

## Istanbul – Irresistible Rise session

### *Bullet points from Sally Tomlinson*

- 1985. My article “The expansion of special education” (Oxford Review of Education 2/2) suggested that special education would expand, with services and resources being claimed by local authorities, schools and parents, and that the ideology of special educational needs would provide a justification for the economic and social position of a large group of young people.
- By 1991, 3.7% of children had a Statement of SEN, while schools claimed over 20% had learning and behavioural problems.
- In 1996 I suggested in a Chapter in Christensen and Rizvi (eds Disability and Dilemmas of social justice) that there would be an expansion of professional vested interests in dealing with more and more young people in expanding categories of SEN, disability and learning difficulty. Figure 11/1 in this chapter showed 34 professional available to ‘help’ Johnny/Jill. Now this has expanded even more, and includes neuro-scientists and ‘brain experts’
- In 2012 in “The irresistible rise of the SEN Industry” Oxford Review of Education 38/3, I noted that my forecast had come about and governments had become concerned with the expansion and the costs involved. Much of the expansion had come about as middle class parents now demanded help and resources for their children who could not compete in the market-oriented competitive education system that has developed. Parents if possible want medical labels for their children.
- Post 1993 all schools were expected to have a SENCO to identify and deal with SEN. The 2001 revised Code of Practice envisaged three levels of support – school action, school action plus, and a Statement of SEN requiring inter-professional assessment. By 2010 some 916,000 children 5-16 were identified as ‘having SEN’, with an overlapping group of a million post-16 young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) and a DfE White Paper in 2011 promised a different system of identification, to overcome ‘perverse incentives to over-identify’ children as in need of special services and resources.
- An Education (special needs) Act is currently passing through Parliament. School Action will require schools to deal with children identified with a special need or at risk. School action plus will disappear, and the Statement will be replaced by an Education, Health and Care Plan, in which a local authority must take the lead in assessing whether special educational provision is necessary for a young person ( up to 18 or 25). The regulations specifying professional, parental, and young person involvement are laid out in the draft regulations for



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1<sup>st</sup> February 2014. Although intended to reduce costs and numbers, parental demand and possible litigation may lead to higher costs, and also to inter-professional confusion ( especially as some of the services specified are now privatised)

- It is logical that as inclusive education has brought into mainstream schools and Colleges many young people previously excluded, demand for services would increase. Major reasons for this are:
  - the ideology of a knowledge economy in which all young people must achieve some sort of qualification to help compete in the national and global economy
  - An increase in demand from parents, (governments are caught in the contradiction that they promised ‘choice’ and ‘help’ )
  - teachers are pressured by requirements to ‘raise’ standards’ and still need to have the troublesome and disruptive removed or dealt with.
  - vested interests from professionals who need more clients
- There continues to be confusion between the those children and young people whose ‘needs’ are recognisable- the normative physical, sensory and multiple disabled, and the non-normative groups whose assessment and label depends on the value judgements of the professionals. The majority of those considered to ‘have SEN’ are those with learning and behavioural issues.
- Politicians and policy-makers have acquiesced in the development of a special needs industry and are now trying to back-track as costs rise. But they are caught in the historical issue of whether these young people are surplus to a knowledge economy, whether they will be required to do the low skill and service work, or whether some will still need preparation for independent or cared for living.