

Assessing teacher opinion on the inclusion of children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties into mainstream school classes

Abstract

This study used a mixed methods approach to determine mainstream teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) considering the influence of age, experience, qualifications and the support they receive. The study further considered whether there was a link between attitudes and willingness to work with such children in mainstream classrooms whilst identifying the barriers to successful inclusion. A sample of 50 primary teachers (14 males; 36 females) volunteered to take part in the study. The results indicated that age, time in profession and support received were significant predictors of teacher attitudes, with time in the profession as the strongest predictor. Attitudes also had a significant effect on willingness to include when controlling for support received. Qualitative responses suggested teachers felt they lacked necessary training to include children with emotional and behavioural difficulties and lack of consistent resources and support were commonly cited as barriers.

In the United Kingdom a child is classed as having Special Educational Needs (SEN) when they require additional support at school, owing to their complex, differing sensory, cognitive and social, emotional and behavioural needs (Education Act 1996). Since the introduction of inclusion policies during the early 1970s in Britain, the integration of children with SEN and other disabilities into mainstream education has raised many controversial issues in relation to its impact on parents, professionals and the children themselves. The inclusion of children with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD) can be challenging in mainstream school settings, since children may present with a complex and individual range of needs characteristic of other developmental disorders, such as linguistic impairments and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (see Cole & Visser, 2005; Evans, Harden & Thomas, 2004). Since mainstream school teachers will commonly experience teaching children with SEBD during their career (Hastings & Oakford, 2003; Broomhead, 2013; Armstrong, 2013), capturing and understanding their views and experiences of teaching and coping is invaluable. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to investigate school teachers' opinions about accommodating children's specific needs in a mainstream school setting, placing a particular focus on inclusion for children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD).

Research suggests that teachers' perceptions of inclusion greatly influences both the way in which they manage their own classroom environment, and how they understand and interpretation the support that is available to them (Monsen, Ewing & Kwoka, 2014). Those with greater responsibility appear to be more willing to adapt practices and environments to accommodate children with SEBD (Ryan, 2009; Monsen et al., 2014). Additional key factors, alongside the nature and range of their specific needs, are available time and perceived disruption (McGregor & Campbell, 2001; Hwang & Evans, 2011). There also appears to be a clear division of opinion regarding whether or not children with SEBD should be included. In comparison to secondary school teachers, primary school teachers appear to demonstrate greater acceptance of inclusion, holding higher levels of training to implement inclusive practices (Cook, Cameron & Tankersley, 2007; McGregor & Campbell, 2001; Robertson, Chamberlain & Kasari, 2003). Furthermore, increased time spent with a child with SEBD, is increases teachers' familiarity, improves knowledge of SEBD and increased positive attitudes towards inclusion (Cook, Cameron & Tankersley, 2007).

However, primary school teachers do express more concerns than secondary school teachers about levels of attainment in children with SEBD (Forlin, Keen & Barrett, 2008). The Theoretical Model of Instructional Tolerance (Gerber, 1988) suggests some teachers inadvertently resent children with SEBD, as they feel their increased efforts to better these children are not recognised (Cook, Cameron & Tankersley, 2007). Indeed, teachers may be left using ineffective communication techniques with children hence begin to unintentionally begrudge children with SEBD owing to their challenging nature.

Irrespective of individual opinion on inclusion, it has been reported that teachers often feel they lack valuable key skills and awareness of specific needs to create inclusive environments (McGregor & Campbell, 2001; Robertson et al., 2003) or effectively encourage successful development of children with SEBD (Cook, Cameron, & Tankersley, 2007; Monsen, Ewing, & Kwoka, 2014). Indeed the development of the children concerned may even be hindered because an absence of skills, and needs awareness can have an implicit negative influence on teaching behaviour, teacher's attitudes towards the child, and the adoption of good inclusion practice (Jordan Schwartz, & McGhie-Richmond, 2009). Teachers' level of training therefore significantly affects perspectives, practice and competency to adapt, as training supports increased levels of acceptance and understanding of SEBD (Hwang & Evans, 2011; Monsen et al., 2014; Yan, & Sin, 2014). This in turn can influence the children's attainment (Sin, Tsang, Poon, & Lai, 2010; Forlin, & Chambers, 2011).

Previous research suggests that an additional factor affecting attitudes was teachers' perceived opinions of how well children with SEBD would perform academically, with attitudes and willingness being greatly (and positively) influenced by additional support and technology available to enhance learning and attainment (Larrivee & Cook, 1979; Hwang & Evans, 2011). Teachers with less choice often felt that children with SEBD should attend special schools (Hwang & Evans, 2011; Morberg & Savolainen, 2003). This was because they had perceived those schools to offer greater opportunities because they had specialised equipment.

In summary, research suggests that too many teachers feel they lack a good level of training to facilitate inclusive environments for working with children with SEBD. Enhanced teacher training has been shown to result in greater attainment for the

children themselves. Access to resources, including technology and appropriate support, can also enhance and support learning environments for children with SEBD (Hager & Hodkinson, 2009; Monsen, Ewing, & Kwoka, 2014).

Although many teachers have argued that whilst children with SEBD are amongst the most challenging and demanding of their pupils, they are also amongst the most rewarding to work with. Unfortunately, they are often the children that are least desired in classrooms irrespective of teacher's opinions on inclusion (Armstrong, 2013; Hastings & Oakford, 2003; Monsen, Ewing, & Kwoka, 2014). Some have suggested that this is because emotional and behavioural difficulties create greater pressure and apprehension in teachers (Avramidis, Bayliss, & Burden, 2000; Hwang & Evans, 2011), and teachers commonly feel most unprepared as children with SEBD often exhibit very demanding behaviour (Scanlon & Barnes-Holmes, 2013). Mainstream school teachers often feel ill-equipped, as their skills and resources do not always allow them to stretch the teaching and learning environment (Humphrey & Symes, 2010; Robertson, Chamberlain & Kasari, 2003). A teacher's ability to manage these demands appears to be related to their level of self-belief, such that teachers with a greater belief are more adaptable and more keen to try innovative intervention techniques (Scanlon & Barnes-Holmes, 2013; Stein & Wang, 1988). Nevertheless teachers' attitudes contribute greatly to the placing and removal of obstacles that lead to effective and ineffective inclusion and the maintenance of attention (De Boer, Pijl, & Minnaert, 2010; MacFarlane & Woolfson, 2013). Unfortunately, research determining which methods are successful is sparse. Thus it is difficult for teachers (and researchers) to identify, let alone implement, what works. This is compounded by the fact that it is difficult to learn and implement an array of methods, as each child is individual and will therefore react differently to different strategies. Accordingly more work is required in this area.

Research suggests teachers' concerns have remained throughout their careers since the introduction of inclusion policies (Goodman & Burton 2010). This is worrying for the future of inclusion, as uncertainties are not being addressed. Which, Scanlon and Barnes-Holmes (2013) have argued, may be because of an absence of guidance in specific teaching techniques, despite enthusiasm and professionalism. Teachers themselves have argue that qualifications are irrelevant in engaging children (Goodman & Burton, 2010) but rather it is the respect gained from teacher-pupil

relationships and peer appraisal (to allow teachers to reflect on practices) that has the greatest influence on behaviour management.

The Present Study

Previous research on teacher attitudes towards inclusion of children with SEBD has been limited by the use of either quantitative or qualitative methods in isolation. Our aim is to use a mixed methods approach to enhance understanding and provide in-depth, meaningful representation of teachers' attitudes to SEBD inclusion. Specifically, this work will address whether teachers' age, experience, qualifications, and support received, influences their attitudes towards the inclusion of children with SEBD in mainstream teaching and learning environments. The work also aims to determine a link between educators' attitudes to inclusion and willingness to work with SEBD whilst identifying the barriers to successful inclusion regarding the current support available.

Based on previous research findings, it is proposed that younger teachers who trained more recently will have more positive attitudes towards inclusion, thus demonstrating greater willingness to involve children with SEBD. It is also hypothesised that when more types of support are available there will be an increased willingness to include children with SEBD. Finally, it is also anticipated that, consistent with Glazzard (2011) and, Polat (2011) the qualitative component will help identifying a lack of resources and time as specific barriers to inclusion.

Method

Design

This study is a mixed methods design utilising quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative section includes two scaled questionnaires and the qualitative section involves responding to three open-ended questions. Correlational methods were used to explore the relationship between age, experience, qualifications, and support received with *attitudes* and *willingness*. Thematic analysis was utilised to analyse the qualitative data.

Participants

Mainstream primary school teachers from the East Midlands (n=50; 36 females and 14 males) took part in this research. Sixteen participants were aged 18-25 years, four aged 26-30, seven aged 31-35, seven aged 36-40, four aged 41-45, seven aged 46-50, two aged 51-55 and three aged 60 years plus. The participants had a range of experience, from one year of teaching to 35 years in the profession. The number of relevant qualifications also varied, with participants holding two to eight relevant qualifications, and most of the teachers holding an undergraduate degree. The teachers did not need to have worked with, nor currently be working with, a child with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) to take part. The participants were initially contacted through their head teacher, who then forwarded the study questionnaires to them for completion. No inducements or rewards were offered for participation. No participants withdrew from the study.

Teacher Qualifications and Support

A scale was produced to collect data on teachers' qualifications. This required the participants to highlight the single highest qualification they held. The option to disclose further qualifications in special educational needs (SEN) was also given. The qualifications were scored from low (1) to high (6) and an additional point was given for each relevant SEN qualification. The scores therefore ranged from the lowest score of 1 to the highest score of 6, with additional points being given if necessary: Qualifications began from GCSEs up to Doctorate level.

A similar scale was also used to collate information on support received which required teachers to specify, using tick boxes, what types of support they received. The participants could indicate as many types of support as they received and were scored one point for each. Examples of support included 'Supplementary teaching assistant or one-to-one assistant', and 'Extra help with planning'. The highest score available was 5, which indicated full support and the lowest score was 0, which indicated no support was received.

The 'Multidimensional Attitudes toward Inclusive Education Scale' (MATIES)

The MATIES measures the attitudes of teachers towards general inclusion of any SENs or disabilities (*attitudes*). For the purpose of this study, a modified version of this scale (developed by MacFarlane & Woolfson, 2013) adapted specifically for the inclusion of children with SEBD, was used. Permission was given by MacFarlane and Woolfson to use their revised scale. The scale comprised 18 statements, 9 of which were positively directed and 9 negatively directed. Positively directed statements included, 'I am willing to encourage students with SEBD to participate in all social activities in the regular classroom'; negatively directed statements included, 'I get frustrated when I have to adapt the curriculum to meet the individual needs of students with SEBD'. The teacher participants responded to each question using a Likert scale of 1 to 9, to specify the degree to which the participant agrees or disagrees with the statement. The highest possible score for the *attitudes* is 162 and the lowest possible score is 18, with a high score indicating more positive and inclusive attitudes towards the inclusion of children with SEBD. Cronbach's alpha for the revised scale used in this study was .75 (MacFarlane & Woolfson, 2013).

The Teachers' Willingness to Work with Severe Disabilities Scale (TWSD)

This scale measured teachers' included willingness to include children with severe disabilities and SEN into mainstream schools (*willingness*). It was originally created by Rakap and Kaczmarek (2010) to include 3 vignettes for children with differing SEN. For the purposes of this study a modified version (adapted by MacFarlane & Woolfson, 2013) of the scale was used. The modified version of the scale includes one vignette, solely concentrating on children with SEBD. We further modified the scale by altering the scoring to match the 1 to 9 Likert scale used in the MATIES (see above), which the teachers used to provide their responses to a series of statements. Teachers' willingness (to work children with SEBD) comprised numerous components including their agreement to do extra training and openness to adapt their practices. The vignette included details about the child's stage of educational development, their personality and general behaviour. Example statements included, 'I would support the idea of including Max in my classroom', and, 'I would accommodate and adopt the way

I instruct all children so that Max would be able to participate as well'. Scores on the *willingness* scale could range from 8 to 72, and a total obtained by summing all responses. A low score was interpreted as *less willing* and a high score as *more willing* to accommodate a child with SEBD into a mainstream school environment. Cronbach's alpha for the scale showed high internal consistency at .94 (MacFarlane & Woolfson, 2013).

Qualitative questions on inclusion and working with children SEBD

The teachers were also asked to provide open-ended written answers to three questions that had been designed by the authors, based on key issues emerging from the previous literature (e.g., Cook et al. 2007; McGregor & Campbell, 2001). The purpose of including this qualitative method was extract data that would provide richness and context to the quantitative data, and enable meaningful reflections on teacher's attitudes towards including children with SEBD into mainstream schools. The questions were designed to probe teacher's opinions on aspects of inclusion of, and working with, children with SEBD, as born from their experiences. The questions were:

1. *What problems do you encounter when implementing an inclusive environment for children with SEBD?*
2. *What practical support do you receive in accommodating children with emotional and behavioural difficulties into mainstream classes?*
3. *Do you have any suggestions to make the inclusive classroom more successful for the teaching staff and all students?.*

Procedure and materials

Having formally obtained consent (by letter) from the participating schools' head teachers, the teachers taking part were provided with packs of response materials and consent forms. Ethical considerations were deemed paramount. The confidentiality and anonymity of all participants was respected throughout the process, and individual teachers were made fully aware of their rights and status in taking part in this work. Pseudonyms are used throughout the report.

Results

The descriptive statistics highlighted the range in ages, the experience (time in profession) and range of qualifications, across the sample, with most of the teachers holding an undergraduate degree. The descriptive statistics are displayed in Table 1:

Insert Table 1 here

The support teachers received also ranges from no support (0) to full support (5). A good range of scores were gathered for the attitudes and willingness scales and other variables overall with no floor or ceiling effects present. The correlations carried between the variables are presented in Table 2.

Insert Table 2 here

Age strongly correlated with an individual's experience, however age showed no other significant correlations with any other variables. The correlation matrix suggested that time in the profession correlated significantly and negatively with the attitude and willingness scales; the longer a teacher had spent in the profession, the more their attitudes towards inclusion and willingness to work with children with SEBD, decreased. The number and type of qualifications an individual held did not significantly correlate any of the scales or other variable. However support received did significantly correlate with attitude, suggesting that the more support a teacher had received, the more positive their attitude became towards the inclusion of children with SEBD into mainstream school settings. Finally, the MATIES and TWSD showed moderate to strong significant correlations, indicating that they were tapping into related phenomena.

A multiple linear regression was performed on the teachers' attitudes towards including children with SEBD into mainstream classes, as measured by attitude using

the modified MATIES. The predictor variables were age, time in profession, qualifications and support received. The model was significant and a reasonable fit ($F(4,45)=6.65, p<.001; r^2 = 37.2, p<.001$). Age ($\beta = 5.26, t(47) =2.93, p=.05$), time in profession ($\beta = -1.62, t(47) =-3.80, p<.001$) and support received ($\beta=5.17, t(47)=2.72, p=.009$) all accounted for significant amounts of independent variance. Time in profession showed a negative association with attitude suggesting that the more time spent in teaching more to more negative attitudes become. Teacher qualifications was not found to be a significant predictor of attitudes towards inclusion ($\beta = 1.16, t(47) = .531, p=.598$).

A second multiple regression analysis was used to test if attitudes towards inclusion of children with SEBD significantly predicted teacher willingness, when support received had been controlled for. This was done because the amount of support received (or lack thereof) has been identified as substantial barrier to successful inclusion. The results of the regression indicated that the predictors explained 38.7% of the variance ($F(2,47)=14.83, p<.001$). It was also found that attitude significantly predicted willingness ($\beta=.289, t(47)=4.94, p<.001$), however support received did not ($\beta=.129, t(47)=.143, p=.887$). This suggests that attitudes accounts for the variance regardless of the support received.

Thematic analysis of questions relating to inclusion, environment and working with children with SEBD

The data from the three open ended questions were analysed separately for emergent themes using thematic analysis. For each question, one clear theme has been identified from the participant responses, resulting in three themes in total which are referred to as 'Interruption to the flow of education', 'Physical Support Available' and 'Consistency'. It can be seen that there is a great deal of overlap between these themes as they share similarities in terms of underlying issues and often one theme is affected by one or more of the other themes.

Theme 1 - 'Interruption to the flow of education'

When asked about the problems encountered when implementing an inclusive environment for children with SEBD, the teachers often cited the interruption of flow within the classroom as a main concern. This included the time spent avoiding disruptive episodes, and calming children down whilst returning to a positive working environment. In relation to as disturbing the course of learning, the teachers most commonly referred to their own lack of understanding of behaviour management techniques, to prevent and to handle children's disruptive conduct. Sam admitted being unable to control the class when working with a child with SEBD, because when presented with a group without teaching assistants, she found she could only meaningfully help a small number of children:

Sam – "Often when no extra help is available to work with children with SEBD I can find myself concentrating on few children and others begin to misbehave".

Available support staff would thus be able to offer further support for the child's differing needs, in turn creating less disruption. Sequentially this would avoid the development of misbehaviour of the remainder of the class, allowing the teacher to continue their focus on the lesson. A lack of understanding of behaviour management strategies was closely followed by insufficient numbers of support staff to consistently promote and reinforce teachers' actions. The following are extracts from the teachers' responses regarding the types of problems they encounter:

John – "I lack knowledge in understanding the reasons behind the behaviour and the best way to deal with them. I find it hard explaining to other children why that child is like that without 'singling' them out and making them feel 'different'".

Emma – "I have encountered problems of other children being hurt in my classroom when a child with SEBD has an angry outburst. The child did not have one-to-one support and was in a class of 35 pupils".

John acknowledged his inability to approach and resolve issues raised by disruptive behaviour. He also acknowledged his struggle to confidently and effectively explain to the remainder of the class why an individual child might act in a certain manner and why that such behaviour(s) was not acceptable. This caused him to feel incapable of

successfully promoting inclusion, which in turn lead to disruption and division in the class, with individual children feeling singled out because of their needs.

Theme 2 - 'Physical Support Available'

In considering the practical support received when accommodating children with SEBD in mainstream schools, teachers often referred to the physical support available to them. This theme included the presence of other staff in the classroom to manage children's behaviour and material objects and resources available to promote and foster learning in all children. Of the 31 teachers that provided a response, 21 cited teaching assistants, or one-to-one support staff, as the most common practical support they received. All too often, however, this support was limited or inconsistent:

Pete – “We have a one student in with statement...that has assistance now and again (mainly where staff asks for them)”.

Martin – “...it is very rare to get one-to-one support – and the usual excuse is the cost”.

Sally – “If the child has a statement it doesn't necessarily follow that they have one-to-one. If they do it makes it a lot easier but without the recognition that this is needed, the child, other children and teaching staff suffers”.

Emma described a disruptive experience wherein one child was injured by another in her classroom. This caused great disruption to the children's education as she was unable to control the situation. Emma stressed that she was unable to control the children, likely because of the lack of support staff to reinforce her actions and to lessen the problems which led to unacceptable behaviour.

The responses to this question suggest that extra staff in classrooms was very important in helping with both class control, and lesson effectiveness. However this support was seldom available unless specifically requested because of a lack of funding in the schools. But because one-to-one support for needy children is so time, energy and resource consuming, some teachers felt that they were overworked. This was evident in Sally's response whereby she explains that all parties suffer when no

extra teaching staff are available to help, leaving them feeling psychologically drained. In addition to this, some teachers reported that they receive no help at all, irrespective of the additional needs children in their classes may present.

Theme 3 - 'Consistency'

Finally the teachers were asked if they had any suggestions about making an inclusive classroom more successful, for both teaching staff and students. The responses to this question lead to a theme of environmental consistency for both the child and the teacher. The theme 'consistency' incorporated increased physical support, more resources and staff, and further training.

The most frequently articulated improvement, that teachers felt would make an inclusive classroom more successful, was top-up workshops and short courses both following any initial training as well as throughout their career. Suggestions included training in understanding emotional and behavioural difficulties, and a greater knowledge of the issues children face. This would help teachers' understanding of the underlying causes of behaviour. Finally learning behaviour management strategies to discourage disruptive behaviour and allow teachers to manage situations where behaviour may become out of hand.

Mary – "There is a need for...training for staff. The classroom can be more inclusive by staff implementing consistent strategies with the whole class to manage behaviour".

Katie – "Every child is an individual. It is essential that ALL staffs are fully aware of the specific needs of an individual with SEBD and how they can best be supported. It is highly desirable that one-to-one staff have received training to provide the best and most effective support possible."

The teachers frequently expressed that they felt consistency, regular support and more time to implement strategies would improve their ability to teach as there was greater flexibility in their use of time. For instance Mary believed that by providing opportunity for teachers to update their knowledge, the whole classroom would become more accepting and accommodating of inclusion. In turn this would,

encourage a more successful learning environment. This knowledge would influence the consistency of classrooms, as all teachers would have a greater appreciation of the general and individual issues that trigger disruptive episodes in children with SEBD. This would in turn provide security for all of the children as negative behaviour can be managed or even avoided before it got out of hand. It was important for all staff to understand that each child is unique and their needs would vary in comparison to other children's needs. Moreover, by understanding each child's individual needs, they could provide a more child-focussed, specific and suitable education.

Understanding and knowledge further permits greater collaboration between teachers, children and parents. Through effective communication teachers could be more aware of current/live issues for individual children, and would be able to adapt their teaching practices accordingly. John, for example, suggested that parents would feel more involved, and teachers would feel better equipped to deal with children's behaviour accordingly.

John – "...then you would be better equipped to settle and deal with them effectively. I would also recommend a strong relationship with the parents too as parents who are 'on side' can be very effective".

In summary, teachers felt they lacked an understanding of successful behaviour management strategies to handle the undesirable behaviour children presented. This combined with insufficient support staff led to greater disruption of lessons. Teachers commonly remarked that extra staff in classrooms helped to manage disruptive behaviour and improved lesson effectiveness but was that it often inconsistent or limited owing to a lack of school funding. This left teachers feeling stressed, overworked and incapable of promoting inclusion successfully. The consistency of staffing, support from colleagues, resources and further training all emerged as being necessary to successfully promote inclusion, as they improved teachers' confidence and levels of communication between staff and parents.

Discussion

This study aimed to determine the attitudes of mainstream teachers regarding inclusion of children with SEBD, and the extent to which age, experience, qualifications and support received predict these attitudes. The research also aimed to assess whether there was a link between educators' inclusive attitude and their willingness to work with these children. Finally the research aimed to provide examples of some barriers to successful inclusion of children with SEBD.

To summarise the key findings, time in the teaching profession (experience) was the most significant predictor of attitudes towards inclusion. This may be affected by the generally younger age of sample and therefore the teachers having qualified after the introduction of inclusion policies. Experience showed significant negative correlations with attitudes and willingness, suggesting that the longer the time spent in the profession, the less positive the teachers were in terms of attitudes and willingness towards inclusion. The amount of support received also significantly correlated with attitudes suggesting that greater support promotes more positive attitudes. **The attitudes and willingness scales demonstrated moderate to strong correlations, however the amount and type of qualifications did correlate with attitudes, willingness or other variables.** Importantly though, the results indicated that attitudes significantly predicted willingness to teach children with SEBD in mainstream schools, regardless of the amount of support received. Three key themes emerged from the qualitative analysis; interruption to the flow of education, physical support available and consistency, which will be explored in relation to the quantitative findings.

In considering the research question on the factors that influence a teachers' attitude towards inclusion of children with SEBD, the variable of support received as a significant predictor of attitudes, suggested that greater support improved individual teacher's outlook. This finding coincides with previous research, showing that often teachers' concerns with inclusion, are about to implementation and limited resources (Cook et al., 2007; Hwang & Evans 2011). This has been a consistent finding throughout the last few decades, since the introduction of integration policies, as it largely affects the running of a teaching environment (see Larrivee & Cook, 1979; Cagran & Schmidt, 2011; Monsen, Ewing, & Kwoka, 2014). Although one individual

believed staffing levels were acceptable in schools, the quantitative results corresponded with the qualitative responses within the theme 'physical resources available'. Teachers' responses confirmed that an important barrier against inclusion is a lack of materials and support available in classrooms, and often teachers recommended more of these resources to improve the children's learning. All too often research has found that teachers implementing an inclusive classroom with limited resources felt children with SEBD should attend special schools (Morberg & Savolainen, 2003; Hwang & Evans, 2011). Furthermore insufficient funding typically leads to limited resources which in turn restricts the type and amount of support available. Some responses to the open ended questions, indicated that having no extra support, and hence a lack of resources, lead to a kind of disempowerment; some teachers feel incapable of doing their job effectively and were unable to promote inclusion fully because of factors outside of their control. In contrast, positive points emerged in the 'consistency' theme, where regular support staff and plentiful resources available allowed teachers to deliver well-equipped lessons, creating a more stable and enjoyable teaching environment.

A particularly important variable in the initial model included the time a teacher spends in the profession. This variable negatively correlates with attitudes toward inclusion suggesting that the longer a teacher had been teaching, the more negative their attitudes were towards SEBD inclusion. This is mostly in tune with previous research, which indicates that whilst (typically) older, more experienced teachers show an increased reluctance and hesitance towards including children with SEBD, less experienced (and typically younger) teachers generally demonstrate greater encouragement for and acceptance of inclusion (Forlin et al., 2008; Monsen et al., 2014; Yan & Sin 2014). It is possible that less experienced teachers have more limited experience of working with children with SEBD, and therefore both underestimate the challenges that they might face and present overly positive outlook. The qualitative responses within the theme 'interrupted flow to education', correspond with this idea. Indeed more experienced teachers tended to refer to the disruption in the flow of education in mainstream classes, that children with SEBD can create, as a result of their unpredictable behaviour. Conversely, older teachers, with greater experience, also tended to use different and less contemporary vocabulary than the less

experienced (and young) teachers. Thus it may be that older, but more experienced teachers were less able construct an inclusive narrative than newly qualified teachers and so felt they were ill equipped/prepared for including children with SEBD in mainstream school settings. For example, one response to the questionnaire, from a teacher with long experience, indicated that she sometimes struggled when dealing with children with SEBD as she did not always understand the reasons for their actions.

In studying the factors influencing teachers attitudes, qualifications was not a variable that significantly predicted attitude or willingness. The literature reviewed mainly supports this finding, showing that a teacher could promote inclusion more successfully by getting to know the child's interests and personal attributes (Goodman & Burton 2010). The qualitative responses from within the 'consistency' theme somewhat contradicted our finding and elsewhere, with many teachers indicating that better education and training would give them a better understanding of issues, and causes of certain behaviour in children with SEBD, allowing them to engage children more effectively. One plausible reason for this is apparent contradiction is that our quantitative conception of qualifications (e.g. GCSEs, A-levels and Degrees), is capturing something different from the teacher's intended understanding and meaning of education and training (e.g. dedicated courses on disruptive behaviour and behaviour management solutions). Certainly this would fit with other research (e.g. Goodman & Burton, 2010) in which it has been argued that the bonds formed between teachers and children with SEBD, and time they spend together, is more important than standard educational qualifications in achieving successful inclusion.

Alongside the significant correlations between experience and support received with individuals' attitudes, the results demonstrated a moderate significant correlation between educators' attitudes and willingness to include children with SEBD. Importantly, attitudes remained a significant predictor of willingness after controlling for support received. This accords with previous research, which has suggested that teachers who are more prepared to include children with SEBD, irrespective of the support they have available, express more positive attitudes (Monsen, Ewing & Kwoka

2014). Similarly, it has been argued that an individual's attitude, commitment and willingness to adapt the learning environment (Grieve, 2009; Ross-Hill, 2009; Ryan, 2009) can lead to a more positive approach and inclusive atmosphere. Within in our own identified 'consistency' theme, some teachers express their greater flexibility and willingness in the classroom to adapt new, and existing practices to suit their children regardless of their need, thus providing parity of teaching provision for all. This accords with the previous work, which suggests that by utilising the available resources efficiently, teachers can promote an effective learning environment for the children with SEBD (Ryan, 2009; Monsen, Ewing & Kwoka, 2014).

In interpreting the results of this study, there are some methodological limitations that should be noted. The sample selected were employed within one Local Authority and may have different resources available, levels of children with special educational needs and planned approaches in comparison with other Local Authorities, thus influencing attitudes and willingness towards inclusion. It is also essential to acknowledge that the teachers in this sample were recruited from primary schools only, and therefore the results cannot be appropriately applied to secondary education teachers. A larger sample, with a balanced amount of male and female teachers, would allow for more generalisations and would be more representative of the wider teaching population.

Our work is nevertheless a valuable contribution to the pertinent issue of inclusion of children with SEBD, in mainstream school settings. The results have highlighted some of the improvements primary teachers believe would help them to promote inclusion, which may prove useful during the process of determining the provision available and in forming policies and statutory guidance. If the government introduced minimum requirements regarding the support available to children with additional needs, regardless of statement funding, the process of inclusion could be improved for all.

Furthermore, from these results, suggestions could be made to maintain the programme contents of initial teacher training however enforce annual continuing

professional development rather than make it optional to ensure teachers further their knowledge throughout their career and on a regular basis. By making short courses compulsory, it would ensure that teaching staff would update their understanding of special needs and current issues surrounding special needs, along with knowledge of strategies to promote and manage behaviour. Indeed these concerns were commonly identified by our sample (and elsewhere) as issues in terms of barriers to successful inclusion; however a larger scale version of this study should be conducted to verify this.

This research studied teachers' opinions on the inclusion of children with SEBD in mainstream education. The work aimed to determine the extent to which age, experience, qualifications and support received influenced attitudes to the inclusion of children with SEBD. It also aimed to ascertain the potential link between attitude and willingness to work with children with SEBD. It found that time in profession, age and support received, were significant predictors of attitudes toward inclusion, which notably affected willingness to include. The results suggested that less focus should be on teachers' qualifications when studying attitudes to inclusion but instead look at training and education. Both the MATIES and TWSD scales were used effectively to determine educators' attitudes and willingness towards a policy of inclusion for children with SEBD. Alongside this, the findings highlighted some of the barriers experienced when implementing inclusion, such as a lack of resources. This accords with the quantitative results suggesting greater access to such resources and training would improve inclusive environments.

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