ESAI SIGs
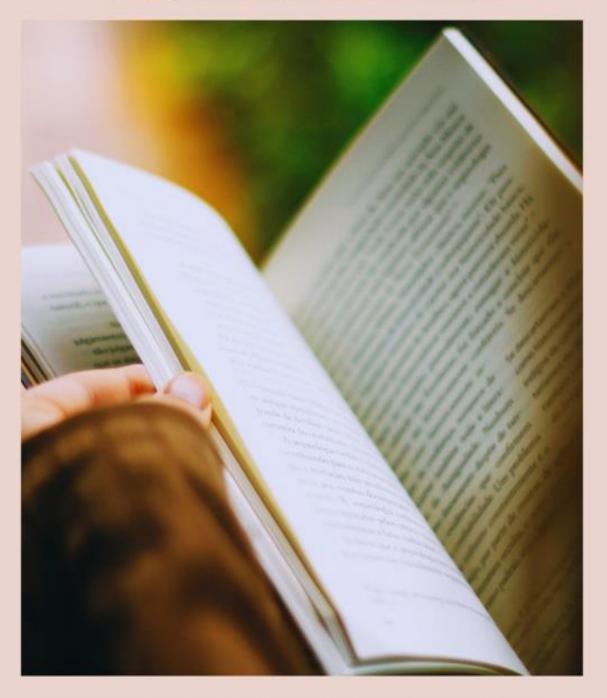
INCLUSIVE EDUCATION SIG NEWSLETTER

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP (IE SIG).

MISSION STATEMENT

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP

The IE SIG understands and supports a broad vision of inclusion. At its core, is the promotion of inclusive research for inclusive education. The IE SIG will seek to empower key stakeholders, i.e., parents, carers, children, young people and adult learners with diverse needs through active engagement with and in the research community. There will be a substantive emphasis on voice and on practical actions, which make a difference in their lives and learnings.

The Mission of the IE SIG is to

- Provide a collaborative 'space' for discourse on research, policy and practice pertaining to inclusive education across all stages of education from early years', primary, post-primary, further education and higher education

- Engage in, publish and promote research (collaboratively and individually) that seeks to advance educational inclusive practice

- Listen and respond to the voices of children, young people and adult learners with diverse needs

- Critically explore the language and messaging of inclusive education to promote a language of empowerment enacted through the celebration of difference

- Innovate through research, as leaders, to enhance the quality and equity of education for students across all stages of education i.e., children, young people and adult learners

- Promote and facilitate the effective translation of inclusive research to practice settings across the education spectrum

- Create a space for the sharing of teacher research in the field of inclusive education

- Encourage early researchers, generally, in the field

- Create a collaborative, cross institutional network for researchers interested in inclusive education

- Disseminate inclusive education research to the wider community of practitioners and policy-makers.

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A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRPERSON

Dear Members,

Welcome to the first edition of our Newsletter and indeed, welcome to our Inclusive Education Special Interest Group (IE SIG). While we would have liked to have met our members in person this year, we have had plenty of engagement and contact with each other despite COVID-19 and the restriction it has placed on all of us and our work.

The formation of our IE SIG emerged from a call from the ESAI, in November 2019, to form SIGs. Colleagues, within each of the HEIs in Ireland, were contacted to consider forming a SIG that related directly to Inclusive Education. It seemed both timely and necessary to deconstruct what inclusive education means, how it relates to special education and to explore if such adjectives were indeed necessary to describe what is, and should be for all, an Education. The varying definitions of inclusion and inclusive education have evolved and expanded and the IE SIG aims to reflect such diversity in education. In accordance with international policy, national education policy has moved away from labelling (DES Circulars 0013/0014/ 2017) of students while identifying and addressing strengths and needs. There is a policy shift towards 'full inclusion'. Therefore, the focus of the IE SIG is to observe and interrogate this emerging landscape and to communicate research within the field to the educational research community, nationally and internationally, under the ESAI flag. Recognising the complexities involved within this arena, the IE SIG represents a communal space for collaboration and communication in our area(s) of interest.

The first formal meeting of the IE SIG focused on and agreed the SIG's Mission Statement. There was meaningful discourse around our understanding of 'Inclusive Education' and how our SIG could best develop synergies with research, policy and practice in the field. Committee Officers were elected: Michael Shevlin, Trinity College Dublin (Vice Chair), Kevin Cahill, University College Cork (Secretary), Deirdre Forde, Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education, MU (Treasurer). Since then, we have grown the committee to include Miriam Colum, Marino Institute of Education (Editor of Newsletter) and Johanna Fitzgerald, Mary Immaculate College (Executive Officer). The IE SIG has increased its membership from the

initial founding members to currently embracing over sixty members, nationally and internationally. The IE SIG provides opportunities for international networking between researchers and members of ESAI.

Reflecting this purpose, our SIG hosted its first presentation from an international expert in the field, Prof. Lani Florian, on November 12th 2020 entitled: 'On the Necessary Co-Existence of Special and Inclusive Education'. Prof. Florian's speak to a large audience from the SIG and the wider education community reflected the mission and purpose of our SIG and was, therefore, timely and thought provoking. The next, in the Expert Lecture series, featured Professor Richard Rose and Professor Michael Shevlin entitled 'Researching the Experiences and Outcomes for Students with Special Educational Needs in Irish Schools' on 19th May 2021. Rose and Shevlin focused on Project IRIS (Inclusive Research in Irish Schools), their Longitudinal Study (2010 – 2014) of provision and outcomes for pupils with special educational needs in the Republic of Ireland. They reminded a large audience of the necessity to listen to the voice of key stakeholders, students of all ages and their families. In the current context of Céim, Peter Hick was invited to present in the third of the series. Peter was Principal Investigator on Initial Teacher Education for Inclusion, collaborating, at that time, with now members of the IE SIG, Finn Ó Murchú, Kevin Cahill, Kathy Hall and others. The discourse emerging from Peter's eloquent presentation of findings will inform many future conversations as Initial Teacher Education focuses on its evolution.

To date, the IE SIG has created opportunities for sharing information and research, developing initiatives, identifying new colleagues and in general, has made itself visible to newcomers in the field. The IE SIG welcomes new membership and looks forward to meeting all members at ESAI Conference in 2022.

Finally, to our committee and all members, I would like to thank you for your continued support which enables the IE SIG to fulfil its mission.

Beir bua is beannacht,

Margaret Egan

(Please contact Kevin (K.cahill@ucc.ie) and Margaret (Margaret.egan@mic.ul.ie) to join IE SIG @ESAI)

Margaret Egan is Convenor of the Inclusive Education Special Education Special Interest Group at ESAI. She is a member of the Dept. of Educational Psychology, Inclusive and Special Education (EPISE) at Mary Immaculate College.

THE "WHAT", "WHERE" AND "WHO" OF GUIDANCE AND TRANSITION PLANNING FOR STUDENTS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES IN IRELAND - A LITERATURE REVIEW

Leanne Connolly, Geraldine Scanlon, and Deirdre Corby

Leanne Connolly is an Assistant Professor in Inclusive & Special Education and PhD candidate in DCU, with a background in primary education, Autism, ID and teacher CPD. Leanne's research intends to investigate the current provision of career guidance in special schools, teachers' roles in guidance and the raising of aspirations of all stakeholders. Leanne's supervisors are Geraldine Scanlon (PhD) and Deirdre Corby (PhD).

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"What" - Human Right to an Inclusive Education

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD, 2006) is the "first legally binding international treaty that provides a comprehensive portfolio of disability rights" (Lang *et al.*, 2011, p.208). It goes beyond the capabilities of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989) in its focus on the right to inclusive education throughout the education system, up to and including access to further and higher education (Heyer, 2021). It frames the right to inclusive education as a cornerstone, acting as a "multiplier" (Heyer, 2021, p.47) by facilitating access to other rights such as employment. The UNCRPD, ratified in Ireland in 2018, places obligations on state parties and education providers, to ensure that the rights to an inclusive education are upheld, specifically through Article 1 (remove barriers to full participation); Article 24(5) (equal access to tertiary education) and Article 27 (d) (access to vocational training). However, Ireland is consistently failing to uphold these rights. Ireland's lack of full implementation of the Education of Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act (2004) particularly Individual Education Plans (IEP's) which are essential for transition planning for students with SEN, pales in comparison with other developed nations, with transition planning being legislated for and enacted in both the USA and England decades ago (Scanlon *et al.*, 2019). Ireland's slow progress in facilitating access to employment for people with disabilities is demonstrated by the latest ESRI (2021) figures showing only 6% of those with an ID having a third level qualification and 14.7% of those with ID in employment (Kelly and Maître, 2021).

"Where" - Inclusive Curricula and Inclusive Pathways

Growing numbers of people with ID in Ireland (Census, 2016), including increased numbers of children with mild ID attending special schools in recent years (McConkey *et al*., 2016) demands a more inclusive education system in Ireland. Currently, many students with ID are transferring from mainstream primary to special schools at the post-primary age (McConkey *et al*., 2016), and this may be attributed to an increase in curricular demands associated with post-primary education (Buchner *et al*., 2021). The introduction of the Junior Cycle Framework (2015) was a momentous shift towards inclusion, formalising and recognising achievement at the first three levels of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). Notwithstanding this progressive shift, the lack of a similar curriculum at Senior Cycle continues to be a major barrier (Aston *et al*., 2021). The current Senior Cycle is overly focused towards higher education entry and does not provide alternative pathways for those with SEN (Smyth, McCoy and Banks, 2019) with little options available to students to bridge qualifications gaps (Scanlon and Doyle, 2018).

"Who" - Guidance and planning for post school options

Nationally and internationally, parents have echoed the same barriers to successful post-school transitions for their child with SEN over the past few decades, despite progressions in global and domestic legislation such as the UNCRPD (2006) and the Comprehensive Employment Strategy (2015) in Ireland. Lack of transition planning and parental involvement in the process are dominant barriers (Gillan and Coughlan, 2010; Mello *et al.*, 2021). In the UK and US, transition planning is mandated in legislation and policy to occur from age 13 and 14 respectively (Scanlon *et al.*, 2019). In Ireland, post school pathways for students with SEN are currently dominated by health funded day services, with transitions generally coordinated by an Occupational Guidance Officer of the Health Service Executive (HSE) with most of this planning not occurring until the final year of schooling. There are low levels of parental awareness of alternative options to health funded services (McConkey *et al*., 2017; Gillian and Coughlan, 2010) with a particular fear of loss of financial supports (Scanlon & Doyle, 2018) should students opt for an alternative, that is, mainstream option. Low levels of expectation and aspiration for their child (Gillian and Coughlan, 2010) are further compounded by the lack of career guidance for students in special schools, despite provisions for it in the EPSEN Act (2004) Section 9(c). Students with SEN attending a mainstream school are in receipt

of some form of guidance, either from the schools guidance counsellor or the SENCO (Aston *et al*. 2020) while students in special schools have no access to guidance counsellors. The lack of guidance counselling for this cohort of students has been highlighted in a governmental review, with recommendations for enhanced career guidance support for teachers in special schools (Indecon, 2019). My research intends to explore that recommendation, the role of the teacher and to identify their needs in order to fulfill this role.

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BARRIERS AND FACILITATORS TO COLLABORATION: EXPERIENCES OF NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICE PSYCHOLOGISTS, SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS CO-ORDINATORS AND SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAMS IN IRISH POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS.

Maria Holland

Maria Holland is in Year 3 of the Professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology in Mary Immaculate College and is a graduate of the B.Ed. in Education and Psychology programme. Her interest in inclusive education was sparked by personal experience and honed while teaching in diverse primary schools.

INTRODUCTION

Increasing moves in Irish and international policy towards a full inclusion model mean that inclusive practice has reached a crossroads (Shevlin and Banks, 2021). Post-primary policy has shifted towards a whole-school approach, mediated by the Continuum of Support (CoS) which provides tiered support for all, some and a few students (NEPS, 2010). The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) consultative model aligns with the CoS, broadening NEPS' involvement in post-primary schools from gatekeeping to a collaborative role, but it is unclear how this has translated to practice (NEPS, 2010). Given this systemic uncertainty, it is necessary to examine barriers and facilitators to collaboration between special educational needs co-ordinators (SENCOs), Senior Leadership Teams (SLT) and NEPS psychologists in Irish post-primary schools. According to Dynamic Systems Theory (DST), NEPS and post-primary schools constitute separate but interacting and mutually influential systems, and embedded practices and past policies continue to be influential in the present (Larsen-Freeman, 2012). Unlike international contexts such as the UK, SENCOs in Ireland do not have a defined role; this considerably hampers efforts to analyse collaboration between SENCOs, SLT and NEPS (Fitzgerald and Radford, 2017).

This article focuses on the interplay between collaboration and inclusion, spotlighting insights gained from policy and research.

COLLABORATION AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

SENCOs, SLT and NEPS operate within wider systems such as the policy context. There is little consensus around definitions of special and inclusive education; however, an inclusive special education approach may allow us to use specialised teaching techniques to facilitate children's future independence and inclusion in the community (Hornby, 2015). However, the blending of special and inclusive education is not fully explicated in Irish policy, and it is not clear whether the focus of consultation has shifted from within-child factors to an ecological perspective (Fitzgerald and Radford, 2017; Kjaer and Dannesboe, 2019). Irish educational policy does not have an explicit underpinning philosophy, although the human rights movement has long called for full inclusion (Griffin and Shevlin, 2011). Recent policies use the language of inclusion, and the National Council for Special Education is currently investigating various school placement options, including full inclusion (NCSE, 2019; Shevlin and Banks, 2021). It is unclear if practice reflects this policy shift; DST posits that embedded practices and attitudes change slowly (Thomas, 2009). It is unclear how future Irish policy will address these tensions.

Collaboration and consultation are often used interchangeably but are not synonymous. Consultation is intended to facilitate collaboration, whereby stakeholders' different types of expertise are equally valued; consultation could also occur in the absence of collaboration, if there is a significant power imbalance (Wagner, 2017). Irish policy explicitly allocates roles within the consultative process to schools and NEPS at all three levels of the CoS (NEPS, 2010). There is less emphasis on NEPS psychologists as gatekeepers under the new model of resource allocation, whereby support is based on needs rather than diagnosis, but it is unclear whether practice has followed suit (Shevlin and Banks, 2021). Irish policy has not explicitly addressed the need for a SENCO to facilitate whole-school strategic co-ordination, creating a systemic barrier to collaboration between SENCOs, SLT and NEPS across the CoS (Fitzgerald and Radford, 2020). Interpersonal relationships are also crucial in determining whether consultative frameworks facilitate

meaningful collaboration (O'Farrell and Kinsella, 2018). In DST terms, working in a system that is in a state of flux, as is the case in Ireland, causes significant procedural challenges.

DISCUSSION

The systemic and theoretical tangle discussed above necessitates exploration of the relationship between SENCOs, SLT and NEPS. Little is known about the place of SENCOs within post-primary school structures or how collaboration occurs between SENCOS, SLT, and NEPS, although research indicates that practice varies considerably (Fitzgerald and Radford, 2017). My doctoral research is exploring collaboration between SLT, NEPS and SENCOs, contextualised within changing policy around inclusive and special education. While Phase 1 involved a questionnaire to identify potential barriers and facilitators to collaboration, semi-structured interviews with participants from each group constitute the main focus of the research. I am using multi-perspectival interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) to explore the lived experiences of SENCOs, senior leadership and NEPS (Larkin, Shaw and Flowers, 2019). IPA allows a granular-level exploration of the experiences of NEPS, SENCOs and SLT working together. By exploring the experiences of those navigating this complex systemic and personal interaction, we can find signposts towards future research and policy. By optimising the systemic and interpersonal connections between NEPS and post-primary schools, collaborative practices can be utilised to support all post-primary students appropriately and in an inclusive manner across the CoS.

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ACCESSING HIGHER EDUCATION FOR ALL

Bairbre Tiernan and Dolores McDonagh

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ACCESSING HIGHER EDUCATION FOR ALL

Inclusion is a concept that reflects the desire of a society to respect the human rights of all (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 2008). Ensuring inclusive and equitable access to higher education is essential for social justice and economic efficiency (UNESCO, 2020). The goal is to widen access and ensure participation by diverse student cohorts, including students with disabilities, mature students, part-time learners, and students from communities experiencing socio-economic disadvantage. The current National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-2021, has as its overall vision "to ensure that the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels reflects the diversity and social mix of Ireland's population". (p. 6) However, developing the ability to respond effectively and appropriately to diversity of needs in education at third level is challenging.

In Ireland to date, in accordance with the United Nations (UN) (2006) and the European Strategy 2010–2020 (European Commission 2010), developments in higher education have been made to improve provision, increase attendance and participation for marginalised students in higher education (Morina, 2017). This has generally considered the need to increase access of groups of students who have traditionally been out of higher education and improve the quality and quantity of services offered to them. However, inclusion goes beyond a shared campus and timetable (Morina, Cortes & Melero, 2014; Redpath

et al., 2013), and requires that all students be fully involved in all aspects of college/university community life (UNESCO, 2008).

Central to developing inclusive third level institutions is an acceptance that a systemic response is required, where it is recognised that inclusion is the responsibility of all. This is similar to the idea of a 'whole school approach' at primary or secondary levels. One of the main lessons that can be learnt from the experiences of primary and secondary sectors is that all stakeholders must engage, and indeed, support the process. Research has focused on the experiences of marginalised students at higher education and how support structures in institutions can be built (Clouder et al., 2016). To achieve inclusive campuses, a whole community approach must be involved. In a whole community approach, the entire university/college community becomes a unit of change involved in coordinated action between interdependent components: curriculum, teaching and learning; ethos and culture; built environment, and student experience.

Currently, the challenge for the higher education system in Ireland is to embrace inclusion in education, irrespective of students' ability, background and identity. The goal is to ensure access, participation and positive outcomes for all. While much research highlights the importance of access to higher education (UNESCO, 2015), the focus is shifting from emphasising the importance of physical access to how higher education becomes an opportunity where all students are socially and academically included and benefit from a meaningful educational programme (Thomas, 2016). Holloway (2001) posits that stronger initiatives to implement policy with practical guidelines to departments are necessary, encompassing staff training and awareness, and student advocacy. It is to be hoped that these considerations are reflected in the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education (2022-2026) which is currently being developed.

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INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN EARLY YEARS

Catherine O'Reilly

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INCLUSIVE DISCOURSE: AN EARLY YEARS PERSPECTIVE

There is a universal concept that *inclusion means everyone* (Vakil, Welton, O'Connor and Kline, 2009); surely then, there must be adequate training and provisions for early years educators to create this reality. At its broadest, within Aistear and Siolta, the Irish early years' curriculum programs, inclusive educational guidelines are set out to promote inclusive discourse between educators, children, families and the broader early childhood community (NCCA, 2006; NCCA, 2009). However, while the guidelines presented in these policy frameworks advocate for inclusive practice, they are not mandatory. Thus, this article is concerned with the lack of strategic planning and support at a policy level to bring inclusive discourse to the forefront as part of the daily practices in the classroom.

During my Masters degree in leadership in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) in 2018, my research focused on how preschool educators explored the concept of cultural diversity in the classroom. During this study, interviews with educators revealed a lack of understanding of specific educational needs within the classroom. The reasons given for an incomplete understanding of inclusive discourse included that the early years' classroom was so busy there was little time to think about specific areas of discourse. Consequentially, the educators suggested that with the pressures of running the busy classroom, surely, the inclusive discourse debate was someone else's role. Therein lies a practical problem: if no one is

accountable for undertaking inclusive discourse, is it absent from the classroom? Thus, educators need support to explore how inclusive discourse could positively add to the teaching and learning environment.

In a recent study on the reality of inclusion for children with special needs in preschools across Ireland, findings from an online questioner with 194 respondents concerning perceptions of AIM, the Action and Inclusion Model (DCYA, 2018), findings reported challenges in achieving inclusive environments (Roberts and Callaghan, 2021). The study presented evidence that early years educators need specific training to achieve an inclusive early years environment. However, not all of the educators interviewed chose to avail of the training. Subsequently, the researchers proposed that *inclusive educational training* should be mandatory for people working in early years' environments.

Howe and Griffin (2020) asked, 'Is Ireland ready for Inclusive Education? I think so, but we must make it accessible to individuals who are unsure of their place in inclusive educational debates. To this end, I concur with Roberts and Callaghan (2021) that inclusive education training should be mandatory for early years educators.

In addition, while Irish researchers attempt to highlight current challenges in the system (Kearns and Shevlin, 2006; Rose, Shevlin, Winter, and O'Raw, 2010; Smyth et al., 2014.), we need to do more. I propose that by taking the initiative to bring inclusive discourse into the daily practice of the early years' classroom, we will influence policymakers and achieve change.

Recommendations

Further research should include the development of a strategic plan where inclusive discourse is placed on the preschool curriculum allowing educators, together with children and families, the opportunity, time and space to unpack critical topics of concern and bring the outcomes of these debates to policymakers for change.

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF A PEER-MEDIATED MULTIDISCIPLINARY INTERVENTION FOR CONCURRENT CHILDHOOD ANXIETY AND AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS

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Introduction

This paper will present findings from a review of the literature and follow with a brief rationale for the focus of the review. Then each finding from the review will be presented as a subsection. Key highlights will be a literature review of peer-mediated interventions for children with concurrent anxiety and Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). Subsequently, future directions and recommendations for the development of an overarching programme for preschool children, with the use of play, peer-mediated intervention will be elucidated.

Anxiety is normal in response to a threatening situation or stimuli. A continuum from normal everyday responses to a more clinical range, however, occurs when such a reaction becomes excessive and impairs daily functioning, one is classified as having an anxiety disorder (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Children with concurrent anxiety and Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) face extra challenges.

Prevalence of anxiety in children

Globally, World Health Organization (2021) estimated that 3.6% of 10-14 year-olds and 4.6% of 15-19 year-olds experience an anxiety disorder. Similarly, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) cited Ghandour et al. (2019)'s study that among children aged 3-17 years, 7.1% had current anxiety

problems. Whilst anxiety disorders in children were found to have early onset, before the age of five (Dalrymple et al., 2007), with 19.6% diagnosed by the age of three (Dougherty et al. (2013), there is no available intervention to address young children's needs, not to mention children with additional needs such as ASD. The Health Service Executive (HSE) recommended talking to a general practitioner (GP) first, then seeking cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) which is talking therapy for age 12 and above, finally medications.

Moreover, parents, teachers, and doctors lack a comprehensive framework to help young children with anxiety, sometimes restricted to a medical model, resulting in a long waiting time in Ireland. For example, the national news RTE reported a seven-year-old girl who has autism and suffering from severe anxiety, who has to wait for more than five years for an appointment at HSE (O Kelly, 2021). Hence, I argue that a group play intervention in this multidisciplinary programme of inclusive education, early intervention, and mental health is an alternative to the dominant, deficit medical model. The goal is to better understand anxiety in children in an effort to reduce their anxiety. Conceivably, the current overarching programme, strength-based paradigm will address children's needs, because the causes of anxiety disorders are not well understood but may involve a combination of factors such as genetics (i.e., family history of anxiety disorders), temperament, and environmental factors (Hudson and Rapee, 2004).

The proposed intervention

The aim of the current programme is to enhance understanding of anxiety in children, parents, and schools, and to reduce anxiety in children. Table I highlights the intervention programme consisting of 3 parts: (1) prevention and early intervention in an educational setting: Lego®-Based Therapy (2) parenting groups of the children with anxiety, with and without ASD (3) whole-class story-reading about coping of anxiety.

Peer mediated prevention. i.e., children with signs of anxiety affecting their daily life in a low level (medical term subclinical anxiety)	Children Group1 Anxiety+ASD Anxiety Anxiety	Parent Parent Parent Parent	Teachers

Peer mediated intervention. i.e., children with signs of anxiety affecting their daily lives in a moderate to high level (medical term clinical anxiety)	Children Group 2 Anxiety+ASD Anxiety+ASD Anxiety	Parent Parent	
Whole-class storybook reading about coping with anxiety Timeframe: 18 months			

Table I: Three parts of the peer-mediated lego® play intervention programme

Considering young children's environment is important for their development, their peers, parents, teachers, and whole class will be involved. Conceivably, the development of this overarching programme, strength-based paradigm for preschool children with neurodiversity will be elucidated.

Peer-mediated interventions for children with concurrent anxiety and Autism Spectrum Disorders

I reviewed the existing intervention options—both behavioural and psychosocial—for children with dual diagnoses of anxiety and ASD and explored alternative intervention options that warrant further study. The review specifically focused on peer-mediated, play-based, and lego interventions.

The review yielded six articles, dominantly five of them adopted a psychological approach of Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and one article about lego-based Therapy.

Summary and Future Directions of the literature review

Concurrent parent and children's sessions are found to be effective in the reduction of anxiety symptoms in children (Antshel et al., 2011). This confirmed Rubin et al. (2008)'s developmental-transactional model of anxiety detailed in chapter two of my thesis.

Furthermore, the literature supported peer-mediated format for children with concurrent anxiety and ASD because the outcome for the group and individual format was similar (Reaven and Willar, 2017).

In fact, all interventions are limited to professionals in mental health services (e.g., Reaven and Willar, 2017), whereas teachers in education or therapists in developmental disorders services were not included. It is worth exploring future directions for intervention to be more inclusive.

Finally, modifications could be made for young children drawing from evidence-based practices for youth with anxiety and ASD, for example, visual supports (Wong et al., 2015).

In summary, this article defined the construct of anxiety in children. Existing intervention for children was dominated by the psychological approach of CBT for children aged 7 years and above. Nevertheless, evidence-based strategies from the literature could be adopted to explore an alternative intervention that addresses risk factors of anxiety to reduce individual and societal burden.

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