Somatization Disorder: What Clinicians Need to Know
Count Me In! is a practical guide to constructing an inclusive teaching environment in both primary and secondary education, and develops the argument that inclusive practices benefit all learners. The authors explore the themes of the teacher-learner relationship, creating independent learners, identifying and confronting barriers to learning, planning for progress and participation, and encouraging active student participation within the learning process. Each of these themes is illustrated through the use of case studies and excerpts from in-depth interviews. The main perspectives are educational disadvantage and attainment, and how experiences of school failure might be perpetuated long after transition into adulthood, resulting in a continuum of dysfunction.

In their introduction, Rose and Shevlin discuss the changing climate of special educational needs within a framework of inclusive education. Taking an essentially grassroots perspective, they examine teaching and learning expectations, adaptations to the classroom environment and accessibility issues. The authors identify the need for a re-examination of the pupil-teacher relationship in terms of dependency, educational choices and pupil voice as key factors in educational attainment and success. They also discuss how stereotypes in media representation and argue the need for a revised view of teacher "buy in", spotlighting a recurring dilemma for the teaching profession: the requirement to be "seen" to address the diverse needs of learners in the classroom, whilst simultaneously being asked to do so in a climate of reduced funding, access to resources and specialisation training.

Rose and Shevlin make the point that amongst the arguments and counter-arguments between educators and policymakers, the real loser is the child. The purpose of this book, then, might be described as an attempt to bring that point sharply into focus by giving voice to the lived experiences of such children. However, it is much more than an evidence-based examination of the current state of affairs. The authors offer concrete solutions, techniques and approaches to inclusive practices which are founded firstly on active participation from the pupil, and secondly on the evolution of a symbiotic relationship between teacher and learner.

As researchers in the area, we would concur absolutely with their point that listening to the pupil does not necessarily equate with changing practice. To use an analogy, if you are going to talk the talk, you must walk the walk. From our combined years of experience teaching and researching in schools, we found the case studies and illustrative extracts to be excellent representations of the way children think, and for us they highlight the degree to which such thinking is ignored. Moreover, we believe that many of the scenarios described in the first chapter with respect to teacher and student relationships have been practised by many talented teachers over many years. As researchers and practitioners in third-level education, we found the “barriers to participation” as described in the second chapter to be current, real and, sadly, more common than not. Furthermore, we would argue that such barriers run the entire gamut of the educational experience from primary through to post-secondary participation. From that perspective, it is a book that should be read by all involved in the process of education, including those teaching in institutions of further and higher education. Many academics would be usefully informed that such engagement is an absolute requirement within their own practice.

"Planning for progress and transition" makes clear statements about the necessity to ensure that children are encouraged to voice their needs, intentions and aspirations for the future, and
to support such engagement and participation. According to Aston et al. (2005) one of the potential barriers to transition may be the different models of transition adopted by stakeholders in the process. Aston et al. describe the use of a developmental model which is essentially student focused and provides individual support through the transition process, whilst the alternative model adopts more of a reactionary perspective, which expects the individual to operate independently with sporadic periods of support/guidance as and when required.

There are obvious attractors and detractors for both models: it could be argued that the developmental model – whilst scaffolding the transition of the individual and theoretically building for success – may encourage over-dependence on support systems and a reluctance to take independent steps. In addition, there is a danger that putting into place a number of different interventions and strategies may actually be more confusing for students. The reactionary model might arguably encourage the development of independent skills more quickly and instil more confidence in students, but is entirely dependent upon students knowing when and what kind of help to ask for. Most urgently Aston et al. (2005) found that: ... there is no clear or systematic evidence of any individual, organisation or agency having overall responsibility for assisting young people to identify and source appropriate options, nor to coordinate service delivery. There are many opportunities for young people to fall down the cracks between services and there is a very real risk that some young people will wander beyond the reach of support. (p. xiv)

Whilst such comments are directed at UK structures and service providers, there can be no doubt that a similar situation exists in Ireland.

In the final chapter, “Looking ahead”, Rose and Shevlin draw attention to the need for developing tools that permit pupils to engage in self-evaluation as a means of moving towards achievable goals using a “systematic approach to investigating pupil responses” (p.131). In the US this idea of systematic engagement and participation has been advocated through the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA; 2004) and its additional regulations (Part B, 2006), one aspect of which is the provision of transition assessment and planning as a part of the Individual Education Plan. There has never been a greater need for such a systematic and participatory approach, in our opinion, than in respect to the transition period for students with disabilities. This should fundamentally begin in transition year, and continue throughout the senior cycle of education and into the first year of further or higher education. Mittler (2007) points out that whilst pupils may be in possession of a statement of special educational needs, once they have transitioned out of secondary education the usefulness of such a statement becomes defunct, and there is effectively no bridge to continuing supports at a post-secondary level. Mittler advocates a “passport” system which “should be based on person-centred planning – a process which should begin in school and continue seamlessly into post-school transitions” (p.17). He emphasises the need for clear student participation and the necessity of providing a voice to young people, reflecting the US approach to transition assessment.

The final chapter summary of Count Me In outlines the need for:

- Defined research and its value to classroom teachers
- Consideration of how researchers and practitioners might further investigate pupil involvement
- An identifiable agenda for such future research.

The writing is accessible with respect to tone, clear language, and real examples that emphasise each point. Most importantly, it demonstrates the effectiveness of marrying theory to practice, and how this can be framed in a manner that has a technical and practical use. This book contributes to the fields of special and mainstream education and educational psychology, and relates to current thinking and debates around the notion of inclusive education. It is an essential tool for practitioners who are dealing with marginalised groups within mainstream settings, and should be required reading for policymakers and those entrusted with widening access and participation.

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References
