

Richards, G. (2010) 'I was confident about teaching but SEN scared me': preparing new teachers for including pupils with special educational needs. Support for Learning. Vol. 25, No. 3: 108-115.

This article is based on a research project undertaken with BA Primary Education students. These students worked on placements with special educational needs students. This was due to a government 'Inclusive Development Programme' which develops initiatives for student teachers.

Developments in special and inclusive education have been rapid. This is challenging for teachers and for teacher training courses. The debate on the integration of children with special educational needs was sparked by the Warnock Report of 1978 and has been fuelled by policy ever since. For example, the Rose Report of 2009 focused on the needs of students with dyslexia. Recent policies use concepts like integration and inclusion interchangeably and mix terminology of words like disability and special educational needs. Not only is the terminology often confused, but there is a debate about what constitutes inclusion and the effects of the language of special educational needs on learners and practitioners.

The 1998 National Curriculum replaced the curriculum previously controlled by individual higher education institutions. This meant that the government required teacher education to include knowledge about special educational needs within their programmes; although, few universities had specialist tutors. In 2004 there was a launch of the government strategy Removing Barriers to Achievement that stated that all teachers should expect to teach students with special educational needs. This meant a move towards the social model of disability and a focus on personalised learning. Key to this government strategy was working with teacher education providers to support student teachers in learning. This provided new standards for qualified teacher status so that all teachers were teachers of special educational needs.

Teacher education providers found implementing this difficult and so in 2008 they were provided with special educational needs and disability toolkits, however, OFSTED still report wide variations of the quality of special educational need course content. There can be seen to be a reliance on schools