

# Leading Innovation in Specialist Education - What could this look like?

QASEL Presentation 2017

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- **INNOVATION is**
- A new **idea**, device or method, or
- **The act or process of introducing a new idea**, device or method

- In educational institutions innovation is about changing our ideas, thinking and our practice.
- Key Questions:

*How do we develop and change our thinking and our practice?*

*How do we lead this process?*

- My assumption:

We do what we know and believe - if we can change our ideas and our ideals then we have a much better chance of changing our practices.

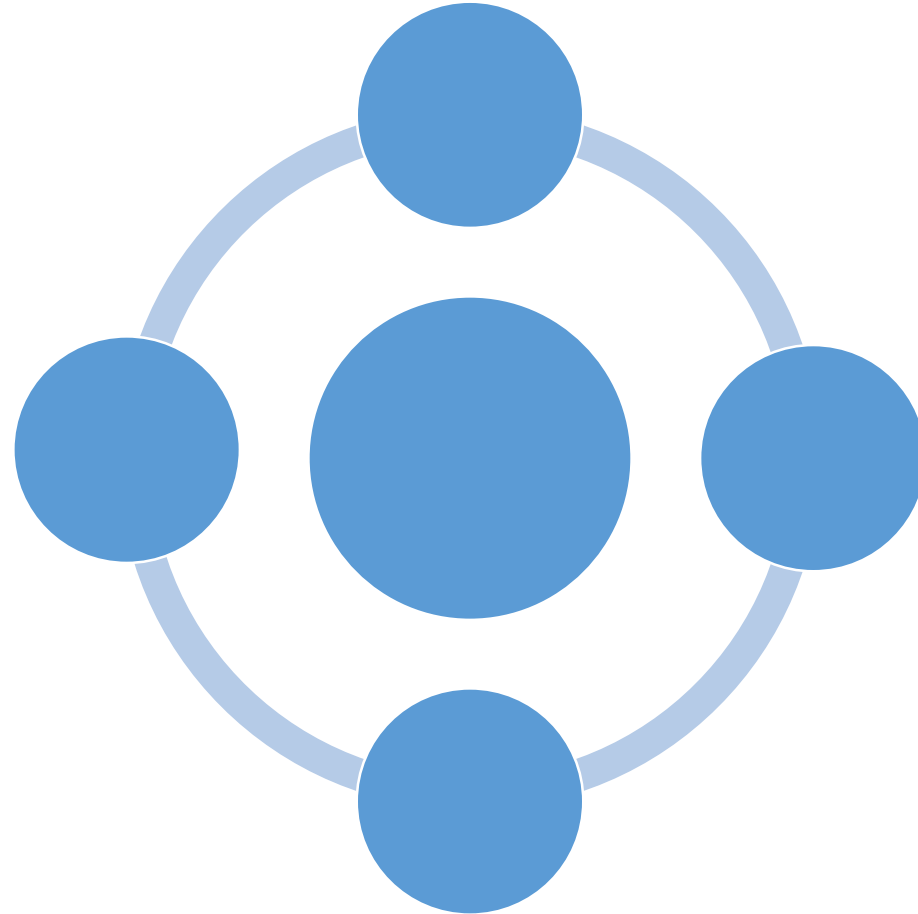
- My focus today is how we lead innovation...what can leaders do to ensure a change in practice?

“ A mind once stretched by a new idea, never goes back to its original dimensions.”

Oliver Wendell Holmes

No need to think  
outside the box,  
simply realize  
there is no box.

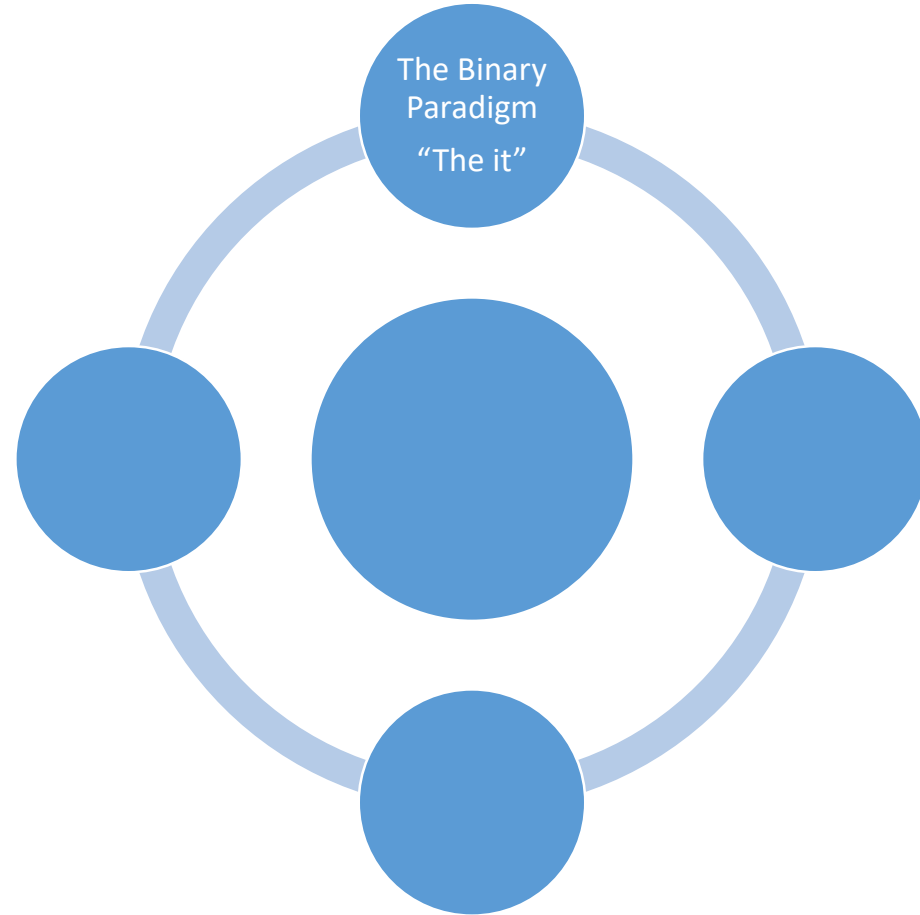
As leaders I would argue we need to understand different thinking perspectives or paradigms



We need to know how we can manage a debate and we can do this by having a model like to one to consider. If we don't then we can go round and around and around in our discussions.....sometimes for decades.

# Thinking Perspectives or Paradigms

Modified thinking from Morris 2017



It is the Either....Or paradigm.

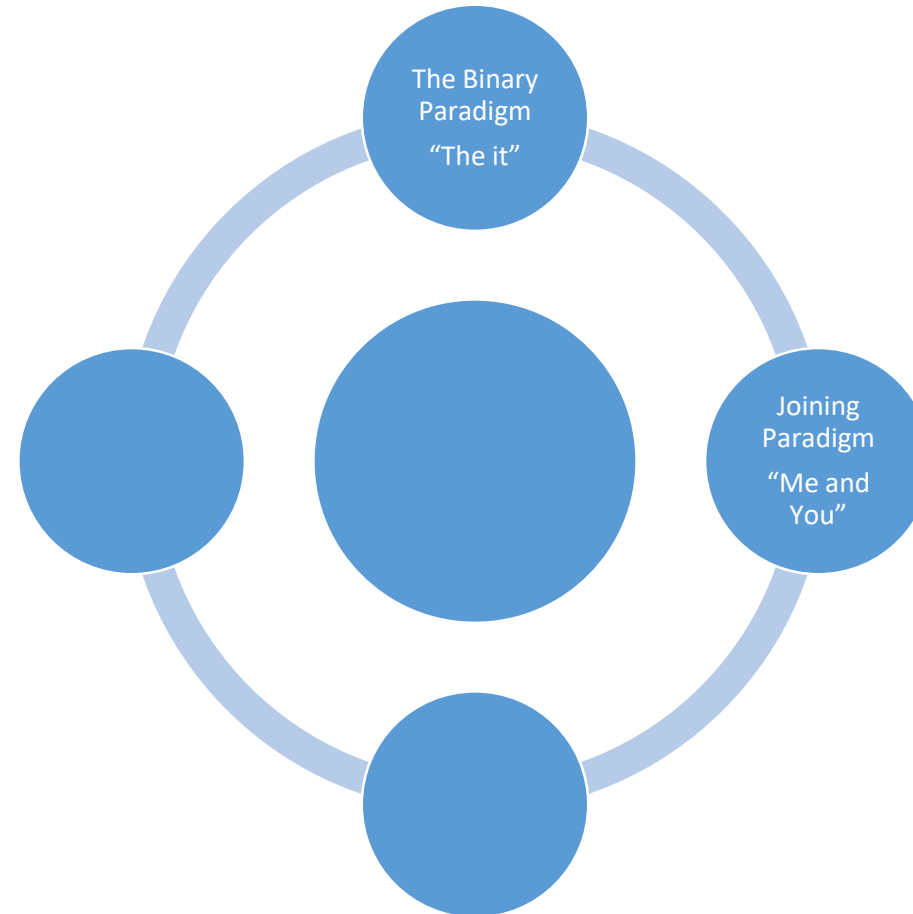
Things are either black or white, good or bad, right or wrong, just or unjust, included or not included, stop or go, left or right.....

Personality vs Job



# Thinking Perspectives or Paradigms

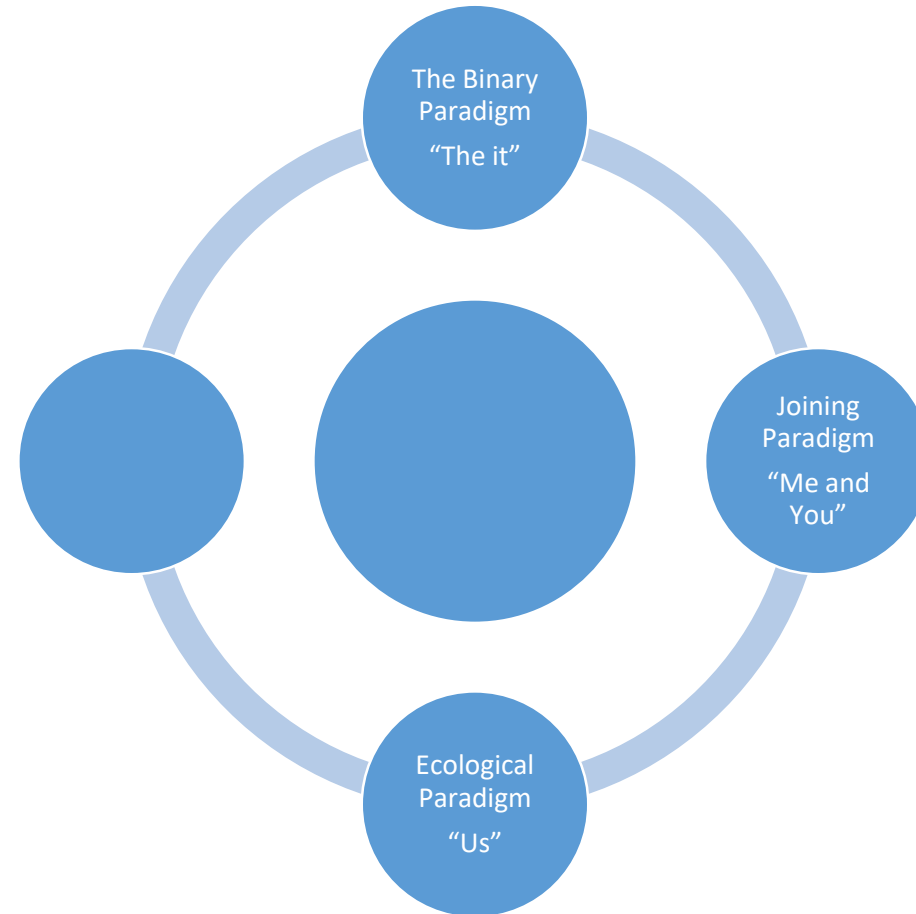
Modified thinking from Morris 2017



This thinking advocates a Both And paradigm. Flexible, adaptable, inclusion can be relative, how you think can shape how I think, If I change the way I look at things then the thing I look at change.....there are no absolutes – there are options

# Thinking Perspectives or Paradigms

Modified thinking from Morris 2017

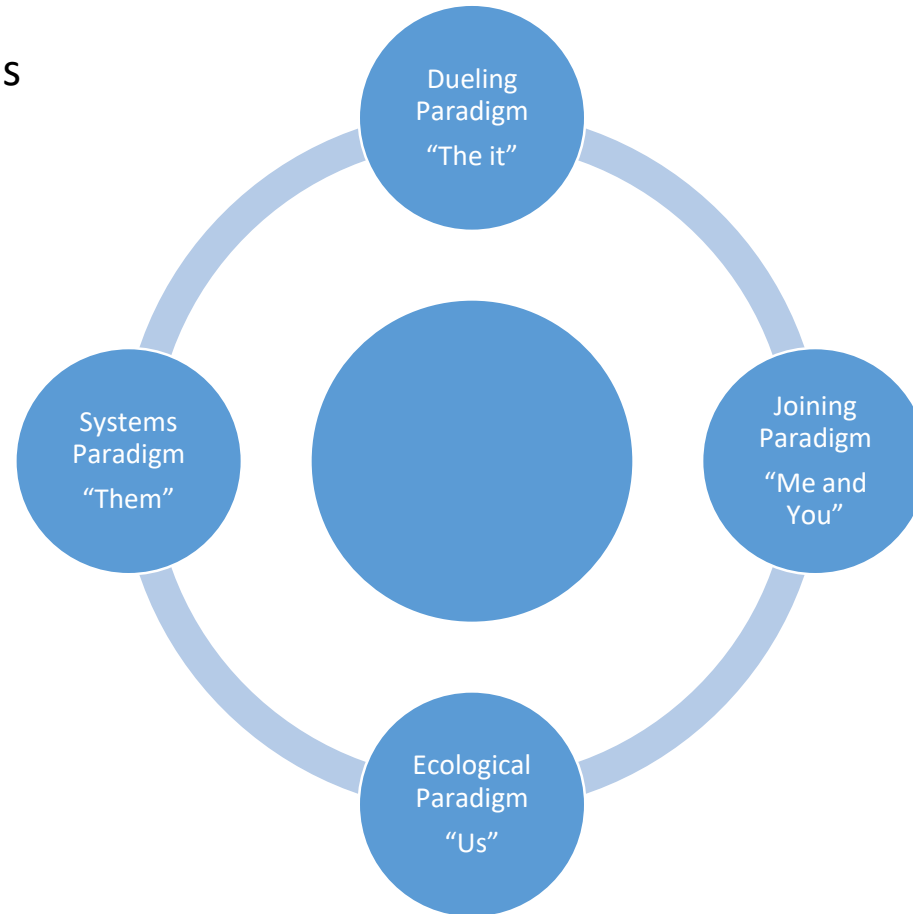


Our context impacts on us – that we impact on each other that our collective can never really represent each of us perfectly, our context and the content within plays a powerful force. In this room today we.....

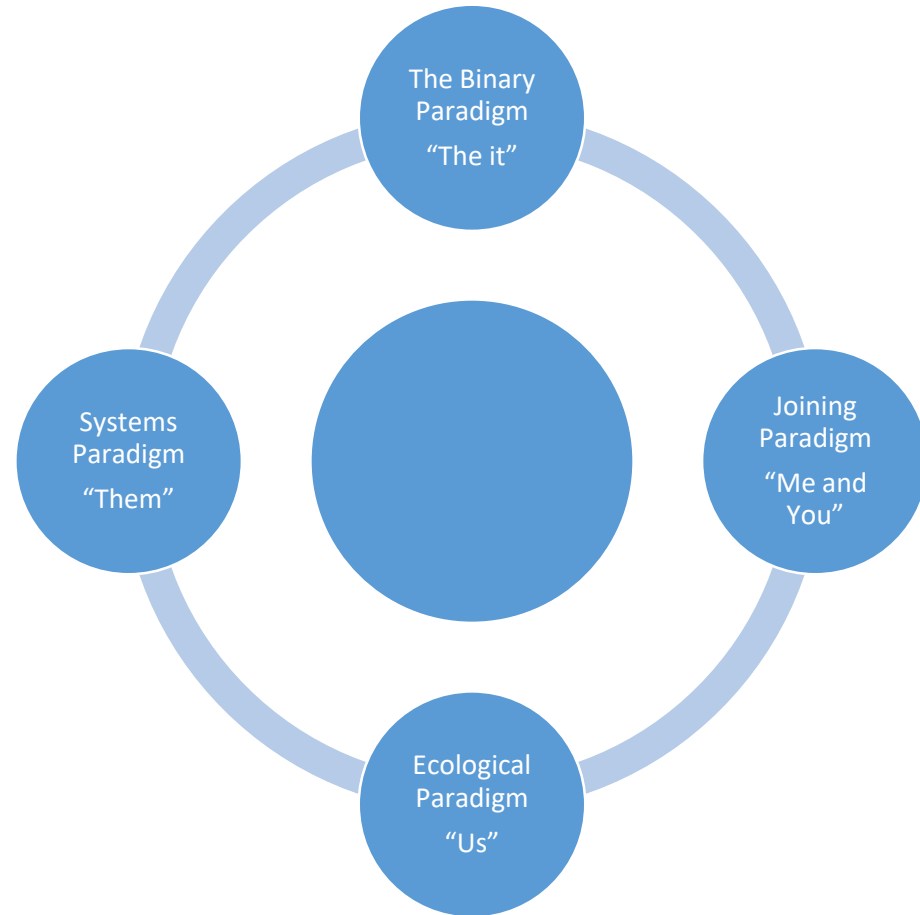
# Thinking Perspectives or Paradigms

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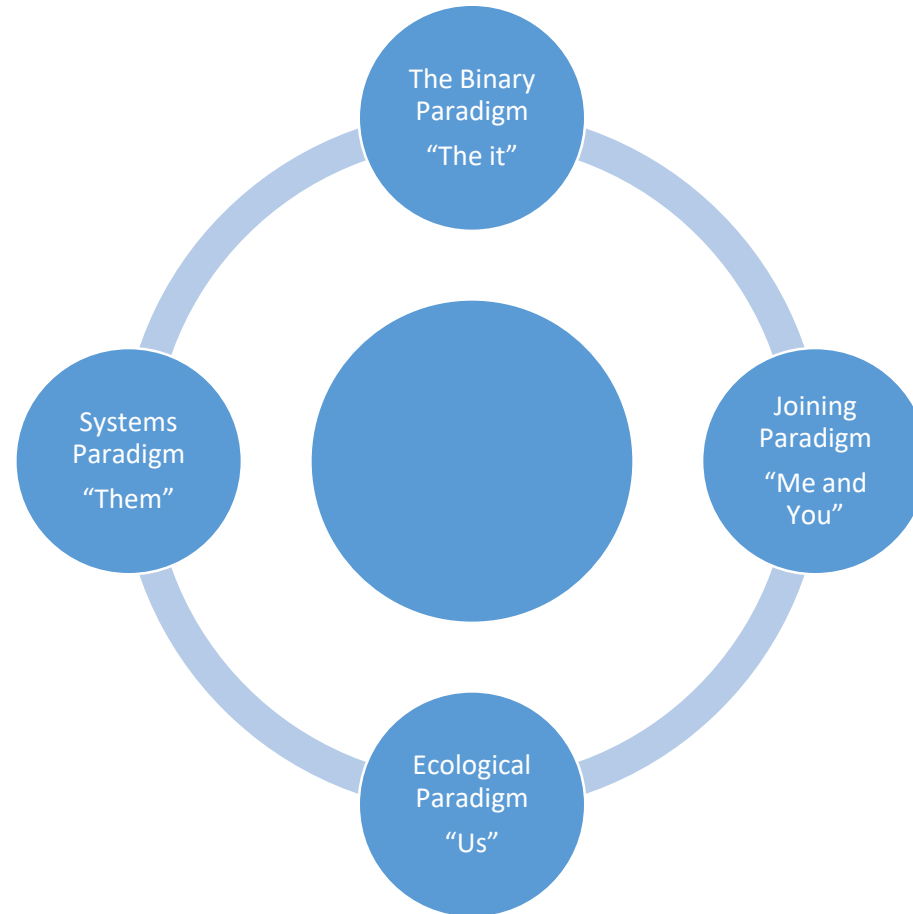
Context on top of context, systems on top of systems. That we are impacted on by people and ideas that we have no connection with but have profound influence on what we do and think....there is a them out there.....



All of these paradigms need to co-exist and work together.....a simple story



# All of these paradigms need to co-exist and work together.....a simple story



Imagine a system where one of these paradigms dominates.  
Image a world leader who.....

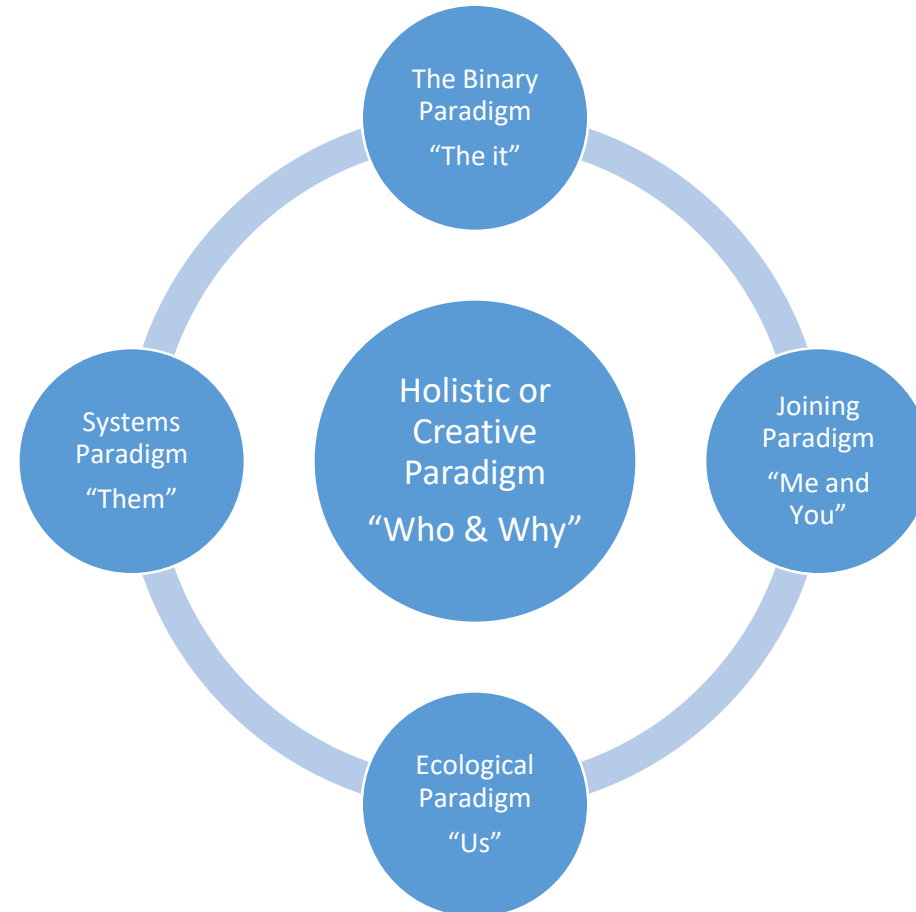
“Our ability to unfold and enact logics of thought and action that are more hopeful and creative, is one of our greatest gifts” (Morris 2017)

How can we move beyond where we are in our thinking and our practice?

What does innovation look like for us and how can we lead it?

# Thinking Perspectives or Paradigm Shifts require disruption....sometimes the balance needs to shift

Modified thinking from Morris 2017



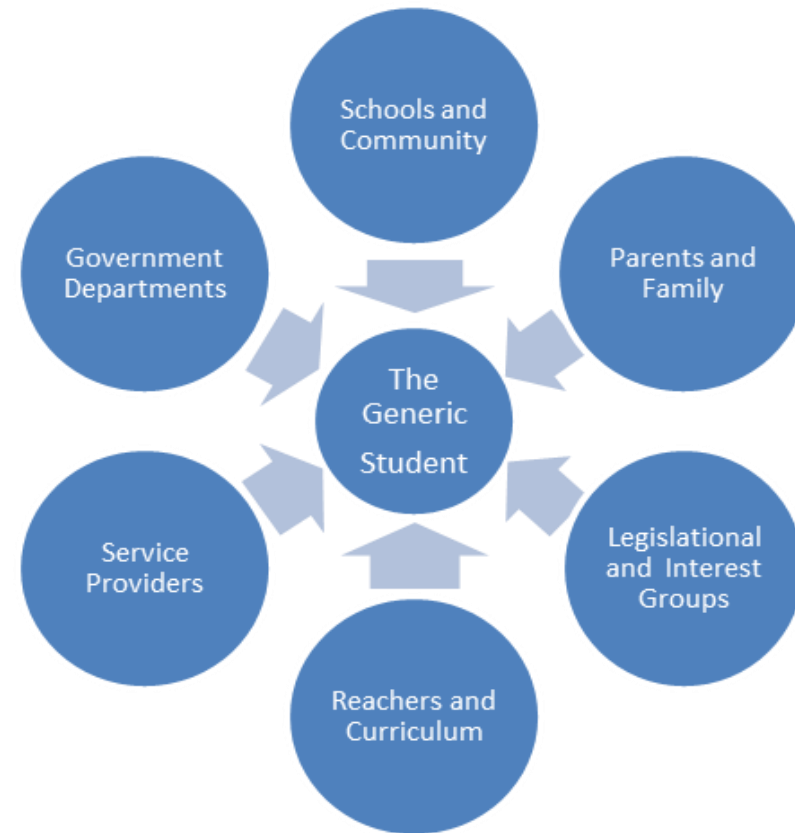


Disruption is used in the arts and business so effectively...how can we use it?.....



# How can we get Paradigm shift with ideas in education????

- Traditional Student Centred Model

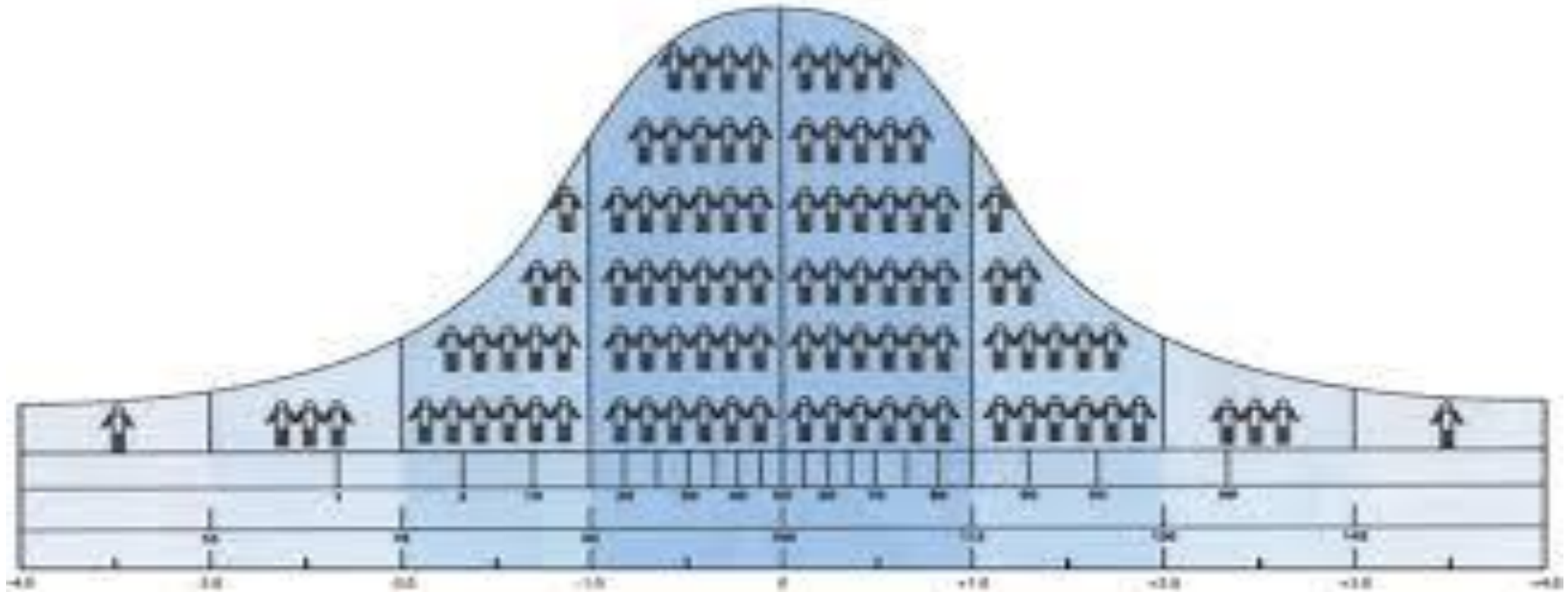


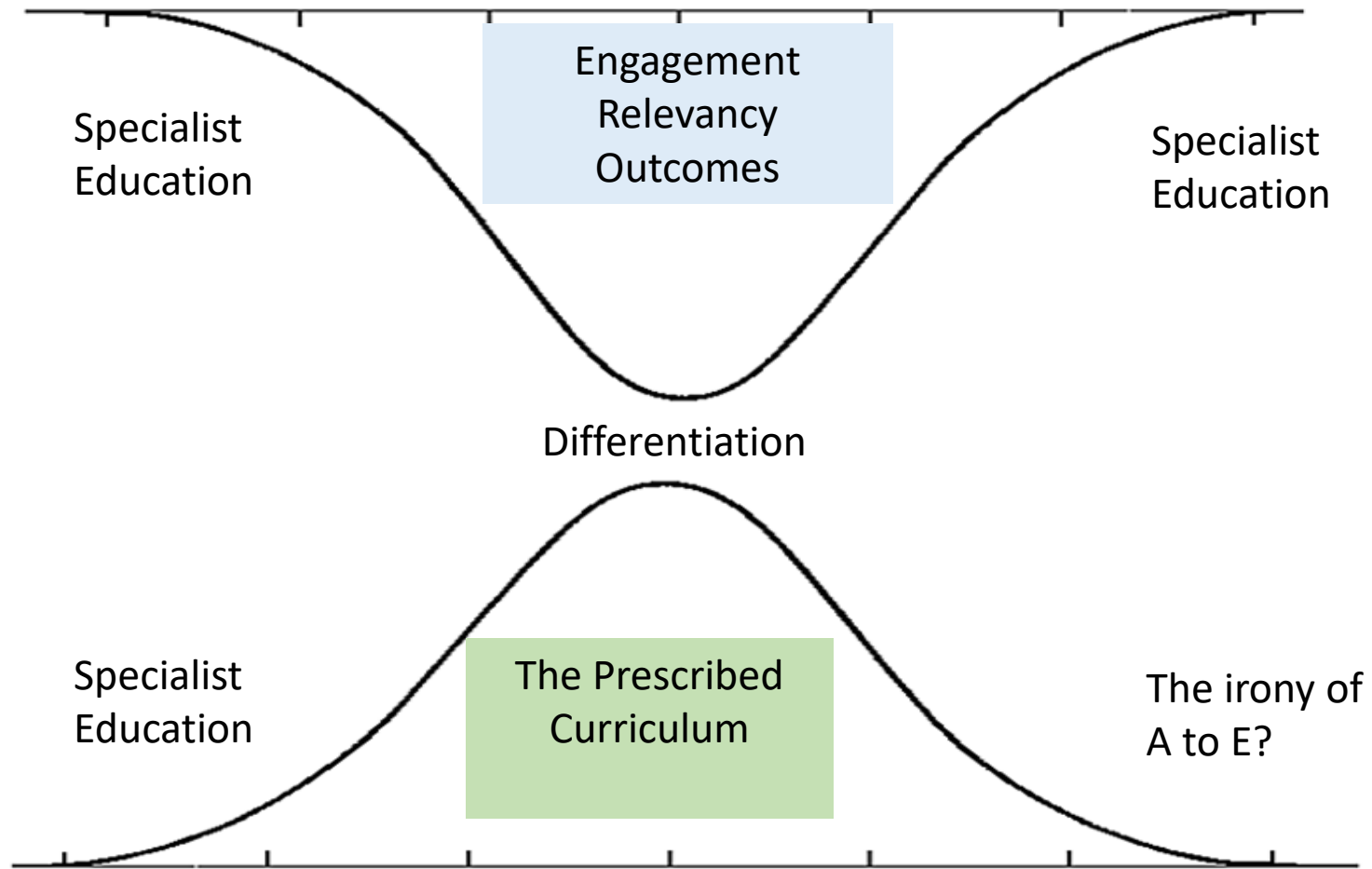
# How can we get Paradigm shift – we need to disrupt thinking ????

- Focus on Quality of Life Model



How can we successfully disrupt 98% of the population to make it better for everyone.





If we are not careful we will spend most of our time differentiating a curriculum that could become less relevant and engaging as we move away from the mean.

# So where am I going with all of this??

- I think an error I have been making is that I have been spending too much time thinking about the alternative and what it could look like.
- I think I have to shift my time to thinking about how we can lead the change in this field.....what is the disruption that is necessary.
- I want to talk about 3 examples of how ideas and practice have changed within our sector.....and tease out what I think was the successful disruption.

# Data Walls

- Nothing new about data being useful to guide our decision making and planning.
- Student Progress has always been a part of educational practice.
- Data always used to rank and rate, shift and sort, include and exclude.
- What was the disruption that led to us embracing data walls.
- This practice is in almost all of our schools.
- We are now displaying, exposing, charting, classifying, prioritising the personal progress of each student – making sure we have their faces on the data?

The disruption was full scale public scrutiny and publication of school results in a way not seen before.

- Caused outrage
  - National debates
  - Changed funding practices
  - Changed the way we protected and maintained confidentiality
  - Changed our culture and our practice in this space significantly.
- 
- The disruption was not that data is no useful....the disruption was a new form of public scrutiny, exposure and accountability



# SEU's, SEC's and the name change to SEP's

- What was the problem?
- Avoiding social responsibility
- Students better served at a SEU not an SEP
- What was the solution?

# Special Education and Inclusion – What can we disrupt here with Nomenclature?

- Special Education – quick summary
- Inclusive Education – quick summary

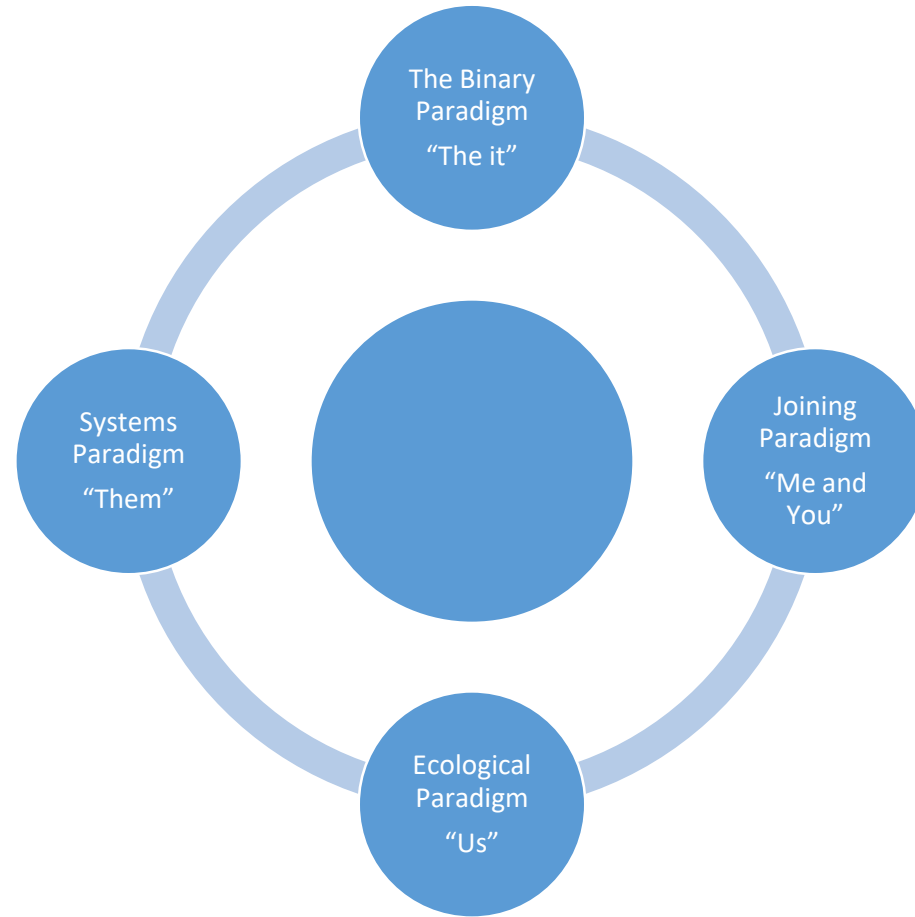
# Disruptive thoughts about Special Education

- Sociological critiques of special education (e.g. Tomlinson 1982) began challenging the proposition that separate systems of education reinforce injustices and discrimination.
- This type of thinking stimulated the debate around educational rights issues which demands both access to, and equity in, education.
- As Special education teachers we find comfort in the notion that the **ends justify the means** because students at the tail end of the distribution require something different or additional from that which mainstream provision offers.

## So

- If special education is not the answer then what is? And what thinking is at the heart of criticisms against the special education and the assumptions upon which the medical model understands and responds to disability.

# A quick revisit with this model



Imagine a system where one of these paradigms dominates.

# WE NEED TO DISRUPT THIS NEVER ENDING STORY

We need to lead the development and the delivery of Specialist Education – but there is a twist – need to wait for a few more slides.

# A Specialist Education Model must understand:

- The history of thinking that has guided past policy and practice – we need to understand and respect all thinking paradigms.
- Leadership priorities and the intent behind Educational Reforms (why am I doing it this way)
- Issues of injustice, discrimination, access to and equity in education
- The differences between teaching and learning
- **Educational leaders must move beyond the limitations of educational compliance** (Frattura and Capper 2004)

# A Specialist Education Model must recognise;

- The best of Medical Model thinking and Social Model thinking, the best of special education and inclusive education.
- International best practice methodologies to support learning....
- It is not exclusive to disability. Special Schools as we know them could change to provide outreach expertise to other schools and to other students with difficulties (Lessons from New Zealand, Finland).
- Education alone is insufficient to manage the collective needs of students and families – it must partner with other public sector provisions (A Hub of expertise – a hub of necessary infrastructure)
- The needs of individuals should determine educational priorities and curriculum development.

# A Specialist Education Vision for 2020 ???

- Is not defined by location or labels
- It doesn't just differentiate curriculum it designs curriculum
- Identifies specific student needs and responds to them with expertise and passion
- Influences policy and practice rather than reacts to it.
- Is individualised and customised – it is collaborative and contextual
- Is outcomes driven not input driven
- Focuses on learning not just teaching
- It prioritises people not processes



# Disruption can hold interesting surprises.

- As leaders how do you shift peoples thinking and practice?
- How can we lead and shift systems thinking and practice?
- Who can we look to help disrupt the current nomenclature?
- What is the role of QASEL in this space?
- How do we / can we contribute?

Great minds  
discuss ideas,  
average minds  
discuss events,  
small minds  
discuss people.

- Eleanor Roosevelt

Disruption is used in the arts and business so effectively...how can we use it?.....



# So what is the twist with nomenclature ????

- Disability has to stay.....NDIS etc
- Inclusion has to stay because.....
- Special Education needs to change
- Specialist education will disrupt the ongoing debates and free us to focus on what is most important.
- Inclusion has to provide specialist knowledge – inclusion has to be about providing access and opportunity to have needs met –not just placed

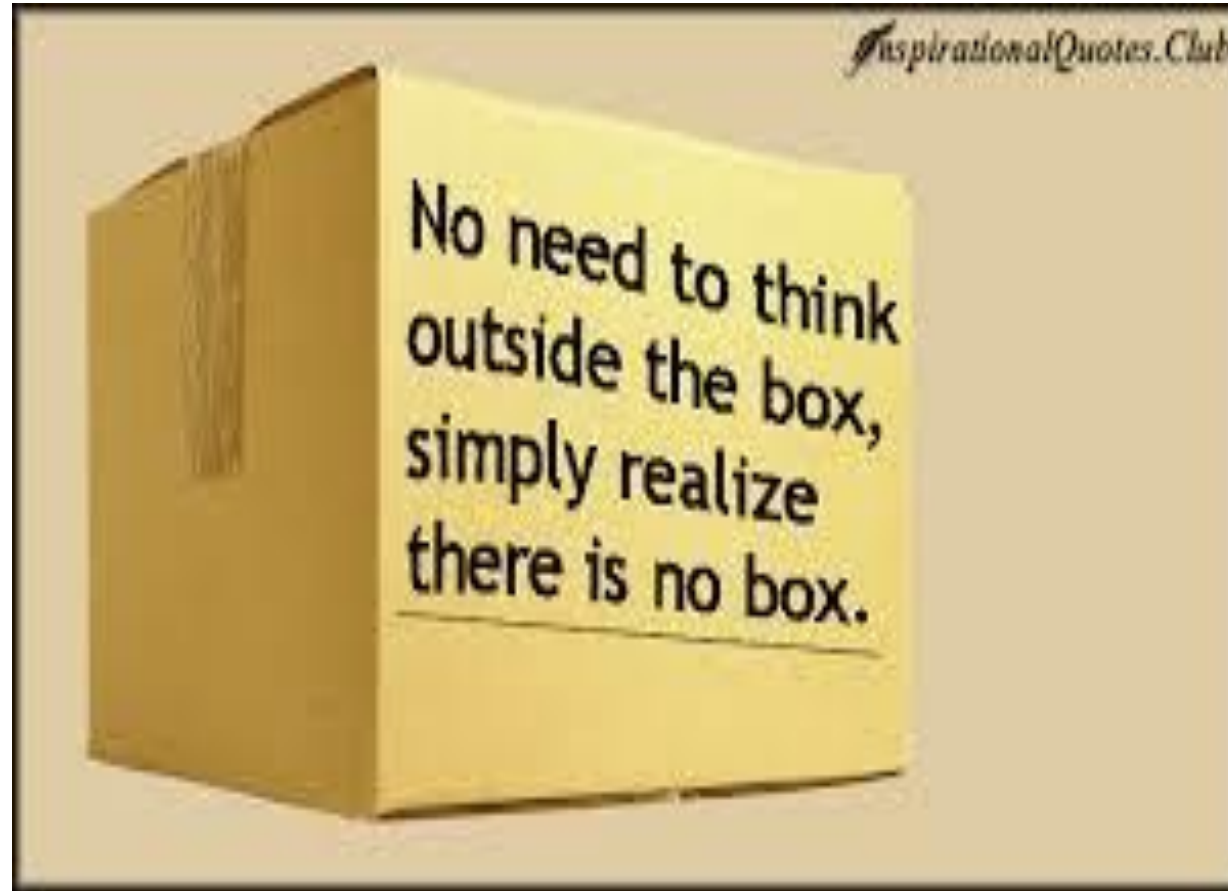
What do you believe ?– what is beyond Special Education which defines our students more than it does our practice and expertise?

- What do you think we need to disrupt?
- What does disruption look like in your leadership?
- I was pleasantly disrupted last week with something that has nothing to do with Specialist Education but has everything to do with not putting ideas or people into boxes.

Thank you for attending..... I really appreciate it.

Spare a thought for Rachel and Amanda....

I encourage you to go away with reflecting on what you believe about how we can improve the quality of our ideas and ideals when we stop putting things into boxes.



Thank you – enjoy the conference