



**A Review of the Literature on Accessible
Curricula, Qualifications and Assessment**

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Executive Summary

Introduction

The focus of this review is a detailed analysis of literature concerned with accessible curricula, qualifications and assessment.

In drawing together the results of the analysis this final report aims to identify the extent to which current policies and practices are underpinned by research evidence. As outlined in the project brief, the report also seeks to identify the systems, policies and practices that best enable disabled learners to achieve their full potential, and which do not put unnecessary barriers in the way of disabled learners.

The subsequent report is divided into three major themes beginning with an examination of the systems, policies and practice used to identify and 'label' populations and the issues which arise from this approach. Two subsequent themes address the curriculum, assessment and qualifications and draw together findings from the analysis of numerous texts such as research reports, policy documentation, articles and descriptive case histories.

Aims and objectives of the review

Aims:

- To conduct a scoping review on current and proposed curriculum and examination systems where these qualifications are regulated by a public body in Great Britain.
- To gather evidence, internationally, regarding systems policies and practices which best enable disabled learners to achieve their full potential, and which do not put unnecessary barriers in the way of disabled learners.

Objectives:

- a) To determine to what extent current regulation regarding the assessment of curriculum and examination systems protects the disabled learner from discrimination.
- b) To determine how effective the current curriculum and examination system is at developing, identifying and consolidating the competencies, skills and knowledge of disabled learners.

- c) To research the effectiveness of other curriculum and examination systems, especially those proposed by the 14-19 Working Party on Curriculum and Qualification Reform.
- d) To identify the key contributing factors of effective systems, including examples of policy and practice and how these things contribute to an increase in the numbers of disabled learners with qualifications.
- e) Identify any specific issues for England, Scotland or Wales.
- f) Identify any cross cutting issues in relation to other equality areas.
- g) Make recommendations for any further work in this area for the year 2005-2006.

Key Findings

In drawing together the key findings which arise from our examination of the literature we are mindful of the objectives set out in the research brief. We have therefore used these objectives as a framework through which to present the discussion of findings and to formulate subsequent recommendations.

To determine to what extent current regulation regarding the assessment of curriculum and examination systems protects the disabled learner from discrimination.

A major finding from this literature review is that there is insufficient research evidence into the effectiveness of assessment processes for disabled learners in England, especially in relation to access to qualifications. Accepting the limitations imposed by this fact, several key messages emerge. Current regulation is ineffective in protecting disabled learners from discrimination. This is most apparent at the level of external examinations and qualifications, where the overriding message is that little has changed in the last 20 years apart from terminology. Access arrangements are dominated by the concern to safeguard the 'integrity' of qualifications and to protect existing standards. The principle of universal design, although upheld in the official regulations, is notably absent in practice. The result is that disabled learners are required to demonstrate how they can meet the assessment criteria of qualifications which have not been designed with their needs and skills in mind. Current arrangements are still based on a deficit model of disability and there appears insufficient evidence of the impact they have on the reliability and validity of assessment outcomes.

How effective is the current curriculum, assessment and examination system at developing and consolidating the competencies, skills and knowledge of disabled learners?

At the level of the individual learner, practice in setting IEP targets and assessing progress towards these targets appears patchy in all schools, though stronger in special than in mainstream schools. Many teachers do not know how to assess the progress and achievement of disabled learners in their classes. An inevitable consequence of this weakness at individual level is that the use of this assessment data to evaluate school performance and inform future planning is also weak. This situation is aggravated by an apparent lack of commitment at LEA and central government level to establishing an effective national benchmarking system to identify progress and attainment levels of disabled learners, notwithstanding the potential technical difficulties involved in developing such a system.

The fact that participation rates in public examinations are not kept and published makes it impossible to judge the extent to which disabled learners achieve their full potential in terms of qualification, but on the evidence from this report it seems likely that they do not.

How effective are other curriculum and examination systems, especially those proposed by the 14-19 Working Party on Curriculum and Qualification Reform?

The Tomlinson review of 14-19 provision promised to pave the way for a fundamental change in both curriculum and assessment by providing opportunities for a greater breadth in the learning experience for all pupils. In some ways it was flawed by a narrow emphasis on a particular phase in education but nevertheless answered a number of the issues raised by this research. For example, we have highlighted evidence which suggests that disabled pupils are excluded from some subjects and are channelled into vocational routes without being given genuine choice.

Often these vocational routes have been tokenistic with more emphasis on 'care' rather than opportunity. The Tomlinson solution would have made such exclusions less likely and brought greater parity between vocational and academic routes. The move away from a curriculum crowded with academic subjects was also to be welcomed. The proposed structure could have paved the way towards a positive and

inclusive environment based on the characteristics of successful inclusion.

Whilst the 14-19 Tomlinson Report potentially offered a welcome alternative to the bureaucratic external systems which currently dominate assessment in our schools and colleges, it also presented a major challenge for the training of teachers who would be expected to carry out this assessment. The evidence of this review suggests that a radical shift in this direction may not be effective if intended to apply only to the 14-19 age group and not to earlier key stages. The fact that the government has now rejected the main proposals of the report adds to the sense that this is a missed opportunity to introduce major changes not just to the structure but also the overall rationale and philosophy of assessment.

What are the key contributing factors of effective systems and how would these contribute to an increase in the numbers of disabled learners with qualifications?

Effective systems are identified in this report to be those that bring together a number of key elements. From our analysis of the literature these key elements include the need to develop a robust approach to the collection of data in relation to disabled pupils coupled with enabling legislation, inclusive policy and practice.

Evidence suggests that the transition experience can be particularly difficult for disabled pupils. This may be for a number of reasons but a strong thread in the literature relates to the need for ongoing access to an appropriate range of resources and support. A system of funding of specialist equipment and specialist support for students with additional learning needs should be available to promote a smooth transition between school and post-school pathways (vocational training/FE) after the age of 16.

Another major factor in effective practice concerns the development of systems for differentiation of curricular content and as QCA point out: 'teachers seemed unaware that the national curriculum prescribes what is taught rather than how it should be taught' (p.6). Evidence from a number of studies but particularly in the UK from QCA and Ofsted suggest the need for special educators and those working in the mainstream context to have closer links and that models need to be identified which exemplify good practice in the differentiation of materials and demonstrate effective collaboration across special and mainstream

schools.

On the positive side we found evidence of a number of what are considered to be effective forms of intervention. These include: grouping arrangements: co-operative learning, peer tutorials, adaptive environments.

But more significant are the attitude of teachers and the facilitation of self-advocacy on the part of the disabled learner.

Whilst differentiation is an important factor the principle of universal design is seen in the evidence from the USA to represent the future and to underpin full participation by reducing the current reliance on post hoc amendments to the curriculum, assessment and the environment. In the UK this is a relatively new concept, though we note the appointment of the first Chair in inclusive design located within the Royal College of Art. Therefore in recognition of the likely increasing emphasis on inclusive/universal design across the broad backdrop of access and student achievement there is a need to appoint an advisory body or function which brings together the many aspects and applications of inclusive /universal design.

Identify any specific issues for England, Scotland or Wales

This review also identified concerns about the limitations of the current PLASC data collection and reporting in England. In consequence there may be a lack of consistency of information between schools and LEAs as the guidance does not specify who should record the details about individual pupils' SEN. There is also an undue emphasis upon a pupil's 'primary' need when there may be other impairments or needs that have implications for learning. In view of these concerns and the issues raised in the previous discussion it is evident that a new approach is required which will make a clear distinction between disability and the need for learning support. At the same time any approach needs to facilitate full participation by all learners and allow the process and outcome of inclusion to be monitored. The scheme being introduced in Scotland (2005) is attempting to provide such a solution by replacing the concept of 'special educational need' with 'additional support for learning' and distinguishing this from disability by separately identifying a pupil as disabled according to one or more of a number of categories. It is too early to judge how the introduction of what might be considered as a multivocal approach to declaration of need and /or disability will work

in practice and whether the concept of additional support for learning will indeed mark a move away from the medical/deficit model. This approach will require close monitoring, and, if successful there is a strong argument for its introduction into the rest of the UK.

Identify any cross cutting issues in relation to other equality areas.

It is evident from the references reviewed that factors such as ethnicity, social class, and social disadvantage are associated with SEN and with disability (Burchardt, 2004; Dockrell et al, 2002; Dewson et al, 2004; DfES, 2004a; Rahi and Cable, 2003; Cabinet Office, 2005). However, there would appear to be a dearth of research that seeks to explore the nature of the relationship between each of these factors and a child's allocation to the SEN category. Similarly, there may be a need for further research to investigate the relationship between ethnicity, social disadvantage and disability. With respect to SEN the review provided evidence to support the claim that the term remains linked to the medical model of disability by focusing on within child factors (and provision of post hoc support to address the resultant 'problems'). As Dockrell et al (2002) has observed regarding children categorised as having BESD, this label 'does not fit easily into models of disability and may indeed limit discussion of causes'. That is, if BESD is seen as intrinsic to the child, full account may not be taken of external factors such as social disadvantage or failures within the education system to meet the needs of this group of children. This is of particular concern in view of the finding that pupils with BESD constitute more than two in five of the SEN population (defined by primary need) and that this group of young people is also associated with the greatest number of exclusions and some of the most negative transition outcomes.

Recommendations

Research

- A research programme is required to identify the extent to which principles of universal design could be applied to the process of assessment at national and school level in order to recognise the needs and foster the participation of all students.
- Research should be undertaken into the range of access arrangements used in external examinations, their impact on the reliability and validity of the assessment and their match with classroom practice.
- Further research should be conducted to examine the use of IEPs as a focus for assessment and their possible links with the development of 'individual action plans' (IAPs).
- Research is needed which identifies the genuine choices available to disabled pupils and how their views mould these choices.
- More research is required to identify the characteristics of good practice in community-based training and vocational preparation for students who are disabled with and without Statements of SEN at Key Stage 3 and 4.
- There is need to conduct specific research which examines the role and function of individual support in order to gather models of good practice.
- Given the current confusion between the way in which the terms SEN and disability are used, research is needed to enable a better understanding of the relationship between the SEN component of SENDA and other aspects of disability discrimination legislation.
- More research is required that seeks to explore the nature of the relationship between ethnicity and social class and a child's allocation to the SEN category. Similarly, there may be a need for further research to investigate the relationship between ethnicity, social disadvantage and disability.

Policy

- In order to address inequality there is a need to promote the development of a set of educational standards which recognises and values the progress and achievement of disabled learners on an equal basis with their peers.
- A system of funding of specialist equipment and specialist support for disabled students should be available to promote a smooth transition between school and post-school pathways (vocational training/FE) after the age of 16.
- In recognition of the likely increasing emphasis on inclusive/universal design across the broad backdrop of access there is a need to appoint an advisory body or function which brings together aspects and applications of inclusive /universal design in order to promote good practice.
- The new approach being developed in Scotland which seeks to find a more reliable method of data collection in relation to individuals covered by DDA legislation will require close monitoring and if successful there is a strong argument for its introduction into the rest of Great Britain.

Practice

- In recognising an increased emphasis on assessment for learning training initiatives for teachers will need to include specific guidance on the effective assessment of disabled learners.
- Models need to be identified which exemplify good practice in the differentiation of curriculum and assessment materials and demonstrate effective collaboration across special and mainstream schools.
- Training should be developed which focuses on helping teachers to gain confidence in their ability to differentiate teaching material and teaching approaches.
- The need to involve disability interest groups at the design stage of all e-assessment initiatives is paramount.

- Initiatives should be developed on a sustainable basis which focus on joint planning between special and mainstream schools and approaches which prioritise the sharing of subject expertise.
- Staff development opportunities should be targeted towards teachers in positions of responsibility such as headteachers to enable them to demonstrate an understanding of effective practice relating to the inclusion of disabled pupils.
- Practice exemplars should be developed which offer guidance for new teachers on inclusive teaching approaches and mentors should be chosen to support newly qualified teachers in recognition of their inclusive practice.

Glossary of Terms

ACCAC	Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales
ASD	Autistic spectrum disorder
CSF	Curriculum Statement Framework (Australia)
CSPAR	Class Size and Pupil Adult Ratios
DDA	Disability Discrimination Act (1995)
DfES	Department for Education and Skills (in England)
DRC	Disability Rights Commission
BESD	Behavioural, Emotional and Social Development needs
ERA	Education Reform Act (1988)
FE	Further Education
FSM	Free School Meals
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
GNVQ	General National Vocational Qualification
HE	Higher Education
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (USA)
IEP	Individual Education Plan
Inset	In-service Training
JCQ	Joint Council for Qualifications
Key stage	Compulsory education in England and Wales is divided into four key stages: Key Stage 1 for pupils aged 5 to

7; Key Stage 2 for pupils aged 7 to 11; Key Stage 3 for pupils aged 11 to 14; Key Stage 4 for pupils aged 14 to 16.

LEA	Local Education Authority
LSA	Learning Support Assistant
LSP	Learning Support Profile
MLD	Moderate learning difficulties
NCEO	National Center on Educational Outcomes (USA)
NUT	National Union of Teachers
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education
OPCS	Office of Population Censuses and Surveys (now the Office for National Statistics (ONS))
PANDA	Performance and Assessment
PAR	Participatory Action Research
PE	Physical Education
PGCE	Post Graduate Certificate of Education
PLASC	Pupil Level Annual Schools Census
PMLD	Profound and multiple learning difficulties
P-scales	Performance scales, developed to provide a framework for charting the progress of learning up to Level 1 of the National Curriculum through eight progress steps (for learners with more severe learning disabilities)
QCA	Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (England)
Record of Needs	Equivalent in Scotland, to the Statement of SEN

SATs	Standard Assessment Tests
School Action	The first of a four-stage model of identification and assessment of SEN. Action is taken at school level and includes setting targets and creating an IEP.
School Action Plus	When School Action measures do not meet the needs of a child identified with SEN, external agencies such as specialist advisory services are called in to advise.
SCLD	Social communication and language disorder
SEED	Scottish Executive Education Department
SEN	Special educational needs
SENCO	Special educational needs co-ordinator
SENDA	Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (2001)
SENTC	Special Educational Needs Training Consortium
SLD	Severe learning difficulties
SLP	Student Learning Plan (British Columbia)
SpLD	Specific learning difficulty
SQA	Scottish Qualifications Authority
Statement	A statutory document, prepared by the LEA, that details the SEN of a child, the special educational provision required and names an appropriate school or other arrangements for the child's education
TA	Teaching Assistant
TGAT	Task Group on Assessment and Testing
VI	Visual impairment/visually impaired
WAG	Welsh Assembly Government

1. Introduction

The Disability Rights Commission (DRC) commissioned this literature review in September 2004. Researchers working under the auspices of the Institute of Education, University of London, conducted the review. The focus of the review is a detailed analysis of literature concerned with accessible curricula, qualifications and assessment.

In drawing together the results of the analysis the final report aims to identify the extent to which current policies and practices are underpinned by research evidence. As outlined in the research brief, the report also seeks to identify the systems, policies and practices that best enable disabled learners to achieve their full potential, and which do not put unnecessary barriers in the way of disabled learners.

The subsequent report is divided into three major themes beginning with an examination of the systems, policies and practice used to identify and 'label' populations and the issues which arise. Two subsequent themes address the curriculum, assessment and qualifications and draw together findings from the analysis of numerous texts such as research reports, policy documentation, articles and descriptive case histories.

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- e. Identify any specific issues for England, Scotland or Wales.
- f. Identify any cross cutting issues in relation to other equality areas.
- g. Make recommendations for any further work in this area for the year 2005-2006.

1.2 Methodology

The following review is based on desktop research. We were able to access a wide range of databases through the University of London libraries and, in particular, the facilities of the Institute of Education. This was in addition to our access to the resources of the voluntary sector and information gathered from our links with the devolved nations. As anticipated our main source of research evidence came from studies carried out in the USA.

Because much of our previous work has involved the analysis of policy texts we also have access to a large amount of current and historical documentation. This saved a considerable amount of time in the initial search. As suggested in the tender document we included, where appropriate, hand searches of journals, DRC publications, national and local government reports, grey literature and other sources of information. We are also especially mindful of the work currently being developed by ESRC UK Centre for 'Evidence Based Policy and Practice'. In the light of this we adopted a protocol-based methodology. The review of literature covers a period, which begins with the 1993 Education Act and the publication of the first SEN Code of Practice until the present day.

As outlined in the previous section, a systematic search of a range of databases was conducted including AEI Database of Research on International Education, British Educational Index (BEI), CERUK and ERIC. Searches were also made of DfES, QCA, SQA, ACCAC and other websites to identify current policies and practices relating to the

curriculum and examination and qualifications systems. In addition, paper searches were made of the Institute of Education library.

The subsequent report is structured around a protocol template which enabled each member of the team to focus on the particular areas of their expertise whilst maintaining an overview of the input of other team members. This template was then used to group material under specific headings and distinctive features. This approach reflects the work of researchers such as Cohen and Manion (1994) and that of Boaz, Ashby and Young (2002) who highlight the tensions in developing evidence based literature reviews within the context of school education. The following table illustrates the structure of the template used to group material.

Table 1: Template for Systematic Review

Theoretical/exhortative literature	Author/Introductions, context, key arguments and structure, theoretical and ideological base, supporting evidence.
Descriptive literature	Author/s, context, key features, rationale, evaluation criteria and methodology, issues raised/implications.
Evidence based literature	Author/s purpose of study and rationale. Sample/context, methodology and methods/design features including measures to counteract bias, results and follow up.

Team members used a tabular form of the template and completed a table for each publication reviewed. When choosing which research to include and which to discard the team made judgements based on how robustly the research design and structure matched the agreed protocol. Additional 'grey' material was included following judgements made on the clarity and relevance of its argument and how significantly the issues it raised supplemented or enhanced the findings from research. The same process was carried out in relation to policy texts (of which there are many). Given the time frame covered by the research, judgements were made on the perceived relevance of policy texts in the light of current government priorities. Overall 205 publications were reviewed in detail and logged in tabular format, and of these 183 were judged appropriate to include.

2. Overarching issues: Defining disability and special educational needs

2.1 The context

Disability

“A person is disabled if s/he has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on her/his ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities”.

<http://www.legislation.hmsso.gov.uk/acts/acts1995/1995050.htm>

<http://www.drc.org.uk/askdrc/category/show.asp?id=114>

Special educational needs

"Children have special educational needs if they have a *learning difficulty* which calls for *special educational provision* to be made for them".

(DfES SEN Code of Practice, 2001)

In this first section we examine some of the overarching issues which underpin much of the confusion between the use of terms such as special educational needs and disability. This is an important area to explore as the use of any global descriptions and groupings of individuals impacts not only on personal identity but also on the individual's position within society. In many ways much of what prevents effective inclusion can be located in the myriad of approaches used to define and categorise learners. Of particular importance is the need to make explicit the assumptions that lie behind the use of categories and definitions.

In the move towards greater equality for disabled people significant changes in legislation such as the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and subsequent proposed amendments emphasise the importance of what is described as the social model of disability. This model is 'based on an understanding that the poverty, disadvantage and social exclusion experienced by disabled people is not an inevitable result of their impairments or medical conditions but rather stems from environmental barriers' (DRC 2004a). The 'social model' of disability is supported by a growing interest in principles of universal design. Universal design seeks to foster access to learning and the environment by recognising

learner diversity throughout the whole process of design rather than trying to adapt existing and often unsuitable approaches and environments.

The move to the 'social model' is in contrast to what is described as the 'individual' or 'medical' model of disability. In this model the emphasis is on difficulties seen to be the result of a particular disability or medical condition (within person factors). As Gray (2002) has observed the term 'special educational needs' in the UK, was formally introduced into legislation in 1978 following the Warnock Report (1978). Although the term was originally intended as a move away from an over reliance on within-child factors there is still a tendency in many schools to see problems lodging within the child rather than with the provision.

When examining the literature around populations it becomes clear that much of the emphasis in research and policy texts remains rooted in concepts of SEN and that childhood disability is still seen as one aspect of SEN. To some extent the confusion over the use of SEN/Disability was compounded by the Special Educational Needs and Discrimination Act (SENDA). Whilst this Act had laudable aims it only confused matters further. By seeking to boost notions of entitlement the Act created an uneasy merge between the disability rights agenda (which focuses on a systemic change in society in the move to greater equality for disabled people) and concepts of SEN which stress issues around the individual and individual needs within the context of education.

2.2 Populations

There are a number of issues relating to the population described as having special educational needs to emerge from this review. The first relates to the question of definition – i.e. who is included within the overarching label of SEN and is it meaningful to refer to children and young people with SEN as if they were a single group? The evidence that we have reviewed reveals that within the category of SEN are distinct sub-groups of children and young people with different needs, different educational experiences and different outcomes. Yet there are also many children who do not fit easily into a single category. It has been argued that classifying children by type of SEN may increase labelling, encourage a deficit approach to children's needs and oversimplify the complexity of a child's difficulties by focusing on what professionals consider their primary need (Florian et al, 2004). This emphasis on within-child factors has often prevented full account being

taken of the effects of social class, parental education and ethnicity when considering the experiences of disabled children and young people and/or those with special educational needs.

These findings raise the following questions: should disabled children be subsumed within the overall heading of SEN? How valid is it to apply measures such as outcome measures to the SEN group as a whole as is currently the case?

2.3 What are the categories within the overall heading of SEN?

In England, schools are required as part of the Pupil Level Annual Schools Census (PLASC) to record details of pupils' special educational needs. This requirement applies only to pupils on School Action Plus or with a statement of SEN for whom special educational provision is being made that is: 'additional to, or different from, the educational provision made generally for children of their age and support has been sought from external services' (DfES, 2003a, p.3). The pupil's primary and, where they have more than one SEN their secondary needs are recorded, according to one of 12 categories that are grouped under the following four headings: cognition and learning needs; behaviour, emotional and social development needs; communication and interaction needs; sensory and/or physical needs.

In Scotland the position is slightly different as 15 SEN categories have been identified and will apply in terms of data collection for the Pupil and School Census from September 2005. These categories are used to define the main difficulty in learning for SEN pupils with a Record of Need and/or an Individual Education Plan (SEED, 2004). In addition is the further classification of three groups of children with moderate, severe and profound learning disabilities and 'significant additional impairments or disorders'. The Scottish data collection will also include a separate set of fields relating to a child's disability which, as will be discussed later in this review, is not seen in Scotland as being synonymous with SEN.

2.4 Difficulties in categorising children by SEN

Several of the contributors to this review have pointed out that there are difficulties associated with categorising children and young people according to special educational need, and indeed there are criticisms of the PLASC approach to data collection. Writing in 2002, Dockrell and colleagues concluded, following their review of the literature into meeting the needs of children with SEN that current statistical information does not provide an adequate estimate of the number of children or sufficient information about the range and extent of their problems. They found wide variance across LEAs in reporting of prevalence rates and a lack of transparency in criteria used for identifying children as having special educational needs (Dockrell et al, 2002). Variation between LEAs and between schools in terms of definition of SEN and of provision was also noted by Florian et al (2004).

Florian and colleagues had also argued that for a number of reasons, the categories of SEN used in the PLASC data will not necessarily lead to more consistent information. One reason is the focus on the child's 'greatest primary and secondary needs' only – they ask who decides and how do they decide, which need is primary and which is secondary, noting that the guidance on this is vague (Florian et al, 2004). In fact the guidance to schools and LEAs on recording pupils' SEN in the PLASC does not specify who should complete the form, which raises questions about consistency, particularly in the case of pupils without a statement of SEN (DfES, 2003a).

Although data recorded is by primary and secondary need, the published data on SEN is by primary need only (DfES, 2003b; DfES 2003c). Florian et al argue that classifying children by type of SEN carries the risk of oversimplifying the complexity of a child's difficulties by forcing school staff to identify a primary cause (Florian et al, 2004). Support for this position comes from the Department of Health, which has provided a model that is intended to enable local authorities to calculate the numbers of disabled children in their area. The model is based on a reanalysis of the 1984 OPCS survey on disabled children, which was carried out by Gordon et al (2000), and clusters children with similar needs into one of 11 severity categories. The authors of the guidance to local authorities on implementing this model note that: 'Very few disabled children, especially those receiving social services, have one disability. The overwhelming majority who were included in the

OPCS survey had four or more impairments. A simplistic approach which attempts to fit disabled children into mutually exclusive groupings did not prove useful and has particularly affected the ability of different agencies in working together' (DH, 2001, p.2). More recent research also points to an increase in the number of children with complex and significant needs (Cabinet Office, 2005).

Classifying children solely on the basis of 'primary' need also carries with it the risk of underestimating the number of children who require educational support for their 'secondary' or other needs in order to access the curriculum. In the case of low incidence disabilities/needs in particular, an underestimate of the population may have important educational support and resource implications. For example, there is evidence that the population of blind and partially sighted children is changing and that the majority now have at least one other impairment (Rahi and Cable, 2003; Flanagan et al, 2003; VIScotland, 2003). RNIB estimates of the number of blind and partially sighted children in England who are being supported by LEA specialist support services (Keil, 2003) are substantially higher than the population of children with a visual impairment identified on the basis of primary need in the PLASC data (DfES, 2004a). In Scotland, the population of deaf children provided within the Scottish Executive statistics – which relate only to children with a Record of Needs – was only 28 per cent of the total deaf child population identified through an annual survey of teachers of the deaf in Scotland (ADPS, 2003).

2.5 Within SEN group differences

Although there are arguments against identifying children on the basis of simple categories such as primary or greatest educational need, there is also evidence that including all children with special needs into a single SEN grouping is an over-simplification and masks very real differences between groups. For example, a review of the literature carried out as part of a major, longitudinal study into the post-16 transition of young people with SEN revealed that a variety of individual characteristics play an important role in young people's transition outcomes. These include type and severity of the SEN, gender, ethnicity and socio-economic status, as well as parental educational qualifications and attitudes towards education and disability (Polat et al, 2001).

2.6 Social class, parents' educational level and ethnicity

Although as Florian et al (2004) point out, the value of the PLASC data should not be overestimated, the data do nevertheless identify particular issues that may warrant further, more in-depth research. An important finding to emerge from the data is an association between ethnicity and SEN and social disadvantage and SEN.

2.6.1 Ethnicity

Looking first at ethnicity, differences were found between ethnic groups in terms of proportions identified as having special educational needs. 22.2 per cent of Black pupils in maintained secondary schools were identified with SEN compared with 15.6 per cent White British, 14.9 per cent Asian and 8.5 per cent Chinese. A higher proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups were without statements compared to their White British peers.

Within the main ethnic groupings, considerable differences were also found. Within the White British group, around 50 per cent of Travellers of Irish heritage and Gypsy/Roma children were identified as having special educational needs. Within the Asian group, a higher proportion of children of Pakistani and Bangladeshi ethnicity had SEN compared with Indian children. Within the Black ethnic group, more Black Caribbean than Black African children and young people had special educational needs (DfES, 2004a).

These findings are of particular interest in view of the fact that for the whole pupil population the ethnic groups with a higher prevalence of SEN tended also to be those who were found to achieve below the national average at GCSE/GNVQ level. That is, pupils of Black Caribbean, Bangladeshi, Pakistani, travellers of Irish heritage and Gypsy/Roma ethnicity (Black African and Mixed White and Black Caribbean pupils also performed below the national average). Conversely, Irish pupils and pupils of Chinese, Indian, Mixed White and Asian heritage achieved higher than the national average (DfES, 2003b).

2.6.2 Free school meals

The data show that pupils with SEN were also more likely to be eligible for free school meals (FSM). For example, 27.3 per cent of pupils with SEN in maintained secondary schools were eligible for free school meals in January 2004 compared with 11.9 per cent of pupils with no

SEN (DfES, 2004a). Pupils eligible for FSM performed less well than those not eligible at all Key Stages and at GCSE/GNVQ (DfES, 2004a).

2.6.3 Social class and educational level of parents

Although the PLASC data does not analyse pupils by characteristics such as social class, other studies suggest that within the SEN group as a whole, social class and parental educational attainment exert an effect. Dockrell et al's (2002) review of the literature found evidence that children with SEN from middle class homes and from the South East of England were more likely than the average to be receiving help for their special educational needs. Dewson et al (2004) found that young people with SEN from higher social classes were more likely to be in education than those from lower social groups following Year 11 transition.

Burchardt, in her study examining the aspirations of young disabled people observed that social class background, especially the education level of parents, is an important influence on the formation of a young person's aspirations and educational outcomes. She concluded that these factors might be especially important for young disabled people (Burchardt, 2004).

2.7 Between SEN group/type differences

The literature has also revealed differences between pupils from different SEN groups on a number of measures. In one study pupils with sensory, physical and medical impairments were rated as being more motivated, attentive, organised and independent learners compared with pupils with learning disabilities and BESD. Pupils with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), severe learning disabilities (SLD), profound and multiple learning disabilities (PMLD), SCLD and physical or sensory impairments were more likely to have parents with higher educational qualifications (Polat et al, 2001). In a study involving a small sample of disabled students attending FE colleges in Hampshire, students with 'more complex needs' such as dyslexia, sensory or physical impairments differed from students with mild to moderate learning disabilities in terms of the support they required to access their courses and the extent to which they felt their needs were being met (Harrison, 1996).

There are also differences between SEN groups in terms of school placement, with certain groups more likely to be educated in special schools. In January 2004, 99 per cent of pupils whose primary SEN was

given as specific learning disabilities (SpLD), 95.2 per cent with social, language and communication disabilities (SLCD) and 90.2 per cent with BESD were in mainstream schools. In comparison, only 32.5 per cent of pupils with SLD and 18 per cent of pupils identified with PMLD were being educated in mainstream schools (DfES, 2004a).

2.8 Attainment and post-16 transition outcomes for pupils with SEN

When data on attainment and post-16 transition outcomes are presented, a different picture emerges depending upon whether the data applied to pupils with SEN as a whole or for particular types of SEN.

The PLASC data for 2003 show that pupils with SEN as a whole, performed less well than their non-SEN peers in each Key Stage and at GCSE/GNVQ level. The data also show that SEN pupils without a statement performed better than those with a statement, and that those at School Action performed better than pupils at School Action Plus (DfES, 2003b). Similarly, pupils with SEN have been found to make much slower progress than pupils not identified as SEN at all Key Stages and in each subject. This applies even to pupils with SEN who were working at or above the expected level at the start of each Key Stage (DfES, 2003c). However, a study of deaf pupils in Scotland suggests that for this group at least the picture may be more complex. Analysis of Standard Grade results (equivalent to Key Stage 4 in England) found that while a higher proportion of deaf pupils compared to the rest of the population achieved passes at general level, this was reversed for credit level, with far fewer deaf pupils achieving a credit (ADPS, 2003, 2005). The authors noted however, that it is important to track the results over several years in order to gain a full picture of deaf pupils' attainment compared with the rest of the pupil population.

By comparing data relating to the transition destinations and outcomes of young people with SEN as a whole, and for different SEN groups, it is evident that a key factor is type of SEN. Looking first at SEN as a whole, a survey carried out by the Connexions service in England on the destinations of young people following transition at end of Year 11 found considerable differences between the early post-16 activities of young people with SEN compared to the whole cohort. Fewer young people with SEN continued into full-time education (56 per cent compared with 72 per cent) and a higher proportion was identified as 'not settled' (15.5 per cent versus 8.1 per cent). Information on over 11,000 young people

with SEN showed a concentration in the most unskilled occupations and a significantly lower proportion in clerical and secretarial work (Connexions, 2005).

In comparison, Dewson and colleagues (2004) identified different post-16 transition pathways according to SEN type. Although overall, 46 per cent of the young people with SEN in their study were at school or in further education following their Year 11 transition, the proportion varied according to SEN type. Seventy-one per cent of young people with sensory and/or physical impairments were in school or college compared with 57 per cent in the communication and interaction needs group, 46 per cent of young people with cognition and learning needs and only 32 per cent identified as having BESD. Young people with BESD were also the most likely group to be unemployed (26 per cent) (Dewson et al, 2004). In the first wave of this major longitudinal study pupils with BESD, SLD and PMLD had been found to have poorer transition experiences than other SEN groups (Polat et al, 2001).

Dewson and colleagues identified three broad groups of young people with SEN, with different experiences of transition and different outcomes:

Group 1 consisted of young people with 'largely uncontested impairments' such as sensory or physical difficulties. The majority of young people in this group had a statement, attended a special school or specialist provision in a mainstream school and had multi-agency intervention relating to their special educational needs. Many had 'deferred transitions'.

Group 2 comprised young people with 'less well defined or evident needs' such as less severe learning disabilities or BESD, 'who effectively form part of a broader population of educational low-attainers' (Dewson et al, 2004, p. xiii). This group were most likely to have attended a mainstream school and less likely to have a statement. They also tended to have a low level of statutory support at school and many were in the bottom end of the labour market following transition at 16.

Group 3 was the largest group and fell between the previous two groups. Young people in this group had a range of special educational needs, including communication and interaction and cognition and learning disabilities 'that may or may not be attributed to various 'conditions' or to more contested and less 'visible' impairments. They may or may not have had a statement of SEN, may well not have had any significant involvement from other agencies and constitute a population for whom

transition pathways are less well defined or understood' (Dewson et al, 2004, p. xiii).

These findings indicate that the most negative outcomes are associated with the behavioural, emotional and social difficulties group. According to DfES data, in January 2004 young people with BESD made up over a fifth (21.5 per cent) of the total SEN school population (at School Action Plus or with a statement and identified by primary SEN). Moderate learning disabilities (MLD) ranked highest with 29.2 per cent of young people on School Action Plus or with a statement in this group. In comparison only 7.7 per cent of children and young people were recorded with sensory or physical impairments. Pupils with BESD also made up the greatest proportion of pupils with SEN in mainstream schools (29.5 per cent) followed by pupils with MLD (27.7 per cent). In special schools, ranked highest were pupils with MLD (31.5 per cent) followed at 23.9 per cent by SLD (DfES, 2004a).

2.9 SEN or disability: labels

Evidence that the terms SEN and disability are *both* linked to a deficit model comes from a study by Pearson (2005). In a study of 354 student teachers entering a post graduate certificate of education (PGCE) course, respondents were asked to write three words or phrases that they associated with the term 'special educational needs'. Although a wide range of responses was obtained, the majority related to within-child factors, suggesting that the medical model played a significant part in the thinking of many of the students. The wide range of responses also indicates that among this sample of students there was not a common understanding of the meaning of SEN. In addition, the findings suggested that students strongly associated behavioural difficulties and also learning disabilities with SEN.

When asked to write words or phrases that they associated with disability however, there was less variation and the number of responses was also lower than for SEN. Pearson notes that 'the discourse of disability is less developed in the English education system' (Pearson, 2005, p 20). As was found for SEN, the majority of responses favoured the individual/ medical model of disability. In contrast to the emphasis upon behavioural and learning disabilities found for SEN, disability was associated most strongly with physical impairments, followed by sensory impairments and what were referred to as 'mental factors'. However, it was also noted that there was some overlap with the terms used for

SEN, and one student was recorded as commenting, 'SEN politically correct phrase to replace terms such as disabled?' (Pearson, 2005, p. 20). Although for those who are well versed in disability discourse the distinction between disability and SEN is clear, it would appear from Pearson's findings that the debate about these two concepts is not being rehearsed in front of a wider audience. As noted earlier in this review (section 2.0) it is possible that the confusion over definitions has been compounded rather than ameliorated by SENDA.

Taken together, the findings discussed so far suggest a complex interaction between type of special educational need, ethnicity, and social background. If the aim is to ensure full inclusion in education for disabled children and those with SEN, including equal access to the curriculum it is necessary to identify the factors that prevent this aim being achieved. That means identifying the particular factors that may apply to different groups of children. For example, it is important to ensure that factors that apply to the larger SEN sub-groups do not skew the results for other groups subsumed within the SEN population.

A case in point are pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, who constitute a substantial proportion of the SEN population. Although not all of these pupils are covered by the DDA they have been picked out in several research studies as having particular experiences that are linked to negative outcomes. In addition to Dewson et al's (2004) conclusion that pupils with BESD were included (along with those with less severe learning disabilities) in a population of 'educational low attainers', in two separate studies, both Polat and Dockrell and their colleagues highlighted issues that related to this group of young people in particular. The finding that pupils with BESD and their parents benefited least from the transition process was described by Polat et al as 'important and alarming'. They go on to say that: '...therefore this issue needs to be further investigated in order to confirm if those pupils without a statement and especially those at mainstream schools are the ones who benefit least from the system as this could be interpreted as 'discrimination'' (Polat et al, 2001, p. 79).

Dockrell et al's (2002) review of the literature had revealed evidence to suggest that pupils with BESD are more likely than other groups to be permanently excluded from school (exclusion is negatively associated with educational attainment, according to the Polat et al literature review). An Ofsted survey of a sample of LEAs and schools that had been highly rated on measures such as SEN policy, support services and inclusive practices found evidence that schools and LEAs were

experiencing difficulties in making appropriate provision for pupils with BESD. The increase in numbers of pupils with challenging behaviour was also the greatest cause of concern for survey respondents (Ofsted, 2003a). It should be noted that challenging behaviour does not always equate with BESD, despite alarmist reports in the media.

Dockrell and colleagues found growing evidence that schools find it easier to include pupils with sensory impairments than with BESD. They also noted that 'the label of BESD does not fit easily into models of disability and may indeed limit discussion of causes' (op cit, p. 33). This would seem to be in accordance with Gray's observation that in the UK 'disability' and 'SEN' tend to be used interchangeably. In fact the terms are not interchangeable as while some children with SEN do not have a specific physical or medical impairment, some children have impairments that have only limited educational consequences (Gray, 2002).

2.10 New approaches

This important distinction is recognised by the Scottish Executive (2004) who state that:

"The focus within the education system is on educational need rather than whether or not a child has impairment. Therefore, it is possible that a child may have a disability but because of the nature of the disability, or because adaptations have been made to the school environment, that the child is not considered to have special educational needs".

In consequence there is now an explicit acknowledgement in Scotland that SEN and disability are not one and the same thing: 'Information is collected annually in Scotland on children who have special educational needs. This information is closely related to, but not synonymous with disability' (Scottish Executive, 2004, ch.4). From September 2005 the Pupil and School Census will include a set of variables relating to disabled pupils, in addition to the existing 'main difficulty in learning' for pupils with SEN categories. According to the guidelines prepared by the Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED), and in line with the DDA definition of disability a pupil who is disabled is defined as having a 'physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term...adverse effect on his/her ability to carry out normal day to day activities' (SEED, 2004, p15). A pupil may be identified as belonging to one or all of the following categories:

- Declared disabled – by the pupil or parent ‘irrespective of whether the declaration has been confirmed by a professional assessment’
- Assessed disabled – by a qualified professional ‘irrespective of whether the pupil or parent has declared them as disabled’
- Access to physical adaptation required (includes adaptations for pupils with sensory as well as for physical difficulties)
- Access to curriculum adaptation required (includes all forms of specialist curricular support)
- Access to communication adaptation required (includes signing/alternative language approaches, also Braille – acknowledges possible overlap with curriculum adaptation category) (SEED, 2004, p15).

Although pupils will still be identified according to a single SEN/main difficulty in learning category, the disability categories allow additional information to be included about specific adaptations required to allow the pupil to access the curriculum. It will also identify pupils who have additional learning needs but who are not disabled or do not require adaptations or adaptations to be made. Also from 2005, the term ‘special educational needs’ will be replaced in legislation by ‘additional support needs’ which will cover more than SEN (eg children for whom English is not a first language). The new framework, based on the concept of additional support needs is intended to represent a more inclusive approach towards support for children’s learning and ‘a move away from the current negative connotations of SEN which has too much of an emphasis on weaknesses and problems’ (SEED, 2004).

Of fundamental importance is that the new focus in the Scottish educational system upon educational need rather than upon whether or not a child has an impairment allows for the fact that a child may be disabled, but may not have special educational needs. This may be because of the nature of the impairment, or because adaptations made to the school environment effectively mean that the child is no longer placed at an educational disadvantage because of external, environmental factors (Scottish Executive, 2004). This approach marks a move away from the conflation of disability with special educational needs and, by shifting the focus away from problems that are located within the child, is sympathetic to the social model of disability.

2.11 Diversity versus difference

Closely allied in principle to the social model of disability is the policy of including disabled children and those with special educational needs in mainstream schools. However, a theme to emerge from much of the literature is a perceived tension between the inclusion agenda, which celebrates diversity and the standards agenda, which emphasises attainment according to a narrow definition. As will be discussed later in this section, this has been seen by some to impoverish pedagogic practices.

Hall et al (2004) argue that the standards agenda, which focuses on narrow curricular areas and emphasises a particular version of ability has implications for disabled children and those with SEN in terms of how they are valued by others and how they value themselves. Their ethnographic study of pupils and teachers in two UK primary schools revealed a 'hierarchy of pupil worthiness' with pupils being valued (i.e. approved or disapproved of) by teachers according to factors such as compliance with the priority placed on Standard Assessment Tasks (SATs) success, ability, and being a hard worker. They also noted that pupils who experienced difficulties were viewed in terms of individual deficit rather than in terms of reflecting classroom practice.

This hierarchy is also reflected in three discourses or versions of educational success identified by Benjamin (2003) amongst pupils in an inner-city mainstream comprehensive school for girls in England. Benjamin argues that the 'dominant discourse' of academic success derives from the standards agenda with its normative expectations of 'typical' academic achievement. By representing educational success as the outcome of 'talent and hard work', inequity is morally justified. Yet as Benjamin notes, 'the standards agenda operates as if standards are absolute and the legitimising narrative operates as if those standards can be made accessible to everyone' (Benjamin, 2003, p.108). Pupils for whom the dominant version of success are not accessible have to 'perform complicated identify work'. These are pupils who fall into the 'consolation discourse', which applies to pupils at the 'borders of learning difficulties' and which, the evidence shows, is a 'deficit discourse'. Likewise, the 'really disabled discourse', which applies to pupils categorised as learning disabled and who are therefore exempted from standard curricular requirements. For these pupils, success is valued according to non-academic criteria. However, the crux of Benjamin's argument is that this discourse, which is linked to the notion of 'valuing diversity', actually serves to emphasise and reify difference.

If only certain groups of students (e.g. those with learning disabilities) are valued for diversity, then 'diversity operates as a polarity, separating and hierarchising students. It becomes another way of distancing a group from the norm...' (Benjamin, 2003, p.115).

Research carried out by Anderson et al (2003) with students with learning disabilities attending mainstream FE colleges identified considerable differences between the experiences of students on mainstream courses compared with those of students with learning disabilities who were on discrete courses. They advise colleges that they need to be aware that placing students with learning disabilities on discrete programmes can 'reinforce negative perceptions of difference and can result in inequitable provision' (Anderson et al, 2003, p. 40). The same study also found that some of the students with learning disabilities were sensitive to being seen as going to 'special rooms' for 'special help' (which for the students, served as markers of difference rather than as a means of removing barriers to accessing their course of study). Neutral terms such as 'curriculum support' were preferred – these made 'disability less of an issue' (Anderson et al, 2003, p. 26).

2.12 Standards versus inclusion

For a historical perspective on the inherent tension between the inclusion and the standards agendas (with particular reference to pupils with SLD) see Mittler (2002). Ofsted in their survey of inclusive schools noted a tension between the aims of promoting and increasing inclusion of pupils with SEN and maintaining performance standards. 'Some schools with a well-established reputation for their inclusive practice were attracting and increasing number of pupils with SEN and were nearing the limits of their capacity to provide well for them and for other pupils...' (Ofsted, 2003a, p. 18). The tension between the inclusion and standards agendas was seen by Ofsted as a challenge for schools and LEAs to resolve, but no suggestions as to how they might do this were offered. Dockrell et al (2002) concluded, following a review of the literature, that despite the notion of effective schools for all there is little evidence that improving school effectiveness and attainment levels for the majority of pupils also leads to improvements for the minority with SEN. Only a very few mainstream secondary schools have been found to combine high academic performance with high proportions of pupils with SEN. They saw an urgent need for further research into schools that are both inclusive and effective.

Hall et al (2004) noted that an emphasis on SATs affected teaching practice by focusing on outcomes rather than upon processes. By attributing outcomes to within-pupil factors such as innate ability and effort makes it less likely that teachers will change their own classroom practices, which can be more inclusive and effective for everyone.

Vlachou (2004) looks at the issue from a social and human rights and equal opportunities perspective, and argues that in education inclusion policies have been treated as add on policies that have to be fitted into the existing framework. Disabled children and those with SEN are not regarded as a mainstream issue. 'Within this context...many school reform proposals, while making technical changes, actually reinforce the underlying disabling values, power relationships, and learning experiences embedded within the conventional ways of teaching children' (Vlachou, 2004, p.8).

Lindsay (2003) however, warns against viewing the issue from a social and human rights perspective alone and thus ignoring within-child factors completely. He favours an interactive model (Wedell, 1978), which conceptualises children's functioning as an interaction between their inherent characteristics and the environment (which can change over time). Lindsay argues that there is a need for more rigorous research that takes into account within-child factors and the efficacy of particular approaches to their education, rather than upon focusing upon the human rights issue alone.

2.13 Key issues

The key issue to emerge from this section is the confusion behind the use of terms such as disability and SEN. We have emphasised that evidence suggests the solution is not a simple substitution of one term with another, but a reconceptualisation of the term special educational needs. This is in the light of the move towards the use of a more positive model of disability reflected in recent legislation.

In the wake of the confusion in the use of terms is the subsequent problem with data collection. This is particularly apparent when data is based on a system of reporting using a rather ad hoc identification of what constitutes a primary disability. We have pointed to possible new approaches such as the work in Scotland in recognition of the need to use multiple sources of evidence when determining the needs of the learner. We have also suggested that the available evidence points to

the need for a move away from the use of the term SEN to that of additional learning needs in recognition that responsibility for support is lodged within a sustainable and inclusive system.

3: Curriculum Access

3.1 The context

In this section we focus on the curriculum and access for disabled learners. However, there are also wider implications in terms of equality of opportunity for other potentially disadvantaged groups. Curriculum access has many facets but fundamental is access to an appropriate model and conceptualisation of the curriculum itself. We recognise that it is perhaps an artificial divide to separate the curriculum from assessment. Indeed, many of the papers reviewed for this section suggest that an emphasis on assessment at the expense of the curriculum and the individual learner is at the heart of the dissatisfaction with the current system. However, for the purpose of analysis we have followed the approach taken by Sailor (April 18th 2002) in a testimony submitted to the 'Research Agenda Taskforce' (a component of the 'President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education', 2002). Firstly, Sailor identifies a series of clusters of evidence relating to inclusive practice in education. Each cluster then becomes a theme set within a specific context. The first of these for the purpose of this report and arguably the most important is the ongoing debate around the curriculum itself.

3.2 The curriculum: design, structure and content

Since the Education Reform Act, 1988 (ERA) provided the legislative framework for the introduction of a national curriculum there has been growing criticism of the structure, content and delivery of the subsequent curriculum. Despite successive revisions of this national curriculum (e.g. Dearing Review, April 1993) much of this criticism has focused on the extent to which content is prescribed, the lack of flexibility within its structure and the subsequent overload on pupils and teachers. Such criticism has taken place at a time when as Daniels (2000 p.1) notes:

- The concept of the welfare state is undergoing scrutiny and questioning;
- There is a growth in the level of unease surrounding effectiveness with respect to current equality of opportunity policy;
- There is international concern about the conditions and processes of social exclusion and the prospects for social cohesion.

In 2002/3 the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA, 2004a) (following another revision of the national curriculum in September 2000) undertook a review of inclusive learning. The key findings of the review (section 3.1) were:

- There is little awareness of the national curriculum inclusion statement.
- There is too much focus on assessment at the expense of learning experiences.
- Concerns were widespread about 14-19 developments not appearing to be inclusive in their conception.
- There are too many initiatives working in tandem to allow for rigorous evaluation.
- Despite efforts to 'mainstream' there was a perception that SEN had fallen off the agenda in all mainstream high-profile initiatives.
- All respondents expressed strong views that performance tables militated against the inclusion of pupils with SEN in many popular schools.

3.2.1 The curriculum and inclusion

The QCA study also found that statistical data indicated SEN Co-ordinators (SENCOs) were the group least likely to know about the inclusion chapter of the national curriculum. This is particularly worrying given the role of the SENCO in facilitating the inclusion of disabled pupils. QCA found a major issue was differentiation and that teachers seemed unaware that the national curriculum 'prescribes what is taught rather than how it should be taught' (p.6). From the QCA study it seems that only the special schools and the mainstream schools with close links to special schools 'appeared to be happy with differentiating the curriculum' (p.6). This finding is supported by Ofsted's (2004) review of inclusion 'Special educational needs and disability: towards inclusive schools'. Ofsted note that 'few of the schools visited had made substantial adaptations to the curriculum they offer to meet special needs and that mainstream schools have insufficient knowledge of curriculum organisation in special schools' (p.13).

Additionally, the QCA report suggests that parents were unaware of the curriculum inclusion statement and were not given accurate information about the implementation of the national curriculum, believing it was a series of daily lesson plans and that work set was too difficult. The QCA findings suggest it was the pace of work rather than its level of difficulty

that caused the problem. Pupils barely grasped one concept before being given something entirely new. Teachers blamed the demands of 'coverage' of the national curriculum (though QCA indicate that this is not a term used by them). The findings also indicate those pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) experienced similar difficulties and these were mirrored in relation to race and gender where the lack of individuality in the curriculum posed particular problems. This could be seen as a further example of the need for an approach to the curriculum based on the principles of universal design. Universal design assumes an approach which puts the needs of a diverse population at the design stage of the curriculum.

In a similar vein a recent paper ('Bringing down the barriers', November 2004) published by the National Union of Teachers (NUT) suggests that despite the inclusion statements in the national curriculum 'inclusion is not at its heart'. NUT criticises the current national curriculum (England) for its failure in preparing pupils for adult life in a diverse society and calls for an end to an imposed curriculum. The NUT is, however, more supportive of the policy of the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) and in particular the limited degree the private sector has been involved in education and the efforts to increase collaboration across the 22 LEAs in Wales in 'tandem' with a review of SEN services. NUT also supports the development of the Welsh Baccalaureate and the Learning Pathways initiative though NUT also notes that there remain issues to be resolved around the breadth and depth of curriculum entitlement for all young people. However, they support the advice from ACCAC that the WAG needs to consider a radical revision of the curriculum 'that is more overtly learner-centred and skills-focused and not necessarily subject based'.

3.2.2 Curriculum content and inclusion

Nor are such criticisms confined to England. Ford, Davern and Schnorr (2001) describe the changing emphasis in curricular guidance in the USA for students with significant impairments and the possible damage to the concept that such graduates could successfully live and work in the community with varying levels of support. They suggest that successful participation by disabled students in education arose from curricula that 'were relevant to students' functioning in everyday life' (p.214). The writers contend that in support of this functional approach teachers based activities on the natural routines and activities of schools and communities and this was reflected in the content of Individual Education Programmes (IEPs). Ford, Davern and Schnorr go on to track

the move from segregation to full membership for disabled students. In particular, they highlight the social benefits of inclusion and a lasting support structure. They also point out the dilemma created by the 1997 amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). These amendments gave states until July 2000 to accomplish the task of including all learners in district and state-wide accountability systems. Whilst on the surface this might seem a laudable initiative the researchers express concern that gains in inclusion will be lost unless there is a coherent and integrated approach to the curriculum responsive to a wide range of learners. They point to five principles that should be applied for the students whose achievement shows the greatest discrepancy from the achievements of others of their age (p.219):

1. Every student should receive priority attention to the development of foundation skills.
2. Individualization is at the core of a good education.
3. Educational priorities should be pursued through schedules and locations that are respectful of the student's membership in a learning community.
4. Students should have an opportunity to experience a sense of mastery over the tasks that they undertake.
5. Being attentive to the student's immediate experience is as important as our concern for the future.

3.3 The curriculum and standards based reform

McDonnell et al (1997) also comment on the negative impact on disabled students following the introduction of standards-based reform in the USA with its emphasis on accountability to a set of uniform standards. This is seen as a move away from an earlier focus on the application of individualised goals and instruction. Rutherford, Turnbull et al (2003) echo concern over the 'Core' (compulsory subject) driven curriculum based on a 'standards' framework. They too suggest that despite the four outcomes (equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living and economic self-sufficiency) established by federal legislation in IDEA there is gross inattention to all of them. This they argue is because of a narrow concentration in the general education (mainstream) curriculum on academic subject based IEPs and point to the need to address the far broader goals enshrined in IDEA.

3.4 UK proposals for structural reform of the curriculum

The current proposals from the DfES (Tomlinson) 'Working Group on 14-19 Reform' (2005) seem to take the debate forward and 'centre on two linked developments'. The first of these sets out a vision for the curriculum:

- a common format for all 14-19 learning programmes which combine the knowledge and skills everybody needs for participation in a full adult life with disciplines chosen by the learner to meet her/his own interests, aptitudes and ambitions. (3.5)

Other documentation from the devolved nations of Scotland and Wales also seems to support the main thrust of the 14 -19 English review but with some significant structural differences in Scotland. In the 2004 report by the Scottish Executive Curriculum Review Group 'A Curriculum for Excellence' there is recognition of the need to provide a less crowded and better-connected curriculum with more choice. This report built on the outcome of the 2002 consultation the 'National Debate on Education' (SEED, 2002). The findings of the consultation identified features of the curriculum which people valued. These included (p.6):

- the flexibility which already exists in the Scottish system - no-one argued for a more prescriptive national system
- the combination of breadth and depth offered by the curriculum
- the quality of teaching
- the quality of supporting material that helps teachers to deliver much of the current curriculum
- the comprehensive principle

However, there were also strong arguments for change (p.7) which would:

- reduce over-crowding in the curriculum and make learning more enjoyable
- better connect the various stages of the curriculum from 3 to 18
- achieve a better balance between 'academic' and 'vocational' subjects and include a wider range of experiences

- equip young people with the skills they will need in tomorrow's workforce
- make sure that assessment and certification support learning
- allow more choice to meet the needs of individual young people

This approach is mirrored in the new curriculum proposed by the Royal Society of the Arts (RSA) in their 'Opening Minds' Report (1999). RSA points out: 'that an information-driven curriculum is unlikely to be able to equip young people adequately for adult life in the new century. The National Curriculum is this kind of curriculum. It struggles to cope with the competing demands of subjects and the struggle gets harder as the volume of information increases. Meanwhile it neglects the development of the competences and skills that young people will need to survive and succeed in their future world (competences for learning, for managing information, for relating to people, for managing situations and for citizenship).' (RSA, 1999)

In its recent White Paper (February 2005) the UK Government sets out its response to the proposals put forward in the DfES Working Group on 14-19 Reform, commonly known as the Tomlinson Report (DfES, 2005). Whilst there are faint echoes of the thrust of the Tomlinson recommendations much of the impetus behind change has been lost. There remains an over emphasis on assessment at the expense of a coherent model of the curriculum. The focus on academic strands overshadows the vocational element. Where disability is mentioned it is set within the context of additional routes.

Personalised programmes are set within the SEN Framework much of which has been demonstrated in this review to be ineffective for a variety of reasons not least the conflation of disparate learners under a label of SEN. The use of the acronym NEET (Not in Employment Education or Training) is in danger of being seen as synonymous with SEN further compounding existing confusion.

It is to be welcomed (9.23) that there will be improved transition planning which aims to link a number of initiatives such as the Strategy Unit's recent report 'Improving life chances of disabled people' (Cabinet Office, 2005), the transition standard under the National Service Framework for Disabled Children and the transition work of the Learning Disability Partnership Boards.

3.4.1 The age range covered by curricula

Unlike the proposals from the Tomlinson Report on 14-19 reform and the National Assembly for Wales 'Learning Pathways 14-19 Guidance' the focus of the Scottish report is on a model of the curriculum covering the age range of 3 to 18. However, the Scottish, English and Welsh reports seem to share a common value base. All reports emphasise the importance of reducing disaffection, increasing choice, participation and raising achievement. Also common is recognition of the need to review the relationship between assessment and learning. But here the similarity ends. The Scottish proposals are built on the importance of bringing a coherence across the whole age range from 3 to 18 (the current curriculum age range is 5 to 14) whilst the English and Welsh proposals concentrate on a specific age range/stage of 14 to 19. This is not surprising given the various government initiatives in England concentrating on Key Stages 3 and 4 and the raft of changes to the funding and control of Sixth Form Colleges and Further Education.

The emphasis of Scottish reforms is on a rolling programme of change over a two-year cycle. By 2006 the aim is to have agreed changes to assessment and qualifications 'to support learning up to age 16' (p.5). The rationale given for change is the need to simplify the connections between assessment 5-14, Standard Grade and National Qualifications. By 2007 the Scottish executive propose fundamental changes to the structure of the curriculum which not only extend its remit to cover an age range 3 to 18 years but which also aim to reduce the perceived clutter of the current system. Whilst work on reform will emphasise the importance of transition there are to be changes at primary, early secondary and to the record of achievement which will encompass 'vocational learning and the achievements of young people beyond the traditional school curriculum'.

This final element of reform in Scotland shares much in common with the emphasis in England. A comparison between the proposed reforms in England and Scotland highlight a possible tension in English reform between the changes proposed at 14 to 19 and how these will impact or map onto the structure of the current national curriculum.

3.4.2 Flexibility in the curriculum

There are however, voices of dissent that express concern at the attempts to introduce more flexibility into curricula without a clearer evidence base. Commentators such as Heward (2003) believe that any

move away from curricula made up of standardised learning (content) objectives runs counter to the inclusion of disabled students in mainstream/general education. Set against the many arguments in favour of change this may seem a reactionary viewpoint but it is worth reflecting on the dual purpose of curricular reform. The aim is both to promote the participation and inclusion of a very broad spectrum of learners both disabled and non-disabled. Heward suggests it is improving the quality of teaching rather than changes in the curriculum which promote equity and engagement across diverse needs. Heward argues: 'The reason we do not teach more children with disabilities better than we do is not because we do not know enough but we do not teach them as well as we know how (p.201).'

3.5 Teaching and learning: evidence and populations

The majority of studies of the curriculum and curriculum access found for this review focus on learners with higher incidence impairments and in particular learning disabilities (in English terminology often described as mild to moderate learning difficulties/disabilities). This appears to be the largest group identified so in many ways it is right and proper that much research evidence focuses on issues concerning these students. The needs of those with low incidence and often more complex forms of impairment are acknowledged in publications but often regarded as too difficult to research. It is certainly more problematic to use quantitative research methods based on the experiences of what are usually very small cohorts and there are strong ethical reasons why these especially vulnerable young people should not be subject to intrusive forms of investigation. Therefore, the majority of information about those learners with low incidence needs comes in the form of exhortative publications and guidance documentation supplemented by anecdotal case histories. Whilst some of this material offers important pointers to those professionals working in schools and post-16 provision its evidence base is flimsy to say the least.

3.5.1 Teaching and inclusive practice

Where evidence from research exists it is largely from research conducted in the USA. Despite some cultural differences there are sufficient similarities between education systems for this data to provide useful pointers to an English audience. However, even in the USA there is limited evidence as to the efficacy of different forms of intervention for those students with more complex needs. Sailor (2002) notes in his

review (p.16) that there are too few comparative investigations using rigorous methodology between inclusive and separate programmes for students with low-incidence and severe impairments to draw any firm conclusions as to efficacy. In particular, Sailor could find no scientific evidence accruing to inclusive practices for blind or deaf students.

Booth et al (1997) observed classroom practice in a mainstream secondary school that had a reputation for the 'successful' inclusion of pupils with SLD, and also included pupils with visual impairments and Down's Syndrome on its roll. Their findings indicated that the notion of inclusion was not embedded in the way that the curriculum was designed or delivered. Inclusion was based instead on an individual model of difficulties which, they note, 'distracts attention from the task of further developing curricula and teaching approaches more evidently responsive to the differences between all students. The absence of the development of classroom practices to support diversity is likely to lead to increased setting, and withdrawal teaching' (Booth et al, 1997, p.353).

3.5.2 Teaching approaches

From the limited research evidence available in relation to the impact of inclusive practice, Sailor suggests it points to possible gains in areas reflecting socialisation and communication. Another variable highlighted by Sailor is the outcome of grouping arrangements such as co-operative learning, adaptive environments and peer tutorial arrangements all of which he suggests seem to offer more positive gains than models using whole-class instruction. This finding is supported by the research carried out by Stodden, Galloway and Stodden (2003) who conducted a literature review using computerised databases covering twenty years. They focused on three areas; the complex learning needs of disabled students within standards-based curricula, the needs of educators to teach this population through standards based curricula and the contextual factors that impact on both teaching and learning standards based curricula.

Stodden, Galloway and Stodden describe their methodology as utilizing a combination of multivocal and participatory action research (PAR). Multivocal research aims to reflect different perspectives, and in particular they highlight (p.12) that: 'Multivocal literature, found in the review is characterised by an abundance of diverse documents and a scarcity of systematic investigations.' To validate the outcomes of their review they also applied a PAR process that included the participation of a diverse group of stakeholders. One of their main concerns arises from

the lack of evidence regarding the achievement of students with complex impairments and what is known is based on small-scale studies that indicate disabled students perform at lower levels on average than non-disabled students.

3.5.3 Pupil grouping

Stodden, Galloway and Stodden also suggest that although earlier studies revealed more about the lack of success of students with complex impairments, there was little evidence about what might help them succeed. Indeed, research indicated that disabled students are negatively affected by traditional instructional practices common to high schools. For example, the tendency in secondary schools to place disabled students in special classrooms for some or all of the day where they may receive substandard curricular content.

However, they also identify some emerging research which 'supports the efficacy of a variety of what are described by the researchers as instructional supports for promoting both the participation of students with complex impairments in the general education classroom and their attaining their individualised learning objectives' (p.13). In addition to the areas highlighted by Sailor, Stodden, Galloway and Stodden point to content enhancement, curriculum revision, and the use of teaching devices and the use of appropriate strategies. The importance of self-advocacy is also highlighted in their research. However, there are ongoing concerns expressed by the researchers that more students need to gain access to improved teaching and learning strategies. Ofsted (2004) also found that pupil grouping has a significant impact on curriculum access and that teaching pupils with the most significant learning and behavioural needs outside mainstream classes 'risked disconnecting them from the work of the class' (p.15).

At a more general level research conducted by the Eisenhower National Clearinghouse (ENC) (2004) found that an emphasis on the 'norm' in the development of curricula in maths and science has led to student failure and that opportunity is limited for 'at risk' groups (those who are disabled and/or have SEN, those with family problems, facing cultural or gender bias). This is particularly the case for disabled students. Although technology is an area of especial importance for these potentially disadvantaged groups many students such as those who are disabled are 'tracked out' of technical courses. This ENC suggest, is because of a misconception that these students cannot cope in laboratories. The Eisenhower National Clearinghouse also highlights that prejudice in the

system forces 'at risk' students to take limited options from the beginning thus denying them access to the underpinning knowledge and skill base required to study with their peers.

3.5.4 Exclusion from the curriculum

Gray (2002) noted that individual schools are able to discriminate against disabled pupils through barriers to curriculum access, both within the school/college and outside on school trips, etc. Findings from Dockrell et al's literature review also suggest that children with SEN are routinely excluded, although the evidence was described as being patchy. Studies reviewed indicated that pupils with SEN miss national curriculum and non-national curriculum subjects, although not the same subjects consistently. Disabled pupils may also miss out on areas of the curriculum because of physical and other barriers. Failure to alter the acoustic environment for example, will significantly impact on the ability of hearing impaired children to access the curriculum (Dockrell et al, 2002).

Limited access to the curriculum was also a problem for some of the pupils from marginalised groups including disabled pupils and those with SEN, from refugee families and from the Gypsy Traveller community in Northern Ireland. For example, some pupils observed rather than participated in practical subjects and PE. Exclusion from participation in the curriculum and extra curricular activities was seen as further marginalising young people by emphasising a sense of difference and reinforcing negative stereotypes (Rose and Shevlin, 2004). In another study, two out of three blind and partially sighted pupils in mainstream schools perceived geography and science as being more difficult due to their vision. Other subjects cited by some pupils as more difficult were PE, technology, art and maths (Franklin et al, 2001).

Disabled students in a small-scale study by Pitt and Curtin (2004) described secondary mainstream education as being restricted by access and resource limitations as curriculum demands increased. There were difficulties in keeping up with the pace of work in mainstream and examples of students having to drop certain subjects in order to keep up. In contrast, the slower pace of work, smaller class sizes, more flexible timetabling and a differentiated curriculum in a specialist FE setting allowed independent working and less reliance on TA support.

Burchardt points out that qualifications make a crucial difference to the prospects of a young disabled person. Yet, as she observes, there may

have been a tendency in the past to encourage young people with sensory or physical impairments to obtain practical skills at the expense of supporting them to achieve their academic potential (Burchardt, 2004). This view is supported by Dockrell et al (2002) who note that a placement in special schools or pupil referral units (PRU) can result in a seriously reduced curriculum. Rose and Shevlin (2004) had likewise found that limited choice was a particular issue for pupils at a special school in Northern Ireland.

A similar observation has been made by Gray, whose review of the literature on disability discrimination in education for the DRC found an over emphasis on the vocational route for disabled students. For some students in fact, there was evidence of 'tokenistic' planning with training and work placements considered to be 'care placements' as opposed to 'a step towards qualifications and employment' (Gray, 2002, p.42). Anderson et al (2003) had also found that with respect to students with learning disabilities, some colleges perceived that they were being forced into becoming 'superior day centres'. Anderson et al (2003) carried out case studies of around 100 students with learning disabilities and/or disabilities attending FE colleges in England and Wales. Although most students were very happy with their college, their course and the support given, some concern was expressed about tutors who lacked disability awareness or did not meet support requirements during taught sessions. The difference between students on mainstream and those on 'discrete' programmes was described as 'major'. For example, many of the discrete learning programmes, which cater for students with learning disabilities failed to match students' requirements and aspirations. The authors commented that 'such provision is built around what learners want and is not sufficiently focused on getting them there' (Anderson et al, 2003, p. 39).

Differences in the content and purpose of tutorials were also seen to result in an inequitable experience for students on mainstream and discrete courses. While for the mainstream students the focus was on curriculum and learning support, on discrete courses the main focus was group discussions about social issues. They recommended that those students on discrete programmes should know exactly when the course is due to be completed and how they will know they have been successful. They also noted that discrete programmes need to be more tailored to individuals. For example where a student's aim is to get a job, progression towards this goal should be clearly defined in the structure of the curriculum.

With respect to students generally, the authors observed that some seemed to passively accept being excluded from curricular activities that were inaccessible. Sometimes, students who were more confident and assertive and those with more outgoing or 'pleasant' personalities seemed more likely to get the support they required. Quiet, passive students or those lacking in confidence were less satisfied with their support but did not always have the confidence to speak up for themselves (Anderson et al, 2003).

3.6 Resources

For a significant minority of the blind and partially sighted pupils in the survey carried out by Franklin et al (2001) the issue was one of resources, with inadequate access to course materials or equipment. Obtaining books and course materials in their required format was a problem for some pupils, with one in three secondary aged pupils saying that they usually had to wait to get books and handouts/worksheets in their required format.

A survey of ICT use in schools found that ICT use was generally perceived to have a positive impact on helping pupils with SEN access the national curriculum. This was particularly the case for special schools. The more confident a school was in ICT usage, the more likely they were to say that ICT had a substantial impact on helping pupils with SEN access the curriculum (Prior and Hall, 2004).

3.7 Labelling and expectations

A longitudinal study in Norway found that for secondary aged pupils with 'general and complex learning difficulties' or 'psychosocial and emotional problems' in mainstream classes a negative relationship was found between the amount of support and assistance received and the outcome measure. This was controlling for factors such as level on entry and type of difficulty. The authors suggested that one explanation for the negative effect of extra help might have been that it focused attention on the pupils' weaknesses rather than upon their strengths. Consequently less time was given to helping them to develop in the areas where they had a chance of achieving (Markussen, 2004). In a survey of theories of learning styles, Hall (2004) suggests that a drawback of the 'matching hypothesis', which emphasises identifying a 'type' of learner and designing a specific curriculum for them is that learners are likely to

accept the labels given to them and be reluctant to move beyond their 'comfort zones' to develop new skills or styles. Hall notes that this could also have the effect of 'closing off areas of experience for lower-achieving students, particularly since some of these style measures appear to correlate to measures of ability' (Hall, 2004, p. 25).

A study of post-16 transition experiences of young people with visual impairments in Wales highlighted a lack of parity in terms of specialist support and resources available for those who continued into the school sixth form compared with Further Education (FE) College. In particular, while learners who remained at school continued to have the support of a specialist teacher for visually impaired pupils, this support was not available for students in FE. The support provided by specialist teachers included advice and guidance given to sixth formers and their mainstream teachers in terms of accessing their A level courses. Problems related to funding of equipment for students in FE were also identified (Keil, 2004).

This finding is supported by Dewson et al (2004) who identified a series of issues relating to the post-16 transition of young people in the group of young people they describe as those with 'largely uncontested impairments'. There were queries in relation to this group as to whether students were always directed to the most appropriate pathway and whether the pathway was one which promoted genuine progression. Another important factor is whether the high level of service co-ordination needed by these young people was available beyond the age of 16. For young people who were described as having more contested and less 'visible' impairments there were queries in relation to the level and effectiveness of the support that was available to them following transition.

A study by the National Foundation for Educational Research for the DRC, on the understanding of and preparation for the DDA Part 4 by schools and colleges, found that in relation to enabling learners to access the curriculum the effective institutions tended to focus on learning, learning needs and learning opportunities for students, rather than on their impairments. They also understood the necessity to 'include disabled pupils in the curriculum and learning experience rather than just to ensure they were 'accompanying' their peers' (NFER, 2003, p. 3). Establishments that were judged to be less 'developed' in relation to SENDA were 'more inclined to think in terms of physical access rather than whole curriculum access and there were more reported instances of resistance to the whole idea of inclusion' (op. cit, p. 14).

Harrison (1996) investigated the views towards and experiences of FE college of 46 students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Overall, 43 out of the 46 students valued the support they received, but 13 also identified needs that were not being met. There was evidence that the students with more complex needs needed a wider range of support to fully access their chosen courses compared with those with mild to moderate learning disabilities. While the latter group generally felt their needs were well met through college Learning Support Centres, courses with a good curriculum match and good staff to student ratios, students with physical or sensory impairments and/or specific learning disabilities did not always have access to the provision they needed. This included teaching or in-class support, equipment, lecturers who understood their difficulties and physical access to the building. Nine out of the 46 students said they had problems in completing tasks on time. Reasons included the lecturer speaking too fast or rubbing work off the board before the student had copied it, and needing extra time to read text books, and to complete homework and examination papers.

NFER's study of schools' and colleges' preparation for SENDA found that the post-16 establishments 'faced a formidable task as regards delivering awareness-raising and specific training relevant to particular departments and curriculum areas' (NFER, 2003, p4). The size and widespread nature of site and number of staff was one factor. One way in which this difficulty seems to have been addressed was by having 'disability units', with dedicated staff to co-ordinate support for disabled students. These were seen to provide consistency across sites and departments, and specialists took away 'pressure' and provided 'proper advice'. Students also knew where to go for support. However, objections and disadvantages to specialist units were also raised - for instance, they took away responsibility from students by 'having things done for them', and were seen as being exclusive rather than inclusive.

3.8 Content and organisation

In 1999 QCA produced guidance on designing the curriculum for learners who are deafblind. This document sets out a number of aspects of learning to be considered. The six aspects, which QCA identifies, are emotional development, incidental learning, learning from imitation, concept formation and speed of learning. QCA suggest the need for an audit of the non-statutory aspects of the curriculum such as relationships, personal and social development, independence skills,

therapeutic support and emphasise the need for practical experience. Evans (2000 p.76) puts these issues within an international framework of curriculum development where there has been a thrust towards a greater emphasis on outcome based approaches, the development of curriculum content such as life-skills/citizenship and functional independence for learners with severe learning disabilities. Byers (2001) pursues this idea and suggests that developments in curriculum design and frameworks for promoting progress and progression for students with PMLD can influence the wider debate across mainstream and special provision.

Continuing with this theme in 2001 QCA (2001a, b) produced a series of guidance documents for teachers working with students who have learning disabilities designed to aid planning, teaching and assessment. The underpinning assumption behind these documents is that a curricular mix would be available combining elements of the national curriculum with the schools' own materials. There is also an emphasis on progression in terms of skill development. The organisation of learning is to be provided through a mix of curriculum breadth, a range of learning contexts, a variety of support, a range of teaching methods, negotiated learning, the application of learning to new settings and the development of strategies for independence. How this relates to overall practice in mainstream provision is not clarified.

Grove and Peacey (1999) question the concept of subject progression for students with severe and complex impairments who operate at very early levels of development. They suggest there are no explicit links between these early developmental levels and the subject specific knowledge and skills of the national curriculum. Their work highlights some important questions. For instance, what aspects of learning are general to all subjects and what is subject specific; what are the stages of development in subject specific learning and how can subject boundaries be drawn and still be inclusive. Turner (2000) continues the debate in relation to the teaching of history and how Ofsted defines history as a subject area for pupils with profound and multiple learning disabilities. Turner analysed 100 Ofsted reports and found 50% had negative comments suggesting inadequate coverage of history; 39% about the range of historical sources; 24% of schools had no schemes of work and in 5% history was not planned or taught. Turner concluded that teaching history is considered a low priority and raises the fundamental issue - does and should entitlement to the same general aims of education mean entitlement to the same content detail.

Welch, Ockelford and Zimmermann (2001) looked at music education within special school provision for pupils with severe learning disabilities (SLD) and those with severe and profound disabilities (PMLD). They contacted 13% of these schools and found that there were no commonly shared definitions of SLD and PMLD and that the school population was not always reflected in the designation of the school. They found there was wide variation in the size of schools. Schools had a complex mix of ages but were mostly considered 'all age' (usually 3 to 19). Virtually all schools had a music co-ordinator but over half of these had no background in music or music education. Although the majority based their work on the national curriculum there was no common approach. The findings of this project highlight confusion in the use of SEN labels and the impact on school designation. The project also highlights the lack of specific subject knowledge in special schools even at the level of subject co-ordinators. This finding is supported by Ofsted (2001a) in relation to the teaching of maths in special schools. However, it would be wrong to suggest that a lack of subject knowledge by those teachers in the role of subject co-ordinator is only an issue for special schools. The government's five-year strategy for effective subject teaching (DfEE, 2001a) acknowledges the need to help teachers develop their subject knowledge.

3.9 Teacher education

In the move towards inclusion increasing numbers of disabled students are educated within mainstream classrooms and colleges. Teacher education and inclusion has been the subject of much debate. Commentators such as Miller and Garner (1997) express concern over the level and type of teacher education available to support the participation of disabled students in mainstream provision. Miller and Garner describe the impact of the change in funding in the UK which led to a dramatic reduction in full-time training and an increase in part-time modular professional development programmes and distance learning initiatives. Whilst an increase in the range of modes of delivery is not necessarily of concern in itself when viewed as part of a trend towards shorter and more ad hoc approaches to staff development there are broader issues around quality assurance and progression. This concern is also expressed in the USA in the final 2002 Presidential Commission report 'A New Era: revitalising special education for children and their families'. The Commission described the inadequacy of the efforts in continuing education for teachers as lacking in substantive research-based content and pointed to the "one-shot" character of many

workshop training programmes and a lack of systematic follow-up (section 55).

The 1996 report by the Special Educational Needs Training Consortium (SENTC) emphasised that every teacher is a teacher of pupils with special needs and highlighted the need for a systematic plan for staff development to reach all teachers. Findings from Gray's (2002) literature review for the DRC suggest that time and skilled support improve the attitudes and practices of teachers with SEN/disabled pupils with in their class. Gray also notes however, that in the UK the amount of time devoted specifically to SEN and disability issues in teacher training is minimal and there has been little evaluation on how pre-service teachers develop their knowledge and skills in relation to disability during the initial training period.

Ofsted highlighted the importance of training for mainstream staff in its survey of schools and LEAs judged as having inclusive policies and practices. Extensive training of SENCOs and TAs had improved the quality of SEN provision in schools and a wider range of school staff now accepted responsibility for the inclusion of pupils with SEN and recognised the need to be better informed. The increased inclusion of pupils with complex needs had led to an awareness among school staff that they needed training. Most importantly, training included raising expectations for pupils with SEN through clear structures for planning and assessment, well-informed support from teaching assistants, well-established teaching routines and a broader range of teaching methods. The outcome was that this 'enabled pupils with SEN to understand what was expected of them and, as a consequence, to achieve higher standards' (Ofsted, 2003a, p. 20).

To some extent this view is echoed in the outcomes of the DfEE (2001a) Key Stage 3 Strategy 'A Framework for teaching English' which identified four principles to underpin entitlement; expectation, progression, engagement and transformation. The findings of the subsequent report suggested that the quality of teaching could be improved by the instigation of a national approach. In the subsequent DfES five-year strategic plan (section 35) this argument is developed by specific reference to teacher training and professional development. The suggestions include the need for more emphasis on classroom observation, practice, training, coaching and mentoring and the use of a range of teaching styles and strategies to promote personalised learning. There is no explicit mention of strategies to promote inclusion (though this may be assumed by the emphasis on personalised

learning). There is also no explicit mention of strategies to promote socialisation and communication within the classroom (less easily explained by the emphasis on the individual learner).

Porter, Miller and Pease (1997) in a study based on the experience of 57 teachers found that more pupils with complex needs are being taught by teachers without specialist training. This may be a growing issue as this population of learners moves from special to mainstream provision. Jobling and Moni (2004) found that pre-service teachers felt that teacher preparation programmes should put more emphasis on the development of knowledge and strategies for teaching pupils with SEN. Pre-service teachers had little experience of working with SEN on their placements. Some students also felt that supervisors were lacking in knowledge of SEN.

3.10 Teacher attitudes and behaviour

Pearson (2005) had found a very wide range of attitudes and understanding of SEN and disability among first year secondary PGCE students. A finding of particular importance is the emphasis placed by student teachers upon the medical model of disability – only one per cent of references were made to inclusion and in relation to SEN and only 0.74 per cent of responses associated inclusion with disability. A small number of respondents used terms such as 'retarded', 'inability' or 'deficient' in relation to disability.

Silva and Morgado (2004) conducted a research project based in Portugal. The study provided evidence of variables that explain support teachers' beliefs concerning the academic achievement of students with SEN. Teachers identified 'teaching approach' and 'curriculum design' as key components of success. Although greater emphasis is being placed on these issues the researchers note that a wide range of teachers do not receive initial training in how to teach students with SEN and consequently may not feel confident of the knowledge, skills they need to plan adaptations for these students. The researchers go on to note that teacher training programmes do not provide sufficient coursework and fieldwork (practice) to enable teachers to support students with SEN in classrooms. The study also highlighted variables such as the importance of positive relations between support and regular teachers. Silva and Morgado also point to the need for further research into the educational settings in which all students fully participate in classroom routines regardless of any SEN.

A survey carried out by Wakefield and Mackenzie (2005) revealed the importance placed by teachers of the deaf on developing good relationships with mainstream teachers. The willingness of mainstream teachers to engage in training provided by teachers of the deaf was commented upon favourably. However, the take-up of training by mainstream teachers was limited due to competing demands and resource issues. Competing demands on mainstream teachers' time also made it difficult for the specialist teachers to access them on occasions.

Mainstream teachers and lecturers have been found to be a source of problems for disabled students in several of the studies in this review. Both Harrison (1996) and Anderson et al (2003) had identified difficulties that students had experienced with lecturers in mainstream colleges of further education. Problems with teachers for pupils in pre-16 education have also been found. A small scale, retrospective study involving deaf young people in Scotland found that pupils encountered a number of difficulties in class due to lack of deaf awareness among mainstream teachers. These included speaking too fast for pupils to lip-read, speaking with their back to pupils or with their faces in shadow, expecting pupils to listen and write at the same time, and expecting pupils to hear perfectly with hearing aids and radio aids (McGilp, 2001). Some blind and partially sighted pupils and parents who participated in a large-scale questionnaire survey felt that teachers and other staff did not always have a sufficient understanding of the nature and effects of visual impairment. Secondary pupils ranked 'teachers who listen to the child' as the highest single factor that makes a good school (Franklin et al, 2001). Eight out of ten respondents in a study of students who had moved from mainstream schools to a specialist college for disabled students reported negative experiences with staff in mainstream. These included differential treatment, or well meaning but ill informed staff acting on assumptions about the students without first consulting with them (Pitt and Curtin, 2004).

Yet a survey carried out by DfES (2004b) suggests that in the mainstream education sector there is a perception that teachers are meeting the needs of children with SEN. The survey revealed that 78 per cent of support staff, 72 per cent of head teachers and 71 per cent of governors think pupils with SEN are well taught compared with only 39 per cent of LEA staff.

3.11 Teaching approaches

Cawley and Parmar (accessed 2004) suggest the need to change teacher behaviour in the classroom in relation to the teaching of subjects such as arithmetic. They are concerned to highlight the need to move away from a behaviourist framework focused on skill development and suggest the need for a better understanding of how students think. They ask two important questions - whether we should continue to teach arithmetic in fairly routine ways and attempt to change the cognitive status of disabled students or should we consider changing teacher behaviour, curriculum and instructional organisation to assist cognitive processing on the part of the learner. Using a model based on theories of cognition they highlight three aspects of the learning process: metacognition (self-monitoring, executive processes), performance components (strategies, reasoning, processing), and knowledge acquisition components (encoding, memory, skills). They argue that a better understanding by teachers of these elements of cognition would challenge the current practice of teaching computation through rote memorisation.

Haywood (2004) makes similar points and challenges the emphasis on the traditional notion of the subject-focused curriculum and continues with the theme of equipping learners with the cognitive tools for lifelong learning. Haywood suggests that the major emphasis in the future should be on the acquisition of reliable models of logical thinking and on the development of task-intrinsic motivation. Using the outcome of a review of evaluative research carried out over the last 30 years on the effects of two programmes of cognitive education; Feurenstein's 'Instrumental Enrichment' and 'Bright Start' Haywood concludes that systematic classroom application of programmes such as these can lead to cognitive enhancement.

Norwich and Lewis (2001, 2004) highlight the need for a continuum of teaching or pedagogic approaches and point to research which shows how pupils with different kinds of learning disabilities are 'are not provided for adequately in general class teaching' (p.325). They highlight research evidence, which indicates that teachers move on before lower attaining students have reached mastery, and the need for more time for consolidation and practice (also highlighted by QCA and quoted earlier in this report).

Garner (1997) sees the role of SENCOs as becoming more and more complex and managerial. Garner's study identifies the feeling amongst

SENCOs that their work is often misunderstood and undervalued. The findings of the study indicated that the use of concept maps (a predominantly graphical approach used to generate and link ideas) was an unthreatening way of helping SENCOs to reflect on their role.

3.12 Teacher support

One of the key planks of the government strategy for workforce reform is to increase the number of support staff in schools. The governments' five-year strategy states that there are now 33,000 more support staff in schools than in 1997. DfES (covering the period January 1997 to January 2003) figures indicate that as a percentage in the overall rise in the use of support staff there has been a 99% increase in the number of teaching assistants (TAs). This includes SEN support staff and minority ethnic support staff.

Blatchford et al (2004) in their longitudinal study of 'Class Size and Pupil Adult Ratios' (CSPAR) note that research to date is limited about many aspects of the impact of the use of TAs. They state that although 'many studies paint a largely positive picture for the most part evidence is based on teachers' reports' (p.5). The researchers point to a number of factors that may lessen the impact of the work of TAs. An example is the 'fragmentary' nature of deployment of TAs in schools and the lack of available time for planning and communication between teacher and assistant in relation to lesson plans and learning objectives. With reference to SEN Blatchford et al note (p.64) that: 'Compared with teachers, TAs had much longer bouts of interaction with individuals and group (but) from the pupils' point of view teachers rarely interacted with them individually. Additionally the researchers add: 'There seems to be an assumption in special educational needs that longer periods of interaction with an adult will succeed in meeting the needs of those pupils. To this extent the results suggest that the most needy are receiving attention'. However, the researchers go on to point out (p.64): 'that the main way that the direct role of TAs is exercised is through support of certain children, in particular, those with SEN, low ability or difficult behaviour.

Blatchford et al found that only rarely were TAs used to work with children of all abilities. As has been said before there is something paradoxical about the least qualified staff in schools supporting the most educationally needy pupils.' This finding is supported by the Ofsted

(2004a) review 'Special educational needs and disability: towards inclusive schools (15:65) which states that: '...teaching for the lowest-attaining pupils had weaknesses which prevented those pupils fully reaching their potential, even when teaching for the rest of the class was good. The main weaknesses related to the nature of the tasks set and the quality and use of support by teaching assistants'. Anderson et al (2003) noted that for FE college students with learning disabilities the teaching assistant was often the critical factor for inclusive learning, but good TAs could also be seen as masking the need for lecturers to adopt more inclusive approaches.

3.13 Key issues

Overall the literature points to concern about a lack of flexibility within the national curriculum and the subsequent overload on both teachers and pupils. Inclusive practice has been limited by few schools making any substantial adaptations to the curriculum (Ofsted, 2004a). The whole issue of differentiation has been problematic but the best examples of differentiation are seen when special and mainstream schools work together.

The content of the national curriculum has been criticised both on the grounds of relevance but also on its dependence on academic subject based content with little room for a focus on social and emotional development and for approaches which seem to foster a more inclusive approach such as collaborative learning, peer support, joint problem solving and self-advocacy.

The links between vocational training and genuine choice for disabled learners has also been raised in this section. The evidence that some disabled pupils are channelled into a limited range of options not only because of limited support but also because of teacher attitudes to disability and their lack of training. Teacher training is criticised on a number of counts but largely because of the lack of emphasis on the development of inclusive practice in initial training and the fragmentary nature of continuing professional development.

The message from policy and research from the USA concerns the importance of developing approaches based on concepts of universal design. Universal design is seen to afford opportunities to develop potential pathways to both standards-based assessments for students with disabilities, and also for meaningful access to the general education

curriculum. This 'universal' approach supports the argument that there is a need for rethinking the way that the curriculum is currently designed and delivered. At present, making the curriculum accessible for children with disabilities is post hoc.

4: Assessment and Qualifications

4.1 The context

In this section we focus on assessment and in particular the needs of learners who are disabled. Just as in the section covering the curriculum many of the issues highlighted can be seen as components of both the disability rights agenda and as fundamental to equality of opportunity for all learners. As also noted in the preceding section, assessment is significantly bound up with the curriculum. Much of the literature in this area (eg Black 1996, Byers 2001, Pearson 2000, Rose et al 1996, Swisher & Green 1998) suggests that to be effective the two should be treated as indivisible. This is reflected in the USA by the approach used in many special schools of 'curriculum based assessment'. In Great Britain it is evident in the growing emphasis in all schools on 'assessment for learning'.

4.1.2 Definitions of assessment

The range of purposes which assessment serves is summarised by the DfES Report on 14-19 Curriculum and Qualifications Reform as follows:

- diagnosis: helping young people to establish a baseline and understand their progress, strengths and development needs;
- recognition and motivation: recording and rewarding learners' progress and achievement;
- standard setting: confirming levels and thresholds of achievement; and
- differentiation and selection; enabling employers and HE to understand what young people have achieved, and how individuals compare to their peers (DfES 2004, p 57).

The first two of these (diagnosis, and recognition and motivation) can be seen largely as teaching and learning tools, in the sense that they are concerned with promoting individual learning and achievement. However 'standard setting' is moving away from a focus on the individual towards measuring the overall effectiveness of schools. 'Differentiation and selection' can be seen to serve a different function again, beyond the world of education. Arguably they are more concerned with the management of education than with teaching and learning Gipps and Stobart (1993) note: 'Certification and selection are artefacts of our

social and educational system; they, and the assessments which support them, are *not* central to the teaching and learning of the individual child' (p.18).

It is therefore possible to conceptualise assessment at three levels - the individual, the institution and the wider world. Some tension between these three is potentially in evidence for all children. Black (1996) draws attention to the inherent conflict between the competing priorities produced by differing expectations of the system and the role of the teacher:

'In their assessment responsibilities, teachers have to reconcile the learning needs of their pupils, which must be their first concern, with pressures to obtain good results in statutory national tests, and their expectations that they will work within a framework of school policies and parental expectations. These requirements are often inconsistent'. (Black, 1996).

This tension grows sharper as individual learning needs become more distinct from a perceived norm, where the skills and aptitudes of the learners concerned cannot be readily measured against set standards. The evidence of the literature review in this area is that the interests of disabled learners are not best served by current assessment structures, which for the most part have not been not designed with inclusion in mind.

4.1.3 Evidence base

There is limited research on the assessment of disabled learners in Great Britain, and most of what there is focuses on relatively high incidence needs such as learning disabilities. The research that has been identified through this review is concentrated largely on the first and second parts of the three-part model above, i.e. the child and the institution. Out of 17 UK based research articles identified, six relate primarily to the process of IEP target setting and monitoring for individual pupils. Five relate to school level assessment structures and the ways in which these interact with the curriculum and IEPs. Six concern external certification in some form, but focus mainly on specific qualifications or impairment groups. Only one (Florian et al, 2004) engages in an overview of the wider structure and purposes of assessment. By contrast, out of 11 studies from abroad (10 from the USA and one from Australia), none focuses primarily on the individual child, three concern assessment at school level and its relationship with the curriculum, and eight concern external assessment structures. These eight studies

involve for the most part detailed surveys of the practice of different US states in responding to the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). It is to be hoped that the passing of the current Disability Bill by Parliament will result in a similar level of attention being paid to the legal entitlement of disabled learners to access examinations and qualifications in the United Kingdom.

For the purposes of this report, attention will be paid to each of the three levels of assessment in turn. In practice, of course, they all overlap.

4.2 Assessment at individual level

Here we are concerned primarily with assessment as the process of identifying individual needs, setting learning targets in the light of these and measuring progress towards meeting them.

4.2.1 Individual Education Plans

The Individual Education Plan (IEP) is a key tool in the process of assessment for disabled learners. IEPs were introduced in England and Wales through the SEN Code of Practice in 1994 but not all schools immediately understood their purpose. Cooper, in an article entitled 'Are Individual Education Plans a waste of paper?' (1996) concluded that IEPs at that stage were often bureaucratic exercises which bore little relation to pupils' real needs and were grafted onto existing school practice. Looking to the USA, where the use of Individual Education Programmes was more established, he argued that IEPs could only work effectively within a positive whole school policy on special needs.

4.2.2 Individual assessment in special schools

Research by Rose and others (1996, 1999) considered ways in which to involve pupils with special needs in target setting and assessment of their learning. They argued that pupil involvement led to greater motivation and more accurate judgements about attainment, but that pupils needed to be taught the necessary skills of negotiation, self-knowledge and prediction of skills as part of the curriculum in order to play a meaningful part in the process. Pearson (2000) makes a similar point in suggesting that the effective use of IEPs goes beyond individual pupils meeting prescribed targets. Good planning and management of IEPs can engage teaching staff and empower students in negotiating their targets and providing evidence of meeting them.

Thomson et al (2002) tested the USA IEP model in the context of a Scottish school for children with specific learning disabilities. This involved individual teachers and pupils working together to determine and assess progress towards targets instead of these being decided mainly by the SENCO. The exercise was judged a success and demonstrated that IEPs should not just set out what is expected of a child but also what is expected of the teacher in relation to that child. However, limitations of time and training were cited as possible barriers to developing this approach more widely.

A survey undertaken by McNicholas (2000) into the assessment of pupils with profound and multiple learning disabilities (PMLD) focused on assessment practices, curriculum and teaching approaches, use of IEPs and the professional development of staff. Questionnaire responses were received from 114 schools in 72 LEAs and these were augmented by interviews and classroom observations. The main findings do not make reassuring reading:

- IEPs often lacked detail and were frequently not linked to lesson plans.
- Assessment was largely informal, idiosyncratic and geared mainly to achievement.
- Recording largely related to summative achievement, often through Records of Achievement.
- One third of teachers had no SEN qualification and many felt unskilled in assessment.

4.2.3 Individual assessment in mainstream schools

Less research has been undertaken into the effectiveness of individual assessment in mainstream schools. The Ofsted report 'Special educational needs and disability: towards inclusive schools' (2004a), based on inspection evidence from 1999 onwards and on visits to 115 schools during 2003 to evaluate SEN attainment, observes that targets for pupils with SEN in mainstream schools are often too low or general to be meaningful and that few teachers monitor the progress of their SEN pupils effectively. This is explained partly by the lack of appropriate training for teachers, many of whom know that pupils are not achieving but are unable to analyse the reasons why. Interestingly, the report only includes one reference to IEPs, in connection with pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. This lack of emphasis would appear to suggest that IEPs in mainstream schools do not feature as prominently as they might.

These criticisms need to be placed in the context of the effectiveness of assessment practice generally in mainstream schools. Ofsted issued guidance in 2003 on 'Good assessment in secondary schools' prompted by inspection findings in 2000-1 that the quality and use of ongoing assessment was significantly weaker in secondary schools than teachers' general knowledge and understanding and planning skills. The guidance promoted the practice of involving all pupils in setting and owning their targets, but makes no reference to IEPs as such.

Ofsted also issued inspection guidance to subject inspectors (2001b, c, d, e, f) which may indicate the importance they attach to the progress and attainment of disabled pupils. The diverse needs of pupils are recognised in the introduction to each booklet, which lists the three principles in the National Curriculum inclusion statement, makes reference to meeting DDA statutory responsibilities and mentions SEN pupils as a key group to consider when judging standards of achievement. Beyond this, however, the guidance contains no detail about how inspectors should arrive at meaningful judgements on these learners.

4.3 Assessment at school and LEA level

The second level at which to consider the effectiveness of assessment for disabled learners is that of the institution. Here the emphasis is less on the individual and more on the progress and standards of groups of learners, defined typically in terms of National Curriculum levels or examination grades. Assessment at this level is concerned as much with accountability as it is with individual progress and attainment.

4.3.1 Assessment processes in mainstream schools

The Ofsted report 'Special educational needs and disability: towards inclusive schools' (2004a) paints an alarming picture of assessment processes for disabled pupils and those with SEN in mainstream schools at a number of levels:

- 'Many schools have difficulty setting targets and knowing what constitutes reasonable progress by pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities.'
- 'Few LEAs have effective systems for monitoring progress for pupils with SEN.'

- 'The government's national targets....do not explicitly include expectations for the lowest-attaining pupils. There are no targets specifically for pupils with SEN, with or without statements.' (p10)

Progress of pupils with SEN was also poorly judged in many schools, largely because teachers' expectations were unclear and they did not make use of comparative data to assess the progress of these pupils in relation to that of others. Not surprisingly, in light of the discussion about IEPs above, the report found that: 'In the schools that were most successful with pupils with SEN, systems for assessment and planning were fully integrated with those of other pupils. This helped to ensure that planning for pupils with SEN was done by all staff and not only by specialist SEN staff as a separate exercise (p.12).

In the limited number of mainstream schools included in the Ofsted report 'Setting targets for pupils with special educational needs' (2004b), the findings were similar to those mentioned above. Mainstream schools were generally more advanced than special schools in their ability to set targets and to analyse assessment data, but few applied this for the benefit of SEN pupils because their primary focus was on meeting their published whole school targets.

4.3.2 Assessment processes in special schools

The Ofsted report, 'Setting targets for pupils with special educational needs' (2004b) explored the effectiveness of target setting for pupils working well below national expectations in 68 schools, mostly special schools. The purpose of the report was to evaluate the effect on special schools of the requirement since 2002 that they set and publish school performance targets. The report found that the great majority of special schools were setting and publishing targets using P-scales (a set of criteria or 'performance descriptions' for measuring the progress of pupils for whom the early levels of the National Curriculum are not appropriate) and that target setting was becoming part of their routine practice, with benefits for pupils and teachers alike. However, the report also points out that P-scales are not yet fully recognised within the National Curriculum assessment framework and not reported in national performance tables.

Male (2000) explored the issue of school target setting in SLD schools through a survey in 2000 to which 41 heads responded. Most supported the general notion of target setting in their schools but many questioned the emphasis on targets relating to pupil attainment when their school

populations were so diverse and individual progress often hard to quantify. The suggestion was that targets should therefore include behaviour and experiential aspects and there was a clear need for a national school profile database to enable like for like comparisons between schools and pupil outcomes.

There is an obvious issue here regarding equity. Setting aside the question of whether target setting and reporting represents good assessment practice or an abuse of it, the current system in Great Britain appears to value the educational standards of some learners more than others. As long as levels of accountability for disabled learners are less demanding than they are for other learners, there is little incentive for schools to assess their progress as professionally as they should.

4.3.3 Accountability through funding

The Ofsted report 'Special educational needs and disability: towards inclusive schools' (2004a) mentions that LEA funding was 'seldom linked to improvements in learning and pupils' progress was often not at the heart of negotiations on placements and annual reviews' (p 21). Elliot et al (2000) following research into the impact of the IDEA legislation highlights an interesting USA initiative in this area. A comparison of evidence from surveys of all 50 states in 1991 and 1995 found a dramatic increase in the number of states collecting data and producing guidelines for accommodations (access arrangements). There was more limited progress in the number of states keeping evidence of participation rates of disabled students or analysing this data. One of the incentives introduced in the 1997 amendments to IDEA was to make federal funding for special education dependent on the participation of disabled students in state assessments, and Eliot et al surmise that in future this would focus states' attention on their duties in this respect. While this is hardly a direct parallel to the situation in Great Britain, it suggests that political will can be exercised in a variety of ways to turn the ideal of equal participation into reality.

4.3.4 The need for comparable data

The fundamental question of strengthening schools' accountability for disabled learners is discussed in depth by Florian et al (2004). From summer 2005 DfES will allow schools to report the attainment of any child with special educational needs working below national curriculum level 1 as a 'P level'. However, commenting on the use of P-scales and

other measures, Florian concludes that as 'the data relating to individual pupils' attainment cannot yet be said to be reliable, it seems premature to expect such data to be used for school improvement and school comparison'. She goes on to argue that: 'The problematic issues related to the assessment of pupils with special educational needs are central to the debate about inclusion and school effectiveness. The desire to construct a data set that includes all children's achievements might be seen as a worthwhile aspiration but it does not make it technically feasible' (p.119).

This difficulty of establishing valid and reliable measures of the achievement of individuals whose skills and needs vary widely from one to another raises fundamental questions about the appropriateness of measuring the achievement of disabled learners in a numerical way.

4.4 Access to qualifications

The third aspect for consideration is that of access for disabled learners to external qualifications. At this level the balance of responsibility moves away from the place of learning (e.g. school or college) and towards external awarding bodies. Because such qualifications hold a recognised currency for access to employment or further/higher education, the imperative to demonstrate that the assessments that lead to them are valid and reliable takes on a greater significance. In the words of the Joint Council for Qualifications (2005): 'In order that a uniform and robust national system of assessment is maintained, where skills are being assessed, the assessment of these skills must be the same for each candidate' (p.3). It is interesting to note the use of the word 'same' here; many disabled learners might argue that 'equivalent' would be more appropriate, shifting the emphasis from skills process to functional outcome - in other words, recognising that individuals may perform tasks in different ways to achieve results of equal worth.

4.4.1 Research evidence in the UK

There is a striking lack of research in the UK into this area. The only study of any significance dates back to 1993 entitled 'Special educational needs and the GCSE: A report submitted to the School Examinations and Assessment Council' (Grant et al, 1993). This involved a national survey of around 100 mainstream and special schools as well as interviews with LEA advisors and voluntary organisations. The report drew attention to a number of barriers to

pupils with SEN being able to demonstrate their abilities and identified three basic principles on which progress depended:

- Consideration of pupils with SEN must be integral to the whole course and syllabus development process.
- There must exist a clearer understanding, in schools and beyond schools, of 'need' in assessment terms.
- Greater consistency and coherence is required in assessment arrangements between different qualifications (p.4).

The report recommended the establishment of a Forum for Special Educational Needs 'to facilitate communication between all partners and to emphasise their shared responsibility for the provision of appropriate assessment opportunities for pupils with special educational needs' (p.5). Such a body has never been created and the level of communication between Awarding Bodies and disability groups has arguably declined rather than grown in the intervening years.

4.4.2 Access arrangements versus universal design

In their publication 'The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland' (2004b), QCA states that: 'Both in setting the structure and content of qualifications, and in its processes and arrangements for assessment and awarding, the Awarding Body must:

- ensure access and equality of opportunity while safeguarding the integrity of the qualifications
- not create unnecessary barriers to achievement
- guarantee fair assessment for all candidates, including those with particular assessment requirements
- take account of all current legislation in relation to equality of opportunity' (p.11).

In terms of access arrangements, these regulations make it clear that awarding bodies must 'make reasonable adjustments for candidates with particular requirements to enable them to access fair assessment and demonstrate attainment.' Wherever possible, such adjustments should reflect the candidate's normal working practice, but they must 'maintain the relevance, reliability and comparability of the assessment'. In practice, the main concern of the Awarding Bodies appears to be to defend existing standards against a perceived threat posed by opening them up to wider access. In a recent notice issued to centres on the use of readers in GCSE English, JCQ states that:

'In developing and reviewing the regulations and guidance the Awarding Bodies continue to work to a set of guiding principles. These include ensuring that:

- Neither an Access Arrangement or Special Consideration gives an unfair advantage over other candidates;
 - Access Arrangements do not reduce the validity or reliability of the examination or assessment;
 - The provision of Access Arrangements and Special Consideration does not compromise the integrity or reliability of the qualification.'
- (JCQ, 2005, p.3)

What is notable about this statement is that it focuses entirely on potential abuses of access arrangements and is not balanced by an equivalent exposition of the Awarding Bodies' responsibilities in this regard.

4.4.3 Universal design in the USA

The President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education Report (US Dept of Education 2002) summarised progress in the USA on this issue as follows:

Universal Design Principles

“Despite the fact that IDEA requires participation of students with disabilities in state-wide assessments, children with disabilities are often excluded from these assessments to establish the accountability and progress of public schools. This is a major problem, as such assessments generally are designed without consideration of modifications or accommodations students with disabilities may need to complete the assessment. Thus, when students with disabilities request modifications, the request is denied because it would presumably invalidate the test or, if the request is granted, the test results are rejected from accountability considerations as invalid results. This barrier must be removed to allow the appropriate modifications and accommodations students with disabilities may require. The Commission recommends that all measures used to assess accountability and educational progress be developed according to principles of universal design so that modifications and accommodations are built into the test that will not invalidate the results. Guidelines to states and schools should specifically outline modifications and accommodations that are reasonable and explain why some modifications and accommodations

cannot be provided, such as reading a reading assessment to a child with a reading disability.” (Section 2: Identification and Assessment)

The fact that public examinations in England and Wales are not yet subject to disability discrimination legislation may explain why the balance between the entitlement of the individual and the integrity of the qualification appears still to be weighted so clearly in favour of the latter. The state of current provision could therefore be characterised as integration rather than inclusion, with the primary emphasis being on fitting the individual into an existing system rather than designing the system to meet the needs of all from the outset. While exams set by schools and universities themselves and professional/trade qualifications are already covered by DDA legislation there is currently a major anomaly in the area of general qualifications. The new Disability Discrimination Act 2005 removes this loophole by extending the DDA (Part 4) to cover examination/awarding bodies providing general qualifications such as GCSEs and Scottish Standards. The knowledge that they will soon be subject to legal challenge is already concentrating minds in the awarding bodies and regulatory authorities, leading to new initiatives such as the development of common guidelines on the inclusive design of examination papers.

4.4.4 Specific access arrangements

There is a wide range of access arrangements available to disabled candidates in examinations and it is not within the remit of this review to list them all. Accordingly, this section considers only those which are the subject of research or of recent interest.

- A prominent example of post hoc provision is evident in the field of visual impairment, where papers in large print are produced in a limited range of print sizes on the basis that this is the most that the Awarding Bodies can afford. Research conducted by Buultjens et al in 1999 undertaken in the hope of identifying an optimum print size for exams taken by candidates with visual impairment reached the conclusion each student should be presented with his or her optimum print characteristics for exam papers. The issue rankles considerably among candidates themselves and their teachers. Cobb (2002) describes their views as follows: 'Many teachers of the visually impaired argue that, by limiting the range of alternative formats available for examinations, we are denying some children the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and understanding properly.' In his response to a review to identify barriers to access

undertaken by Keith Weller on behalf of the regulators in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (2005), Cobb summarised the comments of 30 VI teachers. The most common criticism mentioned was the quality of modified large print papers - in this case, not the size of print but the poor standard of proofreading brought about by the fact that many modified papers are produced at short notice in the last few weeks before the exam.

- Another issue of contention concerns the regulations governing the use of readers in examinations. This is discussed by Woods (2004) who concludes that the policy of the Awarding Bodies in using a reading age of 10 as the single proxy measure is open to methodological and conceptual criticism. Woods emphasises that this policy should be replaced with a more 'ecologically valid' approach to assessment involving direct observation of the candidate working with examination paper material under examination conditions. The Awarding Bodies have now changed their approach to the use of readers and base it on a technical definition involving 'one standard deviation below the mean of an up-to-date nationally standardised test' - presumably not quite what Woods had in mind.
- A particular difficulty has arisen in 2004-5 over the matter of indicated certificates. Indications (previously known as endorsements) formed a longstanding part of access arrangements for many years, providing a convenient loophole in the otherwise solid commitment to maintaining a 'uniform and robust national system of assessment'. Essentially, they allowed a candidate who was unable to demonstrate the skills required by a particular section of an assessment to achieve a qualification based on the other sections. The certificate granted would contain a statement to the effect that not all sections of the specification had been assessed. In the new regulations for 2005, the Awarding Bodies removed indications in recognition that they are likely to be deemed unlawful when the DDA is extended to public examinations, because the terms on which a qualification is offered cannot be varied from one candidate to another. The policy line adopted instead is that 'candidates can only be awarded marks for skills they are able to demonstrate' (JCQ, 2004, introduction). However, the unforeseen result of this change in the regulations was that a number of candidates with hearing and visual impairment were refused access arrangements, such as a reader in English, which they would previously have been allowed with a certificate indication, even if the outcome was that they are unable to take the exam at all. Following representations from RNIB, RNID and other interest

groups, the regulators have now intervened to reinstate indications for 2005 while the implications of their future removal are thought through fully. Whatever the eventual outcome, the unilateral action of the Awarding Bodies on this matter and their lack of consultation with disability representatives is in marked contrast to the measured steps advocated in the USA (discussed in 4.5.4 below) whereby indications would be gradually withdrawn only as tests became more inclusive in their design.

4.4.5 Continuity and convergence

A particular difficulty in England is that the access arrangements for national tests (SATs) up to Key Stage 3 are not identical to those for GCSE and other examinations at Key Stage 4. As a result of QCA's policy of 'convergence', these differences are becoming fewer but they still exist, based on the argument that SATs are not public qualifications and can therefore be responsive to individual need, whereas for GCSE issues of validity and security are paramount. An obvious difference relates to the early opening of papers. In both cases permission is required but for SATs the maximum time given is one day, whereas for GCSE it is one hour - an inadequate amount of time to make most papers more accessible. Overall, it appears that convergence is being achieved by the regulation of SATs becoming stricter, rather than that of GCSE and equivalent qualifications becoming more flexible, possibly leading to more problems around access.

The situation regarding external tests and examinations varies slightly in Wales and more so in Scotland. SATs in Wales are administered by ACCAC and access arrangements are largely in line with QCA in England (ACCAC 2003b). However, the Welsh Assembly has voted to end external testing of primary age children, so children's first experience of such tests in future will be at age 14. In Scotland there is no external testing at all until Highers, the equivalent of English GCSEs. The tone of the guidance information for public examinations issued by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) is noticeably less prescriptive than that issued by JCQ for England and Wales, emphasising that both SQA and centres are required to meet their duties under the Disability Discrimination Act.

Guidelines for candidates with sensory impairment and learning disabilities issued by the Associated Board of the Royal College of Music (2004a) also display a supportive tone, with the emphasis on enabling access rather than an absolute need to adhere to inflexible criteria. The

guidelines suggest that an alternative test or mode of assessment may be considered, according to the individual needs of the candidate (see also Associated Board of the Royal College of Music 2004 b, c, d).

4.4.6 Match with classroom practice

A concern arising from the complexity of the access arrangements available relates to the extent to which schools, teachers and learners are familiar with them. In unpublished research on access arrangements for pupils with visual impairment, Cobb (2004) suggested that knowledge of the access arrangements system is highly variable and depends largely on school context. Arrangements appeared to be more effective where these arrangements were least exceptional to standard school practice. This was most apparent in a special school context, where the issues involved were integral to the specialist nature of the teachers' work and could be seen as a hallmark of their expertise. Teachers in mainstream schools appeared to view their role differently, only taking secondary responsibility for identifying the assessment needs of a pupil with visual impairment in their classes.

JCQ's regulations, published and updated annually, advise centres to make applications well in advance of the official deadlines and to discuss their candidates' needs as early as possible, in order to identify possible areas of difficulty and also to ensure that their working classroom practice will match the exam arrangements as closely as possible. This is not a requirement, however, and in practice most schools and colleges work to the published deadlines. This creates obvious problems if students embark on a two year course on the basis that suitable access arrangements are available, only to find that the following year these arrangements are changed and that they can no longer meet the new requirements. It would seem necessary in future either to require schools to negotiate access arrangements at the start of a course rather than towards the end, or for amendments to the regulations to take effect in two years' time rather than the following year.

4.5 Access to qualifications in the USA

Most of the discussion of access arrangements in the United Kingdom has centred on regulations and guidance because there is very little available in the way of research. In contrast, a number of US research studies examine the question of access to tests and assessments,

particularly since the introduction of the IDEA disability discrimination legislation in the 1990s. Shriner (2000) provides a detailed overview of federal legislation and responses to it at district and state level, including a discussion of case law precedents. This study provides the following useful summary of IDEA requirements for assessment:

- Participation - Children with disabilities are to be included in general state- and district wide assessment programs with appropriate accommodations wherever necessary.
- Alternate assessments - State or local education board must develop and conduct alternate assessments for children who are unable to participate in general assessments (estimated to be around 15% of the overall number of students with disabilities)
- Reporting - States must report to the public on performance of children on general and alternate assessments
- Individualised Education Program - the IEP must list accommodations and modifications needed to participate in general assessment, reasons if not participating, and alternate means of assessment. (p233)

4.5.1 Use of Individual Education Programmes

While the US context, with its balance of federal and state responsibilities, is clearly different to Great Britain, the expectations there are also greater. All students are legally included within the assessment framework and the only question is whether they should be assessed within the general programme using accommodations (i.e. access arrangements) or by an alternate assessment process. Their participation is therefore guaranteed in law, though the research indicates that many states have been slow to implement this on the ground. The results for disabled candidates should be reported alongside those of other students, thus providing a level of accountability which does not exist in the United Kingdom. The Individual Education Programme (IEP) is treated as a central tool in guaranteeing assessment and specifying how it should be carried out, effectively locating the key decisions in those who know the student rather than leaving them in the hands of external assessment agencies. Although IEP teams make decisions based on individual need, their decisions should be informed by state policies on assessment - an area where practice has apparently not yet caught up with policy (Thurlow et al, 2000).

4.5.2 Alternate assessment

The complexities of alternate assessment are discussed by Browder et al (2003) in a study to identify what progress had been made to implement this requirement of the 1997 IDEA legislation for students who were not able to participate in large-scale state and district assessments. The study found that there was no common understanding among states of the legislative requirements or how to meet them. The findings of the study suggested the need for clarification of what standards were to be assessed (i.e. whether they should be academic or functional) and suggested that performance indicators were needed. The researchers also argued that alternate assessments should be reserved only for those who genuinely could not participate in standard state assessments, estimated to be around 15% of the total number of disabled students.

4.5.3 Participation and accommodation

Useful evidence on the extent of participation and accommodation in assessments across the USA is provided in an article by Thurlow et al (2000), based on research undertaken by the National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO) to ascertain the response of all US states to the requirements of IDEA legislation. This showed that over 30 states revised or implemented new policies for participation and accommodation between 1995 and 1997. This level of activity indicates the growing impact of the new legislation, but the researchers conclude by pointing out several areas of concern:

- an 'amazing lack of agreement' between states (and even within individual states) on how to make decisions about participation and accommodation, as well as on the accommodations offered. This is a particular issue in any attempt to compare performance or in the case of students moving from one state to another.
- a limited understanding of the effects of accommodations on test results, partly arising from the lack of consistency in policies and practices identified above.
- lack of agreement about who has the right to make decisions about student participation, and on what basis that decision should be made.

4.5.4 Flagged test scores

The practice of flagged test scores (ie. indicated certificates) for disabled students applying to higher education institutions is discussed in detail in a paper by Heaney and Pullin (1998) which explores existing policy and practice and reviews relevant literature and court cases. The paper points out that many accommodations offered to disabled students taking standardised tests cannot be demonstrated to be valid in terms of their effect on test outcomes. The test agencies therefore place 'flags' on these results to indicate to test users (i.e. colleges) that they are non-standardised. Colleges vary in their policy on how to treat this flagging, which is potentially unlawful as it identifies an individual as having 'a disability' when this may have no bearing on their ability to study the course concerned. The paper recommends three steps:

- detailed research into the nature and effects of accommodations on the validity of tests
- a commitment by colleges to reduce their use of flagging, on the basis that this practice enables them to avoid the imperative to produce standardised tests for disabled students
- further research into the ways in which flagging is perceived and acted on by test users.

This measured approach contrasts with the policy of immediate withdrawals of indicated certificates in England, Wales and Northern Ireland which has led to considerable difficulties for some candidates with hearing impairment and visual impairment in particular.

4.5.5 Extra time

A paper by Elliot and Marquart (2004) considers the use of extra time as an access arrangement in state tests in the USA. Their study involved comparing the performance of three groups of students in a maths test - disabled students, students educationally at risk in maths and non-disabled students. It was found that all three groups reacted more positively to the extra time and that disability status made no significant difference, thus raising the question whether extra time is actually a valid way of creating a level playing field.

4.5.6 Curricular validity

A final issue emerging from the USA literature concerns the concept of curricular validity, i.e. the legal requirement that students have had the opportunity to learn the knowledge and skills required by an

assessment. Shriner (2000) makes the point that: 'Regardless of how students participate in the state accountability system, there should be a logical connection between the assessment and the curriculum. Additionally, these connections should be made very 'public' before and after testing occurs' (p.238). This point about the relationship between external testing and the curriculum reinforces the point made throughout this review that curriculum and assessment should be seen as two sides of the same coin, whereby assessment is treated as part of the overall curriculum provision, reflecting the same content and access strategies.

This review of access to external qualifications suggests that the concept of universal design is not yet translating into practice and that, in its absence, the tension between individual entitlement and maintaining the 'integrity' of qualifications is stretching to breaking point. This is especially true in England, where the commitment to external testing shows no sign of diminishing. The White Paper on 14-19 Education and Skills (DfES 2005) recently issued states that 'we believe the current balance between internal and external assessment is essentially the right one to secure public confidence in the examinations system. We therefore do not propose major change here.' Given this continued commitment to external testing and the fact that public examinations will soon be subject to disability discrimination legislation, there is a need for QCA to review the assessment criteria which lie behind all qualifications as a matter of urgency.

4.6 Standards-based reform

The 'standards' culture is well established as one of the key tools in the Government's campaign to drive up educational standards. Florian et al (2004) make the important point that 'standards' and 'achievement' are not the same and conclude that: 'Standards are not concerned with starting points, only with outcome measures. Achievement on the other hand is concerned with the progress made by learners over time.' Value-added measures may therefore seem a fairer way to measure school effectiveness than absolute standards, especially in schools with a high proportion of pupils with SEN whose starting points may be lower than those of other pupils. However, the article goes on to point out that establishing valid added-value measures for disabled pupils and those with SEN is a process fraught with difficulty because of the highly individual nature of learner needs.

Added value is now built into school performance and assessment (PANDA) results but is calculated primarily from SATs results and external examinations, which involve summative rather than formative types of assessment. The Task Group on Assessment and Testing (TGAT), which was established in 1987 to design the assessment system for the new National Curriculum, identified four main purposes that this system should serve: formative, diagnostic, summative and evaluative.

4.6.1 Formative and summative assessment

Formative assessment uses evidence of all kinds collected in and out of the classroom. Teachers are central to the process of formative assessment and use the information gained to develop their understanding of the teaching and learning needs of individual children. Because formative assessment is intended to reflect individual strengths and weaknesses it is necessarily complex and does not provide an easy basis for comparison. It is primarily concerned with providing valid information on children's attainment and progress, rather than statistically reliable and comparable data.

By contrast, summative assessment is primarily a stocktaking process which demonstrates retrospectively the progress made by pupils since their previous assessment. It generally results in a report or grade which needs to be intelligible to a wide range of potential users, including non-educationalists. As these grades are often the basis for comparison between children or schools, it is important that they are reliable, i.e. that the same test taken in different circumstances by the same child would provide similar results. For both reasons, summative assessment produces simple data compared to its formative counterpart. Assessment of this kind is of little use to teachers as a tool for identifying strengths and weaknesses in a child's performance. James (2000) point out that: 'Summative assessment requires an overall judgement that of necessity irons out inconsistencies in the evidence of performance on different occasions and in different circumstances. In formative assessment, however, these inconsistencies become the focus of interest because they indicate where problems in students' learning occur' (p.358). In the case of disabled learners formative assessment is likely to play a key role in identifying appropriate learning needs and teaching programmes. This is described by Black (1996): 'The distinguishing characteristic of formative assessment (that the assessment information is used, by both teachers and pupils, to modify

their work in order to make it more effective) is recognised as an essential feature for success in special education' (p.51).

Over time the balance between formative and summative assessment has shifted significantly in favour of the latter, yet it is interesting to note the degree of disquiet about the dominance of summative assessment within the ranks of assessment specialists themselves. Broadfoot and Black, writing in 'Assessment for Education' in 2004 and looking back over the journal's 10 year history, identify a range of problems arising from the 'assessment revolution' of recent years which they feel has led to: 'an assessment society, as wedded to our belief in the power of numbers, grades, targets and league tables to deliver quality and accountability, equality and defensibility as we are to modernism itself ' (p.19). They argue that assessment has become an international policy tool, safeguarding existing standards and expectations at the expense of its true educational purpose and value. The article challenges the prevailing worldwide 'belief in the power of conventional summative assessment techniques to be objective and efficient, to motivate present performance and to predict future performance' and argue for a redefinition of assessment which emphasises the importance of learner involvement and commitment. Such views, coming from within the assessment field itself, suggest that the current dominance of summative assessment may not just be bad for disabled learners, it is potentially bad for everyone.

4.7 Performance tables

The international obsession with educational standards also raises questions about the willingness of institutions to include disabled learners in tests out of a concern that they may drag down overall scores. Ysseldyke (1996) makes this point forcefully when noting that: 'Students with disabilities are being excluded from national, state and international assessments. Much of the exclusion occurs because the tests do not have an adequate number of low-level items. Much of it occurs under the assumption that students with disabilities will perform badly and drag down the scores of states and nations' (p.8).

4.8 Assessment structures

Finally, we should consider the overall curriculum and assessment structure within which all this assessment activity takes place. This

review is largely confined to discussion of the structure in England, Wales and Northern Ireland in this respect. Little information was gleaned about the overall assessment structure in other countries, other than the USA where it is defined at state rather than national level.

4.9 The present

In view of the dominance of external summative testing in England and Wales in particular, the structure to provide this is necessarily huge and bureaucratic. Reported in the Guardian of 14 February 2005, John Dunford, general secretary of the Secondary Heads Association, described QCA's estimate that it cost schools £610 million to run GCSEs and A levels in 2003/04 as 'a nightmare scenario', arguing that this represented a 'tragic waste of national resources, which would be put to far better use in school and college budgets'.

The DfES report on 14-19 Curriculum and Qualifications Reform (2005) echoes these concerns, talking about a 'repetitive and burdensome focus on external assessment'. It estimates that 'a young person doing eight GCSEs and three A levels will take 42 external examinations and lose about two terms' worth of learning in preparation and examination time'. The report points out that no other qualifications system in Europe is built solely on national examinations and that teacher assessment plays a major part in systems here as well as in Australia, the United States and New Zealand. As well as the educational validity of constant external testing, there are also major questions about its cost and manageability.

4.10 The future?

The DfES 14-19 report advocated fundamental reform of the current structures in order to raise participation and achievement, strengthen vocational routes and reduce the assessment burden on students and schools. To achieve this, the report proposed a unified diploma framework involving a combination of 'core' and 'main' learning and a significantly reduced emphasis on external examinations. The resulting increase in teacher assessment would be strictly controlled by rigorous external quality assurance systems.

A significant intention behind these proposals to reform curriculum and assessment structures is to make them more flexible and responsive to

individual needs. However, this diversity of needs is discussed almost exclusively in terms of levels of ability. There is no mention in the report of disabled students as opposed to those with SEN, and none of the eleven case studies feature students of either description. The report appears to equate all students with SEN with those working below level 3 of the National Curriculum, whose needs will be met by the Entry level diploma. Entry level programmes would be based on personalised learning through an individual learning plan negotiated between students and teachers, and would be assessed by 100% teacher assessment. They would also overlap significantly with the foundation diploma to enable progression.

Many of the principles of the DfES Report resonate with the views expressed by writers and researchers who are unhappy with the prescriptive nature of current UK curriculum and assessment structures. The diploma framework would enable recognition of learners' achievements and need identified by writers such as Fletcher-Campbell (1996) and Byers (2001) for an externally validated framework for accrediting the achievement of disabled learners and those with SEN. All qualifications would carry value in the overall framework and would be transferable from one level to another, though it is not clear from the report how an entry-level diploma, designed at a local level and personalised to the learner, would translate into a national currency. There is also a clear attempt to shift the balance of assessment away from a summative to a formative approach, involving students in determining their own goals and trusting teachers to assess their progress towards these. The report advocates the use of fixed outcome criteria which students could meet in a range of ways, rather than prescribed tests which predetermine how this should happen.

Shifting the responsibility for assessment away from external systems to internal teacher assessment would indeed help to overcome many of the design and access difficulties which these external systems create for disabled students and those with SEN. However, it would also place considerable expectations on teachers to identify appropriate learning activities and assessment tasks for the full range of students in their classes, a role which they are currently judged by Ofsted in 'Special educational needs and disability: towards inclusive schools' (2004a) not to be fulfilling effectively at present. Without considerable investment in training, there is therefore a danger that the 14-19 proposals could replace an inflexible but relatively consistent approach to assessment with a flexible but idiosyncratic approach in which the assessment

outcomes of a disabled learner in one context cannot be compared to those in another.

In essence, the DfES 14-19 Report appears to be advocating a third way between external summative assessment and teacher-led formative assessment - in other words, teacher-led summative assessment. This can be seen as an attempt to introduce a more flexible, pupil-focused curriculum without ditching the 'rigour' of summative assessment. Achieving this is unlikely to be easy. A literature review by Harlen (2004) explores the reliability and validity of summative assessment undertaken by teachers. The findings suggest that achieving the goal suggested in the DfES 14-19 report of giving teachers 'the freedom to make definitive evidence-based judgements on their learners' work' is a more complex task than it might initially appear. The review found that tasks need to be closely specified and clear procedures followed to lead to reliable assessment and that teacher assessment is likely to be biased in relation to pupil characteristics, including behaviour, gender and SEN. Black and Broadfoot are also scathing about the current practice of teacher assessed coursework in areas which written tests cannot explore, arguing that 'this approach can have a deplorable effect' (p.17) because teachers are unsure whether they are expected to act in their normal teaching role or as external examiners. In general, the literature suggests that the task of 'skilling up' teachers to carry out summative assessments which are valid and reliable would be a major undertaking. This may be one reason why the government seems set to reject the diploma structure suggested in the Tomlinson Report, committing itself instead to strengthening and improving the existing exam system.

The new White Paper on 14-19 Education and Skills contains a chapter entitled 'Engaging all young people' which identifies pupils with special educational needs as distinct from those 'at risk of disengagement' or 'with significant barriers to learning'. Alongside the commitment to maintaining the academic framework of GCSE and A levels, the White Paper proposes an 'improved set of qualifications' which involves creating a coherent framework of provision below level 2 as part of a new Framework of Achievement which will 'allow tailoring to individual needs through bite-sized qualification units'. There is also a commitment to working with the LSC, QCA and awarding bodies such as ASDAN in the area of life skills. The difficulty in judging these proposals at this stage is that they are so sketchy. However, the decision to reject the key Tomlinson proposal of a unified diploma framework for all 14-19 learners must raise doubts about the potential effectiveness of a separate qualifications structure set up specifically for low achieving learners.

4.11 Key issues

A major issue emerging in the literature on assessment is the tension between formative and summative assessment. Dependence on summative assessment systems is seen by many writers as largely politically driven by the standards agenda and prevents the involvement of learners in setting their own targets. This adversely affects pupils with individual learning needs in particular. This view is by no means confined to researchers into SEN and disability, as assessment for learning is argued by many to be a fundamental part of effective teaching.

There is therefore an inherent tension between the standards agenda and the inclusion agenda. It can be argued that the end result is exclusionary because it values some children (i.e. those who can attain according to the prescribed standard) at the expense of those who can not.

Many papers emphasise the point that effective assessment practices must be closely linked to classroom practice and curriculum design and that barriers created by rigid formal assessment systems can be a major disincentive to the development of innovative teaching and learning strategies in schools. This is exemplified in the phenomenon of teachers 'teaching to the test', which impoverishes the quality of teaching and learning and places children in a hierarchical value system.

There is alarmingly little research in Great Britain on the effectiveness of special arrangements and their impact on test results, while evidence from the USA shows that policy and practice in this area varies considerably from state to state. While lack of data on participation rates for disabled students is identified as a problem in the USA few concerns have been expressed about the same issue in Great Britain. There is also very little evidence of the attainment of particular groups of pupils with SEN and/or disability to demonstrate whether or not they achieve in line with other children.

The overall picture emerging is that many countries are struggling with the tensions arising from the attempt to design inclusive and effective assessment systems. While these tensions are thrown into sharper relief in relation to pupils with disabilities, they are to a large extent inherent in the contradictory nature of assessment policy and practice itself.

5. Discussion of Findings and Recommendations

In drawing together the key issues which arise from our examination of the literature we are mindful of the objectives set out in the research brief. We have therefore used these objectives as a framework through which to present the discussion of findings and to formulate subsequent recommendations.

5.1 Protection under current regulation

To determine to what extent current regulation regarding the assessment of curriculum and examination systems protects the disabled learner from discrimination.

The most obvious finding of this literature review is that there is insufficient research evidence into the effectiveness of assessment processes for disabled learners in Great Britain, especially in relation to access to qualifications. Accepting the limitations imposed by this fact, several key messages emerge. The evidence of this review is that current regulation is ineffective in protecting disabled learners from discrimination.

This is most apparent at the level of external examinations and qualifications, where the overriding message is that little has changed in the last 20 years apart from terminology. Access arrangements are dominated by the concern to safeguard the 'integrity' of qualifications and to protect existing standards. The principle of universal design, although upheld in the official regulations, is notably absent in practice. The result is that disabled learners are required to demonstrate how they can meet the assessment criteria of qualifications which have not been designed with their needs and skills in mind. There is also insufficient evidence of the impact that access arrangements may have on the reliability and validity of assessment outcomes. What is required therefore is a research programme based on the principles of universal design to identify how the process of assessment at national and school level can better recognise the needs and foster the participation of all students. This approach should then replace the current post-hoc arrangements that are based on a deficit model of disability.

5.2 Effectiveness of current curriculum, assessment and examination systems

How effective is the current curriculum, assessment and examination system at developing and consolidating the competencies, skills and knowledge of disabled learners?

At the level of the individual learner, practice in setting IEP targets and assessing progress towards these appears patchy in all schools, though stronger in special than in mainstream schools. Many teachers do not know how to assess the progress and achievement of disabled learners in their classes. An inevitable consequence of this weakness at individual level is that the use of this assessment data to evaluate school performance and inform future planning is also weak. This situation is aggravated by an apparent lack of commitment at LEA and central government level to establishing an effective national benchmarking system to identify progress and attainment levels of disabled learners, notwithstanding the potential technical difficulties involved in developing such a system. The fact that participation rates in public examinations are not kept and published makes it impossible to judge the extent to which disabled learners achieve their full potential in terms of qualification, but on the evidence of the rest of the report it seems likely that they do not. The DfES 14-19 Review of Curriculum and Qualifications estimates that between 4-6% of the 16-19 cohort are working below foundation level and states that 5.4% of 16 year olds obtain no GCSEs. These figures must include a large number of students with learning disabilities. In order to address this inequality there is a need to promote the development of a set of educational standards which recognises and values the progress and achievement of disabled learners on an equal basis with their peers. In the words of one American researcher: 'Including students in assessment does not mean that inclusive schooling is taking place. Conversely, to tout inclusive schooling as a model of educating disabled students without accounting for their learning is equally unacceptable' (Thurlow et al 1998, p.186).

5.3 Effectiveness of other curriculum and examination systems

How effective are other curriculum and examination systems, especially those proposed by the 14-19 Working Party on Curriculum and Qualification Reform?

The Tomlinson Report promised to pave the way for a fundamental change in both curriculum and assessment by providing opportunities for a greater breadth in the learning experience for all pupils. In some ways it was flawed by a narrow emphasis on a particular phase in education but nevertheless answered a number of the issues raised by this research. For example, we have highlighted evidence which suggests that disabled pupils are excluded from some subjects and are channelled into vocational routes without being given genuine choice. Often these vocational routes have been tokenistic with more emphasis on 'care' rather than opportunity. The Tomlinson solution would have made such exclusions less likely and brought greater parity between vocational and academic routes and hopefully higher quality of training into vocational qualifications. The move away from a curriculum crowded with academic subjects was also to be welcomed. The proposed structure could provide a positive and inclusive environment based on the characteristics of successful inclusion such as peer support, collaborative learning and joint problem solving. However, it soon became clear from the literature that to be coherent this phase would have to be set within a model of the curriculum which facilitated a smooth transition across phases. The proposals for fundamental changes at 14-19 therefore needed to be set within an inclusive curriculum framework (guidance rather than imposed) based on principles of universal design. This approach would hopefully reduce the number of transition points for pupils likely to be disadvantaged by exposure to change and link the learning experience of pupils from 3 years of age until the age of 19 (as in the reforms in Scotland).

One of the main by-products of a tightly prescribed curriculum is that teacher decision-making has been limited by the heavy emphasis on delivering the content of the curriculum rather than on the process of learning. Differentiation requires much more understanding of pupil learning and teacher behaviour. If the emphasis of the curriculum is to become more learner-centred then many teachers will need additional training to cover both the theory and the practice of meeting pupil needs. Differentiation should therefore be seen both in the context of access to subject content but also to changes in teacher behaviour. Training should be developed which focuses on helping teachers to gain

confidence in their ability to differentiate teaching material and teaching approaches.

The RSA 'Opening Minds' report (1999) embodies much of the best of the Tomlinson 14-19 review without the compromises that the latter appears to have made to provide continuity with the current system. The RSA report makes the point that an effective assessment system 'must assess what is valued, rather than value what can be assessed.' (p.23). The report argues that such a system should incorporate elements of both formative and summative assessment, based on professional judgement backed up by a range of evidence which might include peer assessment and parental involvement. A key tool for driving the assessment process would be 'individual action plans', extended from students with special educational needs to all students and thus becoming part of the everyday life of teachers and learners. The overall aim of an assessment system must be to focus on what students are able to do rather than what they cannot, in order to avoid 'the use of qualifications and examinations as a sifting mechanism which in practice impedes progression for the individual'. In recognising the emphasis this places on teacher assessment training initiatives for teachers will need to include specific guidance on the effective assessment of disabled learners. Additionally, further research should target the use of IEPs as a focus for assessment and their possible links with the development of 'individual action plans' (IAPs).

Much of the radical change proposed by Tomlinson is now under threat by proposals in the recent government White Paper (DfES, February 2005). In a statement published in the leader column of the Times Education Supplement (25/02/05) Sir Michael Tomlinson, Chair of the 14-19 review, said: "What is proposed (in the White Paper) yet again risks emphasising the distinction between the vocational and the academic." For disabled pupils and other 'at risk' groups lobbying for change, the rejection by the government of the opportunities presented by Tomlinson sits uncomfortably with the publication of the Government's recent report entitled 'Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People' (2005).

Whilst the 14-19 Report offered a welcome alternative to the bureaucratic external systems which currently dominate assessment in our schools and colleges, it also presented a major challenge for the training of teachers who would be expected to carry out this assessment. The evidence of this review suggests that a radical shift in

this direction may not be effective, especially if it is was intended to apply only to the 14-19 age group and not to earlier key stages. The fact that the government has now rejected the main proposals of the report adds to the sense that this is a missed opportunity to introduce major changes not just to the structure but also the overall rationale and philosophy of assessment.

Looking to practice in other countries, evidence was found mainly from the USA. Here the implementation of disability discrimination legislation in the 1990s has led to significant changes in the assessment practice of many states. Nevertheless, the fundamental issue of balancing the right of access with the validity of the test remains unresolved, suggesting that the introduction of such legislation in Great Britain will be equally problematic.

5.4 Key contributing factors of effective systems

What are the key contributing factors of effective systems and how would these contribute to an increase in the numbers of disabled learners with qualifications?

Effective systems are identified in this report to be those that bring together a number of key elements. From our analysis of the literature these key elements include the need to develop a robust approach to the collection of data in relation to disabled pupils coupled with enabling legislation, inclusive policy and practice.

Evidence suggests that the transition experience can be particularly difficult for disabled pupils. This may be for a number of reasons but a strong thread in the literature relates to the need for ongoing access to an appropriate range of resources and support. A system of funding of specialist equipment and specialist support for students with additional learning needs should be available to promote a smooth transition between school and post-school pathways (vocational training/FE) after the age of 16.

Dewson et al (2004) concluded, with respect to the post-16 transition of young people with SEN that: 'the overall impression is that, once out of school, no individual or organisation gives a strong lead to young people or 'personalises' the provision that is available...it seems to be the strength of the pathways between pre- and post-16 provision that make

the difference rather than the formal procedures or support mechanisms themselves' (Dewson et al, 2004, p. 145).

Case studies from this same research project also found evidence that outside of school (and hence guaranteed LEA provision) support for individuals was not always available, for example in mainstream FE college. They found that difficulties were particularly likely to arise in cases where some element of the provision was dependent upon funding that is not provided as 'standard'. Examples cited included one young person whose place at a specialist college came under threat when he wished to exceed the usual length of stay, and another whose provision was dependent upon funding by Social Services.

Keil's (2004) study of post-16 transition of young people with visual impairment in Wales had found that while those who remained in school sixth form following Year 11 transition retained the on-going support of the LEA specialist support service; this was not the case for their peers who went to a mainstream FE college. Yet it was evident that the specialist teacher continued to play a key role in ensuring that the young people in sixth form were able to access their A level course. Lack of access to specialist support and funding of specialist equipment both emerged as issues of concern for blind and partially sighted students in mainstream FE. These findings led to the recommendation that all young people with visual impairment in FE have access to support from a specialist teacher for students with visual impairment. A fair system of funding of specialist equipment and support for students with visual impairment in FE was also recommended in line with funding for students in HE.

Another major factor concerns the need for differentiation of curricular content and as QCA point out in their annual report 'Inclusive Learning 2002/03': 'teachers seemed unaware that the national curriculum prescribes what is taught rather than how it should be taught' (2004a, p.6). Evidence from a number of studies but particularly in the UK from QCA and Ofsted suggest the need for special educators and those working in the mainstream context to have closer links and that models need to be identified which exemplify good practice in the differentiation of materials and demonstrate effective collaboration across special and mainstream schools.

Whilst differentiation is an important factor, the principle of universal design is seen in the evidence from the USA to represent the future and to underpin full participation by reducing the current reliance on post hoc

amendments to the curriculum, assessment, materials and the environment. In the UK this is a relatively new concept, though we note the appointment of the first Chair in inclusive design which is located in the Royal College of Art. Therefore in recognition of the likely increasing emphasis on inclusive/universal design across the broad backdrop of access there is a need to appoint an advisory body or function which brings together aspects and applications of inclusive /universal design. This more inclusive approach to design and presentation should also address issues such as the lack of awareness of the inclusion statement within the national curriculum.

Teachers and teaching approaches play a vital part in promoting or inhibiting full participation and promoting successful outcomes for disabled learners. The QCA findings are an example of one aspect of teaching that has been highlighted in a number of the reports we reviewed. The QCA findings suggest it was the pace of work rather than its level of difficulty that caused the problem. Pupils barely grasped one concept before being given something entirely new. Teachers blamed the 'coverage' of the national curriculum. The findings also indicate those pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) experienced similar difficulties and these were mirrored in relation to race and gender where the lack of individuality in the curriculum posed particular problems.

The quality of subject teaching available to learners in mainstream and special schools continues to be subject to much criticism. This is particularly true in special schools where many subject co-ordinators lack the necessary subject knowledge. The operational links between special and mainstream schools should be enhanced to facilitate the access to subject expertise for disabled pupils and to prevent the isolation of teaching staff in either setting. Initiatives should be developed which focus on joint planning between special and mainstream schools and approaches which prioritise the sharing of subject expertise. More research is also required to identify the characteristics of good practice in community-based training and vocational preparation for students who are disabled with and without Statements of SEN at KS3/4.

Models of teaching approaches which seemed to be successful in including disabled pupils stressed the need to change teacher behaviour, curriculum and instructional organisation. One example from the teaching of arithmetic used an approach based on theories of cognition and highlighted three aspects of the learning process:

metacognition (self-monitoring, executive processes), performance components (strategies, reasoning, processing), and knowledge acquisition components (encoding, memory, skills). Proponents of this approach argue that a better understanding by teachers of these elements of cognition would reduce reliance on rote learning.

Other examples stress the importance of collaborative learning and the use of peer support as well as different forms of pupil grouping. One of the greatest drawbacks is the overall lack of training available in relation to inclusive practice and the fragmented nature of training provision for teachers working in mainstream. Staff development opportunities should be targeted towards teachers in positions of responsibility such as headteachers who should be expected to demonstrate an understanding of practice-based approaches to the inclusion of disabled pupils.

Practice exemplars should be developed which offer practical guidance for new teachers in inclusive practice and mentors supporting new teachers should be chosen as a result of their inclusive practice.

Findings also focused on the use of support staff and the increasing reliance on the use of less qualified members of staff to support disabled learners across both school and FE sectors. To date there seems little real evaluation of the role of individual support and inclusion though some studies revealed some positive outcomes there was also evidence that poor support increased dependency and reduced interaction between teacher and pupils. There is therefore a need to look in more detail at the role and function of individual support and to gather models of good practice.

At the heart of questions about access and entitlement lies a whole debate about the nature and purpose of assessment. The use of assessment data to serve the standards agenda has extended the historic dominance of summative assessment at the expense of the formative and diagnostic approaches which lie at the heart of good teaching and learning. Disabled learners are particularly vulnerable in this context, often requiring clearly differentiated learning outcomes which the prevailing culture appears unable or unwilling to recognise and value.

One area for future exploration is the use of ICT as an assessment tool. This presents both opportunities and threats to disabled learners. The opportunities arise if assessment agencies have the courage to move

away from a dependence on paper and pen testing which bears increasingly little relevance to the way in which many pupils actually work in schools. A potential threat lies in the danger that specific assessment tools are designed which in themselves exclude disabled learners - as, for example, in developing on-line testing programs or e-portfolios which are incompatible with specialist access software. The need to involve disability interest groups in the design stage of all e-assessment initiatives is clearly paramount. Inherent in the use of ICT, however, are some tricky questions about skills and how they can be demonstrated. For example, the recent debacle over use of readers in English examinations has arisen through QCA's insistence that independent reading involves the physical act of reading an exam paper to yourself and that an inability to do so renders a candidate unable to meet this essential criterion of literacy. Yet there are so many aspects of reading beyond this narrow definition, such as comprehension, selection and synthesis, which a candidate might be able to demonstrate perfectly well through the use of access technology. Surely assessment has to demonstrate 'fitness for purpose' not just in relation to the nature of the skills being assessed but also the individual characteristics of the person being assessed.

The final word on assessment goes to Broadfoot and Black, reflecting in 2004 on ten years of articles in the journal 'Assessment in Education'. Arguing for a new assessment paradigm, they identify the growing understanding in the pages of the journal that 'assessment can be a powerful force in supporting learning, and a mechanism for individual empowerment. It can help learners at all ages and stages to become more self-aware, more expert in mapping an individual learning path in relation to their own strengths and weaknesses and in facilitating fruitful collaboration with fellow learners' (p.22). If assessment were more about this and less about the 'tidal wave of targets and accountability', the needs of disabled learners would be met on equal terms.

5.5 Country specific issues

Identify any specific issues for England, Scotland or Wales.

This review also identified concerns about the limitations of the current PLASC data collection and reporting in England. There may be a lack of consistency of information between schools and LEAs as the guidance does not specify who should record the details about individual pupils' SEN. There is an undue emphasis upon a pupil's 'primary' need when

there may be other impairments or needs that have implications for learning. In view of these concerns and the issues raised in the previous discussion it is evident that a new approach is required which will make a clear distinction between disability and the need for learning support. At the same time it needs to facilitate full participation by all learners and allow the process and outcome of inclusion to be monitored. The approach being introduced in Scotland (2005) is attempting to provide such a solution by replacing the concept of 'special educational need' with 'additional support for learning' and distinguishing this from disability by separately identifying a pupil as disabled according to one or more of a number of categories. It is too early to judge how the introduction of what might be considered as a multivocal approach to declaration of need and /or disability will work in practice and whether the concept of additional support for learning will indeed mark a move away from the medical/deficit model. This approach will require close monitoring and if successful there is a strong argument for its introduction into the rest of the UK.

5.6 Cross cutting issues

Identify any cross cutting issues in relation to other equality areas.

Disability, Special Educational Needs and Equity?

From the evidence presented in section 2 of this report we draw the conclusion that it is inappropriate to use the terms special educational needs and disability as though they were interchangeable. Indeed, the use of the label of special educational needs has done much to cloud the debate around the relationship between social exclusion and disadvantage.

The SEN label in itself has been shown to be flawed for a number of reasons. Its application within the context of a national drive to raise standards of pupil performance and achievement has meant that instead of celebrating diversity it has served to accentuate differences between learners who are designated as having special educational needs and those who are not so labelled (Anderson et al, 2003; Benjamin, 2003, 2003; Hall et al, 2004). Yet it also masks very real differences between groups within the SEN category who may have different needs, different experiences of education and different learning outcomes (Polat et al, 2001; Dewson et al, 2004). While learners who – for whatever reason - experience difficulties in accessing the curriculum are treated as belonging to a single group the root causes of issues such as low

attainment and exclusion are unlikely to be addressed. The difficulties experienced by some learners may be associated primarily with social disadvantage whilst for others the problem may be linked to particular policies and practices at the school level.

It is evident from the references reviewed that factors such as ethnicity, social class, and social disadvantage are associated with SEN and with disability (Burchardt, 2004; Dockrell et al, 2002; Dewson et al, 2004; DfES, 2004a; Rahi and Cable, 2003; Cabinet Office, 2005). However, there would appear to be a dearth of research that seeks to explore the nature of the relationship between each of these factors and a child's allocation to the SEN category. Similarly, there may be a need for further research to investigate the relationship between ethnicity, social disadvantage and disability. With respect to SEN the review provided evidence to support the claim that the term remains linked to the medical model of disability by focusing on within child factors (and provision of post hoc support to address the resultant 'problems'). As Dockrell et al (2003) had observed regarding children categorised as having BESD, this label 'does not fit easily into models of disability and may indeed limit discussion of causes'. That is, if BESD is seen as intrinsic to the child full account may not be taken of external factors such as social disadvantage or failures within the education system to meet the needs of this group of children. This is of particular concern in view of the finding that pupils with BESD constitute more than two in five of the SEN population (defined by primary need) and that this group of young people is also associated with the greatest number of exclusions and some of the most negative transition outcomes.

Dockrell et al had argued that BESD does not fit easily into models of disability, but as noted earlier in this report, neither should disability be subsumed within nor conflated with SEN. Subsuming disabled learners within the SEN group carries the risk of ignoring or neglecting issues that are specific to the needs of particular groups such as learners with sensory impairments or who have learning disabilities. In addition, associating disability with special educational need carries with it the assumption that every disabled learner requires some form of intervention to enable him or her to access their course of study when in fact some do not require additional support. More fundamentally, as we have reported, the concept of special educational needs tends to focus attention upon problems related to the child. This emphasis can mask the fact that environmental changes alone may be sufficient in providing a disabled learner with a level playing field enabling him or her to access the curriculum along with their non-disabled peers.

Recommendations

Research

- A research programme is required to identify the extent to which principles of universal design could be applied to the process of assessment at national and school level in order to recognise the needs and foster the participation of all students. (5.1)
- Research should be undertaken into the range of access arrangements used in external examinations, their impact on the reliability and validity of the assessment and their match with classroom practice. (5.1)
- Further research should be conducted to examine the use of IEPs as a focus for assessment and their possible links with the development of 'individual action plans' (IAPs). (5.2)
- Research is needed which identifies the genuine choices available to disabled pupils and how their views mould these choices. (5.3)
- More research is required to identify the characteristics of good practice in community-based training and vocational preparation for students who are disabled with and without Statements of SEN at Key Stage 3 and 4. (5.3)
- There is need to conduct specific research which examines the role and function of individual support in order to gather models of good practice. (5.4)
- Given the current confusion between the way in which the terms SEN and disability are used, research is needed to enable a better understanding of the relationship between the SEN component of SENDA and other aspects of disability discrimination legislation. (5.5)
- More research is required that seeks to explore the nature of the relationship between ethnicity and social class and a child's allocation to the SEN category. Similarly, there may be a need for further research to investigate the relationship between ethnicity, social disadvantage and disability. (5.5)

Policy

- In order to address inequality there is a need to promote the development of a set of educational standards which recognises and values the progress and achievement of disabled learners on an equal basis with their peers. (5.2)
- A system of funding of specialist equipment and specialist support for disabled students should be available to promote a smooth transition between school and post-school pathways (vocational training/FE) after the age of 16. (5.4)
- In recognition of the likely increasing emphasis on inclusive/universal design across the broad backdrop of access there is a need to appoint an advisory body or function which brings together aspects and applications of inclusive /universal design in order to promote good practice. (5.4)
- The new approach being developed in Scotland which seeks to find a more reliable method of data collection in relation to individuals covered by DDA legislation will require close monitoring and if successful there is a strong argument for its introduction into the rest of the UK. (5.5)

Practice

- In recognising an increased emphasis on assessment for learning training initiatives for teachers will need to include specific guidance on the effective assessment of disabled learners. (5.3)
- Models need to be identified which exemplify good practice in the differentiation of curriculum and assessment materials and demonstrate effective collaboration across special and mainstream schools. (5.3)
- Training should be developed which focuses on helping teachers to gain confidence in their ability to differentiate teaching material and teaching approaches. (5.3)

- The need to involve disability interest groups at the design stage of all e-assessment initiatives is paramount. (5.4)
- Initiatives should be developed on a sustainable basis which focus on joint planning between special and mainstream schools and approaches which prioritise the sharing of subject expertise. (5.4)
- Staff development opportunities should be targeted towards teachers in positions of responsibility such as headteachers to enable them to demonstrate an understanding of effective practice relating to the inclusion of disabled pupils. (5.4)
- Practice exemplars should be developed which offer guidance for new teachers on inclusive teaching approaches and mentors should be chosen to support newly qualified teachers in recognition of their inclusive practice. (5.4)

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