

“Kids who don’t fit in” (1999) was my attempt to approach certain groups of students who were disaffected with mainstream school in the U.K. and were often excluded.

The first part of this dissertation, which was based on data collected from literature, examined historically the practice of exclusions, the causes of the rapid increase in the numbers of the excluded pupils, their profile, their disaffection with school as well as their future ambitions and prospects. The second part presented a case study I undertook in one of Liverpool’s Pupil Referral Units.

The aims of this research were: a. *The comparison between the data collected from literature and from the certain P.R.U* and b. *The verification of the hypothesis that some students who live under certain circumstances and are disaffected with school may modify their socially unacceptable attitude with the support of a different school environment and the provision of education suitable to help them adjust and develop further in their adult life.*

Data collected through bibliography shows that excluded students often shared certain characteristics relating to their age, sex, race, socioeconomic status and individual additional needs. Disaffection with schooling cannot be defined in strict terms but excluded students behave in a way that manifests their dissatisfaction, their disregard and perhaps their disobedience towards schooling. Taking into account that every government (The State) organizes and determines the form of the provided Education, both state and public, we can conclude that any form of disobedience or behaviour that disturbs the expected and accepted order of the school community should be inhibited in any possible way. Is *Disaffection* with schooling a purely pedagogical problem? Rather not, if, for instance, we take into consideration the fact that juvenile delinquency is related to disaffected behaviours presented in the school context.

Education research proceeds slowly and the results of any new method are not only long term but strongly affected by both external (family, social and financial contexts) and internal (individual needs and diversity) factors. Moreover, the aims and the outcomes of such a research are often regarded with suspicion; questions that arise include “Who is the researcher”, “why are these particular methods used”, “who is going to take advantage of the results?”, “Are the ethical principles applied?”. This last question played so important a role in my research that it determined the whole process of my work.

While studying the literature, I became so motivated to experience the phenomenon of excluded students and this new type of schooling (P.R.U) that I decided to do a case study using participant observation. My decision was determined by my interest on “why” and “how” while the limited time I had at my disposal, allowed me to make my research only upon one school. I faced all the advantages and disadvantages of the research method and I had to change my initial research plan again and again either because I wanted to be loyal to the ethical principles of a social research or because the Head teacher trusted me and offered me access to the official reports of

the social services. I had no intention to cause any inconvenience to the students or the staff who so kindly made me part of their community. In addition, the sample was small and the used method is not indicated for generalisations.

While I was writing about Exclusion and the PRUs, Inclusion had already become an issue. In my opinion it was not only utopia but hypocrisy as well. You cannot treat people equally in an unequal society. I predicted that the number of exclusions would increase and, unfortunately, my fears came true. P.R.U.s could offer the students the attention they needed in order to proceed to Further Education and develop further. At the moment it seems that Further Education has taken over the role of a Mender but this seems to be the subject of another research.

To conclude, I would consider "Kids who don't fit in" more as a personal account of an educational journey on a social and educational phenomenon than a purely scientific piece of work not addressed only to agents of Education but to anyone who might be interested.