

## **Marie Delaney: Special Educational Needs**

(Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2016. 104 p.)

Marie Delaney is a teacher, teacher trainer, Educational Consultant and Educational Psychotherapist. In her present book, she focuses on the importance of the inclusion of Special Educational Needs (SEN) students in English classrooms in primary and secondary education. This issue is highly pertinent to everyone dealing with or interested in education in the 21st century. As a part of the Into the Classroom series it offers useful and easily accessible guides to implementing new ideas and teaching tools in SEN classrooms. Delaney's strategies can successfully be used by teachers in inclusive classrooms, without special SEN training, as with the help of this book, they will be able to manage and integrate SEN.

At the beginning of the book, the author inserts quotations by teachers and learners, reflecting real life issues and solutions in language teaching nowadays. The introduction highlights who this book is written for, provides a short description of the structure of the book, and finally, the author exposes the scope of the book.

In Part One, Delaney provides general principles for SEN teaching, by giving an introduction to SEN teaching, types of SEN and common problem areas. She starts with her definition of SEN, which is interpreted as difficulties in learning. These can be based on cognition and/or learning needs, communication and interaction difficulties, social-emotional-behavioral difficulties, sensory impairments and medical conditions. Nowadays in scientific literature, special educational needs might be referred to as additional educational needs (AEN). Delaney claims that students with SEN can be vulnerable to bullying, that is why teachers must create inclusive classrooms. In this type of classroom, teachers can help visual learners, ask for help from professionals and also use differentiation as a vital element for students with SEN. In her interpretation, differentiation is vitally important since students make judgements about each other easily and this leads to poor interaction. As a solution to these problems Delaney highlights classroom management, which must be based on class contracts and positive feedback to students. Employing them ensures that structured classroom environments are created where students feel safe and secure. Types of SEN are categorized by Delaney as follows: cognition and learning based, as in Down's Syndrome, where students have general learning difficulties; communication and interaction based, such as in autism spectrum condition (ASC), Asperger's syndrome, or students with speech and language production and reception difficulties (SLD); social, emotional and behavioral difficulties (SEBD) for instance attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD); sensory impairments including hearing, visual, physical impairments; medical condition based including asthma, anaphylaxis, diabetes, epilepsy; gifted and talented students. For the first five the author offers an excellent list of general indicators and a

perfect checklist for teachers to identify SEN students. Basically, as a practicing teacher I think these two documents should be owned by every teacher to identify and help SEN students.

In the next section, Delaney focuses on common problem areas and divides them into three subsections: working memory, communication, and self-esteem. Working memory is a system, which works with the information needed for everyday activities. This can be improved by word planes, mnemonics, brain break and memory cards techniques. In the area of communication, students may have difficulties in understanding verbal communication and switching between L1 and L2 yet in the field of self-esteem students need to feel positive about learning and we as teachers must focus on their strengths and interests.

In Part Two, the author deals with ways of working to address SEN by differentiated teaching, working collaboratively and assistive technology.

Differentiated teaching takes into account all students in the class. Delaney draws attention to the fact that we have to know our students, for they demonstrate individual differences. When using specific tasks with an average class, it is less time consuming to change the task itself than to change the content of the task, to meet the needs of SEN students. It is motivating for them to work with the same content as other students do. Differentiation may take place on the level of task, content, student response, self-assess materials and through extra one to one support from a teaching assistant. Working collaboratively is essential in the author's interpretation when dealing with SEN students.

The acceptance of SEN is varied. Some parents find it difficult to accept that their children are diagnosed SEN; on the contrary, for others it is hard to accept that their child is in a class with a SEN student. Cooperating with parents is easier if we use home-school diaries, praise postcards and positive language regarding SEN students.

A whole school plan is a must in every school. In an ideal case, there are speech and language therapist, educational psychologist, SEN teachers, occupational therapists and teaching assistants working alongside the language teacher. Although it is not the case in Hungary but this is the aim for the future. Thinking about help, Delaney emphasizes the importance of assistive technology. Specific computer software and apps help people to overcome barriers in learning by gaining confidence, improving literacy, making it possible to work independently and offering support to overcome frustration. Reading, writing, organizing and memory support all promote the avoidance of difficulties during the learning process. Last but not least using the internet is inescapable in the 21st century as it makes learning English more relevant.

In Part Three, Delaney presents information on specific types of SEN and advice for practical teaching to such extent that without any specialist training teachers can easily cope with the strategies. The author focuses on the importance of getting to know more about the situation of those who have SEN. We are

provided with a detailed analysis of dyslexia characterized by information processing difficulty in reading, writing and spelling; dyspraxia, a developmental coordination difficulty; attention deficit hyperactivity disorder; social-emotional and behavioral difficulties; Autism spectrum conditions and speech and language difficulties. The readers of the book receive a description of the problematic areas.

Delaney draws the readers' attention to listen to the teachers' self-care. Furthermore, with the help of the given list, teachers can check their mental and emotional state in order to stay healthy and give the maximum support to SEN students.

The last chapter deals with gifted and talented students who are SEN students in a way that they excel academically or in practical skills, such as in the five intensities.

The book is clearly structured and the chapters are logically presented, moreover, the Ask yourself questions create a realistic dialogue between the author and the readers.

All in all, Special Educational Needs is an indispensable issue and a substantial resource for practicing teachers. In mainstream primary and secondary education, not all the above-mentioned techniques are possible to carry out, but most of the activities and recommended strategies can be exploited in language classes, in order to help SEN students' advancement and to make our language lessons more lively.

Fundamentally, nowadays in Hungarian education all the problematic areas are dealt with in the same way. For instance, students with dysgraphia (or other types of SEN) are integrated in average classes. They have to fulfill the same requirements as others. When testing them, teachers have to guarantee extra time, which is also valid for the Hungarian school leaving exam. During evaluation, teachers are not required to take spelling into consideration, which is common for all types of SEN.

By contrast, every learner and all types of SEN should be dealt with personally and individually in order to assist the progress of our students. Special Educational Needs from Marie Delaney could be the first step to put it into action.

LENGYEL ZSÓFIA

Siófoki SzC Baross Gábor Szakgimnáziuma és Szakközépiskolája  
lengyelzsafia83@gmail.com

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