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TEACHERS TALK ABOUT INCLUSION... BUT CAN THEY IMPLEMENT IT IN THEIR CLASSROOM?

Teachers talk about inclusion... but can they implement it in their classroom? Exploring teachers' views on inclusion in a Scottish secondary school

GILLIAN FERRIDAY and DIANNE CANTALI

Although there is much research regarding the inclusion of pupils with additional support needs (ASN) in mainstream secondary education, there is little research specifically exploring the perspectives of staff who support and teach this population. This small-scale exploratory study in a Scottish secondary school investigated staff perspectives, aiming to provide unique insights and personal accounts of issues pertaining to inclusion. The findings suggest that there is a need to increase the skills of staff in order for them to be suitably equipped, competent and confident to meet all pupils' needs.

Key words: additional support needs, secondary education, staff perspectives, special educational needs, inclusion, teacher's views.

Introduction

This small-scale exploratory study investigated the perceptions of staff in relation to inclusion of pupils with additional support needs (ASN) in a mainstream secondary school, situated in a small city in the East of Scotland. The school population is made up of around 1,000 pupils from a mixture of urban and rural locations, with around 90 teachers on staff. Around one-third of pupils with a range of identified ASNs attend, and they are supported through a range of provisions, including a specialist provision for around 30 pupils with complex needs as well as other provisions scattered throughout the school to support learning and pupils with social and emotional needs. Twenty-five staff across a variety of disciplines engaged with an online survey gathering both quantitative and qualitative data pertaining to their personal experience and accounts of supporting pupils with ASN. Information was collated regarding the current barriers to inclusion of pupils with ASN from the perspective of staff, the existence of and reasons for any perceived lack of confidence amongst staff in being able to meet the needs of every child in their care and what the staff expressed would best improve their confidence in meeting the needs of pupils with ASN.

The Scottish term “additional support needs” (ASN) is used throughout this study. This term is primarily used in Scotland instead of “special educational needs” (Cantali, 2019). The concept underpinning ASN hinges specifically on the notion of pupils who have needs which may adversely impact their ability to access education, and whose life chances may therefore be at risk of less successful outcomes (Cantali, 2019). Thus, this philosophy recognises that ASN includes any barrier to a pupil’s learning (Education (Scotland) Additional Support for Learning Act, 2009).

With a reported increase in the number of pupils with recorded ASN (Scottish Government, 2016), alongside simultaneously-reported cuts in funding and education budgets (Kewin and Janowski, 2016; National Audit Office, 2016), it could be argued that the ability to provide the necessary resourcing for individualised and personalised learning programmes that are differentiated to include and meet the needs of all learners would be consequently diminished. Cook et al. (1999) inferred that teachers were increasingly being charged with the complex task of increasing academic achievement and attainment in contexts that contained unprecedented and ever-increasing levels of ASN. Harpell and Andrews (2010) concluded that recent, increased demands placed upon teachers in inclusive

settings compromised teacher effectiveness and competence, and ultimately resulted in teacher shortages due to the profession being perceived as unrewarding, unrealistic and stressful. In accordance with this, the Doran Review (Scottish Government, 2012a) stated that there was a clear need for professionals working with pupils with ASN to be highly trained and experienced in order to meet the demands of the job as well as provide the highest quality services that are responsive to the changing needs of society. With decreasing available resources in mainstream classrooms, and also a lack of adequate training for specialisms in ASN, it is clear that, not only do mainstream teachers feel ill-equipped to meet the needs of pupils with ASN in their care, they also develop negative associations and attitudes towards the prospect of inclusive education (Schuum et al., 1994; Burke and Sutherland, 2004; Titone, 2005).

Bacon and Schulz (1991), Barton (1992) and Burke and Sutherland (2004) attribute teachers having negative perceptions of inclusion to the fact that integration of pupils with ASN occurs without adequate training or being professionally informed, with a lack of in-class support and without any planned modifications to the school's organisation. DfES (2004) and Richards (2010) concluded that current initial teacher training was also no longer sufficient to provide newly-qualified teachers with the specific skills-set required to meet the increasing needs of pupils with ASN in inclusive education.

Current legislation, including A Curriculum for Excellence (Scottish Executive, 2004a); Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) (Scottish Government, 2012b); Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act (Scottish Executive, 2004b); National Framework for Inclusion (STEC, 2014) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNESCO, 1989) stipulates the necessity for teachers to fully include all learners in their classroom and to be able to meet the needs of learners in their care. It is well-reported that developments in inclusive educational policies and practices of pupils with ASN present a considerable, complex and increasing challenge to teachers (Batten and Daly, 2006; Jones et al., 2008; Ekins and Grimes, 2009; Hodkinson and Vickerman, 2009).

Research design

The research questions were:

1. Are there any barriers to inclusion of pupils with ASN from the perspective of staff?
2. What are the possible interventions that would help break down any barrier to inclusion?
3. Are there gaps in knowledge, understanding and staff mind-set that directly impact on the inclusion of pupils with ASN?

Sample

Participants in the research were all staff members within the mainstream secondary school setting where the study took place. As advocated by Denscombe (2003), cluster sampling took place which ensured that the survey was made available to all school staff members so as to include the broad perspectives of all staff responsible for working with pupils within different disciplines, including leaders, mainstream teachers, guidance teachers, ASN teachers, ASN support staff, community link workers and library staff. Staff did identify which category of role they belonged to within the school in Q2, and this allowed for a deeper analysis of results linked to staff groups throughout the study. All staff members were over the age of 18-years-old and were capable of making informed consent themselves. Of a possible 88 participants, 25 responses were received (28%).

Survey design

A survey design was implemented with both quantitative and qualitative data collected, reflecting the benefits of mixed-methods research principles. This ensured that in-depth data could be gathered which was better suited to the requirements of the context, participants and the research questions (Creswell, 2003; Thomas, 2003; Bryman, 2008). The online survey, using JISC Online Surveys, consisted of 14 questions which contained a variety of closed and open-ended questions. This allowed for initial statistical analysis of the quantitative data, but also a deeper exploration of issues from a personal viewpoint using the qualitative data. The questions were formulated to explore participants' awareness of current legislation and initiatives that exist to promote and support staff building skills essential for promoting inclusion in their classrooms. They also allowed staff to share their personal accounts of whether these were proving successful or not, with the option to offer their reasons and understanding of why or why not (see Appendix 1). As highlighted by Wellington (2000), Silverman (2005) and Cohen et al. (2007), careful construction and phrasing of the questions was undertaken

to ensure that statements were not leading and would not influence the manner in which the participants interpreted them or the modus in which they responded to them. Researcher bias was reduced by ensuring that all questions were written objectively.

Data analysis

Thematic analysis was employed for interpretation of the qualitative research data. Clarke and Braun (2013) noted that this was particularly important for research conducted in education, due to the diversity of the work involved in learning and teaching. The thematic analysis enabled us to highlight emergent patterns within the data results collated whilst giving flexibility and autonomy in data interpretation to focus on information outcomes that best related and were most significant in relation to the research questions. The emotive views, opinions and direct experiences of the staff in this survey gave increased meaning and justification to the results obtained, and were a fundamental grounding for an accurate analysis of the data. It was important to us that our interpretation of the data had credibility, using Tobin and Begley's (2004) definition that a research project refers to the degree to which the respondents' views and the researcher's portrayal and account of them are identifiable and therefore credible. Therefore, this study relied on transparency and the researcher's representation of the results being entirely credible in order for a true reflection of the current context for inclusion in the school sampled.

Ethics

Ethical approval for the research was gained from both from the researcher's University and the Local Authority in which the school was situated. During the design and implementation of the study, consideration was given to several key ethical issues as stated by BERA (2011) and Bryman (2008). These included responsibilities to participants such as: informed consent, no intention of deception, right to withdraw, anonymity and confidentiality, privacy and data storage. All potential participants were fully informed of the aims, objectives and methodology of the study through a presentation at a staff meeting before partaking in the online research questionnaire. All staff at the school were sent an e-mail invitation with details of the research and gave consent to take part by clicking on the hyperlink to the online survey. We deemed it important to have a record of consent from participants engaging with the study and this was obtained by

participants agreeing to take part in the online survey clicking the consent button which was posed as Q1 in the online survey.

Findings: teacher confidence to meet pupil need

The majority of staff (36%, N = 9) feel ‘somewhat’ confident in meeting the needs of pupils in their care, as shown in Figure 1. Eight percent (N = 2) of staff do not feel at all confident in meeting the needs of pupils in their care; this consists of 20% of Leaders (N = 1) and 33.3% (N = 1) of ASN Teachers. This result may have been unexpected given that both Leaders, who are driving initiatives such as inclusion and guiding school development, and ASN Teachers, who are specialists in meeting the needs of pupils, may have been expected to feel more confident than non-specialist staff. Only a small number of staff (16%, N = 4) were fully confident in meeting the needs of pupils in their care, as shown in Figure 2.

Lack of resources and lack of time are identified as the most significant reasons for a lack of confidence in supporting pupils with ASN. Lack of training and lack of access to ASN support produced the next most significant reason. Lack of leadership support was identified as the least contributory factor to a lack of

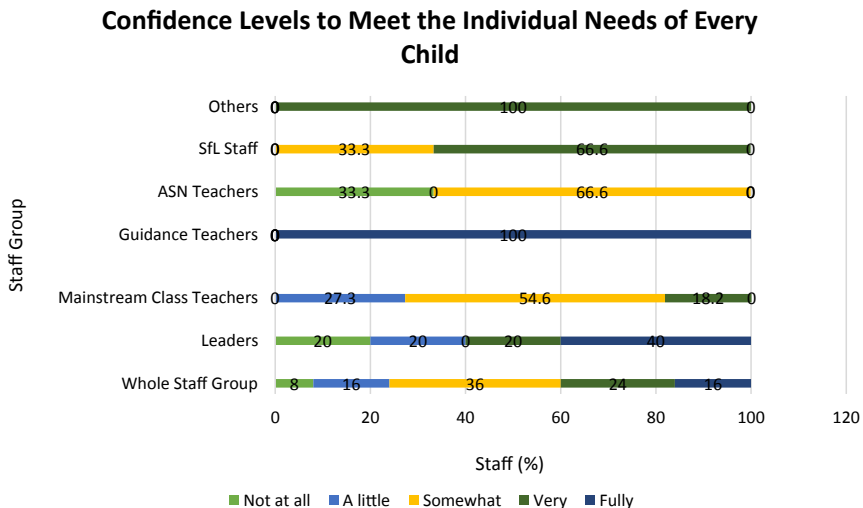


Figure 1. Confidence ratings by group of personal feelings of staff to meet the needs of every child in their care [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

Staff Reasons for Lack of Confidence

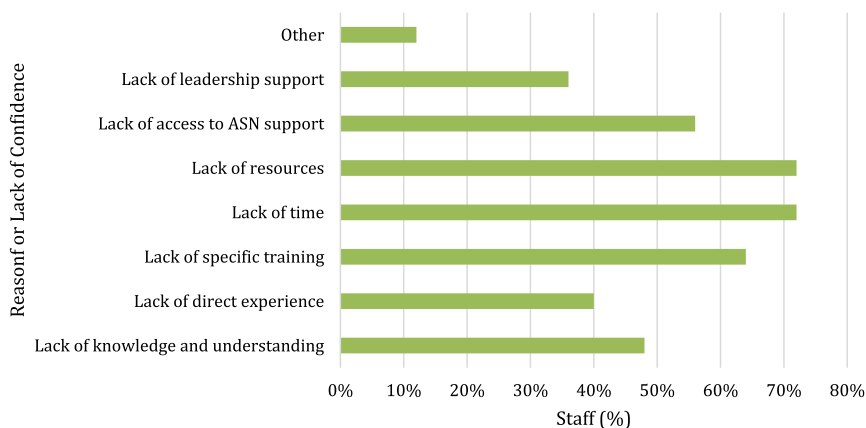


Figure 2. Cluster chart displaying staff reasons for lack of confidence in supporting pupils with ASN [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

confidence. The least-reported response was ‘other’, for which qualitative answers were given, including themes of an inappropriate environment to deal with some physical disabilities and reactive emotional situations, as well as large class sizes making it impossible to focus on individuals, specifically those with ASN.

Staff group analysis of reasons (see Table 1) for a lack of confidence in supporting pupils with ASN produced relatively consistent results across the data gathered. It was noted that Leaders scored highly for every rating apart from lack of leadership support, which scored 0. It is possible that this was an emotive response, or

Table 1. Themes emerging from qualitative staff feedback on reasons for lack of confidence

<i>Staff role</i>	<i>Theme for lack of confidence</i>
Leadership	Lack of training
Mainstream Class Teacher	Lack of time, insufficient resources, lack of ASN support, lack of direct leadership, inability to meet need, large class size
ASN Teacher	Lack of leadership support, lack of ASN specific training
SfL Staff	Lack of leadership support, lack of feedback
Other	Lack of leadership support

that they did not indeed feel they personally were lacking in supporting other staff members. All other staff groups rated a lack of leadership as having a significant impact on the ability of staff to meet ASN pupil need.

Staff were asked to consider what caused them to experience a lack of confidence in supporting pupils with ASN in their current context. The main themes to emerge from the answers include: large class sizes, time constraints, shortage of support for ASN, insufficient training, deficiency of feedback on work and a lack of specific knowledge and experience.

Also explored were the views and opinions of whole staff and individual staff groups regarding methods of intervention which would reduce current barriers to limiting factors and increase staff confidence in meeting the needs of pupils with ASN. The results deemed to be the most popular by the whole staff were increased ASN teaching support and increased resources, followed by increasing in-house training. Inter-group comparisons gave very similar results, highlighting the three stated interventions as the most popular for most staff groups. Further clarification of results was explored by those participants who selected another means of increasing confidence in supporting pupils who have ASN. Statements included themes of increased ASN support, increased time, smaller class sizes and improved feedback and direction from line managers.

Findings: the impact of training

Staff were questioned about training they had received which pertained to meeting the needs of pupils with ASN. Only 52% (N = 13) of the staff group acknowledged attending formal training for this purpose, while 48% (N = 12) of the staff group had not (as shown in Figure 3).

The Leaders group possessed the lowest record, with only 20% (N = 1) attending ASN-specific training. Mainstream Class Teachers had a very split set of data, where 54.6% (N = 6) had received ASN-specific training whilst 45.5% (N = 5) had not. Given that health and wellbeing is the responsibility of all staff in education (Scottish Executive, 2004a), as is meeting the needs of every child in one's care (Scottish Government, 2012b), it seems surprising that this staff group would not have had more engagement with formal training to ensure that their skill-set was appropriate. All (N = 2) Guidance Teachers stated that they had not received any formal training in connection with ASN. This result was startling to

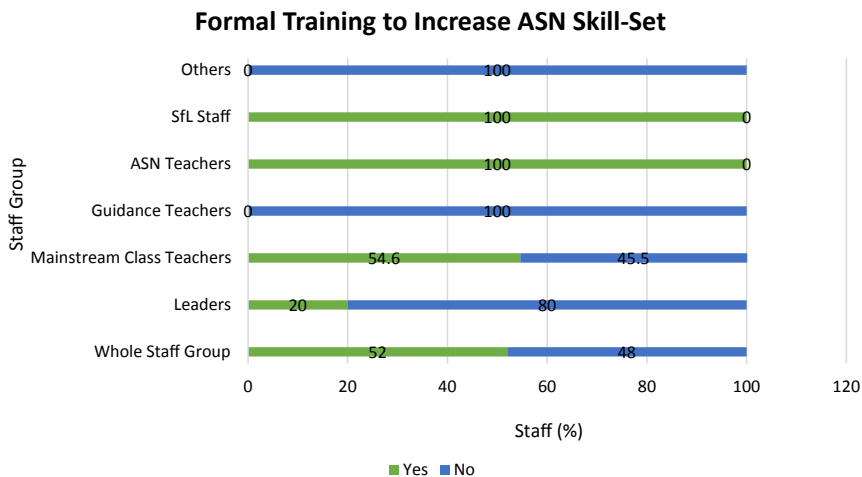


Figure 3. Stacked bar chart of analysis of engagement with formal ASN specific training by staff group [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](#)]

the researchers, given that Guidance Teachers are perceived as specialist teachers who have the responsibility of co-ordinating and managing care plans of pupils with ASN, as well as possessing Keyworker roles and responsibilities for which they would most certainly require specialist skills. Unsurprisingly, all ASN Teachers and Support for Learning (SfL) staff had attended formal training to increase their ASN skill-set. This may be due to the specific roles of ASN and SfL staff in educational settings and the increased responsibility that they may have managing and supporting pupils with ASN more intensively. It could also be attributed to the fact that they actively seek out training opportunities to bridge gaps in knowledge and understanding in order to meet the ever-increasing complex needs of pupils in their care.

Eighty-four percent (N = 21) of the whole staff group felt that training had a positive effect and influence upon their ability to meet pupil need in their context. All ASN Teachers (N = 3), SfL Staff (N = 3) and Others (N = 1) stated that training had a positive impact on them meeting pupil need. Eighty percent (N = 4) of Leaders, 81.9% (N = 7) of Mainstream Class Teachers and 50% (N = 1) of Guidance Teachers reported a positive result, as summarised in Table 2.

Table 2. Additional comments from staff in relation to the inclusion of pupils with ASN

<i>Staff role</i>	<i>Additional comment in relation to improvement of confidence and service</i>
Leadership	<p>There is a need for additional staffing resources to be put in place so that teachers and pupils can both be supported in class.</p> <p>There is a requirement for more effective and relevant training to be put in place.</p>
Mainstream Class Teacher	<p>There is a need for more ASN staff in school.</p> <p>There is a need for more consideration in our busy timetables for considerate planning and delivery of lessons for young people with ASN.</p> <p>Time to get to know the needs of individual pupils would improve the situation.</p>
Guidance Teacher	<p>Smaller class sizes would enable ASN students to be included more fully.</p>
ASN Teacher	<p>A lot of teachers in school talk well about inclusion, however, not all implement it in their classrooms.</p> <p>Some pupils have raised concerns that teachers are either unable to or don't want to help them with their ASN.</p> <p>Perhaps the school environment itself and the curriculum does not meet the needs of all pupils placed in it.</p>
SfL Staff	<p>Teachers need to be better trained in order to know how to meet the needs of pupils with ASN.</p> <p>It can feel like pupils with ASN are not a priority in school.</p>
Other	<p>There is not enough support for pupils in school on many levels and there is not nearly enough SfL staff.</p>

This question allowed participants the opportunity to share any supplementary information or remarks pertaining to the inclusion of pupils with ASN in their current context. Sixty percent (N = 15) of the whole staff group offered responses of varying themes, with the majority relating to the need for additional training; an increase in ASN support required in classes specifically and the school in general; and finally, the need for increased resources, more time and smaller class sizes in order to meet the needs of all pupils.

The key findings from the study are summarised by theme in Table 3:

When comparing the statements made by staff it was clear to the researchers that there was some variation between the comments given by ASN Teachers and SfL Staff and those made by the rest of the staff groups. All staff groups

Table 3. Summary of key findings from the study

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Key finding</i>
Confidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff confidence to meet the needs of pupils in their care was relatively low. Only 16% of staff were fully confident that they could meet the needs of every child.• Most common reasons for a lack of confidence in the ability to meet the needs of every child include lack of time; large class sizes and an increased number of pupils with ASN.• The most common reasons for a lack of confidence in supporting pupils with ASN included: lack of specific training; lack of time; lack of resources and lack of access to ASN Support.• Most staff felt that the solutions to improving the current lack of confidence in supporting pupils with ASN were by: Increased ASN teaching support; Increased resources and relevant in-house training.
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 64% of staff did not receive any specific ASN education or instruction in their initial teacher training. If staff are not being adequately trained to be inclusive practitioners and meet the needs of all pupils in their care then how can they be expected to permeate inclusion throughout their teaching practice?• Only 52% of staff had undertaken formal training in order to develop and increase their ASN skillset. 84% of staff had undergone informal training pertaining to ASN. Of those teachers who underwent training, 84% stated that the training had a positive impact upon their ability to meet pupil ASN.
Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The majority of staff identified that there was room for improvement in ensuring that they were better prepared, resourced, trained, supported and informed in order to meet the needs of pupils with ASN in their care.• There was some difference in opinion between the ASN Teachers and SfL Staff in school compared to all other staff groups in relation to everyone understanding and permeating inclusion in their day to day practices. This could be as a result of the ASN Teachers and SfL Staff accessing more mainstream classrooms in order to support pupils and witnessing practice which may not be entirely inclusive, or indeed a difference in opinion between staff groups as to what inclusive practice actually looks like.

highlighted the need for increased ASN support throughout the school and the perceived benefit that this would have for the delivery of service and meeting pupil need. Both ASN Teachers and SfL staff gave more emotive comments in relation to feeling that other staff groups were not being fully inclusive of ASN pupil need, possibly because they were not aware of how to help the pupils in practice and/or because they felt pupils with ASN were not a priority in school.

Discussion

This study aimed to highlight and identify the barriers, if any, that currently exist in mainstream secondary education resulting in a lack of staff confidence in ability to meet the needs of pupils with ASN. From analysis of the results gathered, the answers to this question have been multi-faceted, and pertain to areas of education including: resourcing issues, lack of training, increasing numbers of pupils with ASN, lack of staff confidence to meet pupil need and a lack of leadership support.

It has frequently been reported that there is a deficit in the funding and resourcing of schools which ultimately impacts the achievement and attainment of those in school communities (Card and Krueger, 1996; Greenwald et al., 1996; Tomul and Savasci, 2012). With an increase in the prevalence of pupils who have an identified ASN (Scottish Government, 2016), as well as an increase in the extent to which pupils with ASN are placed in mainstream education settings, it makes sense that investments in classroom support, staff training and resources to support and facilitate learning should also increase. Instead, there is currently a deficiency of necessary resources crucial to ensuring that all pupils have the ability and facility to access and engage with the learning available to them. In this study, staff identified that, without essential resources such as knowledge, understanding, in-class and leadership support as well as time to improve and capitalise on their service delivery, they struggle to meet the needs of every pupil in their care.

Staff also highlighted the most common reasons for this struggle as being lack of time, large class sizes and an increased number of pupils with ASN to support. This is concurrent with the writings of Fuller and Clarke (1994), Avaramidis and Norwich (2002) and Demir (2009), who state that student-teacher ratio, provision of appropriate educational materials and teacher skills and abilities are the most significant conditions for success and academic achievement.

Staff reported the most common reasons for a lack of confidence in meeting the needs of pupils with ASN as being: a lack of specific training, lack of time, lack of resources and lack of access to ASN Support. Staff conveyed opinions that the solutions to improving their current lack of confidence in supporting pupils with ASN lay in increasing ASN teaching support, increasing available resources and receiving relevant in-house training. As can be seen from the majority of the qualitative statements from staff, there is a general modality amongst participants from all disciplines that there is an increase in the need for specific, targeted, specialised support in order to support staff as well as pupils.

The Doran Review (Scottish Government, 2012a) stated that all staff in schools needed to be competent and confident in meeting the needs of the pupils with whom they work. Bacon and Schulz (1991), Barton (1992) and Burke and Sutherland (2004) all echo this sentiment in their writings, noting that a lack of knowledge and understanding in relation to support, a deficit of professional information and also the absence of suitable levels of in-class support for pupils would lead to teachers not being able to include pupils with ASN effectively in their classes. In this study, it was clear to the researcher that if staff do not feel well-supported themselves then it becomes increasingly difficult for them to be able to meet and support the needs of pupils in their care. Deana et al. (1996) stated that teachers with the most positive attitudes to inclusion were those who invested their time in training and career-long professional learning (CLPL), as well as those who had the most direct experience in dealing with a variety of ASN. Avramidis and Norwich (2002) and Boyle et al. (2013) postulated that teacher perception and attitudes have a significant impact on the degree to which inclusion is effective. The correlation made here is that training leads to better inclusive practice due to an increase in confidence and skill-set.

Schuum et al. (1994) and Boyle et al. (2013) reported in their studies that teachers often indicated that they did not feel confident that they possessed the skills required to teach pupils with ASN in the mainstream classroom. Richards (2010) suggests that this stems from a lack of training at an initial input level. Only 36% of staff in this study reported being in receipt of some sort of ASN specific training in their initial teacher education. Boyer and Lee (2001) and DfES (2004) observed that, due to a lack of ASN-specific training in induction programmes, teachers were being expected to take on duties for which they lacked the skills. Harpell and Andrews (2010) perceived that this led to an increase in stress, a decrease in confidence and a negative perception of inclusion, as teachers struggled to meet unfamiliar needs. Similarly, Titone (2005) advocated that repeated studies reported a majority of teachers did not believe that their preservice training adequately prepared them for teaching pupils who had a varying range of needs and abilities.

The Doran Review (Scottish Government, 2012a) documented that there was a distinct lack of availability of professional training available for educators, and that existing training programmes often did not provide suitable breadth and depth of levels of the knowledge, understanding and exposure required to effectively meet the needs of all pupils. Concurrent with this, and supporting the emergent theme of lack of training leading to a lack of confidence observed in

this study, Daane et al. (2000), Shade and Stewart (2001), Timmons (2002) and Edmunds (2003) affirmed that one of the most prominent barriers to inclusion in schools is the lack of fundamental preparation of both mainstream and special education teachers.

The results gathered from qualitative exploration of views of staff in this study revealed that, in relation to all staff understanding and permeating inclusion in their day to day practices, there was a divide in opinion between the staff in the ASN department of the school compared to the other staff groups. This could be explained by the ASN Teachers and SfL staff being better trained in aspects of ASN and inclusion as a fundamental part of their role, or perhaps making more time to focus on the inclusion of pupils with ASN as a priority in school. Their awareness of the divide could also be explained by them gaining a wider experience through increased exposure of supporting ASN pupils in classes throughout the school, and witnessing teaching by staff who do not feel confident in meeting the needs of those pupils.

In order to improve inclusive practice and ensure that we are meeting the needs of all pupils, it is clear that there is a need for training to be improved, both at an initial staff training and preparation level, and also as part of an ongoing process to ensure that the skills-set of staff develop and evolve with the ever-changing needs of pupils in their care. The Doran Review (Scottish Government, 2012a) noted that in order for this to be successful, the profiles of appropriate and specific ASN supports and interventions should be regularly maintained and underpinned by appropriate research developments and professional learning. Contextual and cultural differences would have to be taken into account given that the needs of school populations will vary greatly depending upon their location and feeder communities (Berliner, 2002; Punch, 2009). It would therefore be the responsibility of educational leaders to identify and address context-specific needs that their communities required in order to manage and provide learning opportunities to motivate and empower staff through increased knowledge, understanding and confidence (Hallinger and Richardson, 1988).

The majority of participants in this study felt that training would be beneficial to them and their practice, and would increase their confidence and ability to meet the needs of pupils with ASN. This is consistent with the writings of Welch (1996), Lesar et al. (1997), Hedeem and Ayres (2002), and Boyle et al. (2013), whose research indicated that teachers believed they needed to further develop their expertise and skills in adapting curricula to adequately support the needs

of pupils with ASN. This is indicative of a positive and proactive mind-set of those in the sample population of this study, and a willingness and commitment on their part to engage with CLPL in order to better meet the needs of learners in their care.

Relevant targeted training, specifically selected to meet the current ASN of pupils in a school, would provide an excellent opportunity for gaps in knowledge and understanding to be bridged and for an increase in staff confidence. This would deliver an excellent example of child-based and needs-led education concurrent with the guidelines set-out in A CfE (Scottish Executive, 2004a), and would certainly aim to accomplish the priorities detailed in GIRFEC (Scottish Government, 2012b) and the National Framework for Inclusion (STEC, 2014). Harpell and Andrews (2010) found a direct correlation between effective educational leadership which fostered and promoted values in educators and the successful implementation of inclusive practices in schools. Ross and Gray (2006) supported this connection, identifying that leaders who could inspire staff to embrace organisational goals such as ‘inclusion for all’ would do so by increasing the collective capacity of staff confidence, security and motivation.

Conclusion and recommendations

With diminishing investment in the Scottish education system, as well as available resources such as money, time, people and training, the over-arching question as to ‘How can we make things better in order to meet the needs of all pupils?’ For the meantime, this lies firmly at the feet of leaders in educational establishments. It is their responsibility to prioritize the deployment of accessible and available resources and educate the educators on how to promote an inclusive ethos with clear legislation, policies and procedures to follow, taking into consideration the organisational culture and community of the school. Effective inclusive practice requires sufficient funding and resourcing to be well implemented and fully meet the needs of the staff delivering it, as well as the pupils receiving it.

The data in this study suggest that there is a consistency in the mind-set of the majority of staff across a variety of disciplines regarding meeting the needs of pupils with ASN. This uniformity can be applied to areas including: an increase in numbers and complexity of pupils with ASN, a lack of training specific to ASN, a decline in confidence, an insufficiency of resources resulting in a lack of confidence and the reality of the current situation in education, which is struggling to meet the needs of all learners with dwindling resources.

What can be taken from this particular study is that there is a clear sense of hope that staff, although very conscious of the lack of resources at their disposal, are for the most part committed, positive and willing to embrace change by taking on additional CLPL of their own volition, and by making a concerted effort to increase their skill-set, knowledge and understanding to better meet the needs of pupils in their care.

This study brought an interesting and personalised account of the current situation in a specific setting by exploring the factors that impact upon the inclusion of pupils with ASN in a mainstream secondary school from the perspective of staff there. Building upon the current study, future research opportunities may involve expanding the survey in scale and also to other schools within the Local Authority, or nationally, to provide better information about the barriers present so that they might be obviated. Further investigation into the awareness and engagement of the underpinning legislation and confidence ratings in relation to inclusion of pupils with ASN could be used to target current educator training. There are also implications for the improvement of initial teacher training, as well as ASN-specific CLPL opportunities to ensure that all staff are given the opportunities to improve their skill-set in line with the ever-changing needs of the pupils in their care.

Several limitations were identified, including the limitations related to the use of data-gathering via survey, which reduces the potential for exploring answers in more depth or following up on a participant's responses to gather more detail (Denscombe, 2003; Silverman, 2005) or to gain clarity on what a participant meant if the researcher is uncertain. Had the study used a mixed-methods design and included a follow-up interview or focus group, this would have been possible. The importance of staff being able to respond honestly and openly to this potentially-sensitive topic through the anonymity of the survey was the over-riding factor in the decision to use a survey only.

Due to the limitations presented by the relatively small sample population involved in this study, and the homogeneity of the participants all being from one specific mainstream secondary school within a particular Local Authority, caution is required when generalising the findings to wider populations (Tobin and Begley, 2004).

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