

BOOK REVIEWS

THE SEND CODE OF PRACTICE 0–25 YEARS: POLICY, PROVISION AND PRACTICE

Reviewed by Janet Hoskin, University of East London

Authors: Rona Tutt and Paul Williams

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The changes to the SEND (special educational needs and disability) framework which are outlined in the new SEND Code of Practice and the Children and Families Act 2014 have been called the biggest changes in special educational needs education since the Warnock Report of 1978. This book seeks to give an overview of the main policy changes in a clear and understandable way, and how these have been interpreted through a range of provisions and changes to educational practice. Both authors have considerable experience of educational leadership in both a school and national setting, and the three distinct sections of the book reflects this depth of knowledge and expertise, with an initial section on understanding the new policy changes; a second section on the growth of specialist and local authority provision; and a final section on how educators' practice is changing across the sectors.

Part one describes the climate for change, discussing the 2010 Ofsted Report which criticised the over-identification of SEND and unacceptably low outcomes, and the Lamb Report of 2009 that highlighted the lack of parental confidence in the old system. Although perhaps less 'aspirational' than was first hoped, the 2014 Act has still brought about major changes, such as the extension of the age range of SEND to 0–25 years; the joint working of local authorities, health and social care services to jointly commission services and to work together for joint outcomes; statements to be replaced by Education, Health and Care Plans;

families to have the option of personal budgets; the publication of a 'Local Offer' by every local authority; and the new focus on transition to adulthood. The authors make it clear that what underpins all these changes is that children and young people with SEND and their families must now be at the centre of everything, and that successful joint multi-agency working and co-production is key to move this from a dream to reality. This part of the book is particularly useful as it gives a very clear and concise overview of the main changes to legislation, which is helpful for those working within the sectors as well as parents trying to navigate the system.

The second and third parts of this book explore the ways in which various types of educational settings and local authorities are meeting these challenges. There is a wide selection of very interesting case studies showcasing some of the innovative ways of multi-agency working, such as Project Search, where post-19 years students from a Special school in east London work as supported interns in a local hospital in the hope of securing permanent employment; a mainstream girls' comprehensive that offers training from Childline for peer mentors; and a charitable foundation that offers both day and residential services for those with complex and physical needs up to the age of 25 years including a Futures Hub day service and Life Skills Centre for those who are older.

However, the focus on 'Provision' feels slightly anachronistic given the

emphasis on a new way of thinking outlined in part one. Perhaps it would be equally useful to read case studies of the young people themselves exploring how they have identified their aspirations and co-produced outcomes through person-centred planning, and how they are using both existing provision and personal budgets to realise these. It is of course early days under the new Code of Practice and we wait with keen anticipation to read about the creative pathways young people and families develop through this greater choice and control with regard to employment, housing, health and social inclusion. The case study of the Pathfinder Local Authority (Hertfordshire) is particularly interesting in this respect as it shows on a strategic level how agencies are working together to jointly commission and to understand the needs of families and young people through the implementation of the 'Developing Special Provision Locally' approach that involves bringing together school leaders, parents from local communities and members of the local authority to shape services.

Overall this is a very helpful book for everyone involved in SEND, as the authors present the key policy points using a clear and succinct approach, and include a wide range of interesting and varied case studies to illustrate their points. Additionally, the 'Questions for Reflections' within each chapter help to consolidate your thoughts and consider how your setting is adhering to these changes in policy. ■

CREATIVE SCHOOLS

Reviewed by **Graham Robertson**

University of East London

Authors: Ken Robinson and
Lou Aronica

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For those familiar with Ken Robinson's TED Talks and previous writings on creativity and education, there will be few surprises in this timely new offering. What Robinson and Aronica continue successfully to do is to challenge at the deepest levels our assumptions about education and learning. There is always a thinly veiled streak of anarchism about Robinson's ideas which echoes past educational thinkers like Godwin in the eighteenth century and Tolstoy in the nineteenth. This is a book to gladden the heart of any budding thinker who wants to raise their view of education beyond the tired present cul-de-sac thinking of comprehensive versus grammar or free school versus mainstream. Robinson and Aronica clear away these tired arguments and help us to free our thinking from what Miller (2010) described as the 'cultural trance' under which we labour and to see education in terms of new heights of possibility.

Robinson & Aronica boldly state their underlying philosophical approach so that the reader is left in no doubt that at the very heart of any education system should be the idea that every individual is valued for their uniqueness. This means that each learner has the right to self-determination; every student has the potential to evolve and live a fulfilled life; and every person carries with them a civic responsibility which must fully respect others.

The authors make clear in their introductory pages that there are four basic purposes of education: personal, cultural, social and economic. They

explain each of these in turn throughout the book and align them with the overall aim of education as they see it, 'To enable students to understand the world around them and the talents within them so that they can become fulfilled individuals and active, compassionate citizens' (p. xvi).

The role for individual practitioners is also made clear. If you are a teacher, 'you are the system'. The authors exhort those responsible for the education of students to make changes within their practice and institutions, press for a rethinking of the overall systems they work within, and to engage with the wider global world around them. They call for 'radical innovation' which goes beyond simply 'tinkering around the edges' of the present industrial system of schooling. They argue for a change in thinking on how we live and relate to each other as both countries in the global context and local communities.

In each of the ten chapters that follow, the urgency of this message is palpable and is delivered with clarity and challenge. For example, in chapter 5 we read that teachers should 'Teach like your hair's on fire' (p. 97), and are challenged to consider the thought that if we really believe that children are 'natural learners' why do they need teachers at all? (p. 102). For teachers labouring under the present regimes of micromanagement in our present school-effectiveness-dominated models these questions might seem irrelevant. However, Robinson and Aronica do see a vitally important role for the committed teacher to engage, enable, expect and empower learners.

Great teachers fulfil three essential purposes for their students: to inspire them with their own passion; to foster in them the confidence to develop the skills and knowledge they need to become independent learners; and to enable them to inquire, ask questions, develop skills, in short, to allow creativity in thinking to flow.

The curriculum too is given a radical rethink, with a competency-based approach being recommended for schools to facilitate. Few would argue with the need for schools to exhibit the characteristic purposes of promoting diversity, depth and dynamism, but some might take exception to assuming a democratic approach as outlined on p. 152. Ultimately the approach advocated is one of personalised learning in which the individual is seen as a unique curious and autonomous learner who is facilitated and inspired by the educators they come in contact with. On p. 256 we are reminded that 'effective education is always a balance between rigor and freedom, tradition and innovation, the individual and the group, theory and practice, the inner world and the outer world'. Education and learning is a complex process closely intertwined with politics. Robinson and Aronica remind us, however, of Gandhi's quote that in order to be change agents, we must ourselves be the change. Reading this book may inspire you to do just that, or at the very least raise some serious doubts and questions about our present approaches to schooling. ■