An education system appropriate to the demands of the twenty-first century must be designed to establish a foundation of knowledge and skill for all children and to nurture the particular talents of each child.

(Social Justice Commission 1994: 131)

Within all contemporary societies there are groups that struggle to gain equality of opportunity and social justice in national educational systems. Research has shown that education systems can be key in perpetuating or curtailing educational disadvantages for marginalized individuals and groups (e.g. Troyna and Hatcher 1992; Foster et al. 1996). There has also been extensive critical debate about the effects of special education on its pupils (e.g. Slee 1996; Pijl et al. 1997; Vlachou 1997), while the effects of educational disadvantage and underperformance have been well documented (Tomlinson 2000).

In 1994 the UK government commissioned a report on social justice (Social Justice Commission 1994), which uncovered an uncomfortable situation. Despite 50 years of educational reform, the education system continued to fail the great majority of children. Even today, the UK has the lowest level of educational provision for under-5s in the European Union, while the average state primary class size is 27 pupils (DfES 2002). In private schools the ratio is halved. Despite government attempts to raise participation, only two in five of Britain’s 19-year-olds is still in full-time education (YCS 2001) and, disturbingly, two-thirds of school leavers reported their main immediate destination to be employment (HESA 2001). Universities are still mainly accessed by pupils from economically advantaged families and private schools, and recent proposals to increase fees for university education are unlikely to reverse this trend. In the first decade of the twenty-first century, a person’s life chances are even more powerfully affected by their education than in the past. People with no qualifications are more likely to be out of work, and the earnings gap between those with a university degree, or its
education, and those without is growing wider. Yet politicians continue to assert the values of social justice: the equal worth of all citizens, their equal right to be able to meet their basic needs, the need to spread opportunities and life chances as widely as possible and the reduction and elimination of unjustified inequalities. This is to be attained through priorities for government policy, which include:

• universal pre-school education;
• basic skills for all children through literacy and numeracy targets in the National Curriculum;
• high achievement for all young people through a unified qualifications system for 14- to 19-year-olds;
• training investment by employers;
• the expansion of university education;
• the development of lifelong learning opportunities.

Education and skills are seen as the route to opportunity, employability and security. Yet, as the Social Justice Commission recognized back in 1994, a person’s individual attributes and resources are not the only factor to affect educational opportunities and life chances. Where a person lives, who they live with and how that community generally lead their lives can be as important as one’s personal resources. ‘Social capital’ is identified as the key to success in communities. This consists of the means to access ‘networks, norms and trust that facilitate co-ordination and co-operation for mutual benefit’ (Putnamm 1993). A healthy society depends on its social capital, as a good in itself, and to make life possible.

The challenge today lies in building social capital and social well-being in a fragmented and struggling school system. What must be recognized is that there are immeasurable benefits to be gained from what people give to each other, pupil to pupil, pupil to teacher, parent to teacher and teacher to pupil, in an interactive mainstream school environment. Yet such covert rewards are rarely used as an argument to support mainstream education because of their invisibility. As educators we need to be aware of what children with special needs, language and cultural differences contribute to a school community. This is an under-researched area and discussion all too readily focuses upon pupils’ needs rather than their added value to education in specific school communities.

The political climate currently favours the principle of inclusion and education for an inclusive society, and the failure of many schools to educate and include all children is recognized. The aim is now to create an education system that will develop the potential of all children in society and recognize and value their differences. If pupils are not included in mainstream education then they will be denied a rounded and inclusive educational experience.

Schooling never was intended to educate the majority of pupils. There is a notional 20 per cent of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) in England and Wales proposed by the Warnock Committee (DES 1978) and an unknown percentage of students from ethnic/cultural minorities, non-English speaking backgrounds and disadvantaged social communities who have found the
school system inadequate for their needs. The idea of inclusion may be illusory (Ainscow 1999) or it may be a profoundly subversive and transformational undertaking, overhauling traditional forms of schooling (Slee 1999).

**Links to social justice issues**

Discussion about the aims of education in any school setting frequently uses such concepts as ‘freedom’, ‘equality’, ‘justice’, ‘personal autonomy’, ‘self-realization’ and ‘the growth of understanding’. Yet these educational values are notoriously vague and cannot be clarified by being broken down into concrete quantifiable indicators of educational outcomes. They are qualities to be realized in the way teachers interact with and treat their pupils in learning situations, rather than extrinsic products of such interactions in either special or mainstream schools. To say that a learning situation is ‘free’, ‘equal’ and ‘just’, or that it enables pupils to ‘learn autonomously’ or ‘realize themselves’, is to say something about the nature of the conditions for learning established by the teacher, rather than its products. Therefore, teaching is seen as an ethical activity, and an appropriate focus for practical investigation and reflection. All areas of education and schooling are open to scrutiny in the advancement of such values and concepts within inclusive practice through research processes like action research. However, it is argued that, within a discourse of ethics, ‘maintaining segregated special education is incompatible with the establishment of an equitable education system and hence, ultimately with an equitable society. It follows therefore that only inclusive education can deliver social justice’ (Dyson 1999).

Rawls (1971) provides an important resource for thinking about the problems of justice because he balances the twin principles of equity and difference. The balance involves the equal distribution of social goods unless unequal distribution benefits people who are underprivileged, when ‘more resources might be spent on the education of the less, rather than the more intelligent, at least in the early years of schooling’. Because inequalities of birth and natural endowment are undeserved, these inequalities should be compensated for by giving more attention to those with fewer natural assets and to those born into less favourable positions. As regards the principle of difference, it is aimed at improving ‘the long-term expectation of the least favoured’. Within this principle is the notion of fraternity and enhanced self-respect, of which the latter is referred to as a ‘primary good’ that everyone needs (similar to social capital). Consequently, educational resources are to be distributed ‘according to their worth in enriching the personal and social life of citizens’.

These ideas have not gone unchallenged (Young 1990). The basic criticism is that the disadvantaged are identified in terms of the relatively low share of social goods they possess. The task of eliminating identified disadvantages is then implemented by various compensatory social programmes, educational and otherwise. All are conceived and developed with little input from those most affected. This makes it profoundly undemocratic, because it assumes that
social goods to be distributed, as well as the procedures by which this has to occur, are uncontroverted. They reflect the interests and values of those who have been, and continue to be, in charge. For example, consider a mainly Christian religious curriculum, which will not be improved by giving more help to religious minorities to master it in order to remove their perceived disadvantage.

Instead of using equality as a principle of rational distribution, there is a move towards equality as a principle of democratic distribution. In this ‘participatory paradigm’ the requirements of distributive justice and those of democracy are integrated – justice requires giving everyone an effective voice in negotiating goods and defining their own needs, particularly members of groups who have been historically excluded. The distributivist paradigm fits naturally with a top-down, expert-driven model of research. Administrators look for the misdistribution of goods, define group needs and then formulate the policies and practices to be implemented – and this is done in the name of equality. However, this model, like the distributivist paradigm with which it is associated, is both undemocratic and unjust.

The participatory paradigm, however, fits quite naturally with a model of research in which equality is sought not solely in the distribution of this or that predetermined good, but through the status and voice of the participants. Goods, along with needs, policies and practices, are negotiated and investigated in collaboration, with democracy and justice functioning as the overarching ideals – the ideals that underlie participatory action research.

The principle of difference is also found in Stenhouse’s argument for a balance between a curriculum that provides all pupils with equal access to cultural goods, and a curriculum organized for the purposes of productive enterprise. Those with natural abilities suited to these purposes will achieve more than other pupils, but it may well benefit all pupils in the longer term.

Arrangements in the educational system which distribute rewards and benefits unequally but justifiably in favour of the well-endowed should not disadvantage the less well-endowed’s equal access to the general culture.

(Stenhouse 1975: 118)

Such access is seen as a necessary condition for acquiring self-esteem as a member of society, which is an essential primary good (Elliott 1998). However, access to the educational goods of society are controlled through educational policy and practice. It is only by making changes to the existing educational and institutional hegemony that wider access to ‘primary goods’ through inclusive practice can be attained. In past decades research on such matters carried out by positivist scientists looked at education as if it were a concrete system, which rendered pupils, teachers and other professionals as pawns, ever subject to the influences of predetermined forces in society. (Bogdan and Biklin 1982; Kincheloe 1991). Educational knowledge obtained through such methods was unhelpful to practitioners and misleading, because it attempted to erase the moral dimension of education, which is so evident in discussions related to ‘justice’ and ‘inclusion’.
In recent years, however, there have been moves to redress past mistakes through the development of more democratic and inclusive research methods to influence educational practice. New forms of research developed in a post-modern idiom recognize that researchers should understand that their actions have multiple meanings. They realize that in carrying out their research they are not fully in control of the results of their actions. For example, in undertaking research to overcome what we recognize as oppressive educational practice, researchers risk bestowing power upon themselves by the very act of assuming the researcher’s role. We must be aware that power can just as easily be identified in the forces of liberation as it can in the forces of repression and exploitation. The notions of equality, freedom and justice are ideas that become defined through the situations they are played out in. The dialogue would be very one sided if liberation was ‘done’ for, or ‘to’, others, even in the name of freedom. Research that is collaborative, inclusive and democratic encourages its participants to consider meanings in terms of the relationships of the struggle with its participants and within the dialogue constructed with them. Any research investigation should be critical of, and concerned with, deconstructing authoritative voices, those who speak for and on behalf of others. This includes the researchers deconstructing their own voices to critique their personal perceptions and explanations of what counts as inclusive practice. New interpretations are thereby created through the investigation of practices related to the historical and traditional meanings of everyday life in schools. However, all written reports of research findings are open to reinterpretation by their readers, including this text and the many texts that will be created in response to the impetus for inclusive practice in schools.

Inequality in educational practice has met with political pressure for its eradication. Academic educationalists have been instrumental in these initiatives over recent decades. Sociologists in particular have been effective in breaking down beliefs about differences in pupil ability or intelligence, with previous imputations about links between cultural deprivation and working-class homes. It is now understood that there is little or no evidence of real or relevant differences among children per se; instead, a social construction of schooling functions to serve the powerful interests of the schools, the state and the dominant classes and powerful groups in society. A new ideology, referred to as ‘social constructivism’, operates to show the socially constructed nature of school experience, exposing the pernicious influence of testing and assessment in special education, and the virus of sexism and racism in both mainstream and special education. However, this new position is not without its problems, because researchers still construct the events they investigate and are implicitly influenced by the social and educational contexts in which they operate. Much research to date on educational practice and pedagogy, other than practitioner research, has been unreflective about the way in which the researcher is associated with the research issue under investigation. How researchers relate to a social or educational problem, their means of investigation, their perceptions, explanations and analysis of evidence, are themselves social processes with a social product. This is an area where researchers
need to be more self-consciously reflexive in the future (Foster et al. 1996). The process outlined in this book aims to encourage such reflexivity. Justice and equity are not the only considerations that impinge on children’s and young people’s educational opportunities. Other factors include inclusive schooling, options within the curriculum, teaching quality and methods, respecting and valuing difference, maintaining communities and the creation of a reflexive investigative teaching profession. Inclusion and its practice is open to scrutiny in all areas and action research provides an agency for its practical interpretation and evaluation.

What is inclusion?

Inclusion suggests that no child or young person should be excluded from mainstream schooling because of perceived learning differences, language, cultural, racial, class, religious or behavioural differences. However, the reality is that many children and young people are segregated or excluded because they are seen to challenge the curriculum, academic outcomes and management strategies of mainstream classrooms and schools. Inclusion is not simply about making a decision between pupil placement in a mainstream versus a special school. There is a wide spectrum of inclusive practice, which may include placement in a special school for a short or longer period of time, for part of a day or week. Time spent at a special school should depend on the child’s needs for a more specialized, specific or individual programme of care and education, which may be temporary or permanent.

Inclusion can be many things. It is a construct of the times in which we live and as such is a current politically correct ideology towards which there is an explicit progression in educational organizations and institutions nationally and internationally. This is based on the basic human need to embrace diverse human cultures and the religious, ethnic, differently focused and talented groups that make up a cohesive and educated society. Inclusion is a process of creating, through educational practice, diverse participation in all dynamic aspects of social and educational life. It means that schooling, which is part of the educative process of our culture, if it is to become fully inclusive, needs to become more flexible in terms of widening access, diversity and choice in the curriculum. Enabling all children to access the possibilities of achieving their potential, developing their talents and contributing what they have to give to the world requires inclusive practices. Restrictions or constraints of any kind on the natural curiosity and the urge to learn that everyone possesses from birth, often affect lifelong perceptions and attitudes. Special schooling for a small percentage of our children benefits them educationally in terms of more intensive and specialist teaching, different curricula and interaction with a smaller select group of peers. Although there is always the necessity for such schooling to be selective in terms of pupil intake and teaching and learning priorities, there is also the need to develop inclusive practices.

The state-supported school system is multicultured and multiethnic, and contains a melting pot of dynamism that comes from the diversity of the
environments in which pupils live and schools are situated. Schools that are highly selective do not allow for the development of community in the context of a local neighbourhood. Selective schools create their own community in a non-locational sense, with people from diverse neighbourhoods. However, a child’s social identity develops out of the membership of at least one group. Pupils attending their local school, situated in the community, benefit by participating in local community life and forming friendships and alliances with neighbourhood children and staff. Local community issues are learned through contacts with neighbours, and a sense of citizenship and civic responsibility develops from the ‘in-group’ solidarity of a school community. This is, however, not the experience of all pupils of school age. The concept of inclusion offers the possibility of going beyond traditional liberal values to stress the bonds that tie people together in communities. They are a matter not simply of tolerating social and educational differences but of recognizing each other’s individual worth as community members who enrich communities by their contributions to them. Inclusion is about balancing the sectorial interests of community members through democratic negotiation and the fair, and possibly uneven, distribution of resources.

**Terminology and labels**

It is acknowledged that pupils with special educational needs (SEN), statemented pupils, pupils with emotional and behaviour disturbance (EBD) and other labels and syndromes, and pupils from many minority communities, are increasingly participating in mainstream schools (CSIE 1989). Inclusion and its practice is a political and ideological construct that needs to be interpreted through its demonstration in the real world of the classroom and school. Its rationale forms an uneven continuum of implementation, from mere social association to total immersion of pupils in mainstream classes and curricula. The range of possible opportunities for social and educational inclusion is considerable, yet they depend on the creativity and ingenuity of everyone involved in the care and education of children and young people. The change in terminology in recent years from ‘integration’ to ‘inclusion’ is not in itself enough to guarantee radical changes in traditional teaching procedures in mainstream schools to accommodate the educational needs of all pupils. The term ‘integration’ is often used in international contexts to refer to increased participation in ordinary schools, but generally the literature shows little consensus on the precise meanings of ‘integration’, ‘inclusion’ and ‘mainstreaming’ (Booth and Ainscow 1998). The concept of ‘inclusion’ is both illusory and evolving. Changes in pedagogy will define it in educational contexts. However, the role of education in influencing and making changes in society is not yet fully understood. It was Bernstein (1971) who first noted that ‘Education cannot compensate for society’, because it appeared to be reproducing rather than removing social inequalities. Moreover, the term special educational needs might itself be seen as a euphemism for the failure of schools to meet the educational needs of all their pupils (Barton 1987). When
the SEN focus in education moved away from child-centred problems in the 1970s to focus more upon problems in schools, the environment and the social context, a greater responsibility was placed on mainstream teachers and schools to adapt and change to meet each pupil’s needs. This movement has made the inclusion agenda explicit in educational policy directives and open to general public debate.

Inclusion is educating all children together in their local neighbourhood schools. It is offering a fully resourced school support service to all children whose families and carers wish them to be educated alongside their family, peers and local community. Inclusion is using the same generous resources that exist in ‘special education’ to enable the participation of pupils from special schools in mainstream schools. Inclusion may be partial or total, but often it is ‘integration’ struggling to be more inclusive. Integration is the process of assimilation of previously excluded individuals and groups of pupils into mainstream, or ordinary, schooling. ‘Inclusion’ has been aligned with the notion of assimilation, where the necessary school and curriculum adaptation and change are aimed at more equal provision, practice and support for marginalized individuals and groups of pupils. Inclusion implies a deliberate look at the school provision for all pupils and how it can be appropriately applied and adapted for pupils with learning or additional differences.

Pupils with educational or learning differences exist in every classroom or school, often without being officially identified. In the UK, the formal identification of different learning needs gives the statutory right for a pupil to be ‘statemented’. The statementing procedure may be initiated by the parent or by the school (with children of school age) before decisions are made about the kind of education to be received by the child. A new Code of Practice has been approved (SU 2002), which requires that maintained schools and local education authorities (LEAs) attend to the latest statutory guidance from the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) on the practical operation of the new statutory framework for inclusion. When a child is ‘statemented’ there are certain legal obligations on the LEA and school to provide for the child’s educational needs. However, it is possible that the parent or the school may not choose to take action as recommended by the LEA, e.g. the child may be removed from the present school and relocated to a private school, or to home tuition. When a child is ‘statemented’ a psychologist might assess the child, along with the teachers, parents and others connected with his or her health and education. The ‘statement’ subsequently produced becomes a legal obligation for those responsible for the child’s educational needs. Without a ‘statement’ the child may be educated wherever he or she is accepted, and no specific legal obligation is put upon his or her educators to provide specialized teaching, learning support or other assistance. This is often the case for many children attending private schools or receiving alternative forms of education.

The professed aim of designating children as ‘special’ or ‘different’, when they are experiencing school-related difficulties, is to provide them with a better educational environment. The mainstream classroom is a setting where different learning environments can be created to correspond with the needs
of its children, who each possess unique relational and learning patterns. Differences between individual pupils need not constitute a negative, but instead can be an educative and positive experience for mainstream teachers and pupils. All children need a school setting that provides the greatest growth potential for them.

Why is a mainstream classroom beneficial?

- The process of labelling and its ill effects are avoided.
- There is the possibility of upward mobility or educative progress in a mainstream setting if certain conditions are put in place to support the pupil.
- Much learning occurs between peers and beyond organized lessons.

Primarily, what is crucial is that every teacher takes responsibility for educating every child in their classroom. However, where necessary this must include access to other resources, such as specialist help in learning, language or behaviour. The teacher must understand the child’s learning strategies and functioning and guide their education. If specialists are available they should be used to give advice, rather than remove responsibility from the teacher. The more human resources the teacher has to help to implement educational plans for the child, the better the pupil’s learning situation will be in a mainstream setting. In accepting additional help the teacher is not removing herself from the centre of the relationship with the child, but allowing herself more intelligent involvement with colleagues and pupils.

All children are unique, and therefore different. For equity and justice in education to be realized, the overall quality of schooling must be investigated and improved, through the meeting of human differences in the ordinary or mainstream classroom.

The Salamanca Framework for Action (UNESCO 1994), the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the UN Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1993) have created an international culture for inclusion by arguing that all forms of segregation are ethically unacceptable. Since the publication of the Warnock Report (DES 1978) in the UK, radical change has taken place in the strongly established institutionalized practices of educational categorization and segregation towards greater flexibility and acceptance of diversity in mainstream schools. They are as follows:

- The 1981 Education Act aimed at recognizing and meeting special educational needs within mainstream education.
- In 1986 the Education Act led to the creation of the National Curriculum, and required that the curriculum be differentiated for pupils of differing ability, experience and background.
- The Salamanca Statement (UNESCO 1994) called for the ‘integration’ of all pupils in mainstream classrooms.
- Two Green Papers, *Excellence for All* (DfEE 1997b) and *Meeting Special Educational Needs* (DfEE 1998a), were aimed at raising awareness of the way
that children with special educational needs were taught, with a particular focus on meeting their needs in local schools.

- The Integration Charter (CSIE 1989) argued for the need to integrate all pupils fully into ordinary schools. This was followed by the Inclusion Index (CSIE 2000), a means of enabling schools to check their inclusion practice against school indicators.

- The revised Special Educational Needs Code of Practice, effective from January 2002, directs LEAs with detailed guidance to support, empower and challenge their schools to become more inclusive.

- The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 came into force on 1 September 2002 and makes it unlawful for schools and LEAs to discriminate against pupils with disabilities for reasons related to their disability without clear justification.

The 1981 Act established the principle that mainstream schools were to be responsible for organizing provision for children with SEN, who previously had been largely accommodated in special units or schools. Mainstream schools began to recognize that ‘pupils with SEN were their responsibility’ (Cowne 1998: 3). The 1988 Education Reform Act introduced the National Curriculum and the devolution of funding to schools, which has had a significant impact on the acceptance, or otherwise, of pupils with SEN in mainstream schools. The Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs (1994) provided a practical framework as a consequence of the 1993 Education Act. This legislation laid the foundations for the development of the role of the school special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) as it is today, because it set out the principles for SEN in school and the key areas of responsibility of the SENCO. ‘For the first time the nature and parameters of the SENCO’s role and the procedures they had to follow were set out in some detail’ (DfEE 1997b: 24). The government’s Green Paper Excellence for All Children: Meeting Special Educational Needs (DfEE 1997b) further promoted inclusive practice and strengthened the subsequent Programme of Action (DfEE 1998b). National Standards for SENCOs were published in 1998. The revised Code of Practice emerged in 2000. It replaced the former notion of ‘stages’ to two ‘thresholds’ of school response to pupils observed to have different learning needs. The thresholds were designed to resolve the problem first through School Action and, second, through School Action Plus, using external agencies if necessary. It also revised and reasserted the role of the SENCO as a manager and coordinator of provision within the school.

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 has been amended and replaced by the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001. The Act strengthens the right of children with SEN to a mainstream education, and the support of parental choice for inclusive schooling. All aspects of school life should be reviewed to increase access to school premises and the curriculum. These are duties to be fulfilled through the new Code of Practice – not to be confused with the SEN Code. The Code, and a Code of Practice for providers of post-16 education with related services, has recently been made available to all schools via the Disability Rights Commission (DRC 2002).
These initiatives have been supported by numerous DfEE circulars. For example, Circular 10/99, *Social Inclusion: Pupil Support* (DfEE 1999), identifies groups at particular risk: pupils with special educational needs; children in the care of local authorities; minority ethnic children; Travellers; young carers; those from families under stress; and pregnant schoolgirls and teenage mothers. These initiatives are not solely aimed at pupils with SEN and enable the widening of access and support for many marginalized individuals and groups of children and young people in ordinary schools.

Many schools are involved in programmes that aim to accelerate the raising of educational standards in disadvantaged city or other urban areas by widening opportunities and intensifying support to pupils and their parents, often drawing on agencies and community interests to enhance this work. These initiatives include Education Action Zones, Excellence in Cities, the Single Regeneration Budget, the Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Grant, the Standards Fund and the New Opportunities Fund. Many of these programmes focus on the achievements of targeted pupils and groups of pupils, including minority ethnic pupils, English as an additional language pupils who need particular support, gifted and talented pupils, pupils with special educational needs, children ‘looked after’ by the local authority and those children who are at risk of disaffection and exclusion. Special activities associated with such programmes might involve supporting the development of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills, study support, making alternative provision at Key Stage 4, improving continuity between the phases of education, encouraging greater parental involvement and family learning, and activities arising from the school’s particular status as an early excellence centre, beacon or specialist school.

Among these initiatives are those attempting to include pupils who were formerly excluded from mainstream and special schools. Inclusive practices encouraged by these initiatives aim primarily at educating all children in their local communities. The communities that embrace inclusive education try to structure a school environment where the needs of every pupil are met and their aim is the successful education of all. All school staff, pupils and families work together to create supportive learning communities that ensure that each child learns to his or her potential and feels valued. Trying to establish inclusive education in a classroom or school involves adapting the curriculum and using a variety of teaching strategies to which pupils with diverse social, academic and learning needs respond. It has already been shown elsewhere that traditional mainstream curriculum and delivery approaches are frequently seen as irrelevant and uninteresting in relation to the diverse background and learning rates and styles of many pupils (Holt 1982; Smith 1986; Giangreco *et al.* 1994; Udvari and Thousand 1996; NASC 2001).

Never in recent history has there been so much government legislation and support for inclusive practice in mainstream. The changing attitude to inclusion is directly linked to changes in social and political thinking, influenced by a heightened awareness of equal opportunities, social justice, human rights and disability issues. This may be seen as a consequence of a ‘constantly evolving public perception of what an education system should
have as its priorities’ (Oliver 1996). Alternatively, it may be seen as the government’s means of cementing ‘initiatives in education, social services and health, allied to powerful economic measures which aim to engage those who have become marginalised from Society’ (Diamond 1995). This is not to deny, however, that there are many critics of inclusion (Reynolds 1995).

LEAs in the UK are developing procedures for inclusive practice, limiting the number of pupils in special schools and actively reducing the numbers of pupils with statements of SEN, at the same time offering ‘value for money’. Yet there is evidence that some LEAs are unclear about what inclusion should mean in practice. Although generally they favour the development of more inclusive practice, they often interpret it as a ‘state’ rather than a ‘process’, and simply move pupils from special to mainstream provision without understanding its implications for the pupils involved (Ainscow et al. 1999).

Including pupils with special needs or other differences doesn’t always require a radical disruption of existing school routines. Research has shown that teachers tend not to make radical changes to their existing teaching practices in response to having a pupil with a severe or profound intellectual learning disability in their classroom. Further, teachers become progressively more relaxed about inclusion and more supportive of it when they have had experience of it (Cowne 1998; O’Donoghue and Chalmers 2000).

A political change is taking place in schools, with mainstream and special schools working more closely together. The move to inclusive education means that mainstream schools are retaining or accepting new pupils who may have been segregated into special schools in previous decades. There is a greater emphasis on ways in which mainstream schools can widen access to, and participation in, the school life through curriculum support and the adoption of a more socially representative and wider pupil fellowship.

However, this shift in focus in mainstream education also takes place in a climate of ‘exclusion’. Many pupils are still excluded from schools because of behaviour and alleged disturbance to classroom and school management. Although the number of permanent exclusions peaked in 1996/7, they have reduced since. Exclusions in 1996/7 were:

- 0.04 per cent of primary school pupils;
- 0.34 per cent of secondary school pupils;
- 0.64 per cent of special school pupils.

Permanent exclusions at present represent:

- 0.03 per cent of primary school pupils;
- 0.23 per cent of secondary school pupils;
- 0.36 per cent of special school pupils


Children with special needs are six times more likely than others to be excluded, and 83 per cent of excluded pupils are boys. Pupils with statements of SEN (an estimated 0.3 per cent) are three times as likely to be excluded as pupils without statements (0.1 per cent) in 2000/1. Some groups are disproportionately affected, e.g. 16 per cent of permanently excluded children...
are of ethnic minority origin. The permanent exclusion rate among children in care is ten times higher than the average. Perhaps as many as 30 per cent of children in care are not attending any school, whether through exclusion or truancy. However, DfEE guidance states that exclusion should be used only in response to ‘serious breaches of a school’s policy on behaviour or of the criminal law’ (DfEE 1997a).

With inclusive practice, all school parties have to adapt and adjust to make it successful. The emphasis now is upon a philosophy of acceptance of inevitable educational differences, based on making radical changes in the mainstream school to widen curriculum access. Diverse approaches to inclusion range from enabling all children with educational, social or cultural differences to be educated in local schools, to a more mixed range of provision. Each local authority in the UK interprets the inclusion ideal in its own specific manner to suit its political direction, geography, finances and existing traditional school provision. The DfES has funded many LEAs to increase effective inclusive practice in mainstream schools through annual funding and various initiatives, including sharing special school expertise, developing school networks to share and disseminate good practice and improving the quality of links between schools and parents (Richardson 2000; McCutcheon 2001). However, it is crucial to realize that, regardless of the rhetoric about inclusive practice, it is only when critical evaluation of various initiatives and projects is undertaken that they can be judged as being inclusive according to the values of the participants. For example, it is difficult to determine whether inclusive provision is successful without feedback from those involved in its practice, and evidence of a consensus of approval involving pupils and their parents.

Many LEAs have set up unified learning support services to provide the expertise necessary to support schools. Their purpose is to share expertise within the existing behavioural, learning, sensory and educational psychology teams in a multiprofessional manner. For example, Birmingham is establishing a network system to involve all community, community special, foundation, voluntary-aided and voluntary-controlled schools with support services in education, health and social services. It is hoped that these networks will give parents, carers and local community groups better access to more equitable services (Baldwin 2000). There are some localized examples of good practice in the UK, but overall progress towards inclusion is slow, often because of already existing and well established interests that exert power to retain the status quo. Government initiatives fund many LEAs to organize focused inclusion development work to supplement mainstream support arrangements already in operation.

In recent years schools have been forced to adopt changes to their policy and practice by outside influences, as a more equal and inclusive society is created. This move towards the greater inclusion of pupils with educational, cultural and learning differences comes at the same time as government direction to adopt more assertive disciplinary approaches within classrooms and to reduce pupil exclusion rates, as represented by legislation (DfE 1994; DfEE 1998b). The abolition of corporal punishment in schools represents significant social reform, yet it could be replaced by a more pervasive and intrusive pattern.
of vigilance and regulation. In every school there is a continuing problem of acceptable dress and behaviour, which may contradict the notion of schools operating as institutions committed to open access and retention of a more diverse pupil population. For example, the insistence on the wearing of school uniforms discriminates against groups such as Traveller families, who may be in the locality only for a short time. If inclusive practice is seen as a democratic negotiable process then the narrow interpretation of regulations needs to be mediated. The dynamic world of schools is marked by change and the continuing occurrence of unique situations, each of which can yield a variety of possible outcomes depending on the specific circumstances.

Peters (1966) claims that two aspects of education are badly in need of ethical foundations: its matter and its manner. Convincing evidence for the success of inclusive practice has to be analysed and publicized before it can be judged as ethical in every case. Arguments can be made that the end does justify the means, or does not always justify the means, or that the means–end distinction doesn’t apply in this situation. Yet the assessment of ends and the choice of means to ends, and the imposition of values and standards on an ideal, cannot be used to justify ‘any’ educational changes, particularly in the current policy context, which translates values like ‘inclusion’ into targets and then refers to outcomes independently of pedagogy.

It is within this context that this book is written, as a means for teachers and educational professionals to deal with the practical and complex challenge of making inclusive practice a reality and to decide the extent of its ethical dimensions, because educational inclusion is also social inclusion. It involves the practice of equity and social justice in school practice and in curriculum adaptations. It means acknowledging and respecting everyone’s right to contribute to, and network in, their local and wider communities.

This book aims to support schools, teachers, LEA advisors for ethnic minorities, SENCOs, their support staff, associated professionals and the associated community in the establishment of a capability to formulate a workable technology to support policy principles. The everyday school reality is riven with dilemmas and problems that serve to illuminate the complexities and inherent contradictions in working for inclusive educational practice. The advancement of teacher-led research, involving positive action in this area, entails taking risks, yet it is the only realistic way to solve practical problems arising from new educational initiatives such as inclusion. Teachers and other educational professionals using practitioner research will be enabled to investigate the complexities of the change process required for inclusive practice. It is hoped that they will be active protagonists in the promotion of investigatory and evaluative practice that brings about increased discussion and activity in schools to challenge existing constraints to the advancement of inclusive practice. This can be achieved in LEAs and schools by:

- the investigation of existing practice, and its evaluation as good practice for inclusion;
- the management of support mechanisms for the investigation, its development, dissemination and application;
• the involvement of pupils, parents, teachers, headteachers, psychologists and other educational professionals as co-participants in an inclusive and democratic research process;
• the organization of a stable support group to share evidence and information and to question or challenge the basis of the assumptions made by its participants.