

The General Allocation Model: An Analysis of Current Inclusion Policy in Ireland

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This study focuses on the current national directive with regard to inclusive educational practice for primary schools, *Department of Education and Science Special Education Circular 02/05*, which introduced the General Allocation Model (GAM) within the context of the roll out of the EPSEN Act (2004). A review of this model was planned for by the government within a three year period but to date no review has been published.

All social systems are faced with the dilemma of matching finite resources with individual needs. The GAM is a case study within a wider societal problem for all social service providers: Finite Resources and Infinite Need. The GAM was introduced as an 'effective and efficient model'... 'to develop truly inclusive schools' to provide resources to match individual needs in inclusive schools. So basically my question is:

In the context of the general allocation model (GAM) in primary schools as a means to resolve the person need /resource match dilemma, to what extent is inclusive education advanced?

Policy is considered as Text, Discourse and Action (Ball, 1994). In this GAM-policy context, the current study centres on how participants, in local activity settings, are actively engaged in policy implementation. In this sense, it is a partnership between the researcher and the participants as Grounded Theory is the approach used for data collection and analysis. As such, the study examines how inclusion gets 'done' in the day to day, routine processes of the social institution/organisation of the school.

Initial findings suggest that there is a link between local notions of ability, school ordering and social class. One of the real dangers in the current period of development is that while the surface structures are changed, the existing deep structures, such as, attitudes, beliefs and values, will remain in place. Moreover, if the deep structures of special education, those issues that underlie relations of power, control, dominance and subordination, are not identified and transformed, exclusion and marginalization will be reproduced even under the most well-intentioned policies.