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Exploring the concept of "reasonable adjustment" in relation
to disability and social justice for children and young people in an inter-professional context
INSTITUTE FOR CHILD-CENTERED INTERPROFESSIONAL PRACTICE (ICCIP)

Kingston University London

ICCIP — Institute for Child Centred Interprofessional Practice

BACKGROUND AND STUDY

This poster communicates the preliminary findings of a qualitative, small-scale project under the umbrella of ICCIP, (Kingston University) that investigates those processes in action by exploring discourses and practices relating to 'reasonable adjustments' as used and understood by different stakeholders. Shared values, beliefs and preparedness for inclusion verse exclusion are explored through diverse voices. The following questions are aimed to be addressed:

- How are reasonable adjustments perceived by different stakeholders and through the voice of the child?
- What are the prevailing discourses in the context of reasonable adjustments?
- How are reasonable adjustments supported within a multi-professional context?

The reasonable adjustments duty has become prominent and statutory for schools and settings in England since 2007 and has been preceded and framed by various policies .

Since December 2006, when carrying out their functions public authorities must have <u>due regard</u> to the need to:

Promote positive attitudes towards disabled persons	Encourage participation by disabled persons in public life	
Promote equality of opportunity	Eliminate disability related harassment	Eliminate unlawful discrimination
The use of positive discrimination if necessary		

Richard Rieser Disability Equality, www.worldofinclusion.com

Recently the SEN Green Paper (DfE, 2011) suggested that there are around 2 million children and young people identified as having a special educational need or who are disabled and that they can feel frustrated by a lack of the right help at school or from other services; In line with a suggestion in the same document for schools to share good practice, and in an uncertain political context that can affect inclusive attitudes in a macro and micro level, it was considered appropriate to shed light on effective policies, practices and attitudes within a context that inclusion is seen as a lived experience.

METHODOLOGY

- Qualitative interpretative research paradigm where different voices are explored –one of the tools is the Mosaic Approach (Clark & Moss, 2005);
- Appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2008) to identify good practice in a particular setting and communicate it to other settings;.
- Investigation into strengths, optimism, and possibilities rather than taking a deficit oriented stance towards provision;.
- Policy analysis in a macro and micro level to ensure that the integration of policy analysis with analysis of actors' perspectives provides a 'bigger picture' (Ozga , 1990);.
- Realization that policies are not implemented unproblematically as a top-down approach, but are dynamic, contextualized , creative and asymmetrical (Solomon, 1994) and certainly not straightforward (Ball, .1998).

The study took place in an Inner City Voluntary Aided Primary School that has had an **outstanding OFSTED for Inclusion**, has been undergoing an **Inclusion kite- marking** process including an Inclusion SEF designed by the LA and has been involved in the **Achievement for All project (2009)**. All these processes can be indicators of reflective activity in the context of inclusion.

In the context of this project **three primary school children** that are on the school's inclusion register for an identified additional educational need or disability from one-form entry inner-city primary school in London were selected. Evidence was collected from children in a child friendly way, in line with the aforementioned Mosaic Approach (Clark & Moss, 2005).

The **professionals working with these children** were interviewed In a semi-structured way to shed light on different voices around the practical implementation of reasonable adjustments and to identify ways their expertise supports settings in making those adjustments successful.

The project's time frame was laid out in two phases in order for reflection to take place on behalf of the researchers and the setting before findings are finalized. The first and longer phase has been completed. One day's worth of interviews will be carried out in October 2011.

Photo of the playground taken by pupil from indoors

The following participants were interviewed:

CHILD A (Mosaic approach-(Clark & Moss, 2001))
- PARENTS
- LSA
- CLASS TEACHER
- INCLUSION MANAGER
- HEAD TEACHER
- SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPIST

CHILD B (Mosaic approach)
- PARENTS
- TA
- CLASS TEACHER (TO BE INTERVIEWED)
- INCLUSION MANAGER
- HEAD TEACHER
- OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST (TO BE INTERVIEWED)

CHILD C (absent on arranged date of visit)
- MOTHER (TRANSLATOR WAS USED)
- TA
- CLASS TEACHER (TO BE INTERVIEWED)
- INCLUSION MANAGER
- HEAD TEACHER
- SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPIST

Children's 'geographies' were explored through the Mosaic approach; "a mosaic is an image made up of many small pieces, which need to be brought together in order to make sense of the whole. The Mosaic approach gives young children the opportunity to demonstrate their perspectives in a variety of ways, calling on their 'hundred languages'" (Clark & Moss, 2005). This is in line with a 'pedagogy of listening' , listening to thought; ''A pedagogy of listening treats knowledge as constructed, perspectival and provisional, not the transmission of a body of knowledge which makes the Other into the same" (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005).
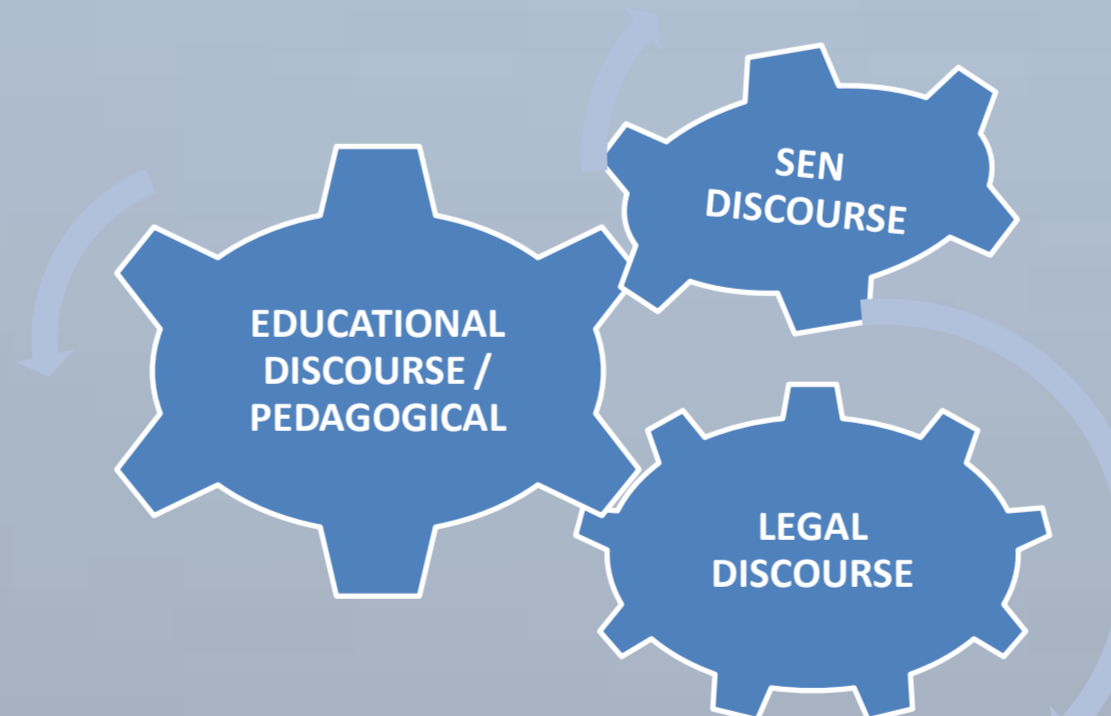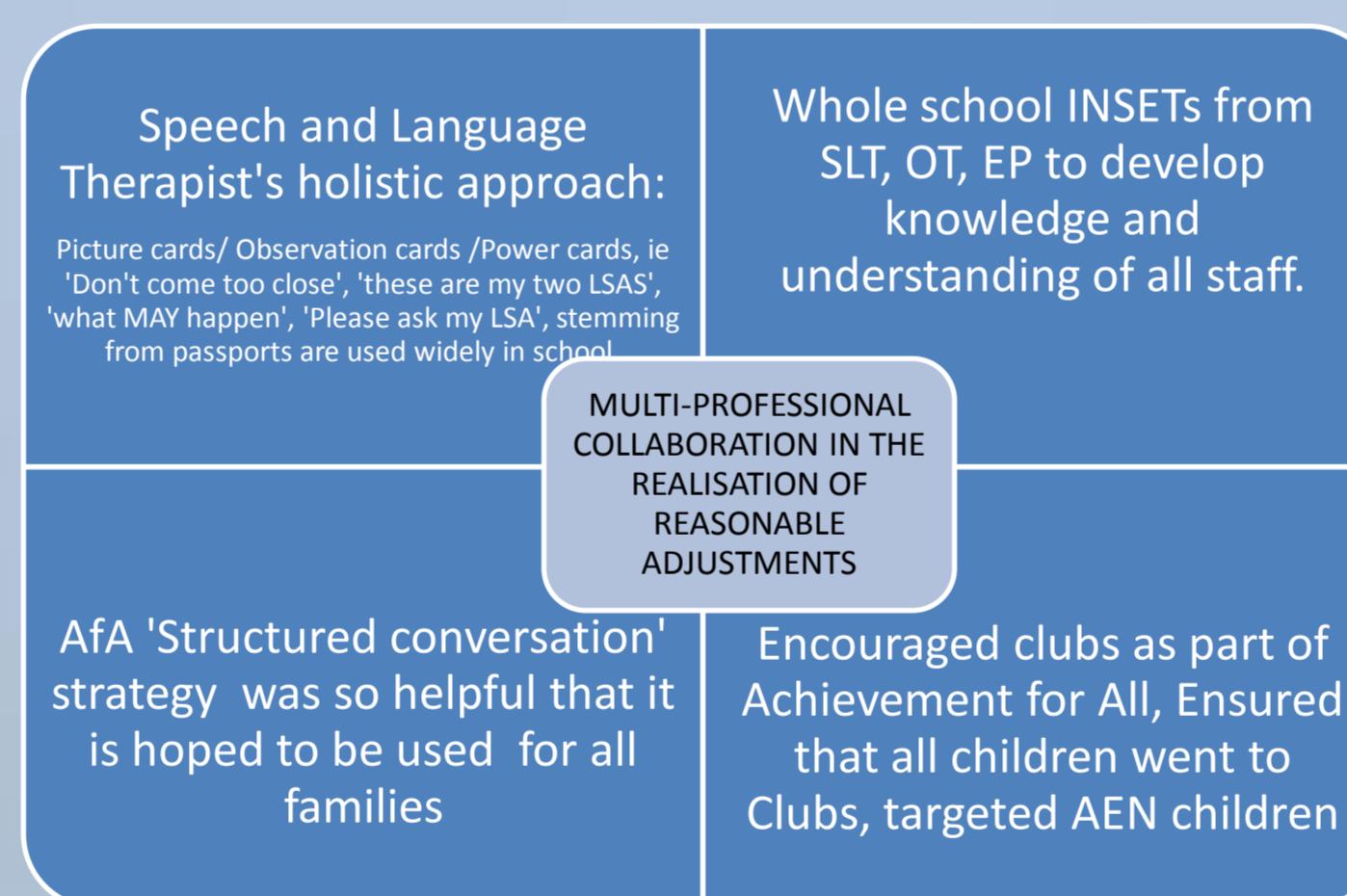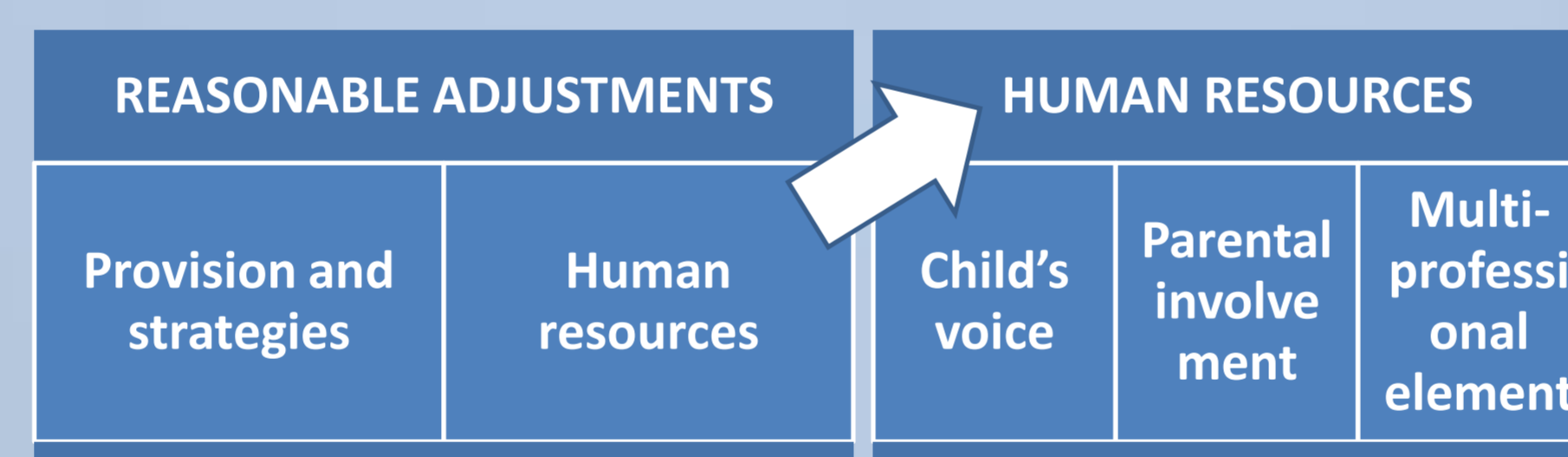
FINDINGS

Inclusion appears to be a lived experience. There was an element of embedded practice and all policies and practices took into consideration all children.
The Inclusion Register includes all children;
Reasonable adjustments are happening all the time, without necessarily being included in the discourse used in school;
Reasonable adjustments were considered in a **wider than just disability context.**

They were translated as follows:

REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS		HUMAN RESOURCES		
Provision and strategies	Human resources	Child's voice	Parental involvement	Multi-professional element

Speech and Language Therapist's holistic approach: Picture cards/ Observation cards /Power cards, ie 'Don't come too close', 'these are my two LSAS', 'what MAY happen', 'Please ask my LSA', stemming from passports are used widely in school.	Whole school INSETs from SLT, OT, EP to develop knowledge and understanding of all staff.
MULTI-PROFESSIONAL COLLABORATION IN THE REALISATION OF REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS	
AfA 'Structured conversation' strategy was so helpful that it is hoped to be used for all families	Encouraged clubs as part of Achievement for All, Ensured that all children went to Clubs, targeted AEN children

SEN DISCOURSE
EDUCATIONAL DISCOURSE / PEDAGOGICAL
LEGAL DISCOURSE

Prevailing discourses in the context of reasonable adjustments

'We all refer to children by the name'
(A's class teacher)
'I don't think they use something that differentiates them as SEN or lower and due to the size of the school everybody knows the names'
(TA)

'When people speak about (child) C, teachers make me feel everything is going to be ok and reassuring and are very positive. They say he has special educational needs but do not use exact words to describe him'
(C's parent)

EDUCATIONAL AND SEN DISCOURSES INTERPLAY

'Every child evaluates the feedback folder and questionnaires. Annual Reviews are a big project and big presentation / what they like, what they don't like what they are proud of..'
(Inclusion Manager)

'Training people according to the needs they work with. Part of reasonable adjustments. We discuss these without using the words'
(TA)

in the school's SEN policy:
'We believe that a child's special educational needs exist in context. They can be relieved or exacerbated by environmental factors including the environment of the school. Therefore our first response to meeting the needs of children with SEN is to examine our own classroom practice and to see if it can be changed to better meet these needs.' (School's SEN policy)

Schools' culture and ethos play a fundamental role on the conceptualisation of SEN and the interpretation of inclusive policies. They are acknowledged as a catalytic parameter for the development of inclusive cultures, policies and practices (OFSTED, 2001). This is in line with "the 'paradigm shift', as it has been identified in discussion at the United Nations, where a declaration on the Rights of People with Disabilities has been adopted and come into force, underlying a transformation throughout the world that is required to bring equality and rights for disabled people to help create inclusive societies" (Rieser and Mason, 1990 in Alur and Timmons, 2009).

Ethos and discourses

- Children were described in many ways by professionals, rarely with outdated terminology.
- Parents spoke more about disability, possibly indicating that disability discourse is more dominant among families thanamong professionals.
- The terminology of reasonable adjustments (Legal discourse) is not used widely in school.
- All children demonstrated ownership of a status within a secure community.

- Legal discourse was not the prevailing one in the school context.
- The protection and rights that children are entitled to under Equalities Legislation was not part of the dominant discourse.
- The fact that Educational/SEN discourse was the prevailing one could mean that reasonable adjustments are a medium for what is perceived as inclusion, as a value in the setting rather than just a legal requirement. It can be claimed that 'Reasonable adjustments' were found more within the following wider frame of social pedagogy, as shaped by Fielding and Moss (2011) and inclusive values (Booth, 2011):

- Ethics of care as a state of mind
- Grasping otherness and shaping pedagogy
- Education in its broadest sense, person-centred, community centred, the individual always in relation to others
- Engaging the local/Community
- Accountability as a shared responsibility
- Democracy/ Participation
- Voices of stakeholders/ Respect for diversity/Trust

In this context:
- Children are valued and treated as individuals.
- Parents/ carers are valued and this transpired from their statements; it was also clear, however, that the school could reflect further on issues of shared understanding on perceptions about disability, discipline and progress.

So:
- **The SEN Green Paper's proposals about 'choice and giving parents much more control' to be viewed taking the above into consideration.**
- **Contextualization** and work in a **multi-professional** context that is respectful to families would continue to offer more real choice and control with a realisation that:
  - *all families are different, and function best when their unique values and preferences are acknowledged and catered for;*
  - *all families have strengths and competencies, and are capable of developing these further.*
  - *the well-being and development of children depend upon the well-being of all other family members and of the family as a whole.*
  - *the well-being of families depends upon the quality of their informal social supports as well as the availability of high quality formal supports.*
  (Moore and Larkin, 2006)

IMPLICATIONS

- Sustainability; the commitment of management and leadership to inclusion was key. Whole school approach on behalf of SLT and other professionals to be sustained? Funding!
- Transferability-Sharing good experiences with neighbouring schools forming alliances verse competition and marketised attitudes.
- Enhancing parental understanding and informed involvement ; parents partnerships/ building on complex cultural issues
- Continuing supporting staff on a discourse about OTHERNESS and RIGHTS; Reasonable adjustments discourse not to be lost. Inter-professional communication to continue informing every stage of the curriculum and the educational experience.