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**“Forging Ahead in Special Education: “it depends a good deal on where you want to get to”**

**Philip Garner  
(University of Northampton)**



**IATSE Conference, St Patricks College, Drumcondra  
June 11, 2011**



"I'm very brave generally," he went on in a low voice:  
only today I happen to have a headache"



## D'où Venons Nous? Que Sommes Nous? Où Allons Nous?





Transforming lives, inspiring change



"Rather than a few students being seen to have 'special' needs, schools must regard all students' needs as part of the fabric of human experience and must become open, inclusive and responsive institutions, which celebrate rather than eliminate difference"

(Christensen, 1992)



- Terminology
- Exclusion
- Power imbalances
- Attitudes & practices



## D'où Venons Nous? (1971) Que Sommes Nous? (2011)

- **Terminology**
- Exclusion
- Power imbalances
- Attitudes & practices





**“15 hours in council today...very hard hitting day and the usual collection of retards in the public gallery spoiling it for real people”**



## D'où Venons Nous? (1971) Que Sommes Nous? (2011)

- Terminology
- **Exclusion**
- Power imbalances
- Attitudes & practices





## D'où Venons Nous? (1971) Que Sommes Nous? (2011)

- Terminology
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## D'où Venons Nous? (1971) Que Sommes Nous? (2011)

- Terminology
- Exclusion
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- **Attitudes & practices**



Transforming lives, inspiring change



- **Psychology**
- **Politics**





**professional politicians**

**chancers**

**snake-oil merchants**

**pyramid-sellers**

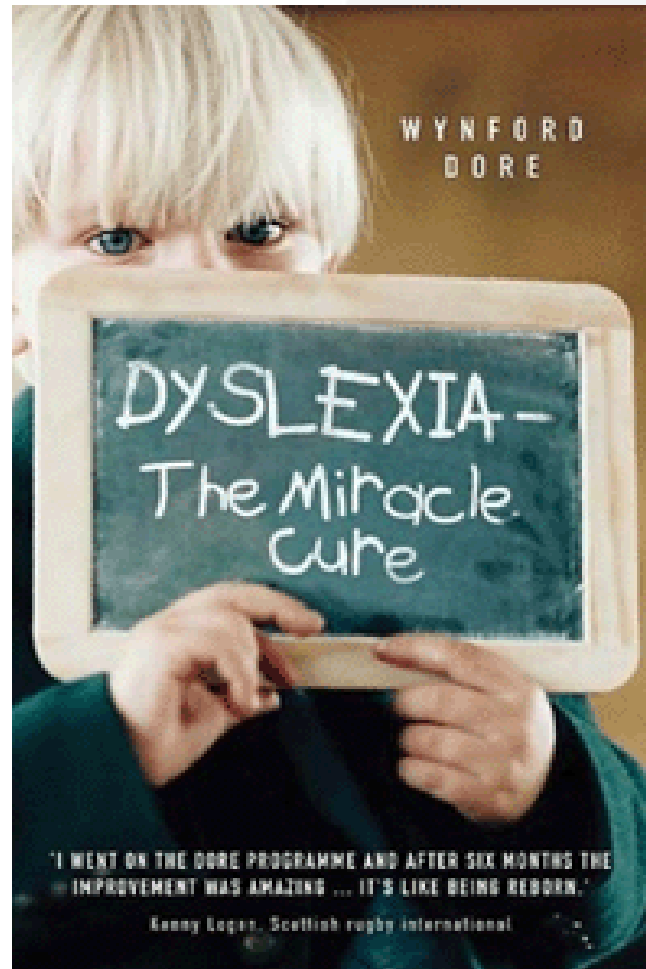
**pole-climbers**

**guilt-merchants**





**“Millions of people with dyslexia have been given hope by a set of simple exercises that experts say can cure the disorder.”**





## Core principles...

- most children with special educational needs can be successfully included in mainstream education providing staff receive appropriate training, strategies and support
- inclusive education service should offer excellence and choice and provide opportunities for the views of parents and children to be heard
- Schools, local authorities and others should actively seek to remove barriers to learning and participation
- Mainstream education will not always be appropriate for every child throughout their compulsory years of schooling

## ...but

- are they shared?
- are they consistent with equity / opportunity / rights / respect for & by others?
- are they applicable to all learners with SENs?
- are they vulnerable?



## IATSE 1994...

- Lack of back-up services and resources
- Examination orientated curriculum
- Overcrowded classes
- Negative attitudes towards disability
- Lack of appropriate training

**(O Murchu & Shevlin, 1995)**

# Misunderstandings

- 'inclusion' has become a bandwagon
- categories have become politically incorrect
- Equality of opportunity remains differentiated
- Certain laws of the jungle apply

Should we learn from the past, rather than try to bury it?



**...to play at life's  
brinkmanship, find  
freedom and the right  
to accept a challenge,  
test oneself to the  
limit, plumb the  
extremes of emotion  
and exhilaration,  
brain, heart, eyes,  
strength and balance  
united in a single  
purpose...**

## A snapshot of the challenges in Ireland

- Lack of focus on Post-Primary SENs
- Differential assessment of 'needs'
- Variable access to training & development
- Variations in resource
- Work that has been left undone





## Où Allons Nous?

Distinguishing what it is we 'do'...by  
defining and developing both professional  
skills and soft skills



## Forging ahead – Ireland's opportunity

- Recognition of a collective purpose
- diminishing resources
- looking beyond boundaries
- celebrating differences and achievements
- challenging orthodoxy



We are all citizens of one world, we are all of one blood. To hate a man because he was born in another country, because he speaks a different language, or because he takes a different view on this subject or that, is a great folly. Desist, I implore you, for we are all equally human.... Let us have but one end in view, the welfare of humanity; and let us put aside all selfishness in considerations of language, nationality, or religion.

