

Aspects of Special Education in Western Europe

A personal impression

Education is politics. How it progresses in any one part of the world is not a function of the dissemination of knowledge among those skilled in the discipline; for if it were, one would have to conclude that communication on this planet had not yet emerged from the stage of runners with cleft sticks. It is rather a function of purely local struggles for power; from school district to school district, from state or province to state or province, from nation to nation in sophisticated Europe, the differences in practice are often extreme.

Tyerman's survey of the state of special education across the European community is a revelation of scale: not only of geographical distance and attitudinal distance from one end of a continent to the other; but also of the range of organizations and activities entailed when a polity makes the commitment to extend the full rights of education to all the casualties of each generation. This survey may remind us also, not overtly, but in the intimacy with detail and the candour of comment in the author's approach, of the prevailing differences in style of action between two continents: the vision and drive that compels from above the unanimity of a great step forward by all together, and the patient pragmatism of care and humanity at the grass roots that may vary enormously in results, but — politics being what it is — may yet go further quicker.

The 21 democratic nations of Western Europe have a total population about 20 times greater than that of Canada in an area half its size. They range from the rich such as Switzerland, with highly developed educational institutions, to those like Portugal that are poor and offer limited educational opportunities. Whilst they share broadly the same social, political, and economic philosophies, they are proud of their differences in tradition and outlook. These similarities and contrasts are reflected in their educational practices. But in a short article such as this it is impossible without confusion to describe them in detail or continually to hedge remarks with the types of qualifying statements that are usual in academic publications. Instead, for the sake of clarity, the

Western European scene will be described in broad terms. The aspects chosen for discussion reflect, and are limited by, the writer's own view of what is important on the European scene, and by his own experience. Comments are based primarily on discussions over a period of years with researchers and administrators in the countries concerned, and from some first-hand observation. The term "special education" will be used in the narrow sense of education for handicapped pupils.

The organizational status of special education

Priorities

In general low priority is given to handicapped children and their education, though in Scandinavia, and more recently in the United Kingdom, they have been a focus of particular concern. Probably this reflects their small numbers, the expenditure that adequate opportunity for them would require (government policy is essentially the allocation of limited resources), and a cynical appraisal of their parents' voting power and of the children's limited future in a competitive labour market.

In 1975, the Council of Europe asked its 21 member states to submit details of their major educational research projects so that international workshops, symposia, and colloquia might be arranged in which educational researchers could examine common concerns. Of the 87 projects notified, not one related to special education. In the two books on comparative education that are best known in Britain, neither "special education" nor "handicapped" is to be found in the index; in the first five bulletins of the Council of Europe's European Documentation and Information System for Education (EUDISED), which list the most important research projects in all the states, there are only 31 projects relating to handicapped children out of a list of over 1200.

Research

Educational research in Western Europe is clearly contributing little to the prevention or educational treatment of handicapping conditions. There is not enough of it to be significant, and even if there were, and even if its quality were impeccable, there is no guarantee that its findings would be reflected in government policy or in classroom practice. Lip service is increasingly paid to the view that educational research can and should contribute to policy and practice, and that educational policy must be based on factual-to-date material and not on political pressure and the fashions of the moment. But it is doubtful how many policy makers or practitioners really believe this when they say it. One distinguished head of a national research institution in a major power stated in despair that his ministry had only to know the findings of educational research on a particular issue to go and do the exact opposite.

Teachers, parents, administrators and politicians in Western Europe lack confidence in educational research. In part this is because so few research findings are unequivocal and so many have little relevance to classroom practice. Research reports are rarely read by teachers of special education; researchers by and large neglect to find out which problems are of most concern to administrators and teachers and there are too few projects carried out in co-operation between them. Educational research has not become an integral part of national educational systems except in a very few countries such as Sweden.

In Western Europe as everywhere else the social sciences are weak, and research — especially evaluation research — arouses fears and is sometimes seen as a threat. There are few large national programmes which tackle a single theme in special education — research in Britain on pre-school education is a notable exception. Instead there are piecemeal enquiries that lack authority and bite. Educational research budgets are dropping. State funding of educational research in France in 1975 was 60% of that in 1965. In 1977 in Norway the number of research projects was half that of 1972, and in the Federal Republic of Germany research grants were being cut by 50% (Taylor, 1978).

Educational research has given few answers to urgent problems. The Warnock Report, which is discussed in detail below, proves the case. Educational research contributed little to the Warnock Committee's appraisal of special education and to its recommendations. But educational research has helped to create a climate of opinion that facilitates long term change, and here the Warnock Report is again an example in its use of a survey of recent research by Cave and Maddison (1978).

Communication

Language barriers are frontiers of ignorance. Western Europe is dominated economically by France and by the Federal Republic of Germany, and linguistically by French as a second major language in the south and by English in the north. English is progressively becoming the more widely spoken of the two and is increasingly the language of educational discussions. But few Englishmen speak any language other than their own, and few Frenchmen will admit to doing so. The Scandinavians are exceptional. In Sweden and in Denmark major reports are published in English as well as in the national language, and university educated people will frequently speak and write five languages. The influence of Scandinavia on special education in Western Europe is therefore widespread and out of all proportion to the small population of its countries.

The experiences of writers in French are virtually unknown in northern Europe, and the developments in the Federal Republic, Scandinavia and Britain have little effect on the French-speaking areas. The findings of educational researchers in California 7,000 miles away or in Montreal 3,500 miles away are better known in London and in Stockholm than those of their opposite numbers

in Paris 150 miles and 500 miles distant. Educators in the Netherlands are more familiar with work in Ann Arbor, Michigan, than in the Sorbonne, Paris. There is nothing like ERIC in Europe.

Information systems

Means of overcoming this gap are being developed, particularly through EUDISED and EPIC (Educational Policy Information Centre). The Educational Research Committee of the Council of Europe saw as its first priority in 1970 the interchange of information on educational issues. It set up EUDISED. Each of the countries was to produce an annual register of its on-going educational research projects and to distribute the register freely to the other members. An agreed multi-lingual thesaurus (list of key words) was prepared to facilitate the indexing. Subsequently the most important of the projects listed each year were placed on the central computer base. This enables computerised pages to be produced and to be collected together twice a year to make up EUDISED R & D Bulletins for general sale. EUDISED computer tapes have been loaned abroad — for example to Ontario — but the system itself is not yet computerised.

More recently the Commission of the European Communities whose nine members (Greece is to join in January 1980) are involved in EUDISED have set up through national governments a network of Educational Policy Information Centres, one in each country. These EPICs are linked by telephone and telex, but not by computer. Each Centre's function is to answer requests for educational information by policy makers in its own country, both at national and local government levels, to provide information on national practice in the other eight States of the Community, and to integrate its activities in the Community network.

The EPICs are initially concerned with four principal themes. None of these refers directly to special education or to handicapped children, but two have very clear links — the “transition from school to work” and “the education of migrant workers' children.” The potential is there.

Starting a child's special education

Discovery and diagnosis

In the countries with developed educational systems — broadly the northern half of Europe — there is growing emphasis upon early identification, early diagnosis, and early assessment based on a comprehensive examination of the child's whole personality and family circumstances. In some countries “at risk registers” are compiled from birth records and from the reports of home visitors, and various procedures for mass screening are adopted — all with variable success.

It is also becoming accepted, though more slowly, that assessment should not be a once and for all affair in a clinic, but a continuous process in which parents and teachers are regarded as indispensable members of a comprehensive assessment team. Psychological testing is giving way to systematic observation especially of the child's response to teaching.

For severely handicapped children, especially those with physical defects, assessment in hospital is seen as essential. In some cases this is linked with diagnostic units where there is accommodation for parents as well as for the children. These overcome the difficulties of the team seeing a child for only a short time in an unreal situation.

The medical model, with its emphasis upon aetiology and classification, is regarded as contributing little to effective educational placement. The view from Canada of the Commission on Emotional and Learning Disorders in Children (CELDIC), that "a diagnostic rather than an administrative classification is required," finds ready support. Categories are regarded as unsatisfactory, for they lump together children whose individual differences are greater than their similarities. A label based on a medical classification may give little clue as to what the child needs, may lead to ignoring aspects of his condition that are of crucial importance for his education, and overlooks the fact that most handicapped pupils are multi-handicapped. The CELDIC comment finds ready acceptance in Europe — "labels or categories . . . exaggerate deficits and lead very easily to false generalisations."

Yet in practice children are placed in various classifications prescribed by law — these are very similar from country to country — and the classification in fact determines the type of school to which the child is allocated. Intellectual retardation is recognised by all countries and is by far the most common condition notified. Only in England and Wales is the term "educational sub-normal" used to describe all retarded pupils, and even there the division into severe and moderate is used. Physically handicapped children and pupils with sensory impairments are also distinguished as categories in every country. Denmark recognises a classification of "homebound or hospitalised" children.

Pre-school education

In Britain and in Scandinavia no child is regarded as being so handicapped that he cannot benefit from education, and it is laid down by statute that such education will be provided: in Britain from the age of 2 if necessary.

Pre-school education is increasingly seen as being desirable for all children and as essential for the handicapped. And there is clear evidence that its value is enormously increased if the school has a learning oriented curriculum, specific goals, a reasonable degree of structure (rather than an informal day), and if the child's home and family are involved in the school activities. But there is no doubt that too few parents know what the nursery school is attempting, what

are its methods, or how they can help their child to benefit most from it. Particularly promising are the attempts being carried out by nursery schools in various parts of Europe to influence the parents' handling of the child through illustration, discussion, and direct teaching. In some cases these take place through home visits, as for example in Britain and in Austria.

There is a tendency in the industrialised countries to extend the age of pre-school admission downwards and to give priority to handicapped children. This implies of course the need to improve techniques for early identification. In the UK for example it is intended that all pupils from the age of 3 should have the chance of a nursery school place.

It is difficult to compare the provision in different countries because of differences in the age at which compulsory education begins, and because of the different concepts which different countries hold about the education of young children. For example the Scandinavian countries do not distinguish between the care and the education of young children. In the United Kingdom compulsory education starts at 5, in France and in some cantons of Switzerland at 6, in Scandinavia and in some other cantons of Switzerland at 7. The starting age for pre-school education is 2 in France and Belgium, 3 in Norway, Denmark, the Federal Republic and Italy, 4 in Sweden and the Netherlands, and 5 in some cantons of Switzerland. The length of the day also varies. In Sweden it is up to 3 hours a day, in Switzerland 4 to 5 hours, in the Netherlands 4, and in France and Norway 5 or more.

With these reservations, between 1972 and 1973 there were 90% of children in nursery education in Belgium, 27% in Denmark, 85% in France, 31% in Germany, 60% in Italy, 93% in the Netherlands, 30% in Sweden, and 33% in Britain (Stukat, 1976). There is increasing emphasis on better co-ordination between school and pre-school.

Mainstreaming, or "integration" — a survey

Within nursery schools and other types of school, methods of grouping handicapped children are still a matter of opinion and research. The emphasis on mainstreaming which is found in Canada and in the USA is also seen in Scandinavia, but is not general elsewhere. Broadly speaking the arguments for mainstreaming, or integration as it is more commonly called in England, are sustained more on social and political grounds than for educational reasons. And it is becoming increasingly obvious that what matters is less the form of organisation adopted, than how well or how badly the class, and every individual in that class, is taught.

There are considerable difficulties in relating Canadian and American experiences to the Western European situation. Above all there are problems of definition. Many children regarded as being mentally retarded in North America

would in Western Europe be found in ordinary schools and regarded as normal children who are just a bit slow at learning. In the United Kingdom, integration means a child joining in the life of the class or school on more or less equal terms, so that he experiences success and increased self-esteem. In Sweden, however, integration certainly can mean placing and teaching a child in an ordinary class, but it can also mean teaching handicapped children in special groups or in special classes that are merely on the same campus as the ordinary school.

Broadly speaking, in Western Europe it is the degree of the handicap, and more importantly the facilities available, that determine the placement — whether regular school, special school, or no school at all. In Britain, the law demands that handicapped children must be afforded special education in a special school or “otherwise” without defining what “otherwise” means. In practice, where special school facilities are adequate, a British child who is handicapped is not placed in a normal class unless he and the teacher can cope and unless the teacher has adequate support. In 1978, 132,000 children were receiving special education in special schools in England or Wales. (D.E.S., 1978, p. 9)

In the Federal Republic of Germany it is also official policy that specialist education for children who have educational difficulties, as well as for those who are mentally and physically handicapped, “may take place in the special school as well as in the general school system under suitable conditions.” The Federal policy document continues, “depending on the type and extent of his handicap, the individual pupil will be integrated into a normal class or he will be given special attention, if need be in a special school.” The estimate was of 424,000 children being educated in special schools for the handicapped in 1975 in Western Germany, and 388,000 in 1980. (Bund-Länder Commission, 1973)

In the Federal Republic the educational organisation adopted varies with the Land. Generally, however, there are few specific arrangements for treating learning disabilities in normal schools. There is virtually no mainstreaming. Special education tends to be provided in independent schools. These are often partially supported by the State and sometimes parents contribute towards the fees. As a broad rule handicapped children are taught in special schools and ordinary pupils in ordinary schools. Most special schools cater for specific handicaps within a local geographical area, but an increasing number of regional schools for children with disabilities that are complex or uncommon are being set up. For the mentally handicapped children there are two types of school — those for pupils with IQs below about 55 and those for children “with learning handicaps.” This latter category accounts for about 80% of all pupils in special schools. In 1970 there were about a quarter of a million pupils in the two categories. There are however some attempts at integration in the Federal Republic, particularly in Hamburg with pupils who are visually handicapped and hard of hearing, and in Bremen, where children with learning difficulties are being integrated into ordinary schools.

In the Netherlands in the early 1970s there were 900 special schools of 20 different types categorised generally according to the handicap of the pupil. They catered for about 5% of the school population. Educational policy resembled that of the Federal Republic — handicapped children required special schools. But in 1977 integration became official policy. Whenever possible handicapped pupils are now to attend normal schools, and the help given in special schools is to be remedial in nature and not based exclusively on the type of handicap. These plans in the Netherlands are meeting considerable hostility from both parents and teachers. And the Government itself recognises that ordinary schools have much to do before they can help most handicapped children. (Pratt, 1977)

Denmark has set an example in integration. There it is not only official policy, but it is so successful that 50% of blind children (braille reading) are in ordinary classes. In Denmark, the guiding rule is that special education should interfere as little as possible with the pupil's normal schooling. There is no special legislation for handicapped persons, neither for their care nor their education. From 1st January, 1980, all existing State schools for the handicapped are transferred to local responsibility at municipal and county level and pupils will attend "general" schools. Not many real educational changes will take place arising from this new legislation, because most of the developments have already gradually taken place during the last 10 years. Children in State special schools will probably continue there. Their "integration" is merely that their school will no longer be a State school run by the Ministry of Social Welfare but a local county school. The local educational system will have responsibility for the education of every child from the time he or she is born even if born with a handicap.

In Norway too, special education in the ordinary school for children with learning disabilities is a legal requirement and has been since 1955. The position in Sweden is similar. For handicapped pupils, other than those who are mentally handicapped, there are "help classes" for pupils in the IQ 70-85 range, special classes for the mentally retarded (IQ 50-70), and special units for children with IQs below 50. Such classes are all housed within ordinary schools or on the same campus. All the children follow the national curriculum, as far as possible, with many of them having individualised programmes. The pupils spend the majority of their time with their class teachers, but have some lessons from teachers of specialist subjects in the ordinary school. It will be seen that, in practice, integration in Sweden is social integration.

Related services

Remedial classes

In England, a remedial class is either a euphemism for a special class of slow learners in the ordinary school, or a class that meets for a short time each day or week for special help in a particular subject — usually reading. In this latter case it might be called a remedial group.

The situation is similar in Sweden. There in the 1970s many local authorities were giving 25% of children in primary schools some remedial education. This could mean one visit a week to a reading clinic for a few weeks, or transfer to a remedial class for several years. The expansion of remedial services and the lack of criteria for transfer have led to there being wide ranges in the levels of ability and attainment of the remedial pupils. They often overlap those in the ordinary comprehensive school. Roughly speaking the progress made in remedial classes is often the same as in the comprehensive school (Grundin, 1979). This has led to trying out alternative forms of remedial service that avoid "withdrawal" to special classes or groups.

In Denmark remedial classes are also usually an integral part of the normal school and follow the normal curriculum except for reading. In the Federal Republic of Germany, however, one of the more usual forms of remedial treatment for children with difficulties in reading and spelling is in groups of up to 10 pupils outside normal school hours. (Rowe, 1975 & 1976)

The British experience is that children receiving remedial help for a short time each week progress in reading about three times as fast as children in normal classes, but when the help is discontinued the gains are lost.

Boarding

Residential schooling, the antithesis of integration and the traditional approach to handicapped children, is moving into disfavour. Although there are few published comparisons of the long-term effects of day schools with boarding education for handicapped pupils, there is increasing evidence of the unhappiness, insecurity, and immaturity that can result from putting children into institutions, and of the importance and educational value of loving and interested parents.

The United Kingdom's practice is perhaps typical of North West Europe. Handicapped children are placed in boarding schools only if their homes are unsatisfactory or if special education can be provided in no other way: for example, there being no school for blind children within travelling distance. The child is then helped to keep in close touch with his family, and in theory the school works closely with it. In the UK, as in Scandinavia, the trend is away from setting up schools in isolated rural areas and towards placing them in residential urban districts.

In France, residential education finds more favour than it does in Britain and there is an extensive system of co-educational residential schools for blind, deaf, crippled, sick, delicate, and retarded children which offer education from pre-school to professional or technical level. Generally, however, facilities for special education are less developed in France than in other Northern European countries. (OECD, 1971)

Support services

Teachers need to be helped to help their pupils especially if the children require special education in the normal class. This is everywhere accepted in theory, but the practice varies enormously between countries.

In Scandinavia, the role of the school psychologist is particularly important. Their duties range from the assessment of young children to the training of teachers of the handicapped. In Denmark, school psychological services are a particular feature: the Ministry's official recommendation is one educational psychologist and one clinical psychologist for every 2,500 pupils, and a social worker in addition for every 4,000 pupils. In the Netherlands the ratio is more nearly 1:12,000; schools in that country do not have the developed advisory services which are common in many others. In the UK the ratio is about 1:8,000 with a recent recommendation for 1:5,000. In the Federal Republic of Germany in 1973 the Lander all agreed to a ratio of one psychologist to 5,000 schoolchildren. In Bavaria, however, the actual ratio is about 1:10,000, whilst in Bremen and Hamburg it is about one in 4,000. In Greece, on the other hand, there are no psychologists in the service of the schools.

Specialist advisory teachers, as in Canada, are also a usual feature in many European countries.

Standards

Overall, standards in special education in Western Europe are low: for some handicapped pupils, for example in Greece, Portugal and parts of Italy, there is virtually no special education, for others there is nothing very special in the education they receive. In some instances the schooling is little better than child minding, often it is "less than satisfactory." In others, though far too few, there is work of distinction. This of course is to leave out entirely the whole question of the less able but normal child in the ordinary school. Throughout Western Europe there is disenchantment with education. It is seen as "failing to deliver the goods." And this disillusion has spread to special education. One of its results is the Warnock Report.

Increasing amounts are spent by European countries on their children's education; in some cases it amounts to 7% or more of the gross national product. Rightly or wrongly, many parents believe that they are not getting their money's worth. There are therefore powerful arguments for governments to monitor national standards, irrespective of action by local school boards. But the whole question of how to carry out such monitoring, especially in special education, is fraught with difficulty. The aims of special education are usually expressed in vague, philosophical language such as "fulfilment of potential" or "become self-supporting," rather than in clearly defined behavioural terms that relate to limited specific objectives. Progress towards such objectives can usually

be measured; that towards aims cannot.

In practice, therefore, investigators into national standards have tended to concentrate on reading and arithmetic, for example in the UK and in France. This has the advantage of relative simplicity and of focussing upon immediate concerns, for whatever criticisms are voiced the real anxiety is that too many children leave school unable to read or write properly. Furthermore there are simple tests in these skills. But subjects that are the easiest to measure are not necessarily the most indicative of general pupil competence or development.

There is therefore increasing agreement that the only fair way to judge the results of a system of special education and the effectiveness of special schools is to assess the work by both objective and subjective first-hand measures. This demands evaluative techniques that accord with the goals and the curricula of individual schools. But throughout Western Europe there is little agreement in explicit and detailed terms on what the curricula should be; there are differences both between countries and within countries.

In Switzerland there is practically a separate system in each of the 26 cantons, just as there is for each of the 11 Lander of the Federal Republic of Germany. In Britain there are 9 separate official educational systems, and each of the 102 local education authorities in England and Wales has considerable autonomy. There is no central responsibility or direction of any kind in Britain for curricula or for teaching methods. This contrasts with the highly centralised and directive national systems such as that of France. And this leaves out altogether the private schools in which many handicapped are educated.

In a country with central control over curriculum content as well as of resource availability, the development of valid assessment measures might well make central decision-making more effective. In countries with an overtly federal organisation monitoring would be more significant at provincial than at national level.

National monitoring is beginning and is here to stay, but while many of the technical problems in measuring pupils' attainments have been solved (the Rasch model, Bayesian theory, generalisability theory, and item banking are particularly important here) it is still not known how to assess accurately pupils' original work nor their personality development, even though creativity and emotional maturity are fundamental educational goals for all pupils.

From school to work

With figures for youth unemployment ranging from 1.5 times the adult rate in Austria to 9 times in Italy, the handicapped child's prospects of finding work are poor. In Britain, proportionately four times as many handicapped young

people are unemployed and seeking work as non-handicapped. A third of the handicapped without jobs have been unemployed 6 months or more over a period of two years, compared to only 3% of non-handicapped children.

In Britain and Scandinavia there is increasing emphasis on careers education, but the whole art of vocational guidance is so rudimentary and the prospects for employment so limited that it is difficult for teachers to avoid being unrealistic. What the child wants is less a career than a job.

In the Federal Republic of Germany there is emphasis on vocational training, and in Britain there are schemes for work experience while the child is at school. In Britain too, under the Youth Opportunities Programme, special courses lasting up to a year that give both education, work experience, and vocational training are organised in colleges of further education. The students receive financial help to enable them to attend.

In Denmark a handicapped child spends half a day a week on work experience or on work-type activities in a sheltered workshop. Mentally handicapped children in Sweden are required to attend vocational education until they are 21; this period can be extended until they are 23. They may be given vocational training for open employment or work training for sheltered employment in day centres.

The emphasis in Scandinavia is on "normalisation": that is, on making the handicapped young person self-sufficient and able to fit into the ordinary community. In Denmark, for example, it is generally accepted that wherever possible handicapped persons should leave home when they are 18 and that adequate facilities should be provided to enable them to do so. Halfway hostels are set up and a system of home visitors arranged to help the handicapped person cope on his or her own. This tendency to normalisation which is growing in Scandinavia is in contrast to the system in Eire, which has modelled specialised centres on the earlier Scandinavian pattern of total protected and specialised care. (Connolly, 1979) In the Federal Republic of Germany too there is a high degree of separateness and little attempt to provide for independent living.

In the Federal Republic, as in the UK and elsewhere, all firms over a certain size are required by law to employ a fixed proportion of handicapped persons.

Teachers

Teacher training — it is rarely called teacher education in England — is a focus of concern in Europe. And some see in the numbers of teachers unemployed through falling school rolls and in the consequent greater competition for jobs a way of raising standards. There is a surplus of 5,000 teachers in the Netherlands in 1979, and a forecast of 200,000 surplus teachers in the

Federal Republic of Germany in 1985. In the UK it is estimated that there will be only 40,000 teachers in training in 1981, compared to 115,000 in 1972.

But few of these unemployed teachers are trained in special education, where there is generally a shortage. The quality of education in any school depends on its teachers; few observers think that in special education the teachers are generally good enough. It is argued that many may have taken it up as a soft option. Generally speaking the requirements of European countries that teachers of handicapped pupils should have had some special training beyond that of the normal school teacher is not enforced. In Sweden, for example, in 1975 only about a third of special teaching was provided by teachers trained for that purpose.

Criticism of teachers in special education rebounds on the teacher trainers, who are charged with failing to help their students deal adequately with the classroom situation as it is rather than as it should be. For many teachers there is a wide gap between the possibilities of teaching as described in their training and the actual practice of education they encounter when they enter schools.

In-service training is largely voluntary in Western European countries, but is compulsory in some Swiss cantons, in Sweden, Austria, Denmark and the Netherlands. In others, for example the UK, attendance at in-service courses is encouraged by paid educational leave and secondment rather than by enforcement. There is little in Western Europe that is comparable to the Canadian summer school system which enables teachers to improve their pay, status and qualifications by vacation study. The detailed objectives of these in-service courses vary between countries, but the basic idea is that new reforms, new knowledge, and new technology create a need for new skills.

The Warnock Report

Among the most significant reports on special education produced in this century in England is that of the Committee of Enquiry into the Education of Handicapped Children and Young People in England, Wales, and Scotland (The Warnock Report, 1978). It put forward a wide range of recommendations: directions based on good practice rather than prescriptions based on theory.

The Committee sees not two types of children, the non-handicapped and the handicapped, often estimated to be about 2%, but, like the CELDIC Report, children with special needs who will require special educational provision; and it suggests that these will number one child in six at any one time and up to one in five at some time during their school career. The Report recommends that the current ten categories of handicapped pupils be abolished and children described instead according to needs. Assessment should take place as early as possible over a period of time and should involve parents, who should be seen as partners requiring advice and practical help. There should be a basic programme of

health surveillance for all children, and whole age groups should be monitored at least three or four times during a child's school life.

The Report suggest that a handbook be available in each area giving details of local facilities for children with special needs, and that within each area one person should be designated as a "named person" to provide a point of contact for the parents.

Children with disabilities or significant difficulties should be given education as early as possible without any minimum age limit. This might be in a nursery, in a hospital, or in the child's home. Within ordinary schools there should be some form of resource centre or other supporting base to promote the effectiveness of special educational provision. Children could be withdrawn there for special help, and materials would be available for use in the rest of the school. In order to deploy specialist teaching and other professional expertise and to maximise the use of sophisticated equipment, it might be necessary to concentrate special classes or units in selected schools. Special schools, some day and some boarding, are seen as necessary for severely and multiply-handicapped children, but the boarding schools should be organised on as flexible a basis as possible and the local authority should pay the cost of the child returning home at week-ends or of the parents visiting him at school.

The Committee recommends that a pupil's special needs should be reassessed with future prospects in mind at least two years before he is due to leave school; and that the careers officer should be involved at this stage, as also should other professionals in the educational, health and social services. The necessity for careers guidance is emphasized, and the Committee urges that pupils with special educational needs should be enabled by financial support and other means to stay on at school beyond the statutory leaving age and also to attend sixth form colleges or classes. In each region there should be at least one special unit for young people with more severe disabilities and this should be based in a college of further education. There should generally be wider opportunities for them in further and higher education and in the public service and in nationalised industries.

Teachers in their initial training should be made aware of children with special education needs and of the services available for them. In-service training should be provided to enable all teachers in all schools to acquire a similar awareness, and training for teachers who have responsibilities in special education should become compulsory. Wider opportunities should be offered to disabled people to train as teachers.

Much in the Warnock Report endorses current British practices and many of its recommendations are aimed at influencing such practices. Its priorities are for improved services for the under 5's, the past 16's, and for teacher-training. However, the major developments recommended require additional resources

which are unlikely to be available in the immediate future. No large-scale developments in special education seem likely in Britain — nor in some other countries where the need is immeasurably greater — while the present economic recession continues.

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