



A mindset shift from SEN to SEQ (special educational *qualities*)

The problem

The 'SEN' label in particular is associated with difficulties, problems and struggle and this is a narrative that needs to shift. Neurodiverse children should not merely survive the struggles of the education system; we need a shift in mindset to embrace our uniqueness, reject the shackles of 'normal' as directed by society and find the confidence to create our own definition of success. It seems completely wrong that so many children's self-worth is shaped by a narrow and failing education system which serves so few. The problem is not our children. Our education system is built on Victorian values and it shouldn't hold any weight in defining a child's self worth or potential.

The world needs neurodiverse qualities

Research published in July 2024 found that 70% of those under 35 years old felt education did not prepare them for the workplace¹. Furthermore, a YouGov survey for the Times Education Commission found that only 20% believe school prepares pupils for the workplace². It's not that education should be about creating a workforce-ready population, far from it; education needs to inspire the next generation of creativity and thinking differently to solve the challenges faced in a fast-changing world. And this is where neurodivergence can be a blessing; different perspectives and ways of thinking should be treasured, and nurtured as untapped potential, not labelled a problem.

Reclaim (or redevise labels) to celebrate neurodiversity

So, do negative associations of the SEN label require us to reject the labels altogether? Arguably, there is great value to be found in understanding who you are and why you are the way you are (neurologically speaking), so perhaps we need to reclaim these labels positively rather than rejecting them

¹ Glass, G., July 2024. 'Seven-in-ten under-34s say school and university didn't prepare them for the workplace' found at <https://www.thehrdirector.com/business-news/gen-z/seven-ten-34s-say-school-university-didnt-prepare-workplace/> and

² Webber, A., June 2024. 'Most think school does not prepare pupils for work' found at: <https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/most-think-school-does-not-prepare-pupils-for-work/>



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outright. Instead, perhaps we can reclaim these labels and make them our own, focusing on children's special qualities rather than needs. In order to inspire the next generation of problem solvers, we should be celebrating and harnessing the strengths of our neurodiverse children in order to unleash their natural qualities and hitherto untapped potential.

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