WARNOCK 40 YEARS ON: THE DEVELOPMENT OF SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS SINCE THE WARNOCK REPORT AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

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WARNOCK 40 YEARS ON: THE DEVELOPMENT OF SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS SINCE THE WARNOCK REPORT AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

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EDITORIAL
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Editorial: Warnock, 40 Years On: Challenges for Special Educational Needs

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Editorial on the Research Topic

Warnock 40 Years On

In 2019, a year after the 40th anniversary commemoration of the publication of the Report on the Enquiry into Special Educational Needs (SEN) for the UK government in 1978, Mary Warnock (then Baroness) died aged 94. Through her chairing of the 26 member Committee, its report had come to be called the "Warnock Report." The Warnock Report (Department for Education & Science, 1978) has had massive influence on the development, conceptualization, policy, and practice for children and young people with SEN both nationally and internationally.

In an interview in 2018 (Webster, 2019, p. 11), Mary Warnock was asked how she had come to be selected to be chair, she replied:

"I'd been the headmistress of an [academically high achieving] school and was thought to be interested in education.... So I came with perhaps a useful ignorance of the whole subject."

She had been a tutor in Philosophy at Oxford University.

The report was widely anticipated, because it had been set up as the result extensive lobbying pressure by both professionals and parents in the preceding 10 years. It established the significant developments in policy and practice which had been achieved during these years, and significantly had completely overtaken the (by then) outdated terms of reference given to the Committee by the government. So chairing the Committee must have presented a steep learning curve for her.

In the subsequent 40 years, Mary Warnock became regarded as the proponent of her Committee's recommendations, and was consulted in many legislative revisions on special education undertaken by successive governments. In 2007, she herself initiated a critical review of some of the inclusive recommendations derived from the Committee's Report (Warnock, 2005). Although, Mary Warnock had become involved in other Enquiries, she still acted in support of those concerned in developing special needs principles and practice, and maintained the pressure for adequate government funding.

This e-book was developed in order to take stock of the legacy from the Warnock Report, to examine where we are now with SEN and also consider ideas for the future. The e-book comprises 16 papers which were accepted from those submitted to an open invitation and which were subject to the normal refereeing procedure. Our thanks to all authors and to those who willingly gave of their time to act as associate editors and review editors.

CONTENTS

The papers in this Research Topic cover a wide range of topics. Some are directly related to issues raised in the Warnock Report, e.g., SEN policy, others address issues that have arisen subsequently, e.g., the contribution of teaching assistants and special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs) in schools. The first paper provides an overview of the Research Topic as a whole, written by the editors (Lindsay et al.). This paper relates how each other constituent paper is related to both the Warnock Report and also to other current research literature.

Norwich argues that there is a strong interconnection between SEN and inclusion with broader aspects of educational policy and provision and that, consequently, SEN policy development depends on general policy processes. Norwich proposes an Education Framework Commission which has the potential to reconcile the many, sometimes contrary value positions. These are exemplified by Daniels et al. in terms of policies promoting competition between schools, in tension with the development of inclusive education. Daniels et al., argue that in England there are perverse incentives for schools *not* to meet students' SEN, which can result in exclusion from school.

Support for these critiques is presented in several papers. First, the scene is set by Black who examines the national SEN statistics for England, including the numbers and percentages of school students with SEN, the relationship with demographics including social disadvantage, and the increase in the numbers of both special schools, and of education, health and care (EHC) plans under the Children & Families Act 2014. Lamb critically reviews the development of the SEN system from the Warnock Report to the Children & Families Act 2014, in particular the establishment in law of levels of resource for children with complex SEN, initially through statements of SEN and now through EHC plans. He argues for the importance of parental confidence in the SEN system and the need for improvements in the quality of the non-statutory offer for children and young people with SEN but not EHC plans. Castro-Kemp et al. extend these concerns, finding that the quality of the outcomes in the EHC plans they reviewed was low.

Cullen and Lindsay address disagreement resolution where parents of children and young people with SEN were highly dissatisfied with the provision made or being sought. Based on in-depth interviews, the study revealed that disagreements were initially driven by their concern that their child's SEN were not being met and by their subsequent dissatisfaction with the SEND system, e.g., its delays, and their experiences of trying to get their children's SEN met.

Other papers report findings which extend the concerns about the current SEND system. Dockrell et al. report a study of students with either developmental language disorder or autism spectrum disorder. A key argument in the Warnock Report had been to move away from diagnostic labels to determine provision by *need* but Dockrell et al. found the opposite: provision was being driven by diagnostic labels rather than need. In this case, students with ASD were more likely to receive support from school and also by speech and language therapists than those with DLD. Furthermore, level of support was independent of the children's language, literacy, and cognitive abilities and behavior, indicating inequity of provision.

Law focuses on children and young people with speech, language, and communication needs (SLCN) and concerns about system problems between education and health authorities not collaborating effectively. He suggests that the appropriate support of children and young people with communication support needs is a litmus test for the achievability of inclusion.

Egelund and Dyssegaard in their paper on the inclusion process in Denmark report a number of barriers to successful development of an inclusive system. Some system changes and the use of incentives have been necessary to develop inclusion but they argue that teachers still feel the need of specialist services and resources, and that they have not yet adapted to the idea of inclusion.

Lindner et al. indicate low levels of personalized teaching, a necessary feature of inclusive education, in their study in Germany: a finding from both students' and teachers' perceptions.

Other papers explore the role of other practitioners and approaches to supporting children and young people with SEN. Esposito and Carroll investigated a key post-Warnock development, namely the SENCO, established in 1994 in England to support inclusion. This paper provides evidence that is more positive for the development of inclusion, through examining the assignments during SENCO postgraduate training, which indicated positive engagement with the need for diversity in SENCO practice, meaningful assessment, evidence informed practice, and evaluation of impact.

Vivash and Morgan report a study of the content of psychological advice reports written by educational psychologists. Although these reports did not contribute to the frequent negative use of teaching assistants, namely the "Velcro TA" where TAs are seemingly "tied" to students with SEN, so limiting autonomy, the reports were considered to be characterized by ambiguity; in particular, a focus on *what* to do but not on *how* to do it.

Melvin et al. developed a bioecological systems based framework for the understanding of absenteeism from school, both students with SEN or disabilities and typically developing students. Designed to aid researchers, the Kids and Teens at School (KiTes) framework aims to support the development of research which takes into account the complexity of factors relating to school attendance problems. Schuengel et al. provide evidence from a systematic literature search on research using longitudinal designs on the early development of children with intellectual disability.

Finally, Webster reviews the (short) programme of research priorities in the Warnock Report and explores how these compare with subsequent and current research; and with research priorities for the future.

CONCLUSION

These 16 papers provide a varied set of responses to the development of SEN since the Warnock Report, its conceptualization and practice, and the policy tensions that have become evident. Although produced for the system in England, the Warnock Report has been international in its impact. In England and internationally the system and overall financial support for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities have developed hugely; inclusion has become supported as policy for educational provision; legal frameworks have developed; and research has expanded substantially. Nevertheless, as demonstrated here, there remain major challenges to address if societies are to truly provide appropriate and effective support for our young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors listed have made a substantial, direct and intellectual contribution to the work, and approved it for publication.

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Warnock 40 Years on: The Development of Special Educational Needs Since the Warnock Report and Implications for the Future

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The report of the Warnock Committee "Special Educational Needs," published in 1978, provided the first comprehensive review of special educational needs (SEN) in England and the basis for subsequent legislation, from the Education Act 1981 to the recent Children and Families Act 2014. The Warnock Report has been highly influential with respect to the development of both national and local policy and practice for SEN, primarily in England but also in the UK generally and internationally. We conceived the "Warnock 40 Years On" research topic published in this journal as an opportunity to examine developments for children and young people with SEN or a disability (SEND) since the Report's publication. As editors of this research topic, in this paper we provide an overview of major elements within SEND, drawing on both the individual constituent papers and the broader policy and research literature. We examine the origins and precursors of the Warnock Review, including then current progressive conceptual development and practice, leading to an examination of the Review. We explore the legislative structure arising from the Report and implementation of the SEND system—from the Education Act 1981 onwards. We critically examine a number of key aspects of the Warnock Report and how these developments of the SEND system have taken these forward, including: categorization of SEN; provision made to meet the special needs of children and young people with SEN or a disability, including inclusion; early identification and intervention; the important rights and role of parents; prevalence of different types of SEN and the complex interaction between SEN and a range of factors, including social disadvantage and ethnicity; and a range of SEND research. Finally we consider the implications for future development of the SEND system, in particular whether its limitations can be addressed better by "patching up" the system or by "system change." Although focused on England, this paper has relevance—as did the Warnock Report—to SEND internationally.

Keywords: special educational needs (SEN), special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs), SEN disagreement resolution, disproportionality, inclusive education, Autism Spectrum Disorder, developmental language disorder

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INTRODUCTION

The report of the Warnock Committee in 1978 (Department for Education Science, 1978) was a landmark event for the education of children and young people with special educational needs (SEN). Although there had been earlier important government reports, these addressed more specific issues (see Cole, 1989, for a review). The Warnock Committee in comparison produced a wide-ranging examination of the whole SEN system of the time and, taking into account recent research and existing progressive practice, the Committee produced a report that formed the basis for substantial conceptual, administrative and practice changes.

Building upon the ideas and recommendations within the Report, we aim to produce an overview of the developments over the past 40 years, drawing on other constituent papers in the *Warnock 40 Years on* Research Topic. We examine conceptualisations of SEN including prevalence; the development of the legislative and managerial systems at national and local levels, including SEN within the overall system for education; the role of parents; special provision and its funding; SEN research, including inclusion; and implications for the future. Although our focus is on developments in England, our review has relevance for SEN internationally.

We first review developments prior to the Warnock Report and their influence on the Report, identifying the paradigm shifts that took place; the basis provided by the Report for the new legislation for SEN, initially the Education Act 1981; and then significant lessons from the Report. Secondly, we explore the evolution of SEN relative to a number of the topics identified by the Warnock Committee for future development. Here we draw in particular on the constituent papers of the Research Topic. Finally, we look forward from the current position, around 40 years after the Warnock Report, which has substantially influenced SEN not only in England but also in the rest of the UK and beyond. This is timely within the English context as the Department for Education is undertaking a major review into support for children with SEN, due to report in early 2020 (https://www.gov.uk/government/news/major-review-into-support-for-children-with-special-educational-needs).

THE WARNOCK REPORT

Precursors, the Enquiry and Subsequent Legislative Structure

There can be few Committees of Enquiry whose main achievement was to counter the out-dated conceptualization underlying its terms of reference (written in 1973):

> "to review the educational provision in England, Scotland and Wales for children and young people handicapped by disabilities of body or mind…together with arrangements to prepare them for entry into employment" (Department for Education Science, 1978, p. 1).

Those working in this field had moved on to a paradigm shift in thinking and practice during the 50s and 60s, and had lobbied for the Enquiry, as a way to establish the official status of this shift, and ultimately to enable legislation which would underpin this. In this section of our paper we aim to:

- summarize the development of thinking that triggered the Warnock Committee Report
- outline how the Warnock Report set out the principles of the paradigm shift, and ways to further the infrastructure to support it,
- describe and consider the consequential legislation that was put in place at that time.
- provide a brief summary of research findings on the implementation of the legislation.

The Development of Thinking That Triggered the Warnock Committee Report

The second chapter of the Warnock Report offers a detailed account of the patterns of provision for children and young people with disabilities from the late 1800's onwards to 1973 when the Warnock Committee was set up. The context of the Warnock Report was shaped by the 1944 Education Act in England, which formulated 11 categories of children and young people with "disabilities of body or mind," and by the pattern of provision for their education. The categories were defined by the medical terminology of the various disabilities identified. Provision ranged across special schools dedicated to these categories, and corresponding special units within mainstream schools. This arrangement accordingly covered those with different levels of "handicap," and those whose level of "handicap" was such that they were regarded as "ineducable" and so deemed not suitable for provision within the prevailing education system. At the other end of the "handicap" range, there were those children and young people who were already included in mainstream schools.

The views underlying this pattern of provision at the time were thus that "handicap" was determined by disabilities of "body or mind" within the children and young people themselves. However, from about the 1950s onwards, psychologists and others working within the field began studies that indicated the need for a greater differential analysis of cognitive, and other components of disability. Such developments in special education occurred in the United States (e.g., Cruickshank, 1976; Kauffman and Hallahan, 1976); in the realm of those regarded as "ineducable," there were psychologists in the UK who were extending the scope for more "personalized" approaches (Tizard, 1964; Clarke and Clarke, 1965) and educators (Schonell, 1942; Segal, 1967). This whole area of development showed that the concept of "handicap" should be regarded as the product of the interaction of factors within individuals (their disabilities) and factors within their environment—such as their education and upbringing, as well as their social context. This "interactive" conceptualization amounted to a paradigm shift in thinking and led to a new terminology of "special educational need" to describe the outcome of this interaction. Within the UK, Professor Ronald Gulliford developed this terminology in a book he authored (Gulliford, 1971).

The paradigm shift itself linked up in practice with an increasing concern about the "rights" of individuals, which was foremost in the concerns of the parents of the children and young people. Parents formed themselves into pressure groups to influence the setting up of targeted educational approaches to meet their children's needs, and also to gain access to education for those who had been labeled "ineducable." This lobbying generated a government Education Act in 1970, which required Local Education Authorities (LEAs) to give all those living in their areas access to educational provision. Correspondingly, the Statutory Assessment procedure was altered, requiring LEAs to include education professionals such as educational psychologists in the decision making about educational provision for children and young people (Department for Education Science, 1975). Even so, statutorily, decision making about designated provision still had to involve a school medical officer.

The Warnock Enquiry

All the above activity led the Secretary of State for Education (Margaret Thatcher) to set up, in 1973, an Enquiry with the terms of reference above, paradoxically using the—by then—"old terminology." The Committee included a range of 26 largely educational, medical and academic professionals, and one parent (of two hearing impaired children). The chairperson appointed was Mary Warnock, at that time a senior research fellow in philosophy at an Oxford college. She is recently reported to have surmised that she had been chosen because "I'd been the headmistress of an [academically high achieving] school and was thought to be interested in education.…So I came with perhaps a useful ignorance of the whole subject" (Webster, 2019a, p. 12). She certainly managed her colleagues well, because in presenting Mrs. Thatcher with the final report in 1978, she was able to claim that: "On all our main conclusions and recommendations we were in complete agreement (Warnock Report, p. iv). She also stated that the Committee had made its recommendations in an "awareness of financial constraints," but acknowledged that in the long term, "the recommendations would require substantial additional resources"[p. iv].

The Committee commissioned a range of information gathering, and also visited provision in other countries. The findings covered a comprehensive relevant range of issues, but at this point reference will only be made to some of the main ones identified in the Enquiry. The issue of rights to education was clearly formulated in the Warnock Report, para 1.4.

- "The purpose of education for all children is the same, the goals are the same, but the help that individual children need.........will be different."

Earlier in the paragraph the "goals" are specified as:

- "to enlarge knowledge, experience and imaginative understanding, and thus [his] awareness of moral values and capacity for enjoyment."
- "to enable [him] to enter the world after formal education is over, as an active participant in society, and a responsible contributor to it, capable of as much independence as possible."

The Report's specification of these goals is significant, since the Warnock Committee's terms of reference did not convey such a comprehensive view of the purpose of these children's education "to prepare them for employment" (p. 1). The Report acknowledges the paradigm shift in the understanding of children's SENs in its repudiation of the categorization of children (para 3.24):

- "Categorisation perpetuates the sharp distinction between two groups of children: the handicapped and the non-handicapped."
- para 3.25: "categorisation focusses attention on only a small proportion of all those children who are likely to require some form of special educational provision…We believe that the basis for decisions ….should be… [on] a detailed description of special educational need."

The Report acknowledges also that this formulation implies that SEN should be considered in relation not only to the nature of "needs," but also to the definition of the degree of need for "special" provision. The Warnock Committee reviewed a wide range of epidemiological studies of "prevalence" at that time, and concluded (para 3.17) that:

- "about one in six children at any one time, and up to one in five children at some time in their school career will require some form of special educational provision."
- in addition, the Warnock Committee accepted that around 2% of children had SENs of a high degree of complexity and severity under the prevailing arrangements (para 4.1).

All these considerations led to the affirmation that "special educational provision" should be regarded as integral to general education, and not as separate from it. It also implied that children's SEN should be met by a continuum of "special" provision, to match the continuum of children's SEN (para 3.38):

- it encompasses the whole range and variety of additional help, wherever it is provided and whether on a full or part-time basis.

The Warnock Committee thus recognized the range of provision that was already made to meet children's SENs in mainstream schools, and so endorsed the principle of integration.

The assertion of the above principles formed the foundation for the very wide range of administrative and organizational analyses and recommendations of Warnock Committee such as the involvement of parents, the assessment processes of children's needs, and the crucial requirement for collaboration among the responsible education, health and social services. The details of these will be considered in relevant places in the paper. We now go on to consider the legislation which was enacted to follow up the Report's recommendations.

THE LEGISLATIVE STRUCTURE FOLLOWING THE WARNOCK REPORT

The Education Act 1981

The publicity about the deliberations of the Warnock Committee already in itself led to reviews among the various parts of the infrastructure—notably the LEAs—of their policies and practice. The government initiated a consultation in the form of a White Paper in preparation for an Act in 1981. The then Secretary of State Keith Joseph was aware of the Report's statement that increased funding would be required, and so he delayed the implementation of dedicated legislation. As it turned out, in 1983 there was a reduction in the total school population, which implied a potential reduction in the education budget and so a possibility to put the Act into force presented itself (Goacher et al., 1988).

The Education Act 1981 tackled the issue of the definition of SEN in an idiosyncratic way. section 1(1) stated: "A child or young person has "special educational needs" if he has a learning difficulty or disability which calls *for* special educational provision to be made for him." The degrees of "learning difficulty or disability" are described in section 1 (2) in relation to (section 1 (2) (a)) as "having a significantly greater difficulty than the majority of children of his age," and in section 1 (2) (b) as having a "disability which either prevents or hinders him from making use of educational facilities of a kind generally provided in schools..." Special educational provision is defined in section 1 (3) (a) "additional to or otherwise different from provision made generally for children of his age in schools..."

Therefore, the definitions are *relative*, and based on judgements of the degree to which "generally made" provision is insufficient to meet individual children and young people's need, and emphasizing that "special education" is integral to mainstream provision. This relativity has, not surprisingly, been the bane of bureaucratic and legal decision-making ever since, despite the fact that it has "real-life" validity (e.g., in determining judgements about an individual's funding eligibility), as is examined in the paper in this Research Topic by Cullen and Lindsay (2019).

The Act followed the Report's staged approach to assessment, and refers to the point at which the LEA concludes that a child's SENs "call [for it] to determine the special educational provision [as defined above] that should be made for him," The LEA will (section 7 (1) make a Statement of his SENs' and (section 7 (2)) "it shall be the duty of the authority to arrange that the special educational provision specified in the Statement is made for him." In the perennial climate of financial constraints this LEA "determination" and its consequent duty to provide, has offered parents a "security" which, by definition, schools themselves are unable to ensure for their children, a problem that still exists as indicated in the papers in this Research Topic by Daniels et al. (2019) and Lamb (2019).

In relation to children's rights to inclusion within mainstream schools, the Act states that where the LEA maintains a Statement for a child, the LEA has the duty (section 2 (2)) to "secure that he is educated in an ordinary school" provided that (section 2 (2)) is compatible with:

- the parents' views, and section 2 (3):

(a) "his receiving the special educational provision that he requires;
(b) the provision of efficient education for the children with whom he will be educated;
(c) the efficient use of resources."

Needless to say, this has been seen as taking away with the one hand, what was offered with the other!

One of the main criticisms which were made about the Act, was that only two of the sections covered the "18 percent" of children with SEN. This distribution of emphasis was more clearly corrected in Circular 1/83 (Department for Education Science, 1983), presented to parliament after a pilot research project which the then government charged the Institute of Education, London University (Wedell et al., 1982) to carry out. The research looked into the lessons that could be learned from the implementation of the Circular 2/75 (Department for Education Science, 1975) assessment procedures described above.

Circular 1/83 replaced Circular 2/75 and details the Statement procedure. Its initial sections set out how the paradigm shift could facilitate the decision-making. This was commented on when the Circular was presented in parliament. It was directed at the LEAs, as well as the District Health Authorities and Social Services Departments. The Circular emphasized the following points:

- LEAs should remember their responsibility for all children with SEN and their parents;
- the focus of assessment should not just be on the child's disability, but on the child's personal resources and on the help and support at home and school;
- assessment should not be an end in itself, but rather a means of arriving at an incremental understanding of the child's learning difficulties, to aid in decisions about planning help;
- assessment is a continuous process, drawing on a range of advice and on learning from the outcomes of intervention;
- the child should be seen as a whole person, and there should be a partnership between the teachers and the parents and other professionals. The feelings and perceptions of the child should be taken into account. There should be frankness and openness on all sides, and this should be extended to older children.
- advice from professionals in all services should lead to a proper understanding of the child's needs;
- LEAs should provide guidance to all schools on identifying, assessing and meeting children's SENs taking into account local circumstances. Professional involvement should progress from the teacher and head teacher to outside professionals, including health and social services. Parents should be kept fully informed. Schools should establish lines of effective communication with all those involved, so that help could be offered before situations become critical.
- Governors have responsibility to ensure that teachers are aware of approaches to identifying and meeting children's SENs, and LEAs should encourage in-service training accordingly.

The rest of the Circular's recommendations deal with the details of the Statement procedure, and of how to recognize the need for "different" and "additional" provision. An Appendix is also provided as an aide memoire for all those contributing to assessment, to promote an interactive understanding of the child's needs, the aims to which provision should be directed, and the facilities and resources required—the paper by Dockrell et al. (2019, this Research Topic) illustrates that the alignment of these considerations still presents problems, for example in the identification of, and provision for, children and young people with developmental language disorder. It will become evident in later sections of this paper that Circular 1/83 provided a blueprint for the successive Codes of Practice associated with subsequent Acts covering children and young people's SEN.

Further Research on the Implementation of the New Legislation

Following the pilot project carried out during the development of Circular 1/83 (Wedell et al., 1982), the DES commissioned further substantial projects on aspects of special educational provision. One of these was directed specifically at the implementation of the new legislation and was again carried out at the University of London's Institute of Education (Goacher et al., 1988). This project broadly reviewed the management of change by the education, health and social services in local areas in their implementation of the legislation. Seen in retrospect, the findings offer a significant overview of the initial stages of some of the issues which still beset the implementation of the legislation following 1981 Act. A further project on inter-service decision-making was jointly funded by the Department of Education and the Department of Health (Evans et al., 1989).

These research programmes provided a baseline for the development of the new legislative procedures. Since that time, there have been many changes in attempts to improve deficiencies in the system, not least the development of a Code of Practice to guide policy makers, professionals and parents, which is now in its third incarnation (Department for Education and Department of Health, 2015—see also Castro-Kemp et al., 2019; Cullen and Lindsay, 2019; Lindsay et al., 2019, this Research Topic). In the next section, we explore the developments, driven by practice, research and policy changes—often to the main education system or the macro political system, for example the post-2008 austerity policy. These examples are all related to significant aspects of the Warnock Report and its identification of subsequent changes.

UK GOVERNMENT'S DEVELOPMENTS POST-WARNOCK

Educational Context

When the Warnock Committee undertook its work the educational context relating to schools was relatively simple. Over 90 per cent of schools were state schools, run by LEAs which were departments within local councils: cities, towns and counties of England. Schools had governing bodies but these had limited powers. Finance was essentially managed by the LEAs, who employed teachers and other staff. There was no national curriculum: curricula were determined by schools in conjunction with LEAs, which employed educational advisers to work with schools. Educational psychologists were also employed by LEAs, apart from a handful of independent practitioners. About seven per cent of schools were independent, including some special schools. With respect to special education provision, in addition to that provided within mainstream schools, LEAS, to varying degrees, developed separate LEA special schools and, increasingly, special education units or special education resources within mainstream schools; LEAs also paid for some students to be educated in independent special schools.

Since that time, the general primary and secondary education system has changed considerably. LEAs have been abolished and education at local level is the responsibility of the local authority (LA). Management, including financial management, of state schools was delegated to individual schools following the Education Reform Act 1988, which also introduced a national curriculum. The powers of school governing bodies have also been increased. The 1988 reforms were followed by increasingly reduced powers of LAs and greater independence of schools, particularly secondary schools (11-16 or 18 years) following the White Paper "Choice and Diversity" of the Conservative government (Her Majesty's Government, 1992), these two principles have been embraced, albeit with some differences in interpretation, by all major political parties. Over 70% of secondary schools and over a quarter of primary schools, have become academies, which are state schools funded directly by the Department for Education (DfE) in England, but outside LA control, and under a system of regional commissioners. For a discussion see Black et al. (2019), this Research Topic. Groupings of academies have developed as Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs). This may bring economies of scale, but dilute the move toward schools having greater autonomy and power. As Leo et al. (2010) wrote based on case study research in early academies

> "As academy chains become longer, the scope for independent, energetic principals to put their own necessarily idiosyncratic stamp on an academy is reduced." (p. 201).

Furthermore, the governance structures of the whole educational system have become more varied and complicated, with the movement to academisation argued to be profoundly undemocratic and inequitable (Keddie, 2017). The "choice and diversity" approach to education has been criticized strongly as an approach that treats education as a commodity. A number of authors have presented evidence to suggest that academies are accepting students who are wealthier and excluding the neediest students (Academies Commission, 2013). There are also indications that some academies are preferring to accept students with higher levels of attainment at the transfer from primary to secondary school (Wilson, 2011). These developments go to the heart of the question: do parents *actually* have more *choice* along with this clear evidence of greater diversity. Indeed, the legislation provides for expressing choice as a preference, rather than guaranteeing that such "choices" will be provided.

The analysis by Black et al. (2019) indicates that the proportion of students with SEN in Academies (which now make up about two thirds of secondary schools) has reduced at a faster rate than LA maintained schools since 2012[1]. However, proportions of students with SEN (at the levels of severity of either SEN support or having statement/Education Health and Care (EHC) plan) in Academies are marginally greater than in maintained schools. Also, the proportion of students with a statement or EHC plan in free schools has increased but is less than mainstream schools. Hence, the picture is now unclear: there are several possible reasons for these trends but whatever the overall trend, the issue remains that Academies and free schools have greater autonomy and decision making ability than LA schools. How does this relate to parents' *choice* when the Academies Commission (2013) reported that, despite then legislation (Academies Act 2010) seeking to achieve "absolute parity" between LA schools and academies, parents do not have the same right of redress regarding academies? Also, judges for the First-tier Tribunal [Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)] commented that the potential for academies to refer Tribunal decisions to the Secretary of State resulted in complexity. Furthermore, this is not only a question of the law *per se*, but also one of practicality for parents. Legal cases take time and parents may be in a "no win" situation, as during this (often protracted) period their child is not receiving appropriate help. Examples include the struggles of parents when seeking to challenge decisions regarding whether their child has SEN, the nature and/or appropriate provision necessary (see Cullen and Lindsay, 2019: this Research Topic).

In addition to the effect of these macro changes in the school system, there have been major changes in support services. Educational psychologists have played a central role in identifying the SEN of children and young people and advising parents and schools on intervention for over 100 years. Developments in the 1930s and 1950s focused on clinic based services but, especially from the 1970s onward, educational psychologists became community, and in particular school focused (Desforges and Lindsay, 2018). Recently, the delivery of educational psychology services has also become more shaped by marketization with new relationships needed, not just within LA systems, but between the LA and independent academies or multi-academy trusts. One aspect that has caused concern is the ethical question of who is the primary client: is it the child (and parents) or the academy/MAT with which the educational psychology service has a contract?

Parents

Before the Warnock Report and the subsequent changes brought about by the Education Act 1981, the focus of SEN legislation, the Education Act 1944, was on 'formal procedures for ascertainment including the medical, and in Scotland, the psychological examination of the child, which were designed for use when parents either objected to or might be expected to object to their child's attending a special school' (para 4.25). By contrast, the Warnock Committee proposed a very different approach:

> "We have insisted throughout this report that the successful education of children with special educational needs is dependent upon the full involvement of their parents: indeed, unless the parents are seen as equal partners in the educational process the purpose of our report will be frustrated." (para 9.1).

The story of the past 40 years is that of a rocky path toward realizing this aim, with many frustrations along the way. However, the Report laid a foundation for many of the positive developments that have occurred (Wolfendale, 1999). These include greater awareness of the need for and provision of greater sensitivity with which parents are informed of their child's disability or SEN; the need for greater provision of information and advice; and practical interventions including parents who are supported through workshops, toy libraries and visiting teachers; and, importantly, that the LEA should have the powers by amendment of the Education Act 1944 (section 4) 'to require the multi-professional assessment of children of any age (after due notice to parents) and to impose a duty on them to comply with a parental request for such an assessment' (para 4.28). These changes were designed to improve communication, support and also address parents' right to be included in decisions about their child and their SENs: identification, assessment and provision. However, some aims (and hopes) of the Committee have not so far been successfully achieved, for example that:

> "With continuing good relationships between parents, local education authorities and others concerned in the discussion and assessment of a child's special educational needs, we hope that the arrangements could normally be conducted by agreement and *without formality* (emphasis added)."(Department for Education Science, 1978: para 4.28).

Following Circular 1/83, a Code of Practice has accompanied subsequent legislation, in 1994, 2001 and 2015, which successfully amended the guidance with the most recent legislation. The first Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (Department for Education, 1994) was introduced in 1994, pursuant to the Education Act 1993. This was the first government publication that provided guidance to LEAs and school governing bodies in particular, but also to professionals and to parents, on the interpretation and implementation of the SEN legislation. This Code included guidance on the role of parents providing "advice" along with medical advice, educational advice and psychological advice from an educational psychologist. Thus, parents were invited to contribute their views. Gradually, their role became more supported through the work of educational psychologists, working with them to identify their child's needs and by third sector organizations and parent support organizations. However, the Committee's hopes for positive and informal collaborations with the LEA were not always developed and the Education Act 1993 set up a Special Educational Needs Tribunal to hear appeals from parents unhappy with the provision being made, or proposed to be made, for their child.

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[1] Students with significant SEN were categorized as requiring *School Action Plus* support from the school and visiting professionals or with a *Statement* of SEN, where the LA has a legal duty to provide support. This system more recently changed to categories of *SEN support* and *Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan.*

The 2001 Code of Practice (Department for Education Skills, 2001) considered parents in the fourth of its five principles, including the importance parents now were seen as having, stating that "parents have a vital role to play in supporting their child's education" (para 1.5). Furthermore, special education professionals and parents working in partnership, and special education professionals taking into account the views of individual parents in respect to their child's particular needs, were two of the 10 success factors identified in the 2001 Code of Practice (para 1.6).

These principles were expanded upon and concrete examples were provided to include, for example, the requirement that LEAs make arrangements for parent partnership services, which met minimum standards and must inform parents of the services how to access them. Disagreement resolution services should be introduced, informal at this stage, and not a statutory requirement, but to be seen as independent of the LEA and credible by parents and the child, with detailed guidance on their roles and responsibilities (para 2.31—see below, Disagreement Resolution).

These developments, built on the legislation that followed the Warnock Report, were very positive in intent: the rights of parents, and also children and young people with SEN themselves, were increased; services to support both parents and their children received the backing of these Codes. However, the reality was not so positive. Parents' use of the appeal process to the SEN Tribunal increased steadily from 1,170 in its first year 1994/5 (Special Educational Needs Tribunal, 1995) to 3772 in 2002/3, having had a change of name (Special Educational Needs Disability Tribunal, 2004). With some fluctuation the rate of appeals continued to increase (Marsh, 2014) and the organization changed again to become the First Tier Tribunal (SEND) in 2008.

Parental concerns about the SEN system grew steadily and the government set up an inquiry under Brian Lamb into parental confidence in the SEN system (Department for Children Schools Families, 2009). The Lamb Inquiry comprehensively set out the frustrations and concerns of parents, and of young people with SEN themselves. These were to influence the development of the 2014 Act. In addition, the Inquiry funded a number of projects, which were found to have a positive influence on increasing parental confidence (Peacey et al., 2010).

Parents and Children's Voice

Over the past 40 years, as has been discussed above, the role of parents has changed. Both legislation and societal expectations have increased parents' rights and their actual engagement in a wide range of aspects of society, including SEN. See Parents section above. In addition, successive legislation and Codes of Practice have improved the rights to young person engagement in decisions about their lives and to enable increased and meaningful involvement and power. Children's voice was the third of five principles of the 2001 Code of Practice: "the views of the child should be sought and taken into account" (Department for Education Skills, 2001, para 1.5).

In the 2015 Code of Practice a substantial proportion of its Principles are clearly focused on the child, along with their parents, for example, para 1.1 states that LAs **must** (emphasis in original) have regard to:

- "The views, wishes and feelings of the child or young person, and the child's parents.
- The importance of the child or young person, and the child's parents, participating as fully as possible in decisions..."

This section goes on to specify what the principles are designed to support, including participation in decision-making and greater choice ad control over support that is offered.

This has been a major achievement with regard to policy, albeit that it has taken nearly 40 years since the Warnock Report. However, the practical reality has been heavily criticized by the most recent report of the House of Commons Education Committee (2019), in Recommendation 26: "More needs to be done to include children and young people in the writing of their Plans and decision-making about the support they receive..." (p. 87).

Disagreement Resolution

As part of the Education Act 2014, there was a further round of changes intended to improve the SEN system, in particular by early resolution of disputes. The early voluntary system was rarely used and indeed under-provided (Harris et al., 2011). Instead, the 2014 Act introduced a statutory requirement for all LAs to provide systems, with the aims of reducing the number of disagreements about children's SEN and provision to meet those needs of the child, and to improve the resolution of those disagreements when they occurred. The 2015 Code of Practice (Department for Education and Department of Health, 2015) sets out six different elements of disagreement resolution. It also includes the requirement that parents and young people with SEN have the opportunity for formal mediation of their disagreement with the LA, which evidence from the U.S. in particular had indicated could be useful, although the evidence for benefits was mixed (Kuriloff and Goldberg, 1997; Nowell and and, 2007). For example, there was the potential for high levels of cost and consequent reductions in the likelihood of repairing the partnership between the school and the parents (Mueller, 2015). Although voluntary, parents are required to contact the mediation service and to have received mediation advice before they, or a young person with SEN, may appeal to the Tribunal (Department for Education and Department of Health, 2015).

Research into the first 2 years of the implementation of the 2014 Act, however, indicates that mediation can be effective in significantly reducing the number of appeals to the Tribunal and that it is cost effective (Lindsay et al., 2019). However, another strand in that research project indicates that for a minority of parents, the process is highly stressful and not seen as successful (Cullen and Lindsay, 2019: this Research Topic).

Summary

In summary, the specific focus on the involvement of parents of children and young people with SEN was a fundamental and positive element of the Warnock Report. The Report set out values-driven principles for this and the initial legislation

(Education Act 1981) put these into practice. However, subsequently, the reality for parent involvement has not been straightforward. Instead, refinements have been made in subsequent legislation and guidance through successive codes of practice (for an historical analysis of change between the three Codes see Lehane, 2017). The improvements have been clear, but these have not been experienced as such by all. Parents' right to challenge decisions regarding SEN has been enhanced with disagreement resolution processes intended to resolve disagreements at an early stage—and avoid resort to an appeal to the 1st Tier Tribunal (SEND). However, despite the success of mediation (Lindsay et al., 2019), the Warnock Committee's hope for a primarily informal system for parents to engage continues to be aspirational.

The Development of the System

The Warnock report provided the basis for both the policy and practical implementation of the SEN system, first put into law through the Education Act 1981. The administrative system was set out in Chapter 3 of the Report, primarily section III, and in detail in Chapter 4. Following the Education Act 1981, a statutory system, based on the Warnock Report and building upon previous practice (see above) was very prescriptive—up to a point. Proposals for processes of identification of children with SEN (called "discovery" in the Report), assessment and the forms, recording and statistical returns were set out. However, as Mary Warnock later argued, there were no criteria specified for who would be eligible for a statement (Warnock, 2005). The reference in the report was to the proportion of students in special schools at that point in time, about 2 per cent. Warnock also, in her 2005 reflections on SEN and the impact of the report of the committee she chaired, raised concerns about the move away from referring to "conditions" and the use of diagnoses and the focus on needs. Indeed, she states that statements "were an idea that ensued from the 1970s Committee of Inquiry, so I personally feel a degree of responsibility for what has turned out to be not a very bright idea" (p. 27). See section Categorization of SEN for more discussion.

Warnock's 2005 concerns reflected the two reports of the Audit Commission (2002) which led to the government's White Paper "Removing Barriers to Achievement" (Department for Education Skills, 2004), which listed four points made in these reports, namely that:

- Too many children waited too long for provision
- Children were being turned away from mainstream schools despite being entitled to attend them if so wished by their parents
- Special schools were uncertain of their role
- There was too much variation between different LAs with respect to provision (see Warnock, 2005, p. 33).

But concerns still remain, as discussed in this Research Topic. Lamb (2019, this Research Topic) argues that the underlying legal structure, built on the proposals in the Warnock report, has remained, including now the Children and Families Act 2014 (Department for Education, 2014). However, he argues that legislation establishing a child or young person's right to specified levels of resource has risked undermining adequate provision and parental confidence in the SEND framework and that this is a dilemma of the SEND system. He proposes a less market led approach in schools and other settings. He also argues for less reliance on statutory assessments (of individual children) and, rather, to develop the education system to meet more children's needs. This resonates with the argument that supporting language development is a public health concern because of its fundamental role in requiring an effective universal system to optimize all children's progress (Law, 2019: this Research Topic, see Development of the System below).

As part of this critique, Lamb reviewed the use of statements (now EHC plans). Lamb argues that there are major problems with the SEN process, including LAs meeting the 20 week deadline and achieving the engagement of health and social care services in the assessment process (Ofsted, 2018). Despite their being generally popular with parents of children who had them (Adams et al., 2017), almost a third of professionals did not consider the EHC plans were better than the replaced statements in conveying the needs of children and young people (Palikara et al., 2019). Furthermore, there is a substantial variation in parents' satisfaction with the process (Adams et al., 2018), with some parents having high dissatisfaction (Cullen and Lindsay, 2019, this Research Topic). Furthermore, Castro-Kemp et al. (2019, this Research Topic) argue that the quality of EHC plans in their study was generally low although it was higher for children in special settings and also for more affluent LAs in their sample than in authorities with higher levels of socioeconomic disadvantage. In particular, the plans were particularly weak with respect to the children's outcomes. Overall, this study suggests the presence of significant social inequity with the use of EHC plans.

Norwich (2019, this Research Topic) also provides a critique of the SEND system and proposes an innovative approach to address the problems identified. Norwich's critique stresses the importance of considering provision for children and young people with SEN, whom he describes as "hard to define," within the context of general educational policy (see above). He argues that "while the Warnock Report's thinking about the SEN concept recognized a basic dilemma about the identification of some children as needing additional or different provision, it did not address it in its analysis of the education system and recommendations" (p. 2). With respect to the current system, Norwich argues that, although "the new SEN code recognizes the relationship between individual EHC plans and population needs for provision planning purposes, there is no clear operational system that connects these foci" (p. 4). He therefore argues for a broader policy framework, that considers the interconnectedness of SEN and disability education with education as a whole; and that there should also be a balance between individualized and provision-focused approaches. His analysis leads to a proposal for the formation of an Education Framework Commission, which would work on the basis that the creation of policy requires the settlement that reconciles contrary value positions.

Joined Up Services

The importance of collaboration between education, health and social care services, was stressed in the Warnock Report. This point has been made continuously throughout the subsequent period (e.g., Bercow, 2008) and the series of Codes of Practice (in 1994, 2001, and 2015) have set out detailed proposals and requirements. It is arguable, however, that such collaborations are still far from optimized. One important impediment is the dispersion of schools in multi-academy trusts, as a result of which the MAT system does not link up with the health, social service and voluntary and community services provision within an LA area. Castro-Kemp et al. (2019, this Research Topic) in their analysis of the quality of statement and EHC plans, argue that a public health approach is required, i.e., *not* a separation of education and health (or social care) analysis and proposed action but an overall "health" approach, subsuming the other strands. Law(2019, this Research Topic) also argues for a public health approach specifically with respect to children with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN). He notes that the meeting of children's communication needs resulted in "border disputes" between health and education services regarding responsibility for meeting these children's needs: or, it may be restated as, who will pay? In his paper, Law reviews the substantial raising of the profile of SLCN through the Bercow Review of provision for children and young people with SLCN (Bercow, 2008); the government's acceptance of all the Bercow recommendations (Department for Children Schools Families, 2009); and the research that fed into the review (Lindsay et al., 2010), and the major research programme commissioned after the review, the Better Communication Research Programme 2009–2012 (Lindsay et al., 2012; Dockrell et al., 2014). A review, "Bercow: 10 Years On," identified the positive developments with respect to SLCN but also indicated areas requiring further progress, including improvements in joined up thinking across education, health and social care (ICAN Royal College of Speech Language Therapists, 2018).

Categorization of SEN

The Warnock Report provided a critique of the SEN labels then used to categorize children and young people with SEN. Their argument for moving away from these labels was set out within their proposed framework, not least that each label implied a continuation of the existing dichotomous thinking of "handicapped" and "non-handicapped." The Committee was also pragmatic, arguing that "for the sake of convenience descriptive terms will be needed for particular groups of children who require special educational provision" (para 3.2.6). The Report argued for the continuation of some ("physical or sensory disabilities seem acceptable") but against others ("maladjusted" and "educationally subnormal") and in favor of the use of "learning difficulties," with different adjectives indicating severity or specificity. What is consistent is the clear rejection of "medical" labels implying "conditions."

Subsequently, this general approach has been continued (e.g., "moderate learning difficulties") but there has been a continuing pressure from parents to use "condition" labels, in particular of dyslexia, attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and autism or autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Also, whereas in education the term "speech, language, and communication needs" (SLCN) is the term used by the DfE and educationalists in general, the use of terms such as specific language impairment (SLI) and now developmental language disorder (DLD) have been favored, in health and speech and language therapy in particular (Bishop et al., 2017). However, category labels can be powerful in a broader socio-political sense, for example in the creation and development of organizations in the voluntary and community sector. These may provide advocacy, resources, direct support and, increasingly in the UK, a replacement of the delivery of public services, e.g., charities such as Mencap, National Deaf Children's Society, Afasic, and ICAN. Also parents may seek certain labels such as ASD or dyslexia in order to access resources.

Dockrell et al. (2019, this Research Topic) provide an illuminating study regarding the interaction between provision to meet children's needs and the identified primary need category they are attributed. Using individual data from children in 74 mainstream primary and secondary schools they report that children whose primary special need was identified as ASD had greater levels of support provided, including speech and language therapy, than children with DLD despite the latter group performing significantly poorer on measures of language and literacy.

Furthermore, the preceding discussion in this section has focused on the young person whereas our conceptualization of SEN is that special needs arise as a result of factors within the child interacting with the context(s) in which they live (environment) and these interactions change over time: trajectories and time will also vary between children and young people (Wedell and Lindsay, 1980; Lindsay and Desforges, 1998; McKean et al., 2015). With respect to context, this ranges from the micro level, for example interactions in a classroom, to national and international levels, including culture, ethnicity and language. Since the Warnock Report, these factors have become increasingly recognized as important: For example, the varying prevalence rates of different SEN within England in relation to ethnicity (see Variation in Prevalence, below). Also, these issues of ethnicity, second language and SEN, and their interaction, have become increasingly important across Europe and indeed worldwide with the increase in migration; for example, the relationship between multicultural diversity and special needs education (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2009; Lindsay et al., 2016).

Provision—From Integration to Inclusion

Beyond the implementation of an administrative system for assessing and determining how to meet the needs of children with SEN and disabilities, there must also be consideration of the functioning of the provision made to support the children and young people. The Warnock report built upon existing practice to propose a presumption of *integration* of children with SEN within mainstream schools. This, as compared with segregated provision in separate special schools, was a consistent theme throughout the report. It was also in line with the Report's proposed conceptual framework for SEN specifying that needs, including special educational needs, should be considered as being on a continuum, not a dichotomy of handicap vs. non-handicap or SEN vs. non-SEN. Policy and practice developed with integration as central in consideration of provision, although the term changed to "inclusion." This was not simply semantic but reflected a conceptual and ideological change from a child being *integrated* into a school to a school *including* the child. This was an important conceptual difference whereby children were seen as belonging within a group (inclusion) rather than as outsiders admitted into an existing group (integration).

Both Lamb (2019) and Norwich (2019) and a number of other contributors to the Research Topic relate their discussions of the existing systems to inclusion policy. Inclusion is an important driver of current policy, not only in the UK but also internationally (UNICEF, 2007), although it is important to keep in mind that there was a period from 2010 in England when the Coalition Government of the Conservative and Liberal parties, developed policies which played down or, at least in part, actively opposed the development of inclusion. The trend of a reduction in the proportion of children in special schools, which had already flattened out at 1.12% started to reverse and then steadily increase, reaching 1.38% in 2018. However, the *number* of special schools only fell from 1160 in 2003 to 1032 in 2013, rising slightly to 1043 in 2018 (Black, 2019, this Research Topic). This must also be seen in parallel with the static percentage of children with statements at 2.8% (2007–2017: Department for Education, 2018), resulting in an increase in the proportion of children with statements and EHC plans, whose needs are met in mainstream schools.

However, inclusion is not just an issue of location. Rather it is a process, of the relationship between the needs of a child with the overall provision, including the curriculum, pedagogy, resources, of interpersonal relationships with other children (typically developing children and also others with SEN); and also relationships with adults (teachers, teaching assistants (TAs) and others in the school, and external support professionals)—see Lindsay (2007). We consider the research base for inclusion below.

Funding

The Warnock Report was written in the context of the difficult financial circumstances in England at the time, noting that "we have throughout our work been acutely aware of the financial constraints in central and local government" (para 19.3). The Committee did, however, state that "we recognize that some of our key proposals will require substantial additional expenditure over the next few years and beyond" (para 19.3). Their strategy was not to attempt to cost proposals, not least because the data available were limited and unreliable, but rather the Committee set out main priorities for action. These were:

- The new conceptual framework within which special educational provision should be made
- Early education (pre-5 years) to increase provision, involve parents, including as educators; extensions of peripatetic teachers for all types of disability disorder, and the provision of professional help and advice from advisory services.
- The provision for young people with SEN aged 16 plus
- Special education advisory and support centers and
- Teacher training, both initial and post-qualification continuing professional development.

The Committee also called for direct or indirect government funding for at least one university department of special education in each region of the country (Department for Education Science, 1978: para 8.3), the formation of a Special Educational Research Group (para 8.11), and a Special Education Staff College (para 8.18).

Over the last 40 years, there has been a substantial growth in numbers of researchers in SEN, although the number of SEN departments as such is relatively limited in England. The major change has been the development of early years provision. Post-16 provision waited for a major change until the Education Act 2014, which includes young people up to 25 years. Changes in initial teacher training *per se*, however, have been many and fundamental, with the closure of training colleges and the movement of most training into the schools, supported by universities. However, the amount of SEN training during initial training is limited. The creation of a national inspection service, Ofsted, has been associated with a major reduction in LA advisory work, which has largely been delegated to schools to organize. However, there has been a major growth in the provision in universities of SEN courses and staff, and also of research (see Research Development).

However, the financial difficulties noted in the Warnock report have increased steadily, associated with SEN system, its administration and also the provision made for the children and young people. This is despite education being relatively protected financially during the UK government's austerity driven period: spending in 2017–2018 was about £53 billion, about the same in real terms as during 2009–2010 and substantially higher than 2000–2001 when it was £35 billion (all at 2017–2018 prices: Kelly et al., 2018). However, the school population has grown over this time.

The high-needs education budget for children with statements or EHC plans in England (£5.5 billion in 2017–2018) has increased by 8% in real terms since 2013–2014. This funds provision for students with a statement of SEN or an EHC plan, currently the first £6000 coming from the budget of the mainstream school, topped up by the LA to provide additional support, bringing the additional funding to about £10,000 per student; sums will vary with individual needs. Pressures on the financial system have come from a number of sources. Population growth and medical advances contribute, but the percentage of children and young people with statements or EHC plans was stable at 2.8% for 11 years (2007–2017) (see above) but has increased in the past 2 years to 3.1% (Department for Education, 2019a). However, LAs and schools have experienced reductions in available resources. For example, although schools were protected during austerity, the rest of the LA was hit with massive reductions in available resources. This has led to services being cut. In addition, family poverty has increased, there has been an extension of services to young people with SEN and disabilities to 25 years (Perera, 2019), and the overall school population has increased (National Audit Office, 2019b).

At the same time, there have been important changes in the profile of expenditure with respect to type of need: the largest increase has been for students with ASD. Whereas, the total number of students with a statement or EHC plan between

2012 and 2017 increased for primary aged students by 3,900, the increase for ASD alone was 4,700 students: this was offset by reductions for some other SEN categories, primarily moderate learning difficulty (−1000), social, emotional and mental health (−800), and specific learning difficulty (−400). At secondary the total number of students with a Statement or EHC plan reduced by about 9000 (with reductions particularly for moderate learning difficulties [−3900], and specific learning difficulty [−2600], but those with ASD increased by 900. But the largest change was for special schools, which show an increase overall of about 17,300 students (92,900 in 2012 to 110,200 in 2017) and an increase for students with ASD of about 10,900, an increase of about 63 per cent, compared with an increase of the total special school population of just 19% (Kelly et al., 2018, Table 4.3).

In summary, the Warnock report made no financial proposals. Understandably, given the range of issues covered and the limited data available, the Committee focused on priorities for development, but with no financial analysis. What is apparent is that in England currently there are major challenges to the SEN system and these pressures are increasing with respect to children and young people with statements or EHC plans. The government has recognized this and the then Education Secretary, Damien Hinds, announced an additional £350 million to support the high-needs budget for children with complex SEN and disabilities on 6 December 2018; and announced a consultation on financial arrangements for children and young people with SEN and those needing alternative provisions, on 3 May 2019. This has not, however, prevented substantial expressions of concern from parents and special education organizations.

Research Development

The Warnock Report included a short (seven pages) chapter on research and development in special education. Webster (2019b, this Research Topic) examines the Report's proposal, with particular reference to improving teachers' relationships with research and usage of research findings; revisiting the Report's research priorities, particularly improving school-based research; and considering current research priorities, in particular using "big data."

The support for SEN research has grown greatly with a large increase in research teams for SEN and also the appointment of professors with responsibility for SEN (including the three editors of this Research Topic), a substantial change from the solitary professorial post held by Ron Gulliford at the time of the report. Training of educational psychologists is now at doctoral level so all educational psychologists now must have conducted substantial research projects in order to qualify, providing a large and increasing pool of research trained staff in LAs or in independent educational psychology organizations. This is a substantial resource. The use of big data has increased. In addition to large scale cohort studies (Dockrell and Hurry, 2018; Law et al., 2018) the DfE's National Pupil Database has provided an important resource which has led to studies of the total English state school population including the relationship between SEN and demographic factors, for example ethnicity (Strand and Lindsay, 2009; Lindsay and Strand, 2016; Strand and Lindorff, 2018).

A caution, however, is to ensure a proper approach of the limits as well as strengths of such studies. For example, there is a need for recognition of the interaction between factors including gender, social disadvantage, ethnicity, and English as an additional language. It is also important to explore *reasons* for the results of such large scale quantitative research, for example by also undertaking combined (mixed) research methods. Furthermore, caution is needed when interpreting these large scale (e.g., cohort) studies as they typically include measures which provide limited data on key educational characteristics and poor operationalisation of variables such as English as an additional language. In addition, despite their large samples, these studies may be underpowered to identify outcome results for children with different types of SEN (Strand and Lindorff, 2018).

The creation of the Education Endowment Foundation, with its substantial research funding budget, has enabled an increase in the number and size of studies of educational effectiveness within the UK. Since 2019 the EEF has included a focus on interventions for children and young people with SEN, and a major review of the effectiveness of teaching approaches for students with SEN (Cullen et al., 2019), on the basis of which guidance to all schools on teaching students with SEN and disabilities will be produced (Education Endowment Foundation, in development).

Early Intervention

One area of positive growth, but with caveats, is early intervention. The Warnock Report put emphasis on the identification of SEN and intervention in the early years (Chapter 5). The Committee also proposed assessments for all children of seven to 8 years of age and later at secondary in order to identify children with SEN. They were not in favor of focusing only on children considered "at risk"—correctly, as research was demonstrating the limitations of the approach (Wedell and Lindsay, 1980; Lindsay and Wedell, 1982). This approach became national policy with the initial introduction of "baseline assessment" of all children in reception classes of state schools in England (four to 5 years old). However, research commissioned by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority identified serious limitations with the approach then taken, including the use of over 90 different baseline assessment schemes and the absence of evidence for the technical quality of all but a handful of the schemes (Lindsay and Lewis, 2003). Subsequently, baseline assessment has had a checkered development and is currently in a new intervention development phase (Department for Education, 2019b).

With respect to children with intellectual disability, a systematic review by Schuengel et al. (2019, this Research Topic) indicates that the main areas of research over the four decades since the Warnock Report have been: (i) syndrome and disorder related studies; (ii) autism-related studies; and disability and parent related studies. Overall, research topics related to autism and, to a lesser extent, parents showed the greatest increase over this period. This supports the findings of Bishop (2010) in her review of research funding for neurodevelopmental disorders that the growth in research was "exceptionally steep" for autism and ADHD (p. 1).

With respect to early intervention there has been substantial development, with both research and policy. The relationship between early risk factors and later outcomes has been clearly demonstrated by many studies (see Allen, 2011a, for an overview) with evidence of the relative cost effectiveness of early intervention (Allen, 2011b; Heckman, 2016). This includes the use of parenting programmes for parents of children with, or at risk of developing, behavior difficulties (Sanders, 1999; Nowack and Heinrichs, 2008), which have also been effective when rolled out on a national basis (Lindsay et al., 2011; Lindsay and Strand, 2013); effectiveness that can be maintained when delivered as part of regular service delivery (Gray et al., 2018). Furthermore, within the UK there has been cross-party political support for early intervention (Allen and Duncan Smith, 2008); the setting up of the Early Intervention Foundation (EIF) which has produced substantial evidence and guidelines for practice (e.g., Asmussen et al., 2016; Taylor et al., 2019); and recently a report of the House of Commons Science Technology Committee (2018) "Evidence-based early years intervention" chaired by Norman Lamb.

Inclusive Education

Lindsay (2007) argued that the case for inclusive education might be made on two different bases: the rights of the child and the efficacy of inclusive education. He also argued that the former was the most common reason propounded for inclusion. Lindsay undertook a large scale literature review of 1,373 papers in eight major special education journals over the previous 5 years finding that only 14 (1.0%) addressed the efficacy of inclusion and that, of these, the evidence was only marginally positive. Subsequent studies have provided some additional positive evidence, for example a positive effect on non-SEN peers (e.g., Szumski et al., 2017), but again this was weak. However, the difficulty in researching efficacy must be recognized (Lindsay, 2003). This is a function of the complexity of the concept, which in turn requires a range of measures across domains; the range of settings (from groups to "classroom," to school, college or early years settings; and the chronological time period necessary for meaningful results to be gathered.

Currently, therefore, the main case for inclusive education is based on children's rights, just as it was for the Warnock Report. One argument against efficacy or effectiveness research is that the rights argument is enough. Another is that "inclusion" is such a diverse variable that research questions must be more specific in order to explore how to optimize the implementation of what is already a generally accepted policy (see Lindsay, 2003), although in England the Coalition Government set out its policy on special educational needs and disability, including the statement, "We will remove the bias toward inclusion" (Department for Education, 2011).

Education Workforce

Since the Warnock Report there have been major changes in the training of teachers in general, from the primary providers of higher education institutions to the focus on schools supported by HEIs and others. Teachers in mainstream schools have often felt under supported but the Department for Children, Schools and Families under the New Labor government undertook a multifaceted initiative to trial and evaluate a number of approaches to improving the knowledge, skills, attitude and confidence of mainstream teachers with respect to students with SEN. Evaluation of the initiative was positive with respect to the range of constituent elements including curriculum development, specialist qualifications for teachers of students with sensory impairment; and support for students in initial teacher training (ITT) through a Toolkit; placements in special schools and specialist provision (Lindsay et al., 2011). The 2011 Green Paper, setting out the government's intention for SEN, included a substantial focus on teachers, ITT and continuing professional development, in recognition of the importance of teachers and teaching assistants for improving SEND provision (Department for Education, 2011).

In this research topic, Lindner et al. (2019) report a large scale study of 872 4th grades in 47 inclusive classes in Germany. They found that whereas students rated their teachers as using inclusive instructional practice (namely personalization and differentiation) there was a lack of evidence that the teachers differed strongly in their teaching practices at the student level; and that students' ratings did not significantly predict teachers' ratings of inclusive teaching practices. Egelund and Dyssegaard (2019, this Research Topic) report in Denmark that the development of inclusion has been hindered by regulations and incentives for exclusion. However, the introduction of positive incentives for inclusion and a change in the concept of special education have radically changed the situation toward increased inclusion.

Two of the post-Warnock developments in England to support inclusion that have experienced a good deal of research concern special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs) and teaching assistants (TAs: referred to as paraprofessionals in the U.S.). SENCOs were introduced with the Education Act 1993 and the first Code of Practice (Department for Education, 1994). Since 2008, SENCOs must be a qualified teacher and those appointed since September 1st 2009 must gain a Masters-level National Award in SEN Coordination within 3 years of appointment. SENCOs are a statutory requirement for all state schools in England. They have day-to-day responsibility for the operation of SEND policy within the school and also for the specific provision necessary to support students with SEN and disabilities. Over time, their role has gradually changed from coordination to determining SEND policy and provision in each school, in conjunction with the head teacher and governing body. Esposito and Carroll (2019, this Research Topic) identify four main characteristics of their role from a study of SENCOs attending the Award, namely: the diversity of SENCOs practice, engagement with assessment designed to be meaningful, e.g., for intervention, the adaption and implementation of evidence informed practice, and the evaluation of interventions. SENCOs provide a large and potentially very important workforce for SEND but there are barriers. For example SENCOs in primary schools frequently do not have the proposed status or influence or time necessary (Wedell, 2017; House of Commons Education Committee, 2019).

Whereas, the Warnock Report made limited reference to non-teaching staff, the growth in the number of TAs has been substantial, now representing 27.8% of the national school workforce in English schools, over a quarter of a million (Department for Education, 2018) compared with 47.7% who are teachers. A major growth area has been the use of TAs to support children with statements or EHC plans. However, there have been concerns about the effectiveness of TAs (Webster et al., 2011), including the support of children with SEN for scaffolded and independent learning, when the TA then is effectively "attached" to the child, known as a "Velcro TA" model. This is explored by Vivash and Morgan (2019, this Research Topic).

Exclusion

Whilst there has been much researcher and practitioner interest in developing inclusion, and indeed from parents and young people and adults with SEN or disabilities, it is apparent that there have also been substantial barriers to developing inclusive practice. An extreme issue concerns children's *exclusion* from school (House of Commons Education Committee, 2018). In this case, children with SEN are even more disadvantaged (Paget et al., 2018). Interestingly, the Warnock report mentioned exclusion only once, with respect to children with emotional and behavioral difficulties. In reference to the Pack report in Scotland on truancy and indiscipline in schools, the Warnock report states that, "in many cases unruliness in pupils is a symptom of special educational needs" and that these should be met "within our framework of special educational provision" (para 11.62).

Daniels et al. (2019, this Research Topic) argue that exclusion of young people with SEN is related to "the nascent tension between policies designed to achieve excellence and those seeking to achieve inclusive practice" (p. 10). Perverse incentives, they argue, arise from policy changes in England in particular, driven by economic objectives not to meet the needs of students with SEN and disabilities. A possible result is their exclusion from school.

Permanent exclusions from schools in England have increased greatly in recent years, following a reduction between 1997/98 and 2012/13, although they are still below the level of 2006/07 (Timpson, 2019). A similar pattern is found for fixed period exclusion. The annual report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills highlights that the most likely to be excluded or off-rolled (see below) are the most vulnerable students (Ofsted, 2018). This is also stressed in the Timpson review of exclusions in general:

> "78% of permanent exclusions were to pupils who either had SEN, were classified in need or were eligible for free school meals. 11% of permanent exclusions were to pupils who had all three characteristics." (Timpson, 2019, p. 10).

Furthermore, Timpson's review found evidence of students being made to leave their school without access to the formal exclusion process, a practice known as "off-rolling," thereby not having access to the formal exclusion process and the structure and safeguards this provides. Also pernicious is that this process does not trigger the processes to ensure that suitable alternative education is provided by the sixth day of exclusion as required by law. Reasons for these developments include: zero tolerance in schools; paucity of external support, including educational psychologists; the effects of school league tables which are attainment based; curriculum measures with high stakes testing; overall levels of funding schools; and also "a policy mind set which disagrees with inclusion" (Daulby, 2019).

As well as active exclusion of children from school, there are also concerns about *non-attendance*. Early research clearly demonstrated that this was not simply an issue only of truancy, i.e., students' decisions not to attend school, but was often, and particularly so with chronic non-attendance, linked to major socioeconomic disadvantage and family stress, (Galloway, 1982) or school factors (Galloway et al., 1985): see also Humm Patnode et al. (2018) for a recent comprehensive review. In England, DfE statistics indicate that the most recent absence rate (2017–2018) was 4.8% overall, mostly authorized (3.5%) with unauthorized at 1.4% (Department for Education, 2019c). Persistent absenteeism accounts for 32.4% of all authorized absence and more than half of unauthorized absence. Furthermore, persistent absence is more than double for students in special schools. These data indicate that vulnerable students, those with SEN in particular, are at further risk as they miss out on schooling, which compounds their difficulties resulting from their SEN. Melvin et al. (2019, this Research Topic) provide a rigorous multifactorial approach to the development and maintenance of absenteeism. They propose a biological systems framework, the Kids and Teens at School (KiTeS) framework which is inclusive of students with and without SEN or disabilities, to improve conceptualization of the complex nature of absenteeism and exclusion.

The development of an inclusive education system, therefore, while being an education policy that has large scale support internationally, continues to struggle. Many initiatives to increase inclusivity of schools have occurred, and it is noteworthy that almost half (47.9%) of children and young people in England with EHC plans are in mainstream school (National Audit Office, 2019a). However, there are also serious concerns, including exclusions and the amount of finance available to meet identified needs.

Prevalence of Special Educational Needs

The Warnock Report provided an important summary of the challenges in determining prevalence of SEN: these challenges remain pertinent today and are intrinsic to both the concept of "handicap," as used in the Report and to its replacement, SEN. Nevertheless, the Warnock Report was important for identifying a number of key issues, supported by then current research, and their implications.

The basic indicator of prevalence in the Warnock Report was the proportion of students attending *separate special provision*, namely special schools or special classes designated as such LEAs and those students who had "been placed by LEAs in independent schools catering wholly or mainly for handicapped pupils, were boarded in homes, were receiving education otherwise than at school or were awaiting admission to special schools" (para 3.7). This criterion, based on provision, was recognized as insufficient but produced an estimate of 1.8% in England, with a similar estimate of 1.4% in Scotland. However, the limitations of these estimates included: substantial variation between different LAs and also within LAs; urban areas having higher prevalence than rural areas with small towns (Rutter et al., 1975); variations in times spent by students who were part time in special provision; rates of "ascertainment" of "handicap" (the legal process); and use of different criteria of need. In addition, the then recent study of all students aged between 9 and 11 years on the Isle of Wight indicated students often had two or more areas of need and therefore a single "handicap" category was inappropriate (Rutter et al., 1970). Furthermore, consideration of this research together with the National Child Development Study (Pringle et al., 1966), and with discussions with teachers and estimates by the Inner London Education Authority, led to the recommendation that:

> "The planning of services for children and young people should be based on the assumption that about one in six children at any one time and up to one in five children at some time during their school career will require some form of special educational provision" (Department for Education Science, 1978: para 3.17)

In summary, the Warnock Committee argued for the change from a focus on single "handicap" criteria to a system based on the concept of special educational needs, and provided the basis for a broader conceptualization of prevalence. Hence, this new approach formed the foundation for future measurements of prevalence.

Variation in Prevalence

Over the subsequent 40 years or so, the estimation of prevalence of SEN has benefitted from this reconceptualization and also the introduction in England of the school census and the National Pupil Database (NPD). These have resulted in data on all children and young people in state schools, including SEN data, and the distinction between primary need and secondary need(s) prevalence. Researchers have consequently had a substantial resource, which has allowed levels of prevalence, trends over time, and also the interaction of SEN data with other factors to be explored.

With respect to trends of SEN, the most recent SEN statistics for England (Department for Education, 2019d) indicate that the percentage of children with SEN increased slightly from 2007 to 2010, to just over 20%, then reduced until 2016 before increasing slightly from 14.4 to 14.9% between 2017 and 2019. The percentage of children with a statement of SEN or an EHC plan, which replaced statements following the Children and Families Act 2014, was stable for 11 years from 2007 to 2017 at 2.8%, but increasing to 3.1% in 2019. These data indicate a higher level in 2010 than Warnock's suggested one in six children having SEN at any one time, reducing to below that level now, but a consistently higher level for children with the highest level of SEN, now about 3% to Warnock's 1.8% (see Black, 2019, this Research Topic). However, the 1.8% was specific to the percentage in special schools—see Department for Education Science (1978, para 3.7 to 3.17 for the Warnock Report's discussion of the extent of SEN at the time).

Interrelationships Between SEN and Other Factors

More recent evidence has examined these data more fully, by exploring the variations in prevalence related to age, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic disadvantage, and having English as an additional language (EAL). Furthermore, in addition to examining individual relationships between each variable and SEN, research has explored the complex interactions between all factors (intersectionality). For example, the Department for Education and Skills in England commissioned a study which examined the nature of ethnic disproportionality and SEN, which examined the relationship between the different types of SEN and the different major categories of student ethnicity (Lindsay et al., 2006). In addition to analyzing the data derived from the school census on all students in state schools, focus groups with senior officers in LAs explored local experiences of ethnic disproportionality in SEN, trends and possible reasons for these.

In addition, this first comprehensive research on the topic in the UK found that there was a complex interrelationship between ethnicity and different categories of SEN. For example, after controlling for gender, age, socioeconomic disadvantage and EAL, students of Black Caribbean heritage were more likely to be identified with behavioral, emotional and social difficulties (BESD) than White British students were. However, this was not the case for students of Black African heritage, who were not significantly different in the likelihood of having BESD than White British students (Strand and Lindsay, 2009).

Ethnic differences have also been found in prevalence rates of SEN over time, after controlling for other factors as above. For example, the prevalence of students with SLCN aged 5–16 years increased between 2005 and 2011 by 72% overall. However, whereas this increase was 70% for White British students the increase in prevalence was as low as 21% for students of Chinese heritage and as high as 89% for Black African students (Lindsay and Strand, 2016). This work has been developed further and the evidence of ethnic disproportionality has been reinforced: Black Caribbean and Pakistani students are over-represented for moderate learning difficulties (MLD) whereas Indian and Chinese students are under-represented; Black Caribbean and Mixed White and Black Caribbean students are substantially over-represented for social, emotional and mental health (SEMH); and all Asian groups (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Other Asian) are substantially under-represented for SEMH and ASD (Strand and Lindorff, 2018).

Age is also an important factor in the prevalence of SLCN, after controlling for the other factors: students in Year 1 were over four times more likely than those in Year 11 to be identified with SLCN (Lindsay and Strand, 2016). Furthermore, the level of prevalence reduced primarily between Year 1 and Year 7, with just a small reduction between Year 8 and Year 11. However, this reduction over age was only found in children and young people at School Action Plus (at the time of the research, this represented children receiving additional, external support but without having a Statement of SEN). The prevalence of students with statements remained approximately consistent (Lindsay and Strand, 2016). Furthermore, patterns of prevalence by age vary for different SEN groups, a phenomenon which Strand and Lindsay's research has demonstrated to be stable year on year and has now been highlighted in the national SEN statistics for England (Department for Education, 2019d). With respect to the four most prevalent types of SEN categories, the year on year prevalence trajectories vary thus: speech, language and communication needs reduces steeply from age 4 years to age 11, then reduces at a lower rate to 15 years; moderate learning difficulties increases from 4 to 10 years and then reduces to 15 years; social, emotional and mental health also increases from 4 to 10 years and then plateaus; and specific learning difficulty rises steadily from 4 to 15 years.

Finally, but importantly, socioeconomic disadvantage has been shown to be the greatest influence overall in terms of proportions of children with SEN (Strand and Lindsay, 2009). Hence, although relationships between SEN and the factors above are very important, it is essential to recognize the level of impact of socioeconomic disadvantage.

Changes in Prevalence of Different Categories of SEN

In our final example we consider changes in prevalence of different categories of SEN. Autism Spectrum Disorder is now the most common frequent primary need of children with a statement or EHC plan: over a quarter (29.0%) in 2019, almost double the prevalence in 2007 (14.6%) whereas the proportion of students with a statement or EHC plan for MLD has decreased over this period from 22.2 to 11.5%, almost by half (Department for Education, 2019a).

Also of interest is that the proportions of students at School Action Plus or SEN support have a different pattern. In 2017, only 2.7% of children with ASD were identified with this level of support whereas for MLD it was 29.6%, over 10 times greater. In 2018 the proportion of students at School Action Plus or SEN support had doubled for ASD (2.7 to 6.2%) whereas for MLD it has reduced, but from 29.6 to 22.8%.

Local Authority and School Factors

Prevalence of SEN is also related to schools and the LA in which students attend school. However, this level of influence is very limited for LAs but more substantial for schools, particularly for MLD. For example, a substantial part of the over-representation of Black Caribbean and Mixed White and Black Caribbean students with social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH) is accounted for by differences between the secondary schools they attend (Strand and Lindorff, 2018). In addition, whereas the proportion of students with School Action Plus or SEN Support has been falling generally, as indicated above, this reduction has been greater for Academies than LA secondary schools (Black et al., 2019, this Research Topic).

Summary

In summary, research has demonstrated the importance of considering *prevalence* of SEN in more detail. Whereas, the Warnock report discussed prevalence with respect to two levels of severity, evidence now demonstrates a much more complex picture with prevalence varying in relation to type of SEN, age, gender, and ethnicity, as well as socioeconomic disadvantage; and these factors interrelate. In addition to this demonstration of complexity, these data, together with the evidence of more resources proportionately going to children with ASD (than children with SLCN: Dockrell et al., 2019) and more research funding proportionately supporting more research going to ASD than to other neurodevelopmental disorders (Bishop, 2010), there are indications of inequity.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

From the Warnock Report to the Present

This review of the developments in special educational provision over the 40 years since the publication of the Warnock Report shows that its main principles have been generally established. These include the principle that the aims of education are the same for all children and young people, but that the methods for achieving them may be different. The Warnock Report offers a broad view of these aims, set out in the introduction of this paper. It is significant that these have not been formally set out in the curricular accountability criteria of the current education system. The concept of a continuum of degrees of SEN has been accepted. Whereas, this is appropriate conceptually, in practice concern developed that students were becoming inappropriately classified as having SEN. Ofsted produced an influential review arguing that many children with low attainment were underachieving rather than having SEN and that this was the result of mainstream provision not being of sufficient quality, and expectations of pupils being too low (Ofsted, 2010). Inspection of the national statistics reveals that subsequently there was a decline in the percentage of pupils categorized as having SEN at the School Action or School Action Plus levels of provision (Black, 2019, this Research Topic). Nevertheless, the special educational needs legislation has also been firmly linked with the notion that education for students with SEN is an integral part of general educational provision and, indeed, the Ofsted review supports this argument, although it criticizes the implementation by schools of the identification of SEN. The Warnock Report's orientation toward "inclusion" (then called "integration") is very similar to that formulated in the successive special needs legislation mentioned earlier in this paper. The 2014 Children and Families Act specifies the three limiting conditions under which children and young people with SEN who do not have an EHC plan can be placed in mainstream schools as having to be "compatible" with:

> (a) the child receiving the special educational provision called for by his or her special educational needs; (b) the provision of efficient education for the children with whom he or she will be educated, and; (c) the efficient use of resources (section 35 (3) (a–c) Department for Education, 2014).

These limiting conditions are presented as the limits of what can be expected of schools' capacity for inclusion—and therefore also serve to distinguish provision which is "additional to," and/or "different from" meeting the more severe forms of SEN. The Codes of Practice issued in conjunction with the successive special needs legislation ever since Circular 1/83 (linked to the 1981 Act) have spelled out the recommended guidance. The austerity financing regime has curtailed schools' and LAs' capacity to observe many of the current Code's recommendations, thus rendering many aspects of this advice "aspirational." Many of the researches reported in this paper have provided evidence of this state of affairs, and also raised questions about the scope for improving the situation.

There seems to be some hope that the austerity financial regime in England is coming to an end and the previous government proposed additional funding for SEN provision. However, recent reports from both the National Audit Office (2019b) and the House of Commons Education Committee (2019) are highly critical of the current situation for children and young people with SEN and disabilities.

The Education Committee stated that, "We are confident that the 2014 reforms are the right ones" (para 17) but then went on to be critical of many elements of the SEND system, for example finding: "The Department for Education set local authorities up to fail by making serious erosion in both how it administers money intended for change, and also, until recently, failing to provide extra money when it was needed." (para 2). They go on to say:

> "We deeply regret that this spending review process was insufficient in tackling the fundamental challenges facing both children and adults in social care." (para 24).

A second concern was lack of accountability. Since the Warnock Report, a substantial system of inspection has been set up primarily through Ofsted. Ofsted's responsibilities, initially to inspect schools, has grown considerably and now includes collaborative inspection with the Care Quality Commission, which conducts local area SEND inspections. However, the Education Committee were very critical of the lack of real accountability. The Minister (Nick Gibb) had reported that a new (i.e., better) Ofsted framework was due (September 2019). However, the Education Committee argued that "counting and measuring" were insufficient and questioned the current accountability in the SEND system:

> "Nobody appears to be taking any action based on the counting and measuring that is taking place, but even worse, no one appears to be asking anyone to take responsibility for their actions. There appears to be an absence of responsibility for driving any change or holding anyone accountable when change is not happening." (para 27).

These, and the many other concerns, raise questions about where the priorities for readjustment lie. There is a choice between two main strategies: proposing the "patching up" of the insufficiencies of the current education system, or "changing the system" so that it does not produce the insufficiencies (Wedell, 2008) The first strategy implies an assumption that the current system is acceptable within the over-arching aims and methods of special needs education, and the second implies that more fundamental change is required so that the system does not limit potential advances. The two strategies are of course not mutually exclusive, and in this final section we track two topic areas as examples of where "patching up" initiatives and "system change" notions may be taking us.

Patching Up or System Change?

An example of an intention to "patch up the system" relates to class teachers' current stress and the 2015 Code's demands that they should take on a greater role in the first line response to children and young people's SEN. The Code encourages teachers to use a "graduated approach" to meeting SEN but is not clear how far this should be an ongoing process. This approach has been promoted in preceding Codes, but it is made more explicit in the 2015 Code as a cyclic process of "Assess, plan, do, review." As such, it is in line with meeting the first of the Act's three limiting conditions for inclusion mentioned above—"compatible with meeting the child's needs" (Department for Education and Department of Health, 2015). This demands teachers have the necessary competencies and that there should be additional teachers' "thinking time," when they are already having to cope with keeping up the pace of a revised curriculum and head teachers are making staffing cuts. Class teachers have less access to advice and support from SENCOs, because these, particularly in primary schools, are being asked to take on additional class teaching time. A recent National Audit Office (2019b, p. 12) report on support for students with SEN and disabilities has taken some of these points into account in recommending (among others), that the Department for Education should:

> "prepare for the next full spending review by making an evidence-based assessment of how much it would cost to provide the system for supporting students with SENDs created by the 2014 reforms," and
>
> "review the incentives in the funding arrangements and the accountability system, and make changes that encourage and support mainstream schools to be inclusive in terms of admitting, retaining and meeting the needs of pupils with SEND, whether they have EHC plans or require other support."

These recommendations represent an example of "patching up" a practical problem, while not questioning the general education system's function as a compensatory special needs resource. An increasing concern has however built up as to whether the current education system's curriculum content and pedagogy match twenty-first century children and young people's needs in mainstream schools, let alone those with SEN and disabilities. For example, the Royal Society for the Arts commented in 2002:

> "We still have a curriculum model close to the one that prepared students for the much more stable and certain society of the 50s, where we knew what a "subject" was and what you "ought" to know about it" (p. 2).

Wedell (2005) described how some of the rigidities in teaching and learning actually stood in the way of achieving a flexible response to the needs of children and young people with SEN, and even perpetuated the association between student grouping and stigma. Department for Education Skills (2004) stated:

> "Inclusion is about much more than the type of school that children attend: it is about the quality of their experience, how they are helped to learn, achieve and participate fully in the life of the school." (p.24)

This statement about inclusion expands on this point made about *inclusive* orientation from the Salamanca Statement, coming out of the World Conference on special needs education:

> "Regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the most effective means of … achieving education for all" (UNESCO, 1994, para 2.)

However, currently in England, there is substantial concern about the *exclusion* of children with SEN from mainstream schools. As already noted, the Timpson Review (2019) found that schools differed in their exclusion rates, indicating corresponding differences in the way that schools function. This is particularly relevant in relation to children and young people with SEN, in so far as the report found that 78% of permanently excluded students either had SEN, were classified as in need, or were eligible for free school meals. The review's findings implied that some schools (i.e., those with lower exclusion rates) appeared to be better at responding to students' SEN, but that this was not fairly acknowledged in the league table rankings.

These developments have, not surprisingly, led to interest in "changing the system." Those concerned are clearly aware that this has to be carried out with due regard to the scale of the endeavor, and its context within the prevailing socioeconomic and political situation (e.g., Norwich and Lunt, 2005). An endeavor can however also be planned at a small scale level, with a correspondingly limited educational focus. The "Opening Minds" curriculum created by the Royal Society of Arts (2019) represents a small-scale approach to the early secondary phase which is now used in over 200 schools, and would seem to be "special education" friendly. It is focused on five competences: citizenship, learning, managing information, relating to people, managing situations. It is reported to enable students not just to acquire subject knowledge, but to understand, use, and apply it in the context of their wider learning and life' Royal Society of Arts (2019). It is also linked with a programme of further professional development for those involved in implementing it (Aynsley et al., 2012). This project, although in some respects controversial, represents an instance of an endeavor for "system change" which promotes the wider educational goals of the Warnock Report.

CONCLUSION

These examples of "patching up" and "system change" show how the heritage of the Warnock principles can be harnessed. However, the overview of SEND provision in this paper clearly shows that, even beyond the constraints of the financial austerity regime, the level of compensatory resource function for children and young people with SEN of the general education system is inadequate. But this is not only a question of increasing absolute levels of funding, necessary though this is. Changes are needed in the balance of the focus on EHC plans and the non-statutory offer to children and young people with lower, but still important, levels of SEN. Key to this is a shift toward greater prevention, through early intervention, which must also be shaped by both system changes, including greater joined up thinking, and multiprofessional collaborations that are effective and efficient (ICAN and Royal College of Speech and Language ICAN Royal College of Speech Language Therapists, 2018). More has to be achieved in the understanding of children and young people with SEN, and more in the contemporary relevance of the curricular content and pedagogy offered in mainstream schools. Teachers must be empowered with post qualification education opportunities, including curriculum and pedagogic development, which may include knowledge exchange programmes (https://www.ucl.ac.uk/ioe/departments-and-centers/centers/center-inclusive-education/supporting-wellbeing-emotional-resilience-and-learning-swerl).

There is still a need to create a dynamic and coherent conceptual framework which can bring together the extensive array of existing current ideas for development. The Warnock Report was one attempt to achieve this at a particular time of concern. How this can be achieved now presents a considerable challenge to both the new UK government elected in December 2019, which will develop policy, and the practitioners responsible for the implementation of the policies. The current low-ebb of provision has now engendered a similar strength of concern calling for a body which can provide a lead both in formulating policy and in implementing it. Fortunately, one of the contributors to this Research Topic (Norwich, 2019) sets out a potential scenario for the establishment of such a body.

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All authors contributed to the conceptualization of the paper, to each draft and approved the final version. GL led the writing team including the conceptualization and writing of the paper overall, the production of drafts and final version. KW and JD led on sections of the paper and contributed to paper overall.

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A Blueprint for Evidence-Based Practice? Assessing the Warnock Inquiry's Proposals for Research and Development in Special Education 40 Years On

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In just seven of its almost 400 pages, the Warnock Report set out an ambitious programme for research and development in special education. The Committee not only identified areas in need of further investigation, revealed via the Inquiry process, but went beyond this, with recommendations designed to improve teachers' involvement in and engagement with research, and the processes of translating research into practical tools and strategies for practitioners in schools and classrooms. Warnock's vision reimagined academic roles as being more applied and in-touch with practice on the ground, created spaces for teachers to contribute to and conduct research, and suggested an elementary architecture for a coordinated, and more democratized approach to research in special education. This paper explores the development of some of the Warnock Inquiry's key proposals on research and development in special education. In the first half of this paper, we consider how the progress made to improving teachers' relationship with research and usage of research findings. It is suggested that much of what has emerged in the UK in recent years regarding the principles and mechanisms for moving the mainstream teaching profession to adopting evidence-based practices are prefigured in the Inquiry report. The second half of the paper revisits the Committee's research priorities and describes how the specific proposals relating to improving school-based research were addressed. We then consider the research priorities of today, and in particular, how "big data" might be harnessed to improve our understanding and knowledge of the impacts of the more inclusive, less segregated, approaches to schooling that the Warnock Committee precipitated.

Keywords: special educational needs (SEN), inclusion, knowledge mobilization, research, evidence-based practice

INTRODUCTION

Forty years ago, government in the UK at the national and local level regarded research in and of education as “a fairly unimportant activity” (Tizard, 1978). Indeed, compared with medicine, education has a poorer research tradition. Since the turn of century, however, there has been a growing international trend in the use of research to inform and improve teaching and learning for all children and young people. This movement, commonly referred to as evidence-based (or evidence-informed) practice (EBP), draws on research from a range of disciplines, including education, psychology, and neuroscience. Additionally, EBP incorporates efforts to translate findings from empirical research into practical strategies and tools that teachers can use to improve pupils’ classroom experiences and academic outcomes.

Within this wider context, there has been significant growth and interest in the field of research in special educational needs (SEN). In the UK, the role and importance of research in SEN was catalyzed by the Inquiry into the Education of Handicapped Children and Young People. One of the underpinning justifications for both the Inquiry itself, and the comprehensive set of recommendations it presented to government, was founded on the basis of results from epidemiological studies that showed the prevalence of those with SEN in the general school-aged population was greater than previously envisaged. The Inquiry chair, Baroness Mary Warnock, concluded that up to one in five children at some time during their school career will require some form of special educational provision’ (Department of Education and Science, 1978). The “one in five” figure has since assumed educational, political and administrative significance, and continues to inform and justify government efforts to improve provision and teaching for those with SEN (Department for Education, 2018a).

The final thematic section (chapter 18) of the Inquiry’s final report addresses the function of research and development in special education. In a little over 3,300 words, and across just seven of its 394 pages, the Warnock Report makes the case for improving the promotion and coordination of research in special education, and its “translation of the results into successful practice” (Department of Education and Science, 1978). The rationale, based in part on the first-hand experience of the Committee members who conducted the Inquiry, was to marshal the “very richness and variety” of different research and research-informed initiatives and specialist interests (Department of Education and Science, 1978). The principal beneficiaries were to be the professionals and practitioners working directly with children and young people with SEN, for whom the “piecemeal nature of research in special education” (Tizard, 1978) was “often a source of confusion” (Department of Education and Science, 1978).

The proposals in chapter 18 concern the reorganization, expansion, and translation of research in special education under the three headings: (i) promotion and coordination of research in special education; (ii) the translation of research into practice; and (iii) areas in which research is needed. In this paper, I will explore the key recommendations under each of these headings, and assess the progress made toward their realization since 1978. I will consider some of the factors that have enabled and hindered progress, and argue which of the proposals still have relevance in today’s contemporary education system, how they might be updated, and how they could be operationalized.

PROMOTION AND COORDINATION OF RESEARCH IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

The Role of Higher Education

The first recommendation under this heading called for higher education institutions (HEIs) to create more senior academic posts in special education, and to ensure there was at least one university department of special education in each region of the country (Paragraph 18.3). At the time the report was published, there was just one such position in Britain at the University of Birmingham, held by Ronald Gulliford. Writing 3 years after the publication of the Warnock Report, Prof. Gulliford (1981) reported that just three universities had established “separate departments or professorial appointments concerned with teaching and research in special education”; while in many HEIs, he claimed, “the special education tutor is a one-man band.” Recognizing that it was still early days and that special education was a growth area, Gulliford concluded that this was a positive basis for expanding HEIs’ research and teacher training in special education.

The second recommendation was to link the functions of research and practice by encouraging HEIs to set up dual appointments: “some of the senior academic posts in special education proposed above should be linked to part-time work with children with special needs from an educational, a medical, a psychological or a social standpoint” (Paragraph 18.4). The proposal was an attempt to replicate the model found in healthcare, with the closer integration of research, teacher training and classroom practice leading to the development, piloting, testing and dissemination of empirically-grounded theory, and effectively applied practices. Educational psychologists (EPs) were singled out as a profession that could benefit and contribute to the increased development and deployment of their research skills, and an additional proposal was set forward welcoming the growth of appointments shared between local education authorities (LEAs) and HEIs (Paragraph 18.6).

Resource Centers and Research

The Committee expressed the “hope” that sufficiently motivated special schools establish themselves as “resource centers” (Paragraph 18.7). It was “highly desirable” that these centers developed close links between special schools and education departments in HEIs (Paragraph 18.9). This language of desirability, coupled with the absence of a solid recommendation, meant that this section of the report (Paragraphs 18.7 to 18.9) comes across as relatively underdeveloped. The labels “resource centers” and “research centers” are used interchangeably, and while talking of special schools being “designated” as centers, it does not specify the organization or body that would oversee this. Nonetheless, the vision of creating collaborative spaces for professional, inter-disciplinary learning was imaginative and novel for education in the late 1970s. The hubs were to be "centers not only of support for teachers and for parents, but also of research in special education" (Paragraph 18.7). For Warnock, "the part which teachers can play in research and development is often under-valued and far more encouragement and support needs to be given to them to carry out systematic research" (Paragraph 18.7). Furthermore, the centers would have provided opportunities for professionals (namely, teachers, EPs, social workers and nurses) "to work together on projects in which a range of skills is required" (Paragraph 18.8).

Perhaps one reason why this proposal reads as somewhat hesitant and non-committal is connected the difficulty the Committee experienced in bringing together practitioners from the different professions to discuss the needs of children and young people with SEN. While education, health, and social care professionals had much to contribute, Warnock claimed that during the Inquiry "it was the most difficult thing in the world just to bring them together." In a 2018 interview (transcribed and published in Webster, 2019), Warnock recalled a typical effort to convene social workers and teachers to talk with one another:

"We got them together for a weekend so that they could thrash out, try to produce a sort of plan, by which they could automatically talk to one another and trust one another, and so on. What happened was, the minute we entered the hotel, the social workers went into one room and the teachers went into another room. And they never talked to one another at all except in formal meetings. And we simply never found a way that we could ensure that they always passed on what was relevant information. In fact, they were very unwilling to do so."

A forum or mechanism for convening senior professionals was a problem the Inquiry was unable to solve; however, Warnock did set forward in the 1978 report a recommendation to create a professional college that might be capable of facilitating and supporting multiagency working, which we shall come to shortly.

A Special Education Research Group

The Committee's third key recommendation was to set up a body to coordinate and systematize disjointed research activities in and related to special education. The Inquiry found that the responsibility for determining priorities for research in special education was "widely diffused." The research activities of government departments responsible for education and health were uncoordinated, while individual proposals for research were considered by separate agencies, "often in isolation and with insufficient regard to other work in related fields" (Paragraph 18.11).

The Committee were convinced of the need for a Special Education Research Group (SERG), which was "able to take a synoptic view of what is going on and offer guidance on priorities for future research" (Paragraph 18.11). The SERG's role would be: "indicating priorities for research in special education, for identifying programmes and projects to be initiated, for awarding some research grants and for commenting, if requested to do so, on applications for research central to its concerns, which are submitted to other research bodies" (Paragraph 18.11).

Warnock envisaged that the SERG's membership represent, and its activities reflect, the interests and priorities of each home nation. It would report directly to the Department of Education and Science (England), the Scottish Education Department and the Welsh Office, and link with research liaison groups in other government departments (e.g., Health and Social Security) (Paragraph 18.12). Working with existing research bodies, voluntary organizations and foundations, the SERG would additionally act as a national recorder and archivist of existing and completed research projects and outputs pertaining to special education (Paragraph 18.13), and would hold conferences for professionals across related disciplines (Paragraph 18.14).

Commentating just a few months after the Warnock Report was published, Tizard (1978) described the composition of the SERG as problematic, as it virtually handed the government the monopoly on research in special education. He highlighted the absence of proposals to include academic research bodies among its membership, or representatives from the schools sector. While, as Tizard (1978) put it, the SERG would be "a useful in-house operational research organization" for the Department of Education and Science, looser ties to government, "a substantial representation from the educational research community on its management," plus "a measure of autonomy comparable with that of a research council" were, in his view, all necessary for ensuring the integrity, breadth, and quality of research.

Tizard's critique in fact pinpoints a more basic reason why the proposal to establish the SERG was not followed up: the lack of detail in the final report about its operating costs [A feature of the Inquiry was that the Committee decided against costing its proposals because, as Warnock explained, "we knew they'd be expensive and we knew that the costs won't stand still" (Webster, 2019)]. Nonetheless, the principle that future developments in special education to be based on sound principles and research-informed practices was clear. Rose (2018) notes that since the Warnock Inquiry, whilst there have been "attempts to create an organizational structure that would encompass such a group, these have rarely gained the support of national [UK] policymakers."

In 1982, for example, the Voluntary Council for Handicapped Children (VCHC), which predated the Warnock Inquiry, persuaded the government to fund a working party (chaired by George Cooke, the vice-chair of the Committee) to explore the possible role and function of the Inquiry's recommendation for a National Advisory Committee to "advise ministers on the provision of educational services for children and young people with special educational needs and their coordination with other services" (Paragraph 16.47). The working group reasserted the need to "discern the emergence of new demands and develop new ideas and practices," but again the government turned down this recommendation (Voluntary Council for Handicapped Children, 1984).

Amid concerns about the fragmented nature of the current education system, and the extent and complexity of difficulties facing schools, Klaus Wedell, a member of the VCHC working party, argues that the need for a SERG persists. He suggests that "instituting a SERG could offer a crucial strategy for recognizing the urgency of a paradigm shift in thinking about an education system to match children's SEN" (Wedell, 2019). A SERG for the 2020s could coordinate and perform a range of important functions to raise the profile of SEN and help advance the inclusive education agenda, and would have the added advantage of being able to utilize the promotional and coordination power of digital technology and communications that were unavailable 40 years ago. It would also link in to, and bridge between, national and local organizations and networks, both general and SEN-specific. Rose (2018) cites the National Council for Special Education in Ireland as an example of where "the value of organizations focused upon the funding and evaluation of research into special and inclusive education has been recognized and endorsed," and the outputs used to inform policy and support teachers.

Brahm Norwich takes the notion of a collaborative approach to debating and establishing research priorities a step further, by proposing an ambitious Education Framework Commission (EFC), of which SEN would be an integrated element. Like the SERG, the EFC would seek to "break down unnecessary polarizations through adopting a position about the role of academic and professional research and evaluation in informing policy and practice" (Norwich, 2019). But unlike the SERG, the EFC would be composed of and reflect the needs, interests and views of a wide range of constituencies, including: "representatives from political parties; teachers and school leaders; parent/carers; pupils; local authorities and middle tier organizations; key bodies, such as Ofsted; third-sector and voluntary groups; employers and business; unions and professional associations" (Norwich, 2019). To ally the kinds of objections raised by Tizard, the EFC would be far more explicit in its independence from government (including in terms of its funding), and active its "public deliberation and consensus formation." Reflecting the contemporary context in which it would do its work, the EFC would attempt to immunize policymaking from the turbulence, short-termism, opportunism and "small-p" politics of general election cycles by establishing a longer-term (e.g., 10-year) "binding framework for future education legislation, along the lines of climate change legislation" (Norwich, 2019).

THE TRANSLATION OF RESEARCH INTO PRACTICE

Warnock set out aspirations for special education teachers to have not only greater involvement the research process, but also in the translation of research into practice. The Committee recommended that teachers play an active role in transmuting research findings into practical applications, and developing and disseminating the methods by which this happened. The report made specific proposals for setting up (i) numerous local centers for research and development, and (ii) a central body to oversee professional training.

Localizing Research and Development

Members of the Inquiry Committee reported favorably on special education teachers' centers set up by local education authorities, "which have made a very effective contribution to increasing teachers" understanding of children's special needs' through involvement in workshops and research (Paragraph 18.17). Building on this, Warnock recommended that "each local education authority should have a center where research, development, and in-service training in special education are based and to which all the teachers in the area with responsibility for children with special needs can turn for help with their professional development" (Paragraph 18.17).

There has, since the early 2000s, been a distinctive and positive shift in the relationship between research and school-based practitioners in the UK and elsewhere. Teachers' and school leaders' awareness of and access to research, their engagement in and with research, and their active participation in research and evaluations have all increased markedly. SEN has though been a modest feature of an evidence-based practice movement dominated and overtaken by the needs of mainstream schools. The structures and processes relating to EBP are mainstream-centric; for example, in 2016, the first Research Schools were set up in England to promote the use of evidence to improve teaching practice. There are presently 22 Research Schools, which network with one another regionally and nationally, all of them sited in mainstream schools. Although generalist in nature, the creation and purpose of Research Schools mirrors the Warnock Committee's call for local hubs to provide training in special education. It would be a mark of progress and statement of intent going forward if several special schools joined the Research School network.

A Special Education Staff College

For Warnock, local training centers for classroom teachers were part of a bigger picture. She additionally identified a specific need for the professional skills bases of "experienced administrators, advisers, and teachers" to align with those of other professionals working with children and young people with SEN and their families—namely "psychologists, doctors, nurses, social workers, and careers officers." Unaware of any existing body able to coordinate multidisciplinary "high level conferences and courses in this complex field," Warnock recommended setting up "a body responsible for the further training of senior staff, which might be known as the Special Education Staff College" (Paragraph 18.18). It was also suggested that the Staff College "should have responsibilities for collecting and disseminating information about new research and developments" (Paragraph 18.21).

Like the SERG, the proposal for the Staff College was never actualized. However, as part of the awareness and growth of the EBP movement in education more generally, a number of partnerships have been established between schools and education departments in HEIs n the UK, alongside the growth in the availability and take-up of postgraduate programmes accessible to the teaching profession. Most recently, in 2017, the Chartered College of Teaching (CCT) was established with the aim of supporting teachers and leaders to work in a more effective, informed way. Following (perhaps unknowingly) a similar blueprint to the one set out by Warnock for the Staff College. Warnock suggested the Staff College "should receive an initial "pump-priming" grant from the Department of Education and Science" (Paragraph 18.20) and "be self-supporting… [via] conferences and courses in different parts of the country" (Paragraph 20.19). CCT was established with kick-starter funding from the Department for Education and aims to be self-sustaining through income from membership fees and events.

While indicative of an encouraging trend toward research engagement and dialogue and collaboration between educators and researchers, existing efforts to do this under the rubric of special education tend to be provincial (geographically) or niche, in terms of relating to a specific condition or type of SEN. In addition to the problem of convening the professions (as identified by Warnock above), the lack of coordination at the national level is perhaps another explanation for why the creation of a body or mechanism to bring together these professionals with research and practitioner colleagues from health, social, and education together, as envisaged by the 1978 report, has been so difficult to accomplish.

The Warnock Report does not comment on the relationship between them, but the Staff College had much in common with the strategic purpose and operational responsibilities of the proposed regional resource centers (Paragraph 18.7). The Inquiry missed an opportunity to bring greater coherence and coordination to these activities. If one considers that the teachers who would have been served by the dissemination and training activities of the resource centers, are the senior educators of the future, who would access professional learning via the Staff College, it may have been preferable to have had one overarching body.

Knowledge Mobilization

Throughout the sections in chapter 18 on (i) the promotion and coordination of research in special education, and (ii) the translation of research into practice, there is an acknowledgment of the importance of "knowledge mobilization" (KM)[1]. KM is the "relatively complex chain of activities, requiring distinct processes of research production, synthesis, distribution, transformation, and implementation" (Sharples, 2013). It is generally conceived as a bidirectional, collaborative process involving researchers, and practitioners.

The Warnock Committee made explicit recommendations about the organizational fora and physical spaces within which such collaboration could take place, but the Report had relatively little to say about how schools and HEIs might create the opportunities for KM-type work. Rose (2018) considers the path to "education as a research based profession" as dependent on winning over more researchers to the job of "working with teachers in setting the research agenda, involving them in the process and sharing in accessible dissemination of results." However, the more inhibiting factors are those affecting teachers. The accountability culture in education in England drives the behavior of school leaders and teachers, and even official analyses acknowledge how accountability processes are responsible for excessive workload (Department for Education, 2018b). The stakes for schools are so high, and the resources for improving educational outcomes for pupils with and without SEN are presently so limited, that engaging more in research and adopting EBP are at risk of being easily dismissed as unnecessary risk-taking, as creating yet more workload, and/or as irrelevant to accountability demands.

The task of putting education research into practice has been aided over the last 10 years by the creation of organizations such as the CCT and the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), both of which have school and classroom practitioners as their principle audience. It is interesting to note that these organizations (and others) are performing aspects of what was advocated in the Warnock Report chapter on research and development in special education over 40 years ago. What is also noteworthy is that this work is directed at children and young people *without* SEN, and that those *with* SEN have been somewhat left behind by these developments. For example, it was only after seven years of existence that the EEF established SEN as one of its strategic strands under which its activities are organized (Henderson, 2018).

Children and young people comprise 14.6% of the school population (Department for Education, 2018c). This is a substantial, disadvantaged constituency, who stand to benefit considerably from the greater application of evidence-based approaches in schools and classrooms. Encouragingly, around half the schools in England use the information and materials provided for free by the EEF to improve education effectiveness (Education Endowment Foundation, 2018). Even with this impressive reach, there is likely to be variability within schools; some teachers will be more research-engaged than others. The education system in England is, broadly speaking, in a promising position to push on with widening and deepening KM activities for SEN. However, policymakers will need to maintain efforts to address teacher workload alongside this to ensure the potential for EBP to transform pupils' experiences and outcomes is maximized.

AREAS IN WHICH RESEARCH IS NEEDED

Priorities for Research

On the basis of the activities that formed the Inquiry itself, the Warnock Committee concluded that further research was urgently needed in a range of areas. These are listed in a short 300-word section in chapter 18, though not in any order of priority (Paragraph 18.15). Five of the 13 areas related to the identification and assessment of specific types of SEN (i.e., maladjustment; specific difficulties with reading and writing) in specific groups of children and young people (i.e., pre-schoolers; post-16; those with English as an additional language). The Committee also recommended updating epidemiological studies, such as Rutter et al. (1970) Isle of Wight study "in order to obtain information about changes in the prevalence of different handicapping conditions, including regional differences" (Paragraph 18.15).

Four of the priority areas considered for investigation concern the administration and organization of provision for children and families (including residential schools and special needs services), and three of the areas invite further research into what goes on inside schools to meet the needs of those with

SEN. In the remainder of this the paper, we consider firstly the progress made in relation to this final set of research priorities (investigations at the school level), and secondly, propose some new priorities that build on Warnock's original suggestions and help address contemporary practice and policy challenges using contemporary methods.

School-Based Research on SEN

The publication of the Warnock Report catalyzed and gave fresh impetus to the research endeavor in special and inclusive education, greatly expanding the literature, and evidence base in a wealth of sub-disciplines (e.g., in relation to particular types of SEN). The progress made in the research relating to how schools accommodate and meet the needs of pupils with SEN deserves particular attention, as it can be seen as a subset of the wider advances made in research on mainstream education effectiveness and improvement.

Rose (2018) notes that much of the research in SEN published since the 1978 report is small-scale, which is perhaps not unexpected of empirical work involving heterogeneous populations. Rose does not discount the value or "local impact" of small-scale research at the school level, but his comments draw attention to the lack of large-scale studies, which have been relatively more common in the wider sphere of mainstream education research (i.e., research that involves or is primarily for the benefit of children and young people without SEN).

One exception was the seminal One in Five study, which investigated special needs in primary schools (Croll and Moses, 1985). One in Five was the first major survey of the nature of the difficulties that children with SEN experienced in the classroom context of mainstream primary schools. It responded directly to the Warnock Committee's call for new research on definition and assessment in special education, and the organizational factors that framed the everyday experiences of children with learning and behavioral difficulties. The One in Five study also captured teachers' views on integration during the period when the Education Act 1981 was being drawn up. Croll and Moses (2000) returned to the 50 schools that took part in the original study some 20 years later to collect follow-up data. Whilst this involved almost fresh cohort of teachers and leaders, it did provide valuable longitudinal data on how teachers' perceptions of and attitudes toward SEN and to those with SEN had developed over time.

Insights into how school organization has changed pre- and post-Warnock is provided by an analysis of the classroom experiences of 1,792 primary-aged pupils with and without SEN, between 1976 and 2012. Using results from the systematic observation component of the One in Five study and five other large systematic observation studies that produced comparable data, Webster (2015) found that results for the average pupil showed an increase over time in the proportion of time spent interacting with teachers and peers. In contrast, relative to their non-SEN peers, those with SEN experienced a more moderate increase in the proportion of time spent interacting with the teacher, and almost no change in the amount of time spent interacting with peers and in whole class teaching contexts. The increase in the number of teaching assistants (TAs) in mainstream primary settings, employed, and deployed to assist the learning and inclusion of pupils with SEN, is identified as a key observable influence on the difference between the classroom experiences of pupils with and without SEN over time.

Relatedly, in a series of publications from their Making a Statement and SEN in Secondary Education studies, Webster and Blatchford provide longitudinal evidence of the school journeys of a cohort of 48 pupils with high-level SEN, from primary mainstream into secondary mainstream and specialist settings (see Webster and Blatchford, 2013, 2015, 2018; Blatchford and Webster, 2018). Efforts to coordinate separate investigations of the nature and quality of the school experiences of children and young people with SEN, in order to assess changes over time and in relation to the experiences of those without SEN, make useful contributions to the literature. However, such work, typically reliant on secondary data from multiple sources, are proxies for the kind of large-scale, longitudinal research that draw primary data from a consistent source. This, suggested Tizard (1978), shows the limitations of a special and inclusive education research agenda that instead prioritizes "a series of *ad hoc* projects each lasting on average 3 years and all inadequately followed up."

The Power and Potential of Big Data

Tizard (1978) concluded that the Warnock Committee "missed an opportunity to bid for a really major research and development policy which could have important consequences not only for special education but for education as a whole." One could interpret this as a criticism that the Committee should have made a specific recommendation to institute at least one large-scale longitudinal cohort study capable of producing the kind of "big data" that helps address important social policy questions. Of course, the Warnock Committee was not tasked with predicting or preparing for advances in education research. However, any list of research priorities for SEN drawn up today must factor in the power and potential of big data.

The utilization of huge datasets, which can be analyzed to reveal patterns, trends, and associations is a relatively recent development in international research, made possible by significant technological advances in data processing and storage. Big data is changing decision-making in almost every sphere of policy (e.g., social, economic, environmental) and education—which produces vast amounts of information about schools and pupils—is no exception (Rabella, 2016).

An early example of using big data to answer research questions relating to inclusion comes from the UK context. Dyson et al. (2004) used national data on over 500,000 pupils in English mainstream schools to create variables related to local area and school-level inclusivity, and model "which might have an impact on pupils' measured attainments." Their results showed that there were "few if any negative impacts of inclusion on the attainments and achievements of pupils without SEN" (Dyson et al., 2004). The emergent international research evidence on this question is quite consistent with this. Szumski et al. (2017) conducted a meta-analysis of 47 individual studies from a number of jurisdictions, covering a total sample of almost 4,800,000 pupils, and found that the presence of pupils with SEN in inclusive classrooms is positively, though weakly, associated with the academic achievement of pupils without SEN.

Robust and up-to-date evidence on the economic benefits of education (i.e., in terms of achieving qualifications) is critical to educational investment decisions. Evidence from such research is not only attractive to policymakers (Hayward et al., 2014), but increasingly, via activities such as the Research Excellence Framework, researchers have a greater incentive to demonstrate the impact of their work beyond academia, and also build it in from the start, by formulating research questions and designs that have public policy relevance.

There are good reasons policymakers should consider supporting system reform that would lead to more inclusive models of schooling. A maturing evidence base that suggests there are significant long-term economic and social costs involved in failing children and young people with SEN, as revealed in the correlations between SEN and exclusion; low attainment; being neither in education, employment or training; and youth crime (House of Commons Education Skills Committee, 2006). Early, sustained intervention not only saves money and lives, but also enriches society and the national economy. A review of the literature for the European Commission found evidence to suggest that young people with disabilities who attend an inclusive setting are more likely to gain employment and be financially independent on leaving education; whereas those who attend segregated settings are less likely to have friendships and social networks in their adult life (European Agency for Special Needs Inclusive Education, 2018). That including pupils with SEN in mainstream lessons has no detrimental effect on other pupils, in effect, kicks the legs out from one of the most persistent arguments against inclusion.

Warnock's case for the greater inclusion of children and young people with SEN in mainstream settings was argued mainly from a social justice and moral perspective. The Inquiry itself was set up to advise on appropriate environments for educating those whose were previously considered "ineducable," following changes in the law precipitated by the Education (Handicapped Children) Act 1970, which meant that every child and young person was required to attend school. Compelling though this was (and still is), the Committee's decision not to cost their proposals meant that the overall case for inclusion was missing an important economic angle, which would no doubt have been as interesting to policymakers 40 years ago as it would be today. On one hand, Warnock avoided raising the technical and politically-sensitive issues of how to fund the recommendations and where the money would come from. But on the other hand, the report lacked evidence of any potential cost-benefit. Caginess about the upfront financing of widespread reform meant that there was little discussion of the future savings to the public purse, in terms of young people with learning difficulties or disabilities contributing to the economy through paid employment, instead of subsisting on state benefits. The evolution of education research and policymaking, and the potential of big data, requires us to lose our shyness about advancing the economic case for inclusion.

It is important to note that existing big datasets in the UK may help assess the impacts of inclusion (i.e., in terms of social and economic effects); however, they tend not be sufficiently powered to address well-specified research and policy questions concerning children and young people with particular types of SEN. Variables relating to the SEN population in large-scale longitudinal datasets, such as the UK Millennium Cohort Study, are quite limited. An additional large dataset encompassing infants, children, young people, and young adults that reflects the heterogeneity of the SEN population is necessary for not only detecting trends relating to needs identification and assessment, achievement (academic and otherwise), and progression into adulthood and employment in a comprehensive and systematic way, but these data could also feed into robust analyses of the economic impact of inclusion.

Any national government or administration that lays claim to evidence-based education policymaking must have a large-scale longitudinal cohort study of children and young people with SEN near the top of its list of research priorities. However, worthwhile, correlational studies based using such data may be insufficient for moving debates about policy and practice unless there is an attendant effort to take account of what actually happens in schools and classrooms for learners with SEN. Pupil-level data on processes and experiences of teaching and learning are not as abundant as big data on outcomes, and so we know less about what might need to change in real-world schools and classrooms, and how, if improvements are to be made.

While researchers appear able to define the features and impacts of inclusive settings, the characteristics of teaching and curricula (the "how" and the "what") are less clear. Indeed, evidence from the systematic reviews of the impact of inclusive approaches (e.g., Kalambouka et al., 2005; Hehir et al., 2016) is reticent on the practical issues of implementation. Broad statements about success are worthy, but lack precision: it is not exclusively a matter of additional financial resources; more or better training; and teachers and other professionals needing to "regularly engage in collaborative problem-solving" (Hehir et al., 2016). Consequently, the active ingredients of effective "inclusive" classroom teaching and learning for pupils with (and without) SEN remain elusive. Identifying and validating these characteristics ought to be an additional priority for future research. This is important in view of KM efforts mentioned earlier, as it makes it more likely that the most appropriate and impactful research is translated into practice.

CONCLUSION

This paper considered the content of chapter 18 of the Warnock Inquiry report, which focused on the important and valuable role of research and development in special education. The Committee's recommendations represented an ambitious agenda for research and practice in special education, and expressed: (i) the need for high-level, applied academic posts, which required postholders to work with teachers and/or children with SEN; (ii) the creation of "major centers of influence" (Paragraph 18.22) capable of coordinating a range of research, dissemination and cross-disciplinary professional learning; and (iii) priority areas for research.

Forty years on, perhaps the most successful elements of these proposals concerns special and inclusive education as an academic discipline. Education departments in HEIs across the UK now have senior specialist appointments involved in teaching and research. The last four decades has produced a vast theoretical and empirical literature across the field. As a result, our education system is better informed and pupils with SEN are better served. There are, however, policymakers, practitioners, professionals, parents, and pupils, as well as researchers, who will take issue with this assessment, and point to the ways in which elements of the reform agenda never really got out of the starting blocks, and how children and young people with SEN and their families continue to be failed, in whole or in part, by the current education system.

Empirical research and the scholarly literature on SEN is forever a work in progress. A motivation for writing this paper was to highlight how one of the shortest chapters in the Warnock Report has provided one of its most enduring, though often overlooked, legacies. The Warnock Inquiry simultaneously cemented special and inclusive education into the broader discipline of education research, while putting forward an architecture to ensure its outputs are not locked up in a metaphorical ivory tower, but actively inform the everyday functions of teaching and school leadership. Four decades on, it remains a worthwhile blueprint for advancing research and development in special and inclusive education.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

There are subtle distinctions between knowledge mobilization (KM), knowledge transfer (KT), knowledge translation (also KT), knowledge exchange (KE), knowledge transfer and exchange (KTE), knowledge translation and transfer (KTT), and knowledge integration (KI). However, all of these terms essentially describe the same process of connecting research with practice and/or policy.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

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What Drives Educational Support for Children With Developmental Language Disorder or Autism Spectrum Disorder: Needs, or Diagnostic Category?

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A central conceptual change in the Warnock report, the first type report of a UK government committee on the education of children and young people with all types of special educational needs (Department for Education and Science, 1978), was the shift from categorization of children and young people by handicap to the identification of individuals' special educational needs (SEN). However, the focus on categories has persisted. In this paper we examine the relationship between the educational provision made for children with SEN in relation to diagnostic categories as opposed to assessed needs. We draw on data from one of the studies in the Better Communication Research Programme which was commissioned by the UK government in response to the Bercow Review (2008) into provision for children and young people with speech, language and communication needs. Data were collected from 74 mainstream schools in England about the support provided to two groups of children with identified SEN ($N = 157$, Mean age 10;2 years): those with developmental language disorder (DLD) $n = 93$ and those with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) $n = 64$. Information was collected about school support and support by external professionals (speech and language therapists (SLTs), educational psychologists and other support services). The type and level of support provided was examined and the ways in which these differed between children with a diagnosis of DLD or ASD explored. We considered whether the support provided varied according to within child or contextual factors. In addition, change in the provision made over a 2 year time period was examined. To our knowledge this is the first study to concurrently recruit pupils with DLD and ASD from the same mainstream settings to examine differences and similarities in their profiles and the ways in which these impact on service delivery. The results demonstrated provision for children with DLD and ASD continues to be driven by diagnostic categories, and that children with ASD are significantly more likely to receive support from schools and SLTs, independent of

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children's language, literacy, cognitive scores and behavior. Driving amount of provision by diagnostic category limits the possibility of providing effective provision to meet the children's individual language and learning needs. This raises serious questions about the allocation of support resources and, by corollary, indicates the likelihood currently of an inequitable allocation of support to children and young people with DLD.

Keywords: Warnock Report, developmental language disorder (DLD), ASD, support in schools, children's needs

INTRODUCTION

The Warnock Report (Department for Education and Science, 1978) constituted the first comprehensive review of special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities in the UK. One of its main themes was a move away from the use of disability labels to a focus on children's needs. This was based in part on evidence from epidemiological studies that children may have two or more types of difficulties, and hence complex combinations of needs (Rutter et al., 1970). For example, children with significant hearing loss may also have significant problems with verbal and written communication, behavior, mental health, and learning; some might also have physical disabilities. In this paper we examine the relationship between the provision made for children with SEN in relation to diagnostic categories as opposed to assessed needs, drawing upon evidence from a study of children and young people with either developmental language disorder (DLD) or autism spectrum disorders (ASD).

There has been continued concern about meeting the additional needs of children with SEN in mainstream settings. Children with DLD and those with ASD raise particular levels of concern, albeit for different reasons. For children with DLD there have been concerns about identification (Dockrell and Hurry, 2018) and provision of additional speech and language therapy (Ebbels et al., 2019), while for those with ASD concerns have been raised about managing behavior (Lindsay et al., 2013) and support for difficulties in social communication (Roberts and Simpson, 2016). For both groups of children, the need for additional support, the manner in which this support is provided, the scarcity of trained professionals to work with pupils, and the limited evidence base underpinning effective interventions have raised concerns among researchers, professionals, and parents. Yet to date there has been no attempt to map support provided to pupils with these different primary needs in mainstream settings and to examine the support in relation to their performance on standardized measures of language, literacy, cognition and behavior, restricting the evidence base to inform models of practice. Drawing on data collected from a cohort of pupils identified in mainstream settings with either DLD or ASD, as part of the Better Communication Research Programme (BCRP: Dockrell et al., 2014), we examined the support that was provided to the pupils by school staff and speech and language therapists (SLTs). We further considered whether the manner (in class, small group, or individual) and amount of support that was provided were related to their diagnosis, age group, or level of need as indicated by measures of language, literacy, cognition and behavior. Finally, we examined changes in reported levels of support over time to ascertain the extent to which schools and speech and language therapy services continued to provide support to the children, given the accumulating evidence that these problems would continue throughout the pupils' time in schools (DLD: Ebbels et al., 2019; ASD: Adams et al., 2016).

The Warnock Report and Support

The main focus of the Warnock Report with respect to support of children and young people with SEN was at the level of structure and organization (Department for Education and Science, 1978). A substantial part of the report discussed principles, conceptualization of SEN, inclusion, and services. In each case there was relatively little content regarding the micro level of how children and young people with SEN should be identified and supported. For example, the need for teachers and pupils to receive support, was stressed (para 8.45) and the roles and functions of the Advice and Support Service (Chapter 13) and that of educational psychologists and other external services (Chapter 14) were explored, but not direct support for children. Even Chapter 11, "Curricular Considerations" had little to say on that subject. To enhance the attainments and opportunities for pupils with SEN it is necessary to capture their needs and consider how this impacts on the support that they are provided with.

At the time of the present study there were two levels of additional support in mainstream schools for pupils with SEN: school action and school action plus arranged within the school from its own resources but including visiting professionals e.g., educational psychologists; and, secondly, provision specified by the local authority (LA) in a statement of SEN, following a statutory assessment. Under the new SEN legislation (the Children and Families Act, 2014) school action and school action plus have been replaced by SEN support, and statements of SEN by education, health and care plans (EHC plans: Department for Education, 2015), Support for children and young people with DLD or ASD is provided in a range of ways, from the level of school provision: specialist provision within mainstream schools (resource bases) and specialist schools;; to the individual level: e.g., individual or group support, speech and language therapists (SLTs), peripatetic specialist teachers, and pedagogical approaches including special manualized teaching and learning programmes (Roulstone et al., 2012).

We explore the support provided for children and young people in mainstream schools who were identified with either DLD or ASD and whose needs were addressed at School action plus or by a statement. We explore the support provided in a large sample of mainstream schools and the relationship between the provision made and their primary diagnosis (DLD or ASD).

Support for Children and Young People With DLD or ASD

Concerns about the levels of support and the ways in which this is provided to pupils with DLD are not new (Lindsay et al., 2010; Bishop et al., 2012). Attention has been drawn to scarcity of speech and language therapy services and also specialist provision, particularly for pupils in secondary education (Lindsay et al., 2005; Dockrell et al., 2006) and this has led to considerable debates about the ways in which the pupils' needs should be identified and supported (Ebbels et al., 2019) in the context of the limited training and knowledge base reported by teachers (Roberts and Simpson, 2016; Dockrell et al., 2017). There is also increasing recognition that many children can experience difficulties with oral language, including children with ASD for whom this is often a co-occurring problem (Dockrell et al., 2015).

In addition, there have been major debates about the etiology and classification of children and young people with language and communication difficulties. Until recently, the dominant distinction was between children who had "specific language impairment" (SLI) and others with similar difficulties but who met specific exclusion criteria, in particular that their general cognitive ability was at a lower level (often defined as $-1SD$). However, critical examination of the research evidence did not support this (Bishop, 2014), leading to a consensus being reached, following a major Delphi exercise, to use the term "developmental language disorder" (DLD; Bishop et al., 2016, 2017). The term, DLD, is now being used by many researchers and practitioners. However, it covers a wider group than the earlier SLI (Bishop et al., 2017); in particular there is no restriction for inclusion on the grounds of lower general cognitive ability. Within the education system in England, however, the term "speech, language, and communication needs" (SLCN) is the official term by the Department of Education (2015). This is broader than DLD, including, for example, children and young people with speech difficulties.

While debates about diagnostic criteria to identify DLD raise problems for researchers and practitioners alike, there is also increasing interest in comparing the profiles of children with DLD and ASD. The potential overlap between the two cohorts has been a matter of considerable debate (Bishop et al., 2000; Williams et al., 2008). DLD is primarily associated with structural language impairments whereas social communication (pragmatic) impairments are typically thought to characterize ASD. There is, however, increasing evidence that the boundaries between the two disorders are not clear (Bishop, 2003), including our own work on writing (Dockrell et al., 2014), behavioral, emotional, and social difficulties (Charman et al., 2015), and work by others on the well-established difficulties with structural aspects of language that children with ASD experience (Kjelgaard and Tager-Flusberg, 2001). Developmental language disorder is more prevalent than ASD (Bishop, 2010). However, ASD remains the more well-known condition and the one which attracts the most research funding (Bishop, 2010), although the majority of funding for ASD supports basic science including genetics and cognitive systems (Singh et al., 2009). By corollary, twice as many children in England have a statement of SEN or an education, health and care (EHC) plan for autism than they do for SLCN (28.2 vs. 14.6% of children with a statement or EHC plan: Department for Education, 2018a). Indeed, ASD is the most prevalent primary type of SEN category across ages 4–17 for those pupils with a statement or EHC plan (Department for Education, 2018a).

Language skills in ASD are variable. While some individuals with ASD do not have obvious difficulties with language, others have language skills which mirror profiles typical of children with DLD (Simms and Jin, 2015); although higher general cognitive ability is associated with better language in ASD populations (Magiati et al., 2014), language skills can be independent (Kjelgaard and Tager-Flusberg, 2001). Nor does it seem to be the case that the language difficulties of children with ASD are less severe for expressive rather than receptive language as might be predicted because of their reported difficulties with pragmatics. Kjelgaard and Tager-Flusberg (2001) found no differences between expressive and receptive tasks which tapped higher order knowledge of syntax and semantics, although single word naming was a relative strength. However, in ASD, speech production can be preserved and there is some indication that pupils with ASD are better at sentence repetition than those with DLD (Whitehouse et al., 2008). Thus, pupils with ASD are at risk of language difficulties but typically do not have problems with speech. The increased association between language difficulties and ASD has been captured in DSM-5 where autism can be diagnosed with or without language impairment (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; see also Loucas et al., 2008).

ASD features have also been documented in samples of children and young people with DLD (Bartak et al., 1975; Bishop et al., 2000; Conti-Ramsden and Botting, 2004; Dockrell et al., 2015). For example, 41% of a DLD sample (total $n = 45$) met ASD criteria for social communication impairments on measures commonly used to diagnose ASD (Leyfer et al., 2008). Pupils with DLD in this study showed difficulties in social behaviors including not showing appropriate interest in other children and failing to spontaneously imitate actions. However, repetitive and compulsive behaviors were seen rarely in the language impaired sample.

Overall, the evidence suggests that there is significant overlap between the DLD and ASD populations in some core features, but it is less clear how these impact on the way pupils' needs are met in schools. To our knowledge this is the first study to concurrently recruit pupils with DLD and ASD from the same mainstream settings to examine differences and similarities in their profiles and the ways in which these impact on service delivery.

Support Within the Education System

Within the state school system of compulsory education for children and young people in England between 5 and 16 years of age, pupils with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) (which includes DLD) comprise the second highest category of SEN: 22.8% of those receiving SEN support and 14.6% of those with an EHC plan or statement of SEN (Department for

Education, 2018a). The most prevalent SEN group with an EHC plan or statement comprises pupils with ASD: 28.2%, whereas the percentage of pupils receiving SEN support is 5.7%. Furthermore, the prevalence nationally of pupils with SLCN (SEN support, or EHC plan or statement) increased over seven years (2005–2011) from 0.9% of all pupils aged 5–16 to 1.61%, an increase of 72% (Lindsay and Strand, 2016); and for pupils with ASD from 0.48 to 0.87%, an increase of 87% (Strand and Lindsay, 2012). This very high, and increasing, prevalence of pupils with either SLCN or ASD presents substantial challenges to the education system to provide appropriate provision which matches their profile of difficulties.

Types of Provision

Within schools in England the most common support for pupils with SEN in mainstream schools, including those with SLCN and ASD, comprises teaching assistants (TAs). Their number has grown substantially, reflecting the growth in the prevalence of pupils identified. Currently, TAs represent 27.8% of the national school workforce, compared with 47.7% who are teachers, with an increase from 219,800 TAs to 262,800 between 2011 and 2017 (Department for Education, 2018b). Evidence for the effectiveness of TAs, however, is limited and the major Deployment and Impact of Support Staff (DISS) study found a negative relationship between the amount of TA support received and the academic progress made by pupils in mainstream school (Webster et al., 2011; see also Muijs and Reynolds, 2003).

However, the DISS study was only able to control for a small number of factors related to more TA support (e.g., prior attainment and SEN status) and did not examine individual pupils' knowledge and skills. It may be that children, despite having a similar SEN status, with greater levels of impairment were in receipt of TA support or that co-occurring difficulties, such as behavior/ attention problems, resulted in higher levels of support. Nonetheless, positive effects were found in Year 9 (13–14 year olds) in the DISS study, when there was a clear positive effect of TA support across all eight positive approaches to learning outcomes measured in the study: teacher ratings of distractibility, task confidence, motivation, task confidence, disruptiveness, independence, completion of assigned work, and following instructions from adults (Blatchford et al., 2009). Also, a review by Farrell et al. (2010) found that academic achievements of pupils of primary age who had learning difficulties showed significant improvement following a period of targeted intervention delivered by TAs. However, when the support was more general, results were equivocal, which suggests that support should be shaped by pupils' specific profile of educational needs. Indeed, a range of studies have demonstrated that interventions should be targeted directly to the child's area of difficulty than at a more generic level (see for example Bowyer-Crane et al., 2008).

Given the significant number of TAs and their cost, the mixed evidence for their effectiveness is of great concern. Consequently, other research has sought to identify the specific elements of TA work with pupils that may have benefits, and training has been developed to assist the development of this substantial workforce (Webster et al., 2013; Sharples et al., 2015). It is also important to note that this research on effectiveness has been undertaken primarily on children with general learning difficulties, and behavior difficulties, rather than DLD or ASD. There is some evidence for the potential of TAs, or paraprofessionals in the U.S., with respect to helping pupils with ASD to improve their socialization (Koegel et al., 2014) and a range of learning, behavior and communication abilities (Rispoli et al., 2011; Brock and Carter, 2013).

Speech and language therapists (SLTs) are key providers of support for children and young people with DLD. The SLT profession has developed its practice to work more in and with schools, allowing both the opportunity for direct therapy with individual children, group work, and also consultation with teachers (Law et al., 2002; Lindsay and Dockrell, 2002; Roulstone et al., 2012). In addition, a major review of the effectiveness of interventions provides SLTs and other teachers, and parents, with information upon which to plan appropriate action (Law et al., 2012, 2015) and which is available through the Communication Trust[1]. However, these studies have not mapped support to level of need.

The Current Study

In this study we investigated the provision made for children and young people in mainstream schools with either DLD or ASD. This comprised part of a prospective longitudinal study within the Better Communication Research Programme (Dockrell et al., 2015). As part of the main study, we collected information on the pupils themselves and the context in which they were learning. Our three research questions were:

1. What type and level of support, in terms of school provision and SLT provision were reported to be provided and how did this differ with respect to the diagnostic categories of DLD and ASD?
2. How did the support provided vary according to within child language, literacy, cognitive and behavioral performance?
3. What change was evident over an 18 month time frame in the provision made?

METHODS

Design

This study utilized a cross-sequential design, allowing both longitudinal (Time 1 vs. Time 2) and cross-sectional (pupils recruited in four school years) comparisons. Pupils from 4 year groups were identified in the initial screening phase, which began in November 2009. The majority of pupils (90%) were screened between November 2009 and July 2010 (2009/2010 academic year) when they were in school Years 1 (age 6), 3 (age 8), 5 (age 10), and 7 (12). The screening procedure is detailed in **Figure 1**. Data from a wide range of measures (see Measures) were then collected at Time 1 and Time 2 (on average 18 months later); with selected measures repeated across these time points to provide longitudinal data.

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[1] https://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/whatworks

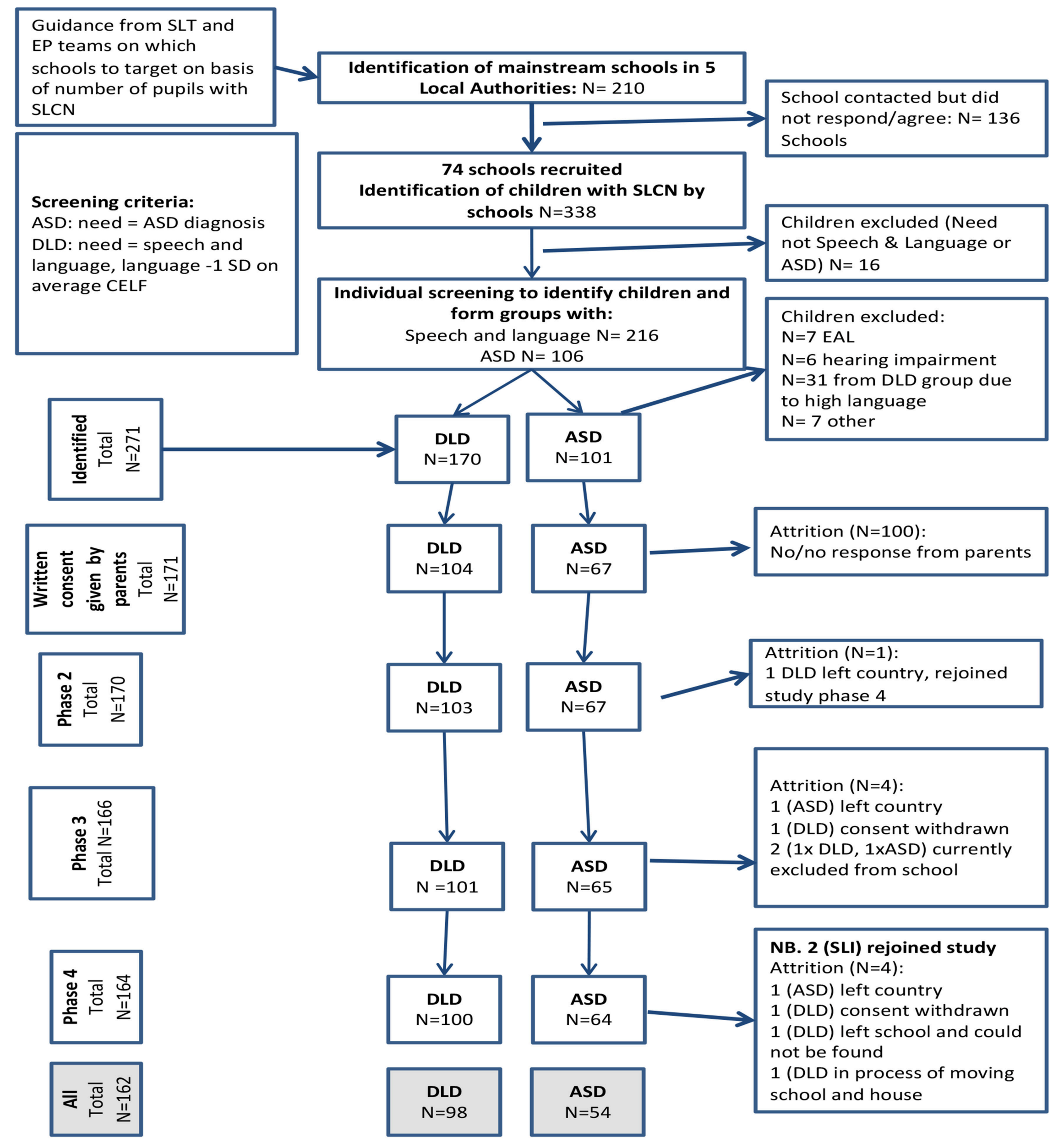

FIGURE 1 | Flow diagram showing inclusion criteria, exclusion criteria and attrition in the sample.

Participants

At the time of the research, children in England with the highest level of SEN had a statement of SEN under the Education Act, 1996, which specified special education provision not normally made by the child's school from its own resources. Children with lesser but still substantial additional difficulties, which required support from specialist services from outside the school, for example an SLT or an educational (school) psychologist (EP), had a level of need designated as school action plus. In each case the primary need was specified and reported to the Department for Education through the school census.

Participant Selection

Recruitment to the sample was drawn from a screening of five Local Authorities (LAs) in the South East of England. To ensure comparability and representativeness there were three criteria which LAs needed to meet to participate in the study: (1) commensurate with national averages for the proportion of pupils with recorded SEN; (2) commensurate with national averages for the proportion of pupils with SLCN or ASD as their primary difficulty and (3) were at or above the national average for performance of pupils on combined English and Maths national curriculum tests at age 11. Across LAs, 210

TABLE 1 | Participant characteristics for DLD and ASD groups.

		DLD ($n = 93$)		ASD ($n = 64$)				
		Mean	***SD***	**Mean**	***SD***	***t***	**Significance**	**Cohens' D**
Demographic factors	Chronological age in months	105.83	29.58	112.71	24.45	$t_{(113)} = -1.29$	*ns*	0.28
	School year group	3.45	2.6	4.32	2.27	$t_{(113)} = -1.82$	*ns*	0.35
	Income Deprivation Indices	0.29	0.16	0.33	0.19	$t_{(110)} = -1.41$	*ns*	0.22
Non-verbal ability z score	BAS-II Matrices z- score	−0.51	1.22	−0.31	1.24	$t_{(121)} = -0.88$	*ns*	0.16
Oral language skills z score	CELF[a]-expressive language	−2.42	0.77	−1.65	1.21	$t_{(163.25)} = -3.75$	0.001	0.75
	CELF-receptive language	−1.74	0.75	−1.14	1.07	$t_{(67.22)} = -3.19$	0.002	0.65
Autism symptomatology z score	SRS	0.50	0.98	1.76	1.07	$t_{(104)} = -6.17$	0.001	1.23
Literacy z score	SWRT	−0.95	0.95	−0.34	1.12	$t_{(104)} = 3.08$	0.003	0.59
	YARC comprehension	−0.91	0.65	−0.51	1.09	$t_{(58.96)} = -1.95$	ns	0.45
	BAS spelling	−0.50	1.29	0.08	1.2	$t_{(106)} = -2.40$	0.02	0.47
BESD z score	SDQ Total	0.89	1.29	1.27	1.18	$t_{(84)} = -1.39$	*ns*	0.30

[a] *When pupils had not completed all the tests to achieve an index score we produced an average of the relevant tests completed. This occurred for 15 pupils across both groups.*

mainstream schools were approached, 74 of which agreed to take part in the study. Following agreement from the schools, pupils were identified at the start of the study who were aged 6, 8, 10, and 12 years, attending mainstream provision and had SLCN or ASD as their primary SEN, according to their school. All participants spoke English as a first language and had no history of hearing impairment or uncorrected eyesight. Subsequently, we conducted a screening phase to ensure that participants from the SLCN group met criteria for DLD according to the fourth UK edition of the Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals (CELF-4 UK: Semel et al., 2006; see Measures and Procedure below). Participants were identified as having DLD if they obtained a standardized score that was below the average range i.e., greater than one standard deviation below the mean < $-1SD$) on either the Recalling Sentences or Word Classes (total score) subtest from the CELF-4 UK.

During screening we also administered the matrices subtest from the second edition of the British Ability Scales (BAS-II; Elliott et al., 1997) as a measure of non-verbal ability. During this phase, teachers were also asked to complete the Social Responsiveness Scale (SRS) (Constantino and Gruber, 2005) to confirm the clinical diagnosis of ASD and to use as a dimensional measure of autism symptomatology.

The 157 school aged participants (M age = 10;2 years; SD = 2;2) comprised 93 with DLD (males 68: females 25) and 64 with ASD (males 57: females 7). Twenty-five percent of the participants were eligible for free school meals, an index of socioeconomic disadvantage. There were no significant differences in social disadvantage between participants with DLD and those with ASD [X^2 (2, $N = 154$) = 0.21, *ns*]. Moreover, this percentage reflected the level of disadvantage of the schools and LAs from where the pupils were recruited. Data on ethnicity were available from the Department for Education for 115 pupils; of these 69 were of white heritage, 23 Asian 11 Black, and 12 mixed heritage. There was no significant difference with respect to ethnicity between participants with DLD and those with ASD [X^2 (5, $N = 112$) = 0.24, *ns*].

Participants' Scores on Screening Measures

Table 1 provides M (SD) and effect sizes (Cohen, 1988) for these participants on age, index of deprivation and the standardized measures of non-verbal ability, language (expressive and receptive), autism symptomatology, literacy (single word reading, reading comprehension and spelling), and behavioral, emotional and social difficulties (BESD) as measured by the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ). Data for all standardized measures have been transformed to Z scores, which have a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1 to allow comparisons across all the measures, which use different standard metrics e.g., T scores, stanines and standard scores. These Z scores are derived from scores using the test normative samples and take into account the age of participants. For example, a Z score of -1 would equate to a standard score of 85 and a percentile rank of 10, while a Z score of -2 would equate to a standard score of 70 and a percentile rank of 2.

As **Table 1** shows, the two cohorts did not differ in terms of age, index of deprivation, non-verbal ability or BESD. There were significant differences with large effect sizes for measures of language: in all cases the pupils with DLD were demonstrating significantly greater difficulties. By contrast, and as expected, the pupils with ASD were significantly more impaired on the measure of autism symptomatology, again with a large effect size. Apart from reading comprehension all non-significant effects had smaller effect sizes.

Measures

Non-verbal Ability

British Ability Scales Matrices (BAS II; Elliott et al., 1997). Participants are presented with an incomplete pattern and are required to select the picture that will complete the pattern. The BAS-II technical manual reports modified split-half correlation coefficients as a measure of internal reliability ($r = 0.79$–0.92). Test-retest reliability is also reported ($r = 0.64$). Correlation with the Performance IQ scale from the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children 3rd edition (Wechsler, 1991) is reported as $r = 0.47$.

Oral Language

Receptive vocabulary

In the British Picture Vocabulary Scale (BPVS-III; Dunn and Dunn, 2009), participants hear a word and select a referent from ***four*** alternatives. The BPVS-III provides norms for individuals aged 3–16 years. Reliability is reported as 0.91 and validity with the WISC as $r = 0.76$.

Receptive grammar

In the Test for Reception of Grammar (TROG-E; Bishop, 2005), participants hear a series of sentences that increase in grammatical complexity and select a target from one of four alternatives. A computer is used to present items and record responses. The TROG-E provides norms for individuals aged 4 years to adult. High internal consistency is reported ($r = 0.88$) indicating good reliability; correlation with concepts and directions from CELF-3 (Semel et al., 2000) is $r = 0.53$.

Formulated sentences

In the formulated sentences subtest of the CELF-4 UK (Semel et al., 2006), students are asked to formulate a syntactically and semantically correct sentence in response to an orally presented target word or phrase, with a stimulus picture for reference. Internal consistency is $r = 0.75$–0.89 and test-retest reliability $r = 0.86$.

Autism Symptomatology

The SRS (Constantino and Gruber, 2005) was completed by teachers. Respondents are presented with a series of statements relating to autism symptomatology and indicate the frequency of their occurrence. The SRS generates a total score based on measures of social awareness, social cognition, social communication, social motivation, and autism mannerisms. Norms are provided for individuals aged 4–18 years. A high level of internal consistency was reported using Cronbach's alpha values for teachers (male $\alpha = 0.97$ and female $\alpha = 0.96$). Correlations between the teacher SRS and the subscales from the Autism Diagnostic Instrument-Revised (ADI-R) show high levels of validity ($r = 0.52$ to $r = 0.70$).

Literacy

The Single Word Reading Test (SWRT; Foster, 2007), in which children read a list of words, provides a measure of word reading accuracy for children attending primary schools. An extended version of the SWRT (with additional more difficult words) was used with children attending secondary schools (Stothard et al., 2010). These word reading tasks were untimed.

The York Assessment of Reading for Comprehension (YARC Form A; Snowling et al., 2009; Stothard et al., 2010) provided a measure of reading comprehension for each participant at each time point. The primary and secondary versions of the YARC are aimed at children attending UK primary (4–11 years) and secondary (11–16 years) schools, respectively. At each time point, children read one passage and answered a series of open-ended comprehension questions, some of which referred to literal information contained within the text while others required an inference to be made. The child's age determined the version presented (primary vs. secondary) and their word reading score (SWRT) determined passage difficulty within each version. The YARC assessments can yield measures of text reading accuracy and/or rate but this depends on the version and passage completed. Since these scores were missing for many participants, we chose to report only the comprehension measure from the YARC, which was available for all participants, and use the SWRT as our measure of reading accuracy.

The BAS-II (Elliott et al., 1997) spelling subtest. Students are asked to spell a series of single words. The BAS-II provides norms for individuals aged 5 years to adult. The BAS-II technical manual reports modified split-half correlation coefficients as a measure of internal reliability ($r = 0.84$–0.96 depending on age group). Test-retest reliability is also reported ($r = 0.64$). Validity has been established with the Wechsler Objective Reading Dimensions (WORD; Rust et al., 1993) at $r = 0.63$.

Social and Emotional Behavior

Teachers completed the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ: Goodman, 1997). The SDQ comprises 5 subscales: Hyperactivity, Conduct problems, Emotional symptoms, Peer problems, and Prosocial behavior. Screening cut-offs (www.sdqinfo.com) are available to identify children with "abnormal" levels of difficulties—the highest 10%ile from over 8,000 teacher ratings (Meltzer et al., 2000). Each item is scored 0–2, with subscale scores across 5 items ranging from 0 to 10; higher scores indicating higher levels of psychopathology (with the exception of the Prosocial behavior subscale where lower scores indicate higher levels of psychopathology). The Hyperactivity, Emotional symptoms, Conduct problems and Peer relationship subscales comprise the Total Difficulties scale (range 0–40).

SENCO questionnaire

A bespoke questionnaire was developed for special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs) to provide information about support for the pupils with DLD and ASD attending their schools. Specifically, we asked SENCOs to comment on: specialist provision made within the school for the specific child in the study (e.g., from TAs, SENCOs or a resource base); support from professionals external to the school (in particular SLTs and EPs); administrative and other support (e.g., time for writing reports, meeting parents); and special resources purchased outside normal school provision (e.g., specialist programmes). Data were reported in hours per week for in school support and hours per term for external professionals and administration time.

Procedure

All participants were assessed individually by a qualified speech and language therapist or a psychologist. The first testing session involved the screening measures. Three subsequent sessions occurred with pupils completing all assessments in a standard order. The SRS, SDQ, and the SENCO questionnaire were discussed with the SENCO who completed each in their own time and returned it to the research team. SENCOs completed

TABLE 2 | Differences between pupils for whom questionnaires were either not returned, were returned at one point only or were returned at both study waves.

Questionnaires returned	None		One		Two		
Z Score	**Mean**	***SD***	**Mean**	***SD***	**Mean**	***SD***	**ANOVA**
BAS-II matrices	-0.21	1.32	-0.08	1.29	-0.64	1.08	[$F_{(2,155)} = 3.72$, $p = 0.03$]
CELF-expressive	-1.82	1.32	-2.19	1.18	-1.92	1.16	[$F_{(2,131)} = 1.029$, *ns*]
CELF-receptive	-1.10	1.09	-1.35	0.95	-1.52	0.98	[$F_{(2,155)} = 1.718$, *ns*]
Single word reading (SWRT)	-0.92	1.13	-0.81	1.08	-0.52	1.08	[$F_{(2,143)} = 1.656$, *ns*]
Reading comprehension (YARC)	-0.52	0.91	-0.71	1.03	-0.67	0.87	[$F_{(2,128)} = 0.39$, *ns*]
Spelling (BAS-II)	-0.69	1.48	-0.43	1.28	-0.20	1.20	[$F_{(2,147)} = 1.406$, *ns*]
Social responsiveness scale	1.42	1.35	0.88	1.16	1.13	1.18	[$F_{(2,145)} = 1.821$, *ns*]
Strengths and difficulties questionnaire	1.04	1.55	1.10	1.13	0.93	0.97	[$F_{(2,143)} = 0.287$, *ns*]

the SENCO questionnaire at two time points: in the first year of the project and 2 years later.

Ethical approval was provided for the study by the University of Warwick Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee, which adheres to the British Psychological Societies guidelines for all phases of the study. Schools agreed to participate in the study in the first instance. Parents were provided with project information and signed an opt in consent for their child. All child participants were provided with written information about the project in a child appropriate manner prior to the commencement of any testing. This information was also read to the children and children made their response orally. This was noted by the researcher. Participants were informed that they could withdraw from the project at any point or from individual assessments.

Data Verification and Data Analyses

All data were entered into a data file with a 10 percent check for data entry accuracy. The first research question examining support and nature of provision between the two diagnostic categories was examined through a series of Chi square tests to examine distribution of the support provided. Stepwise linear regression examined the language, literacy, cognition, and diagnosis as predictors of the support provided to the children. Finally, a repeated measures ANCOVA evaluated the change in hours of support over the 18 month time period.

RESULTS

The results are presented in four sections to address the specific research questions. A minority of SENCOs failed to complete the questionnaire at all and in some cases a questionnaire was only returned at one time point. Therefore, first we examined differences between participants where no questionnaire was received at the first time point, only one questionnaire was returned or the questionnaire was returned at both times. Section 2 explores the support provided for the participants with DLD and ASD. Section 3 examines the relationships between standardized measures of language, non-verbal ability and working memory, and the support provided. Finally, we examine changes in provision received by the pupils over time.

Differences Between Participants Where Support Data Were Received and Those for Whom It Was Absent

One hundred and fifteen SENCO questionnaires were received from the schools during the first wave of the project (73% response rate; DLD = 71, ASD = 44) and 93 during the second wave, 18 months later (59% response rate; DLD = 47, ASD = 43). Questionnaires were received at both time points for 73 participants. We first examined whether there was a difference between the cohorts in response rate across the study waves (none, one questionnaire, or two questionnaires) to establish whether the questionnaires received reflected the total sample. There was no significant difference in response rate between pupils with DLD and those with ASD: χ^2 (2, $N = 157$) $= 1.67$, $p = 0.43$. We further considered whether there were differences for pupils in receipt of free school meals and stage of the severity of SEN (school action plus or a statement of SEN). In both cases there were no significant differences in response rates (Eligible for free school meals χ^2 (2, $N = 157$) $= 0.24$, $p = 0.87$; Level of reported need, χ2 (6, $N = 157$) $= 9.60$, $p = 0.14$). Nor were there significant differences in the pupils' age at screening [F (2, 156) = 0.28, *ns)*. Finally, we explored whether pupils for whom we received questionnaires differed significantly on measures of non-verbal ability, language literacy and social, emotional and behavioral development. **Table 2** provides means (*SD*s) and results of the ANOVAs for these comparisons. *Post hoc* Bonferroni comparisons were used for significant differences. As **Table 2** shows, there was only one significant difference, where questionnaires returned for participants on two waves had significantly lower non-verbal ability scores than those returned on only one wave $p = 0.03$). No other results were significant.

Reported Support Related to Primary Diagnosis (DLD or ASD)

We first considered whether pupils were receiving support both within the classroom and, in those schools which had then, a resource base. These data are presented in **Figure 2A** SLT support and **Figure 2B** school support. The majority of pupils were receiving some support by the schools 91.3 % ($n = 105$) and this did not vary by year group [X^2 (3, $N = 115$) $= 4.78$, ns]. Only half the pupils were reported to be receiving support by the SLTs

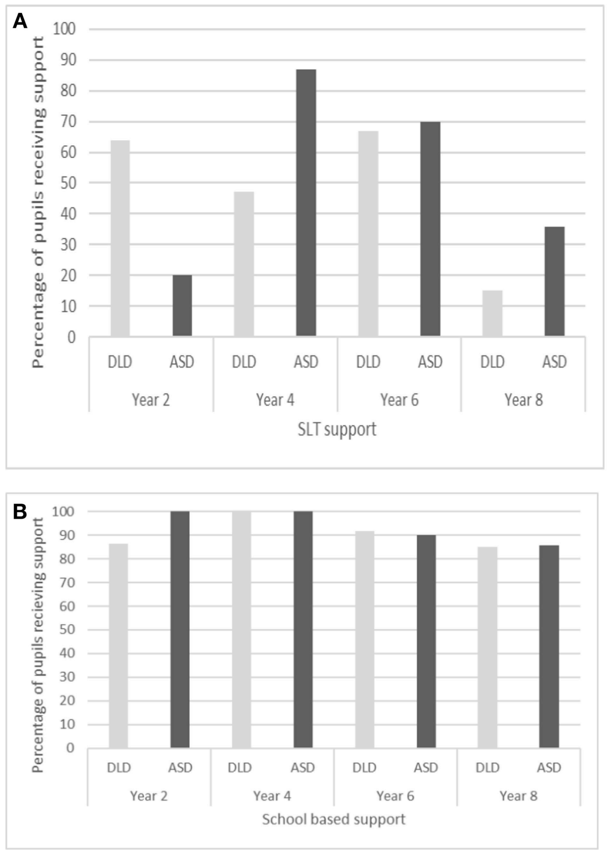

FIGURE 2 | (A) Distribution of support by year group provided by SLTs for the children with DLD or ASD. **(B)**. Distribution of support by year group provided by schools for the children with DLD or ASD. SLT, speech and language therapist.

(51.3%, $n = 59$), and this did vary by year group [X^2 (3, $N = 115$) $= 15.83$, $p = 0.001$]. As **Figure 2A** and b show, this difference is accounted for by the reduced numbers of pupils who received SLT support in Year 8 (second year of English secondary school) compared to the other years groups (all in primary school).

The number of hours and the way support was delivered by the schools and SLTs is reported in **Table 3**. As **Table 3** shows, reported hours of SENCO pupil support were low as was support provided by SLTs in a clinic. By contrast mean TA weekly support was high but the standard deviations indicate a wide range of support provided for the participants. Support was also provided in different ways, 1–1 or group.

Organization of Support

We explored whether the manner in which support was provided (1–1 or group) varied by diagnostic category and year group. Given the skewed nature of the data, non-parametric analyses (Mann–Whitney U and Kruskal–Wallis H tests) were used to compare the mode of support in hours that the pupils received by TAs and SLTs. As pupils could receive both 1–1 support and group support analyses for TA and SLT support were computed separately. School TA support varied significantly by diagnostic group, where children with ASD were more likely to receive 1–1 help from TAs ($U = 2110$, $p = 0.001$, $r = 0.31$) and children with DLD more likely to receive group work with TAs ($U = 1214$, $p = 0.04$, $r = 0.19$). By contrast, there were no significant differences between the cohorts in the way in which either SENCO (1–1 $U =$ 1,577, *ns*; group $U =$ 1,384, *ns*) or SLT support was provided (SLT 1–1 $U = 1708$, *ns*; SLT group $U =$ 1,780, *ns*).

TABLE 3 | Mean (*SD*) hours support reported by SENCOs during wave 1.

		DLD		ASD	
		Mean	***SD***	**Mean**	***SD***
School hours per week	TA 1–1	4.56	6.15	14.77	12.05
	TA group work	6.75	6.02	5.63	5.46
	SENCO 1–1 h	0.36	0.70	0.26	0.45
	SENCO group work	0.57	0.84	0.50	1.14
Therapy hours per term	SLT 1–1	2.35	3.64	3.33	5.77
	SLT group work	1.04	2.59	4.32	6.04
	SLT in clinic	0.33	1.16	0.00	0.00

There were no significant differences across the age groups in TA 1–1 support [$H_{(3)} = 2.02$, *ns*] or TA group support [$H_{(3)} = 2.75$, *ns*]. Nor did SENCO group support differ across age groups [$H_{(3)} = 0.97$, *ns*]. However, SENCO 1–1 support occurred significantly more for the older children [age group 11–12, $H_{(3)} = 9.66$, $p = 0.02$]. There was also a statistically significant difference between the four age groups for 1–1 hours of support per term for SLTs [$H_{(3)} = 12.39$, p $=0.006$] with pupils in the youngest age group receiving the most 1–1 SLT support and those in the age group 11–12 receiving the least. There was no significant difference across age groups in SLT group support [$H_{(3)} = 4.29$, *ns*].

We reasoned that total hours of support provided by the schools and SLTs would provide a more sensitive level of identified need. Total hours of weekly support were calculated by school and monthly hours of support by SLTs. In all cases pupils with DLD received significantly fewer hours of support than those with ASD, with medium to large effect sizes. School hours of support including resource base: DLD: $M = 10.85$, $SD = 8.89$; ASD: $M = 18.85$, $SD = 13.62$ $t_{(65.84)} = -3.33$, $p = 0.001$, $d = 0.67$; school hours of support excluding resource base DLD: $M = 8.49$, $SD = 8.1$; ASD: $M = 14.91$, $SD = 12.04$ $t_{(67.08)} = -3.13$, $p = 0.003$, $d = 0.63$); and a small effect for hours of SLT support DLD: $M = 2.45$, $SD = 4.09$; ASD: $M = 4.43$, $SD = 6.57$ $t_{(65.84)} = -1.97$ $p = 0.05$, $d = 0.36$.

Finally, we examined termly support in hours provided by school administration and services external to the school for the identified pupil. School time was primarily related to teacher ($M = 2.15$ hours per term) and SENCO time ($M = 2.55$ hours per term). External support was extremely rare with most schools reporting no support; the most support was provided by educational psychologists ($M = 0.23$ hours per term).

Summary of Support by Diagnostic Group

Over 90 per cent of the pupils were receiving additional support by school staff and 50 percent from SLT services, although there

TABLE 4 | Correlations between hours of support provided and scores on non-verbal ability, oral language, social responsiveness, and behavior[a].

	School staff weekly hours of support	1	2	3.	4.	5.	6.
1.SLT Monthly Hours of support	0.39**						
2.Chronological age	−0.10	−0.15					
3. Non-verbal ability	0.04	−0.05	0.56**				
4. Expressive language	−0.09	−0.14	0.12	0.23*			
5. Receptive language	−0.14	−0.15	0.02	0.40**	0.62**		
6. Social responsiveness scale	0.33**	0.17	−0.01	−0.07	0.03	−0.04	
7. Strengths and difficulties questionnaire	0.29**	0.19	0.13	0.07	−0.19	−0.24*	0.40**

*$p < 0.05$, ** $p = 0.01$.*

[a] *We also examined correlations with the SDQ subscales of externalising and internalising. The results remained the same. No associations for SLT support, school support externalising 0.25** and internalising 0. 22**.*

TABLE 5 | Exploratory regressions examining predictors for: **(A)** hours of support a week in schools; and **(B)** hours of support per term by SLTs.

Step	Predictor	B	Std error	Beta	t	Sig
(A) FINAL MODEL PREDICTING HOURS OF SCHOOL SUPPORT PER WEEK						
1	Chronological age	−0.12	0.04	−0.28	−2.71	0.008
	Non-verbal ability	0.12	0.05	0.23	2.19	0.03
2	Receptive language	−0.35	1.48	−2.84	−2.39	0.02
	Expressive language	−0.68	1.23	−0.06	−0.55	0.58
	Social responsiveness	0.03	0.03	0.08	0.76	0.45
	Behavior	0.21	0.16	0.12	1.28	0.21
3	Diagnostic category	8.66	2.7	0.38	3.20	0.002
(B) FINAL MODEL PREDICTING HOURS OF SPEECH THERAPY PER TERM						
1	Chronological age	−0.05	0.02	−0.28	−2.54	0.01
	Non-verbal ability	0.03	0.02	0.16	1.35	0.18
2	Receptive language	−1.36	0.72	−0.24	−2.0.	0.06
	Expressive language	−0.47	0.60	−0.09	−0.79	0.43
	Social responsiveness	−0.008	0.02	−0.05.	−0.45	0.65
	Behavior	0.08	0.08	0.10	0.96	0.34
3	Diagnostic category	3.40	1.32	0.32	2.59	0.01

was a significant and marked decline in SLT services in secondary schools. Although the manner in which the support was provided to pupils with ASD and DLD did not differ, the pupils with ASD received more total hours of support from both school staff and SLTs than those with DLD.

Support and Pattern of Need

Support was measured in terms of the numbers of hours of school support and SLT support provided to the pupils. These were examined in relation to their performance on the standardized measures of non-verbal ability, oral language, social responsiveness and behavior, which represented our measure of need. As **Table 4** shows, hours of school support was significantly associated with hours of speech therapy, scores on the SRS and the SDQ total and the internalizing and externalizing subscales. By contrast hours of monthly SLT support was not significantly associated with any of the within child variables.

We examined whether age, non-verbal ability, language levels, behavior or autism symptomatology predicted hours of support by school and by SLT services using two exploratory stepwise linear regressions. Age and non-verbal ability were entered first, followed by the measures of expressive and receptive language and social responsiveness and behavior. Finally, we added diagnosis as a dummy variable to establish whether additional variance was accounted for after the pupils' competencies were controlled for.

Table 5 provides the final models for school support and SLT support. The model for school support was significant $F_{(7,114)} = 5.28$, $p < 0.001$ accounting for 26 per cent of the variance. Addition of both the social measures (SRS and SDQ) and diagnostic category resulted in significant *adjusted* R^2 change ($p < 0.001$, $p = 0.002$ respectively). The final model includes as significant chronological age, non-verbal ability, receptive language and diagnostic group ($adj\ R^2 = 0.22$). The model for SLT support was also significant [$F_{(7,114)} = 2.75$, $p = 0.01$] accounting for 15 per cent of the variance. In this case only the addition of diagnostic category resulted in a significant $adj\ R^2$ change and only age and diagnostic category remain significant in the final model ($adj\ R^2 = 0.10$), although receptive language approaches significance.

Changes Over Time

Hours of support provided by schools and SLT services were examined over a 2-year time frame. We had data from schools for 56 pupils at both time points (DLD $n = 31$; ASD $n = 25$). A repeated measures ANCOVA was conducted to examine changes in hours of support provided over the time frame with group as the between measure controlling for pupil age. There was no significant effect of time [Wilks Lambda = 0.99, $F_{(1,53)} = 0.54$, *ns*] and no interaction with group [Wilks Lambda =0.026, $F_{(1,53)} = 0.88$, *ns*] in terms of support provided by schools. By contrast there was a significant change in hours of SLT support [Wilks Lambda = 0.79, $F_{(1,45)} = 12.18$, $p = 0.001$, partial eta squared 0.21] and a significant interaction by age [Wilks Lambda = 0.87, $F_{(1,45)} = 6.50$, $p = 0.014$, partial eta squared 0.13) but not group [Wilks Lambda =0.99, $F_{(1,45)} = 0.33$, *ns*]. To further address the age effect, we computed a change score by subtracting the hours of SLT support that pupils received at the second time point from the hours of support of SLT they received at the first time point. The greatest reduction in hours of support by SLTs was evident in the children who were 9 years and younger at the first point of assessment.

DISCUSSION

The current study used data from children and young people in mainstream schools to examine the nature of support provided to pupils with either DLD or ASD. The findings indicated that there were important differences in the support received by different pupils and also between the DLD and ASD groups. Our results suggest that although support is being provided both to pupils with DLD and those with ASD, the relationship between both the amount and characteristics of the support received by the pupils with DLD and those with ASD is not consistently related to their relative abilities and educational needs. This finding indicates the potential for inequity.

Both the DLD and ASD groups were receiving additional support but the support from SLTs dropped significantly between the primary age groups and the Year 8 group, who were then attending secondary schools. This pattern of limited SLT support at secondary level in English schools is well-established (Lindsay and Dockrell, 2002). Although some reduction may reflect improvements in language ability that were not captured by our measures, it is also the case that many young people continue to have language learning needs that could benefit from individual SLT intervention (See Ebbels et al., 2017; Wright et al., 2018).

Direct support from SENCOs was low as was SLT support in a clinic. The latter resonates with the shift from SLTs predominantly working within clinics at the time of the Warnock Report (Department for Education and Science, 1978), to the current focus on working within schools (Ebbels et al., 2019). The main support in the present study was from TAs, who provided both 1–1 and group work. This is a major development since the Warnock report when TAs were not mentioned. Rather, the report refers to 'ancillary workers, sometimes called non-teaching assistants' (para 14.32). At that time, the perceived need was for pupils with physical disabilities, severe learning disabilities, or emotional or behavioral disorders but there was also recognition of the benefits of an ancillary worker generally 'for each child who needs such support' (para. 14.32). Furthermore, the overall level of support provided to pupils with ASD was greater than that provided to those pupils with DLD; and pupils with ASD were more likely to receive 1–1 TA support whereas pupils with DLD were more likely to receive support in smaller groups. These two different approaches to provision broadly reflect the tiered approach to addressing children's SEN. Tiered intervention models generally divide intervention into three different levels, waves, stages or tiers (e.g., Law et al., 2003; Gascoigne, 2006; Snow et al., 2015; Fuchs and Fuchs, 2006). In these frameworks the highest level of need (Tier 3) typically reflects individualized intervention devised by an SLT or professional for a specific child and aims to improve specific skills. By contrast, Tier 2 interventions are considered to target less severe problems and the support is often provided in small groups. Within this framework, the pupils with ASD were more likely to receive Tier 3 support, and pupils with DLD to receive Tier 2 support.

Teaching assistant support was about three times greater for the ASD group than the DLD group (see **Table 3**). This likely reflects the increased level of social, emotional and behavioral difficulties in the ASD group (see also Charman et al., 2015). More surprising, however, is the significantly higher levels of SLT support for the ASD group, especially for the use of group work which was over four times greater. It is the case that children and young people with ASD may have language learning needs. However, the level of language learning needs in ASD is variable (Loucas et al., 2008), as was observed for our sample. Notably, the DLD group had significantly lower levels of language ability than the pupils with ASD, with moderate to large effect sizes. A similar pattern was also found for spelling and reading accuracy, although not reading comprehension: see also (Dockrell et al., 2015). Despite greater needs in these domains, the pupils with DLD received significantly lower levels of SLT support than the pupils with ASD.

The relative importance of group (DLD or ASD) as a predictor of support received was also demonstrated by the results of the regression analysis. For both hours of school support (per week) and SLT support (per month) diagnostic category added significantly to the models once language, literacy, and cognition were accounted for. In the final model for SLT support no additional standardized assessments of language, literacy or cognition explained variance. By contrast school support was also explained by non-verbal ability and receptive language. It is likely that children with poorer receptive language and lower non-verbal ability require more differentiated instruction reflected in the greater support provided in schools and the challenges with intervening to impact on poor receptive language (Reilly et al., 2015). These data raise questions about the ways in which decisions are made about the provision allocated to specific pupils, both by schools and also by SLT services. Importantly, when we considered change in provision over time, whereas no differences were evident in support provided by schools, SLT support reduced significantly in upper primary school. This reduction cannot simply be explained by the move to secondary school and the reduced numbers of SLTs in those settings. Rather the data speak to a greater emphasis by SLTs in early intervention, independent of the pupils' level of language difficulties (see Ebbels et al., 2019).

LIMITATIONS

The current study was the first attempt to map provision provided to children with DLD or ASD within education settings; while response rate for the SENCO questionnaire was high (73 per cent) at the first collection point, the response rate at the second time point was 59 per cent, and the submission for children at both time points were markedly lower (43 per cent). Importantly whereas data were available about the hours of support children received, there were no data about the content or nature of that support. It may be that the SLTs were working with pupils with ASD in terms of social skills and social interaction, for example. Additionally, we have not captured pragmatic language difficulties in a detailed way. There is increasing evidence that children with ASD have greater difficulties with pragmatics, than those with DLD, and such problems may have a greater impact on the ways in which children's difficulties are manifested in the classroom and the resulting additional support which is reported to be in place.

CONCLUSION

The nature of support for children with SEN has changed greatly since the Warnock Report. The use of TAs has increased exponentially and is the most prevalent form of within-school support in England. In addition, the pattern of SLT support has changed from largely within-clinic to within-school models. Our research has indicated, however, that at least in the case of pupils diagnosed with DLD or ASD, support provided may not be equitable. In the current study there is very clearly a higher level of support for pupils with ASD compared to those with SLD, even support from SLTs, which did not correlate with the needs revealed by individual assessments of each group. The need to move away from discrete categorization systems is not new (see for example Florian et al., 2006). The current data further highlight that discrete categorical systems do not reflect the children's needs to guide effective provision. This raises serious questions about the allocation of support resources and, by corollary, indicates the likelihood currently of an inequitable allocation of support to children and young people with DLD.

ETHICS STATEMENT

University of Warwick, Humanities, and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

JD was principal investigator for the study and completed the first draft of the paper and all the analyses. TC and GL were co-investigators. JR and OP were post docs on the project supporting conceptualization and leading on data collection.

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After Warnock: The Effects of Perverse Incentives in Policies in England for Students With Special Educational Needs

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The 1978 Warnock Report made the case in the United Kingdom for a number of actions that, it was argued, would make the integration and support of young people with Special Educational Needs more effective. These included: a cohesive multi-agency approach in assessment and determination of special educational need and subsequent provision; early intervention with no minimum age to start provision for children identified with special educational needs; better structural and organizational accountability; the appointment of a Special Educational Needs Coordinator in each school; parental input to be valued and considered alongside professional views in matters relating to the child; and a recommendation that special classes and units should be attached to and function within ordinary schools where possible. The 1981 Education Act introduced a number of regulations and rights which supported the development of these forms of practice. However, the introduction of competition between schools driven by measures of attainment by the 1988 Education Act introduced new incentives for schools. At the same time there was a discourse shift from integration, or fitting young people with special educational needs into a system, to inclusion or inclusive practice in which inclusive systems were to be designed and developed. In the aftermath of this wave of policy development, a nascent tension between policies designed to achieve excellence and those seeking to achieve inclusive practice emerged. Whilst the devolved parliaments in Scotland and Wales have continued to try to give priority to inclusion in education, in recent years these tensions in England have intensified and there is growing concern about the ways in which schools are managing the contradictions between these two policy streams. There is widespread public and political unrest about the variety of ways in which young people with special educational needs, who may be seen as a threat to school attainment profiles, are being excised from the system either through formal exclusion or other, more clandestine, means. This paper charts this move from attempts to meet need with provision as outlined by Warnock to the current situation where the motives which drive the formulation of provision are driven by what are ultimately economic objects. We argue that policy changes in England in particular have resulted in perverse incentives for schools to not meet the needs of special educational needs students and which can result in their exclusion from school. These acts of exclusion in England are then compared to educational policies of segregation in Northern Ireland and

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then exemplified with data. We illustrate the impact of perverse incentives on practices of inclusion and exclusion through an analysis of interview data of key stakeholders in England gathered in a recent comparative study of practices of school exclusion across the four United Kingdom jurisdictions.

Keywords: special educational needs, inclusion, exclusion, Warnock, perverse incentives

INTRODUCTION

The development of policy and practice in the field of special educational needs (SEN) and subsequently, after 2014, Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) education in the United Kingdom (UK) has a long and convoluted history. These developments have often been, and remain to be, highly contested (Kalambouka et al., 2007). The field has witnessed political struggles between single interest lobby groups, practitioners and their professional associations, economists and administrators, amongst others. The recent history of the legislation and official guidance bears testament to the continuing complexity of the field. Cole (1990) suggests that this history is littered with contradictions and tensions between incentives of social control and humanitarian progress.

The Warnock Report (Department of Education Science, 1978) was an important milestone in, rather than an initiator of, the transformation of practices of exclusion of particular subgroups of children and young people from what counts as the mainstream in education. The motives for these transformations are not always apparent. This paper will begin with a discussion of these transformations and then compare them with changes in another form of segregation—the religious divide in schooling in Northern Ireland (NI). The purpose of this comparison is to examine whether there are commonalities in the values which have underpinned different policy moves and practices. The general argument of the paper is that practices of bringing together and keeping apart are driven by the interplay of a complex set of incentives set up, often unintentionally, by policies emanating from different stakeholder groups and recontextualized in different local settings and institutions. For example, in recent years the devolved parliaments in Scotland and Wales have continued to attempt to give priority to inclusion in education whereas these tensions in England have intensified and there is growing concern about the ways in which schools are managing the contradictions between these two policy streams (Daniels et al., 2017). We will illustrate the impact on practitioner views through an analysis of data gathered in a recent study of practices of exclusion undertaken by the multi-disciplinary Excluded Lives Research Group (forthcoming) which was set up in the University of Oxford and has now expanded to include colleagues from the universities of Queen's Belfast, Cardiff, and Edinburgh.

A History of Special Educational Needs Policy in the UK

Norwich (2014) argues that the SEN system in the UK cannot be understood outside the wider context of school education and social policy. His use of the term "connective specialization" (Norwich, 1995) suggests that what is specialized about the field is interdependent on the general system (Norwich, 2014). Norwich identifies four key aspects of the general system of relevance to the ways in which SEN is constituted: the National Curriculum and assessment, school inspection, the governance of schools, and equality legislation (in particular, disability as a protected characteristic). We argue that this is an important contribution but the connections extend beyond the realms of the education system into wider social welfare and political systems. Of particular importance is the way in which notions of difference are recognized, valued and regulated.

Some time ago Oliver (1986) suggested that the industrial revolution in the UK was a key historical moment in the marking of difference in terms of disability. In little more than the last 100 years there have been significant changes in ways that minority groups have been identified and managed. In the early years of the twentieth century, the 1921 Education Act legislated that a minority group of children, then referred to as "handicapped," had rights to be educated in segregated classes or schools. The 1929 Wood Report considered what were regarded as key barriers to the implementation of these rights and produced a set of recommendations for the overall structure and, to some extent, functioning of a segregated system of schooling. These recommendations included the development of a differentiated curriculum for children who were then described as "mentally defective." Different forms of class and whole school segregation were introduced. Taken together, the 1921 Act and the Wood Report set up the arguments and regulations for a form of segregated education for those who were identified as being in need of provision which was different from that which was made available in the mainstream. Intelligence tests formed an important part of the technology of segregation although other factors were seen to be at play in the placement of particular children in special schools (Tomlinson, 1981a,b). However, this form of segregation into different types of school was not the only means of institutionalizing difference. It was not until the enactment of the Handicapped Children Education Act (HM Government, 1970) that all children were deemed educable and brought into the education system. In theory those with a measured IQ of <50 were classified as uneducable before this Act and provision was made within the health service.

In the same decade as the 1970 Act, the Warnock Report was commissioned and published in 1978. Mary Warnock's remit was to review educational provision in the UK for young people with SEN. This report was an important milestone in the transformation of the ways in which young people with SEN were identified and systems of provision were managed. Schools were urged to integrate children with SEN into existing classrooms with additional support. The recommended move was away from alternative provision to the allocation of additional support in mainstream settings albeit not always in mainstream classrooms. Special classes and units were to be attached to ordinary schools and if this was not possible then specialist and mainstream provision was to be more tightly linked than in the past. The Education Act (HM Government, 1981) announced the rights of children with SEN to access appropriate education provision.

The Warnock Report is often taken as the moment at which the question of the location of provision for children and young people with SEN in the UK was brought to the attention of a wide constituency of policy makers and practitioners. The international equivalent is the somewhat later Salamanca Statement (UNESCO., 1994). The general move has been from policies and practices of segregation in special provision, through a phase where debates were concerned with the integration of individual children into existing systems, and, subsequently, on to the consideration of ways in which systemic responsiveness to a broad diversity of needs could be built in the name of inclusion.

The meanings associated with the terms "segregation," "integration," and "inclusion" have witnessed considerable variation over time, culture and context. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (Organisation for Economic Co-operation Development (OECD)., 2000) provided startling empirical evidence of variation in interpretation in rates of incidence, even across normative categories of sensory impairment. Avramidis and Norwich (2002) identified different interpretations of the idea of inclusive education on the part of parents, children, practitioners, teachers and leaders. The field is marked by a profusion of documents that can easily confuse a lay reader or busy practitioner with regard to what is legally enforceable and what is either recommended or advisable. Parliamentary Acts introduce enforceable law. Sections of these are then articulated by enforceable regulations. In the 5 years following the publication of the Warnock Report another distinction emerged in practice, if not the policy world, as children with sensory and physical disabilities became more integrated into schools whilst segregation of children with learning difficulties and behavior problems increased (Swann, 1988).

One important move came with the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act in 2001 (Department for Education Skills, 2001a). This brought the full force of anti-discrimination legislation to bear on education, which had been specifically exempt from such scrutiny in the past. Statutory guidance was issued in *Inclusive Schooling: Children with special educational needs* (Department for Education Skills, 2001b) alongside the non-statutory guidance available in the *SEN Toolkit* (Department for Education Skills, 2001c). However, there was considerable skepticism from both official and academic perspectives about the effectiveness and efficiency of much of the guidance (Farrell, 2001). A considerable body of enforceable legislation and statutory and non-statutory guidance creates a complex set of requirements and suggestions, which allow for a very high degree of local, highly situated interpretation (Audit Commission, 2002; Office for Standards in Education, 2004; House of Commons Education Skills Committee, 2006). These interpretations often appear to arise as "trade offs" made between contesting policy agendas, as witnessed in attempts to improve standards as well as to advance the development of inclusive practice. As Ainscow et al. (2006) note "there has been a powerful tradition in the inclusion literature of skepticism about the capacity of policy to create inclusive systems, either because the policy itself is ambiguous and contradictory, or because it is 'captured' by non-inclusive interests as it interacts with the system as a whole" (305).

This skepticism about the policy environment has been followed by concern about the practices that have arisen during this period. Warnock (2005) herself argued that the policy of inclusion and the associated practice of issuing statements needed to be reviewed. A House of Commons Select (House of Commons Education Skills Committee, 2006) noted significant concerns about the demands and tensions that had arisen in the field particularly in coping with rising numbers of children with autism and Social, Emotional, or Behavioral Difficulties (SEBD).

Research funded by the National Union of Teachers and conducted by MacBeath et al. (2006) interviewed teachers, children and parents at 20 schools in seven local authorities and concluded that current practice placed far too many demands on teachers and schools. They make particular reference to the need for schools and special schools to work together in order to meet the diversity of needs that may be present in any particular community. In many ways MacBeath et al. echo the earlier assertions made in the (Department for Education Skills, 2004) report *Removing the Barriers to Achievement* that integration with external children's services, earlier intervention, better teacher training and improved expectations would reduce educational difficulty. However, the House of Commons Education and Skills (House of Commons Education Skills Committee, 2006) suggested that the notion of "flexible continuum of provision" being available in all local authorities to meet the needs of all children was not embedded in much of the guidance (27). This suggestion is evidenced in the Croll and Moses (2000) study, which drew on interviews with special and mainstream head teachers and education officers to show that there was much support for inclusion as an ideal—but which was not evidenced in policy. They found evidence of significant concerns about feasibility, given the extent and severity of individual needs and structural constraints on the practices of mainstream schooling.

Almost 10 years later, the Lamb Inquiry (Lamb, 2009) noted a significant disparity between policy and practice and the consequences for young people and their families. The enquiry evidenced the effects of local or situated re-enactment of policy (Ball, 2003) which gave rise to significant variation between settings in the availability of special educational needs and disability (SEND) provision. The Lamb Inquiry (Lamb, 2009) paved the way for major changes in the system. Four broad categories of reform were suggested:

- Incorporating information about SEND in the broader education framework to reduce systemic segregation of SEND children and their typical peers;
- Communication and engagement with parents rather than standardized information;

- An increased focus on outcomes for disabled pupils and pupils with SEND;
- Tighter quality assurance and accountability for meeting streamlined requirements (8).

To a certain extent these recommendations influenced the revision of the Children and Families Act (HM Government, 2014) and subsequent amendments to the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice (Department for Education, 2015). These are the latest in a long line of modifications and adjustments to the vision for the education system set out in the Warnock Report of 1978. However, Norwich and Eaton (2015) noted the contradictions between aspiration and outcome following these changes. One of their specific concerns was with children who were thought to have Emotional and Behavioral Difficulties (EBD). They drew attention to the rhetoric of increased parental choice over school placement, and the absence of evaluation of inclusive admissions procedures in schools by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), the school inspectorate body in England. The Conservative Party government in the 2000s believed there had been an over-identification of special educational needs at the expense of those with complex needs; however, Norwich (2014), argues that this change has also been partly driven by economic austerity policies and this has negatively affected young people with Moderate Learning Difficulty (MLD) and Behavioral, Emotional, and Social Difficulties (BESD).

Norwich and Eaton (2015) point to difficulties with interagency working that have been highlighted all too frequently since the publication of the Warnock Report. They point out that multi-agency groups are "unique structures, each with their own socio-political context, objectives, working processes, internal dynamics and external pressures" (124) and it "has often been assumed that these groups will 'just work' once outcomes have been agreed" (124) despite little evidence that this is so. Norwich and Easton cite Townsley et al. (2004) who evidenced persistent barriers to inter-group friendships and communication as a result of these conflicting stakeholder agendas. They also observed the likelihood for the focus of inter-disciplinary meetings to be deflected away from improved outcomes for the young person and toward the multi-agency structure itself. Hodkinson and Burch (2017) went further in suggesting that the SEND Code of Practice (Department for Education, 2015) actually "contains, constrains and constructs privilege as well as dispossession through enforcing marginality and exclusion" (2).

In summary, the litany of guidance and legislation that has been enacted since the Warnock era has served to recognize needs associated with particular groups whilst also giving rise, through the messy processes of implementation, to the creation of different patterns of barriers and support. It may be that the move away from official recognition of some needs has led to unrecognized patterns of marginalization. For example, the reduction in the application of the descriptors MLD and BESD may well be associated with a reduction in the proportion of students with SEN included in the exclusion data from around 70% in 2012/13 (Department for Education, 2016) to 46.7% in 2016/17 (Department for Education, 2018). This may be amplified by a lack of capacity to match need, however it is conceptualized or described, with provision. The moves from the early twentieth century affirmation of segregation to the incorporation of all children in the education system in 1970 and the exhortation to integrate (individuals) and subsequently to create inclusive systems have been marked by difficulties in ensuring that underlying values were witnessed in practice and not nullified through contradictions with other aspects of the policy world. It is in this context that Slee (2018) has suggested that there has been a seismic shift in attitudes and values toward inclusive education including "a rejection of its principles and practices with a call for a return to separate schools for children with disabilities" (17).

Across the UK, policy reforms in education have been underpinned by dual-commitments to school accountability for the progress of their students, and the inclusion of students from disadvantaged backgrounds, with special educational needs and disabilities. However, these tensions in England in particular have intensified and there is growing concern about the ways in which schools are managing the contradictions between these two policy streams. Ball (2003) has drawn attention to the dilemma of promoting practices of inclusion, whilst also deciding between incentives of excellence through competition on the basis of maximizing mean examination performance. This may be all the more problematic when access to support for meeting additional needs is highly constrained (Marsh, 2015). School exclusion—both official and "hidden"—can be seen as part of a political economy of schooling through which institutions seek to manage students' disruptive behavior in the context of increasing levels of accountability, an emphasis on high stakes testing and the proliferation of "alternative" forms of provision to which "troublesome" students can be outsourced. Ball (2003) and Connell (2009) have shown how the performative professionalism that arises in the kind of competitive practices that are often found in systems with high levels of accountability, undermines the capacity of professionals to meet the needs of disadvantaged social groups. In such situations, students who do not submit to the rules (Lloyd, 2008) become "collateral casualties" (Bauman, 2004), who find themselves locked in a process in which they are evacuated to the social margins of schooling (Slee, 2012). However, a recent study by Machin and Sandi (2018) suggested that there is a need for a nuanced account of the relationship between competition and exclusion, as exclusion is not always a means of facilitating better performance for autonomous schools in published league tables. They suggested that increases in school exclusions may partly be a consequence of disciplinary behavior procedures that some schools elect to implement as well as increasing pressure by parents and other bodies to ensure the school environment is protected from potential disruption. Persistent causes of exclusion are socio-historical, diverse and complex and intersect with each other in various ways to produce disparities in the social contexts of different jurisdictions (Cole et al., 2003).

In contrast to the devolved education systems of Scotland, and to some degree NI and Wales, commitment to accountability appears to override practices of inclusion in England (Daniels et al., 2017). Moreover, policy discourse in England has tended to individualize reasons for exclusion rather than develop an understanding rooted in the wider context of education, social and health policy (Mills et al., 2015). The Children's Commissioner for(Children's Commissioner, 2013) has argued for a greater understanding of the ways that conflicting policy motives may in practice form "perverse incentives" for schools to exclude students. As Mills et al. (2015) argue this policy contradiction in practice has led to schools in England finding ways to "move on" young people who do not fit into the market image that they wish to project. There is therefore a contradiction in England between the implementation of policies designed for inclusion in the spirit of the Warnock Report, such as the Children and Families Act (2014) and the updated SEND Code of Practice (2015), and performativity and accountability measures that have resulted in perverse incentives for schools to not meet the needs of SEND students and which can result in their exclusion from school.

Segregated Systems of Schooling

With these thoughts in mind, we turn to an analysis by Gallagher and Duffy (2015) of the evolution of segregated systems of schooling in NI. Here the focus is on religious communities. We suggest that there are important parallels with some of the general trends in the post-Warnock SEN systems. We argue that there are interesting similarities in the social and political movements that have progressively transformed systems of schooling in NI and in provision for young people with recognized SEN and or SEND. These parallels are suggestive of broader movements in thinking about and responding to difference in education that can result in systemic intolerance for children with different or special needs.

Gallagher and Duffy (2015) identify four systems of provision in NI: Unitary; Segregated; Multicultural; Plural. In a unitary system of single schools which assumes common cultural identity they point to expectations of conformity to mainstream values. Here schooling is a means of assimilating minority differences into a common ground. Gallagher and Duffy suggest that this model is systemically intolerant as there is no provision or recognition of minority groups. A variety of school types exist in what they term segregated systems and particular groups are allocated to particular types of school. A situation not unlike that which obtained across the UK in the early part of the twentieth century for children considered to be handicapped. Gallagher and Duffy (2015) argue that this is a "different form of systemic intolerance in that minorities are recognized, but marginalized, and often receive significantly poorer access to resources or opportunities" (37). Their other two types of system show strong parallels with the different integration and inclusion movements in the post-Warnock era. For them multicultural systems involve the establishing of a single school system, "but within which there is some acknowledgment and recognition of the identities of communities other than the majority identity. Unlike unitary systems these models promote the principle of recognition and seek to protect the identity and rights of minority groups within the single school system" (Gallagher and Duffy, 2015, p. 37).

As in the multicultural system, plural systems "embody the principle of recognition, but realize it through institutional means, so that minorities are accorded the right to have their own schools and are normally accorded some degree of equal treatment" (Gallagher and Duffy, 2015, p. 37). Thus, unitary systems neither tolerate nor recognize difference whereas segregated systems recognize difference but do not tolerate it in mainstream settings. Multicultural systems champion tolerance and incorporate diversity in shared spaces whereas in plural systems recognition of difference almost overrides tolerance and returns to differences in the formulation of provision. Whilst the similarities are not precise the identification of the underlying principles of tolerance and recognition provides a helpful tool with which to unpick the entanglements of different policy initiatives.

If the balances between recognition of difference and consequently of need and tolerance of diversity is being undermined by austere economic conditions and practice driven motives of institutional competition based on narrowly defined criteria for resource in the form of student numbers and consequent income then what are the perceptions of key stakeholders in the system? In the terms outlined by Gallagher and Duffy, exclusion may be seen as an extreme form of intolerance which is arguably often associated with a lack of recognition of need. We now report some of the findings of a series of interviews conducted with key stakeholders concerning the growth of practices of school exclusion in England in order to illustrate the nascent tension between policies designed to achieve excellence and those seeking to achieve inclusive practice.

METHODS

The data reported on here is a subset of data from the Excluded Lives project: *Disparities in rates of permanent exclusion from school across the UK* which sought to investigate the large increase in school exclusions in England over the past few years compared to the other three UK jurisdictions [Daniels et al., 2017; Excluded Lives Research Group (forthcoming)]. The project was funded by the John Fell Fund and received ethical clearance from the University of Oxford's Central University Research Ethics Committee. The study had three main aims, 1. To develop and trial a model of the practices and outcomes of exclusion in each of the four UK jurisdictions that can be used to elicit key stakeholder perspectives, 2. To elicit and analyse the perspectives of multiple stakeholders in each of the four jurisdictions on the practices of official and informal exclusion from school, and 3. To develop a theoretical account of the mutual shaping of policy and practice in the field of exclusion. The study design included an analysis of published national datasets on permanent and fixed period exclusions in the four UK jurisdictions, alongside documentary analysis of relevant legislation and national policy guidance, and semi-structured interviews with 27 key stakeholders from sites within the four UK jurisdictions between January and April 2018, see **Table 1** below for further details.

Interviewees included senior policy makers and Government Officers, Local Authority (LA)/Education Officers concerned with education (overall), exclusion/inclusion, additional and/or alternative provision, child and adolescent mental health, special

TABLE 1 | Sample characteristics.

	Government officers	Local authority/ education officers	Third sector/ voluntary body officers	Total interviewees	Total interviews
England (2 × local authorities)	0	6	1	7	7
Northern Ireland	2	4	3	9	5
Scotland	3	2	1	6	5
Wales	2	1	2	5	3
Totals	7	13	7	27	20

and/or additional needs and disability, and students Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET); as well as senior officers, including three lawyers and a senior social worker, working for Third Sector/Voluntary Body organizations concerned with marginalized and disadvantaged children and young people. The interviewees were identified by existing contacts known by members of the research team, who acted as gatekeepers, and purposively selected participants in the four jurisdictions. Aside from the interviews conducted in NI, all interviews were carried out by two members of the research team, with one team member leading on all of the interviews to ensure consistency across the data collection. The second interviewers were members of the Research Group based in the different jurisdictions who were knowledgeable about the local contexts. At the beginning of each interview, the interviewees were presented with comparisons of the rates of permanent and fixed period exclusions in each jurisdiction over the past 5 years and asked to reflect on the figures for their jurisdiction. The following topics were then covered:

- Recent developments in policy and practice relating to exclusions at national and local level
- Positive aspects of policy and practice in the respondents jurisdiction/LA helping to prevent/reduce exclusions
- Support and provision available for "at risk" and excluded students
- Threats to current levels of support
- Accuracy of data on permanent and temporary exclusions
- LAs' ability to track excluded students
- Scale, nature and effects of unofficial exclusions.

Although the research did not focus directly on SEN students, there is a correlation between the likelihood of exclusion and SEN status, therefore the data is relevant to the current paper. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed with the informed written consent of the participants and lasted between 40 and 90 min. The findings presented below are from the English data only. The English sub-sample consisted of six LA practitioners from two different LAs (one northern—LA1, one southern—LA2), and a Third Sector representative based in London. All interviews were conducted with the interviewees in their place of work. The interview data were coded by one of the present authors (Tawell) following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six step guide to thematic analysis. Five key drivers behind the increase in number of school exclusions in England were identified: (1) policy changes; (2) school governance; (3) school culture and ethos; (4) accountability, performativity, and marketization; and (5) increasing demands, reduced capacity and financial pressures. Each theme is discussed below and illustrated with verbatim quotes.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Theme 1: Policy Changes

When asked about what they believed may have led to the increase in school exclusion figures in England over recent years, the practitioners mentioned three related policy changes. The first was a perceived change in political discourse, with practitioners believing that in the current education climate, compared to the New Labor government period of 1997–2010, there is less emphasis on inclusion:

> "*... in the early 2000s we saw permanent exclusions and fixed terms drop... Reasons for that? I think maybe the political party at the time was encouraging inclusive practices*" (LA1—Respondent 2)

The second policy change spoken about was the replacement of Independent Appeal Panels (IARs) with Independent Review Panels (IRPs) as part of the Education Act 2011, and the subsequent revisions made to the school exclusion statutory guidance in 2012. Respondents believed that the move from having IARs to IRPs marked a reduction in schools' accountability around exclusions.

> "*Nick Gibb [Education Minister]... came in with a clear intention to I guess reduce the accountability around exclusions. So, there was the Education Act 2011... and they removed the act to automatic reinstatement as part of the review process. They got rid of independent appeal panels. They introduced independent review panels, who had less of a role, and they could recommend reinstatement, but they couldn't order it. So that was an obviously very clear message to schools that the accountability around it was going to be relaxed. At the same time, there was the issue of academization [where schools were either forced or opted not to be under the control of LAs]. And what was the role of Local Authorities, so who's responsible for kids who get excluded became you know, quite muddied*" (Third Sector Representative)

> "*...So, the exclusion process is, this is my view personally, the exclusion process is easier for schools now than it used to be. It's more difficult for Local Authorities to challenge schools, and it's more difficult for parents to have their voice heard. So, in the past, in previous versions of the exclusion guidance... [t]he parents had a right of appeal against the governors' discipline committee, now they don't. They have a right to review*" (LA1—Respondent 1)

Both of the above quotes also indicate the reduced powers held by LAs, not only due to the revisions in the school exclusion statutory guidance, but also due to the changes in governance brought about by the Academies Programme. This will be returned to below under Theme 2: School governance.

Lastly, some respondents spoke about the difference in language used in the updated statutory guidance, which they believed was helping to validate schools' decisions to exclude:

> *"Although the new [school exclusion statutory] guidance was clearer in terms of what was guidance and what was law, what the previous guidance had, it had a lot more meat and the language it used was, all of it, those strategies, last resort, exhaustion, all those things, that went. Schools, they decided to pick up on some of the language in it that then made it almost in favor or to support their decision"* (LA1—Respondent 2)

This point arguably overlaps with the first sub-theme and the identified move from an emphasis on inclusion to exclusion within current policy rhetoric.

The third policy change mentioned was the new SEND Code of Practice (Department for Education, 2015). Following claims by the Conservative party's Special Educational Needs Commission that "there was over-identification of special educational needs in schools" (Norwich, 2014, p. 418), Ofsted recommended that students not on the SEN register but classified as "School Action" should no longer be classified as having SEN. This recommendation was somewhat realized in the 2015 Code with the School Action and School Action Plus categories (students with lower levels of need) being replaced by SEN Support, which involves a "graduated approach to identifying and supporting pupils and students with SEN" (Department for Education, 2015, p. 14). A second change saw the replacement of Statements of SEN with Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP) for students with the highest level of needs.

The Third Sector Representative in the current study questioned whether this change could be linked to the recent rise in school exclusion numbers:

> *"What's happened to those hundreds of thousands of children with SEN, who had SEN five years ago and now don't? Now is that why we're suddenly seeing a big increase, because all of those children at School Action with low level needs have simply had their support removed and are now struggling with their learning and therefore getting into trouble through the disciplinary side?"*

While some of the LA practitioners indicated that the change to the Code of Practice had resulted in a reduction of services, others (even within the same LA) believed that though the process had changed the support available remained the same:

> *"When the SEN Code of practice changed we then reduced our specialist teachers to give advice on behavior."* (LA1—Respondent 2)
>
> *"The process is different, but the support that was available is still there."* (LA1—Respondent 1)

Related to resources, one practitioner when speaking about a rise in students with SEN being excluded or at risk of exclusion in their LA, discussed how this may be due to an understanding that schools must demonstrate that they have invested in interventions to meet a student's needs before an EHCP assessment can be requested (there is in fact no legal basis behind this understanding):

> *"…we have had more young people with Education Health and Care Plans recommended for permanent exclusion and we've had more kids with other SEND that are less, not actually with Education Health and Care Plans, who've been excluded, so I think our SEND exclusions have gone up a little. Whether there's a direct correlation between that and the new code, because I do think the new SEN code in terms of its, the way it's written, in terms of empowering parents, I think is the absolute right way… whether there's an issue around the way that now schools have to put in the first so many thousand pounds…"* (LA1—Respondent 2)

Therefore, the extent to which the new SEND Code of Practice has influenced the rise in school exclusion figures is debatable and warrants further exploration.

Theme 2: School Governance

The second identified theme related to the changing education landscape and the relationship between LAs and Academies. In LA1, two of the respondents considered that the LA had maintained a good relationship with their local Academies. However, the change in governance had meant that there was sometimes a delay in Academies reporting the needs of students to the LA, and a reduction in advice and assistance sought from their LA practitioners:

> *"We don't get contacted as early in the process as we used to."* (LA1—Respondent 1)

However, a third respondent from the same LA, believed that:

> *"…the whole academization programme has seriously undermined the relationship between the local authorities and schools and I think it's really unclear"* (LA1—Respondent 3).

Unlike the first two respondents, Respondent 3 considered the relationship between the LA and its local Academies to be varied and noted that the LA had *"recently begun to meet resistance from academies about attending hearings to support parents."* From a different angle, Respondent 3 also indicated that some maintained schools in their LA had been using the threat of academization as a bargaining tool to achieve their aims from the LA.

In LA2 respondents were much more aligned and firmer in their beliefs that the changes to school governance had affected exclusion practices:

> *"I also think the academy thing is one of the reasons [for the increase in school exclusion rates]"* (LA2—Respondent 1)

When asked about whether they believed the freedom that Academies have was linked to the use of exclusion, LA2 Respondent 2 commented:

> *"Oh, without a doubt, it absolutely does and because also, it gives that message: 'You do what you want to and it's not for the Local*

> *Authority to tell you how you should run things'. So, yes, and also I think it probably comes down to the individual ethos and the structure within a school and that does start at the top, doesn't it?"* (LA2—Respondent 2)

Linked to the changing role of LA practitioners, was the sub-theme of responsibility:

> *"What should the Local Authority role be in that [exclusion process] and what do schools want? Because there's an element of want and what our responsibilities in terms of Ofsted because we are inspected and challenged and we carry responsibility for those children, yet we don't—we don't have the same authority that we once had. So, this is the big bubble of challenge."* (LA2—Respondent 2)

This relates back to the Third Sector Representative's earlier comment about who is responsible for excluded students becoming *"quite muddied."* LAs are having to juggle their responsibility as a maintaining authority, while also developing their role as "facilitator" in the increasingly devolved system (Parish and Bryant, 2015). This is particularly relevant to school exclusions, as the LA retains responsibility over students who are permanently excluded. The extent to which the LA role is determined by the LA or Academies is also an area that needs further exploration, as this will ultimately determine the relationship and extent of collaboration between the two organizations. It can be argued that LAs, as the middle tier, are being squeezed by both school and system level factors (Daniels et al., 2018).

Relatedly, with LAs having less power to direct Academies over particular issues there has been concern that schools are opting out of systems in place to ensure vulnerable students receive an appropriate education (House of Commons Education Committee, 2018), such as In Year Fair Access Panels (IYFAP), and under increasing accountability pressures "game the system" by controlling their intakes (e.g., accepting fewer students with EHCPs; *ibid*). IYFAPs are designed to ensure that unplaced children, especially the most vulnerable or hard to place, are offered a school place quickly in order to minimize time spent outside education. Indeed, LA2, Respondent 2 stated how their number of referrals to the Education and Skills Funding Agency to direct schools to take students who required a school place had increased.

However, it cannot be claimed that only Academies have the desire to reduce the number of disruptive students in their schools. Talking more broadly, LA1 Respondent 3, noted how *"schools want old school EBD [Emotional and Behavioral Difficulties] schools," "they want to remove the problem from their school."*

Theme 3: School Culture and Ethos

The third theme revolved around school culture and ethos. When asked by the interviewer: "*… are you sensing a difference in culture and sort of ethos?*" LA1 Respondent 2 answered:

> *"Yes, I am. I think some of the behavior policies, if I read them, they're less conducive to kids who've got additional needs. They're more rigid… there's less movement within them."*

There was suggestion that the change in language, had also led to a change in culture and practice in school, and that messages instilled by government officials had played a part in this change:

> *"We've become less inclusive in our mainstreams."* (LA2—Respondent 1)
>
> *"It feels like there's a culture of much less tolerance of behaviors in schools than there used to be. We have anecdotal evidence from schools of things Ofsted inspectors said about how you will never be good or outstanding whilst you have those youngsters in school… I don't think Ofsted inspectors would give that message now, but the damage has been done."* (LA1—Respondent 3)

Both of these points link back to the change in political discourse discussed in Theme 1, and the performativity pressures placed on schools which will be further explored in Theme 4. Related to the above, LA1 Respondent 3 believed that the change in political discourse around inclusivity was illustrative of a much broader societal change in attitude:

> *"I think their [school staff] attitudes reflect the attitudes of society at large, so I think society is giving permission to those professionals who already hold those views, but possibility also influencing people who wouldn't have been going down that route, but are finding it really hard going because there are some really difficult kids out there who, in the past would have thought, 'I've got to try and do more', and now—they can, 'Well it's ok, I can just say it's their fault, it's the child's fault, get them away because my job is to get everybody to A*'."*

Many authors have spoken about the increasing individualization of problem behavior as highlighted by the phrase *"it's the child's fault"* in the above quotation, and the pressure of perverse incentives on teachers to move away from social and emotional aspects of learning and focus wholly on academic achievement.

Theme 4: Accountability, Performativity, and Marketization

As has already been touched upon, the accountability and performativity pressures that schools and teachers find themselves under in the current educational climate were also mentioned as a key factor that may be driving the rise in school exclusion figures in England. One particular accountability measure that was mentioned by many of the respondents was the Progress 8 benchmark, which is based on students' performance in eight qualifications, with English and Mathematics receiving double weighting:

> *"Our feeling is that it is because of how schools are judged, that it's about if kids aren't going to succeed in terms of the data, and Progress 8 is not going to help."* (LA1—Respondent 3)

There was a feeling amongst many of the respondents that there was a lack of desire from schools to invest in students who were unlikely to meet the Progress 8 benchmark:

> *"There's a real reluctance now for schools to put in an alternative package in Key Stage 4 [students aged 14–16]. Now, whether that*

> *is to do with… Progress 8, it's because of the qualifications they will take, yeah. And also the cost implication, and a permanent exclusion, even the other week I asked a headteacher if he would consider an alternative package for this young man, and his answer was financially it wasn't an efficient use of the school resources, so the answer was no."* (LA1—Respondent 2)
>
> *"So, a headteacher said to me, you know 'It'll cost me £12,000 to put a full-time alternative package in', and bear in mind what you get to do is the AWPU [Age Weighted Pupil Unit], you know, age weighted pupil, I think, which is about £4,000 as well, so if you do the sums, yeah, and then secondary to the money, when the young person is at the alternative provider it's going to significantly impact on my Progress 8, and that's what schools are telling us."* (LA1—Respondent 2)
>
> *"Everybody has to concentrate on the pure part of the curriculum and teaching which is why we get the exclusions we get… Actually, there are cases where school staff would say 'We'll take the hit, we'll take the fine'."* (LA2—Respondent 2)

This last quote draws attention to a related issue raised by the respondents, namely the narrowing of the curriculum:

> *"The curriculum has been made much more prescriptive, to get to the expected level, it's far more difficult and teachers who want to teach inclusively are finding it very difficult… which has knock on effects on behavior and engagement."* (LA 1—Respondent 1)

Moreover, when making decisions about whether or not to exclude, many of the respondents noted that the decision was not only based on whether or not the student under question would meet the Progress 8 benchmark, but whether or not they would also prevent their classmates from achieving due to their disruptive behavior. In the operation of a marketized system, schools must also prove to consumer parents that their schools provide a safe environment for their child to learn. Consequently, some of the respondents believed that schools were refusing students who may negatively affect the school's image:

> *"Parents like good behavior in schools. That's a big selling point. And we don't care about our neighbors next door."* (LA2—Respondent 1)

Theme 5: Increasing Demands, Reduced Capacity, and Financial Pressures

The final theme related to the conflict between increasing demands on the one hand and reduced capacity and financial pressures in both schools and LAs on the other. Of course there will inevitably be some differences in views expressed across LAs and the Third Sector because different policy and funding decisions are made by different LAs and in particular decisions that have been made as a response to cuts in LA funding. Turning first to the increasing demands, one of the most prevalent problems spoken about was mental health:

> *"So, social, emotional and mental health and Autism Spectrum Disorder are our two biggest pressure points at the moment."* (LA1—Respondent 1)

Despite the recognition of the problem, the view put forward by many of the LA practitioners was that they did not have the capacity to address it:

> *"I think because the demand seems to have increased, and yet whilst we're realigning and restructuring services, we haven't managed to keep pace with the increase in demand yet."* (LA1—Respondent 1)

Yet LA1 Respondent 1 did not think that staff restructuring was necessarily negative. Although in the short term she acknowledged that they were falling behind in case management, she believed in the longer term the restructuring could have a positive effect on ensuring that students' needs are met. Reflecting on her own new role, she noted how the restructuring had resulting in her having a position where she had oversight of many areas, which meant that she had a better understanding of "*who to contact and who links with who.*" Related to this point, there was a general recognition by the respondents of the importance of multi-agency/professional working. However, many believed that this type of working continues to be constrained by the silos that exist between different LA departments.

Additionally, when comparing the two LAs, even though the official figures showed that LA1 boasted higher rates of permanent and fixed period exclusions in 2016/17 than LA2, in general they were more positive about their current situation (although they saw themselves as *"just so managing"*; LA1—Respondent 1). Despite a reduction in staff across many areas, it seemed that they had retained more services and still saw their primary function as providing early intervention (even though as we have seen they were not being contacted as early in the process as they had been in the past to discuss students' needs).

In contrast, LA2 believed they were working in reactive mode:

> *"Teams have been cut so heavily, people are so busy doing the business of fire-fighting."* (LA2—Respondent 1)
>
> *"I think we've just been in a reactive phase because of the figures and the staffing situation we've had."* (LA2—Respondent 2)
>
> *"To be frank, we're in a position at the moment where schools are feeling the pinch financially, they are struggling with the reduction in all services across the board and support systems and increasingly turning to exclusion because I don't think they feel genuinely they have another option."* (LA2—Respondent 2)

The Third Sector Representative's description of the high needs block funding provides another example of the dual pressures of increasing demands, and reduced capacity:

> *"So what I've been writing this morning is about the high needs block, and that's the block of funding that Local Authorities hold to fund SEN and Alternative Provision (AP), and like all these systems, they have certain statutory duties. So they've got a job with the high needs block to keep kids in mainstream… When the kids get excluded or need to go to special school, the money gets taken out of the high needs block to pay for it and reduces the amount that the Local Authority can support the schools. So every graph is going up. The number of kids [who] are excluded is going up. The number of kids with EHC plans is going up. The number of kids in special school is going up. So as all these go up, the high needs block gets*

> *smaller and smaller, so the support that they can give to schools gets smaller and smaller. The behavior support team gets smaller and smaller. So then mainstream is even less able to keep them in, so more kids fall out, so we end up in a cycle, and that's where we are now, and it's going to burst."*

A recent report commissioned by the Department of Education (Parish and Bryant, 2015) similarly found that changes to funding formulas (e.g., high needs) and funding inequities between schools, coupled with an increasingly autonomous education system, have resulted in a breakdown in some areas of joined up services for vulnerable children and their families.

In the respondent accounts in the current study, there was discussion over how the number of students being permanent excluded in some areas was outstripping the number of places available at the local AP Academy/Pupil Referral Unit (PRU). This was found to result in one of two things, either those who were permanently excluded were failing to receive a spot and spending long periods of time out of education, or the permanently excluded students were allocated all of the places within the AP/PRU, meaning that no early intervention alternative packages could be offered by the provider. In addition to this, in some cases the LA practitioners described the allocation of provision as "*ad hoc*," determined by what was available, rather than being needs-led, and affected by the geographical location of the provision in relation to the students' home.

As well as a reduction in early intervention support, some of the LA practitioners discussed how in the past they had been able to work with excluded students and their families over extended periods, and support students during their transition back into mainstream school, however, they no longer have the resources to be able to do this.

Lastly linking back to Theme 4, some of the respondents believed that as school budgets decrease, and services increasingly become "*traded*" (LA2, Respondent 1), schools are making the financial decision to exclude:

> *"Our argument is that schools are meant to make Alternative Provision for those children who struggle in the mainstream curriculum and the schools don't want to fund any form of Alternative Provision, they just want to get rid."* (LA 1—Respondent 3)
>
> *"As schools' budgets reduce, schools are beginning to just look down at themselves, they have less capacity and they're certainly not up for buying in extra things."* (Third Sector Representative)

The final quote below provides a summary example of the multiple pressures faced by schools and the impact this may be having on school exclusion practices:

> *"We had a change of curriculum, change of assessment, we had the change of Code of Practice. 2014 for teachers was pretty flipping stressful, and I think if teachers are stressed, they find it harder to manage stressed children."* (LA2—Respondent 1)

Teacher burn out, and recruitment and retention issues were also briefly mentioned in relation to the above point, however, these issues require further exploration before any conclusions can be drawn.

CONCLUSION

The 1978 Warnock Report made the case in the UK for a number of actions that, it was argued, would make the integration and support of young people with SEN more effective. These included: a cohesive multi-agency approach in assessment and determination of SEN and subsequent provision; early intervention with no minimum age to start provision for children identified with SEN; better structural and organizational accountability; the appointment of a SENCO in each school; parental input to be valued and considered alongside professional views in matters relating to the child; and a recommendation that special classes and units should be attached to and function within ordinary schools where possible. The 1981 Education Act introduced a number of regulations and rights which supported the development of these forms of practice. However, the introduction of competition between schools driven by measures of attainment by the 1988 Education Act introduced new incentives for schools that disadvantaged students with SEN. At the same time there was a discourse shift from integration, or fitting young people with special educational needs into a system, to inclusion or inclusive practice in which inclusive systems were to be designed and developed.

In the aftermath of this wave of policy development, a nascent tension between policies designed to achieve excellence and those seeking to achieve inclusive practice emerged. Whilst the devolved parliaments in Scotland and Wales have continued to try to give priority to inclusion in education, in recent years these tensions in England have intensified and there is growing concern about the ways in which schools are managing the contradictions between these two policy streams. There is widespread public and political unrest about the variety of ways in which young people with SEN, who may be seen as a threat to a school attainment profiles, are being excised from the system either through formal exclusion or other, more clandestine, means.

This paper has charted the move from attempts to meet need with provision as outlined by Warnock to the current situation where the motives which drive the formulation of provision are determined by what are ultimately economic objects. We have argued that policy changes in England in particular have resulted in perverse incentives for schools to not meet the needs of SEN students and which can result in their exclusion from school in ways that are comparable to educational policies of segregation in NI.

ETHICS STATEMENT

Ethical approval was acquired from the University of Oxford's Central University Research Ethics Committee (CUREC). Written informed consent was obtained from all participants.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

HD, IT, and AT contributed conception and design of this article. HD wrote the first draft of the manuscript. IT and AT wrote sections of the manuscript. AT analyzed the data. All authors contributed to manuscript revision, read and approved the submitted version.

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Impact of Research About the Early Development of Children With Intellectual Disability: A Science Mapping Analysis

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The "Warnock Report" (Department for Education and Science, 1978) underlined the importance of early intervention for children with a range of special educational needs and the importance of partnership with families. This paper focuses on young children with intellectual disability to describe the longitudinal research on early development that has emerged since the report, and to describe the scholarly literature that has been impacted by this longitudinal work. First, we conducted a systematic literature search for primary reports of longitudinal studies on the early development of children with intellectual disability. Included studies were those that measured dependent (i.e., developmental outcomes) and independent variables (i.e., risk and resilience factors) on at least two measurement occasions (i.e., truly longitudinal), starting before the end of the 7th year of life, with samples including children with intellectual disability (or related terms). The topics of these studies, and of the publications that have cited these longitudinal studies, were extracted from titles and abstracts using machine reading and subjected to multidimensional clustering (VOSviewer; Van Eck and Waltman, 2016). The resulting body of 101 research studies (about 2.5 studies per year) covered a scattering of topics without a dominant focus. The literature that was impacted by these longitudinal studies consisted of 3,491 scientific publications. Three clusters of topics emerged from mapping the terms used in these publications, which were dominated by (1) syndrome and disorder related terms; (2) autism-related terms; and (3) disability and parent related terms. Topics related to autism and, to a lesser extent, parents showed the strongest increase over time. Topics related to intervention and programmes were mostly linked to the topics disability and parents. Taking into account the science mapping as well as features of the context in which research on intellectual disability takes place, we suggest a collaborative research agenda that systematically links topics relevant for intervention with longitudinal research, in co-creation with families.

Keywords: intellectual disability, longitudinal research, early development, early intervention, systematic review, science mapping

INTRODUCTION

Intellectual Disability is described in ICD-11 as a Disorder of Intellectual Development (Salvador-Carulla et al., 2011). Intellectual disability emerges during the "developmental period" [usually taken to mean before age 18 years; (American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD), 2010)], and is characterized by low cognitive ability (IQ < 70) and low levels of adaptive functioning (such as communication, and social and independence skills, assessed using standardized tools). Prevalence studies internationally suggest that ∼1.5–2.2% of children and adolescents have an intellectual disability (Maulik et al., 2011). Children with an intellectual disability have historically been given a variety of labels including "mental retardation," "mental handicap," and "subnormal." While internationally the term intellectual disability is favored, terminology in the UK education system was heavily influenced by the report of the committee led by baroness Warnock on special educational needs (Department for Education and Science, 1978), which proposed to use "learning difficulties" as the generic term (with some distinction of severity in mild, moderate, or severe). Publications like the Warnock report have not only shifted the social construction of having an intellectual disability but also enhanced awareness of critical needs in a significant group in our society. Charting those needs is one of the tasks that researchers in the field have undertaken.

Current social constructions of intellectual disability emphasize low levels of general intellectual ability and associated low adaptive functioning—relative to levels expected from individuals of the same age. Profiles of abilities and associated needs look very different from child to child, but usually the problems in the domain of mental functioning broadly affect activities and participation. In addition, the putative causes of this cluster of needs are many and varied—ranging from specific genetic conditions (e.g., Down syndrome), to socio-economic circumstances (e.g., extreme poverty or neglect), and environmental toxins (e.g., lead poisoning), with etiology known in a minority of cases (Kaufman et al., 2010). Despite this heterogeneity, the field still categorizes children with intellectual disability, so that needs of this subpopulation of children can be defined on a group basis. Many countries organize specialized educational services with this category of children in mind. Our focus in the current paper, using science mapping methods, is to examine research on the early development of children with intellectual disability, describing themes based on the primary sources on this research as well as the themes within secondary sources that base themselves on the longitudinal research in early development. The focus will be, in terms of the International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health (World Health Organization, 2001), on the development of mental functioning, activities, and participation, as these domains are universally affected in people with intellectual disability (in contrast to other body functions and structures). Furthermore, the focus will be on early childhood development, which may be defined as the emergence within the period from conception to age 8 of sensory-motor, cognitive, communication, and social-emotional skills (World Health Organization (WHO), 2012).

There is broad consensus that intervening early is a good thing in support of any disadvantaged child (UNICEF, 2017). The UK Warnock Report (Department for Education and Science, 1978) devoted a whole chapter to children under five that started with a recognition that the early years are a time of rapid development, and that this time of development is as crucial for children with special educational needs as for all children. However, early intervention and support may be even more important for children with intellectual disability than for all other children. By definition, children with intellectual disability have core developmental delays reflected in their performance on IQ and adaptive behavior assessments. As development in general is rapid in the early years, cognitive and adaptive functioning of children with intellectual disability soon lag behind that of their peers even if their rate of development is only slightly slower than average. To help children with intellectual disability to catch-up developmentally, intervention and support needs to start early in life to shift their trajectory of development and avoid further falling behind.

Beyond dimensions that are a part of the definition of intellectual disability, this group of children face multiple other educational, social, and health inequalities. For example, children with intellectual disability are 4–5 times more likely to have mental health problems compared to other children (Emerson and Hatton, 2007). Families of children with intellectual disability are at increased risk for multiple social/economic risks including poverty and exposure to negative life events (Emerson and Hatton, 2007). In the physical health domain, children with intellectual disability are up to 70% more likely to be obese (Emerson et al., 2016), which in turn increases the long-term risks of obesity-related health problems. These inequalities are apparent early in the lives of children with intellectual disability; by age 5 years at the latest (Totsika et al., 2011; Emerson et al., 2016) and likely even earlier. The early emergence of these inequalities in children's lives has given rise to entertaining the possibility that early intervention may have large and long-term impact.

In considering any specific intervention, including early interventions, it is important to be able to draw upon evidence that is relevant and that has sufficient coverage of the multiple, complex facets of intellectual disability. Frameworks for complex interventions suggest that the evidence base should start with theory and modeling research (or understanding the "problem") (e.g., Craig et al., 2008; Thornicroft et al., 2011). This research evidence is then used to design specific interventions that can be tested using robust experimental designs, incorporating mixed methods evaluation, and eventually the testing of the wider scale roll-out of interventions in typical practice. Thus, evidence-based early intervention and early support for children with intellectual disabilities and their families (recognizing that families are the primary context for early development; Department for Education and Science, 1978) would benefit from research on the early development of children with intellectual disability.

From a developmental perspective on intellectual disability (e.g., Hodapp et al., 1990), developmental pathways for children generally apply to children with intellectual disability. The main difference is that the pace with which children with intellectual disability develop along these pathways may differ (especially, may be slower). However, this perspective needs to be tested explicitly in studies on the early development of children with intellectual disability. In addition, the developmental perspective on intellectual disability recognizes that there may also be some divergence from typical developmental sequences most notably in the context of specific genetic syndromes. For example, the genetic disorder Rett syndrome is typically associated with severe to profound intellectual disability and early development in this condition is typified by an early period of developmental regression (Cianfaglione et al., 2018).

Very little longitudinal research had been published into the development of children with intellectual disability before the Warnock committee, and no such research was referenced in their report (Department for Education and Science, 1978). The recommendations from the report regarded attending to the origin and course of the special educational needs of children including those with intellectual disability.

The aim of the current paper was to describe the areas that have received most attention in research on early development in the four decades since the Warnock report. To that end, we adopted a bibliometric approach and first asked what peer-reviewed longitudinal research evidence is available on early developmental pathways of children with intellectual disability, what topics of these studies were, and how the topics of this literature are related. Second, we asked what the impact of this longitudinal work has been by mapping the topics of peer-reviewed publications that have cited the longitudinal work, again by describing and depicting the topics and their interrelationships and by examining time trends.

METHODS

The review questions were addressed by performing literature retrieval (Liberati et al., 2009) in **two** steps.

Retrieval of Longitudinal Studies of Early Development

Eligibility Criteria

Publications were selected if these: (1) used as inclusion criterion intellectual disability or a clinical condition with intellectual disability as a part of the phenotype (as focal sample, not as comparison sample; per the goals of this review), (2) reported studies where the aim was to quantify non-experimental change in dependent variables or associations between independent and dependent variables on at least two time points (i.e., truly longitudinal), (3) conducted the first measurement wave before end of the 7th year of life for all children (to be flexible enough to incorporate most international perspectives on the focus period for early intervention), (4) appeared as indexed peer reviewed journal articles or chapters (to focus on peer reviewed primary sources of empirical studies), (5) appeared within the domains of psychology and social sciences or in a journal in the field of intellectual disability (to focus on fields that broadly attend to mental functioning, activities, participation, personal factors, and environmental factors in relation to health conditions and bodily functions; World Health Organization, 2001), and (6) were published before 2018 (to be able to retrieve citing studies in the next step of the research). Publications were considered ineligible if no abstract was available and the full text version could not be retrieved (to enable the investigators to assess eligibility).

Retrieval and Eligibility Assessment

Query strings (**Appendix A**) were entered in the bibliographic databases of Scopus and Web of Science, which provide ongoing coverage of the large majority of international peer reviewed journals in the field of special education and rehabilitation. Records retrieved (Web of Science: number of studies $k = 920$; Scopus: $k = 1{,}016$) were entered in Endnote to remove duplicates, after which $k = 1{,}593$ records remained. The authors independently coded the titles and abstracts on eligibility criteria 1–3, turning to the full manuscript if information was missing or unclear. This resulted in 120 candidate publications. Reliability of eligibility assessment varied between kappa = 0.79 to 1.00 ($k = 50$ were double coded). After first screening, candidate publications were fully read to double check compliance on eligibility criteria 1–3, after which 108 publications remained. The final set of $k = 101$ eligible studies was obtained by excluding 7 studies with dependent variables that fell outside the domains of mental functioning, activities, participation, personal factors, and environmental factors in relation to health conditions and bodily functions (eligibility criterion 5). **Figure 1** provides the PRISMA flow diagram for the study selection and results.

Retrieval of Studies Citing Studies of Early Development

Eligibility Criteria

Publications were selected if these: (1) cited one or more of the longitudinal studies identified in step 1 (as per the goal of the study), (2) had full bibliographic records electronically available with title, author list, publication year, abstract, keywords, and reference list (to provide the data necessary for science mapping analysis), which limited the search to journal articles.

Retrieval

The longitudinal studies ($k = 101$) retrieved in step 1 were searched in Scopus and Web of Science to identify citing references. Records retrieved (Web of Science: $k = 2{,}494$; Scopus: $k = 3{,}448$) were exported to a publication database. Duplicate removal led to $k = 3{,}491$ unique publications in step 2.

Science Mapping

The citing records retrieved in step 2 were read into the software program VOSviewer 1.6.10 (Van Eck and Waltman, 2016) for the construction and visualization of bibliographic networks. This software projects "nodes," such as publications, authors, or terms, in a two-dimensional space based on a normalized index for bibliographic similarity (i.e., link strength), such as the number of co-citations of two publications by third publications or the number of times two terms occur together in the same publication (Van Eck and Waltman, 2014). In addition, the

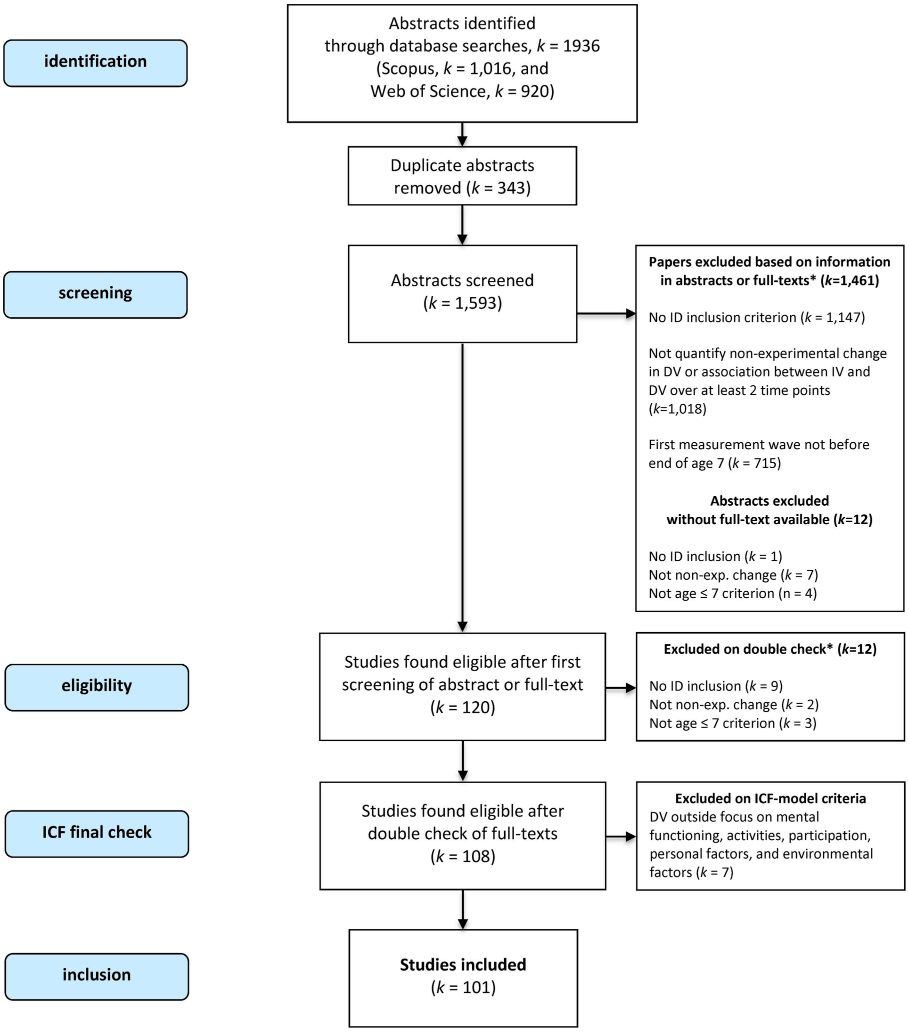

FIGURE 1 | Flow-chart describing the steps from identification to inclusion of primary journal article reports on longitudinal studies of early development of children with intellectual disability. *Overlap in scoring criteria; publications may be ineligible on multiple criteria.

program performs a weighted and parameterized variant of modularity-based clustering on the link strengths to reveal additional distinctions beyond those that can be derived from the two-dimensional scaling (Waltman et al., 2010). To map the topics and themes in the longitudinal studies on early development, a network was created of co-occurrence of terms extracted by natural language processing of titles and abstracts for nouns and adjective-noun combinations. Only terms that occurred 5 times or more were included. The algorithm ranks the terms found based on the extent to which co-occurrence appears systematic or random, keeping only the 60% most relevant terms. Terms were excluded if these referred to longitudinal research, young children, or intellectual disability (because publications were already selected on that basis), if these described study methods (given the interest in substantive focus), or if the terms appeared trivial (such as type of publication, statistical terms, or country of study).

To map the topics and themes in the literature citing longitudinal work on early development, natural language processing was conducted similarly as for the longitudinal studies of titles and abstracts, now limited to terms that occurred at least 50 times. Terms were excluded if these described study methods (given the interest in substantive focus), or if the terms appeared trivial (such as type of publication, statistical terms, or country of study). The full list of deselected terms can be found in **Appendix B**.

RESULTS

Longitudinal Studies of Early Development

References to the longitudinal studies of early development identified in step 1 of the study can be found in **Appendix C**. **Figure 2** maps the machine extracted terms describing the longitudinal studies, indicating the weight of each term (by its size), and mean publication year indicated by its color (with redness indicating relatively recent use of these terms and blueness indicating relatively early use of these terms). The links connecting terms represent their rate of co-occurrence. **Figure 2** shows that studies referring to "parenting" are of a relatively recent appearance in the literature, this term being present in titles and/or abstracts 14 times since 1999 (9 of which after 2012). "Context" appeared in this literature since 2001 ($k = 10$), while other relatively new topics occurred less frequently. "Syndrome" ($k = 52$), often in combination with "Down" ($k = 41$), continued to be used throughout the period covered by the longitudinal studies. Of the domains of early development (World Health Organization (WHO), 2012), cognitive, communication, and social-emotional skills were represented, with communication (including language) receiving most attention. The sensory-motor domain was not represented. The considerable scatter in the map, with little evidence of dominant topics among this modest set of longitudinal studies, precludes a coherent overall summary of dominant focus and trends.

Bibliographic Impact of Longitudinal Studies

Figure 3 shows the increase in publications citing the longitudinal studies of early development up until 2017 (the last full year with complete bibliographic data). **Figure 4** maps the machine extracted terms describing the publications that cited longitudinal studies, indicating the weight of each term (by its size), and membership (by its color) of one of the three clusters that were extracted from the weights of the links between the terms. The links connecting terms represent their rate of co-occurrence. Only links with a minimum weight of 50 are displayed.

The green cluster consisted of 39 terms, and was dominated by the term "syndrome," and also, albeit to a lesser extent, by "disorder," "ability," and "individual," reflecting a focus on the diagnosis of individual children. Early development was represented in this cluster with the cognition ("cognitive," "memory") and sensory-motor ("motor") domains. When searching for terms referring to intervention and support, only "patient," "identification," and "treatment" were found. Terms referring to education did not occur within this cluster.

The blue cluster consisted of 32 terms, and was dominated by the terms "autism," "autism spectrum disorder," "ASD," and "skill," reflecting a focus on people with autism spectrum disorders and their skills. Early development was represented in this cluster with the domains of cognition ("joint attention," "cognitive development," "learning"), communication ("language," "language development," "speech," "gesture," "vocabulary," "word," "expressive language," "communication"), and social-emotional skills ("social interaction"). No terms belonged to this cluster that referred to intervention or support, nor to education.

The red cluster consisted of 44 terms, and was dominated by the terms "disability," "family," "parent," and "mother," reflecting a family focus. In this cluster, early development was represented with the social-emotional skills only ("friendship," "peer," "social competence," "social skill"). When searching for terms referring to intervention and support, these were also included in this cluster, such as "effectiveness," "efficacy," "practice," "professional," "program(me)," "service," and "support." Terms referring to education were also found in this cluster, such as "education," "school," "student," "special need," and "teacher."

To discern the most recent research on which longitudinal studies have had impact, **Figure 5** overlays the clusters from **Figure 4** with mean publication year. There is a clear trend of an increasing number of studies on autism spectrum disorder that cites longitudinal research on young children with intellectual disability. Of the terms referring to intervention and support, "efficacy" ($k = 93$), "effectiveness" ($k = 97$), "practice" ($k = 311$), and "support" ($k = 705$) stand out as being used in relatively more recent literature that cited longitudinal research. Of the terms referring to education, only "school" ($k = 609$) and "student" ($k = 142$) appear in more recent literature citing longitudinal research.

DISCUSSION

Applied scientific research findings may improve understanding of a phenomenon or the processes associated with a problem's emergence or maintenance. However, the delay in time for such scientific findings feeding into interventions and practice can be substantial—perhaps as much as 20 years (Contopoulos-Ioannidis et al., 2008). Evidence-based interventions are best informed by scientific findings and theory (Craig et al., 2008; Thornicroft et al., 2011), and there is critical need for evidence based early intervention practices for children with intellectual disability (as inequalities affecting them emerge very early in development). Therefore, the research identified in the current study on the early development of children with intellectual disability is of substantial importance both scientifically and in relation to policy and practice.

In the systematic review stage of the current study, we identified 101 longitudinal (at least two time points, first data point before children turned 7 years old) research studies addressing educational, psychological and related development of children with intellectual disability. This body of work has been published over more than four decades. Thus, although the total body of relevant work appears at first to be significant, the number of studies published on average per year is a modest 2.5. Running our literature searches without restricting the outputs to studies including terms relating to "intellectual disability" (as a quick search to provide context for what we have found) led to an almost 20-fold larger corpus of potentially relevant papers on early development. This all suggests that the early development of children with intellectual disability has been relatively neglected internationally. Using science mapping approaches to examine the focus of the 101 studies also suggests a lack of coherence or strategic direction for the field of early development in children with intellectual disability. Terms in the records of included studies (**Figure 2**) were varied and showed few trends over time. Although still weak trends, there was some indication of reference to parenting (and to a certain extent to family) in the

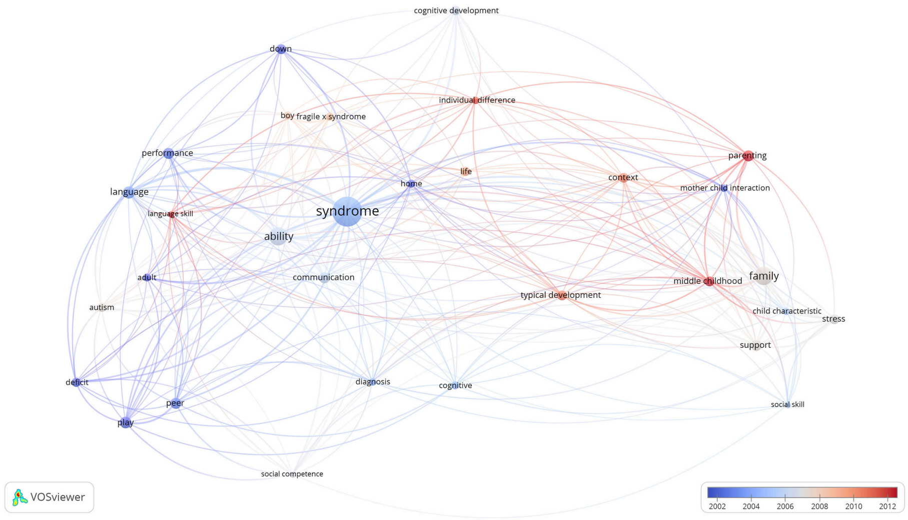

FIGURE 2 | Map of terms co-occurring in titles and abstracts of longitudinal studies of early development ($k = 101$), with distance between terms indicating strength of the links between terms and color indicating the average publication years of the articles in which these terms occurred.

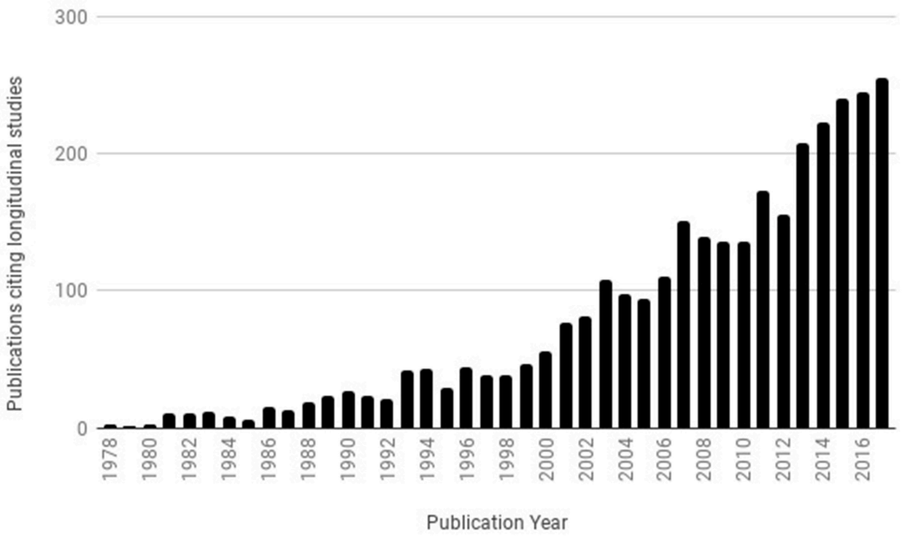

FIGURE 3 | Histogram of publications ($k = 3,491$) that cited longitudinal studies of early development ($k = 101$), ordered by year of publication.

more recent research literature. This may signal an increasing focus or recognition of the role of parents and the family in early development of children with intellectual disability, reflecting programmatic and collaborative efforts by people in the field (e.g., Blacher; Baker; Hauser-Cramm). However, given the relatively small number of total studies, this weak trend may have been driven purely by a small number of research groups publishing in the field. Also of note is that 41 of the 101 studies referred to Down syndrome. Although an important sub-group in the population of children with intellectual disability, this relatively large amount of studies referring to the group with Down syndrome seems to represent a relative neglect of other sub-populations and potential ascertainment bias in the current evidence base.

Publications citing the 101 core studies have been increasing over time, especially over the most recent 5 years to 2018 (**Figure 3**). These data may indicate a growing and recent attention to the early development of children with intellectual disability, or at least in research addressing this topic. The related aspect of the science mapping (focus and trends of the 3,491 studies citing the original 101 studies) showed three clusters of research that have been citing studies about early development of children with intellectual disability (**Figures 4**, **5**). The first cluster shows that research referring to autism spectrum disorder

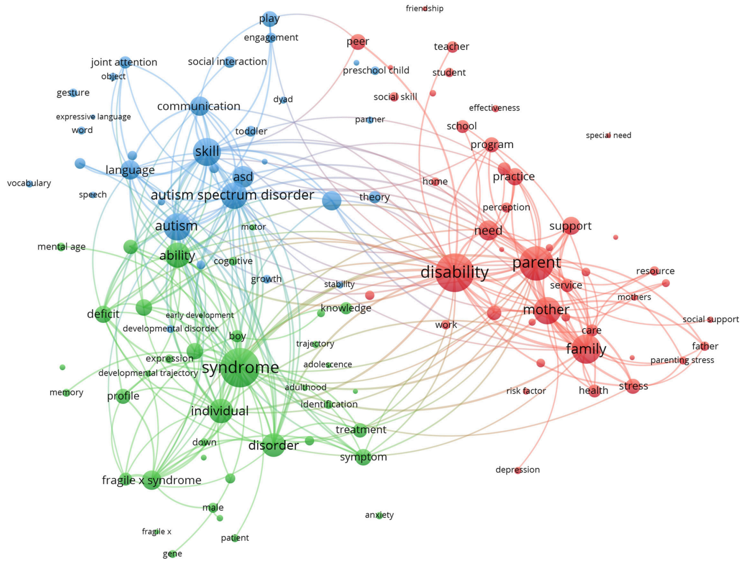

FIGURE 4 | Map of terms co-occurring in titles and abstracts of publications (*k* = 3,491) that cited longitudinal studies of early development (*k* = 101), with distance between terms indicating strength of the links between terms and color indicating membership of the clusters derived from link strength.

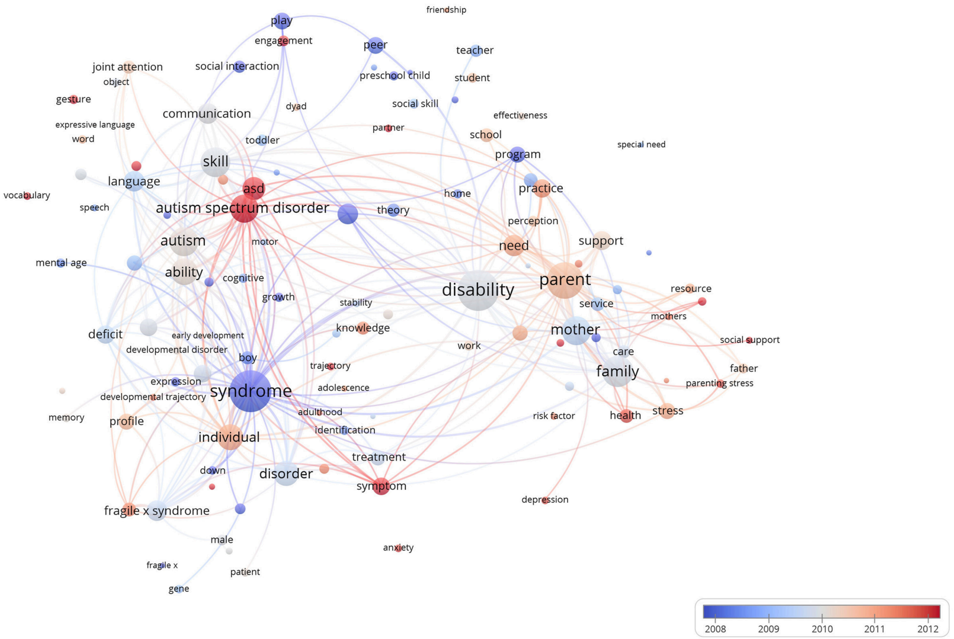

FIGURE 5 | Map of terms co-occurring in titles and abstracts of publications (*k* = 3,491) that cited longitudinal studies of early development (*k* = 101), with distance between terms indicating strength of the links between terms and color indicating the average publication years of the articles in which these terms occurred.

has been citing studies of the early development of children with intellectual disability, and that this is a recent trend in particular. It is important to note that we did not search for research studies focused on autism (in the absence of intellectual disability) as our interest was in research on the early development of children with intellectual disability (also including those who may have an additional diagnosis or label of autism). However, drawing on research on the early development of children with intellectual disability in the autism literature may reflect a number of scientific trends. For example, this may reflect a simple increase in the volume of autism research as it has become a funding priority internationally. Furthermore, children with intellectual disability and Down Syndrome in particular are often used as a comparison group in studies focusing on children with autism (e.g., Baranek et al., 2019). The autism research citing studies of early development of children with intellectual disability was not associated with frequent use of intervention-related terms. Clarifying linkages and trends regarding autism and intervention will require more comprehensive mapping of the research on early development in children with autism.

A second cluster of terms from citing studies in **Figure 4** derive from medical terminology including "syndrome," "disorder," and "ability." Intervention-related terms did also occur in this cluster but again they can also be seen to have a more medical flavor (patient, identification, treatment). There was also a clear time trend for this cluster of more medical terms from citing studies (**Figure 5**) appearing in older literature. Our searches sought out research of a primarily psychological, social or educational nature on the development of children with intellectual disability. Therefore, it is of interest that a more medically-focused cluster of citing studies was found. However, the fact that this cluster of terms was found in older citing research may reflect a general move away from medical models of disorder to an increasing functional, activity, and participation focused understanding of disability (World Health Organization, 2001; Bertelli et al., 2016).

The third cluster of terms from citing studies represents studies focusing on environmental factors. This third cluster was dominated by terms relating to family [including parent(s)], but also included multiple terms relating to social dimensions of intervention and to education. Thus, there is a body of research citing studies of the early development of children with intellectual disability that has a dual focus on families, and on intervention and supports. This body of work has been present in the field for some time, but does not have such a strong recent trend (in the same way that autism is showing) (**Figure 5**). Given the key role of the family in early child development, one might have expected increasing interest in the developmental environment, as well as in the implications for family life. However, the science mapping of citing studies did show a clear time trend for increasing occurrence of terms in citing studies that referred to intervention and support (efficacy, effectiveness, practice, and support) (**Figure 5**), showing that intervention as a component of the environment appears to integrate insights on development and considerations of the family context.

In summary, we found a disappointingly small body of international research literature on the early development of children with intellectual disability but on a broad range of subjects (suggesting lack of focus). Science mapping analysis revealed some encouraging trends in the use of research on early development of children with intellectual disability. Most significantly, more recent research citing studies of early development in intellectual disability were more likely to also make reference to intervention and support. Perhaps of some concern was that, despite dominant terms relating to the family and child within the family in the 101 early development studies themselves, recent citing studies were more likely to be referring to terms relating to autism than to the family. Our analysis suggests a priority for more research on the early development of children with intellectual disability.

Toward a Road-Map for Early Developmental Research in Intellectual Disability

Funding, organizing, and maintaining longitudinal studies in all fields is a considerable challenge. In intellectual disability, there are at least three additional challenges. First, the prevalence rate of intellectual disability even in childhood is low overall (Maulik et al., 2011), and these numbers drop dramatically when breaking down this population in subpopulations with distinct known etiologies (Kaufman et al., 2010) let alone phenotypes. Finding sufficient numbers of young children and their families to achieve reliable estimates of developmental pathways and test hypotheses about developmental mechanisms with sufficient statistical power will, therefore, require additional resources and/or collaboration across research groups and countries. Second, ascertainment of intellectual disability when children are very young is fraught with problems. Intellectual and adaptive functioning of young children show variation across individuals and time, and time is needed to be able to conclude that functioning remains in the range for intellectual disability. Existing studies have typically focused on populations (and "diagnoses") that may be more typically applied to young children and are likely strongly associated with identified intellectual disability as a child ages. In particular, the constructs of Global Developmental Delay or developmental delays in key domains (e.g., language and/or social behavior) may be easier to identify in young children. Some etiologies (e.g., Down syndrome) are also easily identified without even the need for complex biological testing. Third, children who have lower levels of cognitive and adaptive functioning (especially those with severe to profound intellectual disability) present researchers with challenges given the paucity of measures of development and opportunities to test children to establish their developmental level.

These three challenges, and likely others, may explain the relatively small amount of research on the early development of children with intellectual disability. Despite increasingly clear data on the developmental inequalities affecting children with intellectual disability, it may also be the case that international policy has yet to fully recognize the developmental needs and priority for early intervention for this population of children. Without policy prioritization, funding for research on the early development of children with intellectual disability is also unlikely to be easily available, resulting in fewer incentives for researchers to focus their energy and careers in the field of intellectual disability. We propose two inter-linked strategic developments to increase the volume and relevance of research on the early development of children with intellectual disability: Partnership and co-creation; and innovative and creative research designs and methods.

Partnership and co-creation is needed at a policy level, across countries and cultures, and most importantly between families of young children with intellectual disability and researchers. In terms of the latter, our science mapping did not identify a core of research referring to co-creation, co-production, or co-design with families of children with intellectual disabilities. Thus, families may not as a matter of course be involved in contributing to research questions about early development or partnering with researchers in longitudinal research processes. An alternative explanation is that co-production and co-design may have been happening in the research literature but that the way research is reported by scientists does not emphasize these features. Either way, a stronger partnership between families and researchers is required. Closer connection with families will not only ensure directly relevant questions about early development of children with intellectual disability are asked, but will mean that the findings of early development research might be more rapidly applied (at least by families, who have a considerable interest in ensuring the best possible developmental environment for their child). Examples of co-production and co-creation by parents, professionals, and researchers are emerging in neighboring fields, leveraging the opportunities of digital platforms (e.g., a digital platform for asking questions, finding information, and preparing for consultation with professionals for parents of children with physical disabilities; Alsem et al., 2017).

Families of young children with intellectual disability, and researchers in the field of intellectual disability, also have a direct, current and future shared interest in influencing early intervention/early education policy and also research funding policy around the world. Thus, we call for families and researchers to work together strategically to bring early years development and the need for early intervention to the attention of policy makers who can ensure that the early development of children with intellectual disability becomes a policy priority. Research is also needed on developing and evaluating models of co-production between families and researchers, and the putative impact of different approaches to this partnership on policy. With attention to children with intellectual disability in early years/early education policy, families and researchers might then also be able to work together to approach and influence research funders cross-nationally. In addition, families as partners will play a key role in the training and development of researchers working with young children with intellectual disability. To keep the research questions relevant, and to ensure that research methods are inclusive (especially considering the challenges associated with research with children with severe to profound intellectual disability), close connection and partnership with families are crucial.

One strategy to address the challenges outlined earlier (of a rare condition like intellectual disability, methods to ascertain likely intellectual disability early in development, and creative methods to include children with more severe intellectual disability) is to foster scientific partnership. This requires not only that researchers join forces, but research funding agencies, organizations representing and working with families, and regulators also participate in such teams (cf. Webster, 2019, for the neighboring field of special education). International co-operation could increase available sample sizes, increase the overall size and relevance of research through collaborative funding arrangements, and enhance agreement to use similar measures and tools. For example, in the Netherlands, a minimal data set was developed to facilitate interoperability and reusability of data to answer questions, for example, affecting smaller numbers of children such as those with rare genetic conditions associated with intellectual disability (Kunseler et al., 2016). Research teams working together could also share and plan to address key questions in the field strategically (e.g., one team in one country seeks funding to work on one problem, and a research team in another country works on another problem thus creating synergy; Salas et al., 2018). While co-production needs to be carefully considered on a case by case basis (Oliver et al., 2019), in intellectual disability research many instances can be found where the benefits of co-production will outweigh these costs.

The second area of strategy to change the trajectory of research on the early development of children with intellectual disability is to take advantage of new and emerging research methods and designs. We suggest four general approaches that would benefit early development research in intellectual disability. First, countries around the world have been investing more in administrative data across multiple domains of public policy, but including children and families. Early development research on children with intellectual disability would benefit from international standards for data to gather about young children that would allow those with an intellectual disability to be identified with some confidence. Second, many countries also invest in large population-based studies of children and families. It is possible in some of these to identify children who are likely to have an intellectual disability and related developmental conditions and thus to uniquely consider matters of child development at a population level (cf. Totsika and Hastings, 2012). When making these national investments, it would not take much additional effort for the designers of population surveys to include methods that would allow children with intellectual disability to be more easily identified. Exclusion from population level surveys is in any case likely inconsistent with the rights of people with ID to be included in matters related to their health and well-being (United Nations, 2006). Third, although the consent and data sharing issues will need to be considered very carefully, families of young children with intellectual disability across collaborating international research groups could be approached to join national or international research registers (cf. the Netherlands Autism Register: www.nar.nl; Grove et al., 2018). Fourth, and related also to the previous point, a repository of protocols, measures and methods in longitudinal studies of young children with intellectual disability is needed to make sure that creative and excellent research approaches are more widely used, researchers do not have to "re-invent the wheel," and that data are more easily combined to consider new research questions without the expense of commissioning new research studies.

CONCLUSION

In the current paper, and science mapping study, we have argued for the importance of basing early interventions for children with intellectual disability on the foundations of high quality developmental research. Mapping the use of early development research in intellectual disability, we found only moderate evidence of links to research on intervention and arguably a concerning disconnection. However, our analysis gives only a partial picture of the state of early developmental science in intellectual disability. A related systematic review and synthesis of early intervention research in intellectual disability would be informative in this regard. It is possible, for example, that early interventions in intellectual disability have been directly informed by mainstream developmental theory and/or research studies of typical development.

Given that we have argued that developmental processes may be relatively universal although likely at a slower pace in intellectual disability, does it matter if there is both a lack of early development research in intellectual disability and a potential disconnection with early intervention science? We contend that the answer to this question is: Yes, it does matter. In particular, it is clear that the social (and especially the family) environment both partially determines and also interacts with children's development. This means that the development of children with intellectual disability is likely shaped by different environmental influences than for other children at the same developmental age. For example, puberty and the social/family response to developing sexuality in a physical sense may occur for adolescents with intellectual disability when their social and communication functioning lags behind their peers. In addition, families' experiences are different: their child with intellectual disability may engage in challenging behaviors that are not only uniquely stressful, but lead to considerable public stigma for families. Modeling the effects of any intervention is thus not as simple as applying a one-size-fits-all "developmental delay" approach. Lacking direct research evidence about the development of children with intellectual disability, any intervention not informed by such research may have unexpected, and even damaging, outcomes.

Without underpinning developmental research, it is also difficult to understand how or why early interventions are working successfully. This will be especially limiting at the stage where evidence-based early intervention strategies need to be rolled out widely in practice. Successful implementation will, in part, be determined by strategies to maintain the changes in developmental and family processes that are targeted by the intervention. While the Warnock report in 1978 did not focus on the critical need to understand developmental mechanisms in children with intellectual disability, the findings of the current study suggest continuing relevance of high quality longitudinal work.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The bibliographic datasets generated and analyzed for this study can be fully obtained using the search commands in the **Appendix A**, using proprietary databases of Thomson Reuters (Web of Science) and Elsevier (Scopus). The bibliometric map data with which interactive versions of the maps (**Figures 2**, **4**, **5**) can be created are open and can be accessed at https://osf.io/s7hde/ (doi: 10.17605/OSF.IO/S7HDE).

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

CS and RH contributed conception and plan for the review. CS collected bibliographic data and performed the bibliometric analyses. CS, MvR, and CES scored abstracts for eligibility and prepared the flow chart and supplementary tables. CS and RH wrote the first draft of the manuscript. All authors contributed to manuscript revision, read and approved the submitted version.

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SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

The Supplementary Material for this article can be found online at: https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/feduc.2019.00041/full#supplementary-material

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The Changing Perception of Communication Needs—A Litmus Test for the Warnock Legacy

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Meeting Lady Warnock[1] at the final conference for some work commissioned by the DfEE/NHS in 2001, she said that one of her greatest concerns about her earlier report is the fetishisation of the statement of education needs. It was, of course, true that with the "statement," as it came to be known, was often equated with her report, and triggered a rather legalistic culture with all the accompanying processes of tribunals and appeals. Nowhere was this more apparent than in the "border disputes" between health and education as to who was responsible for children with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN), a term which only emerged 25 years after her report was published. In this paper it is argued that the nature of disability has changed since Warnock. Communication disability is now one of the most disabling conditions and communication access at least as important as physical access. It is argued that communication should perhaps be seen as a litmus test[2] for whether the integration of children with support needs in the classroom is achievable. Although Warnock resisted diagnostic labels in favor of "needs" there has been a burgeoning market in measures of cognition, language and behavior since the 1970s. The paper goes on to look at the ways that the term SLCN has played out across health and educational services and ends up comparing the recommendations in the original report with those in the recent (2018) *Bercow - 10 Years On* report.

Keywords: language, communication, speech, child, public health

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The Warnock report (Warnock, 1978) was a brave attempt to bring together all the issues associated with the history of special education needs and the modern priorities (in the 1970s) of the children and young people concerned—the first report to do so for half a century. In attempting to capture the needs of all children, the report often lacked specificity—to be fair the authors are clear that this is what they had planned—but this has to be offset against the range of issues that they do cover. The main recommendations or what the report calls their "first priority" are improved provision for children under 5 years, for young people over 16 and teacher training. Of these, the first has made considerable progress, the second and third probably less so. But beyond these first priorities there are a host of other recommendations, some of which look a little strange in hindsight precisely

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[1] Throughout this piece, reference is made to "Warnock" as if it refers to the individual rather than the eponymous report. In fact, this just reflects a common understanding which takes the name of the chair of the relevant committee as its title. Clearly the findings to which reference are made here were generated by the committee and the research that it commissioned rather than the individual concerned.

[2] The term "litmus test" refer to the UK understanding of this term which stresses the importance of a single factor in establishing a finding.

because special needs have moved forward so much. We have no mention of inclusion but a highly differentiated version of integration which prefaced later changes. The discussion of children speaking more than one language, a critical educational concern to most modern teachers, is confined to Welsh and Gaelic which might surprise modern readers. Inevitably in such reports there are contradictions but, of these, the most substantive is the tension between belief and practice in the identification of children. On the one hand we have the statement that "*statutory categorisation of handicapped pupils should be abolished*" (para 3.25) but on the other we have a recommendation for what became the lightening rod of categorization in education for many years.

> *A system of recording as in need of special educational provision those children who, on the basis of a detailed profile of their needs..are judged by their local education authority to require special educational provision not generally available in ordinary schools* (para3.13) –

One area which attracts considerable attention nowadays is speech, language and communication (SLC) skills, which pervade the issue of *disability* in general and *access* more specifically. SLCs are seen as critically important both in their own right as far as parents, professionals and children are concerned. They are also critical as an earlier marker of a wide variety of neurodevelopmental disorders (Ek et al., 2012) and in terms of access more generally, access to education, the curriculum, friendship groups and later employment. Indeed, one could reasonably argue that while "handicapped" children experience a great many difficulties in terms of mobility, cognition etc. it is their communication skills which represent the most salient obstacle to their effective inclusion in society and this is getting more prominent as society becomes more technologically sophisticated. There are a number of references to speech and language in Warnock but these are generally in terms of "speech and language disorder" or in terms of "speech and language therapy" rather than as a key dimensions of risk, inclusion and access.

It is argued below that the functional disabilities associated with speech, language, and communication are really one of the best tests for the Warnock legacy. Four issues are identified where this is particularly true,

- the changing nature of disabilities within a changing society,
- the use of thresholds and the increasing definition of the labels for disabilities,
- the tension between education and health approaches to the issue and particularly the role that public health (not mentioned by Warnock at all) has come to play in the process of management and identification of the young child with developmental and/or educational needs
- a comparison of the recommendations from Warnock with those made by the *Bercow 10 Years On* report (ICAN/RCSLT, 2018) which followed up the Bercow report (Bercow, 2008) designed to improve facilities for the children with speech, language and communication needs.

THE CHANGING NATURE OF DISABILITY IN SOCIETY

As Warnock indicates, disability, and indeed special needs and the way that society responds to them, are not static. They change as society changes and, indeed, with the individual's response to that society. One key aspect is the needs of the workforce and the role that education, although a general "good" in Warnock's parlance, plays in helping children acquire the necessary skills to enter the workforce. Many disabilities may not have been so apparent in an early industrial society but have emerged as the needs of that society changed. The best example of this is language and communication skills which have become of paramount importance in our increasingly white collar world.

> "*Before the Forster Education Act (of 1870) the needs of mentally handicapped children were little recognised. Mental disability was for many children, no substantial handicap in coping with the simple demands of everyday life in a largely uneducated and relatively uncomplicated world, and institutional provision was available for those who needed looking after. Their needs first became apparent after 1870 when large numbers of children of below average or poor intellectual ability entered public elementary schools. Many of them made scarcely any progress and their presence hindered normal teaching*" (ibid p12 2.16)

Some 20 years on from Warnock, this issue was articulated even more clearly in a paper related to employability and speech and language needs.

> *The fitness of the person of the 21st century will be defined, for the most part, in terms of his or her ability to communicate effectively. Societal self-interest will drive an increased allocation of resources to optimize the communication ability of its population, for this is how society prospers. Communication disorders will be a major public health concern for the 21st century because, untreated, they adversely affect the economic well-being of a communication-age society. We have seen that manual labor–based employment has diminished, in terms of percentages, in the country during the past century, but massive unemployment has not resulted because those jobs have been replaced by communication-based jobs.*(Ruben, 2000 p.243),

Globally, workforces have changed over the past 60 years with a sharp rise in individuals employed in service industries contrasted with a decline in employment in production industries. Thus, in Australia, half of the workforce was "blue collar" in 1966, only 8% in 2001. This inevitably presents new challenges. The Australian Industry Group (2013) reported - "40% of the workforce had communication skills below the minimum standards required to perform their jobs." And now with the hollowing out of the middle classes (fewer jobs for highly educated people) and widening social inequalities, the salience of oral language skills becomes even more pronounced

> *During most of human history a person with a communication disorder was not thought of as "disabled." The shepherds, seamstresses, plowmen, and spinners of the past did not require optimal communication skills to be productive members of their*

> *society, as they primarily depended on their manual abilities. Today a fine high-school athlete—a great "physical specimen"—who has no job and suffers from poor communication skills is not unemployed, but, for the most part, unemployable. On the other hand, a paraplegic in a wheel chair with good communication skills can earn a good living and add to the wealth of the society. For now and into the 21st century, the paraplegic is more "fit" than the athlete with communication deficits.* (Ruben, 2000, p. 243)

Ruben was writing in the nineteen nineties but, in many ways, what he said has been amplified by computing in general and artificial intelligence in particular. This puts those with communication needs under even greater pressure, competing with Alexa, Echo and myriad other helpful household items in the internet of things which are starting to dominate our lives. But such implements, for all their convenient wonder, are still relatively crude and function in a very instrumental manner. They provide information or respond to demands but are still not able to interact very effectively. The symbolic imagining of other people's worlds, the capacity to inhabit the shoes of others, remains elusive to the technology. Good effective interactive communication remains at a premium and is likely to become even more so, further handicapping those who struggle with these types of skills. The digital gains of recent years have done much to relieve the disabilities of people who would traditionally been considered "at risk" in society for physical or those gains have done little to help those with functional speech, language and communication needs. This is not just a matter of literacy, as is sometimes assumed, but oral language skills and it is therefore not surprising that many schools are now making this a priority for all children and especially those with more marked, disordered, speech and language—in a way that they may not have done in the late seventies.

THRESHOLDS AND CLASSIFICATION

One of the distinctive characteristics of the Warnock report was the nuanced nature of the discussion of disabilities both in their characteristics and the way in which they interacted with the child's environment. The report highlights that two children, with similar profiles, might be more or less disabled in different family or indeed school contexts. But inevitably the need to decide which children do and which do not need extra funding to support their needs leads to a splitting of the population in one way or another. Warnock draws a distinction between those with major handicaps, many of which have names freely employed by Warnock but difficult for cultural reasons to use nowadays, and those with what the report terms 'no substantial handicap'. This takes us to measurement and what happens if your assessed performance falls on one side of a designated threshold rather than the other.

Warnock talks about the lack of ability to measure children's abilities. This may have been true at the time but, since the seventies, there has been a considerable increase in the number of cognitive factors and corresponding measures for all sorts of different aspects of a children's abilities (Frazier, 2007; Dockrell et al., 2017). This is to be commended because it helps with measurement for identification, diagnosis and, indeed, intervention outcomes, although, as Dockrell et al. indicate, many of these measures remain relatively poorly evaluated and are sometimes used interchangeably for diagnosis and outcomes, for example. The challenge is that the increase in the number of measures then allows us to detect differences between groups of children and those patterns are then used to determine a group of children with isolated "specific" problems and this is especially true when general intelligence is involved. Of course, these conditions are only really specific if we are clear that all the other areas have, in fact, been measured and found to be "within normal limits." In practice, there are high level of comorbidity in all developmental disorders (Bax and Gillberg, 2010) and many are only notionally "specific." This has long been recognized as a characteristic of developmental language disorders (Hill, 2001; Carpenter and Drabick, 2011; Tomblin and Mueller, 2012). An obvious example would be the organizational and co-ordination difficulties of children with specific reading difficulties or dyslexia and the same would be true of developmental co-ordination disorder, dyscalculia etc.in the way that they have been traditionally characterized (Verhoeven and Van Balkom, 2004). There has, of course, been considerable discussion about whether these concepts are traits or dimensions (Coghill and Sonuga-Barke, 2012), but less on how these can be shown to map onto need or indeed how need should be measured.

A case in point is the identification of children with speech and language difficulties which are *specific* to those domains but otherwise without associated difficulties. First identified in the early nineteenth century (Reilly et al., 2014) these children were a neurological curiosity for many years and it was not until the 1945 Education Act in the UK that they were identified as being potentially in need of special education. A host of different terms have been used to describe the disorder—congenital childhood aphasia, developmental dysphasia, specific language impairment etc. The key components of such conditions are rarely the same and thresholds also differ with some authors identifying children with language levels two or more standard deviations below the mean (World Health Organization, 1992), and others taking more liberal cut-off such as −1.5 standard deviations, the 10th centile (Tomblin and Nippold, 2014), −1 standard deviation (Conti-Ramsden et al., 2001), or with an overall language age (LA) at least 12 months lower than their chronologic age (CA) or their performance mental age (MAP), whichever was the lower (Stark and Tallal, 1981). Consensus amongst academics and practitioners is clearly key. Yet the evidence suggests that academics and indeed those commissioning services are often much happier with clearly defined categories than practitioners who are often much more accepting of "need" as a defining category.

Interestingly in the last 3 years this issue has led to a consensus project pinning down the criteria for *Developmental Language Disorder* (DLD) (Bishop et al., 2016, 2017). While many are happy to work with this broad term (DLD) with its emphasis on functional outcomes many prefer the term Speech, Language and Communication Needs. Only time will tell whether this leads to the term DLD being adopted in the international classifications systems such as the DSM and the ICF or whether it will follow Asperger's Syndrome and be replaced (McPartland et al., 2012). In many ways Warnock's position, eschewing lower level categories, is probably wise from a pragmatic point of view as can be seen from the report's discussion of terms such as "delicate" which have entered and exited the special needs vocabulary leaving barely a trace. In many ways the academics desire for cognitive specificity is offset against the broader concept of need that practitioners in both education and health have to deal with.

EDUCATION AND HEALTH

Speech, language and communication are, by their very essence, concepts which are relevant to both educational and health services. These skills clearly underpin most of what takes place in the classroom, they are closely linked to literacy, to many aspects of attainment and to social inclusion and, as indicated above, to employment prospects. But equally they are an indicator of healthy development and well-being more generally. Poor communication skills are commonly associated with mental health difficulties and they are also commonly associated with a wide variety of neurodevelopmental difficulties—autism spectrum disorder, cerebral palsy learning disabilities etc. Almost by definition SLCN straddles both services.

Service provision is at the root of the Warnock recommendations as it will always be for those with a focus on improving the experience of "handicapped children and young people" moving through school. Although the context of the report was always the school, there was an awareness of the importance of speech and language, often framed as a speech and language therapy in referencing the Quirk Report (Quirk, 1972) which preceded Warnock and had a considerable impact on the way speech and language therapy services were developed. Although the government of the day did respond to the report, and the number of those qualifying as speech and language therapists increased after its publication, provision for children needing speech and language therapy remain something of a cinderella service relative, for example, to services directed toward literacy or latterly autism. The saliency of services for children with SLCN increased throughout the eighties and nineties. This was partly as the result of pressure from parents from the positive experience of such support in schools and the growing evidence base supporting speech and language interventions.

However, to be fair, these issues were driven by the statement of educational needs and the litigious culture it created. Throughout the eighties and nineties this led to a range of "border disputes" as services squabbled over responsibility for the implementation of recommendations made in the statement and this had its greatest impact for children with what were often considered more moderate difficulties. Nowhere was this more pronounced than in the management of children with speech and language disorders who repeatedly fell between the stools of health and education (Law et al., 2000). The increasing emphasis on parental empowerment, the improving status attached to disability and the way that services were enshrined in law meant that parents began to use the tribunal system and the law to settle such disputes. In turn, this resulted in a good deal of acrimony, parental stress and wasted resource.

In the end, the Departments of Education and Health in England and Wales came together at the end of the nineties to commission a report on how services should develop (Law et al., 2000). This made a number of recommendations about the common use of terminology, the role that speech and language therapists should play in schools and about the commissioning of these services (joint health/education budgets etc). In turn, this led to a number of papers about different aspects of the services, for example about the role that parents felt that they should play in the process (very much in the spirit of Warnock) (Band et al., 2002 and later Hambly, 2014). But it was soon clear that the pressure within the system required a more substantive initiative to drive the issue of speech language and communication needs forward. This led to the publication of the Bercow report (Bercow, 2008) and then the government's response, the Better Communication Action Plan (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2008) and the Better Communication Research Programme (BCRP) (Lindsay et al., 2009, 2012).

To a great extent these initiatives shifted the emphasis away from speech, language and communication needs as a health concern to one of central concern to schools. Alongside these initiatives language and communication were increasingly being identified as a key issue by the government's *What Works* centers, notably the Early Intervention Foundation (EIF) and the education Endowment Foundation (EEF) (Law et al., 2017a,b). While educational practice related to communication needs has been an interest in some quarters for many years, such initiatives have moved communication and language to the center of the stage as far as early years education policy is concerned in England at least. Furthermore, they have broadened its application still further, drawing these skills to the attention to a much wider policy audience and to local government officers planning local services. Warnock referenced the Court Report (Court, 1976) and the changes that were taking place with the development of community pediatrics and the need for child guidance clinics to which children should be referred if they had emotional and behavioral problems. Reference is also made to the way that hospitals and schools were historically collocated to facilitate the management of children with both education and social difficulties but the presumption is that education is the focus of the report and that the other aspects just happen because the child has clear medical needs. This picture has clearly changed considerably.

Over the same period there has been a remodeling of the statement of special educational needs which has now been replaced in England by the Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) (DFE, 2014); (https://www.gov.uk/children-with-special-educational-needs/extra-SEN-help). Like the statement this was intended to result in an integrated plan with the child's needs at the center and different agencies feeding in specific details about different aspects of the child's development (i.e., Cognition and learning, Communication and interaction, Social emotional and mental health and Sensory, and physical needs). The criteria for this level of funding was rather stricter than for the statement and it was not easy for children SLCN to receive such a plan except as part of another condition. Parental feedback on the process has been well-documented (Adams et al., 2017). The number of children with EHCPs is relatively stable at 2.8% (DfE/ONS, 2017) but a further 11.6% are deemed to be eligible for SEN support and of these the second largest proportion after moderate learning difficulty is SLCN. The corresponding figures for 2010 ie when the original SEN statement was still in place was 2.7 and 18.2%, respectively, suggesting the reduced eligibility for support at the less severe end of the distribution. By contrast, the highest proportion of those with EHCP, by a long way, are children with autism spectrum disorders. Yet even with this tightening of eligibility the suggestion is that authorities are not able to cope with the volume of demand and 40% of authorities indicated that they are not able to meet the 20 week target for completion set and over 6,000 cases had taken over a year https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-46658243. Furthermore, the number of parents having to resort to tribunals nearly doubled to 2000 in the 3 years after 2014 when they were introduced suggesting that many of the problems with the SEN statement are recurring. Interestingly Lady Warnock herself had a number of reservations about the ECHPs when they were introduced (https://www.tes.com/news/warnocks-5-point-plan-send) particularly because there was so little transparency about the criteria used by local authorities, mirroring the threshold discussion above.

Although the clinical dimension for children with the most marked "medical" needs remains, there has been a further shift toward a more "population" approach to childhood disability. One of Warnock's key recommendations is that special education needs to be extended downwards in to the preschool period and upwards into post 16 education. To a great extent this happened as far as the identification of the children with the most marked difficulties were concerned, in collaboration with the developing "child development" services offered by community pediatricians, clinical psychologists, speech, and language therapists etc. In recent years across the UK, national educational systems have increased services to younger and younger children, perhaps best illustrated by the English "two year offer" for more socially disadvantaged children https://www.foundationyears.org.uk/2011/12/2-year-old-offer/. The result of this downward extension of activity is that the boundaries between what is a special needs issue and what is developmental variation for which support may be valuable, have become increasingly blurred. In part this is because it means that the purview of the child health nurse or health visitor services effectively crosses over with that of those delivering the new early year's services. Of course, this emphasis on the very young child, reflecting the increasing awareness of the importance of the home learning environment (Melhuish et al., 2008; Kelly et al., 2011), influences the role played by educationalists because they need to engage with the context in which the child is growing up—i.e., the family—rather than exclusively the performance of the child in class something which is especially salient in the early years. Warnock has very little to say about the social determinants of educational attainment which has been shown over recent years to be so instrumental in terms of the outcomes achieved (Pfeffer, 2008; Bukodi et al., 2014). Awareness of the gap in attainment by the time children start primary school has fostered an increasing interest in the development and measurement of early skills and thus the identification of thresholds of what is and what is not "typical" development. A corollary of this is a focus on parenting and on promoting "parent child interaction" (Kiernan and Mensah, 2011; Landry et al., 2012). This, in turn, has led to a development, not foreseen by Warnock, but increasingly becoming a driver in the early years is the identification of speech and language as a public health issue rather than just a within-child concern (Beard, 2018). For a condition to be considered a public health problem it must place a considerable burden on society, a burden that appears to be increasing. The burden must be distributed unfairly (i.e., certain segments of the population are unequally affected) and there must be evidence that early preventive strategies could substantially reduce the burden of the condition (Schoolwerth et al., 2006). Increasingly there is an awareness that child language does fulfill these criteria (Law et al., 2013, 2017c; Wylie et al., 2014).

Nowhere is this seen more clearly than the concept of school readiness. Over the last few years a series of documents have highlighted the importance of very early child development and school "readiness" as core life skills. These have been shown to lead to a host of later benefits in education, socialization and employment (Bercow, 2008; Gross, 2008; for examples see: Allen and Duncan Smith, 2008; Field, 2010; Marmot, 2010; Allen, 2011; Save the Children, 2014a,b,c). A child's ability to understand and use oral language is arguably the most important element of school readiness. The crucial transition to literacy in the first 3 years of school is not likely to be successful without well-established language skills (Law et al., 2017a,b).

In terms of the burden to society it is clear that many children with limited language skills are already in receipt of additional resources in school. In particular, when their difficulties are associated with poor school achievement and mental/health behavioral difficulties (Cohen et al., 1998; Law and Elliott, 2009), often leading to long term consequences (Beitchman et al., 2001; Hartshorne, 2006; Schoon et al., 2010). Children with DLD are also likely to struggle with transitions between schools and into the workforce (Snow, 2016). Low literacy levels impose a range of direct and indirect costs on governments, industry and communities and are difficult to rectify (Industry Skills Council of Australia, 2011). Approximately 8 per cent of children at school entry may have DLD (Norbury et al., 2016), making it as prevalent as childhood obesity (reported to be 7% Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2009) although this figure is likely to be much higher once children with less pronounced difficulties are included (Locke et al., 2002; Law et al., 2011) and when children across from across the social spectrum are compared (McKean et al., 2018). Access to services was an issue not directly addressed by Warnock but it is clear that it is not easy for all children to access the services they need and it is often the families who are most in need of these services who access them the least (Moore et al., 2015) and cost, availability and accessibility may also be issues (Ou et al., 2011; Morgan et al., 2016). A recent Australian study by Reilly and colleagues mapped the distribution of speech pathology services across metropolitan Melbourne and examined the level of need in these areas according to language vulnerability and social disadvantage (Reilly et al., 2016). There were three times as many private speech pathology services (requiring the client to pay a fee) as there were public (free) services for 0–5-year-olds and overall, poorer availability of services in some of the most vulnerable areas. Evidence from the UK is less easy to come by but a recent study has suggested that such inequalities may not be as marked in London at least (Pring, 2016). All children have access to schools in the UK but not all of them have equal access to the necessary support and more socially advantaged parents are more likely to have the skills and knowledge based on their education and experience to be resourceful and access the services their children need.

The field of intervention research and evidence based practice has moved on apace since 1978. Indeed, Warnock, by her own admission, had little to say about it. Much has been written about the evaluation of interventions to promote child social and emotional development in general (Asmussen et al., 2016) and about interventions to promote the language skills of young socially disadvantaged children (Warr-Leeper, 2001). Most of the intervention studies concerning DLD have been carried out by specialist clinicians and could be described as "targeted-indicated" interventions whereby children are identified by a diagnostic process prior to attending the service (Law et al., 2003). Rather less often they focus on universal (the whole population) or "targeted selective" interventions—i.e., where a subset of the population was deemed to be "at risk" and therefore received the intervention, usually for reasons of socio-economic disadvantage (Law et al., 2017a).

Interestingly although she did consider early identification, deeming it to be a health concern managed at a local level, Warnock did not consider the public health dimension. This has now moved into the mainstream in much of the UK as witnessed by the universal use of the Ages and Stages Questionnaire in Scotland and England (Squires and Bricker, 2009) and the recent announcement from the UK Education Minister Damien Hinds and the joint Public Health England and the Department of Education in England working together (https://www.change.org/p/rt-hon-damian-hinds-mp-secretary-of-state-for-education-fair-funding-for-children-and-young-people-with-speech-language-and-communication-needs) and more recently still by Nadhim Zahawi Children and Families Minister who announced additional funding to help identify children with language difficulties at 2 years. https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/children-and-families-minister-announces-new-early-years-funding.

WARNOCK AND BERCOW 10 YEAR ON (BTYO) – WHERE HAVE WE GOT TO?

It is important to see Warnock within the current policy context. Specifically it is instructive to compare some of the Warnock recommendations with those in the most recent report on provision for children with speech language and communication needs namely the Bercow 10 years on report (ICAN/RCSLT, 2018). One would hope, given the passage of time, that recommendations would have moved on as some are achieved, others move out of focus and new ones come in. It is important, of course, to acknowledge that the terms of reference for the two reports were very different and so trying to speak across the generations is likely to be a challenge. Rather than making direct comparison between all the recommendations of both reports some, interesting similarities and differences can be identified. Understandably BTYO was much less concerned with the formal process of identification or the specific educational provision that is made although it authors do express concern about the perceived lack of funding without EHCPs. It was not trying to draw together what is known about services but rather point in the direction of future developments. Raising public and teacher awareness about speech and language disabilities particularly. As already indicated, public health was not mentioned in Warnock whereas it comes through very strongly in *Bercow 10 years on*. Similarly it references the Department of Education's role in contributing to the government's "social mobility strategy" tackling health inequalities: to their Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy and in their contribution to Integrated Care Systems, such broad policy linkage was far beyond what was said in the Warnock report. The report highlights the role of evidence based practice and sharing best practice, both modern mantras which one could say were implicit but rarely explicit in Warnock. In relation to young people with communication disabilities the report says

> *The Department for Education should ensure that communication skills, specifically those identified as needed for the workplace, are appropriately recognised in the criteria for the Functional Skills qualifications. The Education and Skills Funding Agency should revise their apprenticeship funding rules for training providers and employers, to include training for communication skills development.* (ICAN/RCSLT, 2018 paragraph 1.4 p.40)

These last two recommendations are interesting for two reasons. The first is that the disability issue is fused with employment more generally and the second is the employment significance of communication skills, to which Warnock does not refer at all. There is a recommendation for OFSTED, the mechanism in England by which school performance is monitored, which, of course, did not exist in the 1970s, to audit communication issues in the school and classroom. The Warnock report separates out psychiatric problems and what it prefers to call emotional and behavioral problems from speech and language disorders. An extensive body of research evidence over the last forty years suggests that these two domains are closely linked and *Bercow 10 years on* recommends that this be recognized in the provision of Children and Young People's Mental Health Services and the Mental Health Support Teams. An extension of this, demonstrating the ambition of the second report, is that there is a recommendation that the Youth Justice Board should introduce mandatory communication skills training for all justice professionals as part of their initial training.

BTYO focuses on the need for accessible and equitable services for all families something to which, as noted above, Warnock does not pay any attention. Prevalence especially from the Isle of Wight study (Rutter et al., 1976) is referenced in Warnock but there is no sense that specific subgroups of the population received greater or lesser access to the services they need. BTYO indicates that what are now called *Local Offers* need to include clear statements about who is responsible for funding and providing support for children with SLCN from 0–25 years. Furthermore, the report talks about the need to commission support for children and young people's SLCN on the basis of outcomes not outputs reflecting the need to get away from measurement of process (waiting lists, attendance etc) to whether the interventions made a difference. Early identification—a concern for Warnock—was also picked up in BTYO but the focus on current systems and how to improve them (notably the Ages and Stages Questionnaire) suggesting that the processes need developing within the context of the English Healthy Child Programme. Training is highlighted in BTYO but this time it is the health visitors (not considered in more than a passing manner by Warnock) who are considered central to the process of identifying special needs.

In short, the topological landscape has changed considerably in the 40 year since Warnock but many of the items, important now, were referenced in the earlier report. There are plenty of examples of real progress. In many ways the modern concerns are refinements which have schooling at their center but overlap with other services Child and Adolescent Mental Health (erstwhile child guidance) services and employment services with a strong public health dimension speaking to the nature of the populations identified and the service access available to them.

CONCLUSIONS

Returning to the key arguments in this paper, it is clear that the nature of disabilities changes as society changes and the society about which Warnock was writing was very different from our own. Yet definitions, labels and thresholds will always be an issue as different groups of professionals seek to define their populations for study, provision etc. It is clearly helpful, not least to parents and practitioners, that the views on what is a case coincides, but there is still a lot of progress that needs to be made in the science underpinning these judgements. "Need" sounds as if it is more meaningful as far as the child is concerned but, of course, this remains a relative concept. Does the parent's concept of need reflect that determined by the therapist or the authority commissioning the services. Communication has a number of characteristics which makes it relevant for those providing both health and educational services (in the UK context at least) and this has led to tensions as to who should take responsibility for these services. The argument here is that a public health approach in many ways mitigates this problem given the universal nature of educational provision. As demands change so it has become increasingly clear that pressure to develop services for children with SLCN has become better articulated over time so that those demands are better defined now than they were in 1978.

Warnock's recognition of the importance of the functional aspect of disabilities rather than their classification categories has meant that certain aspects of a child's development have become especially salient in measuring whether the system has succeeded in supporting the child. Many aspects of disability, physical access, sensory adjustment etc. have progressed substantively since the 1970s, because of increased awareness and new technology, but one aspect to which this paper has been devoted is *communication access*, the ability of the child to understand what is going on in the classroom and the home, with family and friends and to actively participate in discussions and decisions, in the curriculum and in making and sustaining friends.

Amongst its nuanced discussion and detailed analysis, the statement of educational need will always been seen as one of the key initiatives that came out of the Warnock report. Rather than engaging with some of these difficult concepts, people latched on to the statement as a way of identifying and ultimately helping the child. In fact, it ended up as an instrument in its own right with resultant tussles with parents about labeling on the one hand (bad) and access to funding on the other (good) or a more nuanced combination of the assessment of need (Resch et al., 2010; Watson et al., 2011). The good intentions to enshrine the process in law ended up with a rather litigious process with border disputes between health and education as to who was responsible (Lindsay et al., 2005) a tension that remains to this day (https://specialneedsjungle.com/call-to-action-lets-work-together-stop-send-tribunal-nightmares/.

Nowhere was this more pronounced than language and communication skills which underpin many of the core activities that Warnock identified. Indeed, these skills are amongst the most important aspects of inclusion which go far beyond co-location and physical modifications to active engagement with peers and others. Warnock identified the importance of participation but did not discuss the issues in terms of specific abilities. Similarly she did not identify the liminal space between health and education where speech, language and communication needs have tended to reside in the UK, at least until relatively recently. Perhaps when her report is repeated fifty years on, it will be the better understanding of the role of such skills and the way that teachers respond to them which will be a focus. Warnock saw the influence of her report reaching "to the end of the century and possibly beyond" (p.325) and it has certainly done that. Expectations of parents have increased as have the numbers of staff and indeed the training for staff (Bercow, 2008). The argument here has been that the extent to which children's speech, language and communication needs are addressed will be critical to the practical implementation of many of the child focused recommendations in the Warnock report and this will remain the case for the foreseeable future, whatever new technology may bring.

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The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

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Forty Years After Warnock: Special Needs Education and the Inclusion Process in Denmark. Conceptual and Practical Challenges

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The 1978 Warnock report enshrined the policy of inclusion and changed the way we talk about disability starting in the UK and following became a worldwide trend especially after the Salamanca Statement in 1994. The report thus had a groundbreaking effect on how children with special educational needs should be educated. This article is a tribute to the Warnock report and takes the reader to Denmark to see how special education, inclusion, and differentiated instruction in comprehensive schools have been on the agenda in Denmark. Several schools and municipalities have tried to use resources on special education to promote inclusion and differentiation, but rules and regulations and clear incentives for exclusion have hindered this. Only after changing the concept of special education and the introduction of incentives for inclusion in Denmark, the trend has been radically changed. However, there are clear signs that teachers have not yet adapted to the idea of inclusion and are in need of specialist services and resources.

Keywords: differentiated instruction, incidence, inclusion, prevalence, school psychology, special education and special needs education

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INTRODUCTION

The 1978 Warnock report led the way for the Education Act in 1981 in the UK. The report coined the concept of special educational needs. It substituted the concept of special education from the 1944 Education Act that had stipulated ten categories of individual "handicaps." The new concept moved the educational focus from the student's individual learning impairment or disability to the student's educational requirements. The report also built on an assumption that about two per cent of school-age children had severe learning disabilities or other difficulties that affected their education so much that a special school placement was necessary. The report thus had a groundbreaking effect on how children with special educational needs should be educated and in what settings.

In Denmark the Education Act from 1958 made the establishment of special education mandatory for municipalities. In 1993—a year before the 1994 Salamanca Declaration—a new Education Act was passed stating that instruction should be differentiated to suit the needs of all children in the comprehensive school, in order to minimize the need for special education. Moreover, in 2003, a change in the act encouraged the grouping of pupils within and across classes as a means of differentiation. The concept of inclusion was not adapted to the Danish language before 2005, when the ideas from the Salamanca Declaration led to the coining of a Danish word "rummelighed" meaning spaciousness even as the concept of special education and the medical model continued to rule.

In 2003 the Ministry of Education decided to make a quantitative and qualitative investigation of the use of special education as a supplement to regular education in Danish regular classes.

The quantitative study covered a random sample of 290 Danish public schools. The study showed that the prevalence of special education was 8.8% (SD 3.97) with a total variation from 0 to 26%. The qualitative study compared eight schools matched on demographic factors but with extreme levels (high or low) of prevalence. The study was reported in Danish (Egelund, 2003). In total there were surprisingly few relations between the prevalence of special education and factors often associated with the need for special education, such as resources for regular teaching, school size, municipality size, degree of urbanization, and geographical location.

A low prevalence of special education seemed to be related to other factors. First of all, the governing rules at that time encouraged a high prevalence of special education and the use of traditional special education as the only means of taking care of special needs. In fact, schools with low prevalence broke the rules omitting the requirement of a pedagogical and psychological evaluation of the student before using special education resources—with the consent of the local municipal authorities that owned the schools. The same schools also looked upon special needs as a natural product of human diversity and adapted the regular educational program to take these needs into account. This adaptability was closely related to the flexible organization of the school, also regarding the physical environment, where rooms for group work were available and where walls between classes could be removed, rendering teaching of both large and small groups possible. What was perhaps most important was the presence of teachers with teaching experience in special education and school psychologists as a key resource, providing collaborative consultancy, and supervision to teachers within the standard classroom setting. Finally, both pupils and parents had positive attitudes toward diversity and provisions for special needs within the regular educational program. If a specialized intervention was deemed necessary, it was looked upon as a welcomed effort, not as a stigmatizing, unavoidable solution (Egelund, 2003). Thus, the ideas from the Warnock report and the Salamanca Declaration had spread to the grass root level in some schools. Following the results, the Danish Minister of Education proposed that the term special education should be reserved for use in special schools and special classes. The intention, however, raised concerns that municipalities would gradually remove the 8–12% of the resources that had until now been set aside for special education in regular classes.

In 2007, Denmark went through a structural reform merging 275 municipalities into 98. An implication of the reform was that the ownership and responsibility for special schools were transferred from the counties to the municipalities resulting in an easier access to these schools for the individual municipalities. While the 2003 study showed a tendency in many schools to introduce more inclusive measures in their regular classes, some schools chose to establish special classes. This trend continued up to and after the structural reform in 2007, when new managements were set up and the degree of municipal supervision was low. From a level of 4.8% segregation to special schools and classes in 2005, the segregation rose to 5.4% in 2009 mainly due to an increase in use of special classes (Statistics Denmark, 2014). This prompted a study of the use of resources for special education (Deloitte, 2010) showing that in 2009, around 30% of all resources for schools in Denmark was used on special education with an almost equal division between segregated special education and special education in regular classes.

The above mentioned results had a great impact on the Danish politicians resulting in a new act in 2012 called "The Inclusion Act," stating that exclusion should be reduced to 4.0% in 2015. Moreover, the term special education was reserved for interventions with a weekly duration of 12 lessons (9 h) or more. Interventions of <12 lessons were now to be called "supplementary education and other academic support" and became the responsibility of the head teacher. An assessment and a statement from the Pedagogical Psychological Counseling Center were no longer needed.

To follow the development of more inclusive practices in regular schools the Ministry of Education engaged in several efforts. One was to establish a Resource Center for inclusion and special education (Ministry of Education, 2013). Another was to conduct a research project monitoring the process in the municipalities over the years 2013, 2014, and 2015. The results from this project are reported in this article.

THEORY

The guiding principle in special education in Denmark officially follows the 1994 Salamanca Statement: "The fundamental principle of the inclusive school is that all children should learn together, where ever possible, regardless of any difficulties or differences they may have. Inclusive schools must recognize and respond to the diverse needs of their students, accommodating both different styles and rates of learning and ensuring quality education to all through appropriate curricula, organizational arrangement, teaching strategies, resource use, and partnership with their communities. There should be a continuum of support and services to match the continuum of special needs encountered in every school" (Salamanca Declaration, 1994, p. 11–12).

A systematic review of international literature on inclusion performed for the Danish Ministry of Education in connection with The Inclusion Act showed that it is of vital importance for the academic and social development of students with special needs that the school has a stated objective to and positive attitudes toward inclusion. Teachers with negative attitudes toward inclusion of students with special needs, have negative effects on the development of all students (Dyssegaard et al., 2013). This follows Ainscow et al. (2006): "The development of inclusion, therefore, involves us in making explicit the values that underlie actions, practices and policies, and learning how to better relate our actions to inclusive values" (2006, p. 23). Furthermore, it follows Booth and Ainschow (2002) in their three dimensions of the Index for inclusion: (1) Production of inclusive policies. (2) Evolving inclusive practices. (3) Creating inclusive cultures.

The present research project looked at production of inclusive policies, evolving inclusive practices and the creation of inclusive cultures in Denmark from 2013 to 2015. The objective for the study was to describe the 12 municipalities' transition process following the new rules set out in "The Inclusion Act" from 2012. The main focus of the research project was to describe how the municipalities both pedagogically and administratively handled the transition toward a higher inclusion rate.

METHODS

The design of the research project was a panel study that was conducted three times in the years 2013, 2014, and 2015 in 12 municipalities representing demographic differences in Denmark. The research project was conducted according to principles in the "The Danish Code of Conduct for Research Integrity" which provides the research community with a framework to promote commonly agreed principles and standards. The Code of Conduct aims to support a common understanding and common culture of research integrity in Denmark (Ministry of Higher Education and Science, 2014). The design and approach to the research project was furthermore approved by the Danish Ministry of Education. Further approval by an Ethics Committee was not required as per applicable institutional and national guidelines and regulations. The 12 municipalities were invited to participate in the project. The 12 municipalities are completely anonymous. The completion of questionnaires was completely voluntary and also anonymous. In this way the informed consent of the participants was implied through survey completion. Participants in the interviews were invited by mail stating the purpose of the project and they were asked to give their consent in a reply mail. All participants were above the age of 23.

From the 12 municipalities a multitude of information was collected: municipal documents about inclusion and special education were collected and studied; demographic information about municipalities and schools were found, data about economic resource allocations and student mobility were collected from the municipal administrations; qualitative interviews were conducted with school directors and leaders of the Pedagogical Psychological Counseling Center about strategies and procedures; questionnaires about strategies and procedures for inclusion were completed by school principals ($N = 146$); questionnaires were completed by teachers in the 2nd and 8th grades about their work with inclusion ($N = 448$). Due to great discrepancies between the principals' and teachers' answers over the 3 year period it was decided to supplement the data with focus group interviews. Focus group interviews were carried out in 19 schools, two schools in seven of the twelve municipalities and one school in the remaining five municipalities. Participants in the interviews were the school principals, union representatives, heads of school resource centers, and teachers.

TABLE 1 | Description of the 12 municipalities in the study.

Municipality ID	Size*	Urban/ rural	Inclusion 2010	Social and economic index**	Diff. from expected
A	Small	Urban	94.2%	0.47	−1.8
B	Medium	Urban	96.1%	0.71	0.0
C	Medium	Urban	89.7%	1.64	−2.3
D	Medium	Rural	92.5%	0.88	−1.9
E	Medium	Rural	92.0%	1.13	−2.0
F	Small	Rural	97.5%	0.86	+2.0
G	Big	Urban	94.9%	1.15	+1.4
H	Medium	Rural	92.3%	1.06	−1.8
I	Medium	Rural	91.8%	0.86	+0.1
J	Small	Rural	91.7%	1.00	−0.4
K	Medium	Rural	89.5%	1.09	−2.5
L	Medium	Rural	94.9%	1.09	+1.2

Size: Small < 30,000 inhabitants. Medium 30,000–70,000 inhabitants. Big > 70,000 inhabitants.

***Based on percentage of the population in age 20–59 years in workforce, number of psychiatric patients, percentage of single parents, percentage of population on public support. 1.0 is average for Denmark. High values are indicators of low social economy and vice versa.*

The qualitative analysis of data used a thematic structure as the basis for organizing and reporting the study findings from semi-structured interviews and from documents and materials collected in municipalities and schools. Quantitative data from questionnaires were analyzed using STATA and t-test or Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney U-test.

Four reports have been published in Danish (Baviskar et al., 2013, 2014, 2015; Dyssegaard and Egelund, 2015).

RESULTS

The research project covers a broad range of municipality sizes, urban/rural regions and social and economic status found in Denmark. **Table 1** gives a view of the differences in the first three columns. There is an interesting wide range in inclusion percentage in 2010 and a difference in expected inclusion percentage based on student social background. These results are presented in the fourth to sixth columns in the table.

Inclusion Rates From 2010 to 2015

The twelve municipalities differed in their inclusion percentage in 2010 between 89.5 and 96.1%. Inspections of columns four and five in **Table 1** show that there is a relation between degree of segregation and average educational and economical level of the municipality. But further calculations shown in column seven reveal differences from the expected level. The differences amount to between plus 2.0 percentage points to minus 2.5 percentage points.

Table 2 presents the development in inclusion from 2010 to 2015. Two phases are identified; one covers the time from 2010 until the implementation of The Inclusion Act in 2013, the other covers the 3 years after implementation (from 2013 to 2015).

In 2013 there was a variation in inclusion percentage from 91.3 to 98.3 with an average of 94.1%. The change from 2010 is

TABLE 2 | Change in inclusion percentage from 2010 to 2015 in the 12 municipalities.

Municipality ID	Inclusion percentage 2010	Inclusion percentage 2013	Inclusion percentage 2014	Inclusion percentage 2015	Change 2010-2013	Total change 2013–2015	Total change 2010–2015
A	94.2%	94.4%	95.1%	95.7%	−0.2	+1.3	+1.1
B	96.1%	97.0%	97.4%	98.0%	+0.5	+1.0	+1.5
C	89.7%	91.4%	92.3%	92.5%	+1.0	+1.1	+2.6
D	92.5%	93.2%	94.1%	95.2%	+0.2	+2.0	+2.2
E	92.0%	94.3%	95.6%	96.5%	+0.9	+2.2	+3.1
F	97.5%	97.8%	97.6%	97.5%	+0.2	−0.3	−0,1
G	94.9%	95.9%	96.4%	96.8%	+0.2	+0.9	+1.1
H	92.3%	94.3%	94.3%	94.5%	+1.2	+0.2	+1.4
I	91.8%	96.3%	96.0%	96.8%	+2.6	+0.5	+3.1
J	91.7%	94.5%	95.4%	95.2%	+0.8	+0.7	+1.5
K	89.5%	91.3%	92.2%	93.7%	−0.2	+2.4	+2.2
L	94.9%	98.3%	99.2%	98.2%	+2.7	−0.1	+2.6
Average	93.1%	94.9%	95.5%	96.0%	+0.8	+1.0	+1.9

due to the fact that some of the municipalities started inclusion processes early.

Changes From 2010 to 2013

Four of the municipalities, E, H, I, and L had an increase in inclusion from 2010 to 2013 of 0.9 to impressive 2.6 and 2.7 percentage points. Documents and interview data from the municipalities revealed which strategies and practices led to the increase in inclusion. Municipalities I and L had almost identical strategies. They started by closing a number of small schools and at the same time implemented inclusion measures. Municipality I established a municipal resource team, changed focus from an individual perspective to a systemic perspective, trained teaching consultants and introduced cooperative learning. Municipality L closed all its special classes and included the special school in a regular school at the same time halving the capacity. All teachers were upgraded in inclusive practices by changing focus from an individual perspective to a systemic perspective. An important aspect was that all resources followed the included students and an extra resource of ∼1 million EUR was added to the schools for inclusion. Municipality E closed eight small schools and the rest were merged to four district schools. One fourth of all special class students were transferred to regular classes with their resources. All teachers received an upgrade in inclusion and teacher consultants were trained by the local university college. Municipality H differed from the three others by working on inclusion from 2010 and established a distinct vision and a strategy for inclusion using dialogue groups representing headmasters, teachers and parents in 2012.

Two municipalities, A, and K did not commence on any distinct initiatives to increase inclusion up to 2013. A had established and overall strategy in 2011, and the individual schools had made their own strategies, but nothing had been done to reduce special settings or to introduce economic incentives. K had a plan for analyzing the situation in the specialized area in 2010, but no actual initiatives were taken before 2013 when a new school director and new head of Pedagogical Psychological Counseling Service were appointed.

Municipality F differed from all the other municipalities in having a significant focus on inclusion from 2003. There was no real need to increase inclusion which was already relatively high (97.6%).

Municipality C has had the lowest rate of inclusion and also had the lowest socio-economical background in Denmark, but still the rate was lower than expected. An overall definition of inclusion was agreed upon in 2011, where the overall aim was to reduce segregation with 5% pr. year over a 3 year period. The municipality was not interested in establishing economic incentives. In 2013 there was a reduction of 1 percentage point since 2010.

The last four municipalities, B, D, G, J all had established principles, strategies, goals, and projects aiming at reducing segregation and succeeded in increasing inclusion up to 2013 from 0.2 to 0.8 percent points.

Changes From 2013 to 2015

After 2015 there was an increase in inclusion of from 0.2 to 2.4 with an average of 1.0. The municipality with 2.4 is K, which was the last to start and chose to close all special classes and half of their special schools in 2014. The special classes had been converted to inclusion centers at three schools with a close collaboration with regular classes. A municipal goal of the maximum number of students in the special schools had been established for 2016. For all twelve municipalities the average in 2015 became 96.0%.

After collection of documents, data collection in municipal administrations, visits in the municipalities to interview school directors and heads of the Pedagogical Psychological Counseling Centers, analysis of the data showed that in 2013, ten of the twelve municipalities had started the process of inclusion by setting up goals, by establishing strategies, by providing in-service training to all teachers and specialist training of teachers as inclusion consultants. In 2014, all twelve municipalities had commenced working on promoting inclusion processes. In 2013, nine of the municipalities had introduced a system with economic incentives for inclusion; in 2014 yet another municipality had taken up the

TABLE 3 | Supplementary education.

Organization form	2013	2014	2015
Co-teaching	41.5%	45.4%	33.8%
Resource center outside of regular classroom	32.1%	19.7%	29.4%
Teacher assistant	8.4%	11.0%	12.1%
Other forms	18.0%	23.9%	29.6%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	99.9%

"How is supplementary education organized in the school" (according to school headmasters) N = 146.

principle. In 2015 another municipality had started to consider adapting the principle.

Incentives for Inclusion

The system of the incentives for inclusion was that schools were financed by a fee for each student in their school district. The fee was adjusted according to grade level and in most cases for parents' average social and economic status in the school district. The fee was based on the municipal expenditure for regular education and special education in 2011–2012 (before The Inclusion Act and system change) and was adjusted each year to adjust for inflation. Fees were paid up front for each school year. If a school wanted to send a student to a special class or a special school, the school had to pay for the service. In most cases it was a fixed amount around 10,000 EUR per year, in some cases the actual amount could go up to 60,000 EUR per year. If a school brought a segregated student back to the local school, the school was paid either the fixed amount or the full price for that student.

Reduction of Special Education

The new Danish system worked. For the first time since the Salamanca Statement the percentage of segregated students was reduced. The average inclusion percent for the twelve municipalities had gone from 94.1 in 2010 to 94.9 in 2013 and 96.0 in 2015. The establishment of a municipal strategy deliberately closing special classes and thus preventing the possibility of segregation was very efficient and had been used in four municipalities. The establishment of incentives for inclusion worked at the school level, where headmasters generally avoided placement in segregated settings.

Supplementary Education

The new act has made it possible for school headmasters and their teachers to establish early and dynamic solutions tailored to individual students without having to wait for an assessment from the Pedagogical Psychological Counseling Center. In 2011, the prevalence for special education as a supplement to regular classes was 6.66%; in 2015 it was down to 0.025% (Ministry of Education, 2015). The prevalence of supplementary education was 5.5% in 2013 and 5.6% in 2014 but with a huge variation between schools. Out of 146 schools seven have no students who receive supplementary education.

As shown in **Table 3**, supplementary education was, in 2013, given as co-teaching for 42% of all students, for 32% as referral to the resource center, for 8% as teacher assistant and for 18% by other measures. In 2014, the percentages were 45% co-teaching, 20% referral to resource center, 11% teacher assistant and 20% as other measures. In 2015, the percentages were 34% co-teaching, 19% referral to resource center, 12% teacher assistant, and 25% as other measures. Other measures primarily covered the formation of small groups within the classes and support and supervision from special educators, inclusion consultants and the Pedagogical Psychological Counseling Centers.

TABLE 4 | Headmaster's and teacher's answer to the question: "How do you agree or disagree with the goal of decreasing the proportion of students receiving special education and thereby increasing the proportion of students in regular education from 94.4 to 96.0%?."

Respondents	Headmasters			Teachers		
Year	2013	2014	2015	2013	2014	2015
Agree to a high degree	29.3%	36.2%	32.3%	3.5%	3.3%	3.6%
Agree	50.0%	38.3%	33.9%	15.2%	9.6%	11.7%
Neither agree or disagree	15.5%	14.9%	24.2%	17.8%	15.5%	17.4%
Disagree	5.2%	6.4%	9.7%	27.8%	30.1%	27.7%
Disagree to a high degree	0.0%	2.1%	0.0%	33.5%	38.2%	36.9%
Do not know	0.0%	2.1%	0.0%	2.2%	3.3%	2.8%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.1%	100.0%	100.2%	100.1%

TABLE 5 | Headmaster's and teacher's answer to the question: "Have you in your school had 1 day of in-service training on inclusion?"

Respondents	Headmasters			Teachers		
Year	2013	2014	2015	2013	2014	2015
Yes	72.4%	61.2%	25.3%	33.6%	31.7%	14.5%
No	27.6%	38.8%	74.7%	66.4%	68.3%	85.5%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Success in Creation of an Inclusive Culture?

Data from the school headmasters and teachers, however, showed that teachers especially were reporting a low degree of acceptance of the principles of inclusion (**Table 4**).

Over the years from 2013 to 2015 between 75 and 79% of the headmasters agreed to the principle of inclusion while the same was only the case for between 14 and 19% of the teachers. In the same period of time only 5 to 10% of the headmasters disagreed while between 62 and 68% of the teachers disagreed.

In Denmark the most common form of in-service training is to devote a full day—usually a Saturday—to a common theme. The headmasters and teachers were asked about how often this had happened over the years from 2013 to 2015. The results are shown in **Table 5**.

When it came to competence building, 72% of all school headmasters in 2013 said, they had arranged a thematic day about inclusion. For 2014 the percentage was 61 and for 2015 it was 25. The fact that the percentage decreased over the years can be seen as a natural result from a need which is fulfilled. It is, however, remarkable that the teachers only reported that over the 3 years, respectively, 34, 32, and 15% had participated in a thematic day about inclusion.

The huge differences in attitudes toward inclusion and participation in in-service training in inclusion indicate problems regarding establishing an inclusive culture at school level. The survey data could not account for these huge discrepancies. Therefore, extended qualitative interviews on obstacles to inclusion were set up with all 12 school directors and heads of Pedagogical Psychological Counseling Centers: Moreover, focus group interviews in 19 schools were arranged and concluded just before the end of the project in June 2015.

Obstacles to Inclusion

Qualitative analysis of interview data from the 12 school directors and 12 heads of Pedagogical Psychological Counseling Centers in the spring of 2015 covered six areas: acceptance of the strategic goals, competency development, feeling of self-efficacy, use of counseling, too many changes in a short span of time and lack of available resources.

The data about acceptance of strategic goals, originating from the Parliament and adapted by the municipalities, showed two common themes. One was that it is a top-down decision, where headmasters had to be loyal to the decisions in the local governments and its school administration, while teachers did not have a clear understanding of what the intention and the objective for inclusion was. The other was the frustrations teachers felt in their daily work having to deal with students with special needs and at the same time having to teach two more hours pr. week even as they had less time for preparation as a result of the settlement for duty hours after a teacher lock out in the spring of 2013.

When it comes to competency development there were again two common themes. One was that the teachers experienced the content and quality as insufficient. They found that the in-service training provided had been very theoretical and change of attitude oriented and that some of the instructors had talked down to the teachers making them feel insufficient. The other was that the teachers wanted to have University College courses related to different types of diagnosis while learning in the classroom. They believed this might have been more effective, but it was seldom an option.

Regarding teacher's feeling of self-efficacy there were three common themes: powerlessness, the challenges of team-cooperation and the desire to have two teachers in the classroom. Powerlessness covers that teachers in their daily work in the classrooms wanted a "tool box" where they could grab a course of action when for instance a student with ADHD showed aggressive behavior or when a student with autism withdrew. They felt that they were unable to handle differentiation of instruction and manage the classroom. Team-cooperation—which had been gradually introduced in Danish schools from the mid 1990'es to raise professional performance of teams—covers that teachers found it difficult to engage in an actual cooperation with their colleagues in their teams concerning classes or subjects because of lack of time. Finally wanting two teachers in the classroom was related to feelings of being insufficient in regard to handling the teaching situation, and also to extra help as a good general solution for all types of problems.

Use of counseling services had two common themes. The first and most prominent was the existence of cultural gulfs. In the history of the teaching profession one class, one teacher, one classroom had been the dominant setting, and introducing an inclusion consultant in the classes had been difficult for many teachers, especially if the expert had less total teaching experience and subject knowledge plus perhaps was younger than the subject teacher. Some teachers avoided consultation and supervision and therefore did not report their problems to the headmaster or to the head of the resource team. The other theme was that some of the appointed consultants, who often had extensive experience in special classes and special schools, had difficulties in working in classrooms with up to 28 students and giving advice to subject teachers.

Too many changes in a short span of time was a common theme which covered that the time period from 2012 to 2014 had seen three major reforms of the primary and lower secondary school in Denmark. The Inclusion Act required school headmasters to deal with decisions about allocation of human resources for supplementary education and financial resources to special education in segregated settings, in most cases with economic incentives. The settlement for duty hours after a teacher lockout came, as noted earlier, in the spring of 2013. A comprehensive school reform introducing a longer school day (30 h a week for the youngest students and 35 h a week for the oldest students), subject supporting activities, more physical activities and homework hours was enacted in 2014. Finally, the school administration in five of the twelve municipalities had undergone profound changes with new structures, new management, and new procedures.

Lack of available resources covered one common theme: reduction in budgets. First of all, the economic incentives implies that resources for special needs were paid up front and were expected to be allocated to each student with special needs. This was true in ten of the twelve municipalities, but in five municipalities it was clearly felt as "giving with one hand and taking with the other" as there had been general cutbacks in funding in the aftermath of the global economic crisis in 2008. Moreover, there had been an average reduction of number of students of 2.04% covering a span from +4.18 to −7.53% causing the school budgets to shrink accordingly while expenses to buildings and administration were at the same level.

Final Focus Group Interviews

As mentioned previously the rationale behind the focus group interviews was to study in depth the differences in attitudes and opinions shown in the quantitative data from school headmasters and teachers. Participants in the focus group interviews were the school headmaster, the teachers' union local representative, the head of the school resource centers and one or two teachers.

There were seven areas to be covered in the interview: use of resources for students with special needs, competency development, use of counseling services, use of team-cooperation, ensuring students' academic progression, the most effective inclusion practices.

On the subject of use of resources for students with special needs the dominant theme in eight of the 19 schools was that there were too few resources, and this was to a high degree caused by general reductions in funding of the schools. Different funding practices also created problems. The most common practice was to set up a plan where resources were allocated for students/classes for each half school year, but then, when new needs arose, they had to wait for up to 5 months. Another common practice, especially in the bigger schools, was to allocate the resources to the teams around the classes, but this reduced flexibility. For instance, it was difficult to move resources from one grade level to another if new needs arose. Only very seldom there was an unused reserve capacity in the budget, and therefore teachers trained as inclusion counselors often were used as "fire fighters," reducing their time for counseling. In two schools special teachers or assistants were used as substitutes when other teachers were sick.

Regarding competency development the focus group interviews confirmed that there was a gap between the content in general in-service training given and the perceived needs of the teachers. This was a complaint mentioned by a majority of the school union representatives. Almost all schools had used a major part of their resources for competency development to train one of their special education teachers as inclusion counselors, but the same training had made the new inclusion counselors very attractive for other schools, and about one fifth of the counselors had moved to another school or even another municipality and then there were not enough resources left at the schools to immediately train a new inclusion counselor.

All 19 schools have or have had teachers trained as inclusion counselors. As mentioned above some have left for other appointments creating vacancies. In about half of the schools there are complaints that inclusion counselors are used as "fire fighters" when teachers or students have issues leaving little time for planned and structured class room observation and supervision of teachers.

Eleven schools had introduced structured team discussions of their students learning progression. For students with special needs, barriers to learning were discussed, intervention strategies were planned and introduced, and after 3 to 4 weeks results were evaluated followed by adjustment of the intervention strategy if needed. This response to intervention strategy seemed highly efficient. In five schools the inclusion counselor or teachers from the resource center participated in team meetings on a regular basis to give advice on how to deal with students with special needs. Only one school said that they lacked systematic discussions of teaching students with special needs in their team-collaboration.

Assuring students' academic progression was primarily done using informal teacher evaluations. Use of the national tests, which were introduced in 2010, had been met with resistance from many teachers because they felt it was a control instrument and not as a tool to inform their professional practice. Ten schools used the national tests to monitor the progression of students with special needs. The tests were given twice a year even though they are only required once a year. The national tests were in most cases supplemented by optional tests developed and sold by Danish publishing houses used by nearly all schools in Denmark. Nine schools only used the optional tests. The test results were discussed in the class teams and occasionally the school reading and mathematics expert teachers were consulted so that a thorough evaluation of student progress and advice on intervention tactics could be obtained. One school complains that the use of tests and other documentation takes too much time from preparation and the informal evaluation of lessons.

Effective inclusion practices were felt to be promoted mainly by the economic incentives where best use of resources was in constant focus, and often creative ways to avoid exclusion were found. However, in some cases less than optimal solutions were used due to economic constraints, and discontinuation in securing a certain number of extra hours per student led to teachers' feeling a shortage of resources. This pointed toward a need for ensuring a certain pool of hours for assistance to special needs students, including a reserve for acute interventions. In-service training was effective if it fulfilled teachers' need of tools to use in their daily work with special needs students, and inclusion counselors needed to have competences and time enough in their schedule for their consultative work and subject teachers needed to accept guidance from colleagues. Finally, segregated settings for limited periods should not be seen to be in conflict with the inclusion strategy, it was sometimes a precondition for maximal inclusion in unison with a regular class.

In total the focus group interviews revealed that headmasters' and teachers' attitudes toward inclusion were less different than they appeared in the quantitative study. It seemed that headmasters' roles as civil servants and teachers' negative attitudes to the new settlement for duty hours had amplified their anonymous responses to the questionnaire. The headmasters felt the obstacles to inclusion in their daily work and tried to deal with them in the best way possible, and the teachers did their best to be professional under strict economic circumstances.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The 1978 Warnock report changed the focus from the student's impairment or disability to the student's educational requirement and built on the assumption that only about two percent of all students needed a special school placement. The report also coined the concept of special educational needs substituting the old concept of special education, and this trend has now been adapted almost worldwide.

In Denmark special education became mandatory in 1958, and special education usually received funding from central resource bases in municipalities or counties. Although Denmark politically had adopted the principle of inclusion in the Salamanca Statement, the concept of special education needs was never adapted in the Danish language and educational practice. Exclusion to totally segregated settings started to grow in the mid 1990'es driven by the tradition "let the specialists take care of the student's problems," the lack of incentives for inclusion and lack of oversight following a structural reform. The medical model of disabilities was still dominant in spite of some grass root movements from 1993 to 1994 at the local level.

In 2011 a total of around 30% of all economic resources for primary and lower secondary school in Denmark was spent on special education. This prompted a change. An Act of Inclusion was adopted in 2012 with the aim of bringing exclusion down to 4.0% in 2015. The term special education was reserved for interventions with a weekly duration of 12 lessons (9 h) or more while interventions of less than 12 lessons were called "supplementary education and other academic support" and became the responsibility of the head teacher. The Danish Ministry of Education initiated a research project monitoring the process in 12 municipalities over the years 2013, 2014, and 2015. The results of this project are reported in this article.

In 2015 exclusion was down to 4.0% in the 12 municipalities. The prevalence of special education in ordinary schools was 0.15% while 5.6% were receiving supplementary education, most often from a co-teacher in the regular classroom. The 12 municipalities had had success replicating the ideas in the 1978 Warnock Report adapting the conceptual change from The Act of Inclusion and some changes in practice, but they still faced some practical challenges.

The quantative and qualitative results reported in this paper show that the basic drivers behind the change, except for the act, were municipal decisions to close special classes and special schools and the introduction of economic incentives for inclusion motivating headmasters to find other means than putting pupils with special needs into special classes and special schools. Seen from a theoretical perspective (Booth and Ainschow, 2002, Ainscow et al., 2006) there are three basic conditions to be met to promote inclusion: Production of inclusive policies, evolving inclusive practices and the creation of inclusive cultures.

The research project shows that inclusive policies had been established both at the parliament level and in the local governments. However, when it came to inclusive practices not all municipalities had been willing to create economic incentives for inclusion and in many cases in-service training had focused too much on ideology and too little on daily practice in the classroom. Many teachers had not yet adapted to the values and ideas of inclusion, and they felt that they were pressured by top-down decisions, and there had in several municipalities been a general reduction in funding to schools and other public service institutions in the aftermath of the economic crisis of 2008. Specialist services and resources had been provided as inclusive practices, but often they were used for acute needs and in some cases, teachers had difficulties in accepting guidance from colleagues. Thus, both the establishment of inclusive practices and the creation of inclusive cultures were lagging behind the policy intentions. However, even with these limitations the goal of 96% inclusion was met in the 12 municipalities. They had finally come closer to the intention in the Warnock report.

Since 2015 a few prominent changes have occurred in relation to inclusion. First of all, the official statistics have shown that for Denmark as a whole the exclusion rate has risen from 4.07 in 2015 to 4.39% in 2018 (Ministry of Education, 2018). Moreover, there has been a continuing rise in children and youth receiving a psychiatric diagnosis from 2009 to 2017 from 0.49 in 2009 to 0.79% in 2017 (Association of municipalities, 2018). The goal of including 96% of all children in regular schools has also been removed from The Inclusion Act in 2016 by the government. These three changes could mean that the Danish school system may again be moving further away from the ideals in the Warnock report.

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All authors listed have made a substantial, direct and intellectual contribution to the work, and approved it for publication.

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CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS
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The Kids and Teens at School (KiTeS) Framework: An Inclusive Bioecological Systems Approach to Understanding School Absenteeism and School Attendance Problems

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Absence from school jeopardizes children's and adolescents' education and their social and emotional development. Proximal and distal individual, parental, familial, and environmental factors have been linked to absenteeism and the development and maintenance of school attendance problems. The complex interaction among these factors necessitates a multifactorial approach to understanding school absenteeism and attendance problems. The current paper builds on recent calls to apply bioecological systems frameworks when studying risk factors for school absenteeism and attendance problems. The Kids and Teens at School (KiTeS) Framework presented here is an application of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems model, incorporating candidate factors of particular relevance to school absenteeism and attendance problems. The current paper is also a response to the Warnock report which highlighted the need to individualize educational supports for children and adolescents with disabilities, to foster optimal educational outcomes. The KiTeS Framework is an *inclusive* framework, inclusive of students with and without disabilities. It is envisaged that the KiTeS Framework will provide guidance to researchers aiming to improve understanding of the factors influencing absenteeism among all school-aged students, including those from minority or vulnerable populations.

Keywords: absenteeism, school, school attendance problems, disability, bioecological systems

INTRODUCTION

School, as construed by any culture, is essential for the cognitive and social-emotional development of *all* children and adolescents (hereafter referred to as youth). It represents preparation for life beyond school, irrespective of the youth's abilities or disabilities (Warnock Report; Department for Education and Science, 1978). Attending school can be understood as a behavior but also as a developmental outcome because it is a marker of the youth's developmental capacity to separate from their caregiver and be engaged at school.

Poor school attendance predicts lower academic achievement over time (Hancock et al., 2013) and subsequent school drop out (Barrington and Hendricks, 1989; Schoeneberger, 2012). Those who leave school early are at greater risk of long term negative outcomes, such as reduced employment and economic security, poorer mental and physical health, and lower life expectancy, compared to youth who complete schooling (Rumberger, 2011).

Absenteeism appears to be a universal problem. In the UK in 2016–17, almost 11% of youth in state-funded primary and secondary schools were classified as persistent absentees for having missed 10% or more of school (United Kingdom Department of Education, 2018). In the US chronic absenteeism has been described as a “hidden crisis,” with nationwide data showing that 16% of youth had absences of 15 or more days during the 2015–16 school year (U.S Department of Education, 2016). An Australian report concluded that ∼30% of youth were at some educational risk due to being absent from school for 10% or more of the time (Western Australia Auditor General’s Report 16, 2015). In rural Karnataka, South India, 8% of lower caste adolescent girls reported being frequently absent from school (four or more days missed in a month; Prakash et al., 2017). A study of youth in Mozambique found that 36.6% of those surveyed reported being truant at least 1 day during a 30 day period (Seidu, 2019). Research conducted by the Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transitions, and Equity identified high rates of absenteeism in India and Ghana (Lewin, 2011). As the aforementioned studies illustrate, different cut offs are used to define when absenteeism becomes problematic. This is an important issue as Skedgell and Kearney (2018) found that associations between problematic levels of absenteeism and contributing factors differ according to the cut-off applied (1, 10, 15% absence).

While acknowledging that a consensus has not yet been reached on an appropriate cut-off to define problematic absenteeism, a body of research shows that a broad range of individual, parental, familial, and environmental factors are implicated in absenteeism and school attendance problems (SAPs) (Kearney, 2016). Given this broad range of factors spanning multiple contexts, some researchers have proposed bioecological models to inform approaches to prevention and intervention (Lyon and Cotler, 2009; Doren et al., 2014; Guralnick, 2015; Gottfried and Gee, 2017). Bioecological models typically position the individual at the center of a nested hierarchy of environments that are understood to influence the individual’s development over time (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006). These environments extend outward from the most immediate contexts experienced by the individual (e.g., home, school) to broader contexts which impact on the individual and their immediate environments in more or less direct ways (e.g., educational policies, overarching societal, cultural, and historical contexts).

Reasons for and Types of Absenteeism

Reasons for school absenteeism vary greatly. For example, students may be absent due to an illness or medical appointment; anxiety about being away from parents or being amongst other youth at school; difficulty with school work or disinterest in learning; because parents keep a child at home; family transport problems; and the school’s exclusion of youth engaged in problematic behavior at school. Often, absences are differentiated according to whether they are excused (e.g., illness) or unexcused (e.g., truancy), and there is some evidence that risk for academic impairment is greater for students with unexcused absences relative to those with excused absences (Gottfried, 2009; Hancock et al., 2018a). In practice and research, it is difficult to reliably establish whether absence is excused or unexcused, and policy and practice differ within and between countries. Moreover, the fact remains that absence for any reason is a risk factor for negative student outcomes (Gottfried, 2009; Hancock et al., 2013).

SAPs are often differentiated by type. Four types described by Heyne et al. (2019) are school refusal, truancy, school withdrawal, and school exclusion. There is some scientific support for differential associations between psychosocial risk factors and types of SAPs (Heyne et al., 2019). However, most research into the multiple determinants of absenteeism does not usually account for likely differential relationships between risk factors and different types of absenteeism. Rigorous research accounting for types of absenteeism may reveal that specific risk factors have weaker or stronger relationships with absenteeism contingent upon the type of absenteeism under investigation.

Absenteeism in Disadvantaged Populations

It is concerning that youth facing relative disadvantage, such as youth with disabilities and those from minority and indigenous backgrounds, tend to be absent from school more than their non-disadvantaged peers (Kearney, 2008; Hancock et al., 2013). For example, studies have found that youth with intellectual and development disabilities (IDD) have higher rates of absenteeism than their typically developing peers and are less likely to complete school, participate in tertiary education, or be in paid employment after schooling (Australian Institute of Health Welfare, 2008; U.S Department of Education, 2016; Gottfried et al., 2017; United Kingdom Department of Education, 2018). In Australia, only 49% of indigenous students in school years 1–10 attended 90% or more school days, compared to 79% of non-indigenous students (Australian Curriculum Assessment Reporting Authority, 2017). Further, Australian indigenous youth in Western Australia, who account for ∼9% of all students, represented half of all youth considered to be at severe educational risk due to school absenteeism (Western Australia Auditor General’s Report 16, 2015). School absenteeism has thus been acknowledged as a priority social welfare issue for education authorities.

There is a paucity of research addressing absenteeism among youth with IDD, despite the increased risk for absenteeism in this group. However, prior research has demonstrated that youth with IDD have elevated known risk factors for absenteeism such as higher rates of chronic and multiple health conditions and health care utilization relative to youth without IDD (Boulet et al., 2009; Schieve et al., 2012). The complex health needs of IDD youth may partly explain their higher rates of school absenteeism. At the same time, some youth with IDD may have a decreased risk for particular types of SAPs. For example, youth with moderate to severe intellectual disabilities may be less likely to truant from school because they may find it more challenging to plan out-of-school activities and to conceal their absence from parents and school staff.

A few studies have addressed the question of whether the reasons for absence differ between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged populations. For example, Havik et al. (2015) reported a tendency for youth with special educational needs to explain their own absences in terms of truancy rather than school refusal. Maynard et al. (2017) reported divergent risk patterns for different racial/ethnic groups of truanting youth. One finding was that non-Hispanic White youth using illicit drugs were at higher odds of truanting relative to those not using illicit drugs, whereas this difference was not observed among African-American youth and Hispanic youth.

ORGANIZING RISK FACTORS FOR ABSENTEEISM

Researchers across the fields of education, psychology, mental health, sociology, and juvenile justice have identified a broad range of individual, peer, family, school, and environmental factors associated with school absenteeism and SAPs (Kearney, 2008, 2016). These factors include but are not limited to student physical and mental health (Egger et al., 2003; Allison and Attisha, 2019), family and neighborhood socio-economic status (SES; Zhang, 2003; Gottfried, 2014), family functioning (Carless et al., 2015), parent mental health (Bahali et al., 2011), school climate (Hendron and Kearney, 2016), and social norms and practices (Prakash et al., 2017). As noted above, given the diversity of factors, some researchers have proposed multi-systemic approaches to understand and respond to absenteeism, aiming to integrate knowledge gained across various fields (Lyon and Cotler, 2009; Kearney, 2016; Guralnick, 2017; Prakash et al., 2017). It has been argued that models based on bioecological and developmental systems, which attend to the interaction of factors across multiple contexts, offer a useful way to navigate the complexity of absenteeism and SAPs (Benner et al., 2008; Lyon and Cotler, 2009; Doren et al., 2014; Guralnick, 2015).

Indeed, research indicates that a *combination* of risk factors may better explain the development and maintenance of absenteeism and SAPs, with no single factor determinative (Ingul et al., 2012; Hancock et al., 2018b; Skedgell and Kearney, 2018). For example, Gottfried and Gee (2017) applied Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems model to examine the determinants of chronic absenteeism in US pre-school students. Factors across various domains, including child attributes and environmental factors, interacted in their influence on chronic absenteeism. The authors found that students who were broadly defined as having a disability (based on school records indicating an individualized education program) and who were in the low SES group had lower odds of being chronically absent than low SES students without disability. This finding was somewhat unexpected given prior research linking low SES to absenteeism and showing higher rates of absenteeism among students with disabilities (Ingul et al., 2012; Balkis et al., 2016; Gottfried et al., 2017). Gottfried and Gee (2017) speculated that parents of pre-school children with disabilities and from low SES environments may place emphasis on their child being at school to receive specialized services they could not otherwise afford. The study provides a useful example of how individual level factors (e.g., child's age, disability status) can combine with factors at other levels (e.g., SES, access to services) to influence attendance.

According to Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems model, human development is driven by ongoing interactions between the person and elements of their immediate environment, referred to as *proximal processes*. For school-aged youth, proximal processes related to absenteeism and SAPs include the interactions they have with parents, siblings, friends, and peers, as well as their engagement in morning and evening routines, learning, and extra-curricular activities. The impact of proximal processes on development is understood to vary as a function of individual characteristics (e.g., social skills, personality) and variables spanning multiple ecological contexts (e.g., family, school) as well as broader social contexts and changes over time (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006). Accordingly, the fundamental elements of bioecological models are referred to as *process—person—context—time*.

Bioecological models typically depict the child embedded in a hierarchy of systems. Immediately surrounding the child is the *microsystem,* the environments in which proximal processes occur (e.g., family, school, community). Surrounding the microsystem is the *mesosystem* which is composed of associations between elements of the child's microsystem, such as connections between parents and teachers. At the next level is the *exosystem* encompassing those settings that influence elements of the microsystem but are not experienced directly by the child (e.g., a parent's work setting; parent and sibling social networks; local health and social services, and infrastructures). Additional levels include the *macrosystem* and the *chronosystem*. The *macrosystem* encompasses broader cultural and institutional norms and beliefs and SES (e.g., family SES; community attitudes to people with disabilities). The *chronosystem* encompasses the influence of time on development (e.g., timing of significant events; changes in systems over time) which can manifest across a number of domains including cultural and societal values, community attitudes, government policies, and economic stability.

The interplay of proximal and distal factors on school attendance can be illustrated by the proximal processes involved in preparing for school in the morning. The morning routine typically involves some level of cooperation between the child and family members and may be influenced by many individual child characteristics such as age, functional abilities, and mental and physical health. Such child factors may interact with the mental health and wellbeing of parents as well as the family's functioning (Egger et al., 2003; Bahali et al., 2011; Carless et al., 2015). A depressed parent who lets their anxious child stay at home to give them "a day off" may base their decision, in part, on their own need for support or the desire to avoid the stress associated with getting their child to school in the morning. In turn, a child with separation anxiety who is allowed to remain home is relieved of their anxiety when they observe their parent and feel assured that the parent is safe. Exosystem factors such as a parent's employment (Ingul et al., 2012), school start times (Bowers and Moyer, 2017; McKeever and Clark, 2017), and transport options (Gottfried, 2017) might also exert an influence on proximal processes. Such distal factors may differentially influence attendance outcomes for special populations such as indigenous students or those with a disability. It is well established that youth with IDD, for example, are more likely than typically developing peers to live in low income, single parent, or unemployed households and poorer neighborhoods (Emerson et al., 2010b). Moreover, socio-economic risk factors are linked to poorer mental and physical health in children with IDD and their parents (Emerson et al., 2006, 2010a; Emerson and Hatton, 2007). In turn, poor mental and physical health in parents and children are known risk factors for absenteeism and SAPs (Allison and Attisha, 2019). Bioecological models that focus on the interaction of factors across domains are, therefore, in line with trends in disability research to shift the focus from individual factors to an understanding of how broader cultural and structural factors, including educational settings, impede the development of students with disabilities (Mittler, 2015).

There have been calls for more research on factors influencing absenteeism and SAPs among disadvantaged populations, such as students from diverse ethnic backgrounds along with those with disabilities, to better understand potentially unique risk profiles (Zubrick et al., 2006; Lyon and Cotler, 2007; Gee, 2018). Moreover, there is no conceptual framework which is explicitly *inclusive* of factors relevant to disadvantaged populations. Efforts to improve school attendance, educational outcomes, and lifelong outcomes for these disadvantaged populations requires a better understanding of the determinants of absenteeism.

Research on absenteeism and SAPs in typically developing populations provides a useful starting point for examining the same phenomena in other student sub-groups, including those experiencing disadvantage. However, absenteeism and SAP types and their key risk and protective factors may differ across disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged groups. A comprehensive research framework is needed to ascertain whether there are meaningful differences in the pathways to absenteeism and SAPs between and among the various populations of students. Research informed by a broad framework relevant to *all* student populations may have important implications for prevention and intervention for absenteeism and SAPs, including family support, school policy, community services, and culturally sensitive school adaptations.

The Kids and Teens at School (KiTeS) Framework—applies Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems model to facilitate research that builds knowledge about attendance and absence among *all* school students, including those from disadvantaged populations (see **Figure 1**). The framework seeks to inform research on the development, maintenance, and alleviation of school absenteeism and SAPs.

THE KITES FRAMEWORK

The KiTeS Framework uses the conceptual structure of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model including micro-, meso-, macro-, exo-, and chrono-systems to organize factors known to influence human development (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006). We also describe the extant literature in its relationship with the factors included in the framework.

We place youth characteristics operating at the micro- and meso-system level at the center of the KiTeS Framework because of their key influence on the interactions between the individual and their environment (i.e., proximal processes). Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) conceptualized person characteristics as *demand*, *resource*, and *force* characteristics. Demand characteristics are features of the person that are directly apparent to others and invite or discourage interactions and reactions. Examples include age, gender, and appearance. Resource characteristics refer to a person's skills, abilities, experiences, and disabilities which can influence the capacity of the person to engage in proximal processes. Force characteristics are considered the shapers of development as they refer to behavioral dispositions that either support or disrupt proximal processes and therefore development. Examples include responsiveness, distractibility, and emotional regulation.

Demand characteristics such as age and gender have been associated with absenteeism and SAPs. Absence rates tend to increase as students get older and move through school, peaking in high school (Hancock et al., 2013; U.S Department of Education, 2016; Skedgell and Kearney, 2018). Links between gender and absenteeism are somewhat mixed and may differ by type of SAP (Havik et al., 2015; Maynard et al., 2017; Skedgell and Kearney, 2018). Race and ethnicity are also associated with chronic absenteeism, with US national data showing American Indian, Pacific Islander, and Black students more likely to be absent for three or more weeks compared with their White peers (U.S Department of Education, 2016). Indigenous Australian youth are also at greater risk of absenteeism and they are more adversely affected by absence than are non-disadvantaged peers (Hancock et al., 2013).

A range of *resource* characteristics are linked to absenteeism and SAPs, including biological and psychological factors such as functional limitations, acute and chronic illness, mental health conditions and sleep (McShane et al., 2001; Egger et al., 2003; Houtrow et al., 2012; Hysing et al., 2015; Allison and Attisha, 2019). Specific learning disabilities, IDD, and neuro-developmental conditions are also associated with absenteeism (Redmond and Hosp, 2008; Gottfried et al., 2017; Black and Zablotsky, 2018).

Self-regulation, a *force* characteristic according to Bronfenbrenner and Morris' conceptualization, has been found to negatively associate with absenteeism (Balkis et al., 2016). Similarly, attitudes toward school and perceptions of academic ability have been linked to absenteeism and these might best be viewed as force characteristics given their influence on a student's active orientation toward school (Green et al., 2012; Balkis et al., 2016). Mental health conditions, including anxiety, mood disorders, and externalizing behavior problems

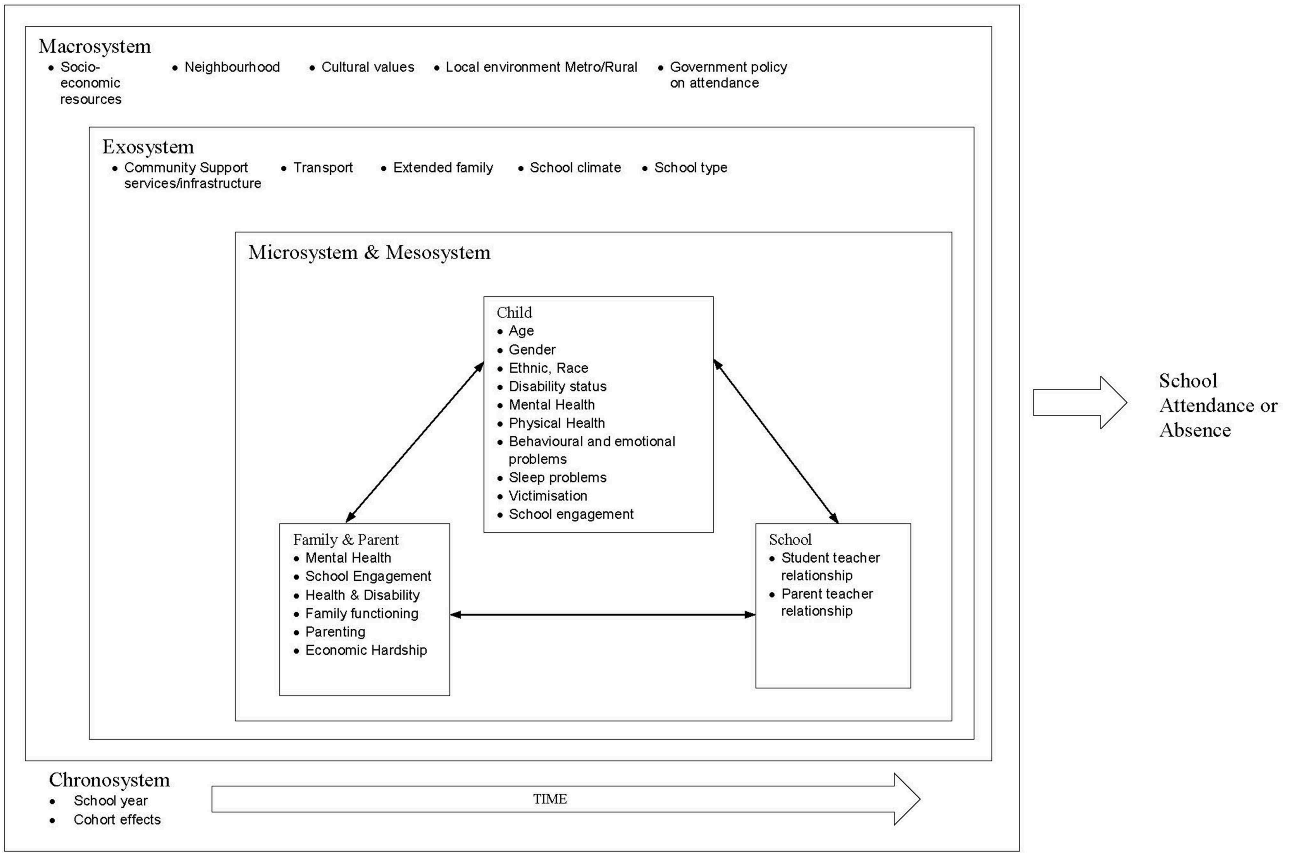

FIGURE 1 | The KiTeS bioecological systems framework for school attendance and absence.

such as inattention, impulsiveness, and hyperactivity are developmentally disruptive and are linked to absenteeism and SAPs (McShane et al., 2001; Egger et al., 2003; Ingul et al., 2012; Kearney, 2016). While these disorders are considered resource characteristics (Bronfenbrenner and Morris 2006), their symptoms, such as anxiety, low affect, and cognitive impairment impact on force characteristics such as social avoidance, self-regulation, inattention, and motivation and are likely to invite or discourage responses from others and impact the likelihood of proximal processes being initiated or sustained.

There is evidence that youth with IDD experience increased rates of resource and force characteristics linked to absenteeism. These include, for example, chronic physical health conditions, mental health and behavior problems, functional limitations, and sleep problems (Einfeld et al., 2006; Cotton and Richdale, 2010; Emerson et al., 2010a; Oeseburg et al., 2011; Houtrow et al., 2012; Green et al., 2015; Black and Zablotsky, 2018). Accordingly, youth with IDD may be at greater risk for absenteeism and SAPs. Evidence that the academic functioning of disadvantaged students is more adversely affected by absences (Hancock et al., 2013) points to IDD populations potentially facing greater educational risks on account of absenteeism.

The KiTeS Framework identifies a range of parent, family, and school factors at the micro- and meso- levels that may influence proximal processes and factors implicated in absenteeism and SAPs. Important parent factors include parental stress, mental and physical health, and parenting styles (Dura and Beck, 1988; Corville-Smith et al., 1998; Martin et al., 1999; Hastings, 2002; Herring et al., 2006; Lipstein et al., 2009; Bahali et al., 2011; Woodman et al., 2015). Parental attitudes to school and parental involvement in their child's schooling are also relevant because these factors are linked to youth's academic achievement and school engagement which are factors associated with school attendance (Newman, 2005; Jeynes, 2007; Doren et al., 2012).

At the family level, family composition (Bernstein and Borchardt, 1996), family functioning (Corville-Smith et al., 1998; Carless et al., 2015), and family dynamics (Kearney and Silverman, 1995) have been linked to absenteeism and SAPs. School factors at the micro- and meso- system levels include aspects of school climate, a multi-dimensional construct encompassing teacher, student, and peer relationships; feelings of safety and inclusion at school; levels of academic and social support; the quality of the school's physical environment; and connections within the broader school community including parents (Cohen et al., 2009). Positive school climate is associated with a number of positive school outcomes such as academic achievement, fewer student behavior problems, and better attendance rates (Faircloth and Hamm, 2005; Freeman et al., 2015; Hendron and Kearney, 2016; Roorda et al., 2017; Van Eck et al., 2017).

Factors at the exo- and macro-system level are identified in the KiTeS Framework due to their links to absenteeism and SAPs. These factors include housing instability (Fantuzzo et al., 2013; Deck, 2017), socio-economic status (Zhang, 2003; Balkis et al., 2016), and neighborhood characteristics such as poverty and the household size and age of neighbors (Gottfried, 2014). With respect to neighborhood characteristics, Gottfried (2014) found that absenteeism increased as neighbor household size increased and, conversely, decreased as average neighbor age increased. Structural barriers such as a lack of transport infrastructure and living in remote locations are also associated with absenteeism (Hancock et al., 2013; Gottfried, 2014).

Exo-system factors related to the school domain such as classroom setting, school type, and school organizational factors also show some links to absenteeism and SAPs (Gottfried et al., 2017; Lenhoff and Pogodzinski, 2018). For example, Lenhoff and Pogodzinski (2018) found that school organizational effectiveness moderated the influence of demographic and individual level factors (sex, race/ethnicity, special educational status, English language learner status, and economic disadvantage) on absenteeism in US state schools but not in charter schools (publicly funded independent schools). A study by Gottfried et al. (2017) found that the risk of chronic absenteeism was lower for mainstream school students with disabilities (broadly defined by special educational needs and including students with emotional problems) who received instruction in classrooms among a higher percentage of typically developing students (inclusive classrooms) compared to students with disabilities receiving instruction in separate classrooms among fewer typically developing students (exclusive classroom). Further, students who received part-time instruction with a special education teacher in inclusive classrooms were less likely to be chronically absent compared to students who had the same disabilities but were in contact with special education teachers full-time in the inclusive classrooms.

Factors at the exo- and macro- system levels may be particularly salient to disadvantaged populations. Youth with IDD are more likely to be exposed to risks of socio-economic disadvantage such as living in low income or unemployed households, poorer neighborhoods, and single parent households compared to their typically developing peers (Emerson and Hatton, 2007). These distal factors are considered within the KiTeS Framework given they may exert a particular influence on absenteeism and SAPs in disadvantaged populations.

Within the macro-system, attitudes toward education vary between cultural groups and may impact attendance rates. There is evidence of variability across cultural groups in parent's beliefs and behaviors regarding their children's education which may influence how parents socialize their child to school (Stevenson and Lee, 1990; Taylor et al., 2004). For example, in a cross-cultural study, Stevenson and Lee found that Chinese and Japanese mothers held higher standards for their child's academic achievement than did American mothers and they also endorsed the importance of academic effort to a greater degree than American mothers. Cultural attitudes toward persons with disabilities also vary. In the Australian multi-cultural context, there is some evidence that cultural groups differ in their acceptance of persons with disabilities (Westbrook et al., 1993). A report from Victoria, Australia, noted that students with disabilities from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds may be missing more school because of cultural views about the benefits and cultural relevance of mainstream education (Victorian Equal Opportunity Human Rights Commission, 2012). The KiTeS Framework prompts researchers to consider such factors when investigating risks for absenteeism in disadvantaged populations.

With respect to the chronosystem, absenteeism that occurs early in schooling places students at increased risk for absenteeism in later years (Hancock et al., 2013). Different constellations of risk factors for absenteeism are also likely to be influential at different ages. For example, Skedgell and Kearney (2018) found that rates of absenteeism differed across school grades. Similarly, separation anxiety may be a more influential risk factor for the SAP school refusal at younger ages (Last and Strauss, 1990). Consideration of chronosystem factors is thus required to achieve a comprehensive understanding of absenteeism and SAPs.

ADVANCING RESEARCH WITH THE KITES FRAMEWORK

The KiTeS Framework, based on Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems model, offers an inclusive structure to inform research. It highlights the complex array of factors within the micro-, meso-, macro-, and chrono-systems, that may contribute to school absenteeism and SAPs amongst diverse student populations. A strength of the KiTeS Framework is that it demands the consideration of multiple levels of influence on school absenteeism and SAPs by placing the child within a nested framework of interacting systems. The Framework is relevant to many disciplines, including but not limited to education, psychology, psychiatry, pediatrics, disability, youth justice, social work, sociology, and criminal justice and is well placed to inform the development of a multi-disciplinary research agenda for absenteeism and SAPs which the field is currently lacking.

As noted earlier, several student populations experience elevated levels of, and vulnerability to, absenteeism and SAPs, including indigenous youth and those with disabilities. The KiTeS Framework is applicable to *all* student populations and fosters examination of the interacting factors that may underlie increased risk for different groups of students. The KiTeS Framework is equally applicable to research into protective factors that promote attendance, counteracting risk factors for the development of absenteeism and SAPs. To-date, the literature in the field has had a greater focus on understanding risk factors for absenteeism and non-attendance. However, the development of interventions to prevent and reduce SAPs will need to target both a reduction in risk factors and an increase in protective factors. The Framework offers a comprehensive context for exploring risk and protective factors to help explain absenteeism and SAPs and develop appropriate interventions.

IMPLICATIONS

It is envisaged that the knowledge gained through research guided by the KiTeS Framework will inform the development of interventions to prevent absenteeism and reduce SAPs. Lyon and Cotler (2009) have argued that traditional psychological interventions for SAPs, which largely focus on individual child factors, should be complemented by knowledge of the influence of factors at other levels, such as broader school, family, and policy levels. Research informed by the KiTeS framework might also influence policies and laws on school attendance and absenteeism by yielding policy-relevant research data. Although policies and laws around absenteeism evidently change over time, the empirical basis for these changes appears to be lacking (e.g., Brouwer-Borghuis et al., 2019).

There are scientific and practice advantages associated with the explicitly inclusive objective of the KiTeS Framework, whereby the needs and experiences of disadvantaged populations are acknowledged, including those with special education needs. The complexities of these youths' lives are challenging for researchers and practitioners who wish to understand school absenteeism and SAPs among these youth. An inclusive framework can help reduce inequalities in the longer term by ensuring that organizations and systems are enabled to develop and provide interventions and supports that consider the needs of all children—those with and without disadvantage.

CONCLUSION

School attendance is important for youths' optimal development. A comprehensive understanding of the complex interplay of protective and risk factors for school attendance and absence is critical. The KiTeS Framework applies Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems framework to guide research toward an inclusive and multifactorial examination of absenteeism and SAPs. It is hoped that research informed by the framework will yield data directly relevant for enhancing prevention programs, tailoring interventions to the needs of those displaying SAPs, and informing evidence-based policies and laws. In turn, these will help improve school attendance, educational outcomes, and the social and emotional well-being of all youth.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors listed have made a substantial, direct and intellectual contribution to the work, and approved it for publication.

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Perceived Differentiation and Personalization Teaching Approaches in Inclusive Classrooms: Perspectives of Students and Teachers

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As indicated by the Warnock Report, even 40 years ago, the necessity of responding to different student abilities and needs in school and thus the importance of adequate adaption of a regular curriculum regarding differentiation and personalization had already been described. Due to changes in policy and legislative frameworks, more and more students with special educational needs (SEN) attend regular education. However, placing the students with SEN within mainstream classrooms does not automatically lead to changes in teaching practices in these classrooms. In line with this, it would be interesting to know the way in which and to what extent students in inclusive classes perceive established inclusive practices, such as differentiation and personalization. Therefore, data from 47 inclusive classes from North Rhine-Westphalia (Germany) were collected. In total, 872 primary school students (grade 4; ages 9–11 years) were asked to rate how frequently their class teachers used inclusive instructional practices (personalization and differentiation) using the Inclusive Classroom Practices Scale (ITPS). In addition to students, teachers were also asked to rate their own teaching practices in general and then in addition for each student separately. As differentiated instruction and multifaceted teaching practices are considered to be measures for meeting the needs of children with different educational needs, results that show a high use of these approaches were expected. Descriptive results indicate a consistent homogeneous understanding of prevailing inclusive teaching practices, which could be characterized by existing, but not intensive implementation, of inclusive practices. Differences regarding students' gender, migrant background, or SEN were not found for the students' ratings of teachers' inclusive practices or the teachers' self-ratings group. Moreover, the teachers' student-specific ratings indicate that teachers did not strongly differentiate or personalize with a focus on students' characteristics. A small overlap between teachers' general ratings of their own inclusive teaching practices and students' individual ratings was found. The results of the current study provide insights into actual inclusive teaching practices in German inclusive classrooms and make it possible to address the need for action and inclusive interventions.

Keywords: inclusive education, differentiation, personalization, students, teachers

INTRODUCTION

At least since the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, 2007), inclusive education is a well-acknowledged concept within the scope of teaching and learning. Due to the trend of European countries toward the inclusive concept of including students with special educational needs (SEN) into regular schools and building inclusive classrooms, the number of diversity factors among students is increasing (Prast et al., 2018; Schwab et al., 2019). In addition to having a disability, individual educational needs can be traced back to different learning barriers (Schwab, 2018). The approach of gathering students with different needs in one classroom in order to provide a productive and diverse educational setting is not fully ensured by simply acknowledging the variety of student requirements. Coubergs et al. (2017) described diversity in education as an existing reality and therefore, teachers need to adapt their implemented teaching and learning practice to the specific needs of all of their students.

Differentiation and Personalization as Inclusive Strategies

According to the plurality of students' needs, there is more need for teachers to address the increasing heterogeneity and variety of different educational needs of children. The demand of meeting the challenges of diversity and plurality of the classroom composition seems inevitable. According to Coubergs et al. (2017), differentiated instruction and multifaceted teaching practice are seen as measures to address the needs of students with different educational needs. The approach of inclusive education is not a result of modern educational discussions. As indicated by the Warnock Report, the necessity of responding to different abilities and requirements of school children and thus the importance of an adequate adaption of the regular curriculum was already discussed 40 years ago: "The first question in planning the curriculum is frequently where to begin. One starting point is the detailed specification of each child's attributes and needs" (Warnock, 1978, p. 206). This means that in order to live up to the needs of every child within the inclusive classroom setting, it is important to focus on teaching principles, such as personalization and differentiation (Sharma et al., 2017; Schwab, 2019).

Differentiated and personalized instruction requires a lot of organization and engagement with the students' characteristics. Tomlinson (2000) states that this teaching approach, which aims for inclusion, has to be "carefully aligned with essential learning outcomes; informed by ongoing assessment; responds to student readiness, interest, and learning profile [...] uses flexible grouping based on thoughtfully balanced individual, small-group, and whole-class work; [and] ensures that all students have 'respectful tasks' [...]" (Tomlinson, 2000, p. 295). Walther-Thomas and Brownell (2001, p. 176) described differentiated instruction as an approach within from which "teachers will create different levels of expectations for task completion within a lesson or unit." Lawrence-Brown (2004) highlighted the importance of differentiated instruction in inclusive classrooms as it provides "a simultaneous motivation and boost for all students to achieve individual goals" (Lawrence-Brown, 2004). Even more specific than differentiated instruction is individualized or personalized instruction, which can be described as "the effort on the part of a school to organize the learning environment to take into account individual student characteristics and need to make use of flexible instructional practices" (Keefe and Jenkins, 2002, p. 441). "[...] the quality of special education will ultimately depend on the headteachers and teachers concerned. Their commitment to curriculum development is crucial if special education is to be of high quality" (Warnock, 1978, p. 225).

More Than Assessing Attitudes Toward Inclusion

Considering the fact that the year 2018 already marks the 40th anniversary of the Warnock Report, the question exists as to whether educational professionals actually incorporate inclusion for all students in their teaching endeavors as inclusive education continues to grow. By considering recent studies from this perspective, it becomes apparent that many educational studies place emphasis on teachers' attitudes and perceptions toward inclusive education and differentiated instruction with a focus on normative scientific demands. The findings of Sharma and Sokal (2016) agree with findings from earlier research for example results of Jordan et al. (2009), who also found that teachers with a positive attitude toward students with disabilities and inclusive teaching tend to use more inclusive teaching practices than others. MacFarlane and Woolfson (2013) investigated teachers' attitudes and behavior in dealing with students with social, emotional, and behavioral difficulties and highlighted the central roles of in-service trainings and the promotion of an inclusive school ethos in order to motivate teachers to work within inclusive settings. Less attention has been paid to data acquisition concerning effective teaching approaches with regard to differentiated instruction and personalization within an inclusive classroom setting. Rausch et al. (2015) stated that teachers' behavior toward students might differ depending on certain characteristics, such as race or gender (Rausch et al., 2015). Within the scope of a case study, Nilholm and Alm

(2010) investigated inclusive teacher strategies in an inclusive classroom in Sweden. The authors referred to the study of Putney (2007), who also discussed conditions within inclusive classes and inclusive teaching approaches. The results of both articles are very much the same according to one theme: the participating teachers establish non-discussable basic rules, which must be followed by all students and teachers. These rules should lead to a pleasant learning environment and strengthen a beneficial class structure.

An Extension of Perspectives

Against the background of the Warnock Report, which pointed out the importance of student-centered curriculum planning and the situation the lack of research data on inclusive classroom practices, the exploration of actual inclusive educational measures of teachers in inclusive classrooms is considered a research gap. Within the scope of the recent study, the aim of this study was to investigate the way in which teachers react to the diversity of students and their individual educational needs in inclusive classrooms. Considering research that concentrates on teaching practices and principles, the sample often covers teachers in different stages (such as pre-service, in-service). The problem is that when teachers are asked about their competencies and teaching practices, there is a tendency to over-report engaging in certain behavior or attitudes in order to fit the desirable social or professional norm. This finding indicates that teachers often respond differently to specific questions for the purpose of satisfying socially desired answers. Therefore, the results distort educational and/or inclusive reality in classrooms (Faddar et al., 2018). In order to provide an extension of this perspective, it seems meaningful to include the group of insiders or recipients (students) who are strongly involved in inclusive classroom practice of teachers. In this context, it seems interesting to not only ask teachers about their teaching strategies but also question students about their perception of their teachers' consideration of the needs of individual students.

Students as Observers of Classroom Practices

As already mentioned, a number of studies addressing teaching practice and instruction focus on the perspectives of teachers and their self-assessment of their teaching. Others gain data through classroom observations conducted by external researchers. In this context, the question arises as to whether student perception surveys can be seen as reliable sources for insights in different classroom dimensions (den Brok et al., 2006; Montuoro and Lewis, 2015; Wallace et al., 2016). Wallace et al. (2016) describe students' perceptions of classroom interactions and structures as unique reports. They emphasized the fact that a sample of students evaluating the quality of teaching provides "indigenous expertise" (Wallace et al., 2016, p. 1859) in contrast to researchers who are trained and enter the research field under the influence of certain presumptions and research interests. Göllner et al. (2018) highlighted the existence of enormous differences in students' individual perceptions of the exact same instructional teaching approaches. Variances among students within the same class may be traced back to dyadic student–teacher effects (Göllner et al., 2018). In order to exceed the demand of highlighting two different perspectives concerning instructional practices in inclusive classrooms, it seems necessary to specialize not only on the dimensions of teachers but also focus on students as active participants in classroom events. This approach enables results to be obtained within both samples considering overlaps and variances in perceptions on instructional approaches, not only separately within each group of participants, but also in relation to each other. Bourke and Mentis (2013) highlighted the importance of giving voice to students as it can lead to a meaningful process of inclusion development and improvement. However, studies investigating students' perceptions inclusive practices used by their teachers are lacking. Gebhardt et al. (2014) examined students' perceptions of inclusive teaching in mainstream classrooms in addition to inclusive classrooms and came to the conclusion that students in inclusive classes perceive more inclusive instructional features than students in regular classes. Furthermore, Schwab et al. (2019) developed a research instrument called an Inclusive Teaching Practice Scale, which asks about the perceptions of students regarding actual inclusive practices of their teachers. The samples consisted of 665 students, including students with and without SEN from 5th to 9th grade and 74 German, English, and mathematics teachers. Interestingly, their results demonstrated that students with and without SEN did not experience different levels of inclusive teaching practices (differentiation and personalization). Overall, the students perceived more inclusive practices concerning level of personalization rather than the level of differentiation. According to teachers, years of teaching experience were a significant predictor for the use of inclusive practices in secondary classes. In order to determine the effects of teacher support (emotional, instructional, communicative, feedback) on students, Tennant et al. (2015) used gender as predictor for students' perception of teachers' support. The results showed that teachers support low-achieving girls over other students by providing this group with more information and instruction.

Overlap of Students' and Teachers' Ratings

In general, students' perceptions about actual teaching practices used by their teachers and the teachers' self-ratings might differ. For instance, Kunter and Baumert (2006) measured the perspectives with respect to instructional features of both students and teachers. The authors acknowledged that both perspectives imply unconscious influences. Student ratings are often considered to be influenced by personal preferences, whereas teacher ratings are considered to be warped by "self-serving strategies" (Kunter and Baumert, 2006, p. 231). Personal preferences of students were determined regarding teachers' popularity. However, ratings by teachers that that were biased by self-serving strategies were not found. Overall, limited overlap regarding all items was investigated. The studies traced the marginal overlap back to "perspective-specific validities" in relation to external criteria and theoretical constructs (Kunter and Baumert, 2006, p. 243).

Schwab et al. (2019) investigated the student–teacher overlap in the context of their teachers' inclusive practices and found a marginal overlap. This finding might be explained by the methodology as teachers rated their inclusive practice in general for all students, whereas students rated the way in which teachers address their individual needs and not the way in which teachers adapt their teaching practices in general for the whole class. Therefore, it might be meaningful to ask teachers about their student-specific teaching practices. This approach can be underpinned by previous work of Zee et al. (2016) who provided evidence that teachers do not perceive the same level of self-efficacy toward all of their students. The variance of teachers' self-efficacy among different students was even higher than the variance of general self-efficacy perceptions among different teachers.

Based on the literature review of the selected authors, no investigations of studies considering students' and teachers' ratings of inclusive teaching practices within a dyadic approach were done.

The Current Study

The current study is part of a research project funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG), a self-governing organization for science and research in Germany (founding number: 393078153). Two research gaps within this study were described. The first one was related to the psychometric properties of the research instrument. The instrument was first used within the scope of a sample of secondary grade students. It is unclear whether the ITPS, which was used in the current study, is adequate for 4th-grade students with respect to the psychometric qualities reliability and factorial structure. In addition to that, it needs to be investigated whether it is meaningful examine teachers' self-ratings of their teaching practices in a student-specific way in addition to teachers' general ratings for the whole class. Additionally, the teachers' perception of inclusive teaching and thus, determinants of differentiation and personalization were investigated based on students' variables, such as gender, migration, and having SEN.

Against this background, several research questions were formulated:

(1a) How do fourth grade students in inclusive classrooms perceive teaching practices in consideration of personalization and differentiation?
(1b) Are there group differences based on students' characteristics (gender, migration, having SEN) in students' ratings of teachers' inclusive practices?
(1c) Do teachers rate their inclusive practices different based on students' individual characteristics (gender, migration, having SEN)?
(2) How strong is the overlap of teachers' student-specific perceptions of inclusive teaching practices and students' perspectives?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Participants and Settings

In the current study, students from 47 inclusive classes from urban and rural schools in North Rhine-Westphalia (a federal state in Germany) participated in this study. In total, data from 872 fourth grade students who attend an inclusive class in primary school were assessed. In every class in which the study was conducted, there was at least one student who was officially diagnosed as SEN. The majority of the students (55.9%) diagnosed with SEN had learning disabilities. The participants were between 9 and 11 years old. Female students comprised 48.7% of the participants. German students comprised 92.1% of the participants. German was the primary language used by 79.3% of students within their families.

In order to present the teachers' sample, we divided sampling into two groups. On one hand, teachers were generally asked about their teaching methods regarding differentiation and personalization, and on the other hand, they rated the same items for each student with regard to inclusive schooling, indicating that if one class consisted of 23 students, the teacher had to fill out one overall questionnaire regarding his inclusive practices for all students and the student-specific questionnaire 23 times (one for every student). It is striking that the number of participating teachers varied when comparing the two groups. This finding was due to a smaller number of participating teachers in the student-specific survey. Twenty-three teachers (21 females and 2 males) out of the 47 participating classes filled out the general questionnaire. The small number of participating teachers can be attributed to the perceived additional work related to the study. Some teachers ensured that the students completed the questionnaires but felt that completing the questionnaires themselves was too much additional work and chose not to participate in the study.

Regarding the student-specific survey, the following should be noted: 20 of the 23 teachers who completed the general questionnaire also completed the student-specific questionnaire over the course of which student-specific data was collected from 341 students. The data from these 341 students contained the following information: of the initial cohort of 341 students, 170 were females, and 166 were males. Most of the subsample participants (89.4%) were born in Germany. Regarding SEN, 36 of students were identified as having SEN.

Research Instrument

Inclusive Teaching Practices

In order to assess the extent of actual inclusive practices, the students' version of the ITPS (s-ITPS) was used (Schwab et al., 2019). This scale consists of 14 items (such as "during the lesson my teacher takes my academic achievement into account") and can be divided into two subscales ("personalization" and "differentiation"). The teacher version of the ITPS contained the same 14 items in a slightly modified version (such as "during the lesson, I take the academic achievement of my students into account.") All 14 items were rated on a 4-point Likert-scale (1 = Not at all true, 2 = Somewhat not true, 3 = Somewhat true, 4 = Certainly True). For the sample of secondary grade students, the internal consistency was above a Cronbach's alpha of 0.81. In addition, the internal consistency for the subscales was satisfactory, and the two-dimensional factorial structure was confirmed (Schwab et al., 2019).

In addition to the general teacher questionnaire, teachers were also asked to rate their teaching practices separately for each student. For this purpose, we adapted the overall teacher version of the ITPS (Schwab et al., 2019) to the student-specific questionnaire. For the student-specific questionnaire, the items of the general questionnaire were changed into statements relating to instructional teaching behavior toward individual students, such as "During the lesson I take the academic achievement of this student into account." These statements had to be rated individually by the teacher for each student of the class. Since not all of the 14 items seemed to be suitable for a student-specific assessment, six items were deleted in the first step (items 5–7 and 11–13) and in a second step, three more items (items 4,10, and 14) were deleted, which yielded better psychometric qualities.

Ethics

Participation in the study was voluntary on both institutional and personal levels. All parents of the participating students gave their written consent with respect to the collection and processing of the data. The conditions of consent were strictly followed since in the event of withdrawal of consent, and the data concerned were immediately and irrevocably removed from the dataset. Participants (and parents) still had the opportunity to ask questions about the project at any time during the study. They could also withdraw their consent at any time. The University of Wuppertal Ethics Committee gave approval for the present study.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Cronbach's alpha scores were used to check to reliability. The factorial structure of the instrument was examined using confirmatory factor analyses. In order to answer the research questions, descriptive statistics and multi-level regression analyses were used. For the multi-level analyses, all metric variables were transferred into z-standardized scores.

Psychometric Properties of the Research Instrument

First, the Cronbach's alpha reliability statistics of the two subscales and the total scale of students' version of the ITPS were computed (see **Table 1**). Alpha values for the total sample ranged from 0.77 to 0.86 and therefore, indicated that the scale and the two subscales provide internal consistency (George and Mallery, 2003). However, for students with SEN the internal consistency was low (alpha = 0.53–0.70). For the general teachers' version based on ITPS scale, the overall alpha was 0.865. The only alpha that was only at an acceptable level was the subscale personalization, which was around 0.69. In addition, the student-specific version ITPS scale showed good reliability with alpha = 0.88. Finally, the reliability alpha for the short version (ITPS-S) for students' ratings (with the same five items as the student-specific teacher version) was 0.75.

TABLE 1 | Reliability statistics (Cronbach's alpha).

	Items	Alpha	*N*
Students ITPS	14	0.860 (0.697[a])	807
Students ITPS DIFF	7	0.753 (0.527[a])	807
Students ITPS PER	7	0.773 (0.642[a])	807
Teachers ITPS	14	0.865	23
Teachers ITPS DIFF	7	0.805	23
Teachers ITPS PER	7	0.687	23
Teachers ITPS student-specific	5	0.883	319

[a] *only students with SEN.*

TABLE 2 | Fit indices of the CFA for the three scales.

Scale	SBS-χ^2	*P*	df	χ^2/df	RMSEA	CFI	GFI
ITPS	135.759	0.00	75	**1.81**	**0.032**	**0.977**	**0.976**
ITPS student-specific	5.186	**0.269**	4	**1.29**	**0.031**	**0.994**	**0.976**
ITPS short version	5.671	**0.340**	5	**1.13**	**0.021**	**0.998**	**0.993**

Bold, indicator for good fit.

Next, confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) were conducted in order to examine the construct validity. **Table 2** shows the fit indices for the hypothesized two-factor model for the students' ratings. The chi-squared (χ^2) statistics are reported in the table, but the results are not discussed because the test is sensitive to a large sample size (Byrne, 2010). Acceptable fit indices were found with the comparative fit index (CFI) of 0.977 as it >0.95 (Hu and Bentler, 1999; Schermelleh-Engel et al., 2003), and a root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) of 0.032 was within the acceptable range (Hu and Bentler, 1999). In addition, another good fit indicator was χ^2 to degree of freedom ratio with a value <3 (1.81) (Kline, 1994) and the goodness of fit index (GFI) of 0.976 (Schermelleh-Engel et al., 2003). In sum, fit indices indicated that the observed data from students fit the two-factor model that was proposed by Schwab et al. (2019).

Third, CFA analysis for the teachers' student-specific ratings scale (ITPS) showed good fit indices with CFI = 0.994, RMSEA = 0.021, and χ^2 to the degree of freedom ratio was 1.29. Fourth, a short version of the ITPS short version with five items to match the five items on the teachers' scale ITPS, was examined via CFA analysis. The fit indices was also good for this short scale (s-ITPS) version with CFI = 0.998, RMSEA = 0.031, and an χ^2 to the degree of freedom ratio of 1.13.

RESULTS

Students' Rating of Inclusive Classroom Practices

In order to investigate students' perceptions of their teachers' use of inclusive teaching approaches and teacher ratings considering personalization and differentiation, mean and standard deviation scores (M ± SD) were calculated (see **Table 3**).

An initial objective of the project was to identify the way in which fourth grade students in inclusive classrooms perceive

TABLE 3 | Descriptive statistics.

Item	Sample	N	Mean score	Standard deviation
Consideration of performance of student	Student	791	3.25	0.864
	Teacher general	23	3.35	0.487
	Teacher student-specific	341	3.26	0.463
Consideration of feelings of student	Student	790	3.18	0.973
	Teacher general	23	3.57	0.507
	Teacher student-specific	340	3.39	0.507
Consideration of interest of student	Student	785	2.98	1.00
	Teacher general	22	3.18	0.395
	Teacher student-specific	323	3.17	0.433
Clear explanation of rules	Student	785	3.62	0.696
	Teacher general	23	3.78	0.422
	Teacher student-specific	341	3.67	0.471
Different options to deal with learning content	Student	782	3.20	1.75
	Teacher general	22	3.23	0.612
	Teacher student-specific			
Use of different forms of evaluation	Student	744	3.26	0.898
	Teacher general	22	3.18	0.501
	Teacher student-specific			
Variation of grouping strategies	Student	785	3.32	0.836
	Teacher general	23	3.43	0.662
	Teacher student-specific			
Switch between different learning activities to support different types of learning	Student	764	3.21	0.926
	Teacher general	22	3.36	0.581
	Teacher student-specific	341	3.30	0.497
Provision of learning environment, that encourages child to deal with topics	Student	780	3.24	0.862
	Teacher general	23	3.39	0.499
	Teacher student-specific	340	3.37	0.508
Encouragement of student to take risks and make mistakes in order to increase learning through trying	Student	776	3.26	0.934
	Teacher general	23	3.57	0.507
	Teacher student-specific	341	3.57	0.507
Variation of learning format	Student	758	3.35	0.857
	Teacher general	23	3.52	0.511
Use of different techniques of presentation	Student	760	3.16	0.935
	Teacher general	21	2.62	0.921
	Teacher student-specific			
Collaboration with colleagues during class	Student	770	3.07	0.996
	Teacher general	23	3.48	0.730
	Teacher student-specific			
Individual feedback	Student	756	3.09	0.979
	Teacher general	23	3.48	0.665
	Teacher student-specific	341	3.55	0.509

teaching practices after considering inclusive practices. The mean scores showed that with regard to almost all items, the students' rating is to be placed in the range of either partial or total agreement. Only for the item "The teacher takes my interests into account," were the ratings of students between partial and total agreement with a rating tendency of 3 on the four-point Likert-scale. This value indicates an evaluation of a specific item with "Somewhat true" (2.98 ± 1.00). Regarding most items, the teachers' rating trends within the general questionnaire were also between 3 and 4 ("Somewhat and Certainly true," respectively). Only the evaluation of the item "During the lesson, I use different presentation techniques" was rated with a mean score of 2.62 ± 0.921, which indicates partial agreement on average. The teachers' answers on the student-specific questionnaire yielded similar results. Without exception, the evaluations of all items was between the values of 3 and 4.

TABLE 4 | Estimates of the multi-level regression model analyses to predict students' rating (the second model).

Dependent variable	Predictor	Estimate	Std. error
ITPS (students)	Gender	−0.36**	0.10
	SEN	−0.04	0.16
	Mother tongue of child: German	−0.06	0.13
	Deviance	796.5	
	Student-specific-variance	0.705**	0.06
	Variance on class level	0.281**	0.11

$^{**}p < 0.01$.

TABLE 5 | Estimates of the multi-level regression model analyses to predict teachers' student-specific ratings (the third model).

Predictor	Estimate	Std. error
Gender (student)	−0.078	0.056
SEN (student)	0.126	0.087
Mother tongue of child (student)	0.100	0.072
ITPS (teacher)	0.607**	0.153
Years of experience (teacher)	−0.214	0.140
Number of students in class	0.074	0.154
Number of students with SEN	0.075	0.156
Number of students with migrant background	0.052	0.156
Deviance	392.501	
Student-specific-variance	0.196**	0.02
Variance on class level	0.299**	0.10

$^{**}p < 0.01$.

Prediction of Students' Rating of Inclusive Classroom Practices

A multi-level regression model analysis was used for examining how much of the variance could be explained on student and class levels regarding students' ratings. First, a model with no predictors was calculated. This model indicated that 27.3% of the variance is on class-level (student-specific variance = 0.737, variance on class level = 0.273, deviance = 808.88, Wald-Z = 2.608; $p < 0.01$). In the second model, predictors were added (student-specific variance = 0.705, variance on class level = 0.281, deviance = 796.50, Wald-Z = 2.615; $p < 0.01$). There was a significant increase in fit in comparison with the model with no predictors at $p < 0.01$ by calculating the differences in deviance (12.8 with df = 3) between the two models (Heck et al., 2013). Regarding the variance that was explained by predictors in the second model, gender was the only significant predictor [$\beta = -0.36$; $p < 0.01$, $t_{(290.87)} = -3.55$, standard error (SE) = 0.10]. Girls perceived a higher level of inclusive teaching practices compared to boys. The other two predictors, SEN [$\beta = -0.04$, $p = 0.78$, $t_{(292.22)} = -0.28$, SE = 0.16] and migrant background/mother tongue [$\beta = -0.06$, $p = 0.63$, $t_{(303.843)} = -0.48$, SE = 0.13] in the model (see **Table 4**), showed no significant differences in contribution to the explanation of the variance in students' rating.

Teachers Student-Specific Ratings of Their Inclusive Teaching Practices

A multi-level regression model analysis was used to examine how much of the variance could be explained at student and class levels considering teachers' student-specific ratings. First, a model with no predictors were performed. This model shows that 79% of the variances were on the class level (student-specific variance = 0.208, variance on class-level = 0.792, deviance = 444.55, Wald-Z = 3.103; $p < 0.01$). In the second model (student-specific-variance = 0.183, variance on class-level = 0.341, deviance = 430.68, Wald-Z = 3.04; $p < 0.01$), one predictor was added, the ITPS (teachers' general ratings). There was a significant increase in fit in comparison with the model with no predictors at $p < 0.01$ for the differences in deviance (13.87 with df = 1) between the two models. Teachers' general ratings showed significant impact on predicting teachers' student-specific ratings ($\beta = 0.618$; $p < 0.01$, $t_{(19.649)} = 4.483$, SE = 0.13).

In the third model, eight predictors were entered and included three of the student-related variables (gender, migrant background, SEN), general ratings of ITPS by the teachers, two variables relating to teachers (years of experience, gender, ITPS rating), and three variables addressing classroom composition in general (number of students in class, number of students with SEN, number of students with migrant background) (see **Table 5**).

This model (student-specific-variance = 0.196, variance at the class level = 0.299, deviance = 392.49, Wald-Z = 2.79; $p < 0.01$) showed a significant increase in fit in comparison with the second model with one predictors at $p < 0.01$ for the differences in deviance (38.19 with df = 8) between the two models. However, not one of the additional predictors in this model was significant in comparison with the second model. In both models, teachers' general ratings were a significant predictor.

Overlap of Students' and Teachers' Perspectives

In the fourth model, students' ratings on the short version of the questionnaire (s-ITPS) was added as a new predictor in addition to the eight already described predictors used in the previous model to examine whether students ratings would predict teachers' specific ratings for the same student (student-specific variance = 0.195, variance at the class level = 0.299, deviance = 390.93, Wald-Z = 2.79; $p < 0.01$). This fourth model showed no significant increase in fit in comparison with the third model at $p < 0.01$ for the differences in deviance (1.55 with df = 1). In summary, students' ratings did not explain significant variances in teacher specific ratings.

DISCUSSION

The previous literature review showed that hardly any research projects address actual inclusive teaching in schools using different perspectives, such perceptions based on the views of both teachers and students. Moreover, they focus on attitudes toward inclusion of different people (such as teachers, students, parents). The purpose of the current study was to determine students' and teachers' perception of teachers' use of inclusive teaching practices with a special focus on differentiation and personalization. Following earlier research, the student version of the ITPS (Schwab et al., 2019) was used in a primary school sample and in addition, the teacher version was adopted for the assessment of student-specific use of differentiation and personalization in teaching practices.

The analysis of this scales' psychometric properties from the student version of the ITPS showed that the psychometric quality criteria for reliability and factorial validity were satisfactory. Compared to Schwab et al. (2019), who used the students' version of ITPS for 5th and older grade students, similar reliability scores were found. However, the reliability of the subscales for students with SEN was too low. Since the sample of students with SEN was limited in the present study, no further analyses were possible. A necessary next step would be to ensure that the items measure the same concept for students with and without SEN. Therefore, it seems necessary to examine possible measurement invariance for students with and without SEN, especially because of the limited reading comprehension abilities of students with SEN; the same items might be understood differently by different students (Schwab and Helm, 2015). According to the psychometric qualities of the instrument, the suggested two-dimensional data structure was confirmed with the CFA for 4th graders in line with the results of Hoffmann (2019), who showed that the factor structure for the sample of Schwab et al. (2019) can be confirmed using CFA. However, measurement invariance between primary school students and secondary school students also needs to be evaluated in the future.

Also, with regard to the student-specific teacher version of the ITPS, the reliability scores were high. However, three items had been deleted in order to increase the psychometric qualities. Against this background, the question arises whether the rationale of the deletion of nine items (six items when adapting the items to address individual students and not all students in general and three in the preliminary analysis) could have been problematic. As the goal was to compare students' ratings with student-specific and general ratings of teachers, it seems difficult to argue that the dimensionality of differentiation and personalization is the same when depending on five items on one scale instead of the initial 14 items (divided into two scales). In line with this, the possibility of slightly different results according to the limited 5-item version for student-specific ratings compared to the general teacher version with 14 items should be taken into account.

In addition, future research should address the question as to whether the general teacher version meets the required psychometric quality. Since the sample of teachers in this study was limited, there was no possibility to check the factor structure of this version.

The analysis of the mean scores showed that within all three versions (student, teacher general, and teacher student-specific versions) the same item was rated highest, which indicates that rules are explained clearly during the lesson and belong to the category differentiation. It may be worth mentioning that this item does not directly refer to an aspect of differentiation but rather implies disciplinary measures during the lesson. This result might indicate that teachers put a lot of work into classroom management and might have occurred because the establishment of basic rules for all is seen as a starting point for an inclusive classroom environment and further inclusive practices. Nilholm and Alm (2010) in addition to Putney (2007) offered an explanation for the importance of rules by stating that the implementation of clear rules is beneficial for inclusive practices. Referring to the literature of teacher attitudes toward inclusion, studies provide insights into the struggles of teachers with deviant classroom behavior within inclusive educational settings. Therefore, the implementation of clear rules may be necessary to make learning processes possible (MacFarlane and Woolfson, 2013).

Focusing on students, general teacher, and teachers' student-specific ratings, nearly all items were rated between "Somewhat true" and "Certainly true." These results imply that there is a relatively high level of inclusive practices. However, inclusive education implementation in practice is not yet guaranteed. According to the present results, the prevailing inclusive teaching practices can be characterized as an existing approach in education but have not been intensively put into practice. This result corresponds with an outcome within the study of Göllner et al. (2018), who observed variances among students' perceptions when considering the same set of their teachers' practices.

Considering the research question concerning the dependency of students' perceptions on students' personal variables, a multi-level regression model analysis showed that intra-group aspects explained 70.5% of the variance within students' rating. The high amount of student-specific variance is in line with the results of the study of Schwab et al. (2019). However, it is interesting that students from the same classes experience a rather small overlap in the inclusive practices used by their teachers. On one hand, the results perhaps reflect individual adaption of teaching practices by each teacher for each student in his/her class. On the other hand, it might just indicate that students experience similar teacher behavior differently. However, neither a diagnosis of SEN nor the migrant background of students provide a significant prediction of inclusive practices used by their teachers. Schwab et al. (2019) explained the lack of group differences between students with and without SEN by the method (student ratings). They assumed that students with SEN are more likely to have a variety of special needs in comparison to students without SEN; therefore, they have a much higher requirement for inclusive teaching practices. Even if teachers address these students more individually in their teaching practices according to different needs, the ratings were still similar. The only students' characteristic that showed a marginal effect was the students' gender. Compared to boys, girls experience more teaching practices that are inclusive in the sense of differentiation and personalization. This finding is consistent with that of Schwab et al. (2018) who showed that girls had a more positive perception of inclusive education in terms of teacher support and care.

It is encouraging to compare this finding with the results by Tennant et al. (2015), who found that teachers provided more information and instructional input for low-achieving girls than for their other students. Against the background of the finding in which a small amount of variance in the student ratings can be explained through the chosen personal variables (gender, migrant background, SEN), the question arises as to which variables have not been considered yet since the biggest part of variances still remain unexplained.

After considering the results of the multilevel-analyses to predict teachers' inclusive practices, it appears that the outcomes of this study showed no differences for students with and without SEN or other groups (such as female or male students or students with and without migrant backgrounds). Contrary to the students' ratings, teachers did not rate their student-specific teaching strategies differently for male and female students. This might lead to the conclusion that teachers in inclusive classes realized that inclusive teaching approaches should focus on all students, not only students with SEN, and therefore, adapt their teaching practices for every student in their class. Along this line of thinking, The Warnock Report (Warnock, 1978) already states that it is the task of teachers in inclusive classes to recognize and consider the needs of all students and adapt their teaching practices accordingly. In addition, recent studies state that teachers should focus on inclusive teaching approaches in order to support all students, not only students with SEN. Teachers need to make sure that inclusive practices are stimulating for all students.

Next to variables at the student level, the characteristics of the teachers have been investigated as possible predictors for inclusive practices used by teachers. The results indicate that neither the years of teaching experience nor the number of students or the number of students with SEN/migrant background predicted the teaching strategies used by teachers. The only variable that played a significant role according to the variances was the global rating of the teaching practices used by each teacher at an individual level. This indicated that teachers rather use or do not use inclusive practices in general and that the choice of these practices is not affected by individual students.

Technically, teachers can use the ITPS in a student-specific way. However, as it takes more time to fill out the questionnaire for every student separately than rating the items one time for the whole class, it needs to be ensured that the student-specific use of the scale is meaningful for assessing teachers' actual inclusive teaching practices. It has been shown that the additional student-specific ratings of teachers could provide further results regarding previous research. In this context, the fourth research question addresses the meaningfulness of the newly developed instrument. Does it contribute to additional results in terms of research on actual inclusive education compared to simply assessing general inclusive teaching practices? Results of multilevel-analyses without predictors indicate that there is a high level of variance on teachers' inclusive teaching practices on the teacher level. The variance at the student level was much smaller. This distribution of variance is contrary to results according to teachers' self-efficacy in which teachers rated their student-specific self-efficacy relatively different for each student (see Zee et al., 2016). However, whether teachers use or do not use inclusive teaching practices did not seem to pertain to students' characteristics. Therefore, it can be assumed that teachers adapt their inclusive teaching to the needs of all individual students and not to specific groups of students. This was further supported by the fact that being a student with SEN or migrant background in addition to specific gender did not predict ratings of inclusive practices use by the teachers. Moreover, years of teaching experience did not predict ratings of their student-specific inclusive teaching practices used by the teachers. Only the general rating of inclusive teaching practices appeared to predict students-specific rating of their selected teaching approaches used by their teachers. Also, other classroom factors, such as the number of students in class or the number of students with SEN or migrant backgrounds, were not related to student-specific rating tendencies by teachers.

During the course of the investigation of the overlap between teachers' student-specific ratings and students' ratings, students' ratings could not explain any significant variance within the teachers' student-specific evaluations. This means that the results of both sample ratings can be regarded as independent from each other. This needs to be highlighted as both students and teachers rated exactly the same items referring to inclusive practices. When considering the fact that students and teachers rated the same instructional approaches, a high interrater overlap was expected. In the light of the missing interrater-agreement, the questions arose as to whether students did not perceive their teachers ambition to implement differentiated and personalized instruction or if teachers did not rate their inclusive teaching practices properly according to their actual instructional approaches. Kunter and Baumert (2006) named perspective-specific validities as reason for marginal overlap between student and teacher ratings. Previous experience of both sample groups, external criteria, and personal characteristics that unconsciously resonate with the perception of the same set of inclusive teaching practices can contribute to low rating consistency.

In general, all three scales allowed an economic, concise, and rapid impression of inclusive teaching practices at different school levels. Against this background, the importance of considering all perspectives should once again be emphasized. However, with regard to variance, the question remains as what is the way in which to explain it and which variables (student-specific or class level) need to be investigated. In this context, we have concluded that we have not found the appropriate instrument for presenting predictors for the implementation of inclusive teaching practices within the sample ratings yet. In this context, a further approach with additional variables could be meaningful. With regard to personal and material resources, possible predictors could be examined. What resources are available for schools and in particular for teachers of a class? Can existing resources be used effectively and flexibly as needed? It might be beneficial to explain shares of variance with the help of such predictors. Another way to clarify variance and check the seemingly non-existent student-specific differentiation and personalization would be to include another perspective in the research project, such as external observers. Given the fact that we cannot definitely state whether the rating tendencies of students reflect the actual teaching practices of their teachers or should be seen as subjective interpretation of individuals who are influenced by diverse contexts and circumstances in different ways and to different degrees, the need for additional methods such as observations becomes clearer.

CONCLUSION

The present study was designed to examine actual inclusive teaching practices from students' and teachers' perspectives in primary schools. Because this study is one of the few research projects that takes three perspectives (students' ratings, teachers' overall rating of their inclusive practices, and teachers' student-specific ratings) into account, the present study adds important information to the present literature. Forty years after the Warnock report highlighted the necessity of inclusive teaching practices, the status quo of the two key concepts differentiation and personalization was examined within this study. This report already postulated the need for personalization and differentiation within education for the benefit of students after considering their needs. Considering descriptive data of the present study, it seems that inclusive practices are perceived as existing practices within inclusive classes in German primary schools. However, we still cannot take approaches, such as differentiation and personalization, for granted. The outcome describing no significant differences within the students' ratings as well as within the teachers' student-specific ratings regarding students' variables (such as having SEN or having migrant background) raises questions about what best practice scenarios should be included in inclusive teaching practices. Does the non-existence of group differences indicate that teachers are really aware of the fact that inclusive education in the traditional sense of the approach focuses on the individual needs of all students and has nothing to do with putting a specific student because of a single characteristic (such as having a disability) in the spotlight? Alternatively, do the results reflect the opposite, indicating that teachers treat everyone rather similarly and do not take individual needs into account? The outcomes of the study indicate that inclusive teaching practices are a complex issue and cannot simply be explained by a single student or teacher variable. Future research might look more extensively at the reasons why inclusive practices are somehow used more in one class than another. Furthermore, the results of this study indicate the necessity of using more than one method to assess inclusive teaching practices since the integration of different methods might lead to different conclusions. Including more methods, such as observations or interviews, might yield deeper insight into what is really happening in inclusive classes.

In spite of the open questions and the need for further research, the ITPS in this context is considered to be an instrument that provides the first insight into selected inclusive teaching practices, which are in this case differentiated, and personalized teaching approaches.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The participation in the study was voluntary on both an institutional and a personal level. All parents of the participants involved have given their consent to the collection and processing of the data. Participants (and parents) have the opportunity to ask questions about the project at any time. They can also withdraw their consent at any time. The ethic committee of the University of Wuppertal gave the ethical approval for the present study.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Together with the involvement of all authors, the research concern, the research questions and the interpretation and discussion were developed. K-TL was responsible for the literature research, the consolidation of all ideas and the writing of the discussion and the conclusion. GA dealt with the evaluation of the data and their interpretation and discussion. SW was responsible for data collection and significantly involved in the development of the aim, focus and discussion section of the paper. SS supported the research of literature, the development of ideas and the drafting of the results and discussion sections.

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The Role of Educational Psychologists in Fuelling the Narrative of the "Velcro TA"

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The notion of "Statementing" borne out of the recommendations of the Warnock Report (Warnock, 1978) set in motion unprecedented reforms in the use and allocation of resources, including the use of Teaching Assistants (TAs), in supporting children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). There has been a move however to question the efficacy of TAs, which has led to a number of studies into their effectiveness. Concern remains around the idea of what has colloquially become known as the "Velcro TA," and how support can provide scaffolded and independent learning. Central to the assessment process of Statements of Special Educational Needs, and current Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP), educational psychologists (EPs) have a prominent role to play in providing advice around provision and the effective use of resources. Consideration therefore needs to be made as to how EPs may contribute to the construct of the "Velcro TA." This paper explores the role of EPs in contributing to this through a consideration of how EPs discuss support through written psychological advice for Statements of SEN/EHCPs and by exploring the perspectives of school staff of how support is delivered in practice. The historical Psychological Advice of 10 pupils were analyzed using Thematic Analysis. Of these 10 pupils, interviews with members of current school staff for five of the pupils were transcribed and the data analyzed using Thematic Analysis. These interviews included five SENCOs, five Teachers, and five TAs. The results from the Thematic Analysis of the psychological advice identified that EP advice does not seem to have contributed to a notion of a Velcro TA and the theme of Independence was prominent throughout. However, analysis from both the psychological advice and the school staff interviews identified an overarching theme of Ambiguity which underpinned many of the themes, including themes of Classroom Practice, and Role of Others. The analysis from the psychological advice identified that there was often a sense of "what to do" but not necessarily "how to do it" and it appears that this Ambiguity is reflected into school staff practice.

Keywords: educational psychologist, special educational needs, EHCP, teaching assistants, psychological advice, ambiguity

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INTRODUCTION

The 1981 Education Act (Department of Education and Science, 1981), spearheaded by the Warnock Inquiry into Special Educational Needs (SEN), directly led to the statutory assessment system, and the legal requirement for Local Authorities (LAs) to have responsibility in identifying and meeting the SEN and Disabilities of children. This also resulted in a systemic and seismic change in the practice of educational psychologists (EP) as they were required to provide legally binding psychological advice as part of the LA Statutory Assessment process. For those children and young people with complex needs, the outcome of which was a legal document referred to as a Statement of SEN, and more recently as an Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP), following the implementation of the Children and Families Act (2014). The psychological advice, written by the EP, along with other advice from educational and health professionals, contributes to the overall EHCP. The EHCP is produced by the LA where the child lives, and the advice is implemented by the school, and subject to an annual review.

Resulting from these changes each school was mandated to appoint a SEN co-ordinator, with the acronym SENCO being universally used in schools. SENCOs are qualified teachers with additional responsibilities for co-ordinating support for children identified with SEND, and act as point of contact for specialist professionals such as EPs.

The role of EPs in supporting the statutory assessment process has historically identified a number of tensions and professional dilemmas, ranging from concerns as to the redefining of the EP role as a gate-keeper to resources (Farrell et al., 2006), to the suggestion that writing statutory advice reduces the time available to EPs to work in a way which EPs perceive may be more meaningful (Lyons, 1999). For example, it is suggested that many EPs espouse to work in a consultation model (Wagner, 2000) whereby the emphasis is on joint problem solving and working collaboratively with schools at an individual, group and system level. However, Crane (2016) details how despite the avowed aims of the recent Children and Families Act, there is an increasing demand for EHCP assessments, and by association an increased demand for the role of the EP in producing psychology advice. This is occurring at a time where there is a shortage of EPs in the profession (NAPEP, 2015 Educational Psychology Workforce Survey, 2015). Additionally, due to current constrained financial conditions of many LAs the practice of many EPs is currently to focus more on statutory work, rather than preventative consultative work (Lee and Woods, 2017). This too, encourages schools to view the EP as a "gate-keeper" whereby involvement of the EP can lead to a school accessing additional funding and resources, rather than making use of EP skills to develop action plans and interventions for children.

Whilst there are tensions arising in EPs related to their role in providing psychological advice, it remains a pivotal role of an EP. Arguably, given their training and expertise in assessing the SEN of children and young people, it is an effective use of their skillset that they should have a prominent role in describing to others, both what special education needs a child or young person may have, and the provision needed to overcome those needs. However, it is suggested that a creative and innovative approach is needed to make psychological advice meaningful and purposeful for others (Cameron and Monsen, 2005). In an attempt to support EPs with writing psychological advice, recent guidelines from the British Psychological Society set out six components required within psychological advice including the need to describe strengths and areas of need; provide the child's views; synthesize a range of information and express it clearly; provide a psychological formulation; contribute to outcomes; and provide advice on provision (British Psychological Society Division of Educational Child Psychologists, 2015).

In recent decades, the number of children identified with SEND attending mainstream schools has increased (Thomas and Vaughan, 2004). As a consequence of greater numbers of children with SEN attending mainstream schools, there has been a significant increase in the number of non-teaching support staff, or teaching assistants (TAs) employed by schools. The Plowden Report (1967), argued for an increase in adult/child ratio in schools; prior to this support staff were in less than a quarter of schools.

Thomas (1992) shows how initial increases of support staff into the 1980s stemmed from informal recruitment, which was often parents who wanted to help in the classroom. However, TAs soon became part of the school staff, taking on additional and significant responsibilities including providing support for children with SEN. Following the election of the Labor government in 1997, and the inclusion of children with SEN has been a key factor in raising the number of TAs.

Since 2000, the number of TAs employed in England has increased significantly. School workforce figures from 2015 detail that there are over 255,000 TAs currently employed in English schools, accounting for around 27% of school staff, which rises in primary schools (Department for Education, 2015). The associated costs of TAs is now over of £3 billion, around a third of what is spent on qualified teachers (Department for Education, 2015). Giangreco and Doyle (2007) show how the increasing use of TAs is common in many other education systems across the world, but the UK has gone further than any other country in the deployment of TAs (Webster and Blatchford, 2014).

Howes et al. (2003) led an analysis of large-scale statistical studies into the impact of TAs in supporting the learning and participation of children with SEN; finding little or no evidence that the TAs had positive impact on raising pupil attainment. Blatchford et al. (2012) report a reliance from headteachers for the implementation of inclusive practice in classrooms, though there is much ambiguity around the role of TAs in pedagogy. The work of Balshaw and Farrell (2002) into small-scale, qualitative studies found positive anecdotal evidence around learning and participation which suggest that relationships between types of support was of vital importance.

Within this study the term pedagogy is understood to move beyond the definitions of primary associations with teaching, but to include the thinking and practice of those involved in education. Fundamentally concerning changing ourselves and the world we live in Brühlmeier (2010).

Blatchford et al. (2012) suggested that there was a lack of studies into the use of TAs under regular classroom conditions.

This led to a 5-years UK government funded study, the Deployment and Impact of Support Staff (DISS) (Blatchford et al., 2009). The findings of this study were perhaps initially counter-intuitive as it showed that pupils receiving the most support, actually made less progress.

The DISS project argues that there are systemic factors in which TAs work that contribute to this. The project details how the work of TAs is mainly focused upon lower attaining pupils with SEN, with TAs often effectively acting as the primary educators for pupils with SEN. This supports the argument put forward by Giangreco et al. (2005) that the least able pupils receive less support from qualified teaching staff. Blatchford et al. (2009) argue that the pupils with the greatest learning needs in our schools receive alternative support from TAs. TAs may lack the opportunities to communicate and plan the tasks that are given to them by teachers. The DISS Project showed that the practice of TAs was less academically demanding of pupils and overtly task focused; rather than focusing on learning, and the interactions between them often closed down discussions about the learning content (Blatchford et al., 2012).

This is of great importance to the practice of EPs, particularly with respect to the nature of interaction between TA and pupil. There is a key role for educational psychologists in the development of interventions based upon Social Development Theory of Vygotsky (1978), and the zone of proximal development (ZPD). Vygotsky demonstrated that the ZPD is the point at which a pupil can perform a task under supervision, and the ability for them to be able to work independently. This, Vygotsky shows, is where learning takes place. EPs often refer to "scaffolding" when describing this in practice. Here a teacher provides support, but decreases this as competence increases. Blatchford et al. (2012) research would suggest that a decrease in the amount of support provided is not always happening with regards the practice of TAs.

Given the history of inclusive practice in UK education over recent decades, there is a contention of the role of the EP and the extent to which the practice of producing statutory psychological advice may have contributed to a potentially defined construct of the "Velcro-model," whereby TAs are attached to provide support to one particular pupil, which may, as outlined above prove to be ineffective as an approach to developing learning and independent thinking. The terminology developed following the definition of the fabric fastener of the same name. If practice perpetuates dependence on a TA for pupils with SEND by continually supporting their learning, and by TAs not operating under a scaffolded approach then practice is not enabling or allowing successful pedagogic practice to develop.

The role that the EP has in this is fundamentally unclear. There is a need to identify the extent to which EPs identify and specify adult support when writing psychological advice. It may be that EPs are unclear in specifying the teaching skills, training, or experience needed by teaching and ancillary staff in meeting the learning and developmental needs of children. It is also unclear to what extent EPs are clear in their own advice if they specify differences in teaching and support approach that is needed from different levels of school staff, and the extent to which EPs differentiate between the role of the teacher and the TA.

As Lewis and Norwich (2001) state, teachers try, and differentiate their approaches to teaching according to their own perceptions of broad pupil ability. Lewis and Norwich (2001) suggest that such strategies cannot be assumed to be representing a common or specific SEN strategy, and indeed the diagnostic label that may be assigned to a pupil clearly may not actually reflect the full range of difficulties and needs that a pupil may have, or require support with; there are questions therefore around the extent to which the actual advice that EPs produce is actually then reflected into school teaching and pedagogy.

There are, therefore, many questions around the role of the EP and their psychological advice particularly in terms of how specific approaches to meeting SEND that are recommended in advice, and whether this is actually replicated in practice. This leads to following research questions, which will be addressed in the present study -

- In what ways do EPs discuss adult support in psychological advice and how is this reflected in school pedagogy?
- In what ways do EPs identify specific training or skills which adults should have to support the pupil and how is this reflected in school pedagogy?
- In what ways do EPs differentiate between support from teachers and support from other adults and how is this reflected in school pedagogy?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative approach taking data from the written psychological advice of 10 Years 9 pupils, and semi-structured interviews with school staff responsible for five of those pupils. The study was undertaken in a large Shire county in the East of England, United Kingdom (UK). The pupils attended schools within two different LAs. The study is exploratory in nature and the results reflect the context in which the study was undertaken, and interpreting the experiences of those involved.

Pupils

Ten pupils were selected from a larger UK based research project, the SEN in Secondary Education (SENSE) study (Webster and Blatchford, 2017). The SENSE study was a longitudinal study exploring the experiences of children and young people with Statements of SEN during Year 9 of their schooling. Participants had all previously taken part in the Making A Statement (MAST) project (Webster, 2013) when they were in Year 5. Written informed consent to take part in the study was obtained from all parents and pupils where applicable.

Participants had a Statement of (SEN) when they were in Year 5, and were in the process of converting to an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP). A Statement/EHCP in the UK is a legal document outlining the additional educational support and resources that a child or young person may require in relation to their SEND. There was a range of Special Educational Need represented in the sample including Moderate Learning Difficulty (MLD), Speech, Language and Communication Needs

(SLCN), Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulty (PMLD), Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH), and Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC). The profiles of these pupils are illustrated in **Table 1**.

Interview Participants

For each of the 10 pupil participants, interviews with members of their current school staff workforce were conducted as part of the SENSE research. The interview participants included the SEN Coordinator (SENCO) ($N = 5$), a core subject (for example, English, Maths, or Science) Teacher ($N = 5$), and a Teaching Assistant ($N = 5$), for each pupil participant. This study only considered interviews with the aforementioned personnel and did not consider interviews with the pupils themselves. For the purposes of data analysis, only interviews relating to the key members of staff for five of the pupils were analyzed, which were selected at random. The pupils selected were those with IDs 1, 3, 4, 8, and 10, and who all attended Mainstream Secondary Schools. Whilst analysis of all of the interviews would have given greater insights, this was not possible due to research constraints at the time this study took place.

Data Collection–Historical Psychological Advice

The historical statutory psychological advice of the 10 pupils were obtained from the Local Authority responsible for maintaining the EHCP / Statement. Psychological advice written as part of a child's statutory assessment broadly covers a number of sections including Developmental History, Assessment and Identification of SEN, Outcomes and Provision. For the purposes of this research, analysis was carried out on the Provision section only of the Psychological Advice. This focused on the recommendations made by the EP as to the provision an educational setting would need to provide to allow the child or young person to achieve the identified educational outcomes. All advices were written by experienced Educational Psychologists employed within the same Local Authority.

TABLE 1 | Profiles of the pupil participants.

ID	Gender	Area of need*	Year 9 provision	Date of psychological advice
1	M	MLD	Mainstream Secondary	2010
2	M	MLD	Local Area Special School	2007
3	F	MLD	Mainstream Secondary	2008
4	M	MLD	Mainstream Secondary	2006
5	M	SLCN & MLD	Mainstream Secondary	2009
6	F	PMLD	Local Area Special School	2013
7	M	SLCN	SLCN / ASC specialist provision	2006
8	F	PMLD	Mainstream Secondary	2006
9	M	SEMH	Mainstream Secondary	2010
10	M	ASC	Mainstream Secondary	2011

**Primary area of need as indicated on the Statement / Education, Health and Care Plan.*

Data Collection–Semi-structured Interviews

The interviews with the key members of staff were conducted and recorded in the adult's school following a semi-structured interview schedule. This schedule was pre-specified by the SENSE study (Webster and Blatchford, 2017) and were based on the interview schedule from the MAST project (Webster, 2013), with additional questions related to the SEND reforms. The questions were related to the needs of pupils with Statements/EHCPs and the provision in place for them. The same questions were put to all interviewees in all settings and role specific questions were asked in line with the teachers, TAs and SENCOs, respective positions and responsibilities. The interview schedule was organized into six sections broadly covering the areas of Locations, The Role of Adults, Curriculum and Provision, Transferring from a Statement to an EHCP, Transitions and Impact. The interview schedule included 17 questions, and is reproduced in **Appendix 1**: Interview Schedules. The interviews lasted ∼15–30 min and following the interviews, the recordings were transcribed.

Data Analysis

The Provision section of all 10 psychological advices and the 15 interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis. A rigorous approach to the thematic analysis was followed, as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006), whereby five distinct steps were completed (familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, the search for themes, review of themes, then finally the defining and naming of themes).

The integrity and rigor of these elements of the research were aided by a number of appropriate measures, including all the interviews being carried out by the researchers, the interview schedules being used in all interviews to ensure the same areas were broadly covered by each participant and that the recordings were all transcribed by the researchers. Further, the integrity of the research was aided by the triangulation of participant responses whereby the same information was sought from different sources. Additionally, a peer reviewer was asked to verify both coding processes to determine the accuracy of the coding systems, and regular collaboration ensured scrutiny of codes and themes.

RESULTS

From the thematic analysis of both the psychological advice and school staff interviews, there were five overarching themes identified what are illustrated in **Figure 1**.

Each of these themes were composed of a number of subthemes, identified via the thematic analysis. The full thematic map can be viewed in **Appendix 2**: Thematic Map. An overview of the overarching themes is given below.

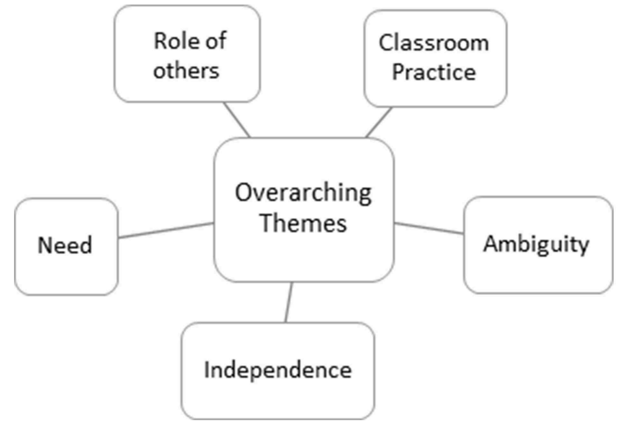

FIGURE 1 | Overarching Themes.

Role of Others

The overarching theme of "Role of Others" included subthemes of "TA Support," "Teacher Responsibility," and "Wider Support Network," and considered the role others play in supporting children and young people with SEND. In particular the role of other adults within the classroom was a prominent subtheme giving consideration to the wide range of additional support, both academic and emotional, which an additional adult may provide.

Classroom Practice

A wide range of subthemes encompassed the "Classroom Practice" overarching theme and included the range of strategies and approaches that may be found within the classroom and used by teachers or other adults. For example, subthemes such as "Differentiation," "Overlearning," "Intervention," and "Scaffolding" were included alongside more specific-themed approaches such as "Feedback and Monitoring," "Equipment," and "Questioning."

Need

Within the overarching theme of "Need," subthemes related to the nature of the child's SEND and how this was reflected, for example in advice or within learning, were included. Subthemes including "Identification of Need," "Evolving Need," and "Personalized to Need" considered the fluidity of need and the response to this.

Independence

The overarching theme of "Independence" reflected the subthemes related to promoting and supporting independence in children and young people with SEND. It included the subthemes "Reducing Support," "Promoting Independence," and "Preparedness" which considered ways in which others supported independence in children and young people with SEND, and also included subthemes related to how children and young people may develop independence such as the subthemes of "Self-monitoring" and "Self-regulation."

Ambiguity

The overarching theme of "Ambiguity" considered the aspects of support which could have resulted in difficulties with interpreting meaning and cause uncertainty, and where content appeared vague and lacked clarity. This included subthemes of "What but not how," "Ambiguous Terms," and "Presumed Knowledge" which was concerned with elements of practice where an implicit understanding of SEND and approaches to supporting SEND was implied. The subthemes of "Unspecified Activities" and "Role of Unspecified Adult" considered information where it was not clear who, for example teacher or TA, should be providing support, or what specifically they should be undertaking.

In What Ways Do EPs Discuss Adult Support in Psychological Advice and How Is This Reflected in School Pedagogy?

Three overarching themes and several subthemes were identified as contributing to the EP construct of adult support and how this is reflected in school pedagogy. This included the overarching themes of "Independence," "Need," and "Classroom Practice." **Figure 2** illustrates the overarching themes and subthemes.

Within the psychological advice, there was an emphasis on the overarching theme of Independence and particularly the subthemes of "Promoting Independence" and "Reducing Support." EPs would describe the necessity of children and young people having opportunities to work independently of adult support, and suggest ways of developing skills to reduce reliance on support. For example, psychological advice indicated cases where pupils should be required to complete work on their own (for example, within the Advice for Pupil 8); further, the Advice for Pupil 5 illustrated:

> "[Pupil] should be encouraged to do tasks where he has the prerequisite skills independently to avoid him becoming dependent on support" (Advice for Pupil 5)

Whilst independence was seen as important, it also appeared that there was recognition that there needed to be a balance between ensuring that children and young people had the support available when required, alongside opportunities to work independently of adult support as described within the Advice for Pupil 1:

> "[Pupil] will need support for many activities but needs to do some of work, other than craft activities, independently" (Advice for Pupil 1)

Alongside the overarching theme of "Independence," the overarching theme of "Classroom Practice" and subtheme of "Differentiation" appeared to contribute to the construct of adult support, and the role of independence continued to be prominent. In particular, there appeared to be an emphasis on differentiation within the classroom and the role this would play in supporting independence. For example, within the Advice for Pupil 3, it was discussed how:

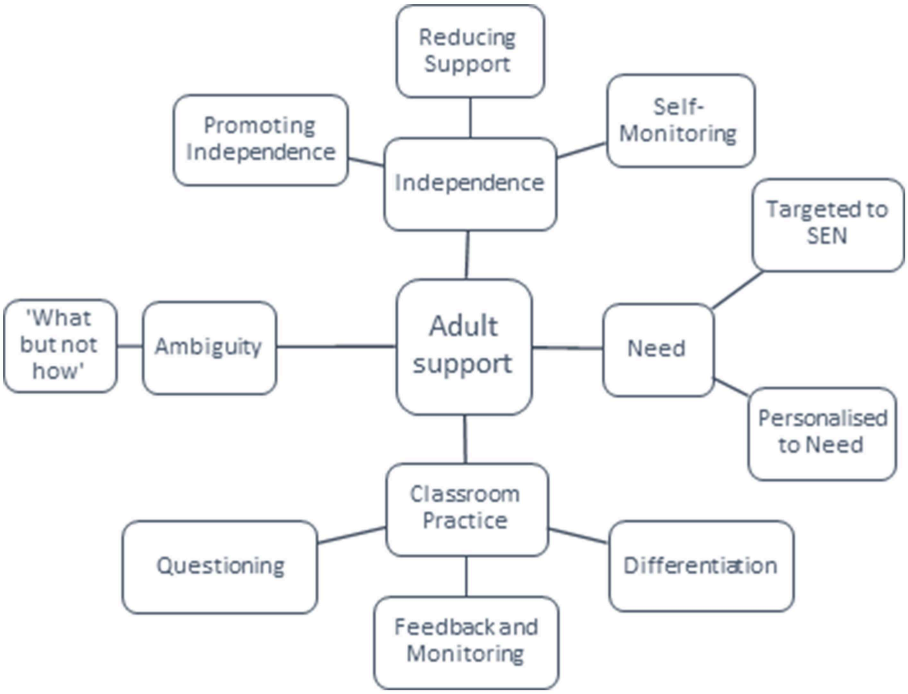

FIGURE 2 | Themes related to adult support.

> "…enable her to work with differentiated materials / tasks in lessons without the need for adult support" (Advice for Pupil 3)

Alongside the role that differentiation could play in supporting independence, it was also identified how differentiation may allow for children to access their learning in alternative ways, for example within the Advice for Pupil 6:

> "adults should provide opportunities to express her ideas in a variety of ways other than spoken responses e.g., drawing, story boards, photographs" (Advice for Pupil 6)

Throughout the psychological advice, it appeared that the EP construct of adult support was in the context of promoting independence and utilizing adults to support children and young people with this. However, it was noteworthy that whilst the overarching theme of "Independence" was a prominent theme throughout the psychological advice, this theme appeared to have less prevalence within the school staff interviews. Within the school staff interviews, when considering adult support, the overarching theme of "Classroom Practice" appeared to be of most relevance, with several subthemes contributing to how adult support appeared to be viewed. In particular, within school staff interviews, there appeared to be an emphasis on identified strategies and approaches that adults may use as a means of supporting pupils to access learning tasks. This included approaches which were described within the subthemes "Questioning" and "Feedback and Monitoring" and included techniques such as highlighting key information and checking understandings. Further, the SENCO for Pupil 4 described how:

> "I think a lot of it is around reiterating instructions or re-explaining things, sometimes she will, for a large piece of work, act as a scribe" (SENCO; Pupil 4)

Similarly, the subtheme of "Differentiation" appeared frequently within the school staff interviews however, there appeared a sense of adults being the *means* of differentiation, rather than having access to differentiated tasks. For example, the Science Teacher for Pupil 3, when discussing differentiation, suggested:

> "Mainly breaking things down into smaller chunks for her to process each activity. I try and keep things fairly short anyway" (Science Teacher; Pupil 3)

This appeared to be a view shared by others, for example:

> "to be able to take the teacher instructions and break them down if they haven't been broken down sufficiently already, break them down further, tailoring it to the child, and also sort of prompting the thinking" (Teaching Assistant; Pupil 4)

Further, whilst the subtheme of "Differentiation" appeared frequently in the psychological advice with reference to differentiated tasks and activities, there appeared to be a view within the school staff interviews that this was not something that children and young people with SEND necessarily needed. For example, within the school staff interviews, the SENCO for Pupil 10 described how:

> "The streaming of the groups allows it that he accesses the same lesson material as the rest of the group. He doesn't require drastic differentiation" (SENCO; Pupil 10)

Similarly, the English Teacher for Pupil 1 identified the perspective that the groups children and young people learnt in, provided opportunity to access learning without additional differentiation such as:

> "I don't necessarily have to differentiate completely for [Pupil] but I think he makes use of the differentiation that I've put in place for several students in there" (English Teacher; Pupil 1)

This was also identified by the Science Teacher for Pupil 3, who considered that:

> "I think just based with her peers in that particular class; they are weak anyway" (Science Teacher; Pupil 3)

With the above in mind, it is perhaps noteworthy that the overarching theme of "Ambiguity" and the subtheme "What but not how" encapsulated the lack of clarity that appeared to be present within psychological advice, particularly in relation to the implementation of the advice. For example, the Advice for Pupil 6 identifies the need to:

> "consider opportunities for [Pupil] to learn and apply knowledge, skills and abilities in a way which leads to healthy independence" (Advice for Pupil 6)

The advice also makes the suggestion to "make explicit the thinking skills she needs to become more independent," where the advice presumes knowledge within practitioners that may not be present.

Overall, it appeared that within EP psychological advice, adult support was presented as support that allowed children and young people with SEND to access learning independently, and that this was achieved through both the adult availability and through the differentiation of activities and materials. However, within school pedagogy, the school staff interviews appeared to emphasize adult support as being the means of differentiation which allowed children and young people with SEND to access the learning alongside others.

In What Ways Do EPs Identify Specific Training or Skills Which Adults Should Have to Support Pupils and How Is This Reflected in School Pedagogy?

Two overarching themes appeared to contribute to the discussion of specific training or skills which adults may need including the overarching themes of "Ambiguity" and "Role of Others." **Figure 3** illustrates this.

Within the psychological advices there was little narrative or themes identified related to the specific training or skills which adults should have and it is noteworthy that the most prominent theme was that of Ambiguity. The subthemes of "Presumed Knowledge" and "What but not how" provided further insight into how confusion may arise when considering how psychological advice should be implemented. For example, the subtheme "What but not how" was prevalent within the psychological advice and there were frequent references to approaches and strategies which may be suitable to supporting children and young people with SEND, however it was unclear as to how these approaches may be implemented by a school or setting. For example, within the Advice for Pupil 7:

> "A programme of work at school should include activities to develop x's phonological skills as well as his weak vocabulary and his weak auditory memory" (Advice for Pupil 7)

A similar example can be found within the Advice for Pupil 6, which suggests practitioners should:

> "focus on instructional/curriculum/educational language to develop her second language abilities" (Advice for Pupil 6)

Furthermore, the subtheme "Presumed Knowledge" considered how within psychological advice there often appeared a sense that schools or settings would already have the knowledge and understanding necessary to implement the support, as illustrated in the Advice for Pupil 9:

"to develop [Pupil]'s word attack skills... this would be best achieved with an intensive structured approach with frequent (at least daily) opportunities and consolidation" (Advice for Pupil 9)

Within the same Advice, it was suggested that "[Pupil] would benefit from an approach based on the principles of distributed practice, interleaved learning..." Arguably these may be approaches that not all school staff would be familiar with, however as this knowledge was presumed to exist there was little guidance given as to implementation steps.

Similarly, within the school staff interviews, the overarching theme of "Ambiguity" and the subtheme of "Presumed Knowledge" contributed to how training did not always appear to be focused or well defined, and appeared to be applied in differing ways. For example, within the school staff interviews, there appeared to be a view that training was offered, however not consistently to those who would be supporting children and young people with SEND, and where it was, it was not necessarily for specific pupils or categories of SEND. The SENCO for Pupil 4 illustrated this and described how:

> "none for him [pupil] specifically... [training dates] are mainly around teaching and learning and we've not had SEN specific modules within them" (SENCO; Pupil 4)

This view appeared to be shared by teachers at other schools where there was a sense that whilst training was available it was not necessarily around SEND:

> "We've had training around the use of TAs in the classroom, I wouldn't say I've had specific training" (Science Teacher; Pupil 3)

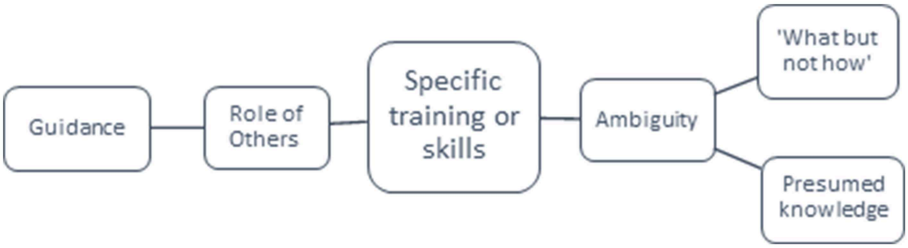

FIGURE 3 | Themes related to specific training or skills.

It was noteworthy that there appeared a sense throughout the interviews that SEND training did appear to be offered however it was on a more informal basis, as reflected in the subtheme "Guidance." For example, participants described instances of sharing ideas amongst themselves and providing guidance to others. It was noted within the TA interview for Pupil 1 that there were often "corridor conversations" and the maths teacher for Pupil 10 described how, "no training, but guidance yes." There was also a sense that when training was offered, TAs were more likely to access it than the teachers as illustrated by the SENCO for Pupil 3 who described how:

> "I've taken them through the new SEND Code of Practice. I produced booklets and gave them links…they've had autism workshops, dyslexia workshops, behavior workshops, but it was voluntary…it was all the TAs but only some teachers wanted to do it" (SENCO; Pupil 3)

It would appear that despite the role of psychological advice in providing specific information on how to support children and young people with SEND, there is a gap in how knowledge is transmitted to school staff to support them with implementing this.

In What Ways Do EPs Differentiate Between Support From Teachers and Support From Other Adults and How Is This Reflected in School Pedagogy?

The overarching theme of "Role of others" contributed to how adult support was differentiated by EPs and school pedagogy, which was composed of the subthemes "TA Support," "Social and Emotional Support," and "Teacher Responsibility." In addition to this, the overarching theme "Ambiguity" was also identified, along with its subtheme "Unspecified adult support." These are illustrated in **Figure 4**.

Throughout the psychological advice the overarching theme of "Role of Others" and subtheme of "Teacher Responsibility" was prominent. It appeared that EPs emphasized the role of teachers and the need for teachers to be providing support to children and young people with SEND. There were frequent references to approaches which should be carried out specifically by the teacher, this included teachers using specific materials and techniques and being explicit about the teachers' role, as advice for Pupil 2 suggest that the pupil should "begin tasks immediately with physical support from the teacher."

Similarly, within the school staff interviews, the subtheme of "Teacher responsibility" appeared to have prevalence with an emphasis on the teacher being responsible for the teaching and progress of children with SEND. Indeed, throughout the interviews, teachers, SENCOs and TAs explicitly described the responsibility of the teacher. For example,

> "The teacher and head of faculty is directly responsible for the SEN student's progress, whether or not the TA is there" (Maths Teacher; Pupil 10)

And similarly, it was discussed how it was the teacher, rather than the TA, who would take responsibility, as illustrated by the English Teacher for Pupil 4:

> "They [teachers] are not necessarily going to see a TA…they come in prepared to take ownership of the child" (English Teacher; Pupil 4)

However, whilst there was a differentiation made between the responsibility of the teacher and that of the TA, there appeared less explicit emphasis on the differences between who was providing support. For example, the overarching theme of "Ambiguity" and the sub-theme of "Unspecified Adult Support" contributed to how within psychological advice, the role of who it was to provide support was often referred to as "adult support" implying any additional adult. There were frequent references made to additional adult support being needed, and how adults may need to support with the delivery of programmes however throughout the psychological advices, less explicit emphasis appeared to be placed on support specifically from a TA. This view appeared to be shared somewhat within the school staff interviews and the TA for Pupil 5 described how:

> "The teacher and I are fairly interchangeable in terms of support so if she's working with [Pupil] I'll go and support another student in the class" (TA; Pupil 5)

Moreover, whilst within the psychological advice a number of approaches and strategies for supporting learning were identified, the subtheme of "Social and Emotional Support" appeared to be particularly prominent within the school staff interviews.

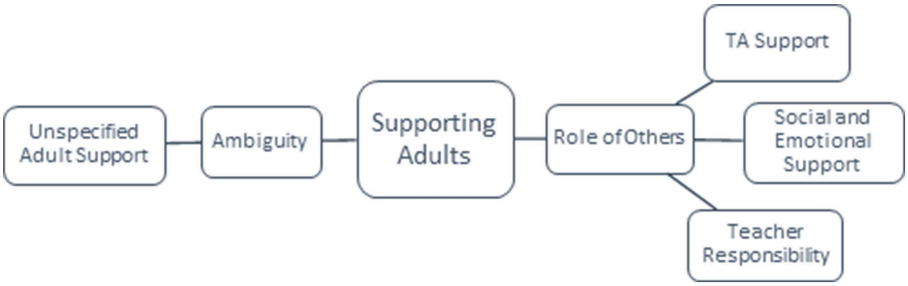

FIGURE 4 | Themes related to adult support.

For example, it was described how support, and specifically TA support, promoted the development of a child and young person's social and emotional skills. This is illustrated by the SENCO for Pupil 2, who described how:

> "Confidence in having an adult with him has had a significant impact on his feelings of security to take risks" (SENCO; Pupil 2)

Overall, it therefore appears that reflected in both the psychological advice and school staff interviews there is an emphasis on teacher responsibility, however there appears differences in the themes of who is providing support, with the school staff interviews providing an insight into a more identifiable role for TAs, in contrast to the psychological advice whereby the role of an additional adult appears somewhat nebulous.

DISCUSSION

The current study has identified a number of insights into the role of EP psychological advice in contributing to constructs of adult support within schools. There was an emphasis within the advice on either a Teacher or additional adult providing support, and despite the psychological advices being written at a time when the Statements included a number of "TA hours," EPs did not presume nor suggest that this support should be delivered by a TA. Further, it is promising that overall the analysis of the psychological advice focuses on developing independent learners.

There was a prominent theme throughout the advice that support should primarily be focused for those times when a child or young person is not able to independently access the learning or task. It was generally suggested that this could be achieved through the role of differentiation which was applied at a number of levels, including differentiation by task and resources. Indeed, there was noticeable, but in some ways not unexpected, inclusion of a range of modifications, strategies, interventions and approaches to teaching and learning that aimed to help children and young people overcome barriers to learning. Indeed, overcoming the barriers to learning is a key objective of an EP, particularly when viewed within the context of inclusive education. Since the adoption of the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) there has been an international drive toward inclusion [for example, within South Africa (Engelbrecht, 2004), New Zealand (Selvaraj, 2015) and the UK (Farrell, 2004)]. Within England, EPs have long contributed to the Inclusion agenda through their involvement with policy guidance and strategy advice at a national and county level, and through the role EPs have held in developing school policies on inclusion (Farrell, 2006). In addition to that, EPs have also had a role in the development of an Inclusion Index (Booth et al., 2002) which aimed to develop more inclusive practices. However, debates continue as to the definition of inclusion and notably the achievability of inclusion in school. For example, it been argued that inclusion is "idealistic" (Evans and Lunt, 2002) and that there are a number of barriers associated with inclusion including understanding which factors that lead to inclusive processes, along with a lack of empirical evidence related to this (Göransson and Nilholm, 2014); there is also a lack of understanding as to the actual effectiveness of inclusion on academic outcomes (Lindsay, 2007). Indeed Glazzard (2014) offers a cautionary note to inclusion arguing that doing so can bring risks to children when they are faced with inappropriate curriculums.

Whilst there are a number of positive findings from an EP perspective, the findings raise a number of questions in relation to how support is reflected in school teaching practice and wider pedagogy. In particular, the analysis from the school staff interviews identified that within the schools, adult support was described more so in terms of TA support, with the primary form of differentiation being one of differentiation by TA. Approaches such as this appear to be common practice within UK schools, yet one could argue as to the effectiveness of this in ensuring children and young people with SEND make progress (Webster et al., 2010). It was noticeable that the theme "Ambiguity" appeared to underpin many of the ideas arising. For example, when considering both the role of adult support, training and the differentiation between different teacher and TA roles, it was somewhat surprising that there appeared a lack of clarity and specificity about how to achieve some of the suggested provision, and very little consideration appeared to be given within psychological advice as to the skill set or training that might be needed for adults to effectively carry out these roles. It is unclear as to whether there is a gap between what EPs suggest as part of their psychological advice and how this is implemented by schools, and also whether Ambiguity may be contributing to this potential gap.

A Case for Ambiguity?

One could argue that Ambiguity contained within psychological advice may be an inevitable result of the positioning of EPs in relation to the process of writing psychological advice for statutory assessment purposes. In particular, as EPs are employed or commissioned by the LA to produce advice; it is suggested that this can cause tensions in the recommendations made to support provision. For example, historically, government guidelines have encouraged EPs to focus their advice on identifying children and young people's SEN, rather than on how to meet those needs (Department of Education and Science, 1983, 1989) However, LAs with their statutory responsibility to meet the provision identified within a Statement/EHCP seek the advice of their EP colleagues as to the provision needed. Crucially, this often has to be achieved within a context of finite financial resources and can arguably result in a professional conflict between an EP and their LA employers leading to what some suggest as a "hidden agenda" within psychologist advice and the recommendations for provision made (Galloway et al., 2013). It could be suggested that the theme of ambiguity reflects an unintentional constraint that EPs may feel when contributing advice about provision.

A further suggestion could be that EPs do not clearly, sufficiently and accurately describe teaching practices and approaches necessary for effective SEND provision due to a lack of evidence-based approaches for meeting the needs of children and young people with SEND (Rix et al., 2009). For example, it is challenging to specify an approach if there is little evidence to justify specific pedagogies for different categories of SEND (Lewis and Norwich, 2001). Similarly, challenges arise in specifying the most effective ways of transmitting knowledge from EPs to school staff. For example, whilst there is evidence of school staff identifying the need for more training in a range of SEND [(Avramidis et al., 2000; Symes and Humphrey, 2011); for example, (Dockrell et al., 2017)], and a call for more training related to SEND to be included within Initial Teacher Training (Carter, 2015), empirical evidence as to the most effective way of ensuring that training impacts on improved outcomes for children and young people with SEND is still emerging, with evidence into effective professional development for teachers incorporating a more multi-faceted and on-going approach to professional development (Cordingley et al., 2015).

Whilst it may be that ambiguity is an inherent part of EP psychological advice, the reality of a recession and government funding cuts have resulted in an imperative to ensure that schools are equipped with specific and well-founded evidenced based approaches in order to meet the needs of the growing population of children and young people with SEND (Department for Education, 2018). It is therefore imperative that EPs utilize their unique positioning, and within psychological advice, highlight the resources and practices necessary in order to support schools to ensure children with SEN can be met, and that guidance in the advice is understandable and implementable by school staff to meet the diverse needs of children. EPs arguably need to do more within psychological advice in order to make this substantial part of their work more meaningful and specific for others. The following four statements are proposed as a means to assist in achieving this:

The Role of How EPs Contribute to the Statutory Assessment Process Needs Reframing or Rethinking

Firstly, it is important to identify and emphasize that EPs work within a complex system which is heavily influenced by the socio-political context (Lee and Woods, 2017) and the 2014 SEND reforms had a number of implications for EPs. Most notably, an increase in statutory assessments at a time when there is a shortage in EPs across England (Lyonette et al., 2019). It is argued that one of the drivers of the shortage was an increase in statutory assessment–work which could be perceived as repetitive and stressful (Lyonette et al., 2019) resonating with previous concerns related to the value EPs place on writing psychological advice for statutory purposes (Cameron and Monsen, 2005; Buck, 2015). However, in order to retain staff and support motivation, it is suggested that Educational Psychology Services (EPSs) often try to provide EPs with a varied "diet" of work including preventative work, inclusion in local initiatives, individual assessment and consultation, and group work, alongside statutory assessment. In order for this to be achieved, often a short-term solution is needed to meet the demand of statutory assessments in an equitable way (Marsh and Higgins, 2018). It is suggested that EPSs are faced with a dilemma of relying on EPs within the service to focus on statutory assessments, at the expense of other work, or employing costly locums or agency staff to complete the statutory assessments. This arguably creates a dilemma that statutory assessment is seen as undesirable work if taken by the EP, or is seen as less valuable if it can be taken on as a discrete piece of locum work. Further, findings from the Local Area inspections (Care Quality Commission and Ofsted, 2017) identified that the statutory assessment process was not working in well-enough in over two thirds of LAs inspected on their SEND processes. It is therefore argued that radical rethink is needed to ensure that EPs continue to value this core function of educational psychology practice.

Within Psychological Advice There Is a Necessity to Embed Provision Within the Identification of Strengths and Areas of Need

Educational Psychologists are applied psychologists with the core function of applying their extensive knowledge and expertise of child development and psychological frameworks. It is this which provides a unique contribution to the statutory assessment process and, as previous government guidelines have suggested, arguably where an EP's focus should be. Whilst there are no statutory defined structures to psychological advice, a number of sections to be included are suggested (Cameron and Monsen, 2005; for example, Department for Education (Ofsted), 2014; Care Quality Commission and Ofsted, 2017) which has inadvertently contributed to a compartmentalized approach to the advice. Such an approach may be useful when taking a broad perspective, for example when analyzing a range of reports in research or when professionals within a system are focusing on broad areas to support with decision making. However, when considering a report for an individual child or young person, solely focusing on an individual section can mean that a more holistic view of the child or young person and the assessment informing the recommendations within the report may be overlooked. Indeed, Buck (2015) suggests that a section-led EP report can result in a "recommendations" section that is narrow in scope and lacking psychological content. Additionally, Cameron and Monsen (2005) found higher quality psychological advices were those where the recommendations were closely connected to the assessment results. Arguably, in order to ensure that recommendations are pertinent to the needs of the individual child or young person, they should be explicitly related to and embedded within an individuals' strengths and areas of need, as identified through the assessment process; these recommendations should be seen as an extension to identifying approaches to learning, and should draw on the individual's strengths. This would shift the EP focus from one of a gate-keeper of resources, to one which allows the EP to evidence and apply their psychological thinking, overcoming criticisms that psychological advice contains little psychology (Norwich, 2000; Imich, 2013). It is important to highlight that psychological advice is one piece of advice sought and other professional reports should contribute to the final EHCP and provision identified; it should not be assumed, nor expected, that EPs provide an exhaustive and exclusive list of recommendations.

EPs Need to Consider Recommendations Through a More Critical Lens

Work practice guidelines for UK-based EPs are not prescriptive in terms of a particular psychological theoretical perspective. It is the EP themselves that decides upon which theories and interventions could be used to support the recommendations within their advice. Therefore, there is a need for EPs to engage in constant critical thinking around their practice and to challenge this thinking with constant engagement in ongoing professional development. For example, one argument within current thinking of inclusion suggest a shift from identifying teaching practices and resources which are additional and different from others, to an approach whereby the emphasis is on extending what is generally available to everyone (Florian and Black-Hawkins, 2011). Whilst, within this, there continues to be a role for approaches that can be modified to overcome SEND it raises the question as to how specific recommendations need to be made and whether there should be a standard core set of practices and pedagogy which could be assumed. Arguably, such questions and suggestions can only be explored through critical reflection on practice and engagement with theoretical frameworks.

There are challenges in transferring evidence based practices into real world contexts (Kelly, 2012), and the often "gold standard" of evidence, randomized controlled tests (RCT), are not particularly suited to less controlled conditions such as education (Norwich, 2014). However, it is imperative that EPs aim to overcome these challenges and make explicit the evidence they are drawing upon which informs their recommendations. For example, a range of evidence exists which EPs can utilize including practice evaluation systems (Dunsmuir et al., 2009), single subject research (Horner et al., 2005), an individual's response to interventions (Fuchs, 2003), databases of effective interventions indexed on a needs basis (Law et al., 2015), and EPs skills in synthesizing and evaluating research (Fallon et al., 2010). In particular, there continues to be a growing evidence base related to the role of adult support in schools and there are specific recommendations EPs could make within their psychological advice as to ways of structuring support (Webster et al., 2016). When using research to inform advice, it is important that EPs make this clear, and present the evidence on which their recommendation is based. Fox (2003) emphasizes this, but also warns that EPs may choose to solely present the evidence that supports their recommendation. Whilst it is possible that this could occur, it is suggested that were EPs to engage in critical reflection they could become aware of this occurring, and of how their prior experience may be influencing their recommendations.

A Systems Wide Approach Is Required to Reduce the Gap Between Interpretation and Implementation of Psychological Advice

Consultation in EP practice has developed significantly since the 1990s. Nolan and Moreland (2014) describe utilizing a systemic approach of exploration in order to develop a shared understanding of open dialogue, and collaborative working, which could shape EP practice. Ecological theories reflect an approach included in current UK legislative frameworks regarding SEN. The SEND Code of Practice (Department for Education and Department of Health, 2015) encourages such an approach to take account of the many complex factors and differing contexts that may influence children's development. EPs should be encouraged to adopt an interactionist perspective when producing psychological advice, viewing SEN needs as a result of situational factors, and the cultural or socio-political context (Cunningham, 2016).

Moreover, such an approach considers the EP input within the context of co-constructing solutions to problems and moves away from a model of the psychologist as "expert" (Wagner, 2000). This arguably conflicts, however, to the role of psychologist as having to provide "expert" advice as part of the statutory assessment process. However, it is suggested that the two can co-exist if a system wide approach is adopted where EPs work more fluidly with schools over time. For example, many EPs have seen changes to the way they deliver services to schools and settings, particularly within the context of traded models. Within such models, assessment continues to be a core function of EP practice; indeed, Lee and Woods (2017) argue that assessing children's needs is not directly linked to the statutory assessment process. Working within this model also allows for EPs to draw upon their expertise in psychology to empower and support schools to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND. For example, through developing relationships with families and schools over time, EPs can become well placed to suggest recommendations with the child's context in mind. By fulfilling this role, EPs could gain greater visibility to families, reducing the perception to parents that a statutory assessment is the only means of gaining an EP's involvement (Webster, 2014). EPs are also in the unique position of being able to support schools with implementing psychological advice at a range of system levels such as through consultation or through providing whole school training and on-going support in practices and approaches which the school may not be familiar with. This results in a relationship where the EP provides the "why" behind their recommendations, and supports the school with the "what" and the "how," reducing the gap between interpretation of advice and implementation.

Whilst EPs may at times find themselves in uncomfortable positions, having to balance the needs of individual children and young people, families, schools, LAs and their own professional role, it is evident that there is a need for those with the most complex needs to have psychological advice that is clear, unambiguous and have the support available within schools to fully implement it so that as we reflect in 40 years' time, the vision of inclusion at the heart of the Warnock Report may finally be realized.

Limitations and Future Research

There are a number of limitations within the study which should be acknowledged. Firstly, the research was carried out on psychological advice written within one LA. It is recognized that there are often large variabilities between LAs, both in terms of the provision offered, and the systemic approaches utilized. Therefore, it may be that psychological advice carried out within a different LA may have provided additional themes and sub-themes. The data analysis of the psychological advice focused on the provision section of the advice and additional themes may have become evident had other sections of the psychological advice been considered. II It is important to note that the psychological advice was written during the previous Statements of SEN and the introduction of the new EHCPs, and the greater emphasis on outcomes, may have resulted in different approaches to writing psychological advice. In the future, it would be useful to compare current psychological advice and the themes and subthemes emerging from current approaches. It is a limitation of the study that it was not possible to deviate from the interview schedule prescribed by the SENSE study. Therefore, future research should consider different stakeholders' perceptions and experiences of EP psychological advice and how the advice is used to implement provision for children with SEND in schools. Finally, it is recognized that the interviews selected to explore how advice reflects school pedagogy was a limited and small sample and did not include all the interviews and psychological advice collected. The advices did not represent all categories of SEND. Therefore, it is possible that there are additional themes and subthemes within the interviews, and these could either show greater or less similarity to the themes identified in the advices. Despite the limitations noted above, this exploratory study has provided pertinent insights into the relationship between educational psychology advice and school practice.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The datasets generated for this study are available on request to the corresponding author.

ETHICS STATEMENT

This study was carried out in accordance with the recommendations of UCL Institute of Education, Research Ethics Committee, with written informed consent from all subjects. All subjects gave written informed consent in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki. The protocol was approved by the UCL Institute of Education, Research Ethics Committee.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

JV and GM contributed conception and design of the study. JV and Assistant Psychologists undertook interviews and transcription. JV and GM carried out the thematic analysis and reviewed codes. GM wrote the first draft of the introduction. JV wrote the remaining first draft of the manuscript. JV and GM contributed to manuscript revision, read, and approved the submitted version.

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Conflict of Interest Statement: The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

APPENDIX 1

Interview Schedules

The following schedule was followed for the SENCO Teacher TA interviews.

Locations

- Over the week I have seen X spent time away from the main classroom. How typical is this of his/her general experience?
- What are the reasons for withdrawing X from the classroom?

SENCO only: the role of adults

- What is the teachers' role in X's support?
- What is the TAs' role in X's support?
- If there are any other adults with a significant role in providing support, what are their roles?
- What forms of training and guidance are provided for teachers and TAs to support X's needs?
- What provision is made for teachers and TAs to meet to plan, prepare and feedback in relation to meeting X's needs?

Teachers and TAs only: the role of adults

- What is your role in X's support? How long have you worked with X?
- What is the teachers' role in X's support?
- What forms of training and guidance are provided for you to support X's needs?
- What provision is made for you to meet with teachers to plan, prepare, and feedback in relation to meeting X's needs?

Curriculum and provision

- Does X require a differentiated curriculum or differentiated tasks to support his/her learning?
- How is differentiation handled for X? Who does it? What forms does it take?
- SENCO only: what intervention programmes, if any, are in place for X? Who selects, plans, delivers and assesses these interventions?

Transferring from a Statement to an Education, Health, and Care Plan

- Explain what has been done/is planned in terms of transferring X's Statement to an EHCP.
- What benefits and challenges have there been/do you predict there will be from making this transfer?
- What effect has the transfer had/do you predict it will have on stakeholders' involvement in and understanding of processes such as annual reviews?

Transitions

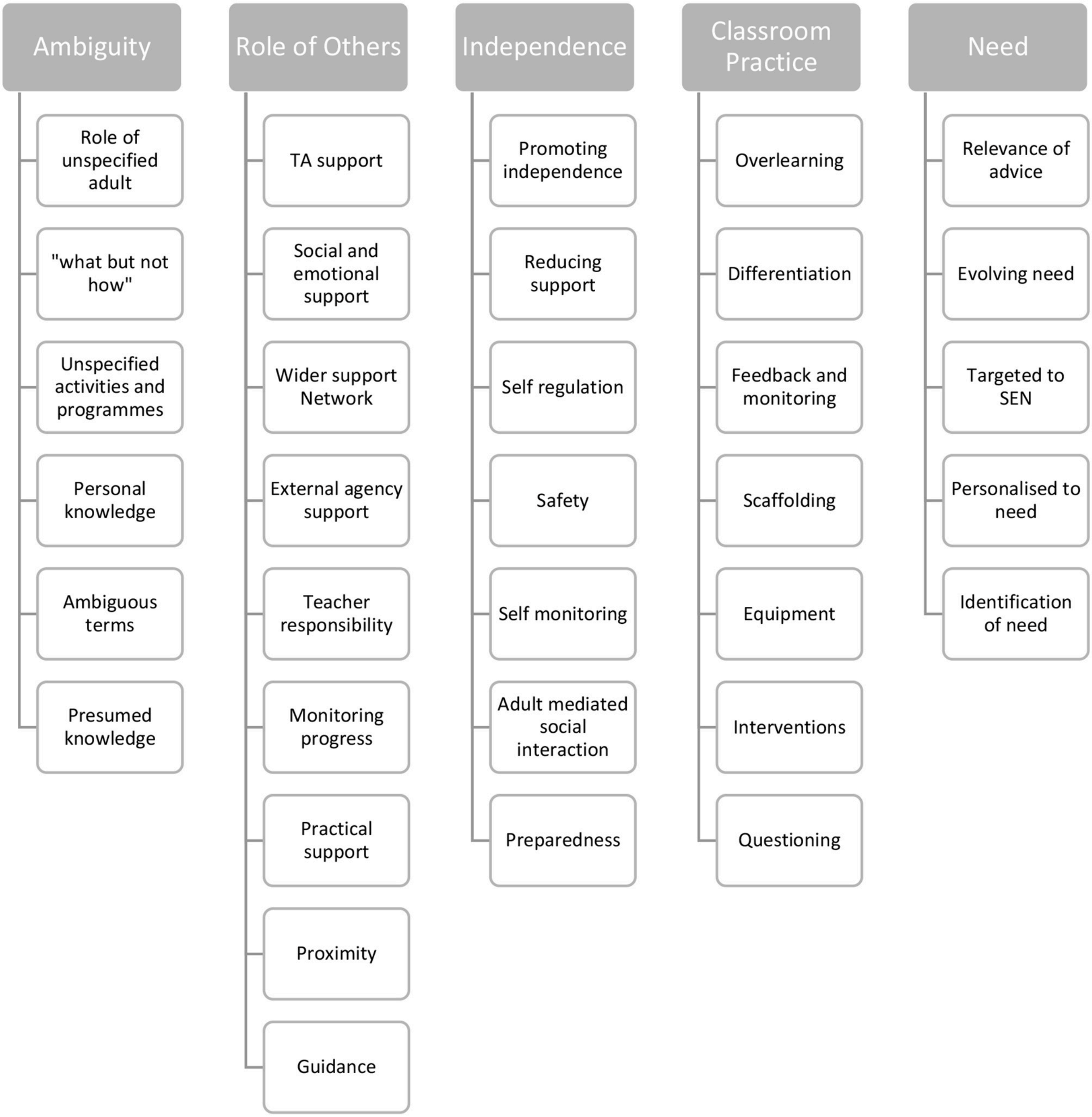
- Thinking back to 2013/14, what you recall about X's transition from primary school to this school? Were there any issues or particular achievements?
- What are your predictions or concerns regarding X's progression to Key Stage 4 in the next school year?

Impact

- How has the support X has received helped his/her progress and development?
- To what extent has having a Statement/EHCP contributed to X's progress and development?

APPENDIX 2

Thematic Map



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From the Warnock Report (1978) to an Education Framework Commission: A Novel Contemporary Approach to Educational Policy Making for Pupils With Special Educational Needs/Disabilities

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This paper argues that the significance of the Warnock Report after 40 years goes beyond the impact of its deliberations and recommendations on UK policy and practice and its wider international influence. The Report's significance also highlights the nature of provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities and the changing context of policy making in contemporary liberal democratic society. This paper shows the strong inter-connection between SEN and inclusion with other aspects of educational provision as the basis for proposing that future policy directions depend on general policy processes. It then argues that policy for pupils with SEN illustrates the democratic deficits in educational and policy-making processes in general. It uses this analysis to conclude that without grappling with these bigger policy issues we cannot expect some crucial questions in the field to be addressed more coherently and convincingly either conceptually or practically. Drawing on a post-democracy political analysis (Crouch, 2000) and contemporary ideas about deliberative democracy (Fishkin, 2018), with a recognition of the plural values that underlie policy tensions (Dahl, 1982). It proposes an Education Framework Commission (EFC). The Commission would set policy priorities as a settlement that has the potential to reconcile plural and sometimes contrary value positions. It would aim to design a 10 year consensual educational policy framework, within which political parties and governments will work; a framework that could be renewed after this period. An EFC would cover all key aspects of education including designs for including the diversity of learners. Finding common ground between different social and political value perspectives involves deliberative democratic principles and approaches that could influence representative democratic policy making. Though this proposal arises in an English context it has international relevance to the project of renewing ideas and values about the nature of schooling in a way that takes genuine account of SEN and disabilities.

Keywords: special educational needs (SEN), inclusive education/schools, value dilemmas, deliberative democracy, education policy

INTRODUCTION

The argument in this paper is that while commemorating the significance of the landmark Warnock Report published 40 years ago, we need to look at the policy context of provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN). This is not just to examine how what counts as special educational provision is inter-connected with other aspects of educational provision, but also how SEN policy making is inter-connected to broader educational policy. It is mainly the policy and provision aspects of the Warnock Report that we are remembering in 2019.

In looking at the policy context of provision for this hard to define sub-group of pupils we also need to consider the quality of general educational policy making and ideas about how this can be improved. This takes us well beyond special needs and inclusive education to questions about the quality of educational and social policy making, with England as the main focus of the paper. This paper will address some of these matters and consider policy making ideas that go well beyond the kind of Government committee review so well-exemplified by the Warnock Committee. So, the paper will conclude that without grappling with these general policy issues we cannot expect some of the important questions in the SEN and inclusive education field to be addressed more coherently and more convincingly either conceptually or practically.

POLICY TRENDS AND ISSUES

The Warnock Committee was set up in 1974 by Margaret Thatcher, then Education Secretary (Minister of Education), with a broad remit that concluded in 1978 in a report of over 400 pages. There has not been a national review of this scale and thoroughness since as the breadth of chapter coverage and detail indicates. For example, its coverage of teacher education and training is as relevant today as it was 40 years ago. It presented 30 detailed recommendations covering all phases of teacher preparation, continuing professional development, and the importance of inter-professional training. It had a chapter about research and development in the field, covering the coordination of research, setting up a national Special Education Research Group, and considered how to translate research into practice.

The central legacy of the Warnock Report has been the concept of "special educational needs," its identification and assessment for individual pupils and the planning of provision underpinned by statutory protections. Though the thinking about SEN had been developed earlier (Gulliford, 1971), it was the Committee's adoption and promotion of it that established its significance. However, many of the current policy and provision problems in this area can be attributed to this individualized focus in the Report as implemented in the 1981 educational legislation (National Archives, 2019). This legislative translation of the key Warnock concepts into the statutory system for assessment of SEN (Statementing system) has dominated the field right up to the latest changes in the Children and Families Act 2014. There has been little change in the basic system despite the refinements by successive governments. This is despite the latest legislation having been promoted as "*a radically different system*" [(Department for Education (DfE), 2011)]. The basic design of a protected individual identification and assessment system of additional needs and provision is still the cornerstone of the system. What has changed is the context of education policy and practice, and how the system is understood.

It was noted many years ago that while the Warnock Report's thinking about the SEN concept recognized a basic dilemma about the identification of some children as needing additional or different provision, it did not address the dilemma in its analysis of the education system and recommendations (Norwich, 1996). The Warnock position was for abandoning categories of educational handicap in order to avoid adverse labeling but promoted a new category of SEN in order to protect resources for a vulnerable minority. The Report stated that: "we have found ourselves on the horns of a dilemma" (page 45). It referred to it in these terms; abolishing statutory categories may give rise to concerns about protecting the interests of children with disabilities. Subsequently Mary Warnock herself acknowledged the problem at the heart of her Committee's Report some years later (Warnock, 1991).

The dilemma is whether to identify and risk stigma or whether not to identify and risk losing protected provision, which has been called the dilemma of difference (Minow, 1990; Norwich, 2008). It could be that by referring to a dilemma but not elaborating about the tensions and how to address them, it was likely that the 1981 legislation would ignore them.

This identification dilemma and other related dilemmas about differences in curriculum design and school placement for pupils with SEN reflect that provision for this identified group is both *integral* to general provision and a *distinct* aspect of education. It is a perspective which I have argued before contrasts with two other influential perspectives (Norwich, 1996). One is that SEN concerns what is additional to and different from ordinary education, that it is a specialization with separate institutional sub-systems and labeled professionals, training and associations. This is the position that is mainly to do with what is distinctive; and is represented by the English legislative system in how SEN was defined and put into operation for the last 40 years. The other perspective that contrasts with the integral/distinct one opposes any labeled identity for the field. In this perspective, which mostly focuses on what is integral, SEN is seen to arise from the inability of the mainstream education to include, accommodate and provide for the diversity of learners. Here the focus is on making the mainstream more responsive to, and inclusive of, diversity in order that difference need not lead to discrimination and be marked out with stigmatizing labels. This is what Cigman (2007) has called universal inclusion (an inclusion with no place for separate labels or systems) and is adopted by the Inclusion Index in operational terms (Booth and Ainscow, 2011).

In recognizing a third perspective that connects the integral and distinctive aspect of this field, I suggested that the concept of *connective specialization* might be useful (Norwich, 1996) and I continue to see its usefulness. It also relates to more recent ideas about inclusive special education (Hornby, 2015). *Connective specialization* refers to the interdependence of different specialisms and the sharing of a relatedness to the whole (Young, 1995). As a double-aspect concept it captures the link between contrary tendencies toward specialization and integration; the tensions between the values of meeting individual needs while doing so without marking out some children as different. The *connective specialization* concept therefore implies some balancing between distinctness and integralness (or inclusion, to use the current term). It stands against fixed dichotomies between one or other alternative, e.g., a focus on environmental barriers to be removed (social model) as opposed to focusing on difficulties (deficit model), or assessment being about individual needs as opposed to assessing children in terms of general categories. *Connective specialization* implies abandoning the opting for one side of the dichotomy to the exclusion of the other and denying any value to the other connected alternative.

CONNECTIVE SPECIALIZATION AND THE INTER-DEPENDENCE OF THE SEN SYSTEM

Connective specialization is relevant to understanding the position and inter-dependence of the SEN system with other parts of the English school education system. **Figure 1** is a simplified mapping of the complex inter-dependency of the SEN system with other key sub-systems. Much of the current Code of Practice, which sets out guidance about assessment practices and provision for children and young people with SEN and disabilities covers the system of individual needs assessment and statutory provision protections, which is the responsibility of local authorities [(Department for Education (DfE), 2015)]. This continues in much detail and in an updated form, the kind of guidance set out in previous Codes of Practice in the SEN system. Though the Code refers to some of the other aspects of provision which are crucial to provision for those with SEN/disabilities, it does so in very general and superficial ways. For example, there is only one brief section on the school curriculum and SEN, which makes brief reference to the National Curriculum statement on inclusion [(Department for Education (DfE), 2015) section 6.12].

The current Code of Practice refers to SEN and disability using the acronym SEND without any commentary on the relationship between the parallel and overlapping system of disability discrimination legislation from 2001, now under the Equality Act 2010. This legislation introduced the dual systems of definitions, guidance and responsibilities which does not fit well the SEN system, either in where responsibilities lie or how the terms SEN and disability relate to each other. This unresolved matter is illustrated in how the "SEN" term has now been coupled with the term "disabilities" to the compound term SEND. While local authorities are responsible for issuing Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs; formerly Statements) which ensure legally protected provision, their powers have been weakened by the new governance system of Academies and Free schools (a form of state -funded independent schools), with greater reliance on market forces in the school system. The growth of Academies and Free schools since 2010 (influenced by the US Charter schools and Swedish friståendeskolors) has changed the landscape of schooling in mainstream, special schools and alternative provision. Academies now form into Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) with member schools which may be geographically dispersed. Though Academies have to take account of the SEND Code of Practice, there have been concerns that Academies might have less commitment to the rights of pupils with SEN/disabilities (Black et al., 2019).

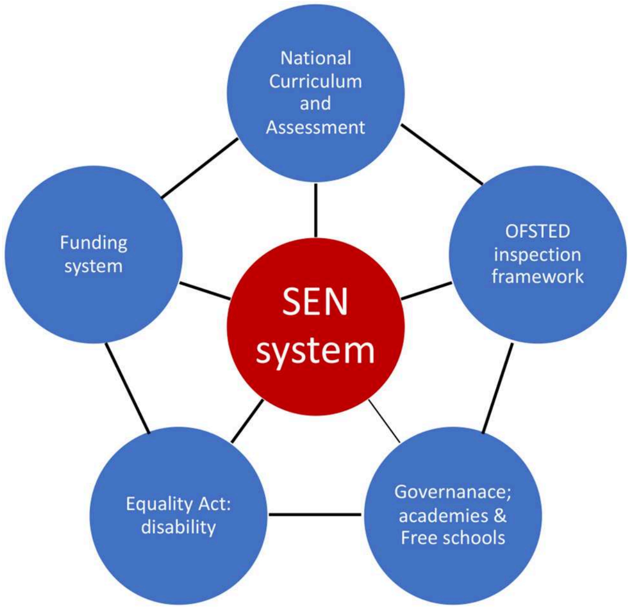

FIGURE 1 | Interdependence of the SEN system with other sub-systems.

Figure 1 also shows the interdependence of the SEN system with the National Curriculum and assessment arrangements [(Department for Education (DfE), 2014)] and Ofsted accountability. Recent changes to the National Curriculum have resulted in a narrowing of what is learned and how it is assessed. Despite changes to the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) inspection framework, the centrality of the academic progress criteria has been retained (Douglas et al., 2017). As mentioned above, **Figure 1** also represents the impact of reduced funding on, among other things, decreased support staffing in schools, and increased pressure from parents for more statutory assessment and EHCPs [(Department for Education (DfE), 2018)].

Based on this interdependence analysis, it is clear that the interests of those with SEN and disabilities require a broader position, one that focuses on the availability of provision and its adaptation and flexibility in inclusive ways. **Figure 2** shows in a schematic way how the current system requires both an individual and also a provision focus. The historical legacy of the Warnock report through the 1981 legislation has been developed into a system of individual needs assessment and provision planning. The left-hand circle shows that the key decision in this process depends on the availability of needed provision. When it is unavailable this might lead to a disagreement between parents and the local authority which might be dealt with by disagreement resolution, mediation, and/or tribunal approaches. This process enables some fitting between what is considered to be needed and what is available, but not without the struggling and stress sometimes associated with this statutory provision decision making system. As **Figure 2** shows what is available for an individual pupil depends on the actual system of provision in a local area, which is the center point of a provision-focused approach.

Figure 2 also shows some weaker influences on actual local provision, the individual statutory need assessment processes, on one hand, and the Local Offer system, on the other. Under the latest SEN Code of Practice [(Department for Education (DfE), 2015)] the local offer is meant to not only provide information to parents and carers of children with SEN and disabilities about what additional provision is available to them. It is also to provide a process by which, through consultation, provision might be developed. This is, for example, one function of Parent and Carer Forums in the UK. However, whether such fora have the potential to influence the design of the pattern of provision in an area is doubtful given the split between middle tier governance local authorities and the regional school commissioners that oversee academies. Though the new SEN Code recognizes the relationship between individual EHC Plans and population needs for provision planning purposes [(Department for Education (DfE), 2015) p. 43], there is no clear operational system that connects these foci. This overview of the weak contemporary systems for reviewing and developing actual provision for pupils with SEN is also underlined by a lack of a coherent and well-grounded national strategy about what is meant by inclusion in school education and how it might be put into operation (SEN Policy Research Forum, 2016).

The legal protections currently used for individualized assessment and provision planning, a Warnock legacy, could also apply to appropriate general provision. This would involve developing a provision-focused approach, while managing the relationship between it and an individualized focused approach. The implication is that there could be a reduced focus on individual assessment and provision planning, and more focus on general provision planning for those with SEN with a presumption for inclusive arrangements. This could translate into providing statutory assessment only when parents opt for it, in contrast to current statutory system for all individual plans. A legacy of the focus on planning for individual needs, which stemmed from the Warnock Report, has been too much focus on individual needs assessment and the neglect of protections for the planning of the general system of provision.

BROADER POLICY FRAMEWORK AND PERSPECTIVE

So, there is a need to adopt a broader policy framework in which SEN and disability in education is seen to be interconnected with other aspects of education, on one hand, and for more balance between an individualized and provision-focused approach, on the other. This inevitably has to be seen in terms of issues about: the general system and its specialization; education markets and their regulation; the public sector and its relationship to the private sector; the relationship between national, local and school responsibilities (Norwich, 2014). As the introduction of the EHC Plan process shows, the SEN framework goes beyond education into other areas of national policy, such as health and social services. How provision for pupils with SEN and disability is designed is part of general policy and political decision-making.

What follows is also informed by a perspective that recognizes that policy depends on several basic values, which can sometimes be compatible, but several values can also come into tension during the process of policy formation. The discussion above about how the Warnock Report recognized a dilemma of difference over SEN identification, but did not carry through with its analysis of policy dilemmas, is the basis for this broader policy framework. This framework derives from various theorists who have suggested plural values can result in tensions that can lead to dilemmas of plural democracy (Dahl, 1982; Berlin, 1990). There are possible tensions between: equality (same) vs. equity (fairness); choice (preference) vs. equity (fairness); participation (own agency) vs. protection (other's agency) n; and difference as enabling vs. difference as stigmatizing. In recognizing plural values, it means that when these values cannot be reconciled fully, there may need to be some balancing, some hard choices with some loss of what is valued. To have, for example, choice and equity, some balancing or "trade-off" is required (Norwich, 2014).

This policy dilemma analysis needs to be set within the current political context. Here, Crouch's (2000) post-democracy perspective is also relevant to this analysis of education policy. In a post-democracy view, there are elections with governments falling and there is freedom of speech. But democracy has become progressively limited, as shown by: a small, detached elite taking tough decisions; abuses of democratic institutions; politicians having a poor reputation and lacking trust with the population through the use of spin and hype; and policy development seen in terms of political expedience. For example, in a recent extensive study of diverse citizens across England to explore the depth and variety of views about contemporary society (Gaston, 2018), the political class was regarded with hostility and sometimes disdain. Though some individual politicians were not subject to such criticism, there was also disapproval of the professionalization of politics and concerns about disconnection from ordinary people.

As causes of post-democracy, Crouch (2000) identified: (i) privatization, the entanglement of public and private sectors, and globalization; (ii) fewer common goals for diverse groups to identify with, more divisiveness, and the rise of populist parties; and (iii) unbalanced public debates with a poor-quality national discussion. More recently Crouch (2011) tends to support approaches that energize citizenship, including state funding of political parties and the use of citizen assemblies. The aim is to reclaim a central place in decision-making, perhaps through social media, to engage citizens in participating in public debates and join advocacy groups. As might be expected this perspective has been criticized for not seeing the potential for a major reversal, only for measures to mitigate the adverse effects of post-democracy. Such criticisms reflect disagreement with Crouch's position on economic markets. Crouch recognizes the strengths

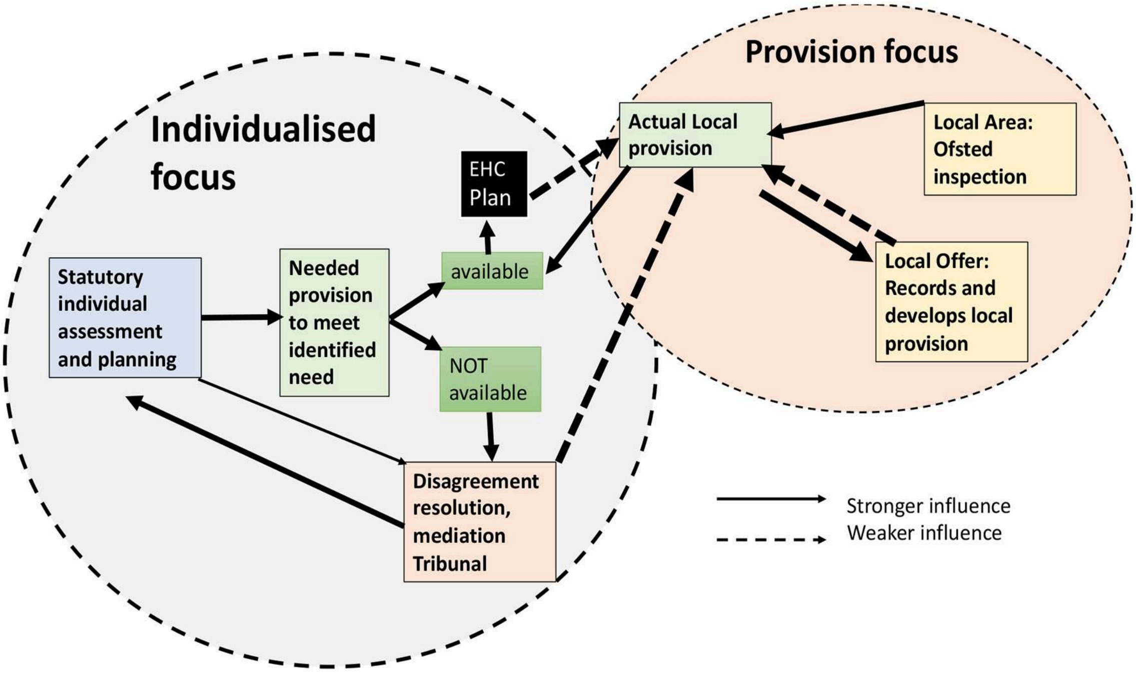

FIGURE 2 | The inter-relationship between an individualized and provision focused approach.

of the capitalist firm for its innovation and responsiveness to customers and so does not take a hostile view to what markets can do in some circumstances. But, he does recognize the damage that market behavior can cause (negative externalities: external costs on others with no compensation) and so advocates a form of social investment welfare state, a version of a mixed economy (Crouch, 2012).

Expressions of post-democracy can be seen in some of the recent trends in education policy and current failures of education policy formation. The introduction of the academies programme by the UK Coalition Government (2010–15) was a major move toward taking education governance out of local government influence. The issues associated with this move and the introduction of MATs set up a more market-oriented school system, even if it is not a full privatization, as in the cases of moving nationalized industries into the private sector (e.g., rail system). The 2010–15 UK government tended to deny positive accomplishments by the previous government. This was shown in the way that the UK Coalition Government, when introducing its plans for the new 2014 SEN legislation, denied the positive achievements of the previous Labor Government in this field (SEN Policy Research Forum, 2012). It has been argued that policies are adopted for short-term political gain with rhetorical policy zig-zagging, rather than for well-founded policy reasons for the longer term (Bell, 2015). As an example, the UK Advisory Committee for Mathematics Education called for better mathematics education policy that is "joined-up, long-term, evidence-informed, transparent and well-designed" [(Advisory Committee for Mathematics Education (ACME), 2014)]. There has been a break in the relationship between government policy and professional knowledge (for example, Government curriculum advisors resigning over National Curriculum reforms; Guardian, 2012). There is also a tendency to project and justify a false sense of certainty about education policy, with an unwillingness to recognize publicly education policy tensions and uncertainties.

EDUCATION FRAMEWORK COMMISSION

One way forward could be to establish an Education Framework Commission (EFC) to work on the assumption that policy should be formed as a settlement that reconciles contrary value positions. The Commission would aim to design a 10 year consensual educational policy framework, within which the current and future governments will work, and that would be renewed after this period. The aim of an EFC would be to:

Raise the level of national educational policy discussion and debate

Design a shared and informed medium-term (e.g., 10 year) education policy framework

Seek and maximize common ground across different social and political interests, outside the political market of politicians attracting voters at elections

Represent key stakeholders, including: representatives from political parties; teachers and school leaders; parent/carers; pupils; local authorities and middle tier organizations; key bodies, such as Ofsted; third sector and voluntary groups; employers and business; unions and professional associations, etc.

Break down unnecessary polarizations through adopting a position about the role of academic and professional research and evaluation in informing policy and practice

Lobby political parties and MPs to enact legislation to establish the 10 year binding Framework for future education legislation, along the lines of climate change and other cross-party initiatives and legislation.

An EFC could be seen as a response to the national post-democracy condition in attempting to raise the level of discussion and debate about education policy to consider issues of justice in education, the role of education in society, environmental sustainability, and the economy and how education can prepare for and influence these socio-economic changes, for example. It would be expected to relate directly to issues of human diversity and in that respect address issues of SEN and disability, not as isolated from other aspects of diversity and general design, as so often happens in the SEN and disability field. The idea is to have an organization that is independent of Government and the Department for Education. Bell (2015) as a former permanent secretary at the Department for Education has called for an independent body to set longer-term educational policy that is separate from the shifting demands of party politics. The EFC would contribute to this purpose, but the proposal is for it to be independently funded so that it does not act as a Government agency, though it would have strong links with the Department for Education, education agencies, politicians, and political parties. This independence from Government would give it more control over its agenda and working practices than if it were a Government agency.

It is clear that such an EFC would resemble some current practices, such as Parliamentary Select Committees and reviews, such as the Cambridge Primary Review (2009) and the Warnock Committee Enquiry, the focus on this paper. **Table 1** illustrates some of the points of comparison between an EFC, Parliamentary Select Committee and previous Education Reviews

Table 1 shows the ways in which the idea of an EFC is similar and distinctive from well-known review systems. An EFC would be similar to the Cambridge Review of Education in its independence and its use of in-depth enquiry that is theory and research informed. But, it would be different in the following ways: i. involving cross-party political positions; ii. producing a holistic framework that went beyond primary education and iii. actively seeking public deliberation. An EFC would resemble a Select Committee in involving cross-party political positions but differ in all the other aspects: the extent of enquiry, public deliberation and coverage. From this, it is clear that the EFC would be more like an Educational Review than a Select Committee but integrates elements from both systems.

An EFC would have some similarities to the recent Social Metrics Commission's (SMC) development of a new measure of poverty for the UK (Social Metrics Commission (SMC), 2018). The SMC presents itself as "an independent and rigorously non-partisan organization" to help policy makers and the public understand and take action to tackle poverty. It presents its goal as developing "new poverty metrics for the UK which will have both long-term political support and effectively identify those who are in poverty" [(Social Metrics Commission (SMC), 2018): p. 4]. It adopts an approach that brought together left and right-wing thinkers, policy and measurement experts and stakeholder consultations to agree on a final poverty measure. This consensual approach might be easier to achieve when there is a specific topic, like poverty metrics, than policy that bears on social justice positions related to education. An EFC also compares with the Institute for Public Policy Research's (IPPR, 2018) Commission on Economic Justice, established in 2016 after the UK referendum vote to leave the European Union. The Commission members were described as coming from "all walks of life and different political viewpoints" and having "voted on different sides of the EU referendum" (IPPR, 2018; p. 1). Though it was claimed that the Commission was independent of all political parties, there can be some doubts about how far the membership reflected a fuller range of political views, outside the scope usually associated with a "progressive think tank," as the IPPR describes itself. Though the report describes the Economic Justice Commission as reaching a "remarkable degree of agreement," given the "breadth of Commissioners"(IPPR, 2018: p. 1), little is said about where there were disagreements and conflicts of views and how they were handled. An EFC would resemble the IPPR's Economic Justice Commission more than the SMC's poverty metrics project, given the broad education framework at stake. However, the IPPR Commission differs from the idea of an EFC in that an EFC's purpose is to initiate a national conversation about education through public deliberation, not to arrive at a report that "can spark a national conversation on why we need a change of direction and what that direction should be" (page 1), as the IPPR Commission did.

RATIONALE FOR AN EFC

Fishkin (2018) describes various types of democracies, including "competitive democracy," the one most widely accepted in Western democracies, as one embodying electoral competition in a context of constitutional guarantees for individual rights. Using (Schumpeter, 1942) description of a competitive democracy as a "competitive struggle for the people's vote," Fishkin argues that this form of democracy is less about reflecting a collective will than a process of forming the collective will, a kind of "manufactured will" which is the product of a competitive political process. Though constitutional guarantees protect against majority tyranny, election competition is what matters, when parties and candidates can mislead the voters. These points relate to contemporary and wide-spread mistrust of politicians and the political processes (Van der Meer, 2017).

Fishkin talks about two other forms of democracy, elite deliberation, and participatory democracy. The former involves elite conventions or bodies that consider competing arguments (e.g., constitutional conventions, the US Senate, or perhaps the UK House of Lords). But, as Fishkin argues, with party politics and elections determining the composition of these bodies, this can limit opportunities for representatives to deliberate. The latter, participatory democracy, emphasizes mass participation combined with equal counting. Though this might have an educational function, it does not enable deliberation. For

TABLE 1 | Key points about EFC in relation to Select Committees and Previous Education Reviews.

	EFC	Select committee	Previous reviews e.g., Cambridge primary review
Relation to Government/Parliament	Independent	Related	Independent
Reflect different political ideology	Involve cross party ideology	Involve cross party ideology	Not explicitly
Extent of enquiry	In-depth and theory and research informed	To some extent	In-depth and theory and research informed
Public deliberation	Actively seek public deliberation	Calls for interest group evidence	Calls for interest group evidence
Coverage	Holistic overview	Focused topics	Middle level e.g., primary education

Fishkin, it is deliberative democracy which combines deliberation with equal weighting of views through using what he calls a "deliberative microcosm." This draws on ancient Athenian practices in modern forms, such as citizen assemblies (see below for current practices). So, for Fishkin (2018), deliberative democracy is a counter to the worst excesses of competitive democracy by asking the simple question: "What would the people think under good conditions for thinking about the issue in question? (Fishkin, 2018; p. 7)" It requires both external and internal validity; external validity with the assembly participants being representative of citizens and internal validity with deliberation done under good conditions to produce the final judgements. In his model, Fishkin sees a need to link deliberative democracy to the lawmaking process based on representative democracy, not to replace representative democracy. This model involves treating deliberative democratic forms as priority setting for representative democracy which he proposes can be done in advance, during, or after representative democratic procedures.

These ideas about deliberative democracy have been developed by contemporary philosophers. Habermas (1996), for instance, identified how the prospect of legitimacy is weak in modern societies given the potential for misunderstanding and conflict over what is good and right. The modernization process engenders pluralism and functional differentiation reducing the resources for consensual resolution of conflicts. This is where Habermas was keen to show how his theory of communicative action could have institutional impact with public discussion and debate over practical issues and questions. This was the basis for his discourse theory of deliberative democracy. Another philosopher, Sen (2009), known for his capability approach to social justice, saw public reasoning or deliberative democracy as central to his approach. Democracy was more than elections and votes, involving government by discussion, which includes "political participation, dialogue and public interaction (page 326)." For Sen, the political ideals of democracy—public participation, dialogue, and public interaction—can be distinguished from the institutional forms of contemporary democracy—competitive elections, political parties, and ballots. These forms are the means to the ideal and in this way Sen cautions against thinking that having these forms is the same as meeting the ideals. This opens up the prospect of developing other forms of democracy.

EFC: OPPORTUNITIES AND RISKS

An EFC promises benefits but has risks too. It could be an opportunity to increase national participation in debates about education, and so increase understanding, which is itself a public and political educational activity. It would seek to involve people who disagree with each other to listen and engage with one another. This would be facilitated by activities taking place outside the electoral cycle (e.g., ahead or after elections). An EFC would involve a deliberative democratic approach and as Fishkin (2018) suggests this could contribute to priority setting in the representative democratic system.

Citizen assemblies (CA) as a form of deliberative democracy have come to public attention in the UK in the wake of the disagreements and uncertainties about Britain leaving the European Union (Brexit). CAs brings together a randomly selected and representative group Aof citizens to consider an issue or question through learning, deliberation, and decision-making over a fixed number of hours. Expert advice is provided to participants with facilitated discussion. A CA has been advocated and undertaken as a way of resolving differences about the UK's future relationship with the European Union (EU) (UCL Constitution Unit, 2017). CA have also had prominence with its use in Ireland to design the form of the referendum on the laws about abortion. Perhaps less well-known has been the use of a CA by two House of Commons Select Committees (Health and Social Care Committee; and Housing, Communities, and Local Government Committee). These committees commissioned a CA on the long-term funding of adult social care (INVOLVE House of Commons, 2018). INVOLVE is a UK public participation charity with a mission to put people at the heart of decision-making and support people and decision-makers to work together to solve challenges. INVOLVE is one of several UK organization that are members of Democracy R&D which is an international network of organizations and associations aiming to develop, implement, and promote ways to improve democracy[1]. This network is based on the assumption that democracy should include a role for randomly-selected everyday people, as in

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[1] INVOLVE https://www.involve.org.uk

CAs. The growth of interest and use of CAs internationally is illustrated through the work of the Stanford University Center for Deliberative Democracy in the United States of America (USA) (Fishkin, 2018).

An EFC could not only be informed by CA strategies but other current or developing approaches. Finding common ground between opposing educational perspectives is very challenging, so there is a place for established conflict resolution strategies. It could be argued that the current acute social divisions and policy crises have been more pronounced than for a long time. This post-democracy situation, as described above, could be seen to have led to the rise of populist and nationalist politics, calling more than before for citizens to engage with different views and find common ground. The "More in Common" organization has been recently set up as a charity in memory of the assassination of the MP Jo Cox who stood for this approach. This is a new international initiative which aims to build communities and societies that are stronger, more united and more resilient to the increasing threats of polarization and social division. Their approach is to "develop and deploy positive narratives that tell a new story of "us," celebrating what we all have in common rather than what divides us"[2]. This involves needing to move out of personal comfort zones, seeking out difficult debates, searching out people we disagree with and listening to them before reacting to their views. This seeking of common ground can be seen as a way of coping with the tensions between positive and negative qualities and integrating them into a cohesive and realistic whole, whether in relation to self, others or socio-political values. When this cannot be achieved there is splitting, a kind of either—or, and all-or-nothing thinking or a good-or-bad feeling, which can be understood as a defense mechanism as theorized in psychoanalytic object relation theory (Fairbairn, 1994). So, the More in Common approach from this perspective avoids the excesses of denigration and idealization.

These More in Common ideas have an affinity with implications drawn from (Haidt, 2012) moral psychology which he used to argue for ways of fostering collaboration between partisan opponents. Based on these ideas a bipartisan working group was convened in the USA under the auspices of two established and well-known US think-tanks with opposing ideological orientations. This group produced a consensual plan for reducing poverty based on opportunity, responsibility and security (AEI/Brookings, 2015). This US initiative goes beyond the UK initiative discussed above to develop a new consensual measure of poverty (Social Metrics Commission (SMC), 2018). It is an example of one of the elements of the core idea of an EFC.

There are two other approaches which are relevant to how an EFC might function, one promoted by a voluntary organization (Citizen Shift)[3] and the other by an international agency (the OECD). The former is the "citizen shift" idea and approach (New Citizenship, 2014) which assumes that western democracies have reached the limits of a consumer identity as the dominant model of the relationship between individuals and the economy and society. This organization promotes the alternative idea of the citizen, which is not just about the freedom to choose between options, but being active in forming those options. This is seen to involve a shift from representative to participatory democracy and for business to shift from profit to purpose. These shifts are not either-or but expand on the consumer idea. So, profits are to be made, but with more emphasis on explicit service of social or environmental purposes. These ideas have clear links with the participative democratic ones, discussed above, the idea that shifts do not mean abandoning fully what has been dominant before. The other approach relevant to an EFC is the approach called "futures thinking" which involves taking a longer-term perspective on the future rather than the common short term focus often associated with the contemporary business model and consumerism. There is a tradition of futures thinking in education and in relation to SEN and inclusive education (Black, 2018) both for school teaching and for policy making (OECD, 2018). The OECD have promoted futures thinking as a perspective that goes beyond the confines of immediate and short-term constraints. Based on the assumption that current attitudes and action frameworks are open to change, the OECD has established an initiative about Schooling for Tomorrow (SfT) using expert analyses, case studies, country reports, and publications. This has included materials with strategies that show how groups can initiate futures thinking in education. These approaches have direct relevance to an EFC.

Nevertheless, it would be very challenging to establish an EFC, not only in terms of its funding base and the scope of the framework to be designed but how far it reflected common ground between participants with opposing positions. The aim would be to formulate the Framework in as specific terms as possible to avoid excessive use of constructive ambiguity. However, it would be expected that the Framework would be open to some degree of interpretation in specific policy-making by political parties, so enabling ideological differences to emerge at election time. Despite this, an EFC could reconnect policymakers with citizens by being responsive to parents/carers, children and young people, and professional and citizen interests, and so raise the policy horizons about the education system.

There are further risks with an EFC. One is that EFC could become marginalized by not managing to engage a wide group of stakeholders with diverse enough views, values and affiliations. It might also not engage key members of political groupings and parties. However, this depends on how it is set up in the first instance. The inclusiveness of the EFC process is built into the citizen assembly method of involving representative participants, but using CAs to construct a broad-based framework will be a continuing challenge. An EFC type of organization might also be captured by a group not committed to its principles. This calls for some scrutiny system with powers to intervene in the running of the EFC organization. Achieving consensus beyond vague generalities might also prove to be very hard to achieve. However, the process is worthwhile despite these risks and challenges if only to find out how far the process can be taken and where there are pitfalls. This is an opportunity for learning about educational policy making and change.

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[2] More in Common https://www.moreincommon.com

[3] Citizen Shift www.Newcitizenship.Org.Uk

CONCLUDING COMMENTS: IMPLICATIONS FOR SPECIAL NEEDS AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

This paper has proposed that the significance of the Warnock Report of 40 years ago goes beyond its deliberations, recommendations, and its policy and practice legacy and impact. The Report's significance is also to highlight the nature of provision for pupils with SEN and disabilities and the changing context of policy making in contemporary society. The key point in this paper is that given the strong inter-connection between SEN and inclusion with other aspects of educational provision, future policy directions depend on general policy processes. This calls for a perspective well beyond special needs and inclusive education to one about the quality of general educational and social policy making that takes account of diversity. This paper has argued that to do so requires recognizing the democratic deficits in the policy-making process that impact on quality in the special needs and inclusive education field. It uses this analysis to conclude without grappling with these general policy issues we cannot expect some of the important questions in the SEN and inclusive education field to be addressed more coherently and more convincingly either conceptually or practically.

The idea of an EFC is based on seeking a medium term and working resolution of the political value tensions that underlie educational policy decisions. The deployment of deliberative democratic approaches is proposed as a way of dealing with some of the issues experienced in contemporary democratic processes. This is not some "third way" approach with false promises of what can be achieved, as it assumes that ideological differences and tensions will remain but may be moderated through common ground seeking strategies. Examples of such strategies that test, renew, and build on what there is in common have been discussed. For instance, a CA has been tried in the area of the longer-term funding of social care by two House of Commons Select Committees, but not for the development of a broad policy framework. Though this analysis and proposal arise in the English-UK system, the ideas drawn on are of international origin and the significance of the proposal can be applied and adapted to other countries and their educational policy making. The principles and approaches discussed here have wider applicability beyond education policy, but education is a good place to start given the public educational purpose inherent in a Commission. Here is a proposal that could renew ideas and values about the nature of schooling that takes genuine account of SEN and disabilities.

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The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

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Status Quo and Inequalities of the Statutory Provision for Young Children in England, 40 Years on From Warnock

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In England, the Children and Families Act 2014 has been regarded as the most radical change in the Special Educational Needs and Disability provision for decades. Building on the recommendations of the Warnock report and subsequent 1981 Education Act, the 2014 Act introduced the Education Health and Care plans to replace the Statements of Special Educational Needs, with the view to promote holistic and participation-focused provision. This study aimed to examine and compare the quality of the Education Health and Care plans developed in some of the most deprived and some of the most affluent regions in England, with a particular focus on young children, given the well-documented instrumental role of early childhood intervention. The Education Health and Care plans of 71 children aged 4–8 years old were gathered and a systematic analysis of the needs and outcomes reported in those plans was conducted. Results show that the pattern of needs is similar across diagnostic categories, with the exception of mobility needs. However, more affluent local authorities provide more detailed descriptions of certain types of needs (related to mental functions and sensory functions) and higher quality outcomes. Special settings also present more detailed descriptions of some needs than mainstream settings, as well as higher quality outcomes. The higher the number of reported mental functions needs (related to emotional regulation), the higher the quality of the outcomes written for those children. However, the quality of the outcomes is markedly low across plans, local authorities and settings. These results show that the *status quo* of the Special Educational Needs and Disability policy and provision is still characterized by marked social inequality and specialized work-force disparities, 40 years on from the first Warnock report and the commitment to full inclusion.

Keywords: warnock, SEND, EHC, inequalities, children, early childhood intervention, ECI

INTRODUCTION

Inclusion, and in particular inclusive provision in early years, has been on the international education agenda for decades. The Warnock report (Department of Education and Science, 1978) was instrumental in establishing the direction of special educational needs provision toward full inclusion in mainstream settings. Additionally, it provided progressive insight and evidence-based arguments on the need to consider children under the age of five, with no minimum age limit, as part of the full inclusion initiative. These powerful statements were supported by contemporary studies of that time, highlighting early childhood as a critical period for change, due to the plasticity of development in this age range, alongside a fast pace of growth (e.g., Caldwell, 1970, 1974; Cave and Maddison, 1980). In a similarly progressive way, the Warnock report (Department of Education and Science, 1978) underlined the role of multi-professional assessment for a holistic and more efficient provision, especially in very young children who might not have started school or nursery yet, but who could still benefit from special education.

The Warnock report's recommendations were groundbreaking and they were followed by other international policies that have been long-standing pillars of special education provision worldwide: the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (Unesco, 1994), calling for all governments to ensure and prioritize the education of *all* children through inclusive schooling, and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN, 2006), which the United Kingdom ratified in 2009.

In England, the Warnock Report (Department of Education and Science, 1978) led to the publication of the Education Act 1981, which regulated that special provision should be implemented by Local Education Authorities for any children with special needs. However, a detailed Code of Practice with specific guidelines for Local Education Authorities was only issued following the 1993 Education Act, as a result of extensive consultation with education, health and social care services. Despite nearly three decades of a clear policy commitment toward full inclusion, in 2005 Baroness Warnock released a pamphlet questioning the way in which the inclusion agenda had been implemented, in many fronts. For instance, Warnock (2005) posited that the statementing procedure was not effective, with unclear criteria as to who and when should be in receipt of the statutory documents; additionally, she claimed that a small number of specialist schools was necessary, as the mainstream provision seemed to be unable to cope with the demands of full inclusion, with high numbers of children being supported by unqualified teaching assistants.

The publication of this pamphlet gave rise to an important debate about the course of inclusive provision in England, with many criticizing Warnock for providing a "new look" on special educational needs provision which was misinformed, dismissing 25 years of research in the area (Barton, 2005). This debate (which continues today and is also the focus of current research) started as early childhood intervention (ECI) was rising internationally as a field of research and practice on its own, conceived as family-centered (Bruder, 2000), with consideration for the family's own context and background (Shonkoff et al., 2000) and multi-disciplinary in nature (King et al., 2009). Opposite to the study of early childhood development, ECI does not focus solely on developmental acquisitions and milestones for children, but on the *goodness-of-fit* between the developing child and her family and community contexts (Simeonsson et al., 1986; Dunst et al., 2014). Moreover, it is meant to support *all* children who are restricted in their development and participation, even if they do not have a diagnosable disability (Halpern, 2000).

The field of ECI has flourished in the twenty-first century, especially in Europe (Carpenter et al., 2009), and in the United States, where a variety of models were proposed (Dunst, 2000; Dunst and Trivette, 2009). Although England's policy for ECI has been largely influenced over the years by this international trend toward inclusion in early years (Parton, 2006; Carpenter and Campbell, 2008), a state-funded ECI system is still not part of the political agenda (Faulkner and Coates, 2013). It was the coalition Governments' plan to implement free nursery education and care available to all, especially to those from disadvantaged backgrounds (Faulkner and Coates, 2013), however this is still not in place today; even with the creation of the Early Intervention Foundation in 2013, a charity whose aim is to improve the lives of children and young people at risk of experiencing poor outcomes, fewer children with disabilities have been eligible for certain benefits such as council care, over the years, and many are off the radar (National Children's Bureau, 2017).

Currently, the policy for provision for children with special educational needs and disabilities in England is regulated by the Children and Families Act 2014 and the respective SEND Code of Practice, which apply from birth to 25 years of age, and therefore account for the provision of very young children (Legislation.gov.uk, 2014; Department for Education Department of Health, 2015). This new policy has been regarded as the most radical change of the last few decades of SEND provision (Norwich, 2014), probably since the first Warnock report. Under this new regulation, statements of special educational needs are now replaced with education health and care plans (EHC plans), which should be designed as holistic documents (involving education, health and social care provision), include the child's own needs and aspirations and those of her family, and specify outcomes that are workable and functional (the SEND Code of Practice suggests these should be SMART—specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time-framed) (Department for Education Department of Health, 2015). Reactions to this new policy have not been short of controversy. Claims that it lacked guidance on how to implement changes and that it was ignoring international models and standards for classifying disability, such as the International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health (Norwich, 2014; Castro and Palikara, 2016), were followed by specific evidence of the problems encountered when implementing the Education Health and Care planning process: a very large number of professionals seem to agree with the policy itself but appear frustrated with the ways in which it has been implemented, suggesting it's ineffective (Boesley and Crane, 2018; Palikara et al., 2018b); the analysis of the EHC plans shows that these are not being developed as the holistic documents they were conceived to be, but appear fragmented, of low quality and not recognizing the children's and families' own voices (Palikara et al., 2018a; Castro et al., 2019).

The overall purpose of this study was to add to the existing evidence on the EHC planning process for young children with SEND, in particular looking at inequalities at social and professional levels, by comparing some of the wealthiest and some of the most deprived areas of England (within Greater

London), and different types of educational settings. Specifically, we examined the needs of children with SEND aged 4–8 as reported in their EHC plans, the quality of the outcomes written for these children, and the relationship between needs and outcomes, testing differences between geographical area and type of setting (mainstream or special setting). To this end, the following research questions were formulated: (a) How does the needs' pattern of young children in receipt of Education Health and Care plans in England differ by local authority, type of education setting and diagnosis? (b) How does the quality of the outcomes written for young children with Education Health and Care plans in England differ by local authority, type of educational setting and diagnosis? (c) How can the relationship between the needs pattern and outcomes written for children in the Education Health and Care plans be characterized?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Recruitment and Sample Characteristics

The sample of this study ($N = 71$) was withdrawn from a larger sample of 265 EHC plans, gathered for the purpose of a larger research project looking at quality of EHC plans across age ranges, from early years to 25 years of age. To address the specific purpose of this study (examining the quality of plans developed for younger children, with a focus on those from deprived backgrounds, for the widely recognized importance of early intervention), a sub-sample was withdrawn from the original dataset, including only children up to 8 years of age. Recruitment was performed by sending letters to Greater London local authorities in close proximity to the area where the research team is based. Because the process of finalizing EHC plans between 2015 and 2018 was slower than initially predicted by the UK government, the sampling area has expanded reaching 7 local authorities in total. Once a meeting was agreed with the SEND representative for each local authority in order to obtain their support and agreement regarding participation in this research, meetings were arranged with individual schools. Those schools that have agreed to participate in the study, liaised with parents and guardians of children and young people with EHC plans by sending information sheets and consent forms about the research project. Opt-in consent forms were sent by the parents/guardians directly to either the research team or to the respective school, after which the EHC plan would be released in hard copy or digital copy, as per the family and school's preference. All digital copies were kept in password protected files and hard copies in locked filing cabinets, accessible by the core research team only. Ethical approval to undertake this study was obtained by the University of Roehampton's Ethics Committee of the hosting research institution. The research team followed the British Psychological Society Code of Human Research Ethics as well as the British Educational Research Association Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research. The children were aged between 4 and 8 years old and attended educational settings in 7 Greater London local authorities which were included in the study; for the purpose of examining differences between local authorities in the current study, and to ensure total anonymity, these were grouped into three clusters, according to the Income Deprivation Affecting Children's Index (IDACI; Smith et al., 2015): the local authorities ranked within the top 25% nationally, which are the most deprived in the country, the local authorities ranked within the bottom 25% local authorities nationally (which are some of the most affluent in the country) and two local authorities ranked within the two mid quartiles of the national IDACI distribution. In relation to the type of school setting that children attend, 57 children come from mainstream schools and 14 attend special schools; 16 are female and 55 are male. In terms of age distribution, the sample has one 4 year-old child, two 5 year-olds, twenty-two 6 year-olds, twenty-seven 7 year olds and nineteen 8 year-olds. All plans included diagnosis information within the health needs section: 34 children had a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder (ASD), 8 children had a diagnosis of Speech Language and Communication difficulties (SLC) and 29 children had other diagnoses such as genetic syndromes, physical disabilities, multisensory impairments and hearing impairments and as described in their plans, within the health needs section.

Instruments and Materials

The content of the EHC plans was mapped to the International Classification of Functioning Disability and Health for children and youth (ICF-CY; World Health Organization, 2007), for the possibility that this system offers of coding disability-related content in a universal language that has been endorsed by the World Health Organization and widely used for research purposes in this area. This is an extensive classification system covering all areas of functioning, from *Body functions*, to *Activities and Participation,* influenced by a variety of *Environmental Factors*. Each aspect of functioning is classified with one alphanumeric code comprised by a letter to designate the component (whether it is a body function, a structure, an activity or form of participation or an environmental factor), followed by a numeric code to designate the specific function/domain—for example d130 refers to the chapter *learning and applying knowledge (d1),* and specifically to *copying (30)*. Therefore, the system contemplates various levels of specification. In the current study, only the chapter level (1st level of specification) was considered. It was not the purpose of this study to detail the needs of the children using the ICF-CY language, but rather to condense the content of the needs' sections of the EHC plans into broad categories, for the purpose of examining differences between contexts. This is an innovative aspect of the methodology adopted in the study, as to date there have been only one study using the ICF system to support the analysis of EHC plans, and that was focused solely on section of the plans (Palikara et al., 2018a).

The Goal Functionality Scale II (McWilliam, 2005) was used to rate the quality of the outcomes included in the EHC plans. This scale was designed with the specific objective of rating the extent to which outcomes designed for provision for young children are functional. The scale is comprised of 7 items: (a) indication of the routine in which the child will participate [criterion 1], (b) specification of the desired behavior [criterion 2], (c) relevance of the specified behavior for the child's overall participation [criterion 3], (d) quantification of the acquisition criterion [criterion 4], (e) relevance of the acquisition criterion (included in a daily routine) [criterion 5], (f) presence of a generalization criterion [criterion 6], and (g) presence of a timeframe criterion [criterion 7]. Each outcome is rated independently on a scale of 1–4: not at all, somewhat, much, or very much. The match between these items and the SMART criteria proposed by the SEND Code of Practice for developing outcomes in the EHC plans is clear and has been extensively discussed elsewhere (Castro et al., 2019). The scale has also been used in similar studies with very high levels of inter-rater agreement (93% and above) (e.g., Boavida et al., 2010; Rakap, 2015).

Data Analysis

In order to address the first research question (How does the needs' pattern of young children in receipt of Education Health and Care plans in England differ by local authority, type of education setting and diagnosis?), we focused our analyses on sections B (education needs), C (health needs), D (social care needs), and E (outcomes) of the EHC plans. Here, individual statements expressing needs of the children were extracted and mapped on to the ICF-CY classification system, following a procedure of deductive content analysis adopted previously in similar studies (Castro et al., 2014; Palikara et al., 2018a); however, only the chapter level was considered in this analysis, as the purpose was to obtain broad categories of need, to support the examination of differences between contexts. A statement was considered relevant when it expressed one need of the child; each need was coded individually. In order to enhance the trustworthiness of the coding, 20% of the outcomes analyzed were independently coded by a second researcher and final agreement obtained in those cases where coding differed. This proportion of outcomes was sufficient for obtaining high levels of agreement (90%). Statistical analyses were conducted with series of Poisson regression and negative binomial regression tests for examining differences in the likelihood of frequency of needs between local authorities, types of school (mainstream and special settings) and the type of diagnosis (ASD, SLC, and other). Poisson regression analysis was performed for those dependent variables in which all assumptions for running this test were met: mental functions needs [ratio mean/variance = 0.99], communication needs [ratio mean/variance = 0.91], interpersonal interaction needs [ratio mean/variance = 1.06], general tasks and demands needs [ratio mean/variance = 0.95], and neuromusculoskeletal needs [ratio mean/variance = 1.1]. Overdispersion was found for play and school participation needs [ratio mean/variance = 1.3], self-care [ratio mean/variance = 1.2], mobility [ratio mean/variance = 1.8], sensory functions [ratio mean/variance = 1.3] and learning and applying knowledge needs [ratio mean/variance = 1.3]; in these cases, negative binomial regression was used, as recommended by Cameron and Trivedi (1990) and Green (2003). Wald Chi-square statistics was chosen over likelihood ratio given the relatively small sample size.

In order to address the second research question (How does the quality of the outcomes written for young children with Education Health and Care plans in England differ by local authority, type of educational setting and diagnosis?), we focused on the analysis of section E (the outcomes) in the EHC plans, and the GFS II (McWilliam, 2005) was used to rate each one of the outcomes on a scale from 1 to 4: *not at all, somewhat, much*, or *very much*. 10% of the outcomes were randomly selected using an automatic number generator and cross-checked by two coders; where agreement was not reached, a third judge with similar expertise was called to support decision-making regarding the final coding, in order to increase trustworthiness, as performed in other similar studies (Castro et al., 2013, 2019). In order to test the likelihood of frequency of high quality ratings per local authority, type of school and type of need, assumptions for running ordinal logistic regression were tested; Because the assumption of proportional odds required to perform ordinal logistic regression was not met, the outcome variables (quality criteria) were converted into dichotomous variables where low quality includes *not at all* and *somewhat* and high quality includes *much* and *very much* ratings. Binomial Logistic Regression was run to test the likelihood of having high quality ratings across the GFS-II criteria per local authority, type of settings and type of need.

In order to address the third research question (How can the relationship between the needs pattern and outcomes written for children in the Education Health and Care plans be characterized?), Pearson correlation analysis was run between these variables.

Statistical analyses were conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences Software, version 24.

RESULTS

The overall purpose of this study was to examine potential inequalities in the current EHC planning process for children with SEND in the wealthiest and the most deprived areas of England (which are in Greater London). Specifically, we examined the needs of children with SEND aged 4–8 as reported in their EHC plans, the quality of the outcomes written for these children, and the relationship between needs and outcomes, testing differences between geographical area and type of setting. These results are presented in more detail in the following sections, which cover the pattern of needs identified in the EHC plans analyzed, the quality of the outcomes included in those plans and the relationship between needs and outcomes.

The Pattern of Needs of Young Children With EHC Plans

The summary of specific needs observed and reported in the EHC plans is illustrated in **Figure 1**: 1,473 statements were identified as reporting specific needs of the children within sections B (education needs), C (health needs), and D (social care needs) of the EHC plans analyzed. Most needs reported are related to learning and applying knowledge (241 out of 1,473 statements); these include statements on learning to read, learning to write and early numeracy skills, but also learning basic and complex concepts [e.g., "*She needs particular support to perceive, copy and manage visual-spatial information in her environment, as well as*

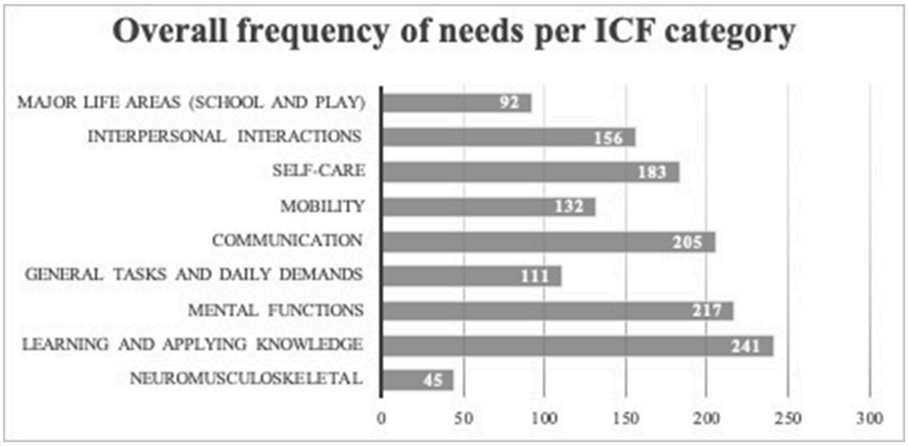

FIGURE 1 | Frequency of needs reported in the EHC plans per category of need.

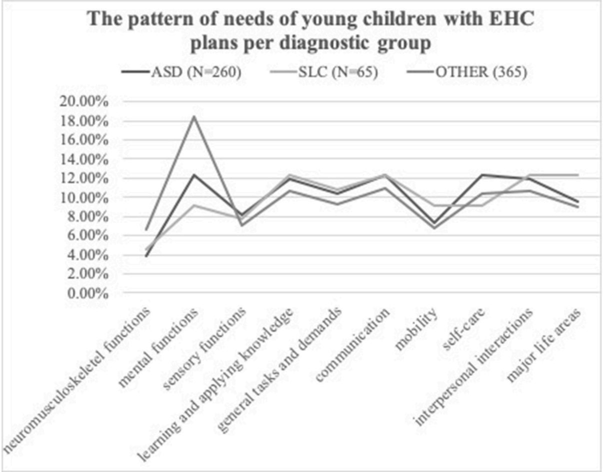

FIGURE 2 | The pattern of needs of young children with EHC plans per diagnostic group.

to develop her skills in thinking and reasoning, with non-verbal information and to develop her skills in matching, sorting and categorizing" (EHC plan number 36); and "*D. is at a pre-reading and literacy level and he is not yet counting with understanding*" (EHC plan number 186)]. The following most frequent type of need reported were mental functions ($n = 217$), in particular functions related to emotional regulation and self-control issues [e.g., "*H. can protest by lying on the floor as a way of opting out of activities*" (EHC plan number 182)]; the following most frequent type of need were communication issues ($n = 205$), relating to understanding and expressing language in a variety of formats [e.g., "*She follows general classroom instructions, when the instruction is supported by adults using signs for transition and natural gesture*" (EHC plan number 87]. Other frequent needs reported were self-care needs ($n = 183$) relating to toileting, washing oneself or eating [e.g., "*He is not yet able to put his shoes, AFOs and socks back on himself and struggles to manage his smock if it is taken off him. He cannot dress or undress himself without assistance.*" (EHC plan number 60)], interpersonal interactions ($n = 156$) which refer to the ability to maintain, initiate and regulate relationships with peers and adults [e.g., "*She can sometimes hit others for getting too close to her when she does not want it*" (EHC plan number 102)], mobility ($n = 132$), relating to fine motor skills and gross motor skills [e.g., "*There are concerns around N.'s gross motor movements and spatial awareness*" (EHC plan number 105)], general tasks and demands ($n = 111$), relating to the ability to complete required tasks in groups or independently [e.g., "*B. has difficulties sustaining his attention in whole class activities and shifting his attention between tasks. He is not yet able to attend to an adult-led task for more than a few minutes*" (EHC plan number 91)], sensory functions ($n = 91$), often referring to sensory overload by the children, or sensory seeking behaviors [e.g., "*A. has some sensory processing needs, particularly in relation to noise and touch. He can experience sensory overload, particularly in unpredictable, noisy environments*" (EHC plan number 200)], major life areas such as the ability to play on his/her own and with peers ($n = 92$) [e.g., "*F. chooses to play his own self-directed play*" (EHC plan number 231)]; and neuromusculoskeletal functions ($n = 45$), referring to the ability to walk appropriately and perform other essential movements [e.g., "*H. Has some postural weakness and can be clumsy*" (EHC plan number 187)].

Figure 2 shows the profile of needs of the sample of children whose plans were included in this study across the main three types of diagnoses—ASD, SLC, and others.

As a result of the Poisson regression analysis conducted, it was observed that there are no statistically significant differences between types of diagnosis in relation to the frequency of reported mental functions as needs (Wald χ^2 (2) = 0.63, $p = 0.731$) communication needs (Wald χ^2 (2) = 1.29, $p = 0.52$), interpersonal interaction needs (Wald χ^2 (2) = 1.73, $p = 0.42$), general tasks and demands (Wald χ^2 (2) = 0.04, $p = 0.98$), and neuromusculoskeletal needs (Wald χ^2 (2) = 3.77, $p = 0.15$). Results from the negative binomial regression conducted show that there are no significant statistical differences between diagnoses in the reported frequencies of play and participation in school needs (Wald χ^2 (2) = 0.33, p = 0.85), self-care needs (Wald χ^2 (2) = 0.84, p = 0.66), sensory functions (Wald χ^2 (2) = 3.75, p = 0.15) and learning and applying knowledge (Wald χ^2 (2) = 0.030, p = 0.985); a statistical significant difference was observed in relation to mobility needs, where children classified as having "other" diagnoses had a higher reported frequency of need (M = 2.62, SD = 2.26) when compared to children with Autism (M = 1.03, SD = 1.22) (Wald χ^2 (2) = 8.02, p = 0.02); A child included in the group of OTHER diagnoses is 2.57 times more likely to have reported mobility needs than a child included in the ASD group (95% CI [1.32, 5.03]).

Looking at the number of sections completed in the EHC plans analyzed (see **Table 1**) that refer to the children's needs, we have observed that in the majority of the plans (n = 37), both the Education (section B) and health needs (Section C) sections were completed; however, it is important to note that in 24 of these plans, the Health section merely described the diagnosis of the child (ASD, SLC, or other); the remaining EHC plans described other specific health needs such as asthma, eczema, or seizures, for example.

We examined whether the frequency of needs reported in the young children's EHC plans differed between local authorities. Results from Poisson regression and negative binomial regression show statistically significant differences between local authorities regarding the frequency of reported mental functions (Wald χ^2 (2) = 13.61, p = 0.001) needs and sensory needs (Wald χ^2 (2) = 9.31, p = 0.010), respectively. A child included in the top 25% IDACI local authorities, and therefore within the most deprived regions, has 2.69 times fewer reported mental function needs than a child included in any of the other two local authority groups (95% CI [1.87, 3.58]); similarly, a child included in the most deprived group has 2.55 times fewer reported sensory needs than a child included in the most affluent group (95% CI [1.27, 5.11]). There are no statistically significant differences between local authorities in relation to other types of need: communication (Wald χ^2 (2) = 2.46, p = 0.29), interpersonal interactions (Wald χ^2 (2) = 0.341, p = 0.84), general tasks and demands (Wald χ^2 (2) = 4.84, p = 0.089), neuromusculoskeletal (Wald χ^2 (2) = 2.37, p = 0.30), play and participation in school life (Wald χ^2 (2) = 3.79, p = 0.284), self-care (Wald χ^2 (2) = 0.433, p = 0.805), mobility (Wald χ^2 (2) = 1.49, p = 0.485) and learning and applying knowledge (Wald χ^2 (2) = 0.53, p = 0.77).

There are no differences between local authorities in relation to the sections of the EHC plans that have been completed (χ^2(6) = 7.48, p = 0.28).

Poisson regression analysis revealed statistically significant differences between the distributions of the types of school placement (mainstream or special settings) in relation to the frequency of reported communication needs (χ^2(1) =14.99, p < 0.001) and general tasks and demands (χ^2(6) = 3.21, p = 0.073). Children included in special settings have 4.4 times more frequently reported communication needs (95% CI [3.45, 5.68]) and 2 times more frequently reported needs related to general tasks and demands (95% CI [1.38, 2.89])

TABLE 1 | Sections completed regarding the needs of the children in their EHC plans per local authority group.

Sections completed in the plans		Education only (section B)			Education and social care (sections B and D)			Education and health care (sections B and C)			All sections (B, C, and D)			Total
		Top 25% IDACI LAs*	LAs in mid quartiles	Bottom 25% IDACI LAs	Top 25% IDACI LAs	LAs in mid quartiles	Bottom 25% IDACI LAs	Top 25% IDACI LAs	LAs in mid quartiles	Bottom 25% IDACI LAs	Top 25% IDACI LAs	LAs in mid quartiles	Bottom 25% IDACI LAs	
Diagnosis	ASD	8	1	1	0	1	0	18	1	0	2	1	1	34
	SLC	3	0	1	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	8
	Other	8	2	3	0	0	0	8	2	4	2	0	0	29
Total		19	3	5	2	2	1	26	3	4	6	1	1	71

**Local authorities.*

than children included in mainstream settings. Negative binomial logistic regression shows no statistically significant differences between types of school for the remaining needs: play and school participation ($\chi^2(1) = 0.12$, $p = 0.73$), self-care ($\chi^2(1) = 1.30$, $p = 0.24$), mobility ($\chi^2(1) = 0.56$, $p = 0.45$), sensory functions ($\chi^2(1) = 0.016$, $p = 0.90$) and learning and applying knowledge ($\chi^2(1) = 0.75$, $p = 0.38$).

In sum, most needs are reported with similar frequency across diagnostic groups in the EHC plans, apart from mobility needs, which are more frequent in children in the category "other" diagnoses. Local authorities differ in the reporting of mental functions needs and sensory needs, with the most deprived areas reporting fewer needs. Schools differ in the reporting of communication needs and those related to general tasks and demands, with special settings reporting these needs more frequently than mainstream settings.

The Outcomes Sought for Young Children With EHC Plans

The 71 EHC plans gathered included a total of 878 outcomes, 654 of which were included in 51 EHC plans from the top 25% IDACI areas (most deprived), 153 (11 EHC plans) from the bottom 25% IDACI areas (wealthiest) and 71 from the mid quarters of the IDACI distribution (9 plans). Mainstream school based EHC plans included more outcomes ($n = 722$), than special school based EHC plans ($n = 156$). Regarding the type of disability, 433 outcomes refer to children with ASD, 376 refer to children with other types of disability and 69 outcomes refer to children with SLC.

Tables 2, **4**, **5** illustrate the overall quality of the outcomes designed for these children, based on the percentage of high and low quality ratings made with the GFS II, per local authority and type of school, respectively. The overall quality is markedly low. **Table 3** shows parameter estimates resulting from the

TABLE 2 | Percentage of high quality outcome ratings per local authority across GFS II criteria.

	Top IDACI local authorities (most deprived) *N* outcomes = 654	Middle range IDACI local authorities *N* outcomes = 71	Bottom IDACI local authorities (wealthiest) *N* outcomes = 153
Focuses on participation in daily routine	0.3	0	7.8
Specifies the behavior the child should perform	0.6	5.6	11.1
Highlights a skills useful for participation	0.6	5.6	13.1
Mentions one acquisition criterion	0	0	11.1
The acquisition criterion is meaningful for the child's profile	0	0	1.3
Mentions a timeframe for the acquisition of the outcome	0	0	0

TABLE 3 | Binomial logistic regression predicting high quality ratings across GFS II criteria where predictions were found to be significant.

				95% CI		
Predictors of high quality ratings	**B**	**SE**	**Wald**	**Lower**	**Exp (B)**	**Upper**
FOCUSES ON PARTICIPATION IN DAILY ROUTINE						
Living in a bottom IDACI local authorities (wealthiest) rather than in middle range and bottom ranked	3.32	0.77	18.65	6.14	27.75**	125.34
Having SLC, rather than ASD and other diagnoses	2.13	0.68	9.66	2.19	8.38*	32.02
SPECIFIES THE BEHAVIOR THE CHILD SHOULD PERFORM						
Living in a middle range IDACI local authorities when compared to	2.27	0.72	9.99	2.37	9.70*	39.68
Living in a bottom IDACI local authorities (wealthiest)	3.01	0.56	28.54	6.73	20.32**	61.31
Attending special settings	1.17	0.42	7.85	1.42	3.23*	7.33
HIGHLIGHTS A SKILLS USEFUL FOR PARTICIPATION						
Living in a middle range IDACI local authorities	2.27	0.72	9.99	2.37	9.70*	39.68
Living in a bottom IDACI local authorities (wealthiest)	3.19	0.56	33.05	8.22	24.44**	72.65
Attending special settings	1.91	0.39	23.66	3.13	6.72**	14.61
MENTIONS ONE ACQUISITION CRITERION						
Attending special settings	1.95	0.50	15.70	2.62	6.99**	18.68
Having SLC, rather than ASD and other diagnoses	1.66	0.684	97.86	1.38	5.27*	20.12

*$p < 0.05$, **$p < 0.001$.

TABLE 4 | Percentage of high quality outcome ratings per type of setting across GFS II criteria.

	Mainstream settings ***N* outcomes = 722**	**Special settings** ***N* outcomes = 156**
Focuses on participation in daily routine	1.4	2.6
Specifies the behavior the child should perform	2.1	6.4
Highlights a skills useful for participation	1.7	10.3
Mentions one acquisition criterion	1	6.4
The acquisition criterion is meaningful for the child's profile	0	1.3
Mentions a timeframe for the acquisition of the outcome	0	0

TABLE 5 | Percentage of high quality outcome ratings per type of need across GFS II criteria.

	ASD ***N* outcomes = 433**	**OTHER** ***N* outcomes = 376**	**SLC** ***N* outcomes = 69**
Focuses on participation in daily routine	0.9	1.3	7.2
Specifies the behavior the child should perform	3	1.9	7.2
Highlights a skills useful for participation	3.7	2.1	5.8
Mentions one acquisition criterion	1.2	2.1	5.8
The acquisition criterion is meaningful for the child's profile	0.2	0.3	0
Mentions a timeframe for the acquisition of the outcome	0	0	0

series of binomial logistics regressions conducted, looking at the likelihood of having high quality outcomes depending on local authority, type of school, and type of need.

Because the assumption of proportional odds required to perform ordinal logistic regression was not met, the outcome variables (quality criteria) were converted into dichotomous variables where low quality includes *not at all* and *somewhat* and high quality includes *much* and *very much* ratings, and binomial logistics regressions conducted. For the analyses, high quality ratings were defined as the indicator. Results show that the wealthiest (bottom IDACI group) local authorities are more likely to have high quality outcomes in terms of focusing on participation in daily routines (OR = 27.75, $p < 0.001$), specifying the behavior that the child should perform (OR = 20.32, $p < 0.001$) and highlighting a skill that is useful for the child's participation (OR = 24.44, $p < 0.001$). Top IDACI local authorities (most deprived) were defined in the analyses as the first to be compared to the intercept, followed by the middle ranking IDACI local authorities, followed by the bottom IDACI local authorities.

Similarly, **Table 4** shows the distribution of ratings per type of settings. Special schools are more likely to *specify the behavior the child is supposed to perform* (OR = 3.23, $p = 0.005$), *to highlight a skill that is useful for participation* (OR = 6.72, $p < 0.001$) and to *mention one acquisition criterion* (OR = 6.99, $p < 0.001$), when compared to mainstream EHC plans (see **Table 3**).

Table 5 illustrates the distribution of high quality ratings per type of need. As shown in **Table 3**, children with SLC are significantly more likely to have higher quality outcomes in their EHC plans, in particular concerning the *focus on participation in daily routines* (OR-8.38, $p = 0.002$) and concerning the *mention of one acquisition criterion* (OR = 5.27, $p = 0.015$), when compared to children in the two other diagnostic groups.

In sum, a child living in a more affluent area and attending a special setting, is more likely to have higher quality outcomes designed for her in her EHC plans when compared to a child living in a more deprived area and attending a mainstream setting, despite the overall poor quality across contexts.

Relationships Between the Profile of Needs Observed and the Quality of the Outcomes

Results show that the higher the number of reported needs related to mental functions, the higher the quality of the outcomes written for those children, specifically in relation to how much they *focus on participation in a daily routine* ($r = 0.33$, $p = 0.005$), the extent to which they *specify the details of what the child should be doing* ($r = 0.39$, $p = 0.001$), the extent to which they *specify skills that are useful for participation* ($r = 0.39$, $p = 0.001$) and the extent to which they *include an acquisition criterion* ($r = 0.27$, $p = 0.020$). Additionally, children with a higher number of self-care needs had more outcomes in their EHC plans specifying a *timeframe* for the outcomes to be achieved ($r = 0.36$, $p = 0.002$).

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine inequalities in the current EHC planning process for children with SEND in the wealthiest and the most deprived areas of England (in Greater London). Specifically, we examined the patterns of need of young children with SEND aged 4–8 as reported in their EHC plans, the quality of the outcomes written for them, and the relationship between needs and outcomes. Overall, our results show a pattern of needs that is similar amongst children indiscriminate of their diagnoses, with an emphasis on learning needs, self-care, mental health and communication. Additionally, we found that the overall quality of the outcomes designed for these children is low. We have also found inequalities in terms of quality of needs descriptions and outcomes: children living in a more affluent area and attending a special setting, are more likely to have higher quality outcomes and needs descriptions in her EHC plans when compared to children living in more deprived areas and attending mainstream settings, despite the overall poor quality of the plans across contexts. Lastly, our results show that some needs are associated with higher quality outcomes.

The study is the first to provide an in-depth analysis of the content of the needs' section in the EHC plans of children with SEND. The use of the ICF-CY in this process enabled the identification of more specific categories of need, beyond the general diagnostic label. By examining these specific needs, it was possible to observe that the profiles of the children included in our sample were very similar, despite the existence of different diagnostic categories. This is not entirely surprising given the fact that the majority of children in this sample have either ASD or SLC, who often present a profile of needs in similar domains (Charman et al., 2015). On the other hand, this finding is in line with previous international research showing that young children with different diagnosis may have similar functioning profiles (Castro and Pinto, 2015) and that their learning and participation patterns are independent of their diagnostic category (Pinto et al., 2018). It is striking, however, to observe that all of the analyzed EHC plans still mentions the actual diagnostic label as a main need, within the health needs section of the EHC plans, when this was perhaps unnecessary, as it is not providing specific individual information on needs that can be used for intervention purposes (Lollar and Simeonsson, 2005); the term "need" often seems to be applied as synonym of diagnosis within the plans. This use of terminology by some professionals who wrote the EHC plans illustrates the previously highlighted claim that there is a gap between the ideology of the current SEND policy, focusing on holistic provision, and the way that it has been put into practice (Castro and Palikara, 2016): although the policy is clear that specific and individualized needs of the children should be reported in relation to the education, health and social care domains, in practice some of the professionals who wrote the EHC plans seem to still use the term "need" from a medical model approach. In fact, it was not a primary aim of this study to identify the diagnostic categories of the children whose plans were analyzed, as there is not a requirement of the new SEND policy to do so. However, most EHC plans included this information within the health needs section. Regarding the outcomes, children with SLC seem to have higher quality ratings in two of the criteria for assessing outcomes; this might related to the fact that these children often have specialized support staff working specifically with their language and communication difficulties alongside the school, thus providing very specific info to be included in the plans. Such specialized support is often not present when children have other diagnostic labels.

One important result of this study is that the EHC plans are not holistic and provision not integrated: the education section is still privileged as the section where to include most of the information, while the sections on health and social care are either empty or they include information of diagnostic nature. We argue that the fragmented structure of the EHC plan, which separates the three domains, contributes to this presentation; it is impossible in real life to separate education, health and social care domains, as they are constantly interacting to define the individual's functioning (World Health Organization, 2001; Rakap, 2015). Over the last 20 years, the WHO has endorsed a definition of "health status" that moves beyond the mere existence of medical issues, to include a "State of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (…) "health-related state is the level of functioning within a health-related domain (…). Health related domains are those areas of functioning that, while they have a strong relationship to a health condition, are not likely to be the primary responsibility of the health system, but rather of other systems contributing to wellbeing' (World Health Organization, 2001, p. 228). From this point of view, education needs are also health needs. Together, they are functioning needs and should not be split. This argument is the essence of the transactional approaches to development, which posit that at each moment in time the child is the result of this dynamic, unbreakable interaction; these approaches have been conceived as the core developmental framework for early childhood intervention (Sameroff, 2009), according to which all needs are health needs as long as they have implications on functioning and well-being. This new approach to health that has been widely endorsed over the last 20 years following WHO recommendations is aligned with the new SEND policy in England where participation is regarded as the ultimate outcome of provision, however, in practice, the plans still contemplate three separate sections for the different types of needs, and as illustrated in the current study, health needs are still seen from a medicalized point of view. Perhaps the EHC plans should contain one single narrative, where the whole child is described in detail, with consideration for the interaction between health, education and social care domains.

The results also show that learning and applying knowledge as well as mental health functions (especially those related to emotional regulation) seem to be a primary need in most children, across diagnostic categories, or that these seem to be described in more detail by those writing the plan. More interestingly, affluent local authorities have richer descriptions of mental health and sensory needs when compared to the more deprived ones. We foresee two possible explanations for this phenomenon: one is that the most affluent local authorities have availability of funds to employ specialized staff to write these plans, leading to a more systematic level of detail; the other possible explanation is that most affluent parents/carers will be more in possession of the cultural capital required to support the teams in writing the most appropriate plan for their children, when compared to parents/carers from the most deprived areas. Given the fact that deprived boroughs are allocated additional education funds by the central government, it is likely that the latter provides a better explanation, which is also aligned with previous research findings: different rates of parental participation and satisfaction in relation to the development of statutory documents for children have been observed, which depend on the family's level of income, and racial/ethnic background (Jung, 2011; Blackwell and Rossetti, 2014). However, future research should look into this matter in more detail, adding evidence to the currently available body of research in this field, by gathering the local authority point of view.

Similarly, special education settings provide significantly more detail about certain types of need that mainstream settings, either because the needs of the children attending this type of setting are in higher number and more apparent, or because special settings employ more specialist staff. Looking into differences in professional practice between specialist and mainstream settings should certainly be the subject of future research too; 40 years from Warnock we seem to be far from reaching the all-inclusive holistic provision that had been highly-regarded then. One could argue that the concerns raised by Warnock in 2005 regarding the need for special schools as an alternative (and segregated) form of provision could be the solution to the problem of low quality service provision in mainstream settings; however, this does not help to overcome the visible social inequalities by which more affluent local authorities seem to have higher quality plans. Our results highlight the clear inequality-based *status quo* of the current SEND provision, which is likely to be more dependent on the parents/carers own cultural capital than on the qualifications of the SEND staff or on the practices adopted within the SEND system.

The low quality outcomes included in EHC plans has been highlighted recently in the literature as one of the main issues with the current SEND policy (Castro et al., 2019) and is examined further in the current study, which shows that richer areas and special setting have higher quality outcomes than the more deprived and mainstream ones. Therefore, we seem to be moving further away from the inclusion and diversity agenda in at least two domains: social class and educational placement. If a child attends a special setting in an affluent local authority, it is likely he or she will have a higher quality EHC plan than another child attending a mainstream educational setting in a deprived local authority.

We argue that a new model for training staff on developing the different sections of the plan, including outcomes, should be adopted as a standardized and intrinsic component of SEND training qualifications, integrated in the Code of Practice. Such training should be research informed and based on frameworks that have been proven successful in improving the quality of the written material; the ICF, for example, has been successfully adopted in training sessions aimed at improving the quality of outcomes in EHC plans (Castro et al., 2018), but also in the development of other statutory documents (Maia et al., 2012) and general goal setting for children with disabilities (McLeod and Bleile, 2004); coaching models of professional development have also proved successful in training professionals for effective, holistic and multi-disciplinary early childhood intervention (Snyder et al., 2015). Despite this, our results also show that the ability to write good quality outcomes may be above and beyond the training of staff: looking at the relationship between the patterns of needs observed and the outcomes developed for these children, we can see that the higher the frequency of mental functions regarded as main need, the higher the quality of the outcomes written in than plan. One possible explanation for this, in line with previous research, is that it might be easier to write outcomes for children with more severe needs, whose accomplishments might be more specific and definable, than for those with higher functioning profiles; because children with more severe disabilities might make progress in smaller steps than higher functioning children, outcomes design might be more straight forward with the former (Boavida et al., 2010). Similarly, it has been found that the presumption of higher competence in students with developmental disabilities resulted in goals and objectives that are focused on learning the general curriculum, increased overall time in the mainstream classrooms, and more special education related services delivered in mainstream settings (Blackwell and Rossetti, 2014).

The evidence resulting from this research suggests that good quality provision requires a more standardized system in place, contemplating specific training on frameworks that can help the production of higher quality documents across contexts, but also contemplating a system where multi-disciplinary teams have the working conditions to know the child and the family to a level where they can be specific about their needs regardless of the severity of the functioning profile.

LIMITATIONS

Although highly trustworthy and well-aligned with the literature in the field, the results from this study should be interpreted with caution, especially as the main sample of EHC plans was gathered in Greater London. Although the study presents sufficiently strong evidence to enable generalization, a nation-wide study would be helpful to be able to claim that the issues observed here are similar to those faced by families, professionals and local authorities in other particular areas of the country, with similar deprivation issues as the ones included in this study. Similarly, the number of children and respective EHC plans coming from the wealthiest local authorities was relatively small, and although the assumptions for conducting statistical analyses were carefully examined, it would have been relevant to look at other affluent regions in the country. However, we consider the findings of the study provide a reliable indication of the inequalities currently observed in SEND provision, which should be the focus of deeper and more extensive exploration in future research.

CONCLUSION

The current study is the first to provide an in-depth analysis of the needs patterns of young children in receipt of EHC plans, of the outcomes written for these children, and of the relationship between needs and outcomes, as included in their plans. In response to the first research question, results show a pattern of needs that is similar amongst children indiscriminate of their diagnoses, a significantly higher number of sensory and mental functions' needs being reported in wealthier areas, and a significantly more detail regarding some types of needs in specialist settings. In response to the second research question, outcomes are of poor quality across EHC plans, but marked differences were observed between the most affluent and the most deprived local authorities (in favor of the most affluent ones) and between types of educational setting. In response to the third research question, results show a relationship between children's needs and outcomes, where the higher the frequency of needs related to mental functions (of emotional nature), the higher the quality of outcomes.

The main insight resulting from this study is that current *status quo* of the SEND policy and service provision in England is still very much marked by social inequality, in parallel with standards of professional development that need urgent intervention. Forty years on from Warnock, there is no standard model of provision aiming to unite professionals in teams focused on holistic provision. The result of this, is a cohort of children who might not be receiving effective support, in particular those from deprived backgrounds. Forty years on from Warnock we still need a new, evidence-based model for SEND training and provision to tackle inequalities and implement effective early childhood intervention.

ETHICS STATEMENT

This study was carried out in accordance with the recommendations of name of guidelines, name of committee with written informed consent from all subjects. All subjects gave written informed consent in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki. The protocol was approved by the University of Roehampton Ethics Committee.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

SC-K conceived the study, managed data collection, conducted data analysis, and reported the study in the current format. OP supported the conception of the study, data collection management, and reporting of the study in its current format. CG supported data analysis and reporting on the study in its current format.

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Special Educational Needs Coordinators' Practice in England 40 Years on From the Warnock Report

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The Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) role in England has been formally established since 1994 to support inclusion. In 2009 it became mandatory for every new SENCO in a mainstream school in England to gain a postgraduate qualification in special educational needs coordination within 3 years of taking up a post, which includes a compulsory practitioner research component. This study examined 100 assignment abstracts from 50 SENCOs submitted as part of the postgraduate qualification delivered in one university in England between 2015 and 2017. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis in Nvivo and yielded 4 themes underpinning SENCO practice, namely diversity in SENCO practice, meaningful assessment, evidence informed practice, and evaluating impact. The findings are discussed in the light of developments in policy and practice in the education of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities since the Warnock Report in 1978.

Keywords: special educational needs, school, disability, SENCO, inclusion, warnock, practitioner enquiry

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INTRODUCTION

Estimating prevalence rates for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) internationally is highly problematic due to the substantial cross country variation in defining, measuring and identifying SEND (World Health Organization World Bank, 2011). As an illustration of these challenges, the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, using data from 30 countries from across Europe in 2012–2013, found that SEND identification rates ranged from 1.11 to 17.47% with the total average for the 30 countries as 4.53% (European Agency for Special Needs Inclusive Education, 2017). In England, where national SEND data is recorded annually, the most recent statistical survey reported that 14.6% of all school pupils as of January 2018 were identified as receiving some form of additional support in school as a consequence of being identified with a SEND (Department for Education, 2018a). Moderate learning difficulties (21.6%) were recorded as the most common primary type of need overall, more males (14.7%) were in receipt of support than girls (8.2%) and pupils with SEND were more likely to be eligible for free school meals: 25.8% compared to 11.5% of all pupils in school.

Whatever the challenges might be of establishing robust comparative prevalence SEND data internationally, disability has been identified as one of the most influential factors in educational marginalization (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 2010). In England, results in national examinations at age 16 show there was a difference of 27.1 points between the average Attainment 8 score for all young people ($M = 49.5$) and pupils with SEND ($M = 22.4$) (Department for Education, 2018b). Moreover, data from national and international large-scale longitudinal studies indicate that the transition to adulthood is a more precarious path for today's young people compared with previous generations (Schoon and Lyons-Amos, 2016) and for young adults with a disability, inequalities in post school education and employment outcomes continue to persist. In the United Kingdom, for example, there is a gap of 18.3 percentage points between the employment rate of young people with and without a disability aged 16–24 (Parkin et al., 2018). Across the countries of the European Union, young people with disabilities are twice as likely to be not in employment, education, or training (NEET) compared with their peers without a disability (Eurostat Statistics Explained, 2018). Recent data in labor market trends from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) reported that the average employment gap for disadvantaged groups is 24.9% (ranging from 50.3% in South Africa to 9.2% in Iceland) (OECD, 2018). Against such a backdrop of disparities in outcomes, it is essential that national and international policy continues to address the education of children with SEND.

Education of Children and Young People With Special Needs and/or Disabilities: National and International Policy Context

At the time of the publication of the Warnock Report in 1978, 4 years after the appointment of the Committee, the authors, cognisant that there might not be a review of such a scale in the UK for some time, stated that, "Our perspective therefore reaches to the end of the century and possibly beyond" (Warnock, 1978, p. 325). The Committee was aware that some of the recommendations came with potential shortcomings. "We have found ourselves on the horns of a dilemma," was, for example, how they described the process of addressing the challenge of ensuring that the required resources were made available to children but in a way that did not "emphasize the idea of separateness" (Warnock, 1978, p. 45). The final recommendation was the allocation of a statement of SEN. This was the system of recording the profile of a child and the additional resources and/or provision required based on a multi-professional assessment that the Local Authority (LA) agreed to and was statutorily obliged to meet. The limitations and often negative consequences of this recommendation in the report and others such as the use of the term "special need," a "special or modified" curriculum and a lack of attention to teaching and learning have been well-documented (Lewis and Vulliamy, 1980; Barton and Oliver, 1992; Visser, 2018). Moreover, subsequent legislation in England relating to SEND attempted to address many of these limitations with varying degrees of success (Farrell, 2001; Norwich and Eaton, 2015).

Despite the well-known limitations of elements of the Warnock Report, evident for many at the time and subsequently, it is possible to identify principles within the report that have contributed, in no small part, to the direction of progress regarding more inclusive approaches in education in the UK and beyond 40 years later. Four principles in the report are of particular significance. Firstly, the *right* of a child with SEND to an education as opposed to their education viewed as a form of charitable act. Secondly, the importance of early and effective identification and ongoing educational assessment of children. Thirdly, the recognition of parents as partners in the education of their child. Finally, the need for all teachers, including student teachers and school senior leaders, to take part in learning and development opportunities, including additional qualifications where appropriate, to be able to respond to the "diversity of school populations" as described in the report. Evidence that supports the longevity of these principles can be found nationally in UK policy related to education such as Excellence for All 1997, SEN Code of Practice 2001, SEND Code of Practice 2015 (Department for Education Employment, 1997; Department for Education Skills, 2001; Department for Education, 2015), policies which are pertinent only to some parts of the UK as there are differences in the educational policy context in Scotland. Internationally, many of these principles are fundamental to the 1994 UNESCO Salamanca Statement and more recently in the United States with the Every Student Succeeds Act 2015 (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 1994; US Department of Education, 2015).

The SENCO Role in English Schools

It is a statutory requirement for every mainstream school in England to appoint a special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) whose main duty is to have day-to-day responsibility for the operation of the SEND policy and the specific provision required to support pupils with SEND. The Code of Practice 2015 stipulates 11 specific duties of the SENCO role. Although the Warnock Report did recommend "that the head teacher should normally delegate day-to-day responsibility for making arrangements for children with special needs to a designated specialist teacher or head of department" (Warnock, 1978, p. 109), the SENCO role in England was first established as part of the 1994 SEN Code of Practice (Department for Education, 1994). In subsequent reviews of the Code of Practice (2001 and 2015), a fundamental development in the role of the SENCO has been in the transition from essentially a coordination role in 1994 to that of determining the strategic direction of SEND policy and provision in school, along with the head teacher and governing body. In the Code of Practice 2015, it was recommended that the SENCO be a member of the senior leadership team in order to support the SENCO's strategic responsibility. A second development was the introduction of legislation in 2008 which stated that anyone taking up the role of SENCO must be a qualified teacher and that any SENCO appointed after 1 September 2009 was required to gain the Masters-level National Award in SEN Coordination within 3 years of taking up the position. The Warnock Committee, in 1978, had also recognized the need for additional training for the SENCO role.

To date, the main focus of research concerned with SENCOs has focused on their role and in particular the disparity between how the role is described in policy and the reality in practice. Studies investigating the challenges encountered by SENCOs in undertaking their duties have identified a lack of time, resources, and influence and/or seniority as the principal challenges (Tissot, 2013; Qureshi, 2014; Pearson et al., 2015; Done et al., 2016).

Moreover, although the requirement to complete the National Award in SEN Coordination has brought benefits, such as building confidence and allowing for opportunities to integrate theory and practice (Griffiths and Dubsky, 2012; Passy et al., 2017), the demands of a qualification when embarking on a new role, often in a new school, can be challenging. Research on the perspectives of SENCOs beyond their role is less evident but has been gathered, for example, on subjects such as engaging with parents and SENCO views on the most recent Code of Practice 2015 (Maher, 2016; Curran et al., 2017). There has been limited research attention given to their practice in supporting teaching and learning and wider school development.

The Study

The current study sought to investigate the practice of 50 SENCOs as identified through 100 assignment abstracts completed as part of the National Award in SEN Coordination programme delivered by one university in England between 2015 and 2017. The abstracts were a novel way to investigate SENCO practice in 50 settings. The purpose of the study was to identify any common principles that underpinned SENCO practice. Such a study is important for three reasons. It contributes to a greater understanding of the SENCO role at operational and strategic levels, 10 years after appointing a qualified SENCO was made mandatory in English schools. Secondly, the study speaks to how schools are prioritizing SEND in their settings and, thirdly, in doing so illuminates the impact of SEND and inclusion policy more broadly in schools since the Warnock Report in 1978.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Participants and Procedures

The 100 abstracts for the study were submitted by 50 newly appointed or aspiring SENCOs ($F = 46$, $M = 4$) as part of their assignment submission on the National Award for SEN Coordination taken at a university in England between 2015 and 2017. The majority of SENCOs ($N = 40$) taught in primary settings, nine in secondary and one in a further education setting.

As part of the assessment, the Award required SENCOs to submit two 5,000-word assignments. The first assignment had a focus on supporting the teaching and learning of pupils with SEN and/or disabilities and the second an emphasis on strategic leadership of SEND provision. Both assignments required students to adopt a practitioner enquiry approach which meant that SENCOs were able to investigate a subject that was relevant to and a priority for their setting. A structured abstract framework was provided for the SENCOs to complete and submit with their assignments. The project followed the British Educational Research Association's (BERA) guidelines and received ethics approval from UCL Institute of Education (British Educational Research Association (BERA), 2011). Informed written consent was obtained from all participants. Both authors teach on the National Award for SEN coordination programme at the university.

Data Analysis

The study used a thematic approach to analysis following (Braun and Clarke, 2006) six stages: familiarization with the data; generation of codes; searching and reviewing of themes; defining and naming themes and the production of a written account. An inductive approach to the process of coding data was adopted as the study was seeking to generate rather than test theory. Stage 1 involved both authors reading the abstracts to become more acquainted with the data. For stage 2, a provisional list of codes ($N = 134$) was created by the authors to begin the first level of coding. After the first analysis, the authors reduced the list of codes to one hundred. This list formed the coding framework for the abstracts (stage 3). The abstracts were coded using Nvivo. The next two stages, the searching and reviewing of codes and themes, entailed the analysis and identification of the relationship between the codes into organizing themes and finally four global themes (Attride-Stirling, 2001). The analysis and interpretation of the data was at the latent level, as the authors were seeking to identify the underlying ideas and concepts that characterized SENCO practice. These four themes were used to frame the writing of the findings in response to the research aims. An 89% inter-rater agreement was established on the examination of a 20% sample of the abstracts.

RESULTS

Four main themes underpinning the practice of SENCOs were evident from the abstracts: diversity in SENCO practice; meaningful assessment; evidence informed practice and evaluating impact. Each theme is addressed in turn.

Theme 1: Diversity in SENCO Practice

Diversity in practice was a fundamental principle that underpinned the practice of the SENCOs in the study. This diversity was evident not only in the scope of their activities but was also a reflection of the range of pupils and practitioners they advocated for and supported. Specifically, the abstract analysis showed diversity in the profiles of pupils, enquiry content and the methods deployed to ultimately improve the learning experiences and outcomes of pupils with SEN and/or disabilities.

Pupils from all 4 broad categories of need set out in the SEND Code of Practice 2015 were represented in the abstracts. Pupils who experienced differing literacy difficulties (N=15/50) were the most common group of pupils reported, followed by pupils with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) ($N = 13/50$), social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH) ($N = 9/50$) and autism ($N = 5/50$). In some abstracts, SENCOs did not use a category label, but focused on cognitive skills such as working memory or learning "behaviors" including attitudes to learning and developing greater independence with learning. The analysis of the second assignment abstracts, which required SENCOs to conduct a practitioner research study on a wider school priority, showed that specific groups of pupils were also included such as, whole school approaches to "behavior for learning" with an emphasis on supporting pupils with SEMH needs.

Diversity of SENCO practice could also be seen from the number and range of activities and approaches adopted by SENCOs to address priorities in their settings. These activities fell into three main categories. The first category was working with or supporting other practitioners with small group teaching and learning activities. The subjects of these groups included, for example, literacy activities, language development social skills and SEMH. The majority of these groups were designed for a set period of weeks and sessions per week depending on the topic, aims, and profiles of the pupils concerned. For more than half of these groups, SENCOs and practitioners developed the programmes and materials based on the class curriculum and other available resources in school. The commercial programmes cited and adopted included Attention Autism (Watson et al., 2017), Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) (Bondy and Frost, 1994) and Colorful Semantics (Bryan A., 1997):

> *"The results showed that some children were beginning to make progress using Colorful Semantics independently and were able to have less adult input than in week one."*
> *Primary SENCO*

The second category was leading and delivering inclusive education approaches outside the formal curriculum, such as implementing structured break time and lunch sessions, setting up a homework club and transition:

> *"The research will focus on between year transition due to the school's absence of guidelines on transition processes. Three-year trends have identified pupils with SEN and/or disabilities make slower progress in the autumn term compared to the spring and summer."*
> *Primary SENCO*

Leading school wide learning and professional development for all practitioners was a third category. Different methods were used including the delivery of whole school INSET on topics such as the preparedness, deployment and practice of Teaching Assistants (TAs), differentiation, behavior for learning, High Quality Teaching (HQT) in the classroom for pupils with SEN and/or disabilities and specific categories of need such as autism. SENCOs also used coaching and mentoring approaches either in small groups or individually to support colleagues. **Table 1** presents the themes underpinning SENCO practice.

Theme 2: Meaningful Assessment

Meaningful assessment practices were evident in the activities undertaken by SENCOs and were demonstrated in three ways. Firstly, baseline measures of pupil and staff knowledge and skills were taken prior to the implementation of interventions and plans to improve pupil and staff performance. A broad range of pupil assessment measures were taken using a number of published standardized and criterion-referenced tests, supplemented by existing school assessment data. The range of measures were used to create a more meaningful, holistic picture of pupils' strengths and needs. One SENCO explained how individual pupil needs:

> *"…were assessed using pre-and post-intervention baseline measurements which included the Single Word Spelling Test, initial teacher feedback and the Diagnostic Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling writing sample."*
> *Primary SENCO*

The meaningful assessment and baselining of strategic school practice was also present in the SENCO abstracts, with one SENCO describing how a:

> *"…baseline of staff awareness was gathered through a training matrix, qualitative data from interviews with staff… data collected from observations."*
> *Secondary SENCO*

The most common area of need that was assessed using published assessments was Cognition and Learning, with the greatest focus on literacy difficulties. The literacy assessments used included the Helen Arkell Spelling Test (Caplan et al., 2012), Single Word Spelling Test (Sacre and Masterson, 2007), Action Picture Test (Renfrew, 2003) and The Bus Story (Renfrew, 1991). It was also common for SENCOs to use a range of widely available phonics screeners and high frequency word lists including Letters and Sounds (Department for Children Schools Families, 2007). In the area of emotional and behavioral well-being, pupils were assessed using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (Goodman, 1997) and the Boxall Profile (Bennathan and Boxall, 1998). The Childhood Autism Rating Scale (Schopler et al., 2002) and the Early Years Autism Observation Profile (Cumine et al., 2009) were used to assess the communication and interaction skills of pupils with autism. Barriers to learning not related to a specific category label such as working memory difficulties, identified through classroom observation, were measured using assessments including the Digit Memory Test (Turner and Ridsdale, 2004) and the Working Memory Rating Scale (Alloway et al., 2008). A range of evidence-informed published audit tools were used as a means of capturing existing practices. These included the Communication Supporting Classroom Observation Tool (Dockrell et al., 2012) the Devon Threshold Tool (Devon Safeguarding Children Board, 2016) and the auditing tools from Maximizing the Impact of Teaching Assistants project (Webster et al., 2015).

Secondly, a wide range of data collection methods were used to create a meaningful picture of pupil and staff knowledge and skills that was then analyzed to inform the changes required to improve pupil and school outcomes and practices. It was common for SENCOs to utilize a number of different methods. The methods used most frequently with teaching staff, support staff, and pupils were observations, questionnaires and interviews with findings supplemented with an analysis of school data. Observations of pupils and staff were undertaken in the classroom and in the playground, assessing the academic, social and emotional skills of pupils and knowledge, skills and expertise of staff. A number of the staff questionnaires focused on the deployment, preparedness and practice of the teaching assistant. Staff knowledge and skills and understanding of pupils' needs and performance were also assessed by means of

TABLE 1 | Themes underpinning SENCO practice.

Global themes	Sub-themes
Diversity in SENCO practice	Scope of activities and approaches Diversity of pupil profiles Range of enquiry content and methods
Meaningful assessment	Baseline assessment measures of pupil performance Published audit tools to measure staff knowledge and skills Range of data collection methods Formative assessment
Evidence informed practice	Evidence informed approaches to assessment Specific research studies as prompt for enquiry focus
Evaluating impact	Effective use of resources (people and financial)

TABLE 2 | Summary of assessment methods employed by SENCOs.

Published assessment	School based assessment
Single word spelling test	Classroom observations
Diagnostic grammar, punctuation, and spelling	Playground observations
Helen arkell spelling test	Pupil interviews
Action picture test	Practitioner interviews
The bus story	Pupil questionnaires
Letters and sounds	Practitioner questionnaires
Strengths and difficulties questionnaire	Pupils' writing samples
Boxall profile	School attainment and progress data
Childhood autism rating scale	
Early years observation profile	
Digit memory test	
Communication supporting classroom observation tool	
Devon threshold tool	
Maximizing the impact of teaching assistants audit	

interviews and questionnaires. Staff were interviewed to gain an insight into levels of confidence in identifying pupils' needs and tailoring provision for pupils. A range of data collection methods were used when focusing on the preparedness and practice of support staff. Interviews and questionnaires were undertaken with parents and included a focus on attitudes to reading and on use of spelling strategies. Pupils' views on their social and academic skills, including language, reading, spelling, and maths were determined through interviews and questionnaires.

Thirdly, formative assessment in the shape of the Code of Practice 2015 graduated response or "assess, plan, do, review cycle" was evident in the majority of the SENCO abstracts as a means of ensuring that the assessment process was dynamic and meaningful. Assessments such as those outlined earlier were undertaken as a baseline, and from this an intervention or plan to improve pupil and school performance and practice was planned, implemented and monitored by SENCOs during implementation. SENCOs reviewed the impact of the interventions and plans for strategic change by repeating baseline assessments post-intervention, before using the outcomes to plan the next steps in pupil provision and whole school development. This was evident in an abstract detailing the implementation of a 10-week reading intervention, in which interim monitoring was undertaken after five weeks, when a midway assessment was completed. Teaching Assistants' planning was monitored on a two-weekly cycle as well as a round of observations in the third week. Any weaknesses were addressed individually or during the weekly workshop meetings. A range of assessment and data collection methods were frequently employed to ensure that assessment processes were dynamic and responsive to the needs identified in relation to pupil need and staff development. **Table 2** presents the range of assessment methods (published and school based) employed by SENCOs.

Theme 3: Evidence Informed Practice

The importance of adopting evidence informed practice was a third principle underpinning the practice of SENCOs in the study. Many of the assessment measures described in Theme 2 were examples of evidence informed approaches such as the Children's Autism Rating Scale, the Action Picture Test and the Digit Memory Test, all of which are used extensively clinically and in research. Another example of evidence informed practice were those abstracts where the origin or prompt for an assignment had been the publication of specific research studies that had resonance for a SENCO in terms of priorities in their settings. The most common subject was the deployment, preparedness and practice of TAs ($N = 12$):

> *"I used the Red Amber Green (RAG) self-assessment audit from the endowment foundation report (The Education Endowment Fund Foundation Guidance Report, 2013). Various forms of evidence fed into the RAG self-assessment; the recommendations checklist (quantitative), questionnaires regarding TA preparedness (qualitative), survey on preparedness to work with and mange TAs (quantitative) and observations (qualitative) from phase leaders focusing on effectiveness of TAs in lessons. The recommendations checklist enabled me to analyse the four key areas and gave observations and very clear focus."*
>
> *Primary SENCO*

Another example was the use of research evidence on supporting the development of language in Key Stage 1:

> *"Using the Communication Supporting Observation Tool, an initial classroom audit was completed to ascertain opportunities provided for oral language development."*
>
> *Primary SENCO*

Finally, SENCO practice was also influenced by a body of research findings that had developed over time. A common example was the research concerned with the principles associated with the provision of more effective professional development and learning opportunities in schools: little and often, based on practitioner need and pupil focused. This was evident from one Secondary SENCO undertaking Continuous Professional Development (CPD):

> *"to build partnerships between teachers, Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) and external agencies to create professional learning communities (PLC) as a learning version of a Team Around a Child where professionals from different organizations collaborate to produce child centred solutions in response to need or vulnerability."*
>
> *Secondary SENCO*

Theme 4: Evaluating Impact

The final theme that emerged from the abstract analysis was the importance placed on evaluating impact with an emphasis on SENCOs making the best use of school resources (people and financial) to ensure better outcomes for pupils with SEN and/or disability. Most noticeably, this was evident in the focus on provision mapping[1] and the monitoring and analysis of the impact of interventions for pupils ($N = 13/50$). Provision mapping was used to gain a broad overview of the efficacy of the interventions in place alongside auditing the effectiveness of specific interventions related to pupils in each of the four broad categories of need. One SENCO abstract highlighted the need to utilize time and resources effectively using provision mapping as a tool, explaining that the:

> *"assignment will audit the provision mapping in the school, assessing whether the programmes and interventions being used are evidence-based (and therefore an effective use of time/money) reviewing how provision mapping can be used as a more efficient and effective way to monitor progress and to identify patterns of need and areas for development of staff."*
>
> *Primary SENCO*

This auditing process that was used to assess the effective use of school resources included audit measures devised by individual SENCOs alongside published audit tools, such as the nasen Provision Mapping Audit Tool, which was used to ensure that robust tracking systems for interventions were in place. Provision mapping was frequently used by SENCOs as, in their words, a vehicle to drive forward whole school changes.

Some examples of interventions for literacy that were monitored and evaluated included Colorful Semantics and evidence informed spelling interventions created by SENCOs for identified pupils. Maths interventions evaluated included Numbers Count and support for working memory. Social skills interventions were monitored for effectiveness in the classroom and the playground and the impact used to inform CPD needs and decisions regarding the ongoing use of particular interventions. The impact of Nurture Groups for pupils with SEMH needs was monitored and evaluated to assess staff skills and confidence as a means of identifying ongoing training needs.

DISCUSSION

This study set out to investigate the practice of newly appointed SENCOs 40 years after the findings of the Warnock Report changed the landscape of SEND and inclusion in schools. The findings of this study revealed four key principles which underpinned SENCO practice and together demonstrated the breadth and complexity of the SENCO role. Firstly, as well as strategically supporting the education of pupils with diverse learning profiles and SEN and/or disabilities, SENCOs were collaborating with a range of staff at an individual, group and across a school to support the education of pupils with SEN and/or disabilities. Secondly, SENCOs employed a range of formative and summative assessment practices to support pupil learning but also to assess the professional learning and development needs of their colleagues to support pupil learning. Thirdly, SENCO practice was grounded in the use of evidence informed approaches. Finally, SENCOs were active in evaluating the impact of SEND, in particular, the deployment of school resources such as people, interventions and materials to meet the needs of pupils.

SENCO Practice: Warnock and Beyond

Despite the many criticisms of the Warnock Report, it is still possible to identify fundamental principles of the report that have influenced, nationally and internationally, the development of inclusive education and which were evident in the SENCO abstracts. Three specific principles from the report reflected in the abstracts were: support to be provided to more pupils with a range of SEN and/or disabilities; the effective assessment of SEND and the importance of multiple opportunities for practitioner learning and development, including that of senior leaders.

Firstly, recommended by Warnock, was a focus not only on the 2% of pupils educated in special schools at that time, but also on the 20% of pupils with a range of ongoing and potentially transitory difficulties in accessing the curriculum. The analysis of abstracts indicated that SENCOs were focusing on the needs of pupils across all categories of need at both SEND support level and those pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans. The greatest focus was on pupils with SLCN, literacy, SEMH and autism.

Secondly, the report identified four main requirements for effective assessment: the close involvement of parents; assessment should aim to uncover how a child learns to respond over a period of time and not just at one time point; the investigation of any aspect of performance that is of concern; family circumstances should be taken into account. All of these principles remain core to the current Code of Practice (2015) almost 40 years later and to a lesser or greater extent were evident in the abstracts. Developing strategies to assess a child's specific profile is a complex process but throughout the 50 abstracts that had a pupil focus, it was clear that SENCOs were working with an awareness of this complexity as shown by the nature and range of assessment data collected and analyzed. There was evidence of needing to go beyond a label and look at the barriers to learning in different contexts as well as the classroom, such as functioning during break times. What was less evident from the abstracts was the contribution of parent voice and taking the wider family circumstances into account, although one abstract did explore the use of the Devon Threshold Tool (Devon Safeguarding Children Board, 2016).

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[1] Provision mapping is a way of evaluating the impact on pupils' progress of provision that is additional to and different from a school's curriculum offer to all pupils.

Finally, the Warnock Report recommended that parents should have a point of contact through a designated Named Person. The emphasis in policy of the importance of parents in the education of children with SEN and/or disabilities was strengthened by the Lamb Enquiry which set out to investigate more effective ways of including parents in supporting the education of pupils with SEN and/or disabilities and improving collaboration between school and home (Lamb, 2009). The recommendations of the Lamb Enquiry were embedded within the Code of Practice (2015) which placed parents at the heart of the decision-making process for children with SEN and/or disabilities. Overall, collaborating with parents as a focus for the work of SENCOs was little documented in the abstracts, apart from an abstract on the use of structured conversations with parents (Lendrum et al., 2015). The absence of parents in the abstracts does not mean that communication and collaboration were not a feature of the settings involved, but considering the policy focus, a greater emphasis in the abstracts might have been anticipated (Beveridge, 2004; Staples and Diliberto, 2010).

Limitations

There were three main limitations to the study. Firstly, this study is restricted to 50 students on a programme in one institution in England which limits the generalizability of the findings. Secondly, whilst the abstract analysis revealed that the practitioner enquiry undertaken by SENCOs was strongly informed by research evidence, it should be noted that the academic requirements of a Masters-level assignment will to some extent have influenced the role played by research evidence in SENCO enquiry projects. Finally, the focus is on the SENCOs perspectives which are not triangulated with other evidence such as the perspectives of other stakeholders (professionals, parents, children and young people); observation of practice or inspection reports.

The Way Forward

As a result of the findings of this study, the authors would make three recommendations for practice and research. Firstly, in order to effectively support the education of pupils with SEN and/or disabilities, school leaders need to allocate sufficient time not just for the SENCO role but for all practitioners in a setting. SENCOs require time, for example, to support the assessment of pupils, provide professional learning and development for colleagues, keep up to date with developments in SEND and lead and manage change in their settings. Class teachers and support practitioners need sufficient time to, for example, support formative and summative assessment, provide additional support as required and stay informed with evidence based practice. Secondly, SENCOs and school leadership teams should audit their practices in relation to parental support and engagement to ensure that parents of children with SEN and/or disability contribute fully to the education of their child. Finally, the breadth and complexity of SENCO responsibilities raises concerns not only about the retention of experienced, qualified SENCOs but also for their well-being. It is recommended therefore that SENCO well-being is protected through the introduction of professional supervision for all SENCOs.

CONCLUSION

The introductory chapter of the Warnock report concludes by stating that "Special education is a challenging and intellectually demanding field for those engaged in it" (Warnock, 1978, p 7). The findings from this study and the analysis of SENCO abstracts, 40 years on from the report, highlight some of the challenges faced daily by SENCOs in schools today and how additional study at postgraduate level can support SENCOs in engaging with an increasingly intellectually demanding field.

DATA AVAILABILITY

All datasets generated for this study are included in the manuscript and/or the supplementary files.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The project followed the British Educational Research Association's (BERA) guidelines and received institutional ethics approval from the UCL Institute of Education Ethics Committee. SENCOs completed a written consent form to have their assignment abstracts included in the study.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

RE and CC have reviewed and approved the complete manuscript, contributed to all elements of the study, and in drafting the paper.

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A Picture of Special Educational Needs in England–An Overview

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In this paper I aim to explore and present various statistics regarding special educational needs in England, to get an overview regarding schooling of pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) as it is at the time of writing, as well as historic patterns. I use publically available datasets to present answers to the following questions: What proportion of all children in schools in England have been identified as having special educational needs? How many children attend special schools? What proportion of children attend special schools? How have numbers of special schools changed? What is the balance of gender in i/ pupils identified with SEN, and ii/ in special schools? What are the proportions of children in different school types eligible for and receiving free school meals? The use of publically available national data is used to explore patterns, reporting these data give an overview of the number, profile and characteristics of the population in schools with SEN. They give indications on the progress of inclusion (or lack thereof), and highlight issues of disproportionality. Findings include the number of pupils identified with SEN in England decreases while the population of pupils in all schools rises. There is also a rise in the number of children attending special schools. Disproportionality with regards to gender; socio-economic status and age are also revealed.

Keywords: inclusion, disproportionality, special educational needs, special schools, national data

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INTRODUCTION

In this paper I aim to explore and present various statistics regarding special educational needs in England. These will include both trends (patterns over time) and snapshots (what the situation was in 2018). The purpose of this is to get an overview of schooling of pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) as it is at the time of writing, as well as historic patterns. The paper does not seek to explain the trends; rather it presents them, as a "where are we" picture of SEN in England. This is timely given that 2018 marked the passing of 40 years since the introduction of the term "special educational needs" into English education policy by the Warnock report (Department of Education and Science, 1978). It is important to have such an overview, in order to contextualize the English education system and view the implications of policy on practice with regards to SEN demonstrated through pupil numbers and studies of proportionality. Such an approach can demonstrate and highlight tensions between policy and practice, such as the policy stance for inclusive education but yet an increase of pupils attending special schools. In this paper I present data on the number of children with SEN overall, and in special schools, viewing these through demographic variables such as gender and age.

In England, the definition of if a person has special educational needs or not is enshrined in law. According to the (Children and Families Act, 2014):

1. A child or young person has special educational needs if he or she has a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her.
2. A child of compulsory school age or a young person has a learning difficulty or disability if he or she—
(a) Has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age, or
(b) Has a disability which prevents or hinders him or her from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools.

There is a presumption in England toward inclusion of children with SEN in mainstream schools: "as part of its commitments under articles 7 and 24 of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the UK Government is committed to inclusive education of disabled children and young people and the progressive removal of barriers to learning and participation in mainstream education" (Department for Education Department of Health, 2014, p. 25). The (Children and Families Act, 2014) sets out some exceptions to inclusion in mainstream schools—children with SEN should be educated in a mainstream school "unless that is incompatible with: the wishes of the child's parent or the young person; or the provision of efficient education for others." By reporting the data on the placement of pupils with SEN in articles such as this one we can examine if the presumption to inclusion is being enacted in practice or not.

A word about context—it is sometimes assumed that writing about education policy and practice in England is synonymous with writing about the same in the United Kingdom. This is not so. As Booth remarked in Booth (1996), the legal basis of education differs considerably between Scotland, Northern Ireland, Wales and England. Responsibility for education has been devolved to a national parliament in Scotland, and national assemblies in Wales and Northern Ireland. One of the clearest examples of divergence in policy related to SEN has been in Scotland. SEN law and policy was broadly similar to legislation in other UK countries, until implementation of the Education Act 2004 which abolished the term SEN, replacing it with a much broader definition—"Additional Support Needs." This includes any child or young person who would benefit from extra help, that is, "additional support" in order to overcome barriers to their learning (Hodkinson and Vickerman, 2009). Under this law, any child who needs more or different support to what is normally provided in schools or pre-schools is said to have "additional support needs." These can include (but are not limited to): "bullying; being particularly gifted; a sensory impairment or communication problem; a physical disability; being a young carer or parent; moving home frequently" (Enquire, 2017, p. 5).

Another contextual point is that the government department responsible for educational policy in England has undergone a number of name changes and rebranding, some of which reflect the differences in role and responsibility. In the time since the Warnock report it has been known as:

- Department of Education and Science (DES), 1964–1992
- Department for Education (DfE), 1992–1995
- Department for Education and Employment (DfEE), 1995–2001
- Department for Education and Skills (DfES), 2001–2007
- Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), 2007–2010
- Department for Education (DfE), 2010- to date (National Archives, no date).

Since its introduction by Warnock in 1978, the term "SEN" has been qualified as a characteristic that differs by degree, the one in five likely to require "special educational provision," and the 2% requiring special educational provision beyond that normally available in the ordinary school (Warnock and Norwich, 2010). As Black et al. (2019) explain "from 2001 to 2014, there were three levels of SEN: School Action; School Action Plus (both of which were identified by school staff); and Statement, which involved a legally based record of provision identified by a multi-professional team that took into account parental views" (p. 3). In 2014, approximately 20% of pupils were identified as having SEN at one of these three levels. In the new SEN Code of Practice (Department for Education Department of Health, 2014), these three levels were reduced to two—SEN Support and Education, Health and Care Plans (EHC Plans). Schools now identify pupils with less severe difficulties as having SEN at the SEN Support level, while local authorities identify pupils with more severe difficulties with the EHC Plans, replacing Statements. These policy changes may have an effect on the number of pupils with SEN in schools, and thus an exploration of pupil numbers and trends is an important one.

To meet the aim of giving an overview of SEN in England and plotting trends over time in this article I present answers to the following questions:

- What proportion of all children in schools in England have been identified as having special educational needs?
- How many children attend special schools? What proportion of children attend special schools?
- How have numbers of special schools changed?
- What is the balance of gender in i/ pupils identified with SEN, and ii/ in special schools?
- What are the proportions of children in different school types eligible for and receiving free school meals?

A number of researchers have written similar articles since the publication of the Warnock report. One such article followed the publication of the Education Act that the Warnock report preceded. This was work by Will Swann, who asked in 1985 "Is the integration of children with special needs happening?" He found that between 1978 and 1982, "the total school population aged 5–15 fell from 8.17 million to 7.44 million, a drop of 8.9%. In the same period the total special school population aged 5–15 fell from 119,411 to 114,019, a drop of 4.5%. Thus, the total school population declined faster than the special school population, leading to an increase in the proportion of pupils in special schools from 1.46% to 1.53%" (Swann, 1985, p. 5,6).

Following Swann's exploration, there commenced a series of analysis published by the Center for Studies in Inclusive Education (CSIE), a national charity, founded in 1982 that works "to promote equality and eliminate discrimination in education" (Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education, 2018). Researchers (Norwich, 2002; Rustemier and Vaughan, 2005; Black and Norwich, 2014) were commissioned by CSIE to explore school placement trends (that is, the proportion of children placed in special schools or other separate settings). The most recent trends analysis report on data from 2013 to 2017 is at the time of writing, to be launched in June 2019.

My own journey in academia has also involved exploration of trends in government statistics relating to SEN. Both my Masters dissertation, then my doctoral thesis (Black, 2012) explored the over-representation of secondary school aged pupils in special schools, with a view that these patterns were demonstrations of disproportionality and as indications that inclusion in mainstream secondary schools was not being achieved.

Within special schools in England certain groups are over-represented. The (Department for Education Skills, 2004) noted that the population of special schools was boy-heavy, there was a larger than average number of pupils eligible for free school meals (a proxy for socio-economic status) in these schools, and that two-thirds of the pupils in special schools were of secondary age. Writing in 2008 Dyson & Gallannaugh stated there had been no comprehensive national study of ALL forms of disproportionality. These authors began to address this, collating work that has been carried out in England on disproportionality in the special needs education system (not necessarily within special schools). They discussed ethnicity, poverty, month of birth, gender and age. Work by Strand and Lindsay (2009), and Strand and Lindorff (2018), while focusing on disproportionally according to ethnicity, do explore other variables, such as age, gender and socio-economic status.

There is a wealth of research into the disproportionality of ethnic minority students in the special schools system, at both a national and international level, with considerable effort put in to try to understand and address this problem (Coutinho and Oswald, 2000; Artiles, 2003), including identifying predictor variables for the patterns (Oswald et al., 2002). Lindsay et al. (2006) carried out a national study of ethnic disproportionality within special education provision in the UK, finding this was a cause for concern. Strand and Lindsay (2009) used pupil level data to calculate the odds ratios of having identified SEN across a number of variables, including ethnicity, age, gender, and socioeconomic status. They found that "poverty and gender had stronger associations than ethnicity with the overall prevalence of SEN" (p. 174), but also that after adjusting for the influence the other variables, significant disproportionality of some minority ethnic groups remained.

Other authors have used the affordances of England's National Pupil Database (NPD) to explore pupil level trends, and relationships with other variables of interest (for example: Farrell et al., 2007, explore the relationship of inclusion with attainment; Strand and Lindorff, 2018, examine ethnic disproportionality in SEN in England, across categories of need, controlling for age, gender, and socio-economic status; Liu et al., 2019, look at the effect of changing levels of school autonomy on reclassification of children with SEN, and on them leaving school). The NPD contains administrative pupil-level data about all children of school age in England, comprised of cross-sectional files, each containing over 7 million records on individual children (with anonymized identification numbers) enrolled in English schools. Data in the NPD is classified into different tiers, depending on its sensitivity and rules on access vary in relation to different tiers of data. Users apply to access the data, a Data Sharing Approval Panel meet to approve or reject the application. If approved, users can to construct longitudinal pupil-level files for each school cohort and carry out pupil level analysis (Department for Education, 2019).

Publically available national data (aggregates of school and pupil level data) also helps to explore patterns, reporting these data provides an overview of the number, profile and characteristics of the population in schools. They give indications on the progress of inclusion (or lack thereof), and highlight issues of disproportionality. As described below the Department for Education (DfE) collects and collates data on pupils on a range of variables and measures from schools and local authorities. It also has historic data from its predecessors. Some of these data are analyzed and findings shared through documents entitled "Statistical First Release" (see for example Department for Education, 2018c). However, much of the data are held in files entitled "National Tables"—Excel spreadsheets—with no analysis or qualitative description. This article collates, analyses and describes patterns in the data of interest.

METHODS

In this article I use publically accessible government data, published in 2018, to show trends and snapshots of factors related to SEN. These are publically accessible data made available on-line by the UK government. I use two sources:

(i) Schools, pupils and their characteristics 2018—National Tables (Department for Education, 2018d)
(ii) Special educational needs in England: January 2018—National Tables (Department for Education, 2018b)

These two sources consist of Excel spreadsheets with a range of tabs leading to different collections of data aggregates. For the relationship between source, tabs and research question see **Table 1**.

The Department for Education (DfE) has legal powers to collect pupil, child and workforce data that schools and local authorities hold. This data is used by the DfE to: assess school performance; publish Statistical First Releases; evaluate and inform educational policy; and assess funding to local authorities and schools (Department for Education, 2018a). *Schools, pupils and their characteristics* is one such Statistical First Release, published annually and containing information on the number of schools and pupils in schools in England, using data from the January 2018 School Census. Breakdowns are given for school types (of which special schools are of particular interest) as well as for pupil characteristics including free school meal eligibility, English as an additional language and ethnicity. The 2018 data sets in some instances include data from previous years, hence why time series can be plotted.

TABLE 1 | Source used to answer research question.

Question	Data source (table)
What proportion of all children in schools in England have been identified as having special educational needs?	Department for Education, 2018b *Special educational needs in England: January 2018*—National Tables (1)
How many children attend special schools? What proportion of children attend special schools?	Department for Education, 2018d *Schools, pupils and their characteristics 2018*—National Tables (2a)
How have numbers of special schools changed?	Department for Education, 2018d *Schools, pupils and their characteristics 2018*—National Tables (2a)
What is the balance of gender in i/ pupils identified with SEN, and ii/ special schools?	(Department for Education, 2018b) *Special educational needs in England: January 2018*—National Tables (3) Department for Education, 2018d *Schools, pupils and their characteristics 2018*—National Tables (1a, 1d)
What are the proportions of children in different school types eligible for and receiving free school meals?	Department for Education, 2018d *Schools, pupils and their characteristics 2018*—National Tables (3a)

**Number in brackets refer to the relevant workbook tabs on the National Tables spreadsheets.*

Graphs and descriptive summaries have been produced to create a descriptive picture of what the SEN landscape in England is like in the year 2018. I have chosen not to use an odds index like Dyson and Gallannaugh (2008), nor prevalence rates as used by Swann (1985), but rather present the raw data to answer the research questions. The project is based on the secondary analysis of publically accessible data. BERA (2018) state that "When working with secondary or documentary data, the sensitivity of the data, who created it, the intended audience of its creators, its original purpose and its intended uses in the research are all important considerations" (p. 11). The collectors and publishers of the data—the DfE, recognize that researchers may use the data (Department for Education, 2018a), but that it is aggregate data, with no personal identifiers. In some places I reproduce figures used by the DfE in their reporting of the statistics. Where these are reproduced they are cited appropriately.

RESULTS

In this section I set out the answers to the research questions, illustrated with figures where appropriate.

Number and Proportion of all Children in Schools in England Identified as Having SEN

In 2018, over 1.25 million children in all schools in England were identified as having SEN (1,276,215). The total number of children in all schools was just under 8.75 million (8,735,100). This equates to 14.6% of all pupils being identified as having SEN. In 2007 this figure was 19.3%, rising to a high of 21.1% in 2010, then falling to a low of 14.4% in 2016 (see **Figure 1**). It is interesting to note that this decrease occurs while the population of pupils in all schools rises, from 8,098,360 in 2010 to 8,559,540 in 2016 (it might be expected that numbers of children with SEN might increase as the overall number of pupils attending schools does).

Just over one in five pupils—1,704,980 school-age children in England—were identified as having special educational needs in 2010, the peak of **Figure 2** (a DfE produced graph, 2018c). In 2018 it is closer to 1 in 7 children (1,276,215). The proportion of children identified as having SEN has fallen, since 2010, with a drop off around the time of the launch of the new Code of Practice (Department for Education Department of Health, 2014). Here, a distinction should be made between the different levels of SEN: SEN Support and EHC plans, as discussed in the introduction. **Figure 2** shows that those with the highest level of SEN (statements prior to 2015; EHC Plans from 2015) has remained fairly stable (2.8% in 2007–2017, increasing to 2.9% in 2018) whereas the number of children with SEN at a lower level of severity (School Action and School Action Plus prior to 2015; SEN Support from 2015) has reduced dramatically. The percentage of pupils with identified SEN but no Statement or EHC plan was 11.7% in January 2018. This follows a decline in each of the previous 6 years from 18.3% of pupils in January 2010.

Numbers and Proportion of Children in Special Schools

The number of children in special schools (**Figure 3**) can be compared with the number of pupils in all schools over time (**Figure 4**). In 2018 the number of children in special schools was just under 120,000 (118,390). Over time, the number of children in special schools dropped from 94,755 in 2003 to a low of 90,760 in 2006, but has been rising since then, passing 100,000 between 2013 and 2014. The number of children in all schools fell from around 8.2 million in 2003 to a low of 7.9 million in 2008 (**Figure 4**). In the years 2006 to 2008 pupil numbers in special schools rose despite the number of pupils in all schools falling.

Moving from actual numbers, to proportions of children in special schools out of pupils in all schools (thus accounting for such changes in population), the proportion of children in special schools has been rising from 1.12% of all students in 2005, to a high of 1.38% in 2018 (**Figure 5**). This is against a backdrop of a reduction in number of special schools. In 2003 there were 1,160 special schools. This dropped to a low of 1,032 special schools in 2013, a figure which has risen slightly to 1,043 in 2018. There has been a drop of 10 percentage points in numbers of special schools in the period from 2003 to 2018.

Gender Balance

In this section I report the balance of gender in i/ pupils identified with SEN in all schools, and ii/ special schools. The DfE acknowledge "Special educational needs remain more prevalent in boys than girls" (Department for Education, 2018c, p. 7). **Figure 6** shows that in 2018 a third of pupils with SEN aged 5–15 were girls, the majority (two thirds) were boys.

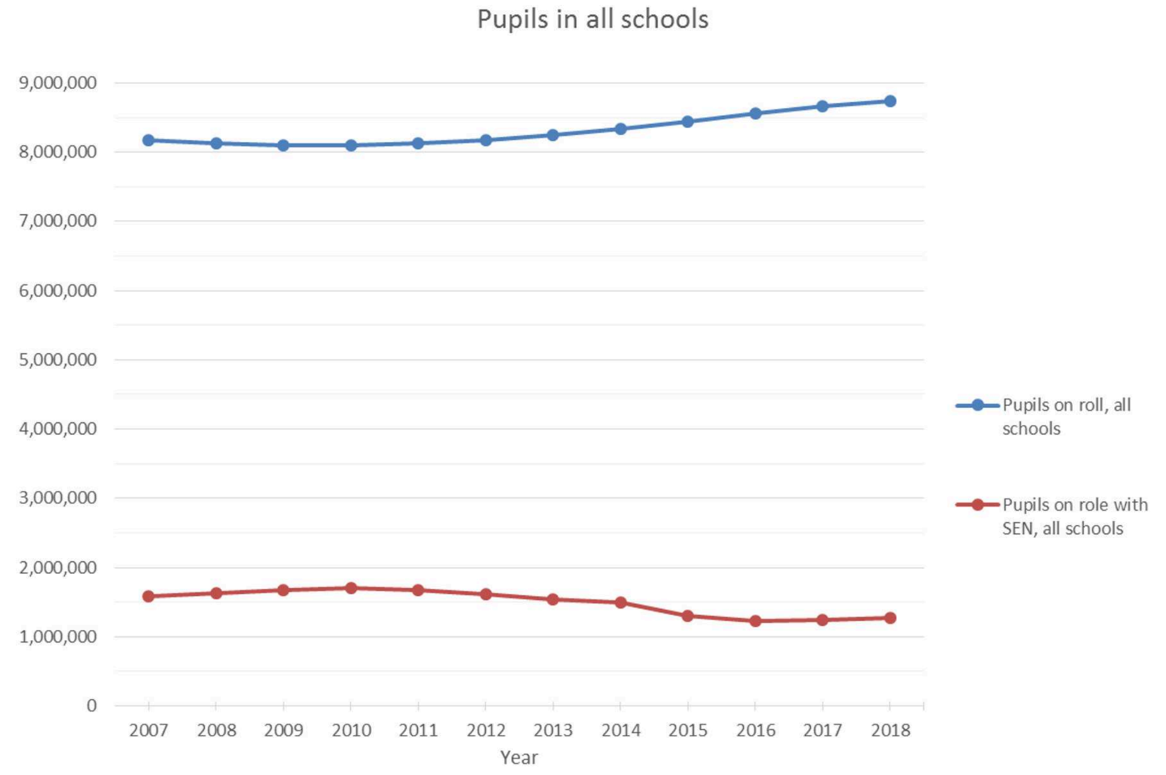

FIGURE 1 | Number of pupils in all schools, total, and those with SEN.

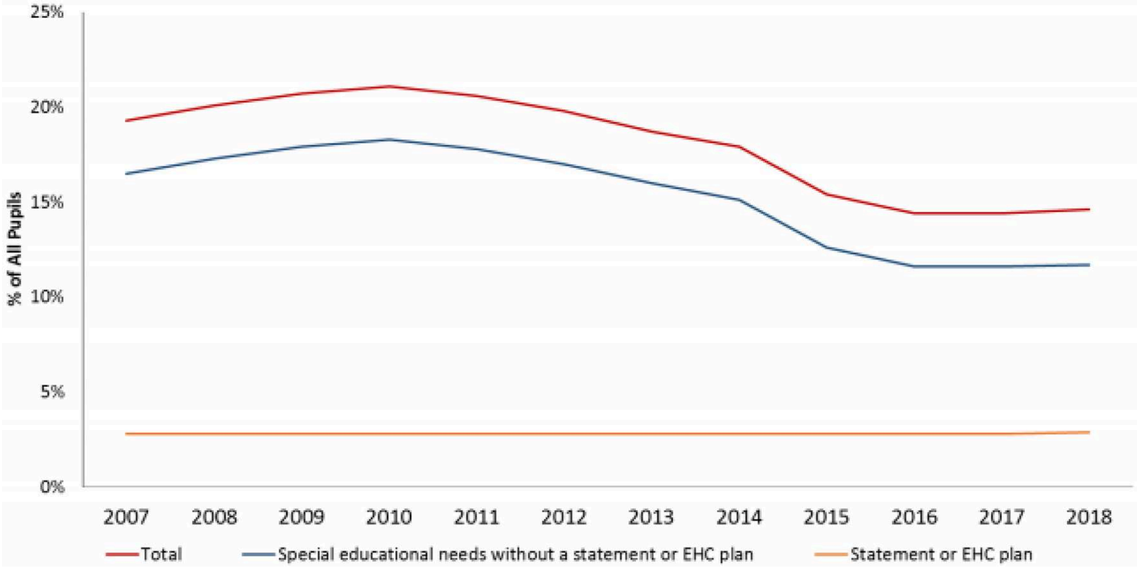

FIGURE 2 | Time series showing the percentage of pupils with special educational needs. Source: Department for Education (2018c).

The gender imbalance is greater when special school populations are examined (**Figure 7**)—in 2018, of the 117,821 of full and part-time pupils attending state-funded and non-maintained special schools 84,890 (72%) were boys.

When the 115,326 of full and part-time pupils attending state-funded and non-maintained special schools in school year groups Reception to Year 14 are plotted (**Figure 8**), several interesting patterns emerge:

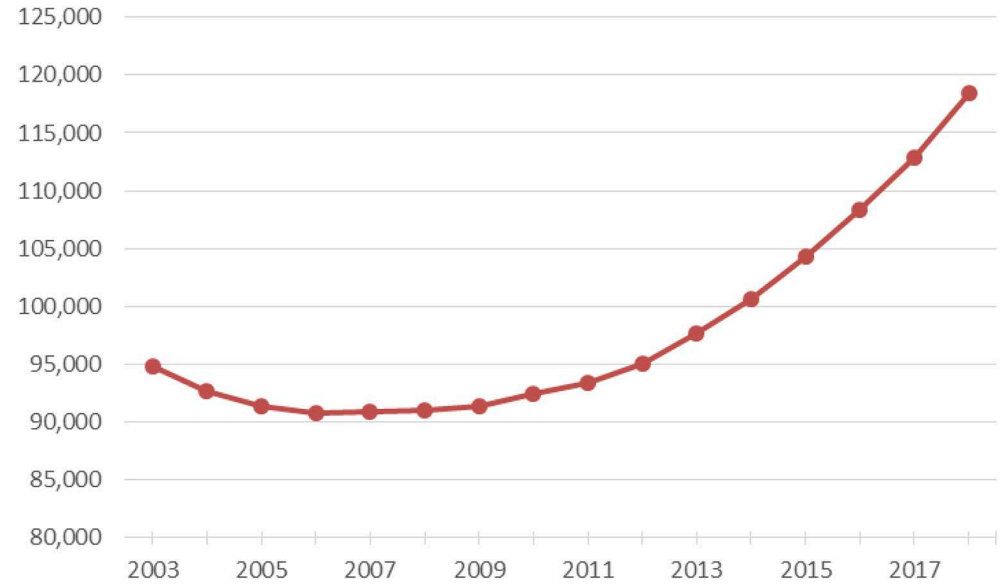

FIGURE 3 | Number of pupils in special schools 2003–2018.

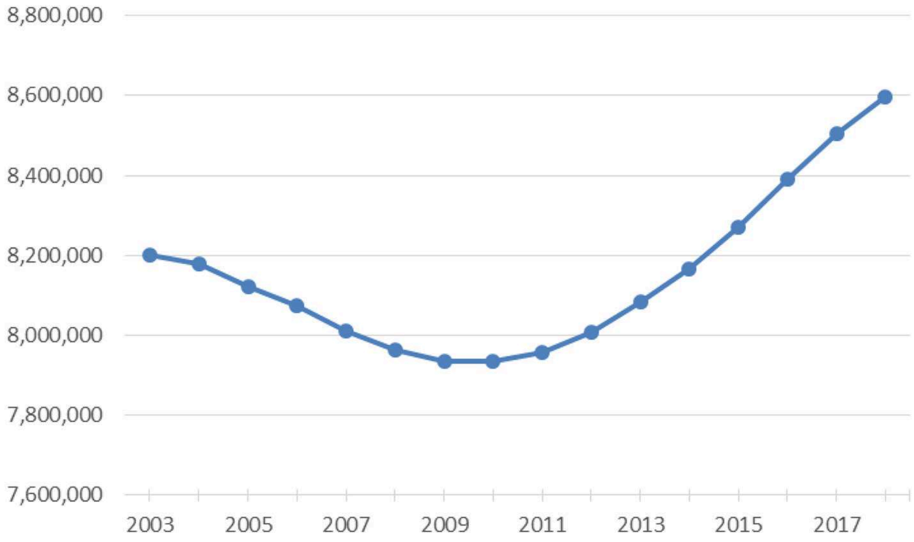

FIGURE 4 | Number of pupils in all schools 2003–2018.

(i) A rise in pupil numbers from reception until year 7, with a large jump in numbers between those in year 6 and year 7 (this corresponds with the year of transfer from primary to secondary school in England).

(ii) There is a slight drop off of pupils from year 7 to year 11, from 3015 to 2912 for girls (a difference of just 13), and from 8031 to 7735 for boys (a difference of 296).

(iii) There is a larger drop off between Year 11 and year 12 (again, corresponding with another time of transition in England, from secondary education to 16+ education. In England pupils have to stay in education until age 18, but this is not limited to staying at school. After the age of 16, students can choose different education paths such as to go to college or to start a workplace apprenticeship).

(iv) The variation between years differs by gender. For boys it varies from a low of 2,931 in Reception to a peak of 8,191 in year 7, for girls the low is 1,157 in Reception, to 3,015 in year 8.

Proportions of Children Eligible for and Receiving Free School Meals

The Department for Education (2018c) state "Pupils with special educational needs remain more likely to be eligible for free school meals—25.8% compared to 11.5% of pupils without special

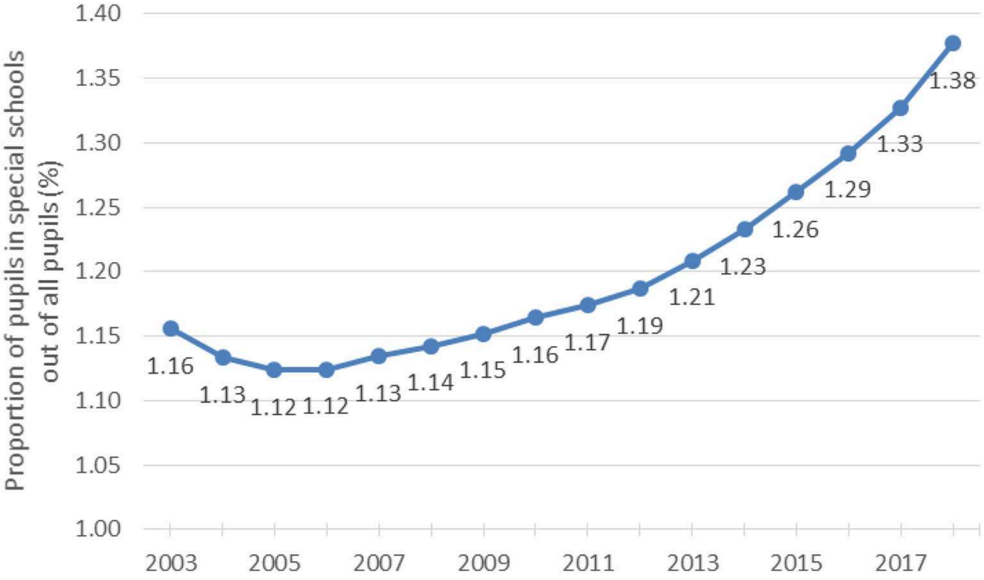

FIGURE 5 | Percentage proportion of children in special schools out of all pupils.

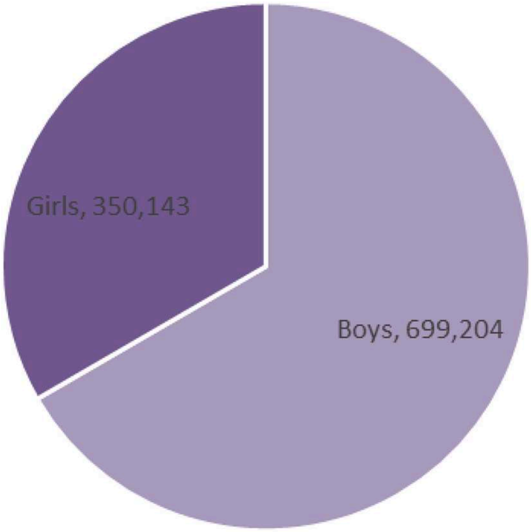

FIGURE 6 | Pupils aged 5–15 with SEN by gender.

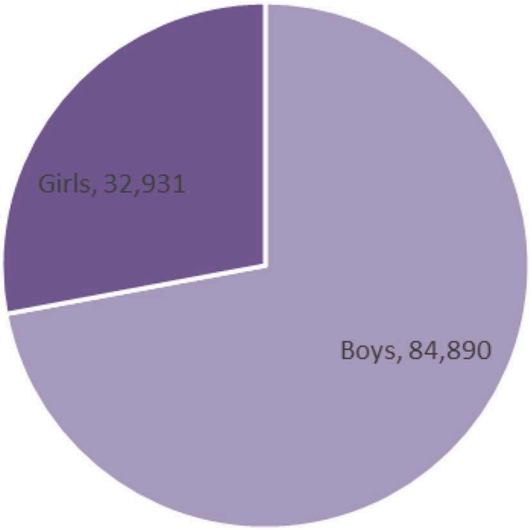

FIGURE 7 | Pupils aged 5–15 in special schools by gender.

educational needs" (p. 9). In 2018, 13.6% of the school population were known to be eligible for and claiming free school meals. In primary schools the proportion was 13.7%, in secondary schools, 12.4%. However, in special schools, 35.7% of the pupils in school were known to be eligible for and claiming frees school meals.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The descriptive data presented above to answer the research questions illuminate some over-arching issues relating to policy and practice with regards to SEN in England, 40 years after the Warnock report. In the introduction I made reference to the Warnock reports nominal 20% of children who have SEN. The Warnock report states: "we estimate that up to one child in five is likely to require special educational provision at some point during their career" (Department of Education and Science, 1978, p. 40). This estimate formed the basis of a number of publications, notably Croll and Moses (1987) One *in Five: The Assessment and Incidence of Special Educational Needs.* It also was seen to be a figure that matched actuality. However, the results above show that there has been a gradual reduction, and in 2018 it was closer to one in seven children. Solity (1991) deemed the original suggestion of one in five to be a myth (an account of the world that has grown up without necessarily being supported by evidence), based on outmoded evidence (the use of IQ tests) and a lack of validity (is it a measure that reflects the proportion of children that teachers experience difficulties with; rather than a measure of children who may have difficulties). Equally, it is hard not to see the reduction in number of children identified as having SEN as result of the English school inspectorate's assertion that "the term 'special educational needs' is used too widely" (OfSTED, 2010 p. 9), and the effect of the subsequent move from three levels of need (School Action; School Action Plus; and statements, Department for Education Skills, 2001) to two (SEN Support and EHC Plan, Department for Education Department of Health, 2014). McCoy, Banks and Shevlin writing in McCoy et al. (2016) outline how a three-step approach combining information from teachers and parents on a range of physical, learning and emotional / behavioral difficulties led to the calculation of a prevalence rate of SEN of 25% (in Ireland), and refer to other cohort studies with similar rates (the Netherlands, 26%, based on parent and teacher reports of SEN). This is closer to one in four children.

It is interesting to note that despite the number of special schools in England falling, the number of children attending those special schools is rising. This could be due an increase in the severity of needs (although the number of children with the highest level of needs as indicated by an EHC Plan has remained fairly uniform). It might be as a result of special schools being keen to keep to full capacity, to justify their existence, similar in some ways to how "Grammar Schools [in Norther Ireland] continue to fill to capacity with a wider ability range of pupils the impact of the population reduction falls on the non-selective controlled school" (North Eastern Education and Library Board, 2013). Additionally, it should be recognized that the numbers of children recorded as being in special schools do not give a complete account of the actual distribution of pupils who are included or excluded (Swann, 1985; Black and Norwich, 2014). "Special schools are only part of special provision. A large number of children are educated in a variety of special classes, units and groups which are integrated into ordinary schools" (Swann, 1985, p. 9).

The Warnock report (Department of Education and Science, 1978) gives no account of potential gender differences affecting SEN. The only mentions of gender are related to historic provision in the chapter about the historical background. In 2007 the DfES published a report exploring the impact of gender on a variety of aspects of education (such as attainment and subject choice). One of the areas explored was SEN, they reported that "boys are more likely than girls to be identified with special educational needs and more likely to attend special schools" (p. 89) 70% of pupils attending special schools were boys (thus the 72% reported in this article indicates a small increase in the proportion of those attending special schools being boys, and subsequently a decrease in girls). In contrast there has been some increase in the proportion of those identified as having SEN being girls– in 2006 it was 30% (Department for Education Skills, 2007) whereas in 2018 it was 33%. So while a slightly larger proportion of those identified as having SEN in 2018 compared to 2006 where girls, a slightly smaller proportion of those placed in special schools are girls. After carrying out a literature review exploring factors influencing the identification of SEN, Dockrell et al. (2003) concluded that a number of mechanisms may be at work related to gender bias in SEN. An interesting conclusion they reach is that girls are in fact disadvantaged as they may have SEN which have not been identified, and are thus under-represented.

Mention of socio-economic status is limited in the Warnock report (Department of Education and Science, 1978). The authors declare "care was taken to ensure that, so far as possible, different types of socioeconomic background were represented in the sample" (p. 388) when reporting on a survey they undertook as part of the studies of the committee. There is an acknowledgment that education in a residential special school may be needed where "poor social conditions [...] either contribute to or exacerbate the child's educational difficulty" (p. 126). The fact that SEN are more prevalent among pupils with low socio-economic status than among their less disadvantaged peers was discussed by Shaw et al. (2016). They note that the relationship is a complex one, spanning from poverty and SEN being conflated by some practitioners; to the links between other factors related to poverty (such as low-birth weight; parental stress) and the likelihood of a child developing learning difficulties.

Although this article may raise the visibility of data published by the DfE there are limitations and cautions that need to be made with regards to the results presented in this article. The statistics are based on aggregates of data, schools are responsible for collating data on a range of variables, and human and/or administrative errors are possible at a range of levels. The DfE makes changes to the types and range of data which are collected, meaning they are not necessarily comparable year on year (Florian et al., 2004).

The figures presented in this article on proportion of children who attend special schools are not directly comparable to previous iterations of the CSIE Trends analysis. **Figures 3–5** in this article are based on population of children in school, whereas in Black and Norwich's 2014 Trends analysis, and in the project that is currently underway, the numerator data provided by the DfE is for pupils aged 0–19 who go to special schools, and thus the denominator is population data for all people aged 0–19 in England. Another point to remember is **Figure 8** shows a snapshot of placement in special school over 1 year. There is a possibility that this pattern may reflect some other factor, such as a change in the general population of children, thus, one cohort needs to be followed longitudinally over a number of years to see if similar patterns emerge before drawing any conclusions about the influence of age on placement in special schools.

This article highlights the potential of national statistics to illustrate trends and historic states, but their explanatory value is limited. There is value of collecting, analyzing and describing these data as broad measures of inclusion (or segregation), and indicators of the effect of policy on practice, but with the acknowledgment they cannot tell us about the mechanisms that cause the patterns. More sophisticated statistical analysis at a Local Authority, school and pupil level

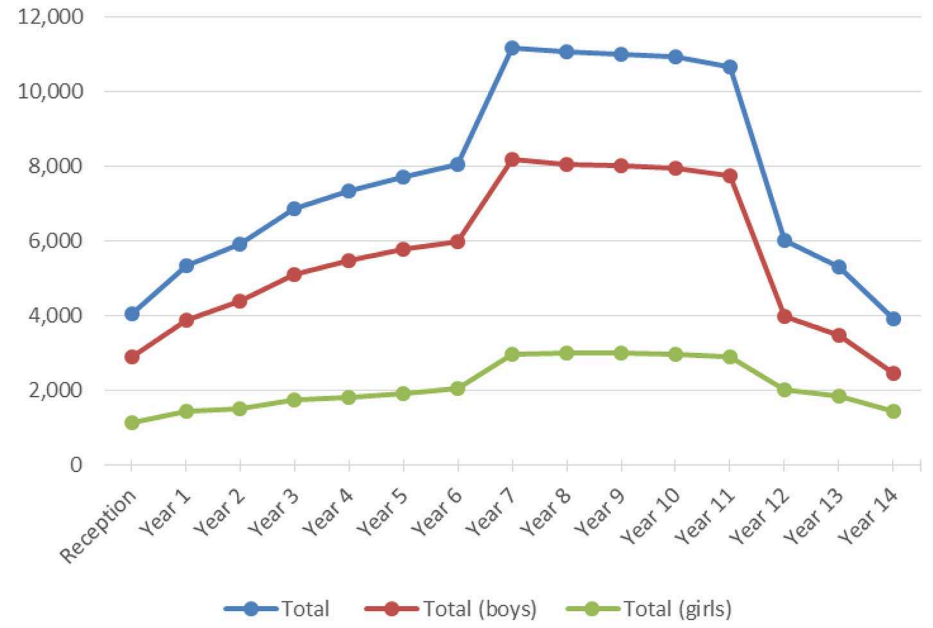

FIGURE 8 | Number of children in special schools by national curriculum age group and gender.

can be done, using resources such as the National Pupil Database, as illustrated by Liu et al. (2019), but there is also a need to go beyond statistics—"meaningful answers to questions about inclusion [...] can be found but they require more than number crunching" (Florian et al., 2004, p. 120). Mixed methods studies should be used to explore reasons for the various patterns indicated in this article. For example, Black (2019) uses questionnaires of key stakeholders to explore reasons for the over-representation of secondary aged children in special schools, finding a range of explanations including school-level factors (e.g., Large size of secondary schools); within-child factors (e.g., the child's "ability" in a range of areas); resources; stakeholder choice; parental preference and an outcome of processes.

Warnock's (Department of Education and Science, 1978) estimates of the one in five likely to require "special educational provision," and the 2% requiring special educational provision beyond that normally available in the ordinary school appear to be fluid, open to variance perhaps linked to policy imperatives rather than changes in children themselves. Some patterns appear to be less variable, this article shows similar patterns to those reported by the DfES in 2004—the population of special schools was still boy-heavy in 2018, there was still a larger than average number of pupils eligible for free school meals in these schools. This article is more than the repetition of data described by the DfE. While the DfE do hold the data they do not present it in a collection in response to specific research questions or in a way to describe patterns visually over time. This article provides such a descriptive overview.

DATA AVAILABILITY

Publicly available datasets were analyzed in this study. This data can be found here: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/schools-pupils-and-their-characteristicsjanuary-2018 and https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/special-educational-needs-in-england-january-2018.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

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Special Educational Needs: Understanding Drivers of Complaints and Disagreements in the English System

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This paper explores why some special educational needs (SEN) disagreements become very distressing for parents and how such disagreements can be prevented or resolved. It is a qualitative study of the experiences of 78 parents (70 mothers, eight fathers) who participated in a national study of experiences of England's SEN disagreement resolution system, 2015–17. The study took place in the context of the biggest reform of the English SEN legal landscape since the seminal Warnock Report in 1978: the Children and Families Act 2014. This legislation extended aspects of individual statutory rights for parents and for the child/young person with SEN and increased expectations of their meaningful involvement in the assessment of needs and planning of provision to meet those needs. It also had a much greater focus on partnership working as a way to prevent disagreements and made statutory the requirement to offer mediation to support early resolution of disagreements. Data were analyzed inductively using the Framework approach and then interpreted in the light of stress theory and the "drama triangle." The main findings are that disagreements are initially driven by a belief that the child's SEN are not being met; and that complaints and disagreements are subsequently driven by experiences of delays and role dissonance during the process of seeking to have the child's needs met. The parental experience of distress can be understood in the light of classic stress theory. The emotional intensity and metaphors of battle can be understood as part of a "drama script." Prevention and early resolution are aided by professionals and practitioners showing empathy, having the knowledge, skills, and understanding to do their job properly, taking responsibility to redress wrongs, by greater investment in the SEN system (staff, staff training, range of appropriate educational provision), and by parents offering peer support. This paper is unique in two ways: in covering parents' experiences across the English SEN disagreement resolution system and in interpreting our findings using psychological frameworks to understand what drives the intensity of such disagreements—and therefore of the way through them to resolution and improved prevention.

Keywords: special educational needs, complaints, disagreements, Tribunals, parental experiences

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INTRODUCTION

The Warnock Report (Warnock, 1978) declared that it was "pre-eminently about the quality of special education" but stated that this required more than a legislative framework:

> "The framework provides *the setting within which people work together in the interests of children*, and the quality of education depends essentially upon their skill and insight, backed by adequate resources – not solely educational resources – efficiently deployed." (Warnock Report, 2.85; emphasis added)

Forty years on, this article addresses what flaws in "the quality of special education" drive a numerous minority of parents (Cullen et al., 2017) to complain about processes or disagree with decisions. It covers those who made formal complaints about the provision or treatment of their child with special needs, sought mediation, and/or lodged an appeal against a decision about their child made by the local authority (LA) officer responsible for SEN in their area.

We focus on three themes in particular from the Warnock Report: the foundation principles of a human right to education (paragraph 1.7), accurate assessment of needs[1] (2.73; chapter 4), and professionals working in partnership with parents (1.5; chapter 9).

The Report, published by the UK government, was ahead of its time in its emphasis on individual statutory rights for children with SEN for which LAs were accountable, and in its advocating that education professionals and administrators work much more in partnership with parents of children with SEN. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), including Article 28 on the right to education, was not ratified in the United Kingdom until 1992. The Report was also a child of its time, building on previous UK government circulars and guidance. Its recommendations, implemented through the Education Act 1981 (England), built on existing systems to create a new administrative system at LA level to process the paperwork and decision-making involved in statutory assessment and annual reviews of needs and provision. Thus, the Act created a new "exosystem" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 25), a decision-making structure that excluded parents (although they had a statutory right to be asked to provide "parental advice"). When Warnock's emphasis on partnership with parents (mesosystem interconnections) was missing in practice, a site of tension was created between parents and LA personnel making decisions on individual cases. Conflict was perhaps inevitable.

Children and young people (CYP) with SEN are, by definition, exceptional. Consequently, it is not surprising that differences of view about the nature and degree of their SEN may lead to disputes, which are different from other disputes in education, such as choice of mainstream school for typically developing young people. Lake and Billingsley (2000) identified eight categories of factors that, from parents' perspectives, increase conflicts with schools, regarding special education, namely different views about the child or child's needs, knowledge, service delivery, reciprocal power, constraints, valuation (e.g., that their child was being devalued), communication, and trust.

Due to increasing parental concern, in 1994 the Special Educational Needs Tribunal was set up to hear appeals from parents in England against LA decisions about their child with SEN. Such appeals increased substantially from 1,170 in its first year (1994/95) to 3,772 in 2002/03: Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal (SENDIST), 2004). The SENDIST was then replaced as part of a broader restructuring of a number of public service tribunals and became the First Tier Tribunal (Special Educational Needs & Disability) (hereafter the Tribunal). The UK government, concerned by the continuing high number of appeals, sought to develop means to enable disagreements to be resolved earlier, including voluntary mediation (see Lindsay et al., accepted), which formed part of the Children and Families Act 2014.

Focus of This Study

This article uses augmented analysis of in-depth qualitative data from 78 parents who participated in a national study of experiences of England's SEN disagreement resolution system, 2015–17, to address two new research questions. That study (Cullen et al., 2017) was part of a broader commission by the Department for Education (DfE) to provide independent information to support Ministerial commitments to conduct a review of disagreement resolution arrangements relating to SEN. It included the pilot extension of Tribunal powers to enable recommendations to be made in relation to the health and social care aspects of an EHC plan, in addition to orders in relation to the education sections of a plan. The research took place between April 2015 and March 2017. In April 2017, the results of the research informed a Ministerial report to the United Kingdom (UK) Parliament (Department for Education and Ministry of Justice, 2017).

The study took place in the context of the biggest reform of the English SEN legal landscape since Warnock: the Children and Families Act 2014. This legislation extended aspects of individual statutory rights for parents and for the child/young person with SEN and increased expectations of their meaningful involvement in the assessment of needs and planning of provision to meet those needs. It also had a much greater focus on partnership working as a way to prevent disagreements and made statutory the requirement to offer mediation to support early resolution of disagreements. The government hoped that the use of independent mediation between the LA and the family would help to resolve disagreements and reduce Tribunal appeals. The Act did not amend or reform the multiple complaints processes relevant to children/young people with SEN and disabilities.

Using both the policy agenda (parents' rights, partnership with parents), and the theoretical frameworks of the bioecology of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998, 2006), stress theory (Lazarus, 1966; Lazarus and Folkman, 1984), and the "drama triangle" (Karpman, 1968) to interpret our data, the paper seeks to understand why a minority of SEN disagreements become difficult to resolve and are experienced by parents as intensely emotional and stressful.

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[1] Building on the Department of Education and Science (DES) Circular (2/75), "The discovery of children requiring special education and the assessment of their needs" (Warnock report, 2.73).

Theoretical Frameworks Used to Interpret Our Data

A number of theoretical frameworks shaped our thinking at the point of mapping and interpreting our thematic analysis. They did not drive the data collection or the thematic analysis, only the interpretation of our findings.

The SEN System as Part of the Human Bioecological Environment

Forty years on, the tension remains between two aspects of SEN law: the individual rights of parents and young people and the corporate duties of LAs. From an education perspective, Bronfenbrenner's theory of the ecology (later bioecology) of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006) is helpful in pinpointing that this site of tension lies in the exosystem: a place where decisions are made that affect the developing person but which do not include the developing person. This site has not changed in these 40 years. What has developed over that time in successive SEN Codes of Practice (Department for Education, 1994, 2015; Department for Education and Skills, 2001) is stronger guidance on working "in partnership" with parents and, by the 2015 version, "involving" parents and young people in expressing their views about needs, provision to meet needs and in that decision-making process. Those involved in the education, health, and care (EHC) needs assessment and plan development processes (which replaced earlier statements of SEN) are expected to have "high quality engagement" throughout that process. In this article, we focus on the roles[2] of parents and LA SEN team personnel.

The role expectations of the LA SEN team personnel (officer responsible, other officers, case workers; administrative staff) have been set out in ever more clarity over the successive Codes of Practice. These include following the statutory timetable for the assessment of needs and writing of an EHC plan (Department for Education, 2015, 9.44) and a strong emphasis on working closely with the child or young person, and the child's parents (Department for Education, 2015, Chapter 1 "Principles"). The three underpinning principles are germane to this study. These are that LA staff must "have regard to the views, wishes and feelings of the child or young person, and the child's parents," enable them to participate in decisions affecting them, and give support and make provision "to help [the children] achieve the best possible educational and other outcomes, preparing them effectively for adulthood" (Department for Education, 2015, 1.1).

Particularly relevant for this study is the paragraph defining what parents "participating in decision making" means during the statutory EHC needs assessment process:

> "Local authorities, early years providers and schools should enable parents to share their knowledge about their child and *give them confidence that their views and contributions are valued and will be acted upon*. At times, parents, teachers and others may have differing expectations of how a child's needs are best met. Sometimes these discussions can be challenging but it is in the child's best interests for *a positive dialogue between parents, teachers and others to be maintained, to work through points of difference and establish what action is to be taken*". (Department for Education, 2015, 1.7; emphasis added).

The 2015 Code of Practice chapter on resolving disagreements includes four principles: making decisions about SEN provision jointly with parents and CYP; open communication about the decision-making process; providing information; and support to take part in the decision-making process; and telling parents and young people about the routes for resolving SEN disagreements (Department for Education, 2015, paragraph 11.1).

The emphasis on joint decision-making and on open communication can be viewed as encouraging the enrichment of two aspects of the bioecology of families with a CYP with SEN: (i) at the "microsystem" level, that is, creating more of what Bronfenbrenner (1979) defined as "settings" where face to face communications take place; and (ii) at the mesosystem level which is made up of all the interconnections between the micro- and the exo-systems.

Stress Theory

The parents we interviewed talked about the stress involved in challenging a LA decision affecting their child and/or complaining about the way in which their child's special needs were addressed. In seeking to interpret and understand what parents said about stress/distress, we drew on stress theory (Lazarus, 1966; Lazarus and Folkman, 1984): that prolonged and multiple forms of stress build up and may tip individuals into physical and or mental ill-health. This shaped our presentation of these findings.

Role Dissonance: The Drama Triangle

When the "pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 22) goes awry, as described by parents involved in this study, one way of understanding this is offered by the Karpman's "drama triangle" (1968, 2007). This is a heuristic device that can be used to conceptualize the roles and role reversals that happen in dysfunctional personal interactions. Like core concepts from Freud's psychoanalysis theories, Karpman's insights around the drama triangle have seeped beyond the discipline from which they derive (transactional analysis) into the much broader fields of psychology and counseling. We draw on this in the discussion to help make sense of our findings.

Previous Research

Previous research has reported that some parents find SEN disagreements stressful and both emotionally and, in the case of Tribunal appeals, financially costly (e.g., Duncan, 2003; Runswick-Cole, 2007; Kids First, 2013). One gap we seek to fill is that previous studies have focused on only a part of the parental experience of SEN disagreement; for example, on informal disagreements (Wright et al., 2012), or on mediation (Tennant et al., 2008); or on Tribunal appeals (Runswick-Cole, 2007). In addition, previous work on parental experiences of SEN disagreements has comprised relatively small scale qualitative studies or larger-scale surveys with limited contextual detail.

The second gap identified in our review of the literature on parents' experiences of SEN disagreements is a focus on understanding *why* a minority of such disagreements are

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[2] Using the Bronfenbrenner (1979, p84) definition of "role".

experienced as extremely stressful. Duncan (2003) in a small-scale study (10 families; two LAs) identified two, "particular leitmotifs that seemed to aggravate the parents as much as the substantive issues [...] helpful and unhelpful people; personal cost" (p. 344–345). Other studies have tended to describe that the experiences are stressful, rather than illuminating why this is the case.

Purpose of the Study

This paper addresses two research questions: (i) Why do some SEN disagreements become so distressing for parents? (ii) How can such disagreements be prevented or resolved? These questions were identified after analysis of our data to address the research questions of the national study, reported in Cullen et al. (2017).

METHODS

We used a qualitative research design and analytical approach because the depth and contextual richness of such data enables the development of new understanding. The data analyzed were collected through semi-structured interviews with parents who had experience of using at least one disagreement resolution process since September 1, 2014, when the Children and Families Act, 2014 (England) came into force.

Participants

Seventy-four interviews were held with a total of 78 parents (in four cases, with male-female couples). In total, 70 were mothers and eight were fathers. Age ranged from 20s to 60s with the largest group in their 40s (a majority-53- were in their 40s or 50s). Sixteen different ethnicities were self-described, including Black British, British Asian, British Indian, British Pakistani, Chinese, Greek, Irish, Mixed, White American, with a majority (49) stating, "White British." Seven different types of relationship status to the other parent of the child discussed were used: the majority (49) were married; other states were "adoptive single mother" (2) divorced (6), partner (3), separated (5), single (4), and widower (1). Of the 66 asked about employment status, 36 were in full-time (18) or part-time (18) employment and 30 were not in paid employment. Of the 65 asked about highest educational qualification, the range was from Level 2 (e.g., O-levels, GCSEs) to Level 8 (doctorate degree). The majority (42) had either a degree (21) or a post-graduate degree or qualification (21). This was therefore a diverse group of mainly mothers, with a skew toward those with above average educational qualifications.

PROCEDURES

(i) Participant Recruitment Process

Parents were recruited by multiple routes. Our starting point was that 17 LAs had agreed to be case study LAs for the DfE-commissioned research[3] (Cullen et al., 2017). These LAs were given leaflets for parents/young people who had appealed to the Tribunal. The leaflet explained about the research and asked permission for the LA to forward their contact details to the research team after the appeal's conclusion. The leaflet stated that contact details would only be used by the researchers to send an invitation to participate in the research, along with a detailed information sheet and consent form. This opt-out route was designed after discussion with representatives from the 17 case study LAs and the DfE. All other routes were opt-in routes based on an invitation leaflet and information sheet for parents/young people with experience of at least one disagreement resolution route since September 1, 2014.

These leaflets were distributed to relevant parents/young people in the 17 case study LAs through mediation services, parent-carer forums, and local SEN information, advice and support services.

Recruitment went wider than these 17 LAs partly through word-of-mouth (participating parents telling others about the research) but mainly through posts on social media by the DfE and by individual participating parents containing a link to our webpage with the invitation leaflet, information sheet and consent form. In total, parents from a quarter of all English LAs took part (39 of 152). The diversity of routes by which parents came to the study was designed to enable us to access parents with experience, across the sample, of as many different disagreement resolution routes as possible.

No incentives or compensation was offered to participants. Each was sent a thank you e-mail or card and was offered the opportunity to be thanked by name in the Acknowledgments section of the published report. Most chose this option. The study was granted full ethical approval by the University of Warwick's Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (Ref: 111/14-15; 24.7.2015).

Contact details were received for 96 potential interviews, through LAs or most commonly directly from parents. Of these, 74 took place and 22 did not (77% success rate). Two of the 22 did not meet our selection criteria (experience of disagreement resolution since September 1, 2014). One withdrew because of illness. In the remaining cases, the parent did not respond to our initial or follow-up e-mails/texts. Interviews were held over a period of 10 months, starting mid-March 2016 and finishing in late January 2017.

(ii) Data Collection

Participants were offered the choice of face-to-face or telephone interviews. Almost all chose the latter. A minority (5) were face-to-face with venue agreed to suit the convenience of the parents.

The interviews varied in length from about 50 min to about 6 h (that one was split over three conversations). Most took between 90 and 120 min. The variation in length was driven by the number of disagreement resolution routes used by the parent, the number of children discussed and how much detail, including of the backstory, was shared. We wanted the parents to feel listened to, whilst we covered the topics on the interview schedule. Therefore, those who wished to share a lot of detail were not hurried on or "closed down." In these interviews, disagreement resolution pathways were discussed involving 81 children/young people, of whom 64 were male and 17 female.

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[3] These were also the LAs involved in the pilot of the extended powers of the SEN Tribunal.

Interview Schedule

In addition to basic demographic information about the interviewee and about the child or children whose case/s were the focus of the interview, the main sub-sections of the interview schedule focused on: open questions about parents' experiences of the EHC needs assessment and planning process; knowledge, use and views about the local information, advice and support service, mediation service, disagreement resolution service, complaints routes, and the appeals route, including the Tribunal pilot. The interview concluded with an open question asking for anything else the parent wanted to convey.

As a result of listening to parents in the first few interviews, a question was added asking for the parent's perspective of their child's strengths, following on from the one asking about their perspective of their child's needs. We quickly learned that the interview worked best if we gave parents the choice of beginning with their experience of the EHC assessment and planning process or with the disagreement resolution route uppermost in their mind.

All the interviews were digitally recorded, with permission. Due to limited financial resources, a minority (15) were transcribed in full. These were the first 10 interviews undertaken (to provide full texts from which to begin developing the analysis framework), plus five of the more multi-faceted cases, involving several different disagreement resolution routes. For the rest, very full notes were taken during the conversation, always using the interviewees' vocabulary, including many verbatim phrases. These were augmented afterwards by listening again to complex sections to clarify or fill out the notes with transcription. These complex sections, where it was not possible to note down quickly enough with adequate detail and accuracy what the interviewee was saying, were marked on the notes taken during the interview, cross-referenced to the time indicated on the digital recording. This enabled efficient use of partial transcription of the majority of the interviews.

Analysis

The overall approach to data analysis was inductive and followed the five stages of the "Framework approach" described by Ritchie and Spencer (1994): familiarization; creating a thematic framework; coding the text ("indexing") to identify which sections relate to which part of the framework; summarizing these data in Excel worksheets built to reflect the framework ("charting"); and finally seeking to make sense of these data through mapping of concepts and interpretation of meaning ("mapping and interpretation"). This method was used because it was designed for applied policy research and we have used it successfully many times before.

The main coding categories were derived from the topics structured in to the semi-structured interview schedule: EHC assessment and planning; Information and Advice Service; Disagreement Resolution Service; Mediation; Appeals; Pilot appeals; and Complaints, plus a Summary sheet collating information about the parent (e.g., gender, age, ethnicity, relationship to the child); the child (e.g., gender, age, SEN from parent's point of view, strengths from parent's point of view); and the disagreement route/s followed (e.g., domain of disagreement (e.g., refusal to assess), external support if used (e.g., legal, support group), outcome. Each sheet contained a row per child/young person's case discussed and multiple columns headed by the sub-topics relating to each theme. The sub-themes within each main category were initially the relevant sub-topics included on the interview schedule. Additional sub-themes were added, derived directly from the data. For example, sub-topics such as "impact on health" and "impact on family" were added to the "Costs" sub-theme relating to the main categories, "Appeals" and "Pilot appeals."

Most of the interviews were conducted by Cullen with the remainder by Thomas; Cullen and Thomas met to debrief after each interview or day of interviewing. Cullen and Thomas conducted the initial analysis, making it easy to collaborate and to agree on the original framework and on additions as these emerged from the data. Any issues were resolved by discussion and going back to the notes, transcript, or voice file for clarification. Cullen added analysis relating to the two new research questions (for example, topics such as "unmet need" and "delays in process" were added to the Summary sheet and additional main coding categories were added, derived from engagement with the data: Backstory to disagreement (summary narrative); and Driving the disagreement (parent's "thoughts," "feelings," "behavior"; and "thoughts," "feelings," "behavior" (as reported by parent) of all others involved, such as school staff, LA staff, medical staff. The "Backstory" theme was sub-themed *within* each case, because the context and detail provided varied so much from case to case. Cullen and Lindsay developed the "mapping and interpretation" of these data presented for the first time in this paper.

RESULTS

Reasons Why Some SEN Disagreements Become So Distressing for Parents

In this section, we summarize six main themes that emerged from our data as to why some SEN disagreements became so distressing for parents.

Our participants experienced all the normal stresses of everyday adult life, with its routine contingencies, temporary inconveniences, and routine irritants, as well as major life events, such as family bereavements. In addition, some experienced specific additional everyday stressors, such as long-term health conditions. This was the background stress to which all the other stressors (themes 1–5) added.

1.These Children had Significant SEN

The children and young people were described by their parents as having complex needs. We did not collect independent evidence of this but, in every case, the parents' account of the severity and/or complexity of their child's needs were reported to have been corroborated by professionals through the statutory assessment process. In cases where a refusal to assess need was the decision that caused the dispute, the parent's views about the child's level of needs were not corroborated until after assessment had been agreed at mediation or ordered by the Tribunal appeal panel judges.

None of the children discussed by our participating parents as the subject of the disputes with the LA had needs that meant borderline decisions had to be made; their assessed needs were significant. For example, in 19 cases where the LA had initially refused to assess the child's need, but then agreed to do so after mediation or a Tribunal order, all the children proved to have complex needs. Examples included: a young child about to enter a school-based nursery who was profoundly deaf, had cochlear implants, speech, language, and communication needs, and global developmental delay; an 11 year old with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), dyspraxia, mental/emotional issues, abdominal migraines, and working at the expected level for a 6 year old. In our data, there were also six cases where the LA assessed needs and then refused to issue an EHC plan, a decision later overturned either through mediation or by Tribunal order. Again, these were not borderline cases: for example, the reported assessed needs of these children, in summarized form, included: a 16 year old with chromosome deletion, dyspraxia, and anxiety and depression; and a 9 year old with autism, severe ADHD, sensory processing disorder, generalized anxiety disorder (GAD), dyspraxia and sleep difficulties.

In all other cases in our data, the disagreement was over the content of an EHC plan or over the decision to cease a statement of SEN at a point of transition. The largest sub-group of parents we interviewed were those who disagreed with elements of the content of the EHC plan. Their disagreement was about a perceived failure to describe needs accurately, and/or to record a plan and placement that would meet their child's needs. In all these cases, the child's needs had been previously assessed as being at a level requiring the LA to ensure additional provision was in place to meet significant SEN.

Thus, in all the cases discussed by parents in our research, the CYP were described as having significant SEN. This can be thought of as the "baseline additional stressor" theme in parental accounts: "the real life issues of your child," as one father (Interview 2) put it. In five interviews, the parent/s discussed having more than one child with significant SEN. Having more than one child with SEN increased the stress such parents felt at this "additional baseline" level.

2.Concern Over Unmet Needs

The first driver for the parents to engage with the statutory assessment process was a strong belief that their child's educational needs required support over and above that available in the current educational setting (or in the setting the child was about to move to). This is the situation the system of statutory assessment was designed to deal with. For our participants, the system did not deliver this; at least, not at first. When they received a decision such as a refusal to assess or a refusal to issue an EHC plan, it was this belief that drove these parents to challenge school practices and LA decisions. They believed they had to seek a different outcome to ensure that their child's special needs would be met, and their strengths flourish. At stake, was their child's well-being and life chances: for example, "We're talking about [our son's life" (Father, Interview 67); "[Our son] is our responsibility. There is nothing I would not do for him. [He] did not ask to be born with SEN" (Mother, Interview 108).

For example, one mother explained that her decision to go to mediation and to appeal had been triggered by the "harrowing time" she and her son both experienced:

> "[...] sending my kid into that school every single day, knowing that he was getting kept in for break because they weren't supporting him through his work and he was getting told off. He was self-harming, everything." (Mother, Interview 32).

She reported that her son, in Year 6 at time of interview, had been diagnosed with Tourette's syndrome, high-functioning autism, sensory processing dysfunction and fine motor coordination difficulties. She described two "wasted" years of schooling for her son as he first of all waited for the LA to agree to assess his needs, which was done after conceding to her Tribunal appeal, and then found that his school ignored the EHC plan, unilaterally removing the 25 hours of support assigned to him, "because they wanted him independent for high school," and accusing him of "using his Tourette's as an excuse." After a meeting with the head teacher, she removed her son from the school and placed him elsewhere, explaining:

> "I said to them, 'If you can't accept a medical diagnosis as a valid reason [for behavior], there's no point my son being around you. You've done enough. He's suffered enough." (Mother Interview 32).

The mother in interview 32 was not alone in taking exception to the behavior of some school staff toward her child with SEN. This was also true for a substantial subgroup of our participants. For example, one mother (Interview 81) described her son's difficulties in secondary school having started after a new person took on the role of special educational needs coordinator (SENCO). Reportedly, this SENCO told this mother that her son was, "too clever to have SEND" and removed the support provided in accordance with his statement of SEN. When the parents met with the headteacher to seek a solution to the bullying their son was experiencing daily, the headteacher reportedly told this mother, "I can't help it if [your son] is irritating." As a result of these cumulative issues, these parents chose to take their son out of schooling, enrolling him in an online alternative.

Neither was the mother in Interview 81 alone in removing her son from schooling. Our participants also included a sub-group of participants who had done the same for similar reasons: issues around unmet needs in school having gone on for years, getting worse over time. This removing or rescuing of a child from a school perceived as inimical to their well-being was one response. Other parents who spoke to us described responding to similar situations by fighting back. For example, in Interview 30, one mother described writing a five-page letter of formal complaint about her son's headteacher to the Chair of Governors and copying it to "absolutely everybody I was aware of in the whole system." It contained:

> "[...] five pages of documented complaints about failures; failure to do any of the transitions, failure to make any allowance for

> his autism, failure to manage anxiety in a school environment." (Interview 30).

The complaint was upheld, as were two further complaints to the same Chair of Governors. In this parent's view, the Chair, "knew that they were on very, very dodgy ground because what they had done was not legal; they had made no allowances for his disability at all." (Mother, Interview 30). This mother described herself as "absolutely ferocious" in "using [the school's] own processes" to ensure that her son's needs were met as far as possible while he waited for his EHC plan, stating that she wrote e-mails to the school, "every single day for months."

In order to get their children's needs met, three of the five participants who had more than one child with SEN found themselves in the position of having to appeal against LA decisions for two or three of their children in parallel. For example, the mother in Interview 23 had twins aged 17, each with complex needs (one with high functioning autism, ADHD, anxiety, and literacy difficulties; the other with autism, dyspraxia, visual processing disorder, epilepsy, learning difficulties, sleep disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder). Unhappy with the content of both EHC plans, the parents appealed separately for each twin. For one twin, the LA conceded shortly before the Tribunal hearing; the parents won their appeal for the second twin. Having multiple children with unmet needs increased the stress experienced by these parents.

3.Engaging With the Statutory Processes

There were three aspects of having to engage with statutory processes that added stress to the lives of the parents who spoke to us. One was the demands of the various processes, a second was delays experienced during these process and the third was behavior by staff involved in these processes which was perceived by these parents as unpleasant and unprofessional.

(a) Demands of the processes

The demands of the various statutory processes varied, according to our participants. The least stressful processes (in terms of the demands of the processes themselves, not the issues involved) were making a formal complaint and contacting a mediation service. With few exceptions, these were reported as being easy to do. The most stressful processes, in terms of what was required of parents, were contributing views to the statutory assessment process, commenting on draft EHC plans, and preparing evidence to substantiate an appeal to the Tribunal. In relation to the first two of these, time, effort, and emotion were invested which was felt to be worthwhile when the views solicited were taken into account in subsequent decisions made by the LA SEN personnel involved. When this did not happen, that investment was deemed a stressful waste. For example, one mother (Interview 108) who had already experienced administrative incompetence (her son's first EHC plan was issued with the wrong name, date of birth, school and syndromes) also found that his amended plan ignored his parents' views, despite these having been requested via a specific form:

> "What is the point of completing all that information about your child? […] You lay yourself bare and spend time and effort filling in the forms. [...] If we're asked for our views in the future, we won't give them. We're not going to play anymore." (Mother, Interview 108).

In relation to the appeals process, the demands of lodging an appeal were low but the demands associated with putting together the evidence required to win the appeal were reported as high. For example, one mother said:

> "I'm somebody who I would say is extremely well-educated and I've found this process extremely, extremely challenging. I think there are children out there who have parents from poor social class, poorly educated, they haven't got a chance in hell. Children are being let down." (Mother, Interview 25).

Parents who had experience of the Tribunal process reported costs in terms of large amounts of time, energy, stress, and direct financial costs varying from zero (those eligible for legal aid or who chose to represent themselves and not to pay for independent professional reports) to those who spent many thousands of pounds. The process itself could also be prolonged. For example, one mother of a 12 year old with complex needs appealed to the Tribunal and found herself involved in a case that went on for over a year and took four hearings with Tribunal panels to reach a conclusion. Although she won the appeal, achieving "99% of the amendments I wanted in the Plan," she was left feeling, "angry that it's taken so much time away from me being with my son to help my son deal with what he is coping with." She added:

> "I find it appalling that that a [LA] would put a parent through all this, much less a single parent who already can't work because her son has such high level needs [...]". (Mother, Interview 26).

(b) Delays

Delays during the processes engaged in whilst seeking to get their child's needs met exacerbated parents' distress. Very often, parents in our research reported multiple experiences of delay. The experiences described in Interview 50 illustrate this. This mother's son was aged 19 at time of interview and had had a statement of SEN since he was 12 years old. The LA approached the mother to suggest the statement be transferred to an EHC plan in view of the 2014 legislation. She described the following 2 years as, "a nightmare," one strand of which were the repeated delays experienced. These included a wait of 9 months between submitting her views as part of the EHC assessment process and any professionals' reports being received; a wait of 3 months in agreeing a draft plan as meeting after meeting was canceled by the LA's SEN staff; a wait of 4 months in receiving a final EHC plan. The process, which is meant to take a maximum of 20 weeks (Department for Education, 2015, p. 154), took 64 weeks. She even faced delays in responses at all three stages of her formal complaint against the LA (which was upheld by the Local Government Ombudsman).

Meanwhile, her son was attending college with no support, consequently failed key exams, and so lost his college place. This case is one illustrative story from our data demonstrating that delays during the statutory processes added to distress, not only because of frustration with the system, but because of the negative consequences for the child or young person with SEN. As illustrated in this case, delays in a key process also often triggered formal complaints.

(c) Dissonances between role expectations and reality

There were two main ways in which parents in our research reported a sense of dissonance between their expectations of staff in professional and practitioner roles and the reality they sometimes experienced. One was realizing that not all staff were competent in the roles they held; the other was that staff could behave in ways perceived by these parents as unexpectedly unpleasant and unprofessional.

Examples of administrative incompetence were frequent in our data, including EHC plans being sent out with the wrong name; decision letters being sent to the wrong parents; draft EHC plans being lost by SEN officers; documents for Tribunal appeals being sent in by the LA with pages missing. None of these were unique examples and all caused delays and irritation or distress.

Examples describing what parents perceived as professional incompetence were also common in our data. These included LA SEN case workers and officers who were described as not knowing their legal duties, or not knowing how to put into practice the principles set out in the legislation and Code of Practice regarding the role of parents and young people in decision-making. For example, Interview 71 was with the mother of a 10 year old boy described as having ADHD and severe dyslexia, as well as other assessed needs. She reported that, despite the partnership and involvement principles underpinning the Children and Families Act and the Code of Practice, her, "views seemed to count for absolutely nothing" during the assessment process; that her "views were dismissed [by the principal SEN officer]" during the mediation meeting; that "none of my amendments were included [in the final EHC plan] with no explanation given as to why this was so"; that the LA SEN team "did not consult with any of the schools I'd asked [to be named in the plan]." Her appeal was upheld by the Tribunal but her experience had led her to believe that, "the views and wishes of parents are [...] not being used as an underpinning principle." She reported that the effect was, "emotionally and psychologically exceptionally distressing," saying that she had "felt so alone." (Interview 71).

A number of parents reported LA staff behaving in unpleasant and unprofessional ways toward them. One mother reported (Interview 57) being in a mediation meeting (the purpose of which is early resolution of disagreements) where the head of the LA's SEN team said, "This file is closed and that's it" as she emphatically closed her physical file of the child's paperwork held by the LA. Shocked that one person could have that power to close down discussion and negotiation, she and her husband immediately lodged an appeal to the Tribunal, which they won. They viewed this incident as illustrative of a "corrupt" and "shocking" culture of ignoring parents within their LA. Others spoke of LA SEN staff displaying bullying behavior. What one described as "bully boy tactics" (Mother, Interview 9) seemed to be associated with the period after an appeal had been lodged and before the Tribunal hearing. For example, one father described behavior by the LA SEN team during that period as being, "outrageous" and bullying:

> "The Council's behavior was outrageous. They took the law in to their own hands. They thought they can bully us as parents but unfortunately for them they picked on the wrong people." (Father, Interview 67).

(d) Parents acting out of role

A minority of parents talked about their own behavior as being out of line with what was expected of parents of a child with SEN. This was always reported as a response to behavior by LA staff that was perceived by these parents as deliberately or thoughtlessly unhelpful. For example, several parents described using repeated Freedom of Information Requests to annoy the LA SEN staff who they perceived had caused them unnecessary stress and trouble. Others repeatedly lodged formal complaints or used as many routes of complaint in parallel as possible. One mother who reported having adopted this tactic explained that she later realized that, "I'm better off trying to cut a deal with them," rather than complaining. She experienced her upheld complaint as a "hollow victory," saying, "Being right x years later [...] won't change what's happened. That's what my complaining has taught me." (Mother, Interview 6).

Another approach was to involve the media. For example, one father went to the local TV news channel as well as to ITV to publicize his daughter's case. He reported that "feedback from a number of charities was that you have to shout and swear and make a stink" (Father, interview 103). Another mother, outraged by the amount of time her son was missing his education because of the disagreement process, wrote letters to the Head of the SEN team and to the Director of Children's Services "fining" them (*in loco parentis*) for failing in their responsibility to make provision to meet his SEN. She found that simply threatening to go to the media with this story was an effective weapon.

Some simply got very angry, shouting at the SEN caseworkers and/or officers whom they felt were treating them badly. For example, one father (Interview 77) of a 5 year old non-verbal child with autism "on the severe side" described losing his temper when a case worker said, "I understand exactly what you are going through"–after months of interaction with multiple staff whom his wife had experienced as "very rude, racist and ignorant," a "refusal to assess" decision, and three inadequate draft EHC plans in which, "none of our expressed wishes had been taken on board." At that point, he reported shouting at her and demanding a final plan be issued so that he could appeal to the Tribunal. Afterwards, he felt ashamed at having raised his voice, and so chose to communicate by e-mail only from that point on. He also escalated things by gaining legal help through a parent support organization, making a formal complaint to the LA's Cabinet Member for Education, and putting in Freedom of

Information requests relating to therapist reports that had not been passed on to them.

Others expressed their sense of being "picked on" by their LA and stated their determination to fight back with all the resources at their disposal, partly on behalf of those who were not able to do so. For example, one couple reported that their attitude toward their LA was combative: they involved a lawyer, their local MP, and made Freedom of Information requests because they had come to believe that the LA would, "push you off until you make a serious fuss." They knew they had the education and financial resources to fight back ("If you had to pick on someone, you wouldn't pick on us!") but they did this in part because they believed that, "the system is stacked against those who can't fight back" (Father, Interview 93).

4.The Number of Processes Over Time

Almost all the parents, without prompting, provided the "backstory" to the issue that had caused a disagreement to arise around assessing and/or meeting their child's needs. The power of this backstory in driving parents to seek a resolution to the disagreement was clear in the interviews but the nature of that driving power only became apparent during analysis. It was the number of times, over time, that they had had to get involved with practitioners and professionals in order to ensure that their child's SEN were recognized and met. To illustrate this, we pick out one example from each end of the age range of children discussed in our data. Even the two parents interviewed about children aged 3 had had to engage with multiple processes. For example, one mother (Interview 5) of a 3 year old had requested an assessment of her son's needs supported by "two and a half years' worth of clinic letters, hearing tests, health visitor reports, pediatrician reports […] reams and reams of paperwork," been refused, had sought help from the local Information, Advice and Support service, and had requested and attended mediation (which she experienced as "confrontational," "like a courtroom," as a "battle").

She had previously had a "big battle" with the local health authority, including having made a formal complaint. This mother expressed what it felt like to have "another big battle going on," when she was already "juggling" the usual stresses of life, plus having a child with a disability.

For those participating parents whose children were in the post-19 age group[4], the number of processes and the number of years of "fighting" and "battling" for their child was concomitantly greater. The new issue they had in common was to get their LA to agree their child could continue their education. For example, one mother of a son aged 22 (Interview 76), who had had his statement transferred to an EHC plan aged 21 was distressed to find that this was withdrawn after an annual review (without this possibility having been addressed at the annual review). The LA's SEN panel, according to his mother, had withdrawn his educational provision, "because they felt he would be better served by social care funded provision." Following a formal complaint and a mediation meeting, his education provision was partially restored but not before he had lost a year of education because of the withdrawal of provision. This mother mentioned having had voluntary, independent support for 10 years from a family advocate, at "meetings and in complaints against social services." After 10 years when such support was necessary, she reported that she and her husband were "exhausted" and therefore did not want to take the LA to Tribunal over the remaining outstanding issues related to his EHC plan.

This sense of being too "exhausted" or "worn out" by all the "battles" over time was something mentioned in many other interviews too. For example, the mother of the twins mentioned earlier who had had to appeal to the Tribunal in both cases (one was conceded by the LA; one was won by the parents) said:

> "After the appeal, we wanted to complain about the broken rules over deadlines [i.e. about delays in the process] but we were too worn out. And it wouldn't have made any difference anyway." (Mother, Interview 23).

5.Fear for the Future

The number of times, over time, that parents had to "do battle" on behalf of their child was a fourth level of stress that also created a fifth layer: fear for the future; a dread that at every annual review the LA was given a new opportunity to take away hard won support from their child. For example, comments such as this one were frequent: "It concerns me that every year we will have to go through the same thing–the battle starts again." (Mother, Interview 109). Even one couple who had been through six different disagreement resolution routes and two formal complaints whilst seeking agreement that their choice was the right school placement for their son (who was visually impaired, and affected by three other conditions) reported no sense of security about the future of that "placement: We feel it could all be pulled away. […] There is no security around it." (Mother, Interview 88).

6.The Cumulative Consequences on Family Life

All the parents we spoke to had experienced the stress associated with having a child with significant SEN (theme 1) and believing that at least some of these needs were unmet (theme 2). They all experienced, but varied in the extent to which they were affected by, the demands of engaging with statutory processes and the extent to which they experienced delays and role dissonances (theme 3), in the number of processes with which they were involved over time (theme 4) and the extent to which they feared for the future (theme 5). Consequently, they also varied in the extent to which the process of seeking resolution to their SEN disagreement had a negative impact on their lives.

For example, in one case, the delays caused by professional incompetence of an EHC plan writer led to negative impacts on both the child and the mother. This mother, who had been very positive about the "child-centered" approach to gathering the information on which her son's draft EHC plan was based, was then disappointed with the draft plan: "The Plan was very poorly written […] not measurable, reasonable or achievable. […] We went through nine drafts to get to the Final" (Mother, Interview

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[4] The Children and Families Act 2014 extended statutory SEN processes and provision beyond age 19 up to age 25.

37). During that prolonged drafting stage, her son's headteacher threatened him with exclusion and so the LA moved the child to a special unit for the seven remaining months of that school year. The following school year, he was transitioned back into mainstream school 1 day at a time but was permanently excluded by the November (with the headteacher arguing that the school could not meet his needs). As a result, the mother was forced to give up her own university course to look after him during the 9 months he remained out of education. At time of interview, he was accessing 3 days a week in school. In addition, she reported her son's distress at losing his friendship group at his original school and then at the special unit, only to be excluded on return to his original school.

To give an example arising from a formal complaints process, one mother described herself as still, "deeply stressed" months after the case had been settled:

> "I feel deep resentment to the system. I feel complete injustice. We tried so hard through all the right channels to settle. Even now, 9 months since the case was effectively settled, I feel deeply stressed when I see an e-mail from the LA." (Mother, Interview 102).

Over half our interviewees (47) had experienced an appeal to the Tribunal and every one of these interviewees spoke about the negative impact on their health and/or on the family. (This was in addition to direct financial costs incurred.) The balance between the impact on health and on the family varied. For example, one mother reported the main impact on her health as being anxiety-based loss of sleep which was, "draining and frustrating," but the broader impact on the family was much greater as she had given up full-time work to look after her son and the loss of earnings had then caused financial strain and family divisions. Another reported that her husband had suffered depression and, "had had a breakdown over it" (Mother, Interview 19), in part due to their decision to home educate their son (in response to lack of agreement with the LA). She described them both as feeling stressed and fighting more because of this.

Others described the negative impact of stress and anxiety on parental health (including time off work, use of anti-depressants) yet pulling together as a family. Still others spoke of the opportunity costs of the time, energy, and money invested in an appeal: for example, "I spent a lot of time on the appeal instead of having couple time or time as a family. You can't cost that (Mother, Interview 40); or, "Otherwise I would have used the money [over £15,000 spent on the appeal] to go on holiday, pay for my other son's driving lessons, and pay to move house" (Mother, Interview 74). The negative impact on the child at the center of the disagreement, as well as on siblings, was also raised by many of our interviewees, in particular, their declining mental health (anxiety, depression).

In our sample, there was a minority who reported serious negative impact of the cumulative stresses, including the stresses involved in an appeal to the Tribunal. These included cases of getting into debt, becoming homeless, feeling suicidal. In each case, the respective interviewee attributed this to the financial and other costs of seeking to resolve the disagreements over how the LA should meet their child's SEN. The most serious case was a father who reported that his wife, who had a pre-existing mental health condition, had killed herself the day after a residential placement was refused for their 11-year old, non-verbal, incontinent daughter, who required "constant care and supervision" (Father, Interview 103). He did not blame the suicide on the LA but believed the LA's decision had been a contributory factor. After an adjournment of the appeal hearing, the LA conceded the appeal.

Overall, the cumulative effect of the stresses involved in resolving disagreements over how their child's SEN were met led to an increase in what we earlier termed the "background" stress of everyday life: health concerns, money worries, relationship difficulties et cetera. The words of one mother sum up the views of our participants: "No-one should have to go through this to get proper education for their child" (Mother, Interview 84).

How Can Such Distressing Disagreements be Prevented or Resolved More Quickly?

In this section we present five clear themes that emerged from our data relating to perceptions of how best to prevent, or more quickly resolve, disagreements about a child's SEN and/or the provision to meet these needs.

1.Show Some Understanding

The first theme arose either directly or by implication in almost every interview. Our participants indicated that some acknowledgment from the staff they encountered of the lived reality of having a child (or children) with significant SEN either did or would have reduced the stress of engaging in school-based and statutory processes. For example, as a mother of two boys with different significant special needs put it,

> "These are families and these are children: vulnerable children. They should have a little more compassion; a bit more of a humanitarian outlook approach toward these families who already go through so much stress every day. [...] The child has got to be the focus in this." (Mother, Interview 64).

2.Do the Job Properly and Listen to Parents

The second theme also arose in every interview, again either directly or by implication. If staff they encountered in public services (such as school, LA, health settings) did or had behaved in accordance with role expectations, the participating parents reported that this had or would have made it easier to resolve issues. In a school-based example, one mother contrasted her ability to work with her son's SENCO and headteacher during Year 2, with the refusal of the new headteacher and SENCO to entertain the possibility of making any reasonable adjustments for her son's ASD in Year 3, while they waited for his EHC plan to be issued and a special school to be named:

> "How I used to work with the previous head and SENCO is we would work together, 'Could we do this?' and they might say, 'Well, that's not possible but we could do that.' So we would kind of ideate it together. I sat there and I said [to the new headteacher], 'Could we do this? Could we do that? [...] In the end, I went, 'Could we move him to another Year 3 class where the teacher isn't changing all the time.' [The head] just looked at me. All she

> ever said was, 'Do you understand we cannot have your child at this school?'" (Mother, Interview 30).

3.Take Responsibility to Sort It When Things Go Wrong

A strong theme in our data was parents' desire for those in authority at school and LA levels to be accountable: to take responsibility when things went wrong and to act to sort things out. Several parents expressed a desire for the education complaints system to be revised and strengthened, having had frustrating and negative experiences of these processes. For example, one mother said in relation to a formal complaint at school level: "There was nobody who actually addressed the issues that we were raising as parents." (Mother, Interview 8).

A desire for greater accountability was also expressed in relation to the LA SEN team. For example, one parent said: "As a SEN parent, it's normal experience to be let down! […] No-one is held accountable!" (Mother, Interview 17). The minority who had experienced mediation agreements not being implemented or even Tribunal decisions not being put into practice were particularly vocal about the need for greater accountability, querying, for example, "Who is holding the LA to account for *not* meeting the needs set out [in my son's] statement?" (Mother, Interview 66).

To give a positive example, in separate interviews, two mothers from the same LA described how a new head of the LA's SEN team stepped in to right wrongs that she had noticed in their respective children's cases. These were children whose needs were not recognized in their respective schools. The parents (not known to each other) made parental requests for assessment. When the LA SEN caseworker then requested documentation of what the respective schools had already done to meet the children's needs, none was forthcoming. At the LA SEN panel, the new head of service picked up on this, and intervened directly, visiting these parents at home and meeting with the headteacher and SENCOs at the two schools. This action was viewed very positively by the parents. For example, one said:

> "Somebody very high up [i.e. the SEND manager] had sat on the panel and heard a story about [our son] and wanted to know how we got so far with no paperwork [from the school]. […] She goes beyond and past a mile to help and she'd only just joined. We called her our guardian angel. Such a lovely caring person." (Mother, Interview 13).

4.Invest in the LA SEN System

In spite of the psychological distress and cost, both financial and otherwise, caused by the disagreements with decision-makers involved in their child's education, one theme in our data was that some parents contextualized their individual experiences within an overall SEN system that was, in their view, under-resourced. This included financially under-resourced: for example, "I know that they do care but ultimately they've got strapped resources and a lot of children to attend to," (Father, Interview 2). It also included under-resourced in terms of the number, quality and training of its staff: for example, one mother who also worked for a LA as a SEN information, advice and support worker noted that she had received more training for that role than the case workers in the EHC assessment and planning team:

> "It's down to who is managing [a SEN team], what their knowledge base is and whether or not that is cascaded to the team. There is no standard. I think that is what is missing. I think there should be a set continuing professional development [input] before you are let loose [in that role]." (Mother, Interview 78).

This sub-group were magnanimous in acknowledging the pressures on LAs and how that affected individuals trying to work within a pressurized environment. Parents asked for investment in more staff and for staff to be well-trained in SEN law and in the skills of working in partnership with parents, and with empathy and understanding of children with complex needs. There was acknowledgment that the Children and Families Act 2014 set out a positive framework but an awareness that, in their experiences, the implementation in practice did not live up to the underpinning principles. As one father put it:

> "The new SEN framework depends on culture change and that has not happened. […] Training is not enough; there needs to be follow-through to implementation in practice." (Father, Interview 59).

5.Offer Peer Support to Other Parents

Having come through all the stresses and strains of their own disagreement resolution experiences, a minority of mothers and fathers used this to provide support to other parents going through similar issues. For example, one father (who had appealed five times in relation to his own children) set up a not-for-profit business supporting other parents to prepare Tribunal cases and attended Tribunal with them. One mother who had had to give up her job in order to give support to her son later became a parent champion for an online charity supporting families with children with SEN. Another mother became an ambassador explaining: "I don't want to stop the fight because there are lots of other parents out there […] who can't necessarily write the letters." She had become an autism ambassador in order to help other parents: "You have to pay back. So many people helped me when I needed it that I now need to go back and help other people" (Mother, Interview 30).

Others volunteered their help in more informal ways. For example, one mother reported that she had, "joined some forums and realized that I'm not alone. There are lots of us." (Interview 71).

DISCUSSION

Our findings need to be viewed in context. Parents involved in a formal disagreement or complaints process related to their child's SEN are, at any time, a minority of the population of parents with a child with SEN. For example, in an English study of EHC plans issued in 2015, of over 13,600 parents and young people, two-thirds were satisfied with the process and three-quarters agreed the EHC plan led to the child or young person receiving appropriate SEN support (Adams et al., 2017, p. 11).

Nevertheless, those in disagreement are an important minority. They flag up when the, "quality of special education" and the "skill and insight, backed by adequate resources[…] efficiently deployed" of the "people working together in the interests of children" (Warnock Report, 2.85) fall short.

Understanding Why

Findings in relation to our first research question, *Why do some SEN disagreements become so distressing for parents?*, can be understood in three inter-connected ways. First, our findings show that, from these parents' perspective, there is one main driver of disagreements (belief that the child's SEN are unmet) and one main driver of complaints (delays and role dissonances experienced while seeking to ensure the child's needs are met). This is a new insight.

Secondly, using Lazarus's four-part model of stress (Lazarus, 1966, 1993; Lazarus and Folkman, 1984) as a lens, we can see that the initial driver of the disagreement ("agent of stress") from the parents' point of view is the belief that their child's needs are not being met and hence their child's strengths cannot thrive. This is viewed as a serious threat ("appraisal of stress") to the immediate and long-term interests of their child, setting up the situation as a main source of distress. Engaging with statutory processes can be viewed as the "coping mechanism." The demands, delays, and role dissonances experienced during these process lead to the "stress reaction." The delays and role dissonances then, in turn, act as further "agents of stress," appraised as further threats to the child's well-being. Having recourse to formal complaints processes and making use of other options, such as Freedom of Information requests, can thus be viewed as different "coping mechanisms." As the length of time and the number of processes engaged in increased, and fear for the future grew, the cumulative "stress reaction" became more serious. Some of the decisions made as a result of the stressful situation in which parents found themselves, such as taking a child out of school, giving up paid employment, in turn became new "agents of stress," appraised as threatening to the well-being of the whole family. Parents' "coping mechanisms" were tested by this, with many reporting that the "stress reaction" had reached very negative heights, including mental and physical illnesses. Understanding this pattern is also a new insight into SEN disagreements and complaints.

Thirdly, one way of understanding the powerfulness of the emotions (the "stress reaction") felt by parents when confronted by professionals and case workers who did not behave in accordance with reasonable expectations of their role is to draw on learning that has its roots in transactional analysis of everyday behaviors. Specifically, the insight that the drama of conflict and emotional intensity is created by unexpected role switches around the "drama triangle" of Rescuer, Persecutor, Victim (Karpman, 2007). This is a useful heuristic device when interpreting our findings about role dissonance. When parents and education professionals act as expected of their roles, they have a mutual responsibility to work together to support the special needs of the vulnerable child. Once this has gone awry and the parent believes the school-based professionals are not playing their part of supporting the child's needs, the parent turns to the LA professionals. The expectation is that the LA SEN team will work in partnership with the parent to ensure that the child's needs are met. When this in turn goes awry (a refusal to assess, for example, or by experiencing delays or unexpected behavior), some parents react to this role dissonance as a perceived attack (i.e., the expected ally in the SEN team is suddenly perceived as acting against their child's interests). In response, they take on the dramatic role of "rescuer" of their child who becomes "the victim" in the drama, leaving only the role of "persecutor" for the LA personnel.

The use of the word "drama" in transactional analysis, and here, is not derogatory or dismissive; it is a signal that the adults have switched out of consciously taking responsibility for their actions into unconscious "roles" with set "scripts." In what we could call the "drama of unmet SEN," the script becomes filled with metaphors of battle. These metaphors pepper our data, as they did in other studies of parental disagreements relating to SEN in England (e.g., Duncan, 2003; Kids First, 2013), in America (e.g., Mueller and Buckley, 2014), and in Scotland (e.g., Weedon and Riddell, 2009). In some cases, as our data also illustrates, parents may at times take on the "persecutor" role with the LA staff as the "victim." The "drama" continues until it is interrupted. This can happen when one of the "players" consciously steps out of "role" (as the mother in Interview 6 did when she realized that "cut[ting] a deal," i.e., working cooperatively together, was a better option for her child than continuing her "battle"). It can also happen when the case is taken to an independent mediator or to an independent panel at a Tribunal. That the "drama" is unnecessary is illustrated by the actions of the LA officer who intervened directly to address the unmet needs of the child of the mother in Interview 13. In doing so, she acted professionally in the expected mode of partnership with parents and prevented a disagreement arising.

Aspects of our findings can be found in previous research on parental experiences of SEN disagreement resolution. For example, the negative impact of delay Local Government Social Care Ombudsman (2017) or of role dissonance (Valeo, 2003; O'Connor, 2008; Yates and Hulusi, 2018); the pressure associated with demands of the processes (Penfold et al., 2009); a model of costs that includes opportunity costs, emotional costs, productivity costs as well as direct cots (Levine, 2001). Our work extends all of these studies. Previous categorizations of parents as "awkward customers" (Duncan, 2003, p), "their child's champion" (Weedon and Riddell, 2009, p 77) or as "high profile" or "bull-dog" parents (Rehm et al., 2013, p. 1381) may also be illuminated by our insights from the "drama triangle."

Our work makes three significant contributions to understanding parental perspectives of the dynamics of SEN disagreements. By allowing parents to include the backstory, and by asking about their experiences of every available form of SEN disagreement resolution in the English system, it has, firstly, provided the most complete picture to date of the parental, "journey through the SEN 'system' [and their] perceived struggles to attain special educational provision for their child" (Tennant et al., 2008). By framing our study in the light of Bronfenbrenner's theory of human ecology, and using the lenses of stress theory and the "drama triangle" to interpret our data, we have, secondly, identified the drivers of disagreements and complaints; and, thirdly, increased understanding of why some of these become so distressing for parents.

Prevention or Earlier Resolution

Findings in relation to our second research question, *How can such disagreements be prevented or resolved?*, are important as they demonstrate a way forward that could address each of the stress levels we identified as experienced by the parents. The normal stresses of everyday life are ameliorated by others showing ordinary kindness and understanding. When a family is also dealing with one or more children with significant SEN, this level of human empathy becomes even more important. If all school and LA SEN staff treated parents with this everyday courtesy and understanding, that is a cost-free way in which some of the stress would lift. Similarly, ensuring that all such staff were properly trained, and willing and able to do their jobs in the spirit of partnership with parents that has underpinned legislation and SEN Codes of Practice since the Warnock Report, the demands of engaging with the statutory processes would become much more manageable for parents. Without unnecessary delays and experiences of role dissonance, the focus would remain on addressing the needs of the child, and the drivers of complaints and the "drama" of the 'persecuting" authority, the "rescuing" parent, and the "victim" child would be unnecessary. In this way, the negative impacts on the parents, child and family would disappear or be greatly reduced and there would be no need to fear for the future.

As early as 1998, Evans identified that the qualitative factors associated with LAs with lower levels of appeals were to do with high quality relationships with parents and other stakeholders. (Evans, 1998) In relation to preventing complaints, the Local Government Social Care Ombudsman (2017) also recommended that LA SEN staff, "work closely with families throughout the EHC process" (p. 21) and also ensure staff received proper training in the law. In a small scale study interviewing 10 school district level directors in one USA state, Mueller and Piantoni (2013) also concluded that good practice in preventing and resolving SEN disagreements was largely about the quality of relationship the professionals created with the parents, including seeking to put themselves in the parents' shoes.

Our finding that parents wanted schools and LAs to be more accountable is given weight by facts, such as that, in England, in the first 2 years of local area SEN inspections, 31 of 68 areas (46%) had to provide a written statement of action (Ofsted, 2018, p. 12). Similarly, the Local Government Social Care Ombudsman (2017) stated that, "Councils and all other bodies providing local public services should be accountable to the people who use them" (p. 22). The context was that, after over 100 investigations of complaints related to EHC plans, 79% were upheld compared to an average "uphold rate" of 53% of all their investigations.

Finally, our finding that a sub-sample of the parents went on to support other parents following resolution of their own cases may be a sign that there is some altruistic awareness of the inequity inbuilt in the system (described by Gross, 1996). It indicates that "parent power" *can* be "generous in spirit rather than narrowly focused on particular interest groups" (Gross, p. 8).

Limitations

A strength of this study is its scale. To our knowledge, this is the largest study on the topic to date in terms of number of in-depth interviews with parents. There have been questionnaire surveys of larger number of parents expressing views about SEN disputes (e.g., Kids First, 2013, received 400 responses to a survey), but these inevitably lack the richness and contextual detail of in-depth interviews.

One limitation is that here we deliberately focused on parents' perspectives only. The theoretical lenses we chose to help to make sense of these perspectives reflect the microsystemic and mesosystemic foci of these data. Perspectives expressed by local authority representatives, not included here, would require a wider lens to incorporate the more macrosystemic aspects affecting disagreements and disagreement resolution that they raised, such as budgetary constraints–and differing views–on the national and local allocation of resource to children and young people identified as having significant special educational needs.

Another limitation is that we do not know how representative our parent participants are of all those in England who have completed at least one SEN disagreement resolution process since September 2014. In fact, it is not possible to assess this as no demographic data is published on parents of children with SEN who make complaints, attend mediation, or appeal to the Tribunal.

More than three-quarters of the children/young people discussed by the parents were male. This is reasonably representative of the gender balance in the population of children with a statement of SEN or EHC plan in England (males 4.2%: females 1.6%, Department for Education, 2018, p. 7).

The interview schedule included questions at the end about the interviewee's age (in decades), self-described ethnicity, relationship status to the other parent of the child discussed; highest educational qualification; employment status; and job, if employed. Due to the semi-structured nature of the interview, and their placement at the end, these questions were asked in the majority, but not in all, cases. Our data therefore does not describe the interviewees as a whole; rather, the majority of that group. Nevertheless, a strength is that our participants were diverse. They were drawn from 39 English LAs (a quarter of the total); they were diverse in age, ethnicity, relationship status, employment status, and educational qualifications. A limitation is that there was a gender skew: more than eight times as many mothers were interviewed as fathers. Mueller and Buckley's study (2014) of the views of fathers of children with disabilities is a welcome redressing of the domination of mothers' viewpoints in SEN research.

Our study was qualitative and designed to generate new understanding of a sample of parental experiences of SEN disagreements in England. It should not be assumed that these can be generalized to all such parents in England, nor to other national contents. However, it is robust enough to serve as a useful starting point for further larger-scale and potentially multi-national research that could test out the findings.

Implications

Forty years on from the Warnock Report (1978), our findings indicate the continuing need to focus on the "quality of special education" and on ensuring that those "people [who] work together in the interests of children" with SEN have the "skill and insight" and "adequate resources" to do so effectively. The LA retains the responsibility to make adequate provision for the SEN of all the CYP in the area. It has to do so in a much changed context, affected by delegation of resources, of support services, the "freeing" of schools from LA control, and a post-2008 period of austerity. Yet, as our findings show, the underpinning principles of the Warnock Report remain relevant: the human right to education, accurate assessment of needs, and professionals working in partnership with parents. When these are in place in practice, our data indicate that SEN disagreements will be prevented or more easily resolved.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The datasets for this manuscript can not be made available because this possibility was not included in the original contract with England's Department for Education nor in the consent forms with participants.

ETHICS STATEMENT

This study was carried out in accordance with the recommendations of the UK Concordat to Support Research Integrity, The University of Warwick's Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee with written informed consent from all subjects. All subjects gave written informed consent in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki. The protocol was approved by the The University of Warwick's Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

MC led the research on which this paper is based and led the writing of the paper itself. GL was co-investigator and co-wrote the paper.

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Statutory Assessment for Special Educational Needs and the Warnock Report; the First 40 Years

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The Warnock report 'Special Educational Needs' (Warnock, 1978) provided the catalyst for an enduring framework of individual statutory assessment[1] in England for children and young people (CYP) with Special Educational Needs (SEN). Through its implementation in the Education Act (1981), enhanced in the Education Act (1993) and consolidated in the Education Act (1996), the report established the overall SEN framework in England for last 40 years; laying the foundation for statements of SEN and more recently Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). The underlying legal structure has been reinforced with the introduction of the Children and Families Act (2014). However, by establishing the right to specified levels of resource for individual CYP, the Warnock framework has risked undermining adequate provision and parental confidence in the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) framework; a central dilemma of the SEND system. This review considers the development of the statutory assessment system and the consequences of this specific model of securing provision for CYP with complex needs. It also explores the importance of securing parental confidence in the non-statutory offer. While additional legislation to strengthen the SEND framework is desirable the Government could begin to address concerns about the quality of the non-statutory offer through a more rigorous implementation of current legislation linked to reforms in funding, accountability and a renewed focus on rights based legislation in education. The conclusions are focused on the English system but the analysis is relevant to other jurisdiction's assessment, funding, and accountability models.

Keywords: Warnock, statements of special educational needs, SEND reforms, education, health and care plans, Equality Act, SEND funding

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INTRODUCTION

Warnock and Assessment

The Warnock Report envisaged assessments would be focused on those needing additional support as "children who require the provision of regular special help outside the ordinary school . . . .call for greater resources and more complex organization of services." The assessment was a means to secure these resources; "Unless these needs and the corresponding means of meeting them are explicitly recorded there will be real danger of insufficiency or default in their provision" (Warnock, 1978, sec 4.69). By creating protection for a defined level of provision Warnock intended to secure resources for children who had only recently had their entitlement to education

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[1] Statutory assessment is used here to denote the process of assessment, agreeing a statutory plan or refusal to proceed to a statutory plan.

recognized (Warnock, 2010). Building on the Committee's recommendations statements of SEN were introduced in the Education Act (1981), with the first statements issued in 1983. Warnock assumed that local authorities (LAs) would be responsible for children with the most complex needs, thought to be 2% out of the 20%, which might meet the new designation of SEN that the Committee proposed (Warnock, 1978, sec 3.17). The number of statements stayed relatively stable during the 1980's in line with the stated intentions of the new system to secure provision for the most complex children (Williams and Maloney, 1998).

From its inception the framework was questioned as a means of organizing SEN provision with the House of Commons Education Committee (1987) concluding that the measures were good but had been poorly implemented. The Audit Commission review (1992) was more critical, finding that despite advances the new system had produced growing conflict with parents, a lack of clarity about who was covered, that resources were not being guaranteed and better outcomes had not been secured for many children. It also recommended that LAs should increase the capability of "ordinary schools to provide for pupils with special needs" (Audit Commission, 1992, par 160). A theme echoed in a House of Commons Education Committee Report the following year which recommended restricting statements to a "minority of pupils" (House of Commons Education Committee, 1993, par 32). Warnock went further suggesting "it seems to me time to get rid of what may be an obstacle to good and imaginative education" and concluded that "statementing should be abolished" (Warnock, 1993, p. xi, ix).

The Government responded to the criticisms by enhancing the statutory assessment framework through the Education Act (1993) and the subsequent SEN Code of Practice (DfEE, 1994), which was later consolidated into the Education Act (1996). This included measures to ensure compliance and enhanced protections, giving parents more opportunity to challenge local authority decisions by establishing the SEN Tribunal, improving choice over provision and speeding up the process of assessment. The role of statutory assessment was to secure a right to a specified and quantified level of educational support in a legally enforceable plan for a child with SEN. The protection statements provided, together with its role in allocating special school places, came to be seen by families as the "gold standard" for securing provision. In consequence reliance on statements grew in the early nineties and accelerated further following the 1993 Education Act reforms. Increasing from 168,000 in 1992 (Audit Commission, 1992) to 264,850 in 2002, exceeding demographic growth factors (Marsh, 2014). What started out as an exceptional means to ensure provision for children with complex needs was in danger of becoming a routine way of identifying and meeting wider SEN need. In the process undermining Warnock's intention that "The vast majority of children with special educational needs do not and should not have statements" (House of Lords 27th April 1993, Col 287). The impact of the focus on individual provision was raised in an Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) and Audit Commission report which noted that LAs were "struggling to achieve strategic coherence and budgetary control against a statutory framework that accords uncontested priority to individual needs" (Ofsted and the Audit Commission, 2001, p. 4).

When the seminal Audit Commission reports (2002a; 2002b) set out a critique of the statutory assessment system they were also crystalizing a number of concerns about its overall impact in the intervening period since its inception (Lunt and Evans, 1994; Coopers and Lybrand SEO CIPFA, 1996; Williams and Maloney, 1998). The Audit Commissions analysis centered on problems with the assessment process, resource allocation, and parental assurance and set the fault lines for debate on statutory assessment. On process it found that "Statutory assessment is a costly and bureaucratic process… which many parents find stressful and alienating" (Audit Commission, 2002a, p. 13; Pinney, 2002). Professionals also felt that they should be providing early support and intervention but were diverted from this by the process of making and maintaining assessments (Audit Commission, 2002a; Florian, 2002). The production of the statement had become an end in itself and was "hampering the design of an appropriate continuum of provision" (Audit Commission Ofsted, 2002, par 47). Further, LAs were routinely being held responsible for provision outside their control and assessments were not being joined up. The Commission concluded by recommending that unified children's services with a shared budget would create the potential for more planning across health and social care.

Statutory assessment was also "a poor way of allocating resources within the system," anticipating Warnock's later criticisms (Warnock, 2005, 2010) they concluded that "for pupils within mainstream an inefficient means of allocating funding" (Audit Commission Ofsted, 2002, par 47). Some LAs had been successful in reducing statements by delegating funding and the Commission proposed schools should hold most SEN resources in their own budgets. They argued this would lead to greater incentives to develop the skills and capacity to meet a wider range of pupil needs without seeking statutory assessment. Further, that focusing on what schools needed to manage CYP with SEN rather than what individual pupils needed would help stem the continued imbalance in resource allocation between statutory and non-statutory provision. These concerns were reinforced by Ofsted who noted that the statementing system was "an overly cumbersome and bureaucratic procedure in order to ascertain where a pupil should be taught or what resources should be allocated" (Ofsted, 2006, par 58). Though they did accept statements could function well in assessing initial needs.

It has often been the cost of statutory assessments and their inefficiency as a resource allocation mechanism that has dominated the debate on statutory assessment. What has been less focused on is the crucial role that the lack of parental confidence in the non-statutory offer has played in explaining the reliance on statutory assessment. The Audit Commission found that there; "is lack of confidence, particularly on the part of parents, that, without the protection it provides, the provision that is needed will be made. Where there is confidence, the statement is unnecessary," (Audit Commission Ofsted, 2002, par 47). They also noted that parents were poorly served by the statutory framework but "terrified" about losing the benefits it bestowed (Pinney, 2002, p. 122). A crucial consideration as by 2005/6 over 3 per cent of the school population were reliant on statements, equating to ∼77,000 additional pupils above the original 2% estimate of those who would need a statement (Audit Commission, 2007).

Parents "value the security of a statement and the confidence it gives them to challenge the authority if the provision agreed is not forthcoming" (Lamb, 2009a, p4; Lindsay et al., 2010). This helps explain the durability of the statutory assessment framework, despite continued criticism of both the processes' and what they secure, as any change to the system has to retain parental confidence that current entitlements and future protections will not be reduced. Thus, while there have been consistent calls for a radical review of statutory assessment or it's abolition (Audit Commission, 1992, 2002a; Warnock, 1993, 2005, 2010; Williams and Maloney, 1998; MacBeath et al., 2006; Ofsted, 2006) parent groups and advocacy organizations have tended to seek an improvement in the assessment process, tightening of requirements and more legislative entitlements to be able to hold the system to account as evidence to parliamentary inquires has illustrated (House of Commons Education and Skills Select Committee, 2006; House of Commons Education Select Committee, 2019).

THE DEBATE ON WARNOCK'S STATUTORY ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

Securing parental confidence in provision without recourse to statutory assessment is a crucial element of the debate on, and the solutions proposed to, the Warnock framework. These issues are now explored within the context in which they developed in the public debate on the future of the system.

Restrict Statutory Assessment to Special School or Mainstream Provision

In 1992/3 the Government responded to the Audit Commission criticisms of the statutory process by tightening statutory duties on LAs and schools however by the time of 2002 Audit Commission critique they had moved to reverse the emphasis on statements. The Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) had concluded in 1997 that "statements can act as barriers to full inclusion of pupils with SEN" (DfEE, 1997, p. 36) and had put in place measures to improve the non-statutory offer, embedding these in a revised SEN CoP and related guidance (DfES, 2001a,b). The revised code sought to enhance pupil and parent participation, improve provision of information to parents and promote early intervention. It also aimed to create a partnership approach between LAs, schools, services and parents. The focus on enhancing mainstream provision was also bolstered by the introduction of a rights based framework, the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (2001). The Act created a greater presumption toward inclusion and introduced new rights to non-discrimination in education for disabled CYP, a group who overlapped but were not coterminous with those covered by the SEN definition. With three-quarters of disabled children also having SEN (Porter et al., 2008). These measures were also reflected in the revised SEN CoP and guidance (DfES, 2001a,b), and together were referred to as the inclusion framework (Ofsted, 2004). However, a subsequent review by Ofsted found that many schools had not implemented the new access plans or reasonable adjustment duties contained in the new legislation and were "not reaching out to take pupils with more complex needs" (Ofsted, 2004, par 110).

A new policy statement, Removing Barriers to Achievement and associated guidance, was also developed with the aim of promoting early intervention, improved teaching and greater access to specialist skills. It was hoped this would lead to a "reduced reliance on statements" and a reduction in special schools placements as mainstream skills and support increased (DfES, 2004, p. 18–19, 37). The overall strategy was successful to the extent that there was an 11% reduction in statements over the 10 years from 2003 to 2013 (Marsh, 2014). However, during this period, there remained significant variation in the number of statements between LAs and variation in provision (Penfold et al., 2009; Lewis et al., 2010; Marsh, 2014). Many parents groups remained critical of the statementing process and the provision it secured which fueled a continuing lack of parental confidence in the SEN system (House of Commons Education and Skills Select Committee, 2006; Lamb, 2009a; Lindsay et al., 2010).

While the DfES were still grappling with improving the non-statutory offer Warnock produced a revisionist paper (Warnock, 2005), criticizing how her original report had been implemented, building on her earlier critique (Warnock, 1993). Arguing that her Committee's framework had been extended and misapplied the paper provoked radical questioning of the Government's strategy. Warnock claimed that the placement of children with complex needs in mainstream schools had been a "disastrous legacy" of the original report. Her "recantation" was consistent with her earlier views that statements should be for children with the most complex needs which could not be met within mainstream provision (Warnock, 2005, 2010; Norwich, 2010). Her claim in part echoed the conclusions of the Audit Commission Ofsted review 2002 that statutory protection should not be needed for mainstream placements if provision could be improved.

Warnock's critique provoked a new Select Committee inquiry into SEN which issued two reports critical of the statementing system (House of Commons Education and Skills Select Committee, 2006, 2007). The intervention was successful in focusing debates in the Education Select Committee on the functioning of statements and the concept of inclusion (House of Commons Education and Skills Select Committee, 2006, 2007). The evidence of many parents groups on the flaws in the statementing system gave purchase to Warnock's criticisms of statutory assessment. However, her proposal to restrict statements to a passport for placement in special schools conflated complexity of need with one type of provision. In doing so it also ignored the more nuanced conceptualization of inclusion which focused on the process of inclusion not the place of education and also had less to say on how to improve non-statutory provision (DfES, 2005; Lindsay, 2007; Norwich, 2010).

Though not explored to the same extent there was also the option that the statutory system should only apply to pupils who have significant SEN placed in mainstream schools, the reverse of Warnock's revised proposal. It could be argued that those who go to special schools or resourced units do not need to have statutory protection as specialist provision is available to meet their needs. Statutory protections would then be reserved for mainstream provision where the adequacy of provision might be more insecure. However, this solution would still need a process for allocating special school places and assumes special school placements will always meet need. The most time consuming and often contested part of the statutory process would still have to remain in some form with a statutory right to appeal against decisions around placement. At best it is only a partial solution but does have the advantage of focusing attention on the quality of the mainstream offer.

Separation of Assessment From Provision

The most routinely promoted solution to reforming statements that emerged from the Select Committee reports and subsequent debate was to separate statutory assessment into an independent assessment agency leaving LAs to organize provision (House of Commons Education and Skills Select Committee, 2006, 2007; Balchin, 2007; Hartley, 2010). This was supported by Warnock as an "obviously desirable reform" (Warnock, 2010, p. 118). The proposal sought to address concerns that LAs had a conflict of interest as both assessor of need and provider of services which resulted in Educational Psychologists (EPs) routinely fettering the content of statements to manage demand. The proposal also resonated with parents who had poor experiences of the assessment process (House of Commons Education and Skills Select Committee, 2006, 2007). However, if LAs had been restrained by this conflict of interest to both assess and provide it was difficult to account for the fact that the number of statements had grown so significantly during the previous period beyond demographic trends (Audit Commission, 2007). Further, there was a lack of systematic evidence to suggest collusion by EPs with the LA to fetter statements rather than a settled culture of assessing for what was known to be available in some LAs (Lamb, 2009a) and informal rationing through restricting the numbers assessed in the first place (House of Commons Education Select Committee, 2012a, Q 54f).

The Government responded that a radical separation of assessment from provision would "be a leap in the dark and would endanger the position of parents and children with special educational needs" (DfES, 2006, p. 5) by undermining current entitlements to provision. The requirement for a separate assessment agency, either nationally or embedded locally within other organizations, also required significant restructuring of LAs and the creation of independent assessment agencies. By the time the new Coalition Government came to consider the proposals in 2011 such agencies had been heavily criticized in respect of benefit assessments (House of Commons Work and Pensions Committee, 2011) and this made the Government reluctant to follow suit in such a highly sensitive area. While resource allocation would have been more transparent, without commitment to fund the potentially open ended budget this solution required, it was difficult to see how separation would have been politically feasible. As an alternative the DfE proposed "introducing more independence into the assessments" (DfE, 2011, p. 6) through voluntary sector involvement. These proposals were quietly jettisoned once the risks and voluntary sector resistance to being co-opted where taken into account. However, the debate did emphasize the continuing fundamental role which statutory assessment played in securing resources and parental confidence.

Improving Confidence in the SEN Offer

How to improve the SEN offer was addressed in a number of related reviews commissioned in response to the Select Committee reports by the Government. The support of well-trained teachers with expertise in SEN, to strengthen provision for children was stressed in reviews of communication (Bercow, 2008), and dyslexia (Rose, 2009). Following these reports the Lamb Inquiry (Lamb, 2009a) examined how to secure greater parental confidence in the statutory assessment process. The Inquiry found that many parents lacked confidence in the assessment process including how needs were determined and reviewed. Parents wanted to be listened to and the system to be more ambitious for their children. They also valued the provision obtained through statutory assessment, even when there had been conflict securing it. The Inquiry responded to these concerns by seeking to improve accountability across the system including increased parental and CYPs engagement. It also recommended enhancing professional skills and a focus on ensuring better outcomes. The extension of the disability rights framework to auxiliary aids and services was also recommended as a means of extending statutory protections (Lamb, 2009a; Lindsay et al., 2010). It concluded that there should be no change in statue or policy which aimed to reduce the number of statements. If children were making good progress, supported by improved parental engagement this would increase parental confidence and, as a by-product, parents might then rely less on the statutory system. Providing additional resources before the statutory stage could also help ensure that a statutory assessment was not required to meet need (Lamb, 2009a).

The Inquiry provoked the issuing of new guidance on writing outcomes focused statements from National Strategies (DCSF, 2010) and strengthening parents' rights to appeal if statements where not reviewed. The Equality Act (2010) extended the right to auxiliary aids and services in schools and LAs to disabled pupils, while the focus on parental engagement and improved information was reflected in the strengthening of parental and CYPs rights to be involved in decision making in the Children and Families Act (2014).

Following from these reviews Ofsted's influential Special Educational Needs and Disability Review: A Statement is not Enough (Ofsted, 2010) also explicitly rejected increasing or tightening the statutory framework in favor of improving the identification of SEN, enhancing teaching and focusing on outcomes. It argued that poor teaching caused poor progression and was being confounded with SEN. This meant that SEN needs were being overstated and confusing identification of need, taking the focus and specialist provision away from CYP who really did need the additional support. The review recommended that any changes to the statutory framework should be focused on simplification and ensuring better assessment which would lead to better outcomes. These recommendations were reflected in the focus on improved identification and teaching introduced by 2014 reforms.

Remove or Restrict Statutory Assessment

Some commentators argued that the framework should be adjusted to remove the statutory stage or dismantled altogether and be replaced by a more generalist assessment for all children, with a much greater focus on early intervention and greater investment in the system overall to secure provision (Williams and Maloney, 1998; Sodha and Margo, 2010). However, without a fundamental improvement in non-statutory provision it is unlikely that removing statutory protection would be able to secure parental confidence for any change and this option secured little traction in the ensuing debate.

Another option was to maintain a multi-agency assessment outside of a specific statutory protection framework, giving parents the choice to be covered by statutory protection depending on their level of confidence in provision (Norwich, 2010). Where the provision is satisfactory then a simplified assessment could be used to establish what support children needed. To some extent this already took place when LAs used their discretion to supplement school funds and the parent then chose not to pursue statutory protection. The advantage was that it set a direction of travel and incentivized schools to make better provision. This option would require significant levels of delegation to schools for which they would need to be held accountable. Using delegation in this way was consistently recommended by the Audit Commission (1992, 2002a, 2007). This had the advantage of retaining confidence that statutory protection could be available if confidence declined and a simpler route to additional provision. The innovative pilots for the Lamb Inquiry tested parents relying less on statements in Oxford, Newham and Blackburn and Darwin. Parents interviewed welcomed the greater delegation of resources but were most interested in the provision this secured. However, they were also concerned about not having access to statutory protection especially at secondary school (Lindsay et al., 2010, p. 61). The proposal did not gain purchase in the ensuing debate given the concerns about how the system was working. However, the central insight of building confidence in provision to reduce dependence on the statutory framework could be part of a longer term solution if linked with other confidence building measures for parents.

THE SEND REFORMS

Widening the Scope of Statutory Assessment

The DfE had responded piecemeal to the individual reviews but the cumulative weight of their conclusions led to a complete review of the SEN system under the new Coalition Government starting in 2010. The primary focus of the review centered on reforming the process of assessment, and extending the age range of the statutory assessment framework while less attention was given to the non-statutory system (DfE, 2011, 2012). The result of an extend period of pre-legislative scrutiny and consultation with parent groups was the new Children and Families Act (2014) and Code of Practice (DfE/DoH, 2015). This changed statements to become EHCPs and extended statutory protection to the 16–25 cohort, abolishing Learning Difficulty Assessments. The reforms were aimed at addressing the lack of cohesion around statutory assessment in respect of multi-agency assessment and reducing the number of individual assessments for services for those with complex needs (DfE, 2011). In doing so the reforms borrowed heavily from the personalization approach and also sought to strengthen existing joint commissioning and planning duties.

Educational need remained the trigger for the production of a statutory assessment while integrating complex health and social care needs into the assessment process where there was also an educational need. Securing parental confidence and support for the new system meant guaranteeing that current recipients of statements would be covered by the new plans and that the legal test to qualify for a statutory plan would remain the same (DfE, 2011). The legislation also introduced requirements to produce an outcomes focused plan, reduced the timescale for completing the plan from 26 to 20 weeks and harnessed this to a renewed emphasis on parental and CYPs engagement in the process of strategic planning through the Local Offer. This included parents and CYP being consulted on the appropriateness of the Local Offer and information on the services and support available in their area. There were also additional requirements for mediation before going to Tribunal and the introduction of personal budgets for educational provision.

The reforms failed to extend legal protections in plans beyond education provision to health and social care. EHCPs therefore strengthened requirements which were already in the original statementing process to take account of multi-agency assessments but without adding the binding legal protection of the SEND Tribunal (Norwich and Eaton, 2014). The proposals did not set targets for the number of EHCPs but in early discussions many LAs assumed this more complex process might be delayed while LAs increased their capabilities (House of Commons Education Select Committee, 2012a, Q 54–Q60f; House of Commons Education Select Committee, 2012b, par 20-21, 46). By making statutory assessment a gateway to coordinated assessment and extending the age range of the EHCP the reforms effectively enhanced the relevance, status and utility of statutory assessment for parents and CYP. In effect the EHCP has continued the parental assumption that this was the "golden ticket" to better provision and outcomes in many LAs if they believed non-statutory provision was not secure (Ofsted/CQC, 2017, par 30).

Implementation

The DfE tested the reform proposals through a Pathfinder Programme with 6 of the 9 objectives focused primarily on statutory assessment (Hill et al., 2014). Additional funding for the new reforms included over £70 million allocated to help LAs prepare for their new statutory duties in 2014 and this was followed by £153 million in "new burdens" funding with £23 million for strategic planning on high needs provision. Most of which seems to have been deployed on the additional costs of transition to the new statutory assessment system, though it is difficult to accurately track where this expenditure has been deployed. There has also been funding for parent carer forums to support engagement and information provision to parents and CYP (DfE, 2018a; Kerr, 2018). The Independent Support programme was also given £60 million to provide support to families going through the transition from Statements to EHC plans (DfE, 2018a). The additional resources devoted to enhancing mainstream teacher skills in SEND has been significantly less than investment in implementing EHCPs and the strategic focus on non-statutory support has come much later in the implementation process. Additional funding was deployed to develop resources and support across all aspects of the reforms to specific impairment groups such as sensory impairment, autism and speech, language and communication from 2014, but this funding is now winding down and was of a much smaller scale. The Whole School SEND Consortium has also been funded £3.4 million, following backing to pilot the approach, over the period 2018–20 to support the schools workforce focus on skills and planning around SEND (DfE, 2018b). The additional resource for transition to EHCPs was necessary to secure the changes in systems and enhanced capacity for LAs, while the support for parents in the transition process was crucial to support the transfer process for statements. However, the strategic and resource focus in the first 4 years of implementing the reforms were weighted towards the statutory system.

If there were expectations or fears that the more complex EHCPs would produce fewer statutory plans this has not been the case. The number of statutory plans under the new system has increased by just under 50%, from 237,111 statements in 2014 to 354,000 EHCPs as at January 2019 (DfE, 2019a, SEN 2 figures)[2]. The increase from January 2018 to January 2019 was 34,200 (11%) up from 319,800 CYP with an EHCP or statement to 354,000 with an EHCP (DfE, 2019a). This continues the upward trend of the previous 2 years where there were 12.1% (30,975) more CYP with statements or EHCPs in January 2017 compared to January 2016 (DfE, 2017), and 11.3% more (32,529) CYP with statements or EHCPs in January 2018 than the previous year (DfE, 2018c). There were 48,900 CYP with new EHCPs issued during 2018 an increase of 6,700 (16%) compared with 2017. The figures also show large variations between different LAs use of statutory assessment with around 30% of LAs seeing a reduction in new EHCPs (DfE, 2019a). If we look at the school population the percentage of pupils with an EHCP has risen to 3.1% (271,165) of the total pupil population from 2.9% (253,680) in 2018. Before this it had remained constant from 2007 to 2017 at 2.8% (DfE, 2018d, 2019b School Census figures). This means that around one-fifth of the school SEN population are covered by a statutory plan.

A significant proportion of the growth in EHCPs has been driven by the opening up of statutory protection to the 16–25 cohort (replacing Learning Difficult Assessments for young people in further education and extending the age range). The proportion of the 16–19 age group moved from 10% of all statements in January 2014 to 22% of all EHCPs in January 2019, while the 20–25 age group represents 5% of all plans as at January 2019. This leaves just under three-quarters of EHCPs in the pre-16 age groups with the 11–15 years old group the largest at 36% of the total in January 2019. The increase in EHCPs is now across all age groups, with the largest percentage increases in the 0–5 age group (13%) and the 20–25 age group (32%) as at January 2019 from the previous year (DfE, 2019a). The number of initial requests for an EHCP has also risen to 72,400 during 2018, an increase of 12% since 2017. Of which 17,900 (25%) were refused (DfE, 2019a). This compares to 14,600 (23%) who were refused in 2017 (DfE, 2018c). LAs identify school exclusions, pressure on mainstream provision, and schools being less inclusive as important factors in the demand for additional EHCPs as well as rising levels of need and the extension of the statutory framework (Parish et al., 2018). LA leaders have also questioned the extent to which statutory assessment should be relied on if there is good provision in place (House of Commons Education Select Committee 8th May 2019, Written Evidence SCN0685).

Demographic trends are also driving demand with a growing incidence of complex needs (Pinney, 2017) which has also been observed by LAs (Parish et al., 2018). Pressures which will be added to by a growth in school age population, where "the latest DfE projections for Years 7–11 estimate that the state-funded secondary age (11–15) population will grow by 15% (427,000 pupils) between 2018 and 2027" which translates to roughly an additional 15,000 pupils with EHCPs compared to 2018 on current trends (Thompson, 2019), further increasing the strain on the statutory assessment system and LA budgets. The extension of EHCPs to the post 19 years age group is also being reflected in the figures with an estimated 15,000 additional EHCPs needed between 2014 and 2020 (Parish et al., 2018, p. 17).

Minsters have stated that there was a deliberate relaxation in part of the criteria for assessments where "may have SEN" was introduced into the definition which triggers an assessment. This has potentially widened the number of CYP who could be covered by the definition (House of Commons Education Select Committee, 2019 Q814–816). It could therefore be argued that some of the significant growth in EHCPs can be understood as the system meeting additionally identified needs and the growth is therefore welcome. If this is the intended objective of the policy then the Government needs to fully fund the capacity of LAs to respond. However, it is not clear why some of the needs currently addressed by the statutory process could not be met earlier through enhanced provision outside of the statutory framework. Thus, using some of the transactional costs incurred in producing the EHCP on early intervention and support as required by the CoP (DfE/DoH, 2015, p. 79) and potentially reducing the need for more intervention later.

The challenge of introducing the new EHCPs, while simultaneously converting all the existing statements, has

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[2] SEN 2 figures are the most comprehensive analysis of all CYP with an EHCP. School Census figures also quoted here below refer only to school aged children and are collected through the school census.

absorbed the capacity of LAs and diverted special educational needs coordinator's (SENCos) and schools from focusing on the new SEN support category. LAs are struggling to complete plans within the new timescales with only 60.1% being completed within the 20 week deadline in 2018, lower than the previous year (64.9%) and the starting point in 2014 which stood at 64.3% (DfE, 2019a). With 50% of teachers in one survey saying that they had taken on additional work to complete plans for the LA (NASWUT, 2018). The greater personalization and complexity of assessments suggests that the investment of staff time and costs in completing the process will also have increased compared to statements though this is dependent on how they are implemented by LAs (Craston et al., 2014).

A majority of parents and CYP have valued the more personalized and outcomes focused assessment process. A large scale survey of 13,643 new EHCPs in 2015 found that around two-thirds of parents were happy with the overall process and around the same proportion were confident about the outcomes being achieved as part of the new process (Adams et al., 2017). However there were continuing concerns about some aspects of the new process with less than half (46%) saying their plan had helped them and their family to have the life they want to lead (Adams et al., 2017). While an in-depth analysis also showed wide variation in parental satisfaction with some elements of the process (Adams et al., 2018). There is also continued evidence from statutory bodies of variability in the quality, consistency and delivery of EHCPs (Local Government and Care Ombudsman, 2017; Ofsted/CQC, 2017). In addition there has been continuing dissatisfaction from parent groups including those representing CYP with dyslexia and autism (Driver Trust, 2015; Moore, 2016).

The quality of the transfer process from statements to EHCPs has been questioned with 52% of respondents, to a survey of 430 organizations and professionals directly involved in the transfer process, saying that children being transferred from statements rarely or never received their legal entitlement to a full EHCP needs assessment (Special Educational Consortium, 2018). While a large scale survey of 349 SEN professionals found that 32.14% did not think that EHCPs convey a better picture of the needs of CYP than statements (Palikara et al., 2019, p. 90). There are also continuing complaints about provision being constrained even when statutory assessment is secured (House of Commons Education Select Committee, 2019). Failure to integrate health and social care into the EHCP assessment is also undermining one of the key objectives of the new assessment process. Ofsteds annual review noted that out of 68 reviews undertaken of LAs implementation of the reforms 30 LAs had required a written statement of action with continuing concerns about the integration of health and social services advice, and planning for EHCPs often cited in individual reports (Ofsted/CQC, 2017; Ofsted, 2018, p. 53). Nevertheless, greater personalization and increasing parental and CYPs voice within ECHPs has been welcomed even where LAs capacity to implement this has been questioned (Adams et al., 2017; Lamb, 2018).

Which CYP are placed in special schools is not simply a function of SEND need but what support can be accessed outside of the special school setting. Choosing to seek a special school placement often happens only after parents lose confidence in the mainstream offer as most pupils in special school start in the mainstream (Bryant and Swords, 2018). The increase in the number of statutory plans has also coincided with an increasing trend toward placement in special schools of pupils with EHCPs and statements with an increase from 38.2% to 43.8% in state funded special schools and from 4.2% to 6.1% in independent special schools since 2010. Less than half of all pupils with EHCPs (47.9%) attended mainstream schools in 2018 (DfE, 2019b). This increase in part predates the change in policy away from the presumption toward inclusion brought in by the Coalition Government (DfE, 2011, p. 5, 17, 51).

Only part of the trend toward additional special school placement can be explained by demographic growth (Black, 2017) and suggests a continuing weakness in the mainstream offer, for both statutory and non statutory provision, could be a factor along with funding incentives for schools to move children out of mainstream provision explored below. For example a review of provision for those with statutory provision in mainstream schools concluded that "the overhaul to the SEND system does not yet appear to have had a profound effect on secondary school leaders' thinking and approach to provision for pupils with SEND." Also that there was "an absence of strong leadership in primary and secondary schools with respect to SEND" (Webster and Blatchford, 2017 p. 6, 95).

The use of out of authority placements has also been a growing trend within the rise in special schools placement. The cost of Independent Non Maintained Special Schools (INMSS) is consistently higher than in authority provision and is often required because of the additional non-educational support elements or behavior management issues. Thus, while only 6% of CYP with EHCPs are in INMSS placements they account, on average, for 14% of LAs expenditure (Parish et al., 2018, p. 21). With the full cost of complex residential placements falling on the High Needs Block (HNB), even if the originating need for the placement is not educational need (Parish et al., 2018). Gaps in specialist services such as speech and language therapy, specialist teachers, mental health services and behavior support also drives demand for more costly specialist residential placements and diverts funds from developing sustainable local services (Lenehan and Geraghty, 2017).

The DfE's response to the growing crisis in provision has been to announce funding which would secure 39 new special free schools and AP provision offering an extra 3,459 extra places for pupils (DfE, 2019c) but this clearly falls short of the potential total number needed on current placement trends and increasing demand.

Creating gateways to accessing specialist provision means it is inevitable that there will be disputes at the edge of that boundary with so much at stake (Meijer, 1999). As the numbers covered by the statutory system grow so does the boundary edge at which disputes will take place. The total number of registered claims for the First-tier Tribunal (Special Educational Needs Tribunal-SENDIST) has increased from 3,557 in 2012 to 5,679 in August 2018 with an increase of 20% in 2018 from the previous year (Ministry of Justice, 2018). The LA loses almost 9 in 10 cases heard questioning the quality of LAs decision making on SENDIST cases. The introduction of a statutory right to mediation was aimed at reducing the number of appeals going to SENDIST by introducing a requirement to consider mediation before progressing to a hearing. An analysis of the early mediation cases from a survey of LAs showed a 14% reduction of appeals going to SENDIST (Cullen et al., 2017). While the figures for 2018 show that of the 3,200 mediation cases held during 2018, 800 (26%) were followed by appeals to SENDIST suggesting that the mediation process has been successful at reducing the number of cases that might otherwise go to SENDIST (DfE, 2019a). This needs treating with some caution as analysis from a large mediation provider covering 19 LAs shows that of 1,972 enquiries dealt with in a 10 month period in 2017–18, 1,221 were requests for Part 1 certificates, with the parent or CYP not proceeding further with the mediation process (Global Mediation, 2019). These figures suggest that a significant number of parents undertaking the meditation process do so to bolster their case in then moving to an EHCP. There are very different rates of appeal across different LAs (Ministry of Justice, 2018). This reflects the size of the LA and assessment policies but also indicates significant variations across LAs in parental confidence in the statutory assessment process, with 30% of appeals against a refusal to secure an EHCP and 56% disputing the content of EHCPs (Ministry of Justice, 2018). The overall proportion of SENDIST cases are only 1.5% of appealable decisions but the proportion is rising (Ministry of Justice, 2018) and they are an important indication of continuing levels of conflict in obtaining a statutory plan and the contents of that plan.

SEN Support and Statutory Assessment

An important strand of the DfE's strategy to improve the SEN offer in schools has been to enhance teacher skills on SEN. The Making Good Progress initiative 2007–2009 (PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP, 2010) explored improving teacher skills to support improved attainment. This was further developed in a pilot with a focus on parental engagement, wider outcomes and school leadership through Achievement for All (AfA) 2009–2011 which was developed from the Lamb Inquiry (Lamb, 2009a). A positive evaluation of the AfA pilot (Humphrey and Squires, 2011) was reflected in the reform proposals (DfE, 2011) and influenced the schools chapter of the SEND Code of Practice (DfE/DoH, 2015 p. 276). The AfA programme was converted into a charity to promote the approach in early years, schools and colleges on a traded basis (Blandford and Knowles, 2013).

The focus on the quality of teaching rather than hours of support led to more attention on classroom teachers taking more responsibility for children with SEND in the revised CoP (Blatchford et al., 2009; Ofsted, 2010; Webster and Blatchford, 2014; DfE/DoH, 2015). The DfE has also enhanced the focus in initial teacher training on SEN and supported an expanded role for SENCos within the CoP (CoP, DfE/DoH, 2015, Chp 6). However, the DfE's continued drive to have a more market led approach to continuing professional development (CPD) in schools has limited its capacity to intervene, which has contributed to significant gaps in some aspects of school based CPD for SEND (Wall et al., 2019). It also means that the main strategic tool for the DfE in influencing school capability on SEND is the provision of small scale contracts to support workforce awareness, training and development through the voluntary sector with resources mainly aimed at SENCos and other front line staff (DfE, 2018b).

The 2014 reforms made limited alterations to schools obligations on SEN. The most significant change was to abolish the categories of School Action and School Action Plus in favor of introducing a single SEN support category for non-statutory provision which was implemented through the CoP (DfE/DoH, 2015). This was intended in part to stop the too easy conflation of SEN with CYP who had simply fallen behind through poor teaching, an issue identified by Ofsted in its 2010 report, and improve identification of SEN (DfE, 2011, p. 10; Ofsted, 2010). The numbers of children identified as SEN has dropped significantly from a peak of 21.1% of all pupils in 2010 to 14.9% in 2019 (DfE, 2019b). However, there was a significant fall in numbers before the abolition of School Action and School Action Plus categories, suggesting that Ofsted's (2010) focus on accurate identification of SEN had already achieved a change in practice with a downward pressure on numbers. Creating a single category of SEN has created a binary division between SEN support and a statutory assessment. This can make it more difficult to demonstrate to parents where additional resources are being deployed as part of the graduated approach introduced in the CoP before statutory assessment (DfE/DoH, 2015). It may be that the revised framework has helped to drive additional demand for statutory assessment as parents think securing statutory protection is the main route to additional provision.

The number of children identified with SEN annually may not be representative of the total number over time within a particular cohort of children as they progress through school. Analysis has shown that because children move in and out of being categorized as having SEN, due to the relativity inherent in the definition, the overall number of children over the course of a cohort going through the schools system can be much higher than the overall figure in the annual statistics. Thus, one analysis suggests 39% of children were recorded with SEN at some point between Reception (age five) and Year 11 (age sixteen) (Hutchinson, 2017) while a different analysis put the figure at 44% identified over a similar period (Thompson, 2018). The period measured cuts across the change in SEN categories. However, this still suggests that the headline figure underestimates the overall level of SEN identified across a period of time with potential consequences for how provision is being resourced at SEN support.

There have been many examples of good practice for children in the SEN support category (Bryant and Swords, 2018; Lamb, 2018) but the relative lack of focus on the non-statutory offer has meant poor provision and outcomes in some LAs. A summary of the first 30 local area inspections by Ofsted found that "Children and young people identified as needing SEN support had not benefited from the implementation of the Code of Practice well enough" (Ofsted/CQC, 2017; p. 27), and that "A large proportion of parents in the local areas inspected lacked confidence in the ability of mainstream schools to meet their child's needs" (Ofsted/CQC, 2017, p. 6). While many parents of children with SEN are not confident that schools understand their children's needs with 32% not feeling that schools are putting in place the right level of support for their child, or engaging them in their child's education (DfE, 2018e). In a survey of Parent Carer forums 57% were not confident that schools provide good SEND support that enabled children to achive good outcomes with only 2% very confident (Contact et al., 2017).

The SENCo role is fundamentally important in supporting better provision for SEN in school, yet SENCos think their role is undervalued. A large scale study of 1,940 SENCos experiences of the reforms found that only 27% felt their role was understood by colleagues and less than half (46%) thought their role was understood by senior management. Additionally 74% of SENCos stated that they do not have enough time to ensure that pupils on SEN support are able to access the provision that they need (Curran et al., 2018). Further, pupils with SEN make less progress in all subjects compared with pupils with no identified SEN with an attainment gap of 52% in reading, writing and maths (DfE, 2018f). While Ofsted concluded that "the gap in outcomes for children with SEND continues to widen. Identification of SEND is weak and those who do not quite meet the threshold for an EHC plan have poor outcomes" (Ofsted, 2018, p. 13). Poor outcomes erode parental confidence in provision and are another factor in encouraging them to seek statutory protection (Lamb, 2009a; Ofsted, 2018).

Provision for the SEN support category is also being undermined by a lack of resources. Funding per pupil has fallen by 8% in real terms since 2010 (Institute of Fiscal Studies, 2018) which means it is not surprising that 94% of school leaders, in one survey, said that they are finding it harder than 2 years ago to fund support for pupils with SEN. With 73% of respondents saying it was harder to resource support for pupils with SEN due to lack of mainstream funding where cuts to TAs and pastoral staff have had a major impact (NAHT, 2018). Another survey of teachers, including specialist teachers of SEN, found that almost two-thirds of respondents (62%) reported a decrease in the level of support to CYP with SEN they provided (NASWUT, 2018). Lack of support to mainstream provision is being compounded by EPs being restricted to statutory assessment work rather than focusing on early intervention (National Association of Principal Educational Psychologists (NAPEP), 2018 par 25–31). This is further impacted by a national shortage of EPs (National Association of Principal Educational Psychologists (NAPEP), 2018). The number of mainstream schools with additional provision for children with SEN has also dropped by almost 10% between 2017 and 2018 from 3,489 in January 2017 to 3,157 in January 2018 (DfE, 2018d, Table 11) and dropped further by 6% in January 2019 to 2,946. Overall moving from 10% of schools with resourced provision in 2015 to 8.3% of schools in 2019 while SEN units in schools dropped from 7.1% to 6.2% in the same period (DfE, 2019b, Table 11). While these resource bases will normally require CYP to have a statutory assessment they also help to support the mainstream offer.

Failure to support schools' capacity to manage SEN is also reflected in the higher proportion of exclusions of children with SEN than any other category of pupil. Pupils with SEN accounted for 46.7% of all permanent exclusions and 44.9% of all fixed period exclusions (DfE, 2018g). Pupils with EHCPs or with a statement had the highest fixed period exclusion rate at 15.93%—over five times higher than pupils with no SEN. Pupils at SEN support had the highest permanent exclusion rate at 0.35% which was six times higher than the rate for pupils with no SEN (DfE, 2018g). Permanent exclusion rates for those with EHCPs are about half the rate of those on SEN support reflecting that schools are required to avoid permanent exclusions of those with EHCPs (Timpson, 2019). The differential rates of exclusions cannot be explained simply by issues inherent to the type of SEN alone (Timpson, 2019, p. 38). Ofsted have also consistently raised concerns about the rate of exclusions and off-rolling (Ofsted, 2018), while there is evidence that exclusions are being used to save money, ensure better exam results and speed up referrals to AP and special schools (House of Commons Education Select Committee, 2018; Ofsted, 2019a). A survey of school leaders and teachers also found that 64% thought they need more support with SEN to prevent off-rolling (Ofsted, 2019a). Further, 22% of the children withdrawn from school to be home-educated in 2017/18 were identified as having SEN (Children's Commissioner for England, 2019a). Home education may be a positive decision but many parents stated that they felt it was their only option as the school could not meet their children's needs (Children's Commissioner for England, 2019a). There are also positive examples of outstanding provision at SEN support to manage SEN and behavior issues (Timpson, 2019) but the variation in provision and management by exclusion can also drive dependence on statutory assessment to secure provision and protection from permanent exclusion.

The Timpson Review (Timpson, 2019) has recommended that schools are held accountable for the outcomes of all the pupils they exclude taking away one of the drivers for excluding children with SEND. Concluding that this should be combined with schools gaining more control over AP funding, revised guidance and a stronger focus from Ofsted in school inspections on exclusions and off-rolling which would all be positive steps. While the DfE have broadly welcomed the report it is not yet clear if these recommendations will be implemented as they are being consulted on further (DfE, 2019d).

Five years after the introduction of the SEND reforms specific issues connected to the imbalance in legislative protections and access to specialist support and provision between the statutory and non-statutory system suggest a continuing structural problem which needs to be addressed. Any system will have to assess need to ensure accurate and effective intervention but this does not have to be tied to statutory assessment. The more resources are deployed on formative assessment and early intervention, as part of ensuring the graduated approach works well, the more effective the SEND framework can be in meeting need (Audit Commission, 2002a; Florian, 2002; DfE, 2011).

THE FUTURE OF THE WARNOCK FRAMEWORK

Concerns about implementation of the SEND reforms have provoked a new Education Select Committee inquiry with the evidence submitted confirming support for the principles of the 2014 reforms but reflecting serious concerns about the implementation issues explored above (House of Commons Education Select Committee, 2019). Whatever recommendations the Committee makes on the functioning of the new system there are steps the DfE could take, within the current legislative framework, to address the imbalance between statutory and non-statutory accountability and provision.

Funding

The implementation of the reforms has been undertaken during a period of sustained pressure on LA finances and school funding with significant changes to the education system and growing demand (Parish et al., 2018). The total HNB, which funds statutory provision, has increased by £1 billion since 2014/15 in recognition of rising demand to over £6 billion for 2018–19 (DfE, 2018a; Long and Roberts, 2019). However, demand for statutory assessments and support services has far outstripped this funding increase with evidence that the overall system of finance is now seriously under pressure (NAHT, 2018; Parish et al., 2018). Important as the quantum of funding is, the way in which resources are arranged to secure policy objectives also determines how children and families will experience the system and their confidence in provision. Ensuring a funding system that allocates sufficient resources outside of statutory assessment to CYP at SEN support is central to increasing confidence in the non-statutory offer.

All mainstream schools have funding allocated for SEN in their overall delegated budget, the notional SEN budget. This funding comes from the schools block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and is distributed to each school through a funding formula. The notional SEN budget is not a ring fenced amount but schools are expected to provide additional support up to a nationally prescribed threshold per pupil per year of £6,000. The LA provides top up funding where additional provision exceeds the threshold of £6,000. These top up payments come from the LAs HNB allocation, which like the schools block is part of the DSG. In most cases pupils who secure top up funding have an EHCP. However, LAs can provide additional funding to pupils who do not have EHCPs to support early intervention to avoid the need for statutory assessment (DfE/DoH, 2015).

This spilt in funding within the DSG between the school block and the HNB can increase the pressure to seek statutory protection for pupils to secure additional support or a different placement, especially where schools feel funding is not sufficient to meet all SEN needs. This can create pressure on the HNB and potential conflict with the LA if a EHCP is refused.[3]

Previously LAs were able to manage this tension by allocating schools block resources to the HNB to support provision and by transferring money from the HNB to support schools without recourse to statutory assessment. However, the new national funding formula limits LAs ability to reallocate DSG funding between the schools block and HNB to 0.5% of the total budget without appealing to the DfE for permission to vary the allocation. A sign of the stress this has put on the system is that 38 LAs applied for additional flexibility and 22 were allowed to transfer funds above 0.5% in 2018–9[4]. The HNB is also still dependent on historical factors for 50% of the funding leading to disparities in resourcing for similar sized LAs based on previous practice and more recent changes in the profile of needs (Marsh, 2017; Parish et al., 2018). It is also becoming less financially tenable for LAs to manage the increasing demand for EHCPs with 85−90% of the HNB now dedicated to meeting individual identified needs in statutory assessments (Parish et al., 2018, p. 5; Children's Commissioner for England, 2019b). This leaves a shrinking discretionary amount within the HNB to support early intervention and specialist teaching services which help schools enhance their offer at SEN support. An analysis of 9 LAs spending on EHCPs found that the increased spend on statutory support "was placing great strain on the support delivered 'pre-statutory' to children with SEND without an EHCP, including..... behavioral and speech, language, and communication support." (Children's Commissioner for England, 2019b, p15). Post 16 provision has also been undermined by the lack of joined up support, funding, take up of apprenticeships and lack of support to meet additional demand (Hunter, 2019).

LAs have responded by exploring traded service models for specialist services and non-statutory EP support. Traded models transfer the costs directly to schools and other settings which often results in reducing the non-statutory offer as schools and settings do not have the capacity to pick up the costs and specialist provision is reduced (National Sensory Impairment Partnership, 2017). As a consequence this risks draining resource from non-statutory provision which will in turn drive more demand for EHCPs. This financial squeeze is also undermining the utility of statutory plans in protecting resources with the average spend per EHCP reduced from £26,700 to £23,800 in the last 4 years (Bryant and Swords, 2018). While another study suggests a 20% fall in value from 2014/15 to just over £19,000 (Hunter, 2019). There are also concerns that the EHCPs are not sufficiently well-resourced to be implemented successfully (Robinson et al., 2018). The DfE has responded to this funding crisis by pumping £250 million more into the HNB for 2018–2020 and £100 million for special school places (DfE, 2018h) delivering additional funding from 2018 to 2021 of £365 million overall (DfE, 2019c). Further, DfE announced £31 million to enhance the number of free training places for EPs to cope with additional demand for specialist support (DfE, 2018h). Important as the additional resources are these can only be a short term panacea if the funding system does not also address some of the underlying weakness in the SEN support offer which helps drive additional demand for EHCPs and special school provision. The DfE has launched a national

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[3] Every LA is allocated a centrally determined amount of money for education in their DSG. The DSG is now divided into four blocks; schools, early years, central services, and the HNB. For a full explanation (see https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/high-needs-funding-arrangements-2019-to-2020).

[4] House of Commons. Written Answer. Nick Gibb, 7th March 2019.

consultation on how funding is distributed between LAs and schools. Including if schools should have an increased notional budget for SEN (DfE, 2019e).

The SEN notional budget is based on a funding formula which does not always accurately reflect the level of needs and numbers of CYP with SEN in individual schools (Parish and Bryant, 2015, p. 12). While allocating funding directly to individual pupils encourages over-identification of SEN, the current system imposes a penalty on many schools that wish to support a more inclusive approach by not always fully funding schools who take more than the average number of children with SEN. Further, the introduction of delegated funding for schools never fully addressed accountability for their delegated SEN resources which are not ring-fenced (Lunt and Evans, 1994). It is not always clear how much delegated funding is applied to SEN by schools or how effective any additional resources have been in securing better outcomes (Parish and Bryant, 2015; Ofsted, 2018). A large amount of expenditure in schools is spent on TAs but this continues to risk conflating TA time with support rather than developing SEN pedagogy with a focus on outcomes (Webster and Blatchford, 2018). The DfE have now instigated a review of how schools use the delegated SEN budget and its cost effectiveness.

The £6,000 threshold for schools SEN obligations was introduced to address consistency and to counteract "the perverse incentive for schools to argue for increased costs of support so that they would have the full costs met" (DfE, 2019e, p13). This has worked well in some areas as LAs and many school heads have welcomed the clarity of expectations but they also pointed to the importance of the overall budget for schools. Parent's views have been mixed. Clarity on the threshold has allowed them to hold schools to account for provision and discuss how resources are being deployed. However, schools have not always been able to demonstrate how resources have been used and parents have struggled to get needs recognised. Generally the idea of a "notional" budget could be confusing as it does not always guarantee resources (Parish and Bryant, 2015). Due to the pressures on school funding there is an incentive to pass costs onto the HNB by appealing for an EHCP to secure top up funding or special school placement (Parish et al., 2018; Hunter, 2019). This funding approach can have a detrimental effect on consistency of provision and parental confidence with significant levels of variation between schools relating to the numbers of children with SEN they accept, how they deploy their delegated resources and what additional support services are available from the LA to call on.

To address these issues the DfE could reintroduce greater flexibility in how LAs manage their HNB to allow more focus on the SEN support category to improve school capacity. This needs to be coupled to a more accurate formula or alternative means of funding schools based on identified needs. One solution would be to secure more accurate measures of the current school population with SEN which forms part of Ireland's reforms of SEN and then fund the identified needs within schools (NCSE, 2013). Alternatively it has been suggested that the threshold for consideration of top up funding is moved to a higher figure while delegating more resources to schools. Other proposals include; improving the accuracy of proxy indicators in predicting SEN in the formula, providing a clearer guide to how the core funding for the schools budget is made up and then support schools in monitoring how this is deployed, which would allow the concept of the notional budget to be removed (Parish and Bryant, 2015; DfE, 2019e). Delegating more resources to schools could transfer conflict from the parent with the LA to parent with the school though it would also encourage issues to be resolved at that level (Crawford et al., 2011).

Raising the threshold could reduce the need for statutory assessments by ensuring SEN needs are met earlier, increasing parental confidence in the schools offer. However this would need stronger accountability mechanisms on schools to demonstrate how they are allocating the notional budget. A study of local variation in SEN found that "Our hypothesis that a lower use of statements indicated better support for children with SEN in mainstream schools was broadly supported by the data. The local authorities which appeared most confident about their mainstream provision generally had a lower percentage of SEN pupils with a statement, a lower rate of appeals" (Lewis et al., 2010, p116). It would be important that increasing the threshold is not funded simply by a reallocation of current funding between different blocks of the DSG. Overall there needs to be an increase in the quantum of funding to LAs for SEN.

One area where there is additional funding for SEND indirectly is through the Pupil Premium. There is a strong association between pupils with SEND and children in poverty (Shaw et al., 2016). It is also "the most disadvantaged children, and those who are persistently disadvantaged, who are more likely to have a Statement at age 7" (Parsons and Platt, 2013, p. 21) and they are also more likely to be dissatisfied with their EHCP (Shepherd et al., 2018). Because of the association between poverty and SEND there is a strong crossover in funding between the two groups. Pupils with SEN are more likely to be eligible for free school meals (FSM), the gateway for receipt of the pupil premium, with 28% of pupils with SEN compared to 13% of pupils without SEN claiming FSM (DfE, 2019b). Pupil Premium funding also has the advantage that schools have to account for its use and the funding is significant, currently £1,320 for pupils in reception to year 6 (Primary) and £935 at secondary school with £2,300 for children in local authority care or similar provision (DfE, 2018i).

There have been concerns that FSM funding is being applied outside of its intended target group with 30% of head teachers saying the funding the school received for poorer pupils was being used to plug gaps in their budget (Sutton Trust, 2017). A National Audit Office study also found that "there is a clear risk that, in some cases, the Pupil Premium could be replacing rather than supplementing" SEN funding (National Audit Office (NAO), 2015, p. 25). While pupils who are identified as SEN and are in receipt of FSM perform worse than pupils with SEN or pupils in receipt of FSM separately (DfE, 2018j; Sutton Trust, 2019) Nevertheless building on a model of a specific fund with greater accountability for how it is deployed and that can be pooled at school level has attractions as a means of identifying alternative funding for SEN to enhance the overall schools offer. Though this would require developing a more objective measure of SEN to avoid risking over identification, which the pupil premium achieves through being tied to FSM entitlement. A move towards aligning the SEN and disability definitions further might help here.

Accountability

Robust accountability mechanisms are essential to ensure greater focus on SEND in schools and the LA across both statutory and non statutory provision. A significant legislative innovation of the SEND reforms was to include a new statutory duty to involve parents and CYP (Children and Families Act, 2014; Clause 19) in decision making following from recommendations in the Lamb Inquiry (Lamb, 2009a; Adams et al., 2017). These measures specifically required engagement at the level of strategic planning through the Local Offer, EHCPs, and SEN support (Lamb, 2013). Enhancing parental engagement through legislation could be seen as modernizing Warnock's insistence on greater parental involvement in the process of statutory assessment and giving it statutory force (Warnock, 1978, sec 4.21, 9.19, 12.1). The strategic engagement of parents and CYP through the Local Offer and co-production has significantly increased their influence in strategic planning, which in turn can support the development of more appropriate services and a different culture of service provision and assessment (Lamb, 2013, 2018; Adams et al., 2017; Ofsted/CQC, 2017). However, the opportunity to secure more appropriate provision in schools is limited because there was no strengthening of the legal requirements on schools to secure adequate provision for children with SEN in the reforms. The legislation continues to rely on the "best endeavors" duty for schools to meet needs.

The lack of LA powers also limits the ability of parents to influence policy at school level via strategic engagement through the Local Offer. LAs are therefore left with limited direct levers to use with schools to secure a focus on SEND and need to rely on schools collaboration, which only works to the extent they are willing to participate and have the capacity (Curran et al., 2018; Parish et al., 2018). While enhanced information requirements were introduced through the SEN Information Report (DfE/DoH, 2015), which requires schools to provide an account of their SEN offer, these are not used effectively enough as an accountability mechanism even though they are linked to the Local Offer (Lamb, 2018). LAs are left with limited opportunities to influence the school offer at SEN support which can then impact on demands for EHCPs. This is then exacerbated if health and social care services are also not available outside of statutory provision to schools (Ofsted, 2018; Parish et al., 2018).

The accountability of schools and settings could be improved by greater delegation of funding but then holding them more accountable for ensuring adequate provision and outcomes. The Local Offer could also be used more proactively by LAs in this context to establish what should be made ordinarily available in schools as part of their use of delegated SEN funding and link this to a clear account of the schools offer in the SEN Information Report (Lamb, 2013). This approach has already been undertaken by some LAs with success (Council for Disabled Children, 2016; Bryant and Swords, 2018). The DfE should also consider how an enhanced SEN Information Report, designed to function more as a direct analog to the Local Offer, could strengthen accountability with parents. This needs to be aligned to increased powers for LAs to hold schools and settings to account should they fail to be able to demonstrate how they have developed effective SEN support provision.

With the importance of Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) growing, including their role in directly providing SEN support services to their own schools, DfE could require MATs to produce a trust wide SEN Information Report. This would encourage a more strategic and consistent schools offer from MATs and ensure that they are more accountable for their SEN provision which is often less scrutinized by LAs. Especially as there have been concerns that sponsored academies could be deregistering pupils at the SEN support stage to look more attractive to parents and meet accountability standards (Black et al., 2019). The Timpson Review found that sponsored academies had the highest rates of permanent exclusions but thought this related to their role in turning around challenging schools (Timpson, 2019, p. 46).

The local area SEND inspections undertaken by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) have secured a strategic focus on the reforms. With 42 of the first 83 reviews requiring LAs to write statements of action on how they will improve due to weaknesses in implementation (Ofsted, 2019b). Delivering cultural change to the system by relying solely on inspection and compliance is going to be counterproductive in the long run if the aim is to win hearts and minds. Nevertheless inspection can play an important part, within an overall strategy, in implementing the reforms through focusing LAs on strategic delivery and then ensuring new ways of working are embedded and maintained. The DfE have confirmed a second round of inspections and repeat visits for those LAs who are required to produce a statement of action. Local area SEND inspections need to be retained over the longer term as an accountability mechanism with strengthened powers to hold health and social care to account given the concerns that lack of coordination between services remains a major problem (Ofsted, 2018, p. 8, 12).

There are also many other aspects of the schools framework which undermines the inclusivity of the schools. For example the Progress 8 accountability system weights performance measures toward the academic end of the spectrum and schools fear failing inspections without good Progress 8 figures. Schools then become concerned that children with SEND will potentially bring down the overall schools rating on Progress 8 scores, given they have the largest attainment gap compared to those with with no SEN of all the comparison groups, which can then drive exclusions and off-rolling (House of Commons Education Select Committee, 2018; Leckie and Goldstein, 2018; Parish et al., 2018; DfE, 2019f). The newly proposed Ofsted schools' inspection framework may help in this respect by moving focus onto the quality of the educational offer and away from floor standards in making judgements (Ofsted, 2019c).

The Legal Framework and Assessment

We should not confuse the process of producing a particular type of statutory assessment (statements/EHCPs) with the overall output of a legally binding plan of the services needed (Florian, 2002). There are other ways to secure statutory protection of provision without the level of bureaucracy inherent in the current statutory assessment model. The disability rights framework incorporated into the Equality Act (2010) provides a different route to statutory protection of education provision for CYP with disability. In 2012 the duty in the Equality Act for schools to make reasonable adjustments (auxiliary aids and services) was brought into force (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2015). This has improved its relevance by securing individual rights to education support that previously would have been seen as falling under SEN provision. In doing so the change addressed criticisms of rights based approaches that focus only on common or generic barriers but which do not address specific individual needs where these required additional support (Norwich, 2010).

The SEND CoP (DfE/DoH, 2015) aimed to integrate the requirements of a rights based approach for disabled CYP (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2014) with the needs based Warnock framework. While the new CoP also encourages disability and SEN to be treated together for the purposes of the legislation where the disabled pupil has SEN (DfE/DoH, 2015, p. xviii), this has left the application of the SEN and disability definitions in an uneasy tension (Norwich, 2014). Further, there are concerns that the disability definition relies on a within-child approach which is in danger of reinforcing the central legacy of the Warnock framework with its focus on individual entitlement to provision (Norwich and Eaton, 2014). However, the overall approach of the equality legislation does have a strong focus on anticipatory duties and planning.

Legal protections in the rights based approach could help in securing educational support for many CYP with SEND without resorting to EHCPs. Further, through the anticipatory duty to plan for access and stress on removing barriers to learning rights legislation focuses on addressing the overall context of education provision and helps promote a more inclusive culture. There is also a legal right to appeal to SENDIST against a failure to make reasonable adjustments, or where there is disability discrimination, direct or indirect discrimination, harassment or victimization (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2014). This secures statutory protection but in a different way from the current statutory assessment model. It also retains a resource allocation mechanism through the concept of reasonableness and is not therefore an open ended funding commitment (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2015).

A rights based approach would allow exploration of a broader concept of the goals of an inclusive education system, guided more by the idea of enhancing capability rather than identifying individual deficits and which could support a more positive ethos in schools (Terzi, 2010; Norwich, 2017). Clarifying and extending the disability definition would also open up the possibility of incorporating a wider understanding of disability based on international definitions such as the International Classification of Functioning Disability and Health for Children and Youth (Castro and Palikara, 2016). However, the rights framework has been under-utilized and under-enforced since its inception (Lamb, 2009b). This is reflected in the low number of disability cases referred to SENDIST with only 138 registered appeals on discrimination grounds in 2017/18 (Ministry of Justice, 2018) and inconsistent implementation of the disability equality duties. Therefore, securing parental confidence via the Equality Act framework would depend on a much more vigorous promotion and implementation of rights legislation than has been evident in recent policy. It would also need the Equality and Human Rights Commission to be encouraged and funded to take a much more proactive enforcement role in respect of SEND and not leave parents to police the system. While this would be a step change in approach and focus it would be within an already established legal framework. This would need to be seen as part of a longer term cultural shift in moving from a discretionary system to a rights based system.

A rights based approach to education might also secure support with parents if the proposed extension of the Tribunals powers to health and social care provision within EHCPs, currently being piloted by the First Tier Tribunal, is successful (DfE, 2018k). By addressing one of the major weaknesses of the current statutory framework parents could have the confidence that complex needs are covered through a single right of redress. Though it will be important that, as the Tribunal recommendations are non-binding on health and social care, they are nevertheless acted on. The Scottish system of statutory assessment, where the Coordinated Support Plan (CSP) reserves statutory assessment for those with complex needs who need support from more than one agency (Scottish Government, 2017), provides an interesting contrast. Scotland has a much lower number of statutory plans, with only 0.3% of all pupils with a CSP compared to 3.1% of pupils with SEND in England with EHCPs, though there are other types of non-statutory assessment in Scotland (Riddell et al., 2019). Since 2002 the number of pupils in special schools has also fallen by 19% suggesting that more provision is being made in mainstream and that the Scottish system has a strong commitment to enhancing non-statutory provision (Scottish Parliament, 2017). Scotland also has a much lower rate of appeals to the Tribunal per head of population (Riddell et al., 2019). This suggests that even if not a deliberate policy intention, the effects of the policies pursued around statutory assessment in England and Scotland have led to completely different ways of meeting complex needs (Riddell et al., 2019).

There have also been criticisms of provision in Scotland which echo some aspects of the English experience including the need to ensure greater investment in specialist staff in mainstream and special provision, the difficulty of obtaining statutory protection for those in deprived areas, the detrimental impact of budget restraints on provision, and the need to enhance parental and CYP engagement in the whole process (Scottish Parliament, 2017; Riddell, 2018; Riddell et al., 2019). These concerns emphasize the need to invest in the quality of the non-statutory offer as part of any approach to reduce the over-reliance on statutory assessment (Scottish Parliament, 2017).

CONCLUSION

The statutory assessment framework, initiated by the Warnock review over 40 years ago, has undergone significant legislative and policy reforms culminating in the Children and Families Act (2014) in response to parliamentary inquires, and continuing challenges about its effectiveness and utility from regulators, parents and advocacy groups. The current reforms aim to address weakness in the Warnock framework. The intention of EHCPs to have a more person centred focus with a greater emphasis on outcomes and extension to a wider age group have all been supported. However, serious questions have been raised about the implementation of the more complex assessments, the lack of integration with health and social care, the inconsistent quality of the plans and LAs capacity to deliver against a background of rising demand. These concerns have been further amplified in evidence to the latest Education Committee Inquiry (House of Commons Education Select Committee, 2019). This is despite many examples of good practice and satisfaction with aspects of the EHCP process and the provision it secures (Adams et al., 2017; Ofsted/CQC, 2017; Bryant and Swords, 2018; Lamb, 2018).

The reasons for the growth and durability of statutory assessment should not be underestimated as they are, in part, rooted in the lack of capacity to meet need, ensure parental confidence and secure rights outside of the statutory framework. Recent Governments have strengthened the statutory assessment framework in which they have invested policy capital and resources but have not sufficiently matched this with enhancing the non-statutory offer.

To create greater confidence in the reforms overall the DfE's implementation strategy needs to balance the focus on improving the quality and delivery of EHCPs with new measures to enhance the non-statutory offer. This needs to address parental concerns by ensuring that the system works with them to support better outcomes and easier access to specialist support outside of the statutory framework. Confidence in the non-statutory offer could be improved by better implementation and integration of the disability rights requirements into the SEN framework. At the same time extending the Tribunals powers to health and social care provision would address the main structural weakness in the design of EHCP's and drive the integration of services as originally envisaged by the reforms.

Increased focus on the non-statutory framework would also allow more scope for embedding other aspects of the 2014 reforms such as improving the Local Offer, reviewing how well SEN support is functioning, personalization for all CYP with SEND and supporting parents and CYPs engagement. The review of the reforms and CoP provides the opportunity to reconsider how well the new system is meeting the needs of all CYP with SEND. The measures explored here build on the existing legislative and policy frameworks but look to integrate the SEN framework more closely with the disability rights framework. Such a strategy would also need to be supported by increased funding linked to greater delegation to schools and a more SEND sensitive accountability and inspection framework to help change the overall culture in the system. There would also need to be more direct investment in the workforce to ensure that schools and other settings are highly skilled in supporting CYP with SEND as Warnock originally intended (Warnock, 1978, sec 12.1).

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

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