Inclusive education has emerged internationally over the past thirty years as a way of developing democratic citizenship. Core to inclusive principles are that improved equity in education can only be achieved by eliminating the economic, cultural and physical barriers that currently impede learning for particular students.

To strengthen inclusive practice to this end inexorably requires that we attempt to make sense of it in its current form: to examine how it is enacted in educational settings from early childhood, schools, and communities and further and higher education; to contemplate the restrictions that it might inadvertently create; and to consider its effects on members of educational communities.

Contributions to this edited collection represent diverse perspectives, yet share a commitment to challenging existing forms of educational marginalisation through policy, practice, theory and pedagogy. The chapters emerged from discussions at the inaugural Inclusive Education Summit that was held at Victoria University, Australia in 2015. They present research that was conducted in Australia, New Zealand, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Spain and the UK—illustrating transnational interests and diverse approaches to practice.

Presented in four sections—provocations, pushing boundaries, diverse voices, and reflections, the chapters explore everyday practice across a range of contexts: from educating culturally and linguistically diverse, refugee, and/or socially and economically disadvantaged students, to issues of diversity brought about by and through gender, giftedness and disability. The book will appeal to academics, students and practitioners in disciplines including: education, sociology, social work, social policy, early childhood, disability studies, and youth studies.
Inclusive Education
INNOVATIONS AND CONTROVERSIES: INTERROGATING EDUCATIONAL CHANGE

Volume 6

Series Editors:
Julie White, *The Victoria Institute, Victoria University, Australia*
Kitty te Riele, *Peter Underwood Centre for Educational Attainment, University of Tasmania, Australia*

Editorial Board:
Sanna Aaltonen, *Finnish Youth Research Society, Finland*
Airini, *Thompson Rivers University, Canada*
Angelo Benozzo, *Università della Valle d’Aosta, Italy*
Lyndal Bond, *Victoria University Australia*
Tim Corcoran, *Deakin University, Australia*
Carlo Corroto, *Otterbein University, Ohio, USA*
Andre de Quadros, *Boston University, USA*
Ye Hong, *China University of Political Science and Law, China*
Max Hope, *University of Hull, UK*
Roger Slee, *The University of South Australia, Australia*
Elizabeth St Pierre, *University of Georgia, USA*
Jennifer A. Vadeboncoeur, *University of British Columbia, Canada*
Rui Yang, *The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong*

Scope:
The Victoria Institute, in partnership with Sense Publishers, is pleased to invite proposals for our book series, ‘Innovations and Controversies: Investigating Educational Change’.

The series is intended to serve as a forum for international research and debates around contemporary innovations and controversies in education across a broad range of contexts. In particular, we invite scholarly contributions that focus on equity, justice and inclusion. Our conception of ‘education’ is not limited to schooling and we have a particular interest in different and new perspectives. We encourage contributions from established disciplines, within interdisciplinary research and from emerging areas of research. Discursive, methodological and theoretical explorations are particularly welcomed.

Books in this series contribute to extending educational and social theory and developing frameworks that explore change and progress as well as the identification of new research agendas and interests. Equity, social justice and inclusion are interpreted broadly, and include social disadvantage, displacement, gender, sexuality, disability and health. Proposals are welcome from scholars working in a range of fields, including:

- policy
- higher education
- curriculum, pedagogies and assessment
- methodology and theory
- creative industries
Inclusive Education

Making Sense of Everyday Practice

Edited by

Vicky Plows
Victoria University, Australia

and

Ben Whitburn
Deakin University, Australia
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Part 1: Provocations

1. Making Sense of Everyday Practice: By Whom, for Whom, for What? 3
   Ben Whitburn and Vicky Plows

2. Understanding Inclusive Pedagogy: Learning with and from Teachers 13
   Kristine Black-Hawkins

Part 2: Pushing Boundaries

3. Inclusive Education, Subjectivities and the Posts 31
   Ben Whitburn, Julianne Moss and Joanne O’Mara

4. Approaching Play and Inclusion 45
   Amy Claughton

5. The Meena Communicative Initiative in Bangladesh: From Gender to Disability 61
   Ferdousi Anis and Julie White

6. On the Edge?: Counter-Practice in Flexible Learning Programs 77
   Vicky Plows and Alison Baker

7. Including Students from Refugee Backgrounds in Australian Schools 95
   Olalekan Olagookun and Julie White

8. Alice in Wonderland: Opening the Doors to Inclusive Practices of Teaching and Learning for All Students 107
   Coral Cara

Part 3: Diverse Voices

   Katina Zammit and Margaret Vickers

10. Dyslexia and Learning: An Insider Account of Negotiating Barriers and AIDS in Secondary Education 141
    Jenene Burke and Alanna Bushby
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

11. “You Don’t Realise You Do That”: Teachers’ Reflections on
    Developing Inclusive Classrooms 159
    *Moya Elvey*

12. “Why I Am Chosen as Inclusion Child?”: Listening to Students’
    Voice on School Experiences of Inclusion in Indonesia 175
    *Elga Andriana and David Evans*

13. Informed Visual Narratives from the Inside: Students’ Viewpoints on
    Inclusionary Practice 195
    *Gwen Gilmore*

14. Parents’ Lived Experiences of Teachers’ Construction of Giftedness:
    Is Meritocracy Part of the Problem? 213
    *Melanie Wong and Missy Morton*

## Part 4: Reflections

15. Inclusive Education: Two Steps Forward and One Step Back 233
    *Suzanne Carrington*

16. Afterthought No Longer 249
    *Tim Corcoran*
PART 1

PROVOCATIONS
1. MAKING SENSE OF EVERYDAY PRACTICE

By Whom, for Whom, for What?

Underpinning the emergent field of inclusive education is the ideology that everyone can participate in learning and teaching; that the culture and organisation of learning environments complement democratic citizenship. But this position is not without contest. Across the globe and in western countries such as Australia, New Zealand, the US and UK in particular, diverse ways of being too often vector discrimination and stigmatisation. The role of schooling and education—wherein disproportionate public funding arrangements favour private educational providers, increased standardisation of curriculum and assessment lead to coercive policy impositions on teachers, and surreptitious gatekeeping deters particular learners from enrolling in local schools—is nothing short of vexatious. More broadly, social disharmony is increasingly perceptible—at the time of writing, in a single week America’s deadliest mass shooting led to the deaths of 50 people in a Florida gay nightclub, and a British socialist politician was assassinated in a neighbourhood street. These hate crimes are acts of wicked violence waged at difference: at diverse lifestyles, sexualities and political agendas. Meanwhile, everyday life in these countries—and many others—is increasingly accompanied by hard-line political responses to religious and ethnic diversity, migration and freedom of movement; worryingly, referenda and elections are being fought and won on these radical platforms.

These examples of social division along clearly delineated lines are indicative of a “typological obsession with identification, categorisation, labelling and ordering” (Armstrong, 2002, p. 442)—a dissocialising sensibility within which education undoubtedly plays a starring role. Nevertheless, together these occurrences lead us to consider the capacity of education—that is the conditions through which it might be inclusive of all subgroups to challenge vulnerability. This requires first a collective status update and to explore options for progress. That is the task of this book, which emerged from discussions at the inaugural Inclusive Education Summit held at Victoria University in Melbourne, Australia. Over a chilly weekend in July 2015, more than 120 delegates came together to discuss inclusive education from a variety of perspectives, but with one thematic orientation: Making sense of everyday practice. In this opening prelude to the book that emerged from those discussions, we deliberate the purpose of making sense of everyday practice in inclusive education, and consider who should and does contribute to the dialogue. This precedes a brief overview of the thematic positioning of the book and the chapters therein.
CONSIDERING ROLES

In a 2013 book, Michael Apple (p. 1) deliberates on a simple question: “Can education change society?” Seeking answers with respect to the cornerstones of knowledge development, relationships and power, Apple situates his analysis on the politics of knowledge creation, relationships between education and economic, political, and cultural powers, and the treatment of teachers and activists in and through educational policy. Working through a series of instructive examples of educational actions—among them the establishment of schools as a matter of priority for and by refugees fleeing from the war in the former Yugoslavia, schools centred on knowledge of oppressed minorities in the USA, and progressive education policy and practice in Porto Alegre, Brazil—Apple demonstrates that substantive participation of local citizens in educational efforts can have a progressively transformative effect. Through schooling of this kind, hierarchies are flattened, and curriculum comprises diverse knowledge—recognising disparate ontological developers and developments.

Not all of Apple’s (2013) examples of educational reform, however, effectively circumvent hegemonic power. Apple draws on an analysis of the US chain Wall-Mart to demonstrate that in parts of the country, the reformist potential of education is being used to align institutions of schooling and the media to neoconservative interests. This is but one example of the reconstruction of “our institutions, of our common sense, of the meanings associated with democracy, and of our very identities” (Apple, 2013, p. 128). Apple’s demure conclusion, then, as to whether or not education can alter the social order, is that it depends: “it depends on a lot of hard and continued efforts by many people” (p. 2).

Inclusivity in education is similarly contingent. Collective effort is integrally required to reflect on everyday practice in order to make sense of its effect, as well as its effectiveness. It requires the exploration of theory, policy, practice, curriculum, and culture to learn “the possibilities for recovering pedagogy” (Harwood & Allan, 2014, p. 2) across diverse contexts. Inclusive education, to this end, draws on the utility of existing resources and relationalities rather than relying solely on expansion. However, as Harwood and Allan demonstrate, contemporary iterations of schooling in western contexts are largely preoccupied with psychopathologisation: a race to diagnose deficits, collect associated funding, and to make excuses for narrow conceptions of non-conformity. Again there is an emphasis on the technology of categorisation, as a necessity that will direct the inclusion or exclusion of particular children based on classified diagnoses and underwritten by the Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (DSM-5) (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). To many, though, these actions are benevolent: as Harwood and Allan note (p. 159), “[i]t is hard to argue against the power and currency that psychopathological explanations of young people have over others ways of understanding school-based issues”. Yet it is the exploration of school-based issues, as well as the articulation of matters in other educational contexts, their
capacity to marginalise, and how this might be overcome that mobilises inclusive education research and researchers.

Before we get to the exploration of everyday inclusive practice, what of the identity of inclusive education researchers? That is to say—who are the explorers, and with whom do they undertake exploration? Moreover, whose interests can be served by inclusive education and its associated research activities, and who can claim allegiance to it? These are questions we considered at some length in bringing this edited collection together.

Writing instructively about the study of disability politics, Shildrick (2012) registers her wariness for claims that personal experiences of disability ought to be privileged over the voiced accounts of people without disability. As she writes (p. 36), “all of us—regardless of our own individual morphology—are participants in the socio-cultural imaginary that pervasively shapes the disposition of everyday attitudes and values—and we all therefore have a responsibility to interrogate it”. Also, there is a danger in this well-intentioned privileging of being complicit in false categorisation. Along similar lines, in his consideration of the study of education policy, Stephen Ball (2013) laments the misfortunate tendency for scholars to disassociate their work from special and inclusive education, critical race theory and/or post-colonial studies. “If we bother at all” (p. 84), he writes in relation to the take up of this scholarship, it is “as fields for special specialists, experts of their very own”. The detachment of research ostensibly categorised as mainstream or marginal contributes to the ineffectiveness of policy inquiry. Indeed it is the absurdity of categorisation alone that parodies the sociology of education. Ball urges researchers to broaden their approach to education policy studies by increasing focus on the impact of categorisation, or what he calls (p. 84) “tightly related and overlapping genealogies of classifications and of blood”.

In highlighting these recent discussions we hope to situate the diversity of inclusive education researchers, research, and the contributors to this book and the theoretical and methodological tools of their trade. We concur with Ball’s (2013) and Shildrick’s (2012) shared conviction that disassembling the technology of categorisation is an action beholden to all, since we are all directly complicit in its power. Similarly, “inclusive education is everybody’s business” (Slee, 2011, p. 83), and its development therefore depends on collective efforts to reclaim pedagogy from ill-serving categories. This edited collection represents this diverse view. From doctoral candidates and early career researchers, to teacher educators and senior academics researching across geographical and cultural borders, contributors to this book represent the sheer length and breadth of the field. Presenting empirical work, conceptual arguments and provocations to policy across different theatres of life-long education, the chapters explore everyday practice with regard to educating culturally and linguistically diverse, refugee, and/or socially and economically disadvantaged students, and issues of diversity brought about by and through gender, giftedness and disability.
THEMATIC CATEGORISATION

Before we introduce the organisation of the book, note that we purposefully refer to disability last in our explanation above. We are cognizant that for a long time, inclusive education has been largely considered the act of enrolling students with disabilities into regular schools. To acknowledge instead the broad definition that inclusive education might entail, both the book and the summit from which it emerges work to a wider agenda; one that Slee (2011, p. 83) refers to as a need “to build robust and comprehensive analyses of exclusion in order that we might challenge social and cultural relations as mediated through education in order [then] to dismantle oppression and promote inclusion.” Contributors to the current volume have applied their craft—albeit in disability or otherwise—in diverse educational contexts such as early childhood, primary and secondary schools, universities and community educational providers in Australia, New Zealand, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Spain and the UK, developing transnational interests and diverse approaches to practice.

The book is organised into four parts: Provocations, Pushing boundaries, Diverse voices, and Reflections. It may seem at once disingenuous and frivolous to categorise this material in any such fashion, given the above discussion. In attempting to sort the collection under organised thematic categories, we were uncomfortable about potentially drawing false divisions that might illustrate our subconscious subservience to anachronistic frameworks. Nevertheless, we opted to develop sections that at least to us, are suitably representative of the ethos of contemporary inclusive education research, and emblematic of the scale of discussions held at The Inclusive Education Summit in 2015. Before concluding with a presentation of this thematic orientation, we want to make one last comment regarding this scale and an associated issue that to us, is relevant to the book’s composition. The book reflects the tension between maintaining a common purpose and political goal, whilst simultaneously seeking to fuzzy the boundaries and to facilitate diversity in the ‘what’, ‘who’ and ‘how’ of research on inclusivity in education. We are aware of the strength of critical engagement when the focus is narrowed but also of the possibilities inherent in a broader conversation with diverse actors. The issue of how we maintain a strong critique and political voice for inclusivity in education when the field is expansive and ‘for all’ remains unresolved.

STRUCTURE AND READING OF THE BOOK

Provocations

In the remainder of Part 1—Provocations—Kristine Black-Hawkins continues our above discussion via a consideration of how education might both recognise and respond to children’s individual differences, while at the same time respecting teachers’ knowledge, experience, and professional development. Mapping the development of the inclusive pedagogical approach (IPA) that she and colleagues
from the UK have generated, Black-Hawkins provides political, theoretical and practical context to the complexity of inclusive education. Exacerbating tensions on one hand to maintain high standards, while promoting equitable and socially justice driven access to education on the other, produce a seemingly impermeable impasse at a time when the scale of diverse students enrolling in schools necessitates a reorientation of teacher practice. Black-Hawkins goes on to demonstrate how empirical research about teachers’ ‘craft knowledge’ about their own inclusive practice was central to the development of the IPA. Revealing study findings that on the surface might appear incompatible with inclusive pedagogy, Black-Hawkins develops an argument that theoretical posture is a significant influence on teacher practice. Teachers who regard the learning and access requirements of all students in their classes—as opposed to most or some—more seemingly readily adopt effective pedagogical practice. The work of Black-Hawkins and her colleagues to this end provoke teachers, teacher educators, researchers and policy makers to come together and to question their notional beliefs about diversity, while at the same time coming to terms with the relational impact of educating inclusively.

Pushing Boundaries

Chapters in Part 2, Pushing boundaries, urge for transformation in education, and utilise tools to achieve it. Each sets out to draw attention to diverse approaches to theorising, researching, and/or practicing inclusiveness in a variety of educational theatres.

Ben Whitburn, Julianne Moss and Joanne O’Mara begin with a call in Chapter 3 to researchers and practitioners in inclusive education to explore the potential of the ‘posts’, as they grapple with why there has not been a more enthusiastic uptake of the contributions of the third wave of disability studies in education. They illustrate the potential of this approach through engagement with three research projects, reflecting also on how it has influenced them as scholars working in higher education as teacher educators. This chapter pushes us to think beyond the ‘usual’ ways of understanding disability and inclusion, and to instead recognise the connections between theory and practice.

In Chapter 4 Amy Claughton brings together the theoretical approaches of disability studies, childhood studies and inclusive education to challenge dominant concepts of children’s play, specifically for those with diagnosed impairments. Claughton’s argument is that reframing how children are perceived to engage in play can facilitate a reimagining of how play is incorporated into special educational settings. She advocates for the use of an inclusive play-based curriculum in special educational settings, drawing attention to the stark contrast between play opportunities available to children who attend either mainstream or special education providers. In her reframing children are considered active agents in their learning, directly contingent on play. She discusses definitions and perceptions around inappropriate
and appropriate play, and the need to move aware from the objectifying assessment culture around play for children with disabilities. Claughton’s take-home message is that educators might listen more attentively to what children say and attend carefully to what they do, to facilitate their focus on the capacities children demonstrate rather than their deficits.

In Chapter 5 Ferdousi Anis and Julie White take us to Bangladesh to examine a TV character named ‘Meena’, who was designed to promote and support the education of girls. The authors discuss how the Meena television initiative contributed to social change, evidenced by the increase of girls from urban and rural areas accessing schooling. Anis and White propose harnessing the success of the Meena initiative to widen inclusive practices, and to promote the education of students with disabilities in particular. This chapter draws attention to some of the challenges for the inclusive education agenda wherein education for all is the lofty objective, but policy and practice often focus on specific categories (as a political and practical move) before moving onto the next disadvantaged group.

Vicky Plows and Alison Baker focus, in the 6th chapter, on flexible learning programs geared towards supporting the work of young people who have either disengaged or have been excluded from mainstream schools. Drawing on interviews with educators and young people, Plows and Baker explore how identities are reworked and conflict is navigated in through counter practice. They suggest that the notion of counter practice is a productive way of in understanding how educators work in flexible learning programs to support the ongoing participation and engagement of ‘marginalised’ young people in secondary schooling. Whilst acknowledging that flexible learning programs occupy a contentious position in inclusive education discourse, they argue that counter practices are an essential facet of trying to work inclusively within these settings.

In the 7th chapter Olalekan Olagookun and Julie White consider the inclusion of refugee young people in Australia’s education system, seeking to contribute to the contemporary discourse about refugees, education and inclusion. They argue that considerations of identity and belonging are crucial aspects of refugee education that cannot go ignored. Grappling in particular with the heightened rate of refugee mobility in the current day and the national response to the education of refugee students in Australia, the authors draw attention to the significance of subjecthood and practice. They highlight the importance of understanding the wider connections between global events and local schooling contexts in making sense of everyday practice in inclusive education.

In Chapter 8 Coral Cara imaginatively turns to Lewis Carroll’s classic book Alice in Wonderland, to draw on Alice’s experiences in particular to illustrate the disjuncture some students feel in Australian higher education in their navigation of unusual situations and complex interactions with others. Reflecting on her own practice as an educator in a teacher education program in an Australian university, Cara’s chapter serves as a starting point to ‘opening doors’ to provide a more inclusive experience for students in higher education. Cara takes cultural
dissonance as her starting point to discuss curricula and pedagogical approaches to supporting educational access for diverse students. Her focus on teacher education draws attention to the cycles of inclusive practice that she hopes to promote through the ways in which she interacts as an educator with pre-service teachers, who will themselves become educators of diverse students in schools.

Diverse Voices

Part 3, Diverse voices, contains chapters that exhibit the significance of insider perspectives to research and practice. In this part of the book, research emphasising the voiced experiences of students of primary, secondary and/or higher education are coupled with the perceptive accounts of teachers and parents. Together the representations of diverse voices and perspectives achieve an account of inclusive theory and practice that might be otherwise overlooked.

In Chapter 9 Katina Zammit and Margaret Vickers explore similar issues to Cara, though with a focus on how an elective student mentor and mentee program in the master of Teaching at an Australian university assists students to learn the hidden curriculum of being a university student and builds their institutional capital. Framing their discussion with Bourdieu’s work around cultural and social capital, they draw on data collected from mentors from the program who come from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The authors highlight positive outcomes of the program for the mentors, demonstrating that the benefits of relational understanding extend to all students involved.

In Chapter 10 Jenene Burke and Alanna Bushby use personal narratives to reflect on Alanna’s experiences of negotiating learning in secondary school education as a student with dyslexia. Their purpose is to consider how schooling either—or both—empowered or disempowered Alanna as a learner. The authors seek to foreground the development of Alanna negotiating her learning in a secondary school context to emerge as an ‘enabled, competent and successful learner’, while at the same time experiencing a mixed response from her school. The chapter reflects the authors’ perspectives on experiences of schooling in the past, with a view to developing a more measured understanding for the future.

Moya Elvey reports, in Chapter 11, research with primary school teachers in Victoria Australia seeking to create inclusive learning environments for students with diverse learning needs, particularly those who receive funding based on diagnosed disability. She explores ‘key ingredients’ in their teaching approaches and what helps or hinders them in their practice. Elvey’s findings reveal that developing trusting and nurturing relationships, a focus on participation and engagement, creation of a welcoming space and student-focused approaches were common to inclusive practice. Challenges were certainly present, though teacher participants of her study referred to school-based professional learning and the positive influence of colleagues as important to the development of their practice. Elvey’s timely reminder of the significance of supportive professional development and collegiality
in schools highlights the value of learning from practitioners about what might aid them to teach inclusively.

In Chapter 12 Elga Adriana and David Evans foreground primary school students’ perspectives of their schooling in Indonesia with the aim of exploring their experiences of attending an ‘inclusive’ setting. Young people who participated in this research conveyed their concerns about labelling children with disabilities as well as the practice of year level retention, whereby some children were kept from progressing grades. These children also suggested teachers’ practices in the classroom and the language they used influenced students’ views of their peers with ‘special needs’—a timely reminder that language can easily speak inclusion in or out of schooling. Overall, in line with previous research, the authors argue that to achieve an inclusive school culture, attitudinal and environmental barriers need to be addressed.

In Chapter 13 Gwen Gilmore also privileges student perspectives to consider young people’s experiences of internal disciplinary inclusion rooms in an English secondary school. Such rooms are used as an alternative to excluding students, or sending them home. Drawing on Cultural Historical Activity Theory and visual qualitative methods of data collection to analyse how the students positioned themselves in relation to power and their sense of agency, Gilmore argues that although an exclusionary disciplinary space, the inclusive culture developed and the constructive nature of their friends and family meant that students mediated the inclusion room in a reciprocal manner and referenced it as part of the ‘educational furniture’ of the school. For Gilmore the student’s optimism about their future learning and behaviour at the school was positive, which is indicative of the utility of the school’s inclusive culture.

Chapter 14 takes us to Singapore from where Melanie Wong and Missy Morton explore parents’ perspectives of how teachers construct their child’s giftedness. The authors draw together conceptions of meritocratic ideals and social constructionism to make sense of the discourses surrounding inclusive practices for children labelled with giftedness. Drawing on data provided in a purposefully created on-line social media group of parents and practitioners, they argue that in the main, parents and their gifted children believe that they receive inadequate support from teachers. In some cases, whereas teachers might identify academic achievers, other areas of potential giftedness often go unnoticed. This contrast highlights several implications for the provision of inclusive and equitable schooling, while demonstrating the significance of parental involvement in their children’s education.

Reflections

The book concludes with Part 4, Reflections, for indeed to make sense of everyday practice requires both a critical consideration of the status of the field, as well as a consideration of the contribution of the book. In Chapter 15 Suzanne Carrington takes us on a reflective narrative of her professional life in education, offering her
observations of the development of the field of inclusive education in Australia and the UK in particular. She draws on the metaphor of movement—taking two steps forward only to be forced into taking one in reverse—to explain that progress in the field has been slow and staggered. Carrington’s reflection presents a sombre depiction of inclusive education while at the same time offering a particularly useful summary of the efforts and progress made towards its realisation.

Last but not least, Tim Corcoran presents an afterthought (no more), in which he deliberates the contribution of post and new theoretical positioning—post-positivist, new materialist—to the project of inclusive education. Emphasising the significance of relational entanglements (people-to-people, people-to-materiality, people-to-social polity) and the potential impact for social intervention, Corcoran’s chapter traverses onto-epistemology, anticipatory responses, and their consequences to research in the field in facilitating diligent and committed exchange of progressive ideas. Corcoran cleverly weaves this discussion around a concise summary of the chapters of the book, noting in particular the volume’s core purpose of documenting joint action for change based on new imaginings of what might be via what is already occurring. Corcoran’s clarion call, that inclusive education requires close alignment to the ethics of existence, resonates loudly for all members of the education community.

REFERENCES


Ben Whitburn
Faculty of Arts and Education
Deakin University

Vicky Plows
The Victoria Institute for Education, Diversity and Lifelong Learning
College of Education
Victoria University, Melbourne
KRISTINE BLACK-HAWKINS

2. UNDERSTANDING INCLUSIVE PEDAGOGY

Learning with and from Teachers

Over the last two decades or so many national governments have introduced legislation intended to support more inclusive education systems. Yet, despite these policy changes, developments in inclusive classroom practices do not seem to have been so easily achieved (Artiles, Kozleski, Dorn, & Christensen, 2006; Göransson & Nilholm, 2014). This not only has important consequences for learners and teachers, but also for those who research in inclusive education. How can we contribute to an understanding of everyday classroom practices that recognises and responds to the individual differences of all learners, but does not marginalise or stigmatisate some because of their particular needs? Significantly, how can our findings be made worthwhile and meaningful in ways that are respectful of teachers’ knowledge and experiences, support their on-going professional development, and take account of the demands of ordinary classroom life?

This chapter is based on a lecture given at The Inclusive Education Summit (TIES, 2015) at the Victoria University, in Melbourne. The conference’s key theme was ‘Making sense of everyday practice’, and its overall aim was ‘How best to strengthen inclusive education practices for the benefit of all students’. With both these in mind, the lecture (and now this chapter) focused on inclusive pedagogy, or the inclusive pedagogical approach: an area of research in which I have been engaged for a number of years, working with colleagues in schools and universities and, especially, in collaboration with Lani Florian and Martyn Rouse (e.g. Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011; Black-Hawkins & Florian, 2012; Florian, Black-Hawkins, & Rouse, in press). This work has led us to an understanding of inclusive pedagogy as a fundamental shift in teachers’ pedagogical thinking:

• away from a traditional, or individualised, approach to learner diversity that starts by making provision for most learners, and then offers something additional or different for some learners identified as having particular needs,
• and towards a pedagogical approach that starts with the learning of everybody.

That is, in the inclusive pedagogical approach, teachers focus on how to make rich learning opportunities available for everybody so that all learners can participate in the community of the classroom.

This chapter also explores the significant contribution that teachers have made to our developing understanding of inclusive pedagogy. In our research we have

© 2017 Sense Publishers. All rights reserved.
endeavoured to ‘bridge’ the gap between research and practice (McIntyre, 2005), by learning with and from teachers. However, as McIntyre (2009) reminds us, doing so must be based on a deep respect for, and intellectual engagement in, the complex work that teachers do in their daily classroom practice. This is important if the findings of research are to resonate with teachers and be useful to them in their practice. These ideas are explored further in the chapter. In the first section some broad contextual background is outlined to help illustrate why a shift in inclusive pedagogical thinking is necessary to support the learning of all children. The second section considers the theoretical perspectives underpinning our research in this area and, particularly, with regard to understandings of inclusive education and teachers’ craft knowledge. This is followed by a discussion of a study of inclusive pedagogy undertaken with teachers in Scotland (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011; Black-Hawkins & Florian, 2012), including its key findings and their implications for teachers’ practice. The chapter ends with some final reflections.

**CONTEXTS**

The complexity of the concept of inclusive education and the diversity of ways it has been enacted in policies and practices in different national and local settings has left it open to a wide range of interpretations (see e.g. discussion by Thomas, 2013). These are influenced by many factors, including the nature of the contexts in which the understandings, values and experiences of the interpreter are developed. Thus, the ideas discussed in this chapter are, inevitably, shaped by my research and teaching, which draw on the educational systems, concerns and challenges of England and, more generally, the UK and Europe, alongside, of course, broader international influences. Nevertheless, despite these different conceptualisations there is a common core in much of the work undertaken in this area. As Slee (2011) explains: ‘[i]nclusive education invites us to think about the nature of the world we live in, a world that we prefer, and our role in shaping both of those worlds’ (p. 14). This section explores some of the key contextual concerns that inform my work on inclusive pedagogy, set within the context of my particular world-view of inclusive education and how it might be changed.

*Marketisation of Education*

The first of these concerns is the on-going marketisation of education (Power & Whitty, 1999) driven predominantly by neo-liberal values (Ball, 2015). In England, as elsewhere, politicians continue to be exercised by the costs and outcomes of the education system in terms of its contribution to national economic wealth. Such concerns profoundly shaped national policy in England in the 1980s, and their influence remains strong, not least because of current global economic uncertainty. Although different governments have responded to these pressures in a variety of ways, the major structural reforms primarily emphasise the principles and
mechanisms of competition, choice and accountability, which together are intended to raise the academic standards of students, schools, and nations. For example, in England, we continue to measure children’s academic performance through standardised tests, the results of which shape decisions about children as individuals and schools as institutions. Schools are also inspected and categorised. The findings of these tests and inspections are intended to inform parental choice and raise standards across the system. However, this discourse of ‘standards’ in which children and schools are ranked, relies on the idea of a so-called ‘normal’ distribution, which expects success for some but also failure for others (Fendler & Muzaffar, 2008), producing ‘winners’ and, inevitably, ‘losers’ (Apple, 2006, p. 69). The potential injustice and inequity in such a view of schooling challenges researchers, policymakers and practitioners to find alternative ways to think about learner diversity, being a learner, and how, and why, learning should be assessed.

Meanwhile, alongside the ‘standards’ agenda, many governments continue to implement legislation intended to promote more inclusive education systems. Tensions have then emerged as a result of conflicts between principles that, on the one hand, underpin market-based reforms and, on the other hand, those that are based on values of equity and social justice. These on-going tensions have not been straightforward to resolve. For example, in an earlier study, undertaken with colleagues, we explored the enduring and widespread perception amongst some policymakers, practitioners and parents that the inclusion of certain children in mainstream schools and classrooms has a detrimental effect on the academic achievement of other learners (Black-Hawkins, Florian, & Rouse, 2007). The findings from this work, however, indicated strongly that this was not the case. Furthermore, there are real concerns that an emphasis on a ‘standards’ agenda does not address the underachievement of individual and groups of students who feel marginalised from education or do not feel they have much to show from their years spent in schools. Who such students are, and how they are identified, varies from school to school and across different national and regional settings. Nevertheless, their experiences challenge us to think differently about how an inclusive pedagogical approach might be conceptualised so as to enable the learning of all children.

**Responding to Diversity in Classrooms and Schools**

A key underlying reason for the continuing tensions noted above relates to understandings of, and responses to, learner diversity in classrooms and schools. Across many countries schools are more diverse in their student intake than ever before: not only with regard to children who in the past attended special schools and are now placed in mainstream settings, but also in terms of ethnicity, culture, languages spoken, disability status and so forth (EADSNE, 2012). However, as Alexander (2009, p. 115) reminds us, ‘focusing on single dimensions of difference such as ethnicity or gender cannot take into account the complex experiences and interactions which are the reality of children’s lives’ (see also e.g. Lave, 1996;
Artiles et al., 2006; Youdell, 2006). Thus, Ainscow, Conteh, Dyson and Gallannaugh (2007, p. 2) argue that more flexible, holistic, and contextualised pedagogical approaches are needed.

What children ‘are’ and how they are ‘different’ from each other cannot be read off from a list of characteristics. Instead, it emerges from the interactions amongst children, and between them and their teachers, as they work together in particular educational contexts, on particular tasks and priorities.

Nevertheless, in responding to learning diversity there continues a pedagogical view around the idea of most learners as a relatively homogenous group, alongside some learners who, because of their perceived differences, are provided with something different from, or additional to, most other learners. Such simple responses to children’s multiple and shifting identities will always be inadequate.

**Teachers’ Experiences of Inclusive Education**

Finding ways to respond to learner diversity is closely connected to the third contextual theme. As noted earlier, despite legislative changes intended to promote more inclusive education systems, developments in inclusive classroom practices have not been so easily realised. Studies, from a range of national contexts, highlight that whilst teachers generally express a very strong commitment to the values and principles of inclusive education they are often anxious about how to work with an increasingly diverse range of learners. Teachers also report that they believe they lack specialist skills and knowledge necessary to meet the differing needs of all the children they encounter. Such views can undermine teachers’ sense of professional competence and confidence (e.g. Avramidis Bayliss & Burden, 2000; Blecker & Boakes, 2010; Jordan, Schwartz, & McGhie-Richmond, 2009; Lopes, Monteiro, & Sil, 2004; Ross-Hill, 2009). It also suggests that traditional pedagogical approaches to inclusion, based on making provision for most learners, and then something extra or different for some, is not really working.

**Contribution of Research to Inclusive Education**

Furthermore, many teachers feel that the findings of research do not properly address their professional concerns about how to enact a policy of inclusion in their classrooms (McIntyre, 2009). The final contextual theme, therefore, relates to the kinds of research that should be undertaken if it is to be useful to teachers (Black-Hawkins, 2014). Over the last decade or so, research that has focused on the development of more inclusive classroom practices has often been sharply criticised, as evident in two international reviews of research into inclusive education. Some ten years ago, Artiles et al. (2006) noted that studies at the level of the classroom were too often one-dimensional, focusing on single perspectives or actions and did
not take account of the complex interactions that are intrinsic to daily classroom teaching and learning. It is then difficult for teachers to see how the findings of such studies might be 'translated' into their own everyday practices. Meanwhile, a more recent analysis of research on inclusive education by Göransson and Nilholm (2014) raises further concerns. They refer to the earlier review by Artiles and his colleagues, to consider what progress has been made. In so doing they argue that whilst there is now a greater focus on classrooms as communities, such studies are often limited because they still do not 'show how more inclusive practices are to be achieved' (p. 276). These considerable limitations, identified in both reviews, highlight the need for researchers to learn with and from teachers (Hagger & McIntyre, 2006), so that in collaboration they can develop an understanding of inclusive pedagogical approaches that are meaningful to practitioners engaging in the complexity of everyday classroom life.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

The section examines the rationale for the theoretical perspectives underpinning the research study described later in the chapter. It builds on the ideas raised in the previous section in terms of broad contextual themes. In particular it focuses on the concepts of inclusive education and teachers' craft knowledge.

The Complex Notion of Educational Inclusion

The terms inclusive education, inclusive practice and inclusive pedagogy are sometimes used as if they are interchangeable. Whilst they are clearly related this lack of clarity about how each is distinctive from the other can lead to misunderstandings. For the purposes of this chapter inclusive education is understood as being concerned with broad political, social and cultural processes that shape schools and education systems, with the aim of making provision for all children to be educated together. When inclusive education was first theorised it focused primarily on the education of learners identified with a disability or special educational need (UNESCO, 1994) but more recently there is an understanding of inclusive education as being about a wider range of multiple processes that can marginalise any learners, such as those relating to poverty, gender, sexuality and conflict (UNESCO, 2015). In contrast, inclusive practice refers to the various actions and activities that professionals in schools and other educational settings do to give meaning to their understanding of inclusion education (Florian, 2009). Meanwhile, inclusive pedagogy is concerned with an approach to teaching and learning that focuses on extending what is generally available to everybody so that all learners are able to participate in the community of the classroom, as opposed to providing for all, by differentiating for some. However, as our study suggests, meeting this challenge is ‘a complex pedagogical endeavour’ (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011, p. 815).