



Exploring young children's perspectives of inclusive education through the use of participatory research methods

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DOI 10.15294/ijeces.v6i1.15761

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Article Info

Received May 2016
Accepted February 2017
Published June 2017

Keywords:
inclusion; participatory
methods; child voice; emotional support; instructional support

Abstract

This paper reports on two small scale research projects which were undertaken in the north east of England. The two projects engaged with pupils from the age of four up to the age of sixteen. However, it is only the children aged four to age seven whose views are going to be reported here. The studies aimed to listen to children's views about how the practices of teachers helped or hindered their sense of inclusion in classrooms. Inclusion was understood here in a broad sense rather than specifically relating to children defined as having special educational needs. Participatory research tools were used as part of group interviews with children. The findings from this research are explored under four main thematic headings that relate specifically to teachers and teacher practices: characteristics and personality of the teacher; support and assistance that the teacher gives; the teacher's use of discipline and finally the choices given to children by teachers. These themes are seen to be connected to each other under the broader headings of emotional support and instructional support and can be seen as crucial in terms of understanding inclusion in schools and further developing existing practices.

How to cite

Adderley, J. A. (2017). Exploring young children's perspectives of inclusive education through the use of participatory research methods. *Indonesian Journal Of Early Childhood Education Studies*, 6(1), 1-11. doi:10.15294/ijeces.v6i1.15761

INTRODUCTION

This paper reports on the data gathered during two separate, but albeit very similar, research projects undertaken by members of the Inclusion and Social Justice Research Group based in the Faculty of Education at the University of Hull. The focus here is on the data that was gathered from children between the ages of four and seven even though the projects themselves engaged the views of a much broader age range within primary, secondary and alternative educational settings.

The first research project was undertaken in an average sized primary school in an affluent village on the outskirts of a large city in the north east of England. The team of researchers worked with focus groups of children in different classes; aged five, aged seven, aged eight and aged nine using a range of different participatory tools (Adderley et al., 2014). However, it is only the data from the children aged five and seven which will be explored here. The children who formed part of these focus groups were chosen by the teachers in the school and were those who the teachers felt may be at risk of marginalisation.

The second project was undertaken in four settings in the centre of the same large city but this time the schools and educational settings were in areas of social disadvantage. The team of researchers worked with focus groups of children and young people in a primary school with an attached early years facility, a secondary school and two alternative educational provisions for young people who had been excluded from their secondary school. However, it is only the data from children aged 4, in the early years facility attached to the primary school, which will be explored here. Again, the children who formed part of these focus groups were chosen by the teachers and were deemed to be those who were disengaged or at risk of disengagement from formal education.

The broad research questions for the two projects were:

-What are students' views about the ways in which teachers promote inclusion in schools?

-How can the use of various participative tools facilitate an engagement with students' views?

This paper focuses on the first research question which relates to students' views and perceptions about how teacher practices can help or hinder children's feelings of being included within the setting. However, the second question is addressed through the fact that this

research adopted a qualitative methodology and the fact that the data were gathered using focus group interviews with the addition of participatory tools. The children who participated in the projects raised many issues, most of which were positive and reflected the fact that they were happy with their school experience. In fact, one of the children in the early years setting, when asked what he liked best about being at school, replied '*everything*'. These positive views were not uncommon across all focus groups in both school settings however, children did raise some negative and more challenging issues in relation to their teachers and their experiences of school. The findings in this paper will focus on the views of the youngest participants in the research study who were aged between four and seven years of age. The particular views that will be explored in depth will be those that are aligned with views of teachers and teacher practices. Specifically, these relate to the characteristics and personality of the teacher; support and assistance that the teacher gives; the teachers' use of discipline (punishment and rewards) and finally the choices given to children by teachers. These factors that the children have raised in relation to teachers and teacher practices all can be viewed through the lens of emotional and instructional support which, it will be argued, impact on children's views of inclusion within the school settings. This paper adds to a growing body of literature on how participatory tools can support children more effectively to explore issues in relation to educational inclusion.

Developing inclusion through the use of child voice

Inclusion is a complex, multi-faceted and evolving concept which can be viewed differently by different people and in different contexts (Messiou, 2012b) It has been viewed as a move to allow access to education for all children, but also as a move to educate those with special educational needs and disabilities, within the mainstream setting (Florian, 1998). However, Messiou, (2006a) suggests that "inclusion cannot be concerned only with those children defined as having special needs" (p.313). Exclusion from and marginalisation within the educational system can happen as a result of many issues such as 'race', social class, religion, academic performance and behaviour. More recently however, inclusion is seen to relate to all children regardless of whether they are perceived to belong to a particular labelled group. This is further argued by Messiou (2012a) who states that the causes of marginali-

sation for some children can happen as a result of very subtle issues and are not necessarily related to having particular characteristics.

Inclusive schools “are concerned with how people learn together, how they treat one another and how they learn to live within the common world” (Ainscow et al., 2006, p.1). Inclusive education and the values which underpin it can present challenging opportunities for schools and teachers when responding to a diverse student population. However, if “educational provision [is going to] be informed by principles of equity [and] respect for others”, then importance needs to be attached to the scrutiny of school and classroom practices which may act to hinder the inclusion of some pupils (Hegarty, 2001, p.248). The experiences which children have on a day to day basis in the classroom will have an impact on their inclusion within the school as a whole: “inclusion and exclusion begin in the classroom” (Mittler, 2000, p.95).

Therefore, if researchers wish to discover more about the impact of school structures and organisation on the pupils and how these affect how they feel about their inclusion within the school, then it seems important to ask the children themselves. Ultimately, children’s views hold particular importance in relation to inclusion because they experience first-hand the impact of exclusionary or inclusionary practices and can therefore “bring to the surface features that are important for promoting inclusive education” (Messiou, 2011, p.1). Messiou also warns that issues at the root of marginalisation for some learners may not be uncovered unless emphasis is placed on listening to children’s views and therefore this can be seen as preferable to assuming how children might feel based on other evidence. In the context of this study,

“by directly listening to marginalised and excluded people themselves, we might gain important insights in relation to inclusive education. In this sense, marginalised people’s voices should have a central role in the process of inclusion. Children could be considered as one of the marginalised groups whose voices have been neglected within inclusive education” (Messiou, 2006b, p.40)

Children themselves potentially formed part of a marginalised group, certainly when considering the view that they should “adhere to the dictum of being seen but not heard and to behave according to societal norms” (Rose and Shevlin, 2004, p.156). Research involving children has previously been conducted from the perspective of research on children rather than research with children (Greene and Hill, 2005; O’Kane, 2008).

Indeed Hart (1992, p.9) states that “children are undoubtedly the most photographed and the least listened to members of society”, which would indicate that adults are interested in the ways in which children negotiate their world but, for a number of reasons, are more reluctant to engage directly with the children themselves. From this perspective children could be perceived as being ‘hidden voices’ which if accessed could provide valuable information in relation to inclusion (Ainscow et al., 1999). More recently there has been a paradigm shift towards the acceptance that children have views and opinions separate from the adults in their lives (James et al., 1998). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989) has significant implications for the participation of all children in society. Article 12 and 13 present a pragmatic and moral perspective that children’s views must be both acknowledged and acted upon which reflects their entitlement within society to being recognised as valuable contributors and rights-holders (Federle, 1994). However, Article 12 of the UNCRC stipulates that only a child who is “capable of forming his or her own views [has] the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child”. In addition to this, these views should be “given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child”. The researchers in this study aligned themselves more with the views of Mittler who argues that inclusion means “listening to and valuing what children have to say, regardless of age or labels” (Mittler, 2000, p.viii). These research studies engage with the views of young children and therefore there was an understanding that these children would need support, through the use of participatory tools, to express their particular opinions. Tay-Lim and Lim (2013) state that,

“while there is a positive move toward listening to children’s and young people’s perspectives, there is apprehension as regards eliciting the views of younger preschool children below the age of 8 years” (p.68).

This mirrors the view of the UNCRC regarding age and maturity and highlights the fact that more innovative approaches are required to ensure that these younger children able to express their views (Morrow, 1999).

Finding ways to access children’s voices can be seen as one element of inclusive practice and therefore works to minimise exclusion and marginalisation (Todd, 2007). Messiou (2006) argues that “listening to children in relation to inclusion is, in itself, a manifestation of being inclusive” (p. 305). Todd further argues that involving children in whole school decisions, although not a com-

mon practice, is vital within educational settings. She states that children should be consulted and involved in helping to make decisions that will ultimately affect them and that “education cannot be inclusive without collaborating with children ... in ways that enables their perspectives to influence the development of schools and systems” (Todd, 2007, p.13). Casey (2005) also promotes the importance of action when following up on the views that have been expressed by children.

Based on this understanding it could be argued that accessing the opinions of children can provide valuable information that has the potential to lead to development of more inclusive educational settings and also be integral in changing and developing teacher practices.

METHOD

A qualitative approach was adopted for these research studies as this paradigm “accepts values and perspective as important considerations in the search for knowledge” (Anderson & Arsenault, 1998, p.5). Young children’s responses to their educational experiences and how these impacted on their inclusion within the setting were sought and as a consequence the research was naturalistic and interpretative. It was important to understand the feelings and reactions of these children within the school context and how their direct experiences defined their view of inclusion and explained their perceptions of teachers and the approaches that they used (Basit, 2010).

Central to this research was the understanding that by engaging with children’s voices, information related to inclusion could be revealed and in order to ascertain the impact that certain approaches could have on inclusion, it was important to ask the children themselves. This is in preference to assuming how they might feel based on other evidence (Groundwater-Smith et al., 2015).

Therefore, working solely with young children to conduct this research study provided a challenge because “children are not used to expressing their views freely or being taken seriously by adults because of their position in an adult dominated society” (Punch, 2002, p.325). The use of participatory tools in research with young children attempts to challenge traditional adult-controlled power dynamics and to equalise the power between researchers and children. This suggests that conventional research methods which rely heavily on verbal language, such as interviews, may not be suitable or appropriate for

some children. The unequal power relationships between adult researchers and children is an area that is widely debated and one which expresses concerns about developing an approach that considers the perspective and position of the child (Mayall, 2001; Morrow and Richards, 1996). Participatory research differs from other research in terms of the central role that the participants play in the process. It therefore challenges the perspective that children are vulnerable and innocent and require their feelings to be expressed by an adult (Devine, 2003). As such, participatory research provides children with a forum to talk about the causes and impacts of issues in their daily lives through a reflexive approach which adopts open-ended research goals and tools (Farquhar, 1990). Participatory research therefore is allied to ideals of democracy and children being agents of change and its epistemological framework links with a more liberating concept of power. It offers an opportunity for researchers to be more innovative in their research design so that children are able to be empowered and able to share their lived experiences (Malewski, 2005; Morrow, 1999; Veale, 2005). It has particular importance when accessing the views of those who are marginalised and can support these participants to achieve a greater degree of emancipation as autonomous and responsible members of society (Freire, 1982). These methodologies reinforce the principles of the UNCRC (2005) which advised that patience and creativity was required when exploring and collecting children’s views. As such it was considered important to use language and research tools that were considered to be “intrinsically engaging” (IIED, 2004, p.68).

Ethical approval was gained from the University of Hull and informed consent was provided by the schools. However, the children were also asked whether they wished to be participants in the project as a way of creating a just and respectful relationship between the researchers and the children. Groundwater-Smith et al. (2015) refer to this more equal and democratic relationship as ethical symmetry. Respecting the children’s wishes related to whether they chose to be involved with the research was one of the strategies that was used to try and reduce the power imbalance. A further strategy was in the choice of tools for data collection which were participatory in nature. This enabled the children to have some “control over the process” and helped to ensure that what they said was valued (Thomas and O’Kane, 1998, p.342). In using activities which involved the participation of the children, it was hoped to provide the children with opportunities

to be able to express their opinion using materials that they were familiar with, that were visually appealing and that prompted discussion. As such, the emphasis was on the conversation that was generated as a result of the activity rather than the focus being on questions and answers being exchanged between the researchers and the children as would have been the case in a traditional interview.

Darbyshire et al. (2005) recommend that a range of methodological strategies and approaches are used when engaging with children because these provide a greater breadth and depth of experience to be explored. Therefore, a number of participatory tools were used across the different age groups of children: unfinished sentences; picture prompt cards; photography; drawings; puppets and blob trees. These different methods were chosen in an attempt to provide the children with age appropriate resources to stimulate discussion and are explained below. The unfinished sentence activity involved the children orally completing sentences that had been started for them, such as:

-My favourite teachers are the ones who.....

-I wish that my teachers would.....

-When I feel happy in class.

-When I feel lonely in class.

-The picture prompt cards showed children exhibiting a range of positive and negative emotions and also showed pictures of children in different scenarios which related to situations which children might find themselves in at school.

Cameras were used by the children in the early years provision to take photographs of areas inside the classroom but also aspects of the outdoor environment which they liked or disliked. These photographs were then used as a focus for discussion to ascertain why the children had chosen to draw attention to these features.

The drawing activity engaged the children in creating a visual representation of aspects of their classroom experience that made them feel happy or sad. They were asked to consider both of these emotions in their drawings. The researchers spoke to the children throughout the process to gain additional information about the children's feelings and about the content of their drawings. A voice recording was used to support the analysis of the photographs and the drawings and this provided a personal narrative which both described and explained the content of the visual images (Einarsdottir et al., 2009). This was important, particularly with the photography activity because sometimes the children had taken

photographs of other children from their class but there was no way of knowing whether this was for positive or negative reasons or, in some cases, no particular reason. The conversations surrounding these photographs provided the clarification that was needed to fully understand the feelings that the child wished to share.

The puppets were used as a focus for some of the conversations with the youngest children and provided an opportunity to recreate imaginary scenarios that could be related through the puppet.

Finally, the blob tree activity involved the children in looking carefully at the picture and identifying a character in the picture which best represented how they felt about themselves or how they viewed themselves in relation to others in the class (see figure 1).



Figure 1. An example of a blob tree

Using a variety of tools also provided the researchers with other alternatives if one particular tool was not effective in generating discussion. This happened when the blob trees were used with the children aged seven. These representations were far too abstract and many children gravitated towards a more literal approach stating that they enjoyed climbing on or swinging from trees.

Other challenges arose in relation to the photography with the children aged four. The researchers had visited the children in the previous week and begun conversations about how they felt about their school and classroom using a teddy bear puppet and picture prompt cards. The cameras were introduced at the end of this session with the intention that the children would

use them during the course of the week to take images of things they liked which made them feel happy and things they disliked which made them feel sad. Unfortunately, when the researchers returned the following week, no photographs had been taken. As such, the researchers provided time, during their visit, for the children to take the photographs before engaging them in discussion.

Conversations with all groups of children were recorded using a voice recorder and fully transcribed. A thematic analysis was then applied to the transcriptions and the researchers worked collaboratively to do this. In the presentation of the findings, all names used are pseudonyms.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Many themes emerged from the analysis of the data but the ones that are going to be discussed here are the themes that relate specifically to teachers and teacher practices and how these are seen to have a positive or negative impact on inclusion. This paper argues that children's experiences within the classroom and particularly their implicit and explicit interactions with their teacher can impact on their feelings of being included. Central to this argument is the understanding that teachers' interactions with children can be viewed within a framework of emotional and instructional support. Four themes arose from the data and these will be discussed in relation to these two types of support. The first three themes relate to emotional support: (a) the characteristics and personality of the teacher; (b) the teacher's use of discipline; and (c) the choices given to children by teachers. The final theme of the support and assistance that the teacher gives relates to instructional support.

It is also important to note that these four themes emerged in all three year groups and in both school settings.

Emotional Support

Emotional support is signified by positive relationships between teachers and children (Curby et al., 2009; Hamre et al., 2013; Reyes et al., 2012). This paper makes the case that the provision of emotional support develops a more equal and respectful relationship between the children and the teacher. If children identify aspects of the teacher and their actions which support this respectful relationship, then this makes them feel more positively about their teacher therefore helping inclusion. Similarly, if children identify aspects of the teacher and their actions which undermine this respectful relationship then they are

likely to feel more negatively about their teacher consequently hindering inclusion. The children identified several issues in relation to the first theme of characteristics and personality of the teacher. These traits made them view their teacher in a positive way. These included being nice, caring, not hurtful and being able to provide things that the children will like. In speaking about their favourite teachers, Thea and Melvyn present the following opinions:

Thea (aged seven):*nice to me, never hurt anyone, and they're caring.*

Melvyn (aged seven): ...*are always nice to us and do things that are always nice and give us things we will like.*

Thea and Melvyn both mention the word 'nice' in relation to teachers that they like but they highlight the fact that consistency is important through the use of the words 'always' and 'never'. It seems that it is not enough for teachers to sometimes or usually demonstrate niceness; it needs to be a characteristic that is always present and therefore reliable and predictable. These two children are also speaking about their view of their favourite teachers rather than their views of all teachers. This would indicate that there may be other teachers who they have encountered who may not provide the supportive characteristics that they have identified as being important.

Children also valued the teacher's ability to cheer them up and sometimes this involved having a sense of humour and maybe telling a joke. For other children who had been involved in an accident on the playground they valued having a teacher that was helpful and nice:

Julia (aged five) – *cause today I fell over and I bumped my nose on the floor and it really hurted so I went to tell the teachers and my friends helped me ... and the teacher was nice to me.*

One child compared his relationship with his teacher as being similar to relationships that he experiences with peers in his friendship group:

Lee (aged seven): *I do work with them plus they are friends with me; we are like school friends but they're older, plus they are teachers, so kind of friends.*

For Jessica these positive feelings were generated through the way her teacher looked:

Jessica (aged four): *Because she is my favourite teacher.....because I like her fringe.*

It could be argued that if children find something attractive in the teacher's personal appearance, this may encourage a positive connection in other ways (Alkan, 2013). The children in this research have been able to identify particular aspects of their teacher's character and personality which they perceive to have a positive impact on

the way that they view their teacher. These positive aspects are also present in the wealth of literature on emotional support, where emphasis is placed on teachers engaging in a positive way with children (Hamre et al., 2013; Curby et al., 2009; Curby et al., 2013; Hamre and Pianta, 2005; Reyes et al., 2012; Pakarinen et al., 2011). These positive ways of engaging are manifested in teachers showing sensitivity and demonstrating kindness, humour and friendliness. Kangas (2010) argues that “teachers should be kind, nice, agreeable, gracious, funny and friendly” (p.214). This concurs with a research study by Glazzard (2012) which concluded that children “perceived that good teachers are fair, kind [and] fun” (p.53).

The children focused in a positive way about the aspects of teachers’ personalities which helped them and also, in the context of this research, seemed to create a level of emotional support which aided inclusion. However, there were times when the ways in which teachers responded to pupils caused a fracture in the relationship between the teacher and the children and therefore seemed to hinder inclusion. These interactions were related to discipline issues which, when dealt with by negative reinforcement, were perceived in a wholly negative way by the children. They did not like being shouted at by their teachers and it could be argued that whilst the positive characteristics outlined above could be seen as establishing a more equal and respectful relationship, shouting emphasised the dominance of the teacher and a hierarchy emerged. The children were aware that being shouted at usually happened “when you have done something naughty” but they also felt that the worst thing about school was “... getting shouted at” and that teachers should “never shout at us”. Other studies have also identified the use of anger, aggression, raised voices and shouting by teachers as being something that is viewed negatively by children (Kangas, 2010; Glazzard, 2012; Wyse, 2001). These forms of discipline seem to impact on the ways in which children viewed their relationship with their teachers and also hindered the level of emotional support which they perceive to gain from their teachers. As such, when children created this image of their teacher as someone who shouts this may well lead to this teacher being perceived in negative ways, even when they are not shouting. In these situations children seem to feel that their teacher is frightening and therefore unapproachable. This in turn leads to children feeling that they cannot explain their point of view even when they have important information to tell the teacher. This was seen to be the case when one child

related their experience of being unable to tell a teacher that his friend had not been involved in a particular playground incident which the teacher had accused him of:

Luke (aged five): *because it was Mr. Thomas and he is a really scary teacher so that's why I didn't tell him...*

It is important to note that, in a previous conversation, Mr Thomas was a teacher who the children had identified as someone who shouts.

Children in this research study also valued the fact that sometimes teachers allowed them to make choices and this relates to the third theme that was identified. This opportunity to choose provides the children with a certain degree of autonomy and seems to establish a more respectful and emotionally supportive relationship between the teacher and the child:

Zach (aged seven): *If we have two things to do and we don't have time, she gives us a vote on which we want to do ... if she picks one only two people might want it, where the other 30 might not want to do it.*

Kelly (aged five): *I like it when the teacher telling us we get to choose because then we get to play with toys.*

However, the children felt more negatively when these choices were not available and the only option was to comply with what was being asked of them by the teacher. In these situations it seems that the children felt restricted:

Sarah (aged five): *when it is pouring outside, and when we watch a DVD I don't like it when we just have to watch the DVD and we can't colour.*

Jessica (aged four): *When we have got to listen to the teacher, we can't do what we have to do, we have to do what the teacher says.*

Jessica seems to be referring to an activity that she is prevented from completing due to the teacher placing priority on something different. Devine (2002) discusses the organisation of children’s time and space in school particularly through the use of the timetable which tends to highlight which activities are considered more important. This also raises issues of lack of choice and flexibility. She argues that “timetables establish boundaries on the nature and extent of children’s activity, classifying such activity into worktime and playtime” (Devine, 2002, p.309). These issues were not quite as apparent with regard to this study with the children aged four because of the flexibility of the early years approach and the fact that work and play appeared conflated and deemed to be of equal importance.

However, with the other children issues of lack of choice were raised which seemed to impact on the relationship between the teacher and the child.

The older children (aged seven) in the study raised more sophisticated comparisons between choices that were made available to teachers but not to the children that for them seemed to highlight the dominance of the teacher and place the children in a position of inferiority; which again undermined the positive relationships between the teacher and the child. These children spoke about the fact that teachers should “*let us have drinks, not just water, they get Pepsi, Dr Pepper, Coke, tea and we don't; they get biscuits and we don't. All we get is water*”. Also teachers should “*let us have drinks in the classroom, when it's lesson time they get to sit at the side and drink their drinks, and we ask to go to the water fountain and they say you should have done it at break time*”. In these situations it seemed to be the overt reinforcement of these differences that caused the children to feel negatively. In the minds of the children it seemed that there was no logical reason for these unequal situations.

Instructional Support

Instructional support is signified by teachers interacting with children to develop understanding as well as providing feedback that is relevant and timely (Hamre et al., 2013). It also involves teachers engaging in dialogue with children about their learning (Curby et al., 2013). This paper makes the case that the provision of instructional support helps children to feel positively about their teacher and has a positive impact on inclusion.

Children in these research studies raised issues about instructional support that they received in the form of help. They recognised that teachers were willing to support them in their work and provide guidance when they were ‘stuck’. Children valued the support that they received from their teacher, particularly if they were experiencing problems and were not sure how to continue:

Alice (aged seven): *they help me with my work when I get stuck.*

Matt (aged five): *the teacher comes to you ...you tell her the question that you are talking about and then she answers it.*

Jessica (aged four): *Like, if you can't do something, you can't find numbers, or you can't count the right ones.*

One child compared how her own teacher responded to her requests for help and this made her feel very positive about the situation – “*Mrs*

Smith is really really nice and she is like always always helping us and if we get stuck on something then we put our hands up, and she helps us”. However, this same child also described how she felt if her teacher was absent – “*Sometimes though when she isn't there I put my hands up and wait, but [the teacher] never comes*”. Therefore, in the second scenario, the situation was viewed much more negatively because other teachers seemed less willing to help.

One child also commented that she enjoyed watching her teacher demonstrate a particular process so that she understood better:

Simone (aged four): *when she shows us what to do with our work, I like it when she does that because I really like watching her do it.*

The willingness of teachers to engage in play with the children was also valued and perceived as being supportive. These comments were specific to children aged four because of their access to a more flexible play-based curriculum. One child, when commenting about a photograph that he had taken of the sandpit, expressed that he took this picture because this was an area where his teacher had helped him through playing alongside him. Another child said that his teacher “*Helps me with the toys*”.

However, there were issues that were raised which showed the potential for children to develop more negative views in relation to the absence of instructional support or when they were worried about trying to access this support. One child commented on the fact that there were times when she did not feel supported by her teacher but recognised that the reasons might be related to the fact that she was getting older and this was preparation for how the situation might be in the next year group:

Jessica (aged four): *No they won't help us.....because we are bigger children, but we are going into Year One soon.*

Sometimes this willingness to ask for and receive help was tempered by feelings of anxiety, even though the end result led to positive feelings:

Simone (aged five): *yeah I got frightened ... because mine went wrong and I got all scared to tell the teacher.... I told her but then I felt quite safe again.....(pause) because she told me that it doesn't matter if you forget what to do because you don't have to be frightened.*

This would indicate that even when teachers actively provide instructional support, children may still feel reticent about asking in case they receive a negative response. As such regular reassurance seems to be necessary.

CONCLUSION

Central to this research study is the understanding that

"inclusion is a dynamic process and not a static position: it happens at the interface between teacher and pupil, pupils and peers and pupil and the school environment" (Adderley et al., 2014, p.3).

This paper is focused on the specific interactions of teachers and children, and argues that it is vital that these interactions are scrutinised to evaluate the impact that they may have on inclusion. The issues that the children discussed can be perceived to fit within the broad framework of emotional and instructional support. These two elements of support can also be seen to be connected from the perspective that teachers who provide a high level and high quality of instructional support are likely to connect much more effectively with the emotional needs of their pupils because they will be spending time interacting with them in a positive way (Curby et al., 2013). Similarly, those teachers who provide a high level and high quality of emotional support are more likely to know their pupils much better and therefore will be able to provide a better quality of instructional support. From the perspective of developing inclusion, it seems that a focus on the quality of emotional and instructional support is important. Many of the issues that are raised in this paper with regard to children's perceptions of their teachers would never have come to the surface without engaging in dialogue with the children themselves. Messiou and Ainscow (2015) argue that these dialogues with children can also be a powerful tool for teacher development "not least in creating interruptions that might encourage teachers to think in alternative ways" (p.249). This is a challenging concept, particularly when considering previous evidence which suggests that when student voice has been employed in schools it has often been limited to peripheral issues involving the general environment of the school rather than on issues related to teaching and learning (Lodge, 2005). This is possibly because these peripheral topics could be considered less sensitive and the opinions related to these issues are not located in the actions of

one particular person. Asking children's opinion about classroom experiences, however, can reveal challenging and personal negative opinions that do relate to the actions of particular teachers and as such are much more sensitive. Research, located in classrooms may raise sensitive issues but is nevertheless important if factors that relate specifically to teachers and teacher practices, at the root of marginalisation for some children, are to be identified.

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