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Abstract

In this paper we carry out a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of the UK Government's 2022 Green Paper 'Right Support, Right Place, Right Time', known as 'the SEND Review'. Our analysis is informed both by Hyatt's (2013) Critical Higher Education Policy Discourse Analysis (CHEPDA) framework and by our cognizance of how the term 'special educational needs' is constructed in the context of the state's active and passive enactment of policies that continue to diminish the quality of disabled people's lives. Our analysis focuses principally on deconstruction of the Green Paper with close attention to modes of legitimation, interdiscursivity, intertextuality, presupposition/implication, and lexico-grammatical construction. We present three main areas of interest: the (mis)use of and omission of 'need', the ubiquitous and ambiguous use of 'we', and the presentation of 'newness' in the SEND Review.

Keywords

Disability – education – policy – critical discourse analysis – disability studies in education – special educational needs – inclusion – policy analysis

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Introduction

In this paper we carry out a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of the UK Government's 2022 Green Paper 'Right Support, Right Place, Right Time', known as 'the SEND Review'[1] (Department for Education (DfE), 2022e). We ask, how does the SEND Review and its language both hide and reveal governmental attitudes towards, and priorities for, disabled children and young people? Our analysis is informed both by Hyatt's (2013) Critical Higher Education Policy Discourse Analysis (CHEPDA) framework and by our cognizance of how the term 'special educational needs' is constructed in the context of the state's active and passive enactment of policies that continue to diminish the quality of disabled people's lives. The paper focuses principally on deconstruction of the Green Paper with close attention to modes of legitimation, interdiscursivity, intertextuality, presupposition/implication, and lexico-grammatical construction. In our analysis, we examine how apparently subtle shifts in language construction can enable principles of neoliberalism to become naturalised and embedded. England's position as 'the social laboratory of neoliberal education' (Ball, 2016, p.1047), a place where disabled people's human rights have been breached by the state, points to the SEND Review as a key site for interrogation of neoliberal educational ideology. As a result, this paper is an important contribution internationally to Disability Studies in Education (DSE) through its exposure of some of the key manoeuvres of state policy in disabled young people's lives.

Here we provide a brief roadmap to the paper. We begin with the context of this project, exploring how Disability Studies in Education can be a helpful lens for understanding both the ideological and policy landscape of disabled children's education within the global project of neoliberalism. We go on to a methodology section which outlines both the suitability of CDA with/in DSE and the methods by which we analysed the SEND Review. We then go on to present three main areas of interest: the (mis)use of and omission of 'need', the ubiquitous and ambiguous use of 'we', and the presentation of 'newness' in the SEND Review.

1 This analytical paper sits within a broader research project called 'Right to Review' which documents parents of disabled young peoples' responses to the SEND Review and their reasons for (non)participation in the public consultation process. While we do not report the project findings here, we are inevitably influenced by the data of it and at times signpost the reader towards the project report (Pluquailec, O'Connor and Sadler, 2022).

Context

The SEND Review was originally due for publication in 2019 but was delayed multiple times until its eventual release in March 2022. The Review was commissioned, in the words of the UK Government (2022):

> as a response to the widespread recognition that the system was failing to deliver improved outcomes for children and young people, that parental and provider confidence was in decline, and, that despite substantial additional investment, the system had become financially unsustainable
>
> p.9.

Such a political warrant might reassure readers of the Green Paper that the government has taken responsibility for the well-documented failings of the SEND system (UK Parliament, 2021; House of Commons Education Committee, 2019; National Network for Parent Carer Forums, 2019; Ofsted, 2021a) and lead them to expect the contents of this public consultation to engender hope for a revolutionised approach to special educational needs that is fit for purpose for the communities it serves. This hopeful future with a distancing from the past is a well-worn policy tactic – a work of temporal construction in which new policy 'constructs either overtly, implicitly or by neglect, an historical past, a present and a desired imagined future … Policy is about creating a better-imagined future and in discursively constructing such an imagined future is about governing the present' (Lingard, 2021, p.348). To offer us the means to interrogate this policy work, we situate our project within Disability Studies in Education (DSE).

We write this paper with(in) the frame work of DSE as a conscious positioning of both our ideological orientation to the construction of 'special educational needs' and our analytical means of interrogating the Green Paper itself. The very premise of SEND policy conceives of certain 'bodyminds' (Price, 2015) as requiring intervention in order to be granted access to the basic right to education. This premise demands interrogation. As Danforth and Gabel (2008) set out, DSE is a space for 'critical analyses that doubt the sincere company line, critique the mundane play of power and press the professions and community to experiment with new forms of participation, solidarity and equity' (p.1). As we write this, we are mindful of Penketh's reflections on the last round of SEND educational reforms in 2014: 'We need to continue to remind educators, at all levels, that people do not 'have' special educational needs … their educational needs are made special as a result of the ways in which we conceptualise and organise our education systems'

(Penketh, 2014, p.1486). Over eight years later, a period which spans nearly the entirety of some young people's educational lives, we have reflected on the failings of those reforms (UK Parliament, 2021; House of Commons Education Committee, 2019; National Network for Parent Carer Forums, 2019; Ofsted, 2021b) and we consider the effects of policy amnesia and the means by which the SEND Review seeks to proffer a bold new vision for the SEND system.

Disabled Children's Childhood Studies (DCCS) is a helpful addition to the lens of analysis here, to emphasise childhoods over impairments (Curran, 2013; Pluquailec, 2022; Runswick-Cole et al., 2018) and to illuminate how readily certain children's childhoods are deemed inconsequential (Julian & Ryan, 2018; Ryan, 2017) or, at best, inconvenient to the successful functioning of an education system (Erevelles, 2000) and a society as a whole. As Sverrisdóttir and Van Hove (2021) note:

> Implementing inclusive education has proven problematic all over the world. The reasons are multiple, but one of them can presumably be related to the way students with disabilities are "created", viewed, and responded to as "special education students" within schools.
>
> p.1

For as long as the childhoods of disabled children remain ideologically conceptualised through policy and practice as the exception to the norm, despite the government's own recognition of the rising numbers of 'children with SEND' (DfE, 2022f), we would argue that the system for educating such children (and education as a whole) will remain largely unchanged regardless of state intervention in policy reform. That said, scrutiny of policy reform is a vital tool of DSE, and arguably DCCS too, given the importance of policy reform in the state apparatus at a time of intense neoliberal conservatism. In the UK, disabled people of all ages have come under attack from political rhetoric and policy which is implicitly and explicitly intended to reduce state spending on disability-related issues, bringing reduced quality of life and opportunities for disabled people (see the Healing Justice Ldn Deaths by Welfare Project, 2022). In 2017, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) published a damning report following a 2016 inquiry which condemned the UK Government for 'grave and systematic violations of disabled people's human rights' including the right to education. In the wake of the UNCRPD's explicit recommendations for better consultation with disabled people, the High Court in November 2021 ruled that the National Disability Strategy was unlawful because the government had failed to consult lawfully

(Binder v Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, 2023). In this context of a state which actively and passively enacts policies that diminish the quality of disabled people's lives, it is evident that close scrutiny of the current SEND Review is vital. Of course, while these systematic exclusions are specific examples, they are reflective of a broader ideological project of neoliberalism internationally.

Whilst we write within an English policy context with its own histories in relation to the education of disabled children, we offer this paper as a contribution to the field of those analysing the neoliberal project more internationally. As Arduin (2015) explored, foundational societal values influence the structures, and therefore, policies, relating to disabled children's education, meaning where neoliberalism serves as the underpinning ideology, there will likely be resonance far beyond the English context. Liasidou & Symeou (2018) and Hedegaard-Soerensen & Penthin Grumloese (2020) evidence the ways social justice in education policy is undermined by neoliberal imperatives. Rather than claiming British exceptionalism we are inclined to return to England's status as 'the social laboratory of neoliberal education' (Ball, 2016, p.1047) as a cautionary tale when it comes to the education of disabled children. Slee (2018) highlights the implications for education, and schooling in particular:

> Neoliberalism provides an ethical framework for the organisation and operation of our social institutions including schooling. Schools are forged within the furnace of competitive individuals, and students are reduced to the bearers of results … As individual units, students manifest risk or opportunity.
>
> p.16

Policy reform is a fundamental tactic of neoliberal education systems, bringing the ever-alluring modernist promise of policy as a means of progression from an inadequate present to a bright future (Ball, 2021). SEND policy has seen a volley of some of the most significant reforms of any education policy in England and those reforms show little sign of let-up. For example, since the publication of the SEND Review Green Paper in March 2022, a further public consultation on the timeline for Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) Annual Reviews (DfE, 2022b) was announced on the back of a High Court judgement that local authorities were routinely breaching the current legislative framework for this area (R (L, M and P) v Devon County Council, 2022). As the parent advocate Tania Tirraoro (2022) astutely commented, one might be inclined to conclude that the consultation was the consequence of the DfE's dissatisfaction with the

judgement: 'if you don't like a legal clarification that's been made, don't worry, you can just change the law concerned'. Another public consultation which recently closed was the revision of school behaviour and exclusion guidance (DfE, 2022a). It has significant implications for disabled young people who are disproportionately at risk of exclusion (DfE, 2022d) and subject to some of the most problematic behaviour interventions (see the Challenging Behaviour Foundation's 2020 report on the use of restraint in schools). This new guidance further entrenches the government's commitment to zero-tolerance approaches to behaviour in schools, with Alternative Provision[2] now being expected to 'provide the leadership and expertise to develop capacity in mainstream schools, building on strong behaviour cultures' (DfE, 2022a, Ch4(8)). The final consultation of relevance running concurrently to the SEND Review was the Ofsted and Care Quality Commission's (2022) new approach to SEND inspections.

These concurrent consultations all with direct consequences to the education of disabled young people show that the SEND policy field is rapidly evolving and has deeply intertwined strands. Moreover, all of these consultations interact with both the (now scrapped) Schools Bill (2022), and the Schools White Paper (DfE, 2022c) entitled 'Opportunity for all: strong schools with great teachers for your child', published the same week as the SEND Review. Significant agendas in these instruments included a new register for young people who are not in school and/or are home-educated, new legislation regarding attendance policies, and enhanced powers to issue fixed penalty notices to parents. The Schools White Paper explicitly cross-references the SEND Review in its broadest terms: it 'complements plans, which will be set out in the SEND Review, for a clearer interaction between the SEND system and the support that should be readily available in all schools' (p.44). Likewise, the SEND Review refers to the White Paper: 'The proposals in this green paper will build upon the ambitious vision for an effective education system that the Schools White Paper seeks to deliver' (p.78). This intertextual referencing leaves the reader with the obligation to cross-check that each of the document's promises to the other is realised. As a technique, it serves to 'support, reinforce and legitimise [the] particular construction, representation and projection of preferred meanings' (Hyatt, 2013, p.841) in the Review. This makes it much more difficult to challenge problematic assumptions and assertions within

2 Alternative Provision in the Review is defined as 'education arranged by local authorities for pupils who, because of exclusion, illness or other reasons, would not otherwise receive suitable education; education arranged by schools for pupils on a fixed period exclusion; and pupils being directed by schools to off-site provision to improve their behaviour.'

the Review, thus creating a barrier to raising legitimate concerns. It is with the intention of raising concerns that this paper asks, how does the SEND Review and its language both hide and reveal governmental attitudes of, and priorities for, disabled children and young people?

Methodology

Critical Discourse Analyses are a staple of Critical Disability Studies because they allow for interrogation of how things come to be (Arduin, 2015; Burch, 2018; Hodkinson & Burch, 2019; Van Aswegen et al., 2019). Whilst CDA's are already established in CDS, this is the first study to adopt this methodology explicitly with/in Disability Studies in Education. For us DSE's philosophical underpinnings align with the most political and critical aspects of CDA methodology; CDA gives us the means to enact a DSE approach in policy analysis. Titchkosky (2007), writing on the consequences of texts, perhaps signals why close analysis of documents is crucial:

> Texts appear to people, and with real consequences, texts enter our lives. In the context of our lives, texts come to life. This life reflects, if only in a flash, the meaning of the being of that which the text speaks …
>
> p.26

In the DSE context of this paper, it is evident that texts such as the SEND Review and its interrelated educational policy documents bring in to being the meaning of disabled childhoods. Arguably, given the significance of SEND policy in the daily lives of disabled children and families, this meaning is more than a flash, it is an omnipresent authority on the quality of those daily lives. We believe, given that significance, that CDA offers us a means of laying bare what is both hidden and revealed about government attitudes towards the education of disabled young people, and their priorities for both future policy and practice.

In this paper we follow Hyatt's (2013) Critical Higher Education Policy Discourse Analysis (CHEPDA) framework rather than perhaps the more obvious adoption of Fairclough (1995) or a successor such as Baachi (2009). Both the aforementioned approaches would have undoubtedly allowed for a rich exploration so whilst a departure from CDAs with/in CDS that have come before, we hope to contribute to the rich analytical toolkit that can be utilised in countering the marginalisation of disabled childhoods. As central as Fairclough's (1995) work is to CDA, and everything we, as researchers know

of it, we sought more methodological instruction. Van Aswegen et al (2019) developed an analysis using both Bacchi's 'what's the problem represented to be?' (WPR) approach and Hyatt's (2013) CHEPDA framework. We increasingly found ourselves drawn to the CHEPDA framework specifically, due to its pedagogically instructive approach. As researchers we want to continually learn in the research process rather than relying on approaches to analysis that we may find longworn or stagnant due to our familiarity with them. The CHEPDA framework, aligned theoretically with Fairclough (1995), excited us as it provided not only methodology but method too, with its clearly defined analytical tactics that we could apply to the document to a greater or lesser extent depending on their utility. Although our policy interest was not HE, we took Hyatt at his word that the framework was always intended as 'transdisciplinary, offering a purposeful approach for engaging in critical policy study regardless of the policy domain' (Van Aswegen et al, 2019, p.188). The umbrella processes, contextualising and deconstructing were used to formulate our approach to our readings and re-readings before moving towards the minutiae of textual analysis. These two dimensions of the analysis are explained in turn.

Methods of Contextualising & Deconstructing the Policy

We regard this contextualisation work as crucial to countering the historical amnesia at the heart of contemporary policy.

> Policies usually proffer a critique of what has gone before, while often working incrementally, in form, language and approach, with previous policies in the domain. This incrementalism is often hidden by aspirational descriptors of the new policy. New Ministers of Education want to leave their mark; this has a temporal effect on the policy language.
>
> LINGARD, 2021, p.248

Given the dense intertextuality involved in the crowded SEND policy field, a contextual analysis is essential. This contextualising began with a close reading of the Education Act (1944), followed by examination of recent wider SEND policy, allowing evidence of changing language to inform our analysis.

Our analysis principally involves a close deconstruction of the document with attention to modes of legitimation, interdiscursivity, intertextuality, presupposition/implication, and lexico-grammatical construction. Through repeated close reading we tabulated occurrences of each of these features and considered where there were repetitions and emphasises that spanned

the document. From here we rationalised the most pertinent findings into an interrogation of the ways in which young people's 'needs' were legitimised and the presuppositions involved in this, a lexico-grammatical exploration of the intended and imagined audience of the Review in 'who are 'we?", and an analysis of the interdiscursivity at work in the quantity, and quality of 'newness' in the document. It became apparent that certain vocabulary was notable in its volume, thus collating the occurrences of particular phraseology's prolific use enabled a means of analysing its function.

For the most part, we focus on the Green Paper's Executive Summary (the first 17 pages of the 100-page document) though we do take our analysis to the main chapters at points where particular substance is found there. We take this approach because it became clear that the substance of the analysis is concentrated in the efforts of the paper's authors to construct a succinct and robust summary. Much of the discourse on the evidentiary, political and accountability warrants lies in the summary, and its text is steeped in the weight of the implicit. It is here that most of the heavy discursive lifting is happening – the onboarding process, as it were.

Findings and Discussion

We now go on to consider the discursive tactics of the Green Paper which 'make further moves thinkable and doable, and ultimately make them obvious and indeed necessary' (Ball, 2016, p.1048). We map how and where these moves are traced over time to transform the unacceptable into something logical, inevitable and even virtuous and we consider what further moves are likely to come to naturalise and neutralise the future educational landscape for disabled children. Policy is 'multi-layered and in its folds, contours, cracks and crevices, it contains, constrains and constructs privilege as well as dispossession through (re)enforcing marginality and exclusion' (Hodkinson & Burch, 2019, p.156). In this sense, we are interested in the minutiae of the policy text itself, while considering its accumulation and its significance as a moment in the development of the neoliberal conservative architecture.

Contextualising and Deconstructing

The SEND Review Green Paper is contextualised explicitly as informed by the Covid-19 pandemic, a period which the document acknowledges had a disproportionately negative impact on disabled young people. In the Review's

predecessor which introduced the 2014 Code of Practice, the Green Paper titled 'Support and Aspiration: a new approach to special educational needs and disability', the contextualising warrant was austerity – 'the current financial climate does not allow any government to be careless with resources' (DfE, 2011, para 14). Austerity was used to contextualise and justify the scope and scale of the policy reforms at that time, with a now familiar aim of reducing spending (Hoskin, 2019; Norwich, 2014), an aim that evidently has not been achieved. It is notable that austerity and its impacts – including its structural consequence, poverty – are not mentioned at all in the current SEND Review. Austerity as a warrant has been superseded by a global pandemic, providing the backdrop to the current Green Paper as both an explanatory force 'exacerbating the challenges' within previous policy and a political warrant for the proposed reforms: 'Close working with the sector during the pandemic … demonstrated that reform is needed' (DfE, 2022e, chapter 1 para 8). In each Green Paper, austerity and the global pandemic respectively have been invoked to set the bounds of state accountability for previous policy failures in the face of seemingly uncontrollable (global) forces.

In Lehane's (2017) analysis of three SEND Code of Practices (which provide the legislative framework in England), she noted that the documents became longer with each reform. We would contend, following Lehane, that the current Green Paper is written not to be read. Related to this contention, the barrier most commonly reported by parents in their ability to respond to the consultation exercise in our broader project [project title anonymised] was that the document is largely impenetrable, even with extensive prior knowledge of the policy and legislative landscape, and so lengthy that it would never lend itself to meaningful and active engagement (Pluquailec, O'Connor and Sadler, 2022). Given that a repeated aim in the Green Paper itself (chapter 1 para 29) and in the associated press communications from Ministers (BBC Newsround, 2022) is to restore parents' confidence in the SEND system, the irony has not been lost on these same parents that the document is, at best, promotional rather than dialogic (Fairclough, 2013) and, at worst, exclusionary.

(1) The (Mis)use and Omission of 'Need'

> … reform is made up of small, incremental moves and tactics … Things that at one time seemed unthinkable become over time the common sense and the obvious of policy, as 'what works' and as 'best practice'; they become embedded in a 'necessarian logic'
>
> Ball, 2016, p.1048.

In this analysis of the 'SEND' Review, it is important to consider the use of this acronym and how it informs change. In some respects, it provides a useful way of identifying those children and young people who require different or additional support in educational settings; like many other disability labels, it also allows people to find each other and form communities (Pluquailec, 2022). However, its use is not without problems. Children are no longer described as 'needing' something from others: they simply 'have SEN/D'. By this etymological nominalisation, what children need *and* the action required to meet the need can be absent from the language. Children are construed as passive bearers of disability. Billig (2008) notes that 'over time a new noun might be derived from a verb and become established as a standard lexical item in the language' (p.787). This does not necessarily imply subterfuge, but nominalisation does permit 'habits of concealment' (Fowler, in Billig, 2008, p.80). The concealment of need is a core component of the SEND Review.

The framing of 'need' as something a child 'has', rather than a requirement for others to act on behalf of the child, is not inevitable. In the Education Act (1944), this responsibility of others was clear. The phrase 'special educational treatment' occurred 12 times in the 1944 document, each time preceded by a verb: require, need or provide. This phrasing demanded action from government. Further, 'special educational treatment' was explicitly described as '… the need for securing that provision is made for pupils …' (8-2(c)), again ensuring that action was an inevitable consequence of need. By the time the Warnock Report (1978) was released, the concept of 'special needs' was in use, defined specifically as the *need for* particular interventions (6.3). Thus, the word 'need' still connoted a requirement for action.

In the SEND Review, however, the use of 'need' has significantly changed. 'Need' appears 420 times in the Review, SEN appears 177 times, and SEND 355 times. By their nature, SEN and SEND are nouns. 'Need' is also predominantly nominalised. Where 'need' is used as a verb, it is either in a mitigating context, such as 'fewer children and young people will need additional interventions' (p.42) and 'young people should be able to access the support they need to thrive without the need for an EHCP' (p.13), or it is used to describe what the system 'needs'. Having a system that 'needs' things, and children who just 'have needs', helps to characterise educational requirements as obstacles to 'the system' rather than necessary adjustments required by students. For example, in a section entitled 'There are three key challenges facing the SEND system' (p.10), 'high needs cost pressures' are at the centre, with funding cuts presented as a way of meeting this 'need'. Occurrences of the verb form of need relate to 'future funding' and 'targeting spending' (p.11) (things 'the system' needs). Meanwhile, the nominalisation of children and young people's needs reduces

them to cost pressures – a financial burden on 'the system' which has been given an 'unprecedented level of investment' (p.11). This linguistic strategy serves to conceal the true significance of children's needs. In this way, the government establishes a 'naturalised ideological position' within which the 'value and usefulness' of removing funds from the SEND system is rationalised. (Hyatt, 2013, p.840).

With the omission of 'need' we find minimising replacements, for example: 'When children and young people did not get the support they wanted, they often felt excluded …' (Ch1, 18). Here, support is not described as a need; to describe it as a 'want' reduces its value and import. This attenuation allows what follows to go unchallenged: the children only 'felt' excluded, rather than 'they became excluded due to their needs being unmet'. Parental needs are diminished in a similar way: they only '*feel* they need to secure EHCPs and … specialist provision' [italics added], 'as a result of low confidence' (Ch1, 32). Presenting 'need' as a feeling instead of an actuality permits inaction. There is a presupposition here that parents are not cognizant of their children's educational rights. This is compounded by the statement that this 'feeling' is caused by another feeling (low confidence). Hyatt (2013, p.841) notes that 'presuppositions help to represent constructions as convincing realities'. Here, they allow the government to elide responsibility for the problems encountered by parents and carers in trying to ensure appropriate support for their children.

The way nominalised 'needs' are categorised in the text can also tell a story. In Key Facts (p.7), diagnostic labels are presented as subcategories of 'needs'. For example, 'Amongst pupils with an EHCP, the most common primary type of need in 2021 was Autistic Spectrum Disorder (30%)'. This puts the focus on labels borne by the young person rather than what needs to be done for the young person, because Autism Spectrum Disorder is a diagnosis not a description of particular educational needs. In effect, 'needs' are erased. It is also disheartening to note how the term 'high needs' is used throughout the SEND Review. Historically, references to 'high needs' connoted greater requirements on educators to meet a young person's greater needs. In this Green Paper, 'high needs' appears 34 times, 32 of which relate to spending, budgets, investment and funding. Here, 'high need' is presented as a financial issue, nothing more.

'Need' is not the only word that is (mis)used/omitted in this way. 'Include'/'inclusion' follows a similar pattern and we explore this in finding 3 'What's new?', below. Further, 'reintegration' makes an appearance in place of 'inclusion'. This occurs within the information for consultation 14, on funding (Ch4, 20), and relates to the creation of new 'performance tables' for Alternative Provision, where providers will be graded on their 'success' in

'reintegrating the children and young people back into mainstream schools'. The text is silent on exactly how this 'reintegration' will take place. Alternative Provision is presented as a way to 'build capacity to address behavioural or other needs that present a barrier to learning' (Ch 4(2)). Alternative Provision settings will involve 'time-limited placements' and 'longer-term transitional placements' for pupils. The omission of 'inclusion', replaced by 'reintegration', gives the surface appearance of inclusion (integration) but actually specifies that children and young people will be excluded from their schools and placed elsewhere. This mode of legitimation is 'moral evaluation' (Hyatt, 2013, p840) of 'behaviour' as a 'barrier to learning' rather than the result of a child's needs not being met. As part of the 'new national vision for Alternative Provision', 'high standards of behaviour' are expected (Ch3, 13) with 'strong behaviour cultures' (Ch4, 8). There is a moral implication here that 'behaviour' is a reason to remove children from their educational settings and send them to other settings where they will learn to 'behave' appropriately. Given that 'Alternative Provision' is mentioned 249 times in the SEND Review, it is evident that pupil 'inclusion' is being replaced to some extent by a process that involves pupil 'reintegration', in a to-and-fro between different settings.

(2) Who Are 'We'?

We cannot ignore the ubiquitous and ambiguous use of the first-person plural 'we', used 372 times in the document. This lexico-grammatical construction is a worthy site of attention to uncover its functions. In British policy work, 'we' was first probed by Fairclough (2000) in his analysis of New Labour's use of the word: 'There is a constant ambivalence and slippage between exclusive and inclusive "we" – the pronoun can be taken as reference to the Government or to Britain (or the British)' (p.35). Following Fairclough (2000), we ask the question: who are the 'we' that the Green Paper speaks of so profusely? 'We' is at times exclusive – the UK Government, the narrator, the voice of the reforms, the announcer of the evidence. At other times, 'we' is more ambiguous and inclusive, bringing in a collective audience. In the latter construction, 'we' serves as a unifying force, bringing in an audience/readership who are constructed as both naturally and obviously in agreement with both the problem at hand (example 1) and the solutions available (example 2):

> *Example 1*: We need a strong specialist sector that has a clear purpose to support those children and young people with more complex needs who require specialist or Alternative Provision'
>
> p13.

> *Example 2*: We need funding reform and strengthened accountability across the system so that everyone knows the role they play, is incentivised and held to account for doing so. We need a strong focus on delivery, supporting the move to a more inclusive system that starts to deliver now, and in the long-term for children, young people and their families.
>
> p25

This pattern is problematic not least because the SEND Review is a consultation document seeking public feedback, while the language sows seeds in readers' minds about what they *should* feel and, in turn, how they *ought* to respond.

Where 'we' is used in the document to refer exclusively to the Review's authors and implementers, it is worth stopping to unpack the implicit authority that this use embeds in the paper's narration. On these occasions of 'we', verbs are rarely conjugated in the past tense and few are in the present tense. The most common pattern is the present perfect tense, often used when there is more interest in the outcome of an action than the action itself. These statements are dominated by the authoritative voice of 'we', with little substance accorded to the action or process: 'we have listened', 'we have considered', 'we have heard'. Little or no space is given to the active voices that were listened to, considered, or heard. In each case, the outcomes of these actions play favourably into a sense of a Review process that simply wants to get on with the task at hand (perhaps chiming with a common media soundbite of the current Government Front Bench: getting on with 'delivering on the people's priorities'). The lack of reported opinions, arguments or submissions from 'heard' stakeholders obliges the reader to assume that those voices are well-represented in the paper's proposals, rather than affording readers the opportunity to draw that conclusion themselves. One need only turn towards public commentary immediately following the Green Paper's publication to conclude that some of those voices do not feel properly listened to, considered or heard. For example, when the Green Paper was published it had no British Sign Language or Easy Read versions. 'It is tragically ironic', said Simon Knight, a headteacher of a special school, 'that a consultation designed to address the dysfunctionality of the SEND system is, through the lack of suitable adapted materials, disadvantaging those very people the consultation is intended to improve outcomes for' (Knight, in Booth, 2022, n.p.). It was only after public backlash that these versions were published, six weeks later. The consultation deadline was in turn extended but only by three weeks.

One of the most interesting uses of 'we' is in a subsection of the Executive Summary, headed 'We need to turn this vicious cycle into a virtuous one'. Reference to 'vicious cycle' recurs throughout the document. The subsection

appears to be shoehorned into the structure of the Review in the absence of an obvious home. It is formatted neither as one of the 'challenges' the paper addresses nor as one of the proposals 'we will' be consulting upon. Linguistically, the subsection heading is not aligned with the rest of the paper. It is precisely its unusual position and form that makes it worthy of close attention – what is its purpose and why is it so important to buck the systematically stylised format of the document? By our analysis, the 'vicious/virtuous cycle' presents a mythopoesis, legitimising policy through a cautionary tale (Hyatt, 2013, p.840). The 'cycle' is a heuristic metaphor, involving a problem system (the vicious cycle) and the idea of a new and better system (the virtuous cycle). Bessant (2002) argues that 'education policy as we know it would not be possible without official rhetoric and the use of metaphor … heuristic metaphors [can] explain why the old system 'failed' and why the new one will be 'better' (p.88, p.95). The use of the vicious cycle metaphor in the SEND Review seems to be an attempt to do this. However, on closer examination, the cycle has a life of its own – a powerful force 'driving' problems in 'the system'. It is 'the cycle' not 'the government' that is the actor. 'We', in any of its forms, becomes absent beyond the heading. When 'we' reappears, it is without a call to action:

> We are clear that in an effective and sustainable SEND system that delivers great outcomes for children and young people, the vast majority of children and young people should be able to access the support they need to thrive without the need for an EHCP or specialist or Alternative Provision place …
>
> p.13

Here, the use of 'We are clear' (that an effective 'system' delivers great outcomes) is notable. Unlike children and families who 'feel', 'we' are 'clear' (we do not 'feel'). Also, 'we' do not promise to 'do' any action; 'we' are just 'clear' that it should be done. The language enables an eliding of responsibility, simultaneously highlighting substantial problems and acknowledging what 'should' be done without actually locating accountability for the problems, or promising to fix them.

'We' is conspicuously absent from the 'Key Facts: the SEND and Alternative Provision system in numbers' where the scale and quantification of the problem at hand is laid out. Within this scene-setting section, which mainly takes the form of budgetary 'facts' serving as evidentiary warrant for both the Review and its proposed reforms, 'we' is nowhere to be seen. This is notable as a distancing move, creating space between the 'we' of the government and the evidence of the SEND system's entrenched failings. As Hyatt (2013)

notes, 'The selection of voice … can be motivated by the desire to elide agency and therefore systematically background responsibility for actions in some instances or to foreground responsibility in others' (p.842). Allowing 'we' into this section would invite association with failure and risk the reader noticing that perhaps 'we' had something to do with the conditions of that failure.

(3) What is, in Fact, 'New'?

It may appear trite to analyse the use of 'newness' in a Green Paper – it is, after all, a set of proposed policy reforms. There are two reasons that we do this analysis. The first is sheer numbers. The word 'new' appears a total of 119 times in the document. Its place of highest frequency is the Executive Summary where it occurs more than a dozen times within only four summary points. The profusion of 'new' prompted questions about the legitimacy of its use – one is inclined to wonder what would be left of the current SEND system with newness on such an industrial scale. This leads us to ask what function is 'new' serving in the Green Paper. Taken at face value, readers would tend towards optimism; with so much newness in the air, real reform is an inevitable goal

TABLE 1 Occurrences of 'new' in the SEND Review

new national SEND system
new local SEND partnerships
new SENCo qualification
new national vision for Alternative Provision
new places and improved provision
new special and Alternative Provision free schools
new Regions Groups
new funding agreements between local government and DfE
new inclusion dashboard
new national framework of banding and price tariffs for funding
new National SEND Delivery Board
local authority new burdens assessment
new digital EHCP template
new £30 million investment
new research on SEND classroom-based practice

and consequence of this SEND Review. Going beyond the quantification of newness in the document, what indeed is new? To begin the answer to this question, Table 1 sets out 15 different phrases in the document that contain the word 'new', all referring to specific initiatives for the SEND system.

Interdiscursivity, where discourses and genres interpenetrate one another (Hyatt, 2013, p.841), can be seen at work in this plethora of initiatives. Discourses of neoliberal business models seep into the language of these initiatives, where proposals involve vision, provision, partnerships, assessments, dashboards and tariffs. This perhaps speaks to the juggernaut that is the 'SEN industry' (Tomlinson, 2012), a further ramping up of the marketisation of disability policy in which the state rolls back and abstract initiatives machinate to produce the so-desired 'virtuous' SEND system. As Sardoč (2021) asserts, 'Education has been at the very centre of the neoliberal public policy agenda as it allegedly represents one of the main indicators of future economic growth and individual well-being' (n.p.), and nowhere is this assertion more apparent than within the imagined future productivity, or state burden, of disabled children (Burch, 2018).

Those with legal expertise in the SEND system have publicly challenged the authenticity and legitimacy of some of these new proposals. The Independent Provider of Special Education Advice (IPSEA) (2022) disagrees with the introduction of new national standards on the grounds that the existing legal framework is sufficient, and what is lacking is *compliance* with those legal duties on the part of local authorities. With 95% of tribunal cases currently being won by families (Ministry of Justice, 2022), it is evident that failure to comply and lack of accountability are entrenched in the SEND system. Another of the Review's proposed initiatives is the introduction of mandatory mediation, evidently to slow or quell the volume (and cost) of cases reaching tribunal. The plan is rationalised by the implication that families simply do not really understand what is happening (Ch2, 31). Again, some would argue that this proposal focuses energy in the wrong place, diagnosing a symptom of the SEND system rather than tackling genuine system reform. As Michael King, Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, submitted to the Education Committee on the SEND Review:

> The focus on redress suggests that the problem is at the end of the system and there is too much conflict at the end. There is conflict at the end of the system only because it is not working upstream, and if there is any kind of impression here that the problem to be fixed is vexatious and litigious parents who are too quick to go law to try to resolve things, that is absolutely not what we see in our experience of investigating complaints.

> The people who come to us have spent months or years navigating the system. They come to us as a last resort, and they are absolutely exhausted. There is no sense at all that the redress system is an easy option for parents.
>
> HOUSE OF COMMONS EDUCATION COMMITTEE, 2022.

Returning to temporal construction work is useful here. It reminds us that contemporary policy needs to construct the past as a distant (and often unrelated) memory in order to narrate the future as new, desirable and necessary (Lingard, 2021). As a tactic, the proliferation of 'newness' serves to project an imagined better future for disabled young people, which instils in readers a requirement of good faith. 'New' initiatives cannot yet be definitively criticised, even if they are only incrementally different from previous initiatives, or have provoked robust analyses of their implicit, inevitable consequences (such as IPSEA's analysis that the proposed initiatives will require legislative change). As IPSEA's Chief Executive Officer, Ali Fiddy, has cautioned (IPSEA, 2022), the Green Paper is a 'wolf in sheep's clothing' designed fundamentally to reduce state expenditure on the SEND system and reduce the number of young people entitled to support from that system. The copious number of 'new' initiatives, and the abundant use of 'new' in the policy document, operate to naturalise and neutralise the politically charged motivations that make certain future moves more likely – and arguably more possible.

The Green Paper's new initiatives include a proposal for Annual Reviews which could consider reducing or ceasing a young person's entitlements (chapter, 2 para 18). Such a provision could, in theory, curb the longstanding growth trajectory that Ministers so clearly fear:

> Challenge 3: despite unprecedented investment, the system is not delivering value for money for children, young people and families … Investment cannot continue to rise at the current rate …
>
> p. 11.

This language seeks to legitimise spending cuts by rationalisation (Hyatt, 2013, p.840), in this case by invoking 'the value and usefulness of a social action … [representing] a "naturalised" ideological position' – that of cost benefits.

Parents in our project told us one of their greatest fears about the new proposals is that they make it harder to get EHCPs or seek redress when those EHCPs are inadequate. If their fears are realised, fewer young people 'with SEND' will exist 'on paper' within the system and the financial pressures on the system will theoretically be relieved. Of course, the material reality for

those same young people is not a life without impairment – rather it is a life without access to adequate support. If we return to Penketh's (2014) claim that children do not *have* SEND, but their needs are *made* special through the way education is organised, we can imagine an alternative means of 'reducing' the number of children with SEND. An inclusive education system, ideologically aligned with Disability Studies perspectives, could also lead to fewer young people demarcated as having SEND. An education system that caters for young people across the full diversity of bodyminds would be one in which certain ways of being were not demarcated as having 'Special Educational Needs' but one where all bodyminds are fully valued as entitled to and deserving of a whole and meaningful education. The SEND Code of Practice (2014) – which is still the legislative framework in England at this point in time – championed inclusive education, both in principle and practice, in its specific use of the language of inclusion. Given this explicit commitment as an overarching driver of the system, 'inclusion' is notable in its absence in the 2022 SEND Review. Within the current Green Paper, neither 'inclusive education' nor 'inclusion' as a practice (in verb or noun form) appear. The only use of the words 'inclusion' or 'inclusive' are as adjectives or nouns to premodify other nouns: 'an inclusive system', 'inclusion plan', and 'inclusion dashboard'. In each case, inclusion is not something that young people can expect, nor is it something that the professionals within the system are required to enable; it is an object or a tool of the system's enactment. Just as the nominalisation of 'need' serves to remove a call to action and nullify the state's responsibility to take or enable action, the nominalisation of 'inclusion' serves to implicitly roll back a commitment to a young person's right to a full and inclusive education, a right protected by Articles 7 and 24 of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2007) and Article 28 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (2007).

Conclusion

In this paper we have drawn vital attention to tactics by which the SEND Review Green Paper allows the unthinkable to become not only 'thinkable and doable' but 'obvious and necessary' (Ball, 2016, p.1048) – presenting cuts to SEND -related spending as 'virtuous', and framing the 'needs' of 'the system' as having logical priority over the needs of pupils. We have traced the purposes of these tactics to demonstrate their function to naturalise and neutralise the underpinning neoliberal political agenda in reforming the future educational landscape for young people demarcated as having SEND.

We have shown that the ambiguous and slippery use of the lexico-grammatical construction 'we', at once author and audience, serves different purposes. Its presence is a means of bringing in readers in a shared vision, and its absence is a distancing move that allows the authors to relinquish association or accountability for current failings in the system. In the entreaty 'we need to turn this vicious cycle into a virtuous one', what appears to be a worthy call to action can be analysed as a metaphor conveying a cautionary tale. It carefully elides responsibility for the viciousness within the current cycle (of the SEND system) and linguistically avoids commitment to creating or sustaining the envisaged virtuous system. We have explored the extent to which this system is imbued with 'newness' though the intention of consequence of the numerous new initiatives cannot be judged. The language of neoliberal business models is drawn into these initiatives perhaps as a means of developing, or emphasising, the marketisation of disability-related policy, in which the state seeks to roll further and further back.

Alongside this, nominalising young people's 'needs' to the point of eventual omission or erasure has been shown as a conceptual progression of 'SEN' which epitomises Slee's (2018) critique of marketised education where young people, as individual units, embody 'opportunity or risk' (p.16). The Review also uses 'inclusion' in ways that omit any commitment to true inclusive education for pupils. This removal of inclusion and concealment of pupil need, achieved through nominalisation, is closely tied to the sleight of hand which justifies reduced state funding for SEND. The SEND Review is contextualised within a global pandemic and spiralling financial spending which undergird the spirit and the letter of the Green Paper: 'despite unprecedented investment, the system is not delivering value for money for children, young people and families' (Challenge 3, DfE, 2022e). This warrant is used to justify reforms and proposals that centre on decreased spending on SEND. One of the key mechanisms for this reduction of the number of young people with SEND is 'early intervention'. The Review does not define this early intervention so is unclear on what this practice would involve, stating only that it is to be strengthened (p.11), focussed upon (p.15), and delivered in greater volume (consultation question 14). As we have analysed, this planned reduction in SEND numbers is to be achieved not through a new approach to education in which diverse bodyminds are actively and meaningfully centred, but through the implication that significant numbers of young people with SEND either do not *really* have SEN but have just been badly taught (p.12), or would not have SEN if someone or something had intervened earlier.

We end this paper imagining an alternative future, a radical reconceptualisation of policy and practice that is the antithesis of the SEND

Review before us. We find hope in the potential that Disability Studies in Education offers to the landscape for disabled young people in the UK and other deeply marketised education systems. We recognise Connor and Gabel's (2013) admission that policy is perhaps DSE's biggest challenge and we affirm that this paper has drawn on the ethics and practice of DSE in its Critical Discourse Analysis to interrogate and highlight the increasing marginalisation of disabled children's education in the SEND Review. We call on readers of education policy documents and public communications to be alert to the kinds of tactics used in discourse to help achieve this marginalisation. We call on academics, practitioners and communities alike to serve as 'demanding social critics and creative inventors of new ways of living and learning together in diverse communities' (Danforth & Gabel, 2008, p.1), to exceed and subvert the current educational regime whether by way of scholarly critique of policy and submissions to public consultations, to challenge the current education regime and move towards a genuinely inclusive system.

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