

Looking Forward, Looking Back: A Critical Reflection on the Impact of the Special Needs Assistant Scheme on Inclusionary Practices for Children with Significant Care Needs in the Irish Education System

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Abstract : This paper seeks to critically review special educational needs (SEN) policy in the Irish education system since the introduction of the Education Act in 1998. In particular, the author seeks to focus on the impact of SEN policy on inclusionary practices for children with significant care needs in light of the introduction on the Special Needs Assistant (SNA) scheme. Following a systematic review of the literature, the growth of the SNA scheme in Ireland will be critically reviewed. Strengths and weaknesses of the scheme will be forwarded and comparisons drawn between contrasting international models of teaching assistant support. Based on this review, avenues for future research will be forwarded, with the aim of supporting effective inclusionary practices for children with SEN based on evidence-based practice.

Keywords : care needs, inclusion, Ireland, special needs assistants

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