

Biographical experiences of People with Disability in European Educational Systems: Ireland

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Policy context

- Transition from segregationist to inclusive approaches
- Informed by:
- Government commissioned reports
- Parental litigation
- Enabling legislation
- Increased resourcing for mainstream provision

Special educational provision

Where?

- Mainstream classes with support (SNA/RT)
- Special classes (mainstream)
- Special schools

How?

- Categorical assessment
- High incidence/low incidence

Who?

- Resource teachers
- Learning support teachers
- Special Needs assistants

Special schools

- Special education provision:
- 129 special schools -14 categories of disability
- Majority of schools designated as Mild GLD
- Increase in designated ASD schools
- Trend for greater enrolment post primary age pupils

Special classes

- Special classes established in mainstream for designated categories of SEN
- Approximately 2% of primary school population in special classes
- Major increase in ASD special classes

Case study

- Brian, 24 years old, general learning disability
- Attended local primary school
- Difficulties keeping up
- Limited support
- Experienced bullying
- Assessment and transfer to special school
- Attended mainstream secondary school
- Experienced bullying
- Nervous breakdown
- Move to special school
- 3 subjects taken at Junior Certificate level
- Left special school at age 18 after Junior Certificate

Case study

- Post school placement:
- 4 years training centre
- One year part time paid employment
- Currently on certificate course & 2 unpaid jobs
- Living at home

Case study

- Brian in his own words:
- ***I was very quiet when I was small. I wouldn't talk much to people. I was very nervous and everything. ... It got to a point that I didn't want to go anymore. Because it was too, too much for me like. ... it wasn't just verbal it was physical abuse as well like. ... And then they sorted it out but I didn't want to be there, because it was too much. ... I suppose any job once ... any job I suppose as long as you get paid like.***

Issues

- Moving between mainstream and special provision
- Limited support available
- Experiences of bullying and mental health difficulties
- Appropriate responses to bullying?
- Few educational qualifications
- Limited choices