Christopher Boyle
Kelly-Ann Allen   *Editors*

Research for Inclusive Quality Education

Leveraging Belonging, Inclusion, and Equity

With a foreword from   **Professor Mel Ainscow**

Springer

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Editors

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Editors
Christopher Boyle 🔟
School of Education
The University of Adelaide
Adelaide, SA, Australia

Kelly-Ann Allen 🔟
School of Educational Psychology and
Counselling
Faculty of Education
Monash University
Melbourne, VIC, Australia

I believe it's our responsibility to show our communities the value of all people, to celebrate different, and to take a stand for acceptance and inclusion.

Julie Foudy

Foreword

This book focuses on what is arguably the greatest challenge facing education systems around the world, that of finding ways of including and ensuring the well-being and learning of all children in schools. In economically poorer countries, this is mainly about the millions of children who are not able to attend formal education. Meanwhile, in wealthier countries, many young people leave school with no worthwhile qualifications, some choose to drop out since the lessons seem irrelevant, and others are placed in special classes or schools away from mainstream education (Antoninis, et al. 2020).

Recently, teachers have faced further, unprecedented challenges as they seek to find ways of ensuring quality education for all their students within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Whilst the nature of these challenges varies depending on the location, a common concern is with those students who are known to be vulnerable to marginalisation or exclusion, such as those from the poorest households, refugees and those in conflict situations, ethnic and linguistic minorities and indigenous backgrounds, and children with disabilities. It follows that efforts to ensure educational recovery following the pandemic must be based upon the principles of inclusion and equity.

Inclusive education. In many countries, inclusive education is still thought of as an approach to serving children with disabilities within general education settings. Internationally, however, it is increasingly seen more broadly as a principle that supports and welcomes diversity amongst all learners (UNESCO, 2020). This means that the aim is to eliminate social exclusion that is a consequence of attitudes and responses to diversity in race, social class, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, migrant status and ability. As such, it starts from the belief that education is a basic human right and the foundation for a more just society.

The editors of this book explain that they have attempted to step away from the notion that inclusion is only about particular categories of students. As they suggest, this new thinking about inclusion in education in schools is simply about 'good education' and should, therefore, be about all children and young people.

The implication is that schools need to be reformed and practices need to be improved in ways that will lead them to respond positively to student diversity: seeing individual differences not as problems to be fixed but as opportunities for enriching learning. Within such a conceptualisation, a consideration of students' difficulties can provide an agenda for change and

insights into how such changes might be brought about. However, this kind of approach is more likely to be successful in contexts where there is a culture of collaboration that encourages and supports problem-solving (Ainscow 2016).

Global developments. Internationally, the year 2016 was particularly important in relation to this policy agenda. Building on the Incheon Declaration agreed at the World Forum on Education in May 2016, it saw the publication by UNESCO of the Education 2030 Framework for Action. This emphasises inclusion and equity as laying the foundations for quality education. It also stresses the need to address all forms of exclusion and marginalisation, disparities and inequalities in access, participation and learning processes and outcomes.

The situation across the world in relation to this challenging policy agenda is complex, with some countries making great strides, whilst others continue to have segregated provision of various forms of education for some groups of learners. So, for example:

- Over many years, New Brunswick in Canada has pioneered the concept of inclusive education through legislation (AuCoin, Porter and Baker-Korotkov 2020). This policy defines the critical elements of an inclusive education system that supports students in common learning environments and provides supports for teachers.
- The Italian government passed a law in 1977 that closed all special schools, units and other non-inclusive forms of provision. Whilst practice varies from place to place, there is no doubt that the principle of inclusion is widely accepted (Ianes, Demo and Dell'Anna 2020).
- Having enacted legislation making disability discrimination in education unlawful, Portugal has gone much further in enacting an explicit legal framework for the inclusion of students with and without disabilities in education (Alves, Campos Pinto and Pinto, 2020).
- And, in Sierra Leone, the pandemic has led to new thinking, particularly for children who have been adversely affected, leading to the recent introduction of a policy that aims to develop a more inclusive and equitable education system (https://en.unesco.org/gem-report/node/3413).

In drawing attention to these examples of national policy development, it must be stressed that they should not be seen as being perfect. Rather, they are about countries where there are interesting developments from which to learn. They are also varied with respect to the approach being taken and what they have achieved. This means that we should avoid two pitfalls of comparative research: the idea that, in any country, there is a single national perspective on inclusion; and the notion that practice can be generalised across countries without attention to local contexts and meanings (Booth and Ainscow 1998).

Addressing Barriers

Like all major policy changes, progress in relation to inclusion and equity requires an effective strategy for implementation. In particular, it requires new thinking that focuses attention on the *barriers* experienced by some learners that lead them to become marginalised as a result of contextual factors. These barriers may include: inappropriate curricula, assessment methods that fail to celebrate the progress of all learners, inadequate teacher preparation and support, and forms of teaching that do not take account of learner diversity.

Barriers may also be to do with the assumptions upon which practice is based. This may be connected to deeply entrenched systems of marginalisation that sort and segregate students by classifications to do with race, ability, gender, ethnicity and socioeconomic status.

All of this means that progress in relation to inclusion is complex and context-specific. The implication is that overcoming such barriers is the most important means of developing forms of education that are effective for all children. In this way, the focus on inclusion and equity becomes a way of achieving the overall improvement of education systems.

Attempts to develop inclusive schools must also pay attention to the building of consensus around inclusive values within communities. This implies that school leaders should be selected in the light of their commitment to inclusive values and their capacity to lead in a participatory manner (Riehl 2000). Moreover, the external policy environment has to be compatible with inclusive development, in order to support rather than undermine schools' efforts.

A Central Message

In thinking about educational policy development, it is important to recognise that the promotion of inclusion and equity is not simply a technical or organisational change. Rather, it is a movement in a clear philosophical direction that involves the development of a welcoming and supportive culture within educational communities. The creation of such a cultural change requires a shared commitment amongst all those involved, including teachers, students, families and wider communities. It is, therefore, crucial that those who need to be involved have a clear sense of what is intended. In particular, the terms 'inclusion' and 'equity' must be defined in ways that will speak to a diverse range of stakeholders.

The following definitions provided in the UNESCO *Guide for Ensuring Inclusion and Equity in Education* are particularly helpful, not least in the way they avoid the use of jargon, a factor that is crucial if stakeholders from a range of backgrounds are to be engaged:

- **Inclusion** is a process that helps overcome barriers limiting the presence, participation and achievement of learners
- **Equity** is about ensuring fairness, where the education of all learners is seen as having equal importance

The central message is, therefore, simple: *every learner matters and matters equally*. The complexity arises, however, when we try to turn this principle into action. This is likely to require significant changes in thinking and practice within education systems.

In this respect, the chapters in this book offer a rich variety of perspectives and experiences, from an impressive range of countries. Together, they provide considerable food for thought. These varied accounts also remind us, in case we forget, that as far as understanding and developing education policies and practices are concerned, *context matters*. This means that it is dangerous to make assumptions about what is happening in another part of the world based on experiences in one's own country. At the same time, we should resist the temptation to amalgamate research carried out in one country with that of others in order to draw generalisable conclusions.

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Mel Ainscow
Emeritus Professor of Education
University of Manchester
Manchester, England

Professor of Education
University of Glasgow
Glasgow, Scotland

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Preface

Research for Inclusive Quality Education Leveraging Belonging, Inclusion, and Equity has 23 chapters that will explore contemporary perspectives and research on inclusion both in school and in the wider community. The book attempts to step away from the notion that inclusion is only for students with special needs and instead embraces the emerging understanding that inclusion in schools is simply 'good education' and is, therefore, for all students. Moreover, this book contains chapters concerned with inclusion on populations with rare diseases, mental health problems and other marginalised groups.

The purpose of this book is to provide another platform for discussing inclusion at an international level. The book will be included in the series, *Springer's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*, which is related to the 17 goals the United Nations and world leaders had formulated and adopted as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Specifically, the book provides a new resource for academics and educators alike contributing to the professional development and lifelong learning of all learners. The book is unique in that through the research-grounded chapters on offer, it provides a genuinely global perspective on inclusion. The chapters represent diverse groups and contexts ensuring that the messages articulated through the book contribute to inclusive and equitable quality education for all learners.

The book is in line with the SDG4 target of 4.5 as it promotes the elimination of gender disparities in education by advocating inclusion at all levels of education. The book also supports target 4.7 of SDG4 as it provides a perspective on how to use inclusion to promote sustainable development in all learners. The book also supports the targets 4.A and 4.C as the book defines the methods that can be employed to improve the educational facilities to make the child, disability and gender sensitive. The book works as a tool of guidance to train teachers to promote inclusion, especially in developing countries around the world.

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Editors
Christopher Boyle
School of Education, University of Adelaide
Adelaide, Australia

Kelly-Ann Allen
Faculty of Education, Monash University
Melbourne, Australia

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This book is dedicated to all the work of the teachers, academics, and school support workers who tirelessly try to improve the educational outcomes of the many students whom they support. 'Good Education' is only possible through the efforts of the many unsung, yet forever remembered, dedicated people we all come across through our education experiences as children and adults.

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A very special thanks to Jill Young and Kylie Allen, teachers and advocates for inclusive practices. We thank you deeply for your expertise, assistance and generous time in helping to prepare this manuscript for publication.

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Editors and Contributors

About the Editors

Christopher Boyle, PhD, FBPsS is a Professor of Inclusive Education and Educational Psychology in the School of Education at The University of Adelaide, Australia. He is a Fellow of the British Psychological Society and a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. He was previously the Editor in Chief of The Educational Academy. He was previously the Editor in Chief of The Educational and Developmental Psychologist (2012–2017) and is the founding co-editor of Belonging and Human Connection (with Kelly Allen) launched in 2022. He is an internationally recognised and respected academic and author on the subjects of inclusive education and psychology. He is a registered psychologist in the UK and Australia.

Kelly-Ann Allen, PhD, FAPS is a board endorsed Educational and Developmental Psychologist and Associate Professor within the School of Education Psychology and Counselling, Faculty of Education, Monash University. Kelly-Ann is an Honorary Principal Fellow of the Centre for Wellbeing Science, Melbourne Graduate School of Education, University of Melbourne and is the inaugural director and founder of the International Belonging Research Laboratory, which represents a large group of belonging researchers from around the world. Dr. Allen's research interests are concerned with school belonging and belonging more generally, and she is committed to the translation and dissemination of research into educational contexts. Dr. Allen is the Editor-in-Chief of the Educational and Developmental Psychologist and Co-Inaugural Founding Editor of Belonging and Human Connection (with Professor Chris Boyle). She is a Fellow of the Australian Psychological Society and the College of Educational and Developmental Psychologists. Dr. Allen has published extensively in the area of belonging research. You can find out more at www.drkellyallen.com.

Contributors

Abbas Abdollahi Department of Counseling, Faculty of Education and Psychology, Alzahra University, Tehran, Iran

Bernd Ahrbeck International Psychoanalytical University, Berlin, Germany

Kelly-Ann Allen School of Educational Psychology and Counselling, Faculty of Education, Monash University, Clayton, VIC, Australia;
Centre for Wellbeing Science, Melbourne Graduate School of Education, University of Melbourne, Parkville, VIC, Australia

Dimitris Anastasiou Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL, USA

Joanna Anderson University of New England, Armidale, Australia

Gökmen Arslan Department of Psychological Counseling and Guidance, Mehmet Akif Ersoy University, Burdur, Turkey;
Centre for Wellbeing Science, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Australia

Greg Auhl Division of Learning and Teaching, Charles Sturt University, Bathurst, NSW, Australia

Jeanmarie Badar Independent Scholar, Afton, VA, USA

Alan Bain School of Teacher Education, Charles Sturt University, Bathurst, NSW, Australia

Quinton Baker Department of Psychology, Eastern Washington University, Cheney, WA, US

Christopher L. Barrell Monash University, Monash, Australia

Emily Berger Faculty of Education, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia

Christopher Boyle School of Education, The University of Adelaide, Adelaide, Australia

Kerryn Butler-Henderson School of Health and Biomedical Sciences, RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia

Denise Chapman Faculty of Education, Monash University, Clayton, Australia;
Faculty of Education, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia

Kim Collett University of Exeter, Exeter, UK

Shane Costello Monash University, Melbourne, Australia

Heather Craig School of Public Health, Monash University, Melbourne, VIC, Australia

Jean B. Crockett University of Florida, Gainesville, FL, USA

Leire Darretxe University of the Basque Country, Leioa, Spain

Levita D'Souza Faculty of Education, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia

Nastaran Ershad Department of Exceptional Children, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran, Iran

Marion Felder University of Applied Sciences, Koblenz, Germany

Ilana Finefter-Rosenbluh Faculty of Education, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia

Marilyn Fleer Faculty of Education, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia

Nerelie C. Freeman Faculty of Education, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia

Zuriñe Gaintza University of the Basque Country, Leioa, Spain

Nicholas Gamble Monash University, Melbourne, Australia

Linda Gilmore Faculty of Creative Industries, Education and Social Justice, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia

DeLeon L. Gray Department of Teacher Education and Learning Sciences, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC, US

Jessica Grembecki Monash University, Monash, Australia

Christine Grové Faculty of Education, Monash University, Clayton, Australia;
Faculty of Education, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia

Christine Grové Faculty of Education, Monash University, Melbourne, VIC, Australia

Daniel P. Hallahan University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA, USA

Amanda Heffernan Faculty of Education, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia

Garry Hornby University of Plymouth, Plymouth, UK

Mads Johan Øgaard University of Exeter, Exeter, UK

Diane Johnson Department of Teacher Education and Learning Sciences, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC, US

James M. Kauffman University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA, USA

Sarika Kewalramani Faculty of Education, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia

Mustafa Kılınç Department of Measurement and Evaluation in Education, Mehmet Akif Ersoy University, Burdur, Turkey

Stella Laletas Faculty of Education, Monash University, Melbourne, VIC, Australia

Fraser Lauchlan University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, UK

Nicole Leach Department of Educational Psychology, University of North Texas, Denton, TX, US

Fiona Longmuir Faculty of Education, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia

Joao Lopes University of Minho, Braga, Portugal

Grace Mackie Faculty of Education, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia

Glenys Mann Faculty of Creative Industries, Education and Social Justice, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia

Fiona May Monash University, Melbourne, Australia

Vicki McKenzie Educational Psychology, Melbourne Graduate School of Education, University of Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

Michele Morgan DePaul University, Chicago, USA

Zoe A. Morris Monash University, Melbourne, Australia

Angela Page University of Newcastle, Callaghan, Australia

Lefteris Patlamazoglou Monash University, Melbourne, Australia

Donna Pennell Faculty of Creative Industries, Education and Social Justice, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia

Panagiotis Pentaris University of Greenwich, London, UK

Paige C. Pullen University of Florida, Gainesville, FL, USA

Andrea Reupert Faculty of Education, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia

Umesh Sharma Monash University, Melbourne, Australia

Shiri Krebs Faculty of Business and Law, Deakin University, Melbourne, Australia

Carl R. Smith Iowa State University, Ames, IA, USA

Ahmet Tanhan Department of Psychological Counseling and Guidance, Adıyaman University, Adıyaman, Turkey

Jason Wornoff Department of Teacher Education and Learning Sciences, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC, US

Gerald Wurf School of Educational Psychology and Counselling, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia

Hannah Yared Faculty of Education, Monash University, Clayton, Australia

Murat Yıldırım Department of Psychology, Ağrı İbrahim Çeçen University, Ağrı, Turkey

Shayne Zimmerman Department of Teacher Education and Learning Sciences, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC, US

Understanding the Issues in Inclusive Education: Working Towards Equitable and Accessible Education for All Students

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Christopher Boyle and Kelly-Ann Allen

Abstract

Understanding the issues that can affect successful inclusive education implementation is crucial in order to be successful. The focus of this chapter is around teachers' attitudes to inclusion and their involvement in programme development. Often teachers are left out of discussions and inclusive education can be thrust upon them without adequate resourcing. There is evidence that by involving teaching staff, there is more chance of the inclusive programme being successful and meaningful. In this chapter Michael Lipsky's pioneering sociological work on street-level bureaucrats is linked to inclusion policy and teacher willingness to engage with the approach. There is no doubt that inclusion is a perennially interesting and challenging subject in education. There are many chapters in this volume which consider various issues such as: student teacher perspectives, social inclusion, serious mental health issues, and teacher attitudes to inclusion. The topic of inclusion is now wide and varied, and this volume encapsulates the range of contemporary arguments and ensures that the reader is engaged on this journey.

Keywords

Inclusive education · Attitudes to inclusion · Barriers · Teacher attitudes · Street-level bureaucrat

1.1 Introduction

The concept of inclusion in society and especially that of inclusive education is a perennially controversial subject. Mainly this is because of the difficulty in having a reasonable consensus of what inclusion actually means in practice. Like many policy implementations, there is always the *de jure* and *de facto* thus meaning that what is actually practised may be quite different to that of its original conception. It is this inability to define the concept, which has proved problematic, amongst other aspects. But if we move away from the issue of definition and consider what we do in order to improve the education of all students then we may be better able to move the debate practically forward.

It was the philosopher Herbert Spencer who stated that *the great aim of education is not knowledge but action.* This especially applies to

C. Boyle (✉)
University of Adelaide, Adelaide, Australia
e-mail: chris.boyle@adelaide.edu.au

K.-A. Allen
School of Educational Psychology and Counselling, Faculty of Education, Monash University, Clayton, VIC, Australia

Centre for Wellbeing Science, Melbourne Graduate School of Education, University of Melbourne, Parkville, VIC, Australia

inclusive education, and this has been evident in the thrusting forward of various international, as well as national, policies most notably the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO 1994, 1995). Inclusive education is the dominant approach to education across most countries of the world. However, despite impressive strides forward many '*nations are still grappling with inclusive education, from the seemingly straightforward task of defining what it actually is, to the more complex challenge of its implementation*' (Boyle and Anderson 2020a, b, p. 883). One of the issues of policy implementation when it comes from higher up the organisational ladder is that the people who are tasked with its implementation may not have been sufficiently involved in the project, and the process, therefore, may not feel invested in its success. This is a crucial and often underplayed issue and having teachers supportive of any major policy implementation is paramount to its positive or negative trajectory.

1.2 Implementing Inclusion

It may seem obvious, but teachers must be fully involved in the decision-making processes, which take place in schools and the community in order to effectively implement new initiatives such as that of inclusive education. The teaching staff operate at the ground level and will use the method that they know to be most successful for the students involved. This is an example of what Lipsky (1980, 2010) referred to as the 'street-level bureaucracy', where direct (front-line) workers make decisions that are best for the client, irrespective of 'company policy'. They are the de facto implementers of change. Policy-makers can forget that there is a street-level bureaucracy (Lipsky 1980, 2010) and if people at the ground level, who in effect, have to implement the policy are not in agreement with the philosophy underpinning the change, then the chances of success are naturally diminished.

The theories put forward by Lipsky are extrapolated to suggest that teachers are pivotal to the successes or otherwise of policy implementation. Boyle and colleague's reviews and studies

(Boyle et al. 2012, 2013; Boyle and Anderson 2020a, b) of teacher attitudes towards inclusion brought to the fore the issue that an important element in the inclusion of students with additional support needs was that of teacher attitudes towards the policy and by extension the students themselves. An important variable that seemed to be sometimes lacking in the implementation of inclusive education was that of teacher attitudes. The whole-school approach is, of course, desirable and necessary but individual attitudes are also important in order to ensure that they contribute towards a successful policy implementation. This concept is demonstrated in Fig. 1.1.

Whilst teacher attitudes clearly do not exist in isolation and are affected by many variables such as school management support (Mac Ruairc 2020) and resourcing (Boyle et al. 2012) amongst others, the links between teacher attitudes and successful inclusive practice is undeniable. Importantly, attitudes to working with children who have special educational needs is clearly an important subject area, and the belief of the individual people who are charged with working in front-line services is an essential ingredient of the success or failure of inclusion in mainstream classes. When a general question or statement about inclusion is made then it is inevitable that different people will perceive what they have heard based on their own belief system. The critical point to consider is that often there are very different opinions as to what inclusion *actually* is, and this inevitably leads to difficulties in research if the concept cannot be broadly and consitently defined.

1.3 Resourcing Inclusion

The level of support that teachers will receive can vary within all levels of education such as school, local authority, and national governments (Boyle et al. 2012). It follows that successful inclusion policies are dependent upon the appropriate level of resourcing being available to the school and ultimately to the classroom teachers. Resourcing does not necessarily mean extra personnel such as classroom assistants or

Fig. 1.1 The Damaging
Cyclical Effect of Negative
Attitudes to Inclusion (Boyle
et al. 2020, p. 130)
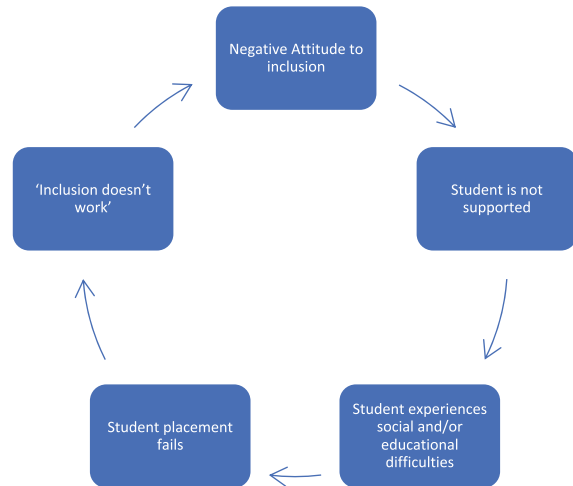
co-teachers but can be as diverse as professional development courses or improvements in staff morale and peer support. Boyle, Anderson and Allen (2020) found that *'informal and formal teacher peer support was one of the most effective resources available to teachers to ensure effective inclusive education'* (p. 135). The positive influence of other school staff can be extremely positive in encouraging inclusive environments (Mulholland and O'Connor 2016). Simply, the importance of peer support in successfully implementing inclusive education should not be underestimated (Boyle et al. 2012) nor should teachers' involvement in intervention design be underplayed. Ainscow (2015, p. 135) describes them as 'highly influential' and 'crucial' to its success. This evidence supports Lipsky's (1980, 2010) observations regarding the street-level workforce's support being required in order to ensure success in supporting the inclusion policy. School staff are no different to other workers in this regard, and their support and belief in the process is a must to ensure *real*, lasting and meaningful positive change.

From the results of various studies (e.g., Boyle et al. 2012, 2013; Hoskin et al. 2015), it is possible to suggest that the attitudes of teaching staff to inclusion are interlinked with the success or otherwise of inclusion programmes and as such consideration must be given to how this is addressed so that teachers are involved in the

planning of these programmes. Ainscow (2007) suggests that, *'…the focus must not only be on practice; it must also address and sometimes challenge the thinking behind ways of working'* (p. 6). The views of teaching staff are paramount as to whether large projects driven by government policies are effective or not (Lipsky 1980). Collaboration and full planning involvement of teaching staff will improve the chances of success and *'Professional attitudes may well act to facilitate or constrain the implementation of policies which may be radical or controversial, for the success of innovative and challenging programmes must surely depend upon the co-operation and commitment of those most directly involved'.* (Avramidis et al. 2000, p. 192).

It follows that there is a possibility that the lack of personnel resources that have been identified by the aforementioned researchers may be fuelling some negative feelings towards inclusion from teaching staff as opposed to the teachers being the cause. By understanding the teachers' perspectives and the reasons for their views on the success or failure of inclusion policies, this is going further towards the crux of the inclusion debate regarding how best to make the policy work. As has been discussed, it is the frontline staff who have extraordinary influence over the success of these approaches (Lipsky 1980). Through these studies, there is a clear understanding of the issues that can occur if

teachers' concerns regarding the implementation are not properly understood. Moreover, it is about how to rectify the situation positively, so that inclusion can be as effective as possible in as many schools as possible.

The following chapters in this volume consider the varied and challenging issues in inclusive education. They have some of the most important contemporary writers in the field and set out deliberately to challenge current thinking and assumptions. Inclusive education is something to be approached with excitement, yet also to critique and question.

Chapter 2 *Teachers' Attitudes to Inclusive Education in Australia* by *Christopher Boyle, Kelly-Ann Allen* and *Jessica Grembecki* discusses the challenges associated with inclusive education and how teachers' attitude towards inclusion affects inclusive practices. This chapter begins with an overview of special education in Australia highlighting both the benefits and challenges to inclusive education. The chapter tackles relevant policies and regulations as well as implementation considerations for inclusive education. The different factors affecting pre-service and in-service teachers' views and attitudes toward inclusion are identified. In particular, high levels of self-efficacy are discussed in order for teachers to implement inclusive practice. Teacher training in special education and having close relationships or experiences in teaching someone with a disability are other factors that contribute to positive attitudes towards inclusion, which are discussed in the chapter.

Chapter 3 *Issues in Primary and Secondary Pre-Service Teachers' Attitudes towards Inclusive Education* by Christopher Boyle, Kelly-Ann Allen and Christopher L. Barrell reviews the attitudes of primary and secondary pre-service teachers towards inclusion accentuating the differences that exist between the two groups. Inclusive education has become the desired practice for progressive schools, yet there continues to be debate and confusion surrounding the implementation of inclusion in schools as is discussed in this chapter. The factors affecting both in-service and pre-service teachers' attitudes and their importance to inclusive education are

also explained. This chapter emphasises the need for quality inclusive education courses and training, and additional research on how teacher attitudes towards inclusion develop. It further suggests that careful application of inclusive education research is required, as it relates to the adoption and implementation of inclusion into the school system which ensures equality and leads to positive societal change.

Chapter 4 *The Importance of Pre-Service Secondary Teachers' Attitudes Towards Inclusive Education: The Positive Impact of Pre-Service Teacher Training* by *Christopher Boyle, Shane Costello* and *Kelly-Ann Allen* examines the impact of pre-service secondary teachers' attitudes and training on the implementation of inclusive practices in mainstream schools. Inclusion and the importance of teacher attitudes to inclusion are discussed in detail in this chapter. The authors review literature that suggests that professional development training for pre-service teachers aid improved competencies and attitudes toward inclusive education. The chapter emphasises that while pre-service secondary teachers have generally positive attitudes towards inclusion, sufficient and ongoing training, and further research in this area is still required.

Chapter 5 *Preparing Practitioners for Inclusive Practice: The Challenge of Building Schema to Reduce Cognitive Load* by *Greg Auhl* and *Alan Bain* argues the need to prepare teachers for inclusive education in order to reduce their cognitive load and allow them to be responsive to the needs of the students. This chapter discusses the importance of schema building and development in pre-service teachers and also explains the relationship between schema, cognition and teacher behaviour. The authors emphasise the importance of schema development for pre-service teachers in terms of reducing their cognitive load, improving problem-solving skills and preparing them for a diverse learning environment particularly in inclusive classrooms. Future research exploring the constructs of teacher cognition and schema development is called for in the chapter.

Chapter 6 *Young People with Serious Mental Health Problems: A Case for Inclusion* by

Heather Craig and *Kelly-Ann Allen* explores the impact of mental illness on social inclusion and young people's participation in education. This chapter discusses the impact of symptomatology associated with mental health problems on learning and the issues of social exclusion and stigma among individuals with mental health problems. It also highlights the role of schools in fostering a sense of belonging to meet the needs of young people with mental health issues. The authors suggest approaches and strategies that address stigma among young people with mental health problems in schools and highlight the critical need for mental health promotion and a sense of belonging to school by students.

Chapter 7 *Standing Out while Fitting In (SOFI): A Counternarrative on Black Males' Strivings for Inclusiveness at a Predominantly Black High School* by *DeLeon L. Gray, Nicole Leach, Diane Johnson, Shayne Zimmerman, Jason Wornoff* and *Quinton Baker* discusses the Black adolescent males' experiences of fitting in and standing out. This chapter is based on a recent study that utilised information obtained from focus-group interviews with 16 African American male students. The study presented in the chapter explored the perspectives of Black males on inclusion and the strategies used to stand out while fitting in at school. Four primary themes emerge from the study: Black masculine literacy practices, standing out while fitting in in the classroom, group affiliation, and domains or excellence versus adequacy. The authors discuss constructive methods to help Black male students fulfil their desires to stand out and fit in, specifically through the increased presence of Black male organisations in Black high schools, interactive and socially based learning activities, and in-school exercises to enhance student reliance on high scholastic achievement.

Chapter 8 *What Norwegian Individuals Diagnosed with Dyslexia, Think and Feel about the Label 'Dyslexia'* by *Mads Johan Øgaard, Christopher Boyle* and *Fraser Lauchlan* shares the perceptions of individuals with dyslexia on the label 'dyslexia'. This chapter clarifies the definition of dyslexia as a social construct. Moreover, it explores the impact of dyslexia on

the individual's life—how it affects self-esteem, attitudes and motivation. This chapter also examines whether diagnosis and support benefit individuals with dyslexia. The authors suggest that while most participants have negative views about dyslexia as it is often related to difficult experiences, failure and stigma, some participants believe that being labelled gave them the support and tools they needed to cope.

Chapter 9 *Social Inclusion to Promote Mental Health and Well-Being of Youths in Schools* by *Gökmen Arslan, Murat Yıldırım, Ahmet Tanhan* and *Mustafa Kılınç* presents a strong case for the importance of social inclusion for improving mental health and well-being of young people specifically in the school settings. The authors discuss social inclusion in detail and relate it to belonging and the need for inclusion as a basic psychological need. The chapter also discusses challenges associated with inclusive education and ways to foster a sense of connectedness amongst students. The authors emphasise the need to form positive inclusive environments and also provide inclusive experiences to improve students' sense of belonging, experience and well-being.

Chapter 10 *Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Inclusive Education* by *Abbas Abdollahi* and *Nastaran Ershad* provides an overview of ASD and identifies the challenges experienced by individuals with ASD and their families related to inclusive education. The chapter also explores the issues young people with ASD face during the different developmental stages of adolescence before reaching adulthood, which has implications for future life in potential employment. The participation of parents, peers and teachers in inclusive education for individuals with ASD is discussed comprehensively. The authors offer practical solutions for implementing inclusive education for individuals with ASD, tailoring interventions to specific individual needs aimed at improving the school experience.

Chapter 11 *LGBTQ Relationships and Sex Education for Students* by *Lefteris Patlamazoglou* and *Panagiotis Pentaris* focuses on LGBTQ-inclusive education in primary and secondary schools. Within the school environment and communities, LGBTQ students are

identified to be at risk of social exclusion and victimisation. This chapter tackles sexuality, gender and formal education, and the importance of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum in schools. Specifically discussed are the benefits and challenges of RSE through schools and social media. Social media can be considered as a valuable source of sexuality and gender information as well as a venue for social support communication among LGBTQ youth. However, online spaces can provide inaccurate, misleading and biased content. The authors suggest that more studies are needed to investigate online sexual health education for LGBTQ, and schools should remain as the primary source of information through policies and practices that promote LGBTQ-inclusive education. The authors also identifies a gap in the literature related to LGBTQ-inclusive sexuality education and provides suggestions for further research.

Chapter 12 *An inclusive response to students with rare diseases from a community perspective: The importance of the active role of associations* by *Zuriñe Gaintza* and *Leire Darretxe* is based on a study that focused on adolescents with rare diseases (RD) and their families' experiences and perceptions. This chapter highlights the value of children and adolescents with RD, and their families' input in ensuring quality inclusive practices. It emphasises the fundamental role of associations in raising awareness and positive views on RD, as well as in creating alliances for inclusive education. Moreover, the importance of having families and other community agents involved in providing individual educational responses for students with RD to improve their quality of life is discussed.

Chapter 13 *Who Belongs in Schools? How the Education System Fails Racially Marginalised Students* by *Hannah Yared, Christine Grové* and *Denise Chapman* explores the impact of race for school belonging and talks about how one-size-fits-all approaches have failed to support the needs of all students. Issues related to racism, racial bias and exclusion are discussed. This chapter identifies the impacts of inclusion and exclusion in schools particularly on mental health and well-being, and identity and belonging. Also presented in this chapter are the approaches to implementing effective inclusive education practices by focusing on three crucial levels: broader systemic issues, the classroom/school context, and the individual teacher. To achieve a truly equitable education that caters to the needs of all students, it is necessary to adopt anti-bias and anti-racist teaching practices.

Chapter 14 *Inclusive Secondary Schooling: Challenges in Developing Effective Parent-Teacher Collaborations* by *Linda Gilmore, Glenys Mann* and *Donna Pennell* discusses the experiences of Australian teachers and parents of mainstreamed students with special educational needs on inclusion in high school. The challenges and obstacles to successful parent–teacher partnerships based on the views of both parents and teachers are presented. The authors suggest that parents and teachers are differently invested in the development of collaborative relationships. The obstacles for parents are poor communication and lack of trust, whereas teachers perceive parents as needy and demanding. This chapter highlights the value of collaborations, valuing parents' inputs, mutual trust, respect and understanding between parents and teachers for a successful inclusive educational setting.

Chapter 15 *Working with Families of Students with Disabilities in Primary Schools* by *Gerald Wurf* reviews international findings from quantitative studies on parent's perception of inclusion in schools. Despite jurisdictions that support inclusive educational practices, parents still report a lack of support from schools and the presence of restrictive practices in schools. These restrictions, according to parents, prevent students with disabilities from accessing the full range of the curriculum. This chapter presents teachers' and students' perceptions of school–family collaborations and identifies seven collaboration principles for implementing inclusive education: communication, professional competence, respect, commitment, equality, advocacy and trust.

Chapter 16 *Parents' and Educators' Perspectives on Inclusion of Students with Disabilities* by *James M. Kauffman, Bernd Ahrbeck,*

Dimitris Anastasiou, Jeanmarie Badar, Jean B. Crockett, Marion Felder, Daniel P. Hallahan, Garry Hornby, Joao Lopes, Paige C. Pullen and *Carl R. Smith* explores the views and attitudes of parents and educators towards inclusive education particularly for students with disabilities. The authors suggest that some parents prefer special education for some students with a disability and consider inclusive placement for others. This chapter reviews numerous studies and suggests that teachers have a more nuanced view of inclusion than that envisioned under a full inclusion policy. Nonetheless, the authors conclude that generally both parents and teachers support inclusive education. The issues related to achieving inclusive and quality education are also discussed in this chapter. In this chapter, the authors advocate for inclusion to be based on learning progress and outcomes and suggest implications for policy and practice.

Chapter 17 *The Importance of Children and Young People's Voices in Debates on Inclusive Education* by *Kim Collett* and *Christopher Boyle* emphasises that inclusive practices can only be successful if the perspectives of children and young people are considered. This chapter defines inclusive education in detail and discusses how children and young people view this concept based on their own experiences and feelings. Moreover, the role of other stakeholders in research, debate and decision-making are also emphasised in this chapter. The authors suggest that children and young peoples' voices alongside the inputs of other stakeholders are keys to achieving reform and inclusivity. This chapter also examines the barriers and tensions in secondary schools in relation to education due to market competition and neoliberalism.

Chapter 18 *Educational Psychology: A Critical Part of Inclusive Education* by *Christine Grové* and *Stella Laletas* highlights the role and importance of educational psychology in inclusive education and in addressing the needs of vulnerable youth. This chapter begins with a comprehensive overview of the relationship between educational psychology and inclusive education. It highlights the role of educational psychologists in facilitating systemic change in educational inclusion and providing necessary support for students. In addition, this chapter recognises student-centred practices and participatory methods as effective approaches for fostering inclusion. These approaches ensure the promotion of equity, student agency and participation of all students and improved educational practices that ultimately promote student wellbeing.

Chapter 19 *The Value of Flexible Options as Enablers in Inclusion* by *Vicki McKenzie* is based on a study among students with severe behavioural issues. The study examines youth resources and resilience within a 6-month period in a withdrawal setting with programs that promote motivation and positive change in behaviour. Results outlined in the chapter show improvement in behaviour, reduced depression scores, and greater success upon return to school among the participants. The key elements that may help drive positive behavioural change among young people are identified. This chapter presents valuable insights into improving attitudes towards inclusion, relationships with teachers, and attendance and motivation amongst students.

Chapter 20 *At the Nexis of schooling: The Conflict between 'Special' and 'Inclusive' Education* by *Joanna Anderson*, *Angela Page* and *Christopher Boyle* examines the available literature that focuses on the issues of special versus inclusive education. The authors suggest that inclusive education has always been linked to the politics of disability and education and argue that there is currently a debate on whether inclusive education provides benefits or disadvantages to students with disabilities as its focus is on the *place* of education rather than the instruction or curriculum. This chapter discusses the transition from special to inclusive education and its current status in Australia. Results of a study examining the perceptions of principals on inclusive education as well as the factors that influence their views are also presented in the chapter.

Chapter 21 *Belonging as a Core Construct at the Heart of the Inclusion Debate, Discourse, and Practice* by *Kelly-Ann Allen, Christopher Boyle, Umesh Sharma, Lefteris Patlamazoglou,*

Panagiotis Pentaris, Christine Grové, Hannah Yared, Emily Berger, Nicholas Gamble, Zoe Morris, Ilana Finefter-Rosenbluh, Michele Morgan and *Fiona May* argues that inclusion can only be achieved with the presence of belonging. In this chapter, the significant role of belonging in inclusion, specifically for the marginalised groups including LGBTQ, racially diverse and students with disability is discussed. Both social inclusion and belonging are linked to positive mental health and well-being. The authors recognise a sense of belonging as a fundamental aspect of discourse, research and assessment of inclusive education. A conceptual model of equity, inclusion, diversity and belonging is presented in this Chapter.

Chapter 22 *Inclusion begins at home: gender equity an imperative first step towards a truly inclusive academy* by *Kelly-Ann Allen, Christine Grové, Kerryn Butler-Henderson, Andrea Reupert, Fiona Longmuir, Ilana Finefter-Rosenbluh, Emily Berger, Amanda Heffernan, Nerelie C. Freeman, Sarika Kewalramani, Shiri Krebs, Levita D'Souza, Grace Mackie, Denise Chapman,* and *Marilyn Fleer*. The chapter explores the experiences of inclusion for people working in academia who identify as women and highlight that their experience is different to that of men. The authors provide a critical review of gender equity and discuss the academic benchmarks concerned with research productivity, and how these may differ between men and women. The chapter points to a series of gender-based discrepancies in academic work that unfairly disadvantage women and point to systemic solutions to be adopted by university leaders and policy-makers. The chapter suggests that inclusion needs to occur in the higher education space for academic staff.

Chapter 23 *The Inclusive Paradox: The Lived Experience versus the Theory* by *Kelly-Ann Allen* and *Christopher Boyle* begins with a vignette about Taylor and her experience as an individual with ASD. It narrates the obstacles faced in mainstream schools and how a special developmental school offered a place where she could thrive. The chapter suggests that inclusion is a dynamic, multifaceted and individualised

construct. The authors summarise the strengths of current inclusion practices and offer future directions and suggestions for improving inclusive education through collaborative work.

1.4 Conclusion

Inclusive practices in the modern school setting: Future directions and perspectives edited by *Christopher Boyle* and *Kelly-Ann Allen* presents a projective discussion of inclusion within the rapidly changing landscape of schools and society. This book highlights a key role for individuals in driving change for the way inclusion is understood and applied, as well as how researchers and academics can empower people at a social and community level to be informed and encouraged through disseminating research in a way that is accessible and of interest to the general public. Taken together, this collection of international perspectives on inclusion offers a robust account of contemporary views for the purpose of future research and practice in the area of education and for the benefit of all students.

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Christopher Boyle, PhD, FBPsS, is a Professor of Inclusive Education and Educational Psychology in the School of Education at The University of Adelaide, Australia. He is a Fellow of the British Psychological Society and a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. He was previously the Editor in Chief of The Educational Academy. He was previously the Editor in Chief of The Educational and Developmental Psychologist (2012–2017) and is the founding co-editor of Belonging and Human Connection (with Kelly Allen) launched in 2022. He is an internationally recognised and respected academic and author on the subjects of inclusive education and psychology. He is a registered psychologist in the UK and Australia.

Kelly-Ann Allen, PhD, FAPS, is an Educational and Developmental Psychologist and an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education, Monash University, and an Honorary Senior Fellow at the Centre for Wellbeing Science, University of Melbourne. She is also the Lead-director and founder of the Global Belonging Collaborative and is the Editor-in-Chief of the Educational and Developmental Psychologist as well as the current and founding Co-Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Belonging and Human Connection with Professor Chris Boyle. The quality of her research has been acknowledged through several awards, including recognition by The Australian's data-science partner, The League of Scholars and independently ranked as Best In Field for research contributions over a four year period.

Part I
Inclusion in Teacher Training

Teachers' Attitudes to Inclusive Education in Australia

2

Christopher Boyle, Kelly-Ann Allen, and Jessica Grembecki

Abstract

Inclusion is a concept that has gained momentum across the world (Sharma et al. 2018). While inclusive practices are always evolving, there has been a slow but definite progression in the shift towards an inclusive future. In today's inclusive climate more and more children with special educational needs (SEN) are entering the mainstream classroom in which teachers are expected to cater to their needs (Bentley-Williams et al. 2017). However, this may prove problematic if teachers hold negative attitudes towards the inclusion of these students. Teachers' attitudes towards inclusion may influence their willingness to accommodate students with special educational needs in regular classrooms (Bentley-Williams et al. 2017). Additionally, negative teacher attitudes towards inclusion generally sustain substandard academic achievements and behaviours for students with special educational needs (Bradley 2009). Therefore, as the topic of inclusion opens for debate, teacher attitudes become of particular interest. In order to gain a solid understanding of the complex issues associated with inclusion it is essential to examine relevant policy and legislation changes, prevalence of students with special needs, inclusive benefits and concerns, pre and in-service teacher attitudes and pre and in-service teacher training programmes in special education.

2.1 Introduction

Inclusion is a concept that has gained momentum across the world (Sharma et al. 2018). While inclusive practices are always evolving, there has been a slow but definite progression in the shift towards an inclusive future. It was reported in 2015 that 7.4% of children from 0 to 14 years experienced some level of difficulty and 4% had a severe level of disability (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2020a). Fortunately, in today's inclusive climate more and more students with special educational needs are entering the

C. Boyle (✉)
University of Adelaide, Adelaide, Australia
e-mail: chris.boyle@adelaide.edu.au

K.-A. Allen
School of Educational Psychology and Counselling, Faculty of Education, Monash University, Clayton, VIC, Australia

Centre for Wellbeing Science, Melbourne Graduate School of Education, University of Melbourne, Parkville, VIC, Australia

J. Grembecki
Monash University, Melbourne, Australia

mainstream classroom where teachers are expected to cater for their needs (Bentley-Williams et al. 2017). However, if teachers hold more negative attitudes towards the inclusion of these students, this may prove problematic. Attitudes influence practice (Malak 2013) and as such negative attitudes may impact a teacher's willingness to accommodate students with additional educational needs in their classrooms (Bentley-Williams et al. 2017). Studies have shown that this can result in poorer academic and social outcomes for students with additional educational needs (Bradley 2009). Therefore, as inclusion continues to endure within much of the educational discourse globally, teacher attitudes are of particular interest. In order to better understand the complexity of issues associated with inclusion and its struggle to move from policy rhetoric to classroom practice, it is essential to examine pre and in-service teacher attitudes towards the construct in light of relevant policy and legislation, benefits and concerns of inclusion, and the adequacy of pre and in-service teacher training programmes.

2.2 A History of Australian Policy

Although the equitable provision of education to all students is still far from reality in Australia (Anderson and Boyle 2019), there has been progress over the past fifty years. Prior to the 1970s many students with complex or profound disabilities did not attended school at all, with only those considered to be 'educable' or 'trainable' enrolled in special schools (Loreman et al. 2011). The year of 1973 saw the release of the *Schools in Australia* report, a report which insisted on a valuing of diversity within Australian education, and by 1981 every State and Territory had a policy for students with a disability (ACER, 1998). Since then, Australian educational policy and legislation have undergone numerous reforms, moving away from the notion of segregation, to integration, to what is now considered the standard for the education of students with disabilities, inclusion.

While education in Australia is administered by the eight states and territories, each jurisdiction is bound by federal legislation. Although education in an inclusive environment is not a right (Dickson 2008), education must be enacted in accordance with a variety of legislative acts, including the *Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986*, and the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (DDA). In 1994, the inclusion agenda was expedited when Australia signed the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO 1994); a globally ratified document considered an integral part of the inclusion movement (Anderson and Boyle 2019) that advocated for the equitable and inclusive participation of all students in education, irrespective of their intellectual, social, physical, linguistic or emotional needs (UNESCO 1994). A decade later inclusion had failed to establish itself as standard practice (Forlin 2006), and a supplementary set of standards that explicitly laid out the requirements on education systems under the DDA, the *Disability Standards for Education 2005*, were released. This document stipulated the way factors such as student support services, harassment and victimisation, curriculum development and delivery, and enrolment should be managed.

While legislation may seem a step in the right direction, the presence of inclusive rhetoric within these documents does not guarantee success (Slee 2018).

A nationwide government review found educational establishments fell short of the standard in terms of their ability to meet the needs of students with special educational needs. The report concluded that teachers were undertrained, students with special educational needs were not handled correctly, and funding was insufficient (APSEWRERC, 2002). A separate inquiry revealed teachers received little or no pre-service training in special education, in-service training was scarce, and access to teachers with specialist skills was often not available (Rohl and Milton 2002). Typically the theme of most papers investigating inclusive practices in Australia conclude that while current standards have come a long way, they still fall short of expectation (Bourke 2010; Fields 2007; Howard and Ford 2007; Loreman et al. 2011; Subban and Sharma 2006; Westwood and Graham 2003).

2.3 Understanding Special Educational Needs in Australia: Prevalence, Implications and Concerns

In 2017, the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data recorded that more than 700,000 students in Australia receive an educational adjustment due to their disability. The students that are identified in this process as having a disability are students that have received a reasonable adjustment to their teaching and learning. However, there is concern that there are some students who continue not to receive accommodations or adjustments and remain undetected (Berman and Graham 2018). While special educational needs have historically been defined as an umbrella term used to describe students who either have a disability, show significant difficulties in varied areas of learning as a result of either temporary or longstanding cognitive, physical or emotional problems, or may fall into either of those categories if no additional support provisions are made (Farrell 2009). For example, it has been suggested that students presenting with special needs that do not have an identifiable disability are at greater risk of non-detection and as such, may proceed in the education system unnoticed and consequently under supported (Berman and Graham, 2018). Research suggests that between 10 and 16 percent of Australian students in mainstream classes present with a general learning disability (Thomas and Whitten 2012). In fact, 1 in 10 students with a disability are now attending mainstream schools (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2020b).

Reports indicate children and young people with disabilities are more likely to be attending mainstream schools today than at any time over the previous two decades (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2020b) including those with a severe disability (NSW Government Response 2011). Thus, such increased participation of students with special needs in mainstream classrooms has prompted researchers to assess the acceptance and implications of inclusion.

2.4 Benefits of Inclusive Education

Research has indicated a large sample of Australian parents held favourable attitudes towards inclusion (Stevens and Wurf 2018). Additionally, research has also suggested that inclusive practices are extensively recognised as beneficial for students with special educational needs, their peers, and teachers (Boyle et al. 2013; Boyle and Anderson 2020). Educating students with special educational needs alongside their peers can provide students with special educational needs with social and adaptive behaviours, a more stimulating environment, a greater sense of class and school membership, friendship opportunities and access to a curriculum that may not be received outside of the inclusive classroom (Vargas-Sanchez and Smith 2017). Benefits for students without special educational needs that participate in inclusive classrooms are received through gaining a greater acceptance of individual differences, displays of higher self-esteem levels, and increased tolerance and cooperative abilities (Kalya et al. 2007; Vargas-Sanchez and Smith 2017). Whereas teachers tend to develop greater awareness of individual differences, new teaching techniques and a better understanding of childhood development (Kalya et al. 2007; Sharma et al. 2018).

2.5 Challenges in Implementing Inclusive Education

Needless to say, not all arguments regarding inclusion follow the same positive tone. Concerns from in-service and pre-service teachers such as a reduction in teacher time for non-students with special educational needs (Forlin et al. 2008), a lack of teacher training (Bentley-Williams et al. 2017; McMillan et al. 2018; Forlin et al. 2008; Rohl and Milton 2002; Subban and Sharma 2006), additional time needed to effectively accommodate students with special educational needs (Round et al. 2014; Forlin et al. 2008), funding issues (Anderson and Boyle

2019), access to support personnel (Sharma and Jacobs 2016), lack of materials (Sharma et al. 2018) and pressure placed on schools to develop higher academic standards from legislatures (identified as being more difficult to achieve with the inclusion of students with special educational needs) have plagued the concept since it was first introduced (Slee 2010). As such, it seems clear that views towards inclusion are far from unanimous thus outlining the complexities associated with inclusive practice.

2.6 Common Practices in Implementing Inclusive Education

2.6.1 Pre-service Teacher Training

Generally, there remains somewhat little debate as to which methods of inclusive training are most effective. Researchers have commonly recognised three rudimentary components that typically increase positive attitudes in pre-service teachers: Confidence building (relating to the implementation of inclusive practice), knowledge acquisition (inclusive law and policy) and experience (close meaningful contact with students with special educational needs; Jordan et al. 2009; Loreman et al. 2007; Sharma et al. 2009). Researchers have also recognised that inclusive education heavily based on theoretics generally does not prove to promote substantial positive increases in the attitudes of pre-service teachers (Forlin and Chambers 2011). It appears that in order to successfully alter student teacher attitudes towards inclusion, special educational theory needs to be coupled with more prominent hands on strategic approaches so as to bridge the theoretical learning into real scenarios (Sosu et al. 2010; Spandagou et al. 2008). However, although pre-service teacher attitudes typically become more positive after engaging in such methods of training, they often remain only partially supportive of inclusion (Sharma et al. 2009; Boyle et al. 2013). As such, additional consideration needs to be given in the design of future programmes.

Since the early 2000s, the method that involves a combination of special or inclusive education and mainstream teaching approaches are put into practice (Cook 2002). This makes theoretical sense as many of the same teaching principles can be applied to children either with or without special educational needs (Cook 2002; Jordan et al. 2009). Additionally, merging special education units with mainstream teaching content may assist in reducing perceptual segregations of students with and without special educational needs (Gottfried et al. 2019). Florian and Rouse (2009) suggest that separating special education courses can act as reinforcement of the common assumption that special education is the responsibility of those who are expert in the field (e.g. special education teachers). Although a number of authors advocate this type of merged programme (Burton et al. 1992; Cook 2002; Stayton and McCollum 2002), and it theoretically falls in line with underpinning inclusion philosophy, such programmes are rare and under researched leaving the effects only speculative (Anderson and Boyle 2019).

2.6.2 In-Service Teacher Training

Although more and more students with special educational needs are participating in mainstream classes, few schools appear to mandate special education training for teachers (Gale et al. 2017; Bentley-Williams et al. 2017). Whilst gaining access and finding time for training may be somewhat problematic, given the current inclusive climate, it is important that practising teachers are aware of inclusive strategies and available support mechanisms.

Whilst little is known about how teachers' epistemological beliefs are developed so as to be reflected in their teaching methods (Jordan et al. 2009), attempts to better prepare educators for inclusive classrooms have taken on various forms. A rather labour-intensive method proven useful in up skilling teachers for inclusive classrooms involves functional assessment-based programmes as designed by Chandler (2000). This method involves providing extensive

inclusive practice strategies to teachers that are observed in class by a professional who then assists the teacher in the development of intervention planning and implementation. Showers and Joyce (1996) designed a successful less labour-intensive model of teacher development that involved peer coaching and collaboration. Although collaborative peer coaching has frequently been associated as a successful element in inclusive practice (Boyle et al. 2011; Round et al. 2015), it is also considered somewhat stressful for some teachers due to time constraints (Round et al. 2015).

As technology has advanced, so too have the means through which educational services are provided to teachers such as web-based training. Web-based training allows 24 hour access from any geographical location providing the availability of an internet connection (Forlin 2010b). Such methods have been noted not only to fit the busy schedule of a teacher, but to also be a professional and empowering method of learning (Forlin 2010a). While research suggests online special education courses are no different in presentation to the more traditional approaches (Ludlow and Collins 2016), it is not the ultimate solution for all issues with training.

2.7   A Review of Practising Teachers' Views Towards Inclusion

2.7.1   Teachers in Australia

Research regarding teacher attitudes towards inclusion has produced mixed results. Overall, such attitudes tend to be positive (Hsien 2007; Hsien et al. 2009; McKenzie 2010; Subban and Sharma 2005, 2006). However, there appear to be a range of factors associated with these levels of found positivity. A common finding emerging from the research suggests the severity and or disability specification of a student impacts upon a teacher's willingness to include certain students in mainstream classes. Victorian research found stronger apprehensions towards the inclusion of students with physical disabilities and self-care

problems in comparison to students with disabilities that present as withdrawn or shy (Subban and Sharma 2006). It has also been found that students presenting with behavioural and emotional disorders to be the least favoured for inclusion (Subban and Sharma 2005). However, these results reflect an extremely small cohort of primary school teachers and have the issues associated with self-report data collection attached.

Some research suggests those with emotional and behavioural problems are less favoured by teachers for inclusion (Lübke et al. 2019). Moreover, a sample of teachers in Queensland recognised the benefits of including children with Down Syndrome however only a small fraction saw the mainstream classroom to be the best option for education (Gilmore et al. 2003). General teaching experience and attitudes towards inclusion were also analysed in this study however no significant associations were found.

Hsien and colleagues (2009) looked at differing levels of educational degrees to identify the effects of higher education on pre and primary school teacher attitudes towards inclusion. Teacher attitudes across all levels of education (diploma, bachelor, graduate diploma and master degrees) typically favoured inclusion. Though, increases in positive attitudes were coupled with increases in education levels. These results were repeated in a separate Victorian study by McKenzie (2010). However, previous experience in teaching students with special educational needs was not statistically controlled during analysis. Research suggests previous experience in teaching students with special needs is associated with positive teacher attitudes (Rakap & Kaczmarek, 2010). As these samples likely engaged in such teaching, education levels alone cannot be definitively attributed to the apparent positive attitudinal increase. Aside from educational attainment, the association of other demographic factors such as age and gender was investigated. It was found that female teachers have a more positive attitude towards inclusion than their male colleagues (Vaz et al. 2015). In reference to age, older teachers tend to hold more

negative views towards inclusion which appears to relate to them having less access to inclusive teacher training (Vaz et al. 2015).

Subban and Sharma (2006) demonstrated that prior training in special education and close relations with a person who has a disability are both significant contributing factors towards positive teacher attitudes to inclusion. However, as Boyle et al. (2013) state the quality of the training was a real issue in the sector with some teachers reporting that they didn't know if they had received training on inclusion or not. Fisher and Purcal (2016) also found that teachers who had a family member and or worked closely with a person with a disability to have a greater awareness of inclusion. These findings are also in line with the Queensland study by Gilmore and colleagues (2003) who found teachers with greater inclusive classroom exposure were significantly more supportive of inclusion when compared to teachers with little or none.

Teachers' attitudes to inclusion have also been associated with levels of competency in teaching students with disabilities. Research conducted on primary school teachers in Victoria found those lacking in feelings of competency were less supportive of inclusion than those with high levels of confidence (Subban and Sharma 2006). Moreover, Hsien and associates (2009) and McKenzie (2010) revealed teachers with special education qualifications felt better prepared to include children with disabilities in their classrooms. These researchers also found those with special education qualifications disagreed with the idea that catering for the needs of every child in a classroom is unfeasible than did teachers holding qualifications outside the area of special education.

This finding was somewhat reconfirmed by Hsien's (2007) Victorian study with results indicating special and regular teacher attitudes towards inclusion to be equally positive, yet special education teachers had higher efficacy levels in respect to implementing inclusive practice. However, it is difficult to conclude that formal special education training is an isolated factor influencing teacher attitudes. Teachers who had high levels of experience in attending to the needs of children with special needs suggesting prior training alone may not be a sole contributing factor. Interestingly, although teachers with special education qualifications were less supportive of segregating children with severe or profound special needs, almost half remained neutral on the issue with a quarter in favour of the idea and a quarter against. Such a result yet again demonstrates the conflicting views that exist when considering movements towards a more inclusive future.

A teachers' personality is also an influential factor on their attitude towards inclusive teaching. In an online survey conducted with 466 adults, researchers asked them how openness and agreeableness, two dimension of the Big Five Personality Traits can affect one's prejudice level towards minority groups. The results revealed a positive correlation between the two variables (Page and Islam 2015).

While there appears an apparent trend for Australian teachers to prefer the inclusion of students who demand less support, there appears to be an apparent lack of research relating to Australian teachers in pre-service and in service for secondary school teaching. Teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education have been a specific focus in past research. This has revealed how critical teacher attitudes and values are for inclusive education for a student's learning and a teacher's willingness to embrace inclusion (Boyle et al. 2020). Teacher attitudes and values are unique to the individual. Thus, it is difficult to make broad generalisations for *all* teachers. However, empirical evidence has emphasised that inclusion is more effective when educators can overcome their own personal biases and prejudices and when they perceive inclusion as an integral part of education (Mackenzie et al. 2016).

2.7.2 International Literature on Teachers' Attitudes Towards Inclusion

The increasing number of students with special educational needs and the challenges experienced

in implementing inclusive education is common elsewhere around the world, not only in Australia. Other countries have also faced difficulties in implementation and execution. Research identifying teacher attitudes towards inclusion in various countries has produced mixed results. In the southern rural regions of the United States, Ross-Hill (2009) discovered teacher attitudes towards inclusion to be overall positive. Teachers from these districts had recently undergone specialised training to better incorporate students with special needs in mainstream classes. The same positive tone was found in research conducted in Italy. Sharma and colleagues (2018) found that Italian teachers have significantly positive attitudes and lower degree of concerns towards inclusion—more so than Australian teachers. Such findings are not surprising as inclusion has been a concept well known to those residing in Italy for over 40 years since its implementation in Italian law during 1977.

Internationally, the severity or type of special needs a student has tends to be highly associated with attitudes towards inclusion (Gyimah et al. 2009; Rakap and Kaczmarek 2009). Gyimah and colleagues (2009) found primary school teachers in Ghana held the least negative attitudes towards the inclusion of students with physical disabilities. For example, the majority of teachers favoured segregation of students who are hearing impaired (67.2%) and/or sight impaired (73.4%) into special schools with about a third of the sample reflecting popular opinion to segregate those with severe to profound intellectual disabilities. These results are somewhat in line with those produced from a Turkish sample (also of primary school teachers) by Rakap and Kaczmarek (2009) who too found extremely low levels of positive attitudes regarding the inclusion of students with visual and hearing impairments.

Rakap and Kaczmarek (2009) also found Turkish teachers to have negative attitudes towards students with behavioural difficulties. This result was repeated again in a sample of teachers from the southwest of England (Avramidis et al. 2000). In addition, these teachers were also found to be apprehensive about including students with emotional difficulties

(Avramidis et al. 2000). An additional unusual finding from the Ghanaian study (Gyimah et al. 2009) was the discovery that students with special educational needs with emotional and behavioural difficulties were least favoured for segregation. This perhaps provides some insight into the importance of cultural factors when considering attitudes towards inclusion. However, as no explicit distinctions were made regarding what was considered a mild to moderate difficulty in comparison to a severe to profound disability, each participant was forced to make the distinction of their own accord, and hence subjectively, potentially having adverse effects on results. A comprehensive review of teacher attitudes towards inclusion was conducted across Northeast, Southeast, Midwest and Western districts of the United States, New South Wales (Australia) and Montreal (Canada) from 1958 to 1995 (Scruggs and Masteropieri 1996). Although dated by today's standards the research synthesis, outlining systematic variability regarding inclusion measures, revealed a pattern of attitudes towards inclusion that we see evident in more recent literature (e.g. Avramidis and Norwich 2002; Subban and Sharma 2006). More specifically, students with mild disabilities may be more favoured for inclusion. While new research is needed to replicate these findings, this synthesis of literature demonstrates poor attitudes and practices towards inclusion can be pervasive throughout the decades.

Other research has yielded varying results regarding levels of positivity towards inclusion as per teaching focus comparisons. Research conducted by Forlin and colleagues (2008) indicated that teachers of preschooler to third grade were more concerned with not being able to adequately include students with special needs than were teachers at later educative levels (e.g. secondary). However, in another study participants were sampled from Western Australia where state policy has increased special educational support persons more so in later education (Australian Institute on Intellectual Disability 2007). Ross-Hill's (2009) study of pre, primary and secondary school teacher attitudes somewhat reconfirmed these findings whereby those

teaching at preschool and primary school levels were found to be more positive towards inclusion than those teaching in early secondary school levels (years 7 to 8).

In explanation, arguably teachers preparing to teach younger children are typically more responsible to establish and develop normative classroom behaviours, as children in later education levels are expected to have already developed in this regard (Johnston et al. 2007; Venn and Jahn 2004). Thus, those teaching in later education levels (e.g. secondary school), are proposed to be more strictly focused on academic content than teachers providing earlier education (Capel 2005). Consequently, it has been suggested that teachers more concerned with subject-matter, which is arguably those teaching in later educative levels, may from a practical point of view, perceive the presence of students with special educational needs as more problematic in regard to managing classroom activity (Alahababi 2009). Alternatively, contextual information may be of importance, as such findings may suggest that support systems for teachers educating at secondary levels may be inadequate, or absent.

In light of the limitations within and across studies, results presented here provide great international insight in regard to factors that impact or are associated with teacher attitudes towards inclusion. It seems that although some disparities exist in regard to attitudes associated with, teaching experience, special educational needs category and teaching level, other factors such as previous positive experiences with persons of disability and long-time implemented inclusive legislation tend to somewhat uniformly associate with positive attitudes towards inclusion.

Pre-service teacher attitudes towards inclusion are vital when considering the concept of inclusion as they are the group that progressively carries the responsibility to implement inclusive educational practices (Ryan 2009). Furthermore, as negative attitudes formed at the pre-service stage may transfer into practice (Smith 2000), it is highly important that they are identified and altered accordingly.

Spandagou and associates (2008) found primary school pre-service teachers in their second year of enrolment in a Bachelor of Teaching to overall display positive attitudes towards the inclusion of students with special needs. This finding was repeated again in a sample of pre-service teachers from Victoria and Western Australia despite the vast majority having had no additional prior training in special education (Loreman et al. 2007; Sharma et al. 2006). A landmark study by Sharma, Ee and Desai (2003) identified attitudes towards the inclusion of social, physical, academic and behavioural categories of SEN. Results pertaining to the Australian cohort within the study, indicated students requiring social and physical accommodations were most favoured for inclusion. The same authors also found knowledge of the DDA (Commonwealth of Australia 1992) to be the only significantly correlated variable with Australian pre-service teacher attitudes towards inclusion. Variables such as age, gender, qualifications, previous contact, special education training, confidence and experience in teaching students with special educational needs however were not. While these results are valuable, the sample size of 25 may not be an accurate representation of pre-service teacher cohorts, thus limiting the generalisability of results.

Carroll and colleagues (2003) looked at the levels of discomfort pre-service teachers had towards interactions with children who have disabilities. Age grouped dichotomously at above or below 30 years-of-age was not found to have significant differing effects on feelings of discomfort. However, this result should be interpreted knowing the majority of the sample (88%) belonged to the below 30 years-of-age groups. Perhaps if age had been grouped differently, differences may have emerged. The variables 'gender' and 'qualification level' were also not found to contribute significantly to feelings of discomfort, nor was the variable 'previous training in special education'. This is not surprising given the disproportionate number of students who had not received any prior special education training within this sample. Whilst the intimate level of contact was not recorded,

increases in total attitude scores were evident in participants proclaiming to have had contact with a person of disability.

It seems there is room for expansion in regard to literature focusing on Australian pre-service teacher attitudes towards inclusion. From the studies discussed here, it appears that Australian pre-service teachers are relatively positive towards inclusion. However, as observed from numerous literatures identifying attitudes towards inclusion, support for full inclusion is not supported within the Australian pre-service teacher context.

2.7.3 International Pre-service Teachers

There appear to be mixed attitudes towards inclusion for pre-service teachers across the world. The attitudes of pre-service teachers in Hong Kong have been found to only be marginally positive even after having undertaken units in special education (Stella et al. 2007). In Pune, India, attitudes towards inclusion were found to be somewhat negative (Sharma et al. 2009). However, as noted by the authors, attitudinal assessment took place at the beginning of an inclusive educational unit, whereby if collected at the end, results may have altered due to training. The impacts of special education training on attitudes towards inclusion have further been noted by various authors (Evans et al. 2007; Sosu et al. 2010; Spandagou et al. 2008). Furthermore, the general attitude from a sample of pre-service teachers in one area of Scotland was found to be overall positive before having commenced any such training relating to their degree or special education, and after engaging in such training, attitudes towards inclusion increased in positivity (Sosu et al. 2010). Moreover, research conducted by Forlin and colleagues (2009) found training in special education increased at the same rate for those who both had, and had not, undertaken prior training in special education. However, those that did undertake prior training were more positive towards inclusion overall.

Northern Ireland has an education system where academic selection is commonplace (Lambe and Bones 2006). Although pre-service teachers in Northern Ireland tend to have positive attitudes towards the underpinning philosophy of inclusion and inclusive practices, they also hold a common belief that students should be educated alongside peers of a similar academic level and henceforth, not inclusively (Lambe and Bones 2006). A study conducted in England found student teacher attitudes towards inclusion to be overall positive (Avramidis, et al. 2000). Considering participants were drawn from one university such results may not accurately reflect the attitudes of all English pre-service teachers. Moreover, pre-service teachers in Mexico were found to be overall positive towards inclusion, though participants preparing to teacher older children were somewhat more negative than those preparing to teach younger children (Forlin et al. 2010).

Some studies have revealed gender as an important factor (Avramidis et al. 2000; Stella et al. 2007; Forlin et al. 2010) while others have not (Hastings and Oakford 2003; Sharma et al. 2009). This also appears to be the case for the variable 'age'. Avramidis and colleagues (2000) found no significant correlation between age and attitudes whereas Sharma and colleagues (2003) did.

Close relations with someone with a disability or prior special education training associated with increased positive attitudes to inclusion of pre-service teachers in Singapore (Sharma et al. 2003), Mexico (Forlin et al. 2010), and Hong Kong (Stella et al. 2007), though not for a sample in India (Sharma et al. 2009). However, this would be expected as the latter sample largely had no contact at all (97%). Teaching experience has been found to associate with more positivity towards inclusion (Forlin et al. 2010). Though, experience teaching students with special educational needs failed to significantly associate with more positive attitudes to inclusion in Ireland (Hastings and Oakford 2003) and India (Subban and Sharma 2009). However, as the sample from India largely had no training in this area, such

results are not surprising. Participants in Ireland also displayed no differences regarding the variables, experience with "a person of disability" and "previous social contact" (Hastings and Oakford 2003). However, both variables (social contact and teaching experience with students with special educational needs) were scored dichotomously and therefore did not contain information regarding the extent of contact or experience. Contact *per se* is not what improves attitudes to inclusion; it is the meaningfulness of that contact (Yellin et al. 2003). Without this information it is difficult to conclude that contact and experience actually have no effect.

Student teachers from different parts of the world appear to have differential preferences for the inclusion of students with certain special needs. In Hong Kong, hearing, conversational and academic problems are least favoured (Stella et al. 2007). In India (Sharma et al. 2009), Ireland (Hastings and Oakford 2003) and England (Avramidis et al. 2000), students with emotional or behavioural problems are least preferred for inclusion. Most countries positively favoured the inclusion of students who would typically exhibit behaviours less likely to disturb the classroom, except for the Indian sample. However, while social and academic problems were the most favoured for inclusion their attitudes remained negative (Sharma et al. 2009).

Irrespective of the limitations associated with cross-cultural comparisons, it appears experience with persons of disability, increased knowledge of special educational needs, and related special education legislation are factors somewhat consistently related to more positive attitudes to inclusion. It appears that preferential inclusion of students based on a student's special educational need category varies cross culturally. However, as with in-service teachers (Avramidis et al. 2000; Gyimah et al. 2009; Rakap and Kaczmarek 2009; Ross 2002) it seems that pre-service teachers also favour inclusion of students with special educational needs that demonstrate less disruptive classroom behaviours. Overall attitudes tend to vary and the effects of gender and age remain unclear.

2.8   Conclusion

Notwithstanding the limitations associated with the discrepancies between sources in regard to scales used, sample sizes, differing definitions and categorisation of disabilities, type of statistical analyses used and the effect of cultural influences, generally it seems attitudes towards inclusion in countries that have implemented inclusive legislation for a number of years are typically positive. However, full inclusion is rarely supported.

Pre-service and in-service teachers' willingness to include students seems to be somewhat dependent on certain conditions. While slight differences emerge between samples, there appears to be a general preferential trend to include students who present with difficulties requiring less constant teacher support. Evidence suggests that a lack of training, knowledge, and self-efficacy relating to effective inclusive practice all contribute to such sub-par attitudes to inclusion. Such evidence has practical implications as it not only provides an important understanding of existing views towards inclusion, but it also highlights areas in need of improvement, thus proving important when refining special educational training programmes.

It can also be concluded that a *range of interplaying* factors likely influence levels of positivity towards the inclusion of students with SEN. There is a general trend that suggests both pre and in-service teachers are more positive if they have high levels of self-efficacy to implement inclusive practice, training in special education, experienced close relations with or taught someone who has a disability, and on occasion, higher levels of education. However, it is difficult to isolate any one of these factors as sole contributors of positive attitudes to inclusion.

A major limitation of current inclusion research is that most if not all studies predefine inclusion without considering how participants understand the concept. As such, participants' attitudes as measured by researchers may not encompass a true definition of inclusion. Future research should aim to better understand what

inclusion means for participants. Additionally, although research conducted on pre and in-service teacher attitudes towards inclusion is extensive, some areas have received more attention than others. This is especially true for research conducted in Australia. More specifically, there is an apparent lack of Australian research focusing on attitudes to inclusion of pre-service teachers and whether they differ as a result of pre, primary or secondary school teaching focus groups. As such, future research in this area should perhaps be considered. In doing so, results will contribute towards further refining student teacher training programmes, and furthermore, such research will likely contribute in the shift towards creating a more inclusive future, a future in which students with special educational needs receive levels of support in line with those provided to their peers.

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Christopher Boyle, PhD, FBPsS, is a Professor of Inclusive Education and Educational Psychology in the School of Education at The University of Adelaide, Australia. He is a Fellow of the British Psychological Society and a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. He was previously the Editor in Chief of The Educational Academy. He was previously the Editor in Chief of The Educational and Developmental Psychologist (2012–2017) and is the founding co-editor of Belonging and Human Connection (with Kelly Allen) launched in 2022. He is an internationally recognised and respected academic and author on the subjects of inclusive education and psychology. He is a registered psychologist in the UK and Australia.

Kelly-Ann Allen, PhD, FAPS, is an Educational and Developmental Psychologist and an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education, Monash University, and an Honorary Senior Fellow at the Centre for Wellbeing Science, University of Melbourne. She is also the Lead-director and founder of the Global Belonging Collaborative and is the Editor-in-Chief of the Educational and Developmental Psychologist as well as the current and founding Co-Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Belonging and Human Connection with Professor Chris Boyle. The quality of her research has been acknowledged through several awards, including recognition by The Australian's data-science partner, The League of Scholars and independently ranked as Best In Field for research contributions over a four year period.

Jessica Grembecki, MPsych, is a Senior Project Manager for eHealth NSW, a technology company delivering clinical and corporate solutions across NSW Health. She has a background in psychology.

Issues in Primary and Secondary Pre-service Teachers' Attitudes Towards Inclusive Education

3

Christopher Boyle, Kelly-Ann Allen, and Christopher L. Barrell

Abstract

Social inclusion is an important philosophy that has been progressively adopted throughout the world in the last few decades. The definition of social inclusion has steadily widened over the years to include more situations and to mean more thorough inclusion (Thomas et al. 2005; Webster and Blatchford 2014). Its primary purpose is the complete inclusion of all individuals, regardless of race, age, ideas, beliefs and religion in all aspects. In the education realm, it relates to the involvement of every child in every school as well as the adults in each school. Previously, "special schools" were used primarily for children with disabilities; however, inclusion has led to the accommodation of children with disabilities in mainstream schools (McConkey et al. 2015; Subban and Sharma 2006). This chapter will discuss how inclusive education has become the desired practice for progressive schools. However, there remains confusion and debate as people and organisations attempt to implement these inclusive models.

Keywords

Social inclusion · Inclusive education · Pre-service teacher attitudes · Special education · Teacher training · Teacher experience

3.1 Introduction

Social inclusion is an important philosophy that has been progressively adopted throughout the world in the last few decades. The definition of social inclusion has steadily widened over the years to include more situations and to mean more thorough inclusion across society and not restricted to educational settings (Thomas et al. 2005; Webster and Blatchford 2014). Its primary purpose is the full inclusion of all individuals, regardless of race, age, ideas, beliefs and religion in all aspects of society. In the education realm, it relates to the involvement of every child in every school no matter their support needs. Previously, "special schools" were used primarily for children with disabilities; however, progressive education policies have led to the inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream schools (Boyle et al. 2011; McConkey et al. 2015; Subban and Sharma 2006).

C. Boyle (✉)
University of Adelaide, Adelaide, Australia
e-mail: chris.boyle@adelaide.edu.au

K.-A. Allen
School of Educational Psychology and Counselling, Faculty of Education, Monash University, Clayton, VIC, Australia

Centre for Wellbeing Science, Melbourne Graduate School of Education, University of Melbourne, Parkville, VIC, Australia

C. L. Barrell
Monash University, Melbourne, Australia

Inclusive education has become the desired practice for progressive schools. However, there remains confusion and debate as people and organisations attempt to implement these inclusive models (Avramidis and Norwich 2002; Finkelstein et al. 2018). As will be discussed in this chapter, inclusion is a positively sought after position that is beneficial to all, in particular children with special needs (Boyle and Anderson 2020; Vargas-Sanchez and Smith 2017). Children with additional support needs benefit from inclusion within a mainstream school as do the other students in social, academic and developmental domains (Blackorby et al. 2005; Vargas-Sanchez and Smith 2017). Consequently, attempts have been made in order to ascertain the factors that promote the successful implementation of inclusive programs and one of the main factors is teacher attitudes. Teacher attitudes towards inclusion have an enormous influence over the environment of the class in which students will attend (Boyle et al. 2020; Costello and Boyle 2013; Hoskin et al. 2015; Kraska and Boyle 2014; Round et al. 2015; Varcoe and Boyle 2014).

The development of the inclusion philosophy has led to the implementation of a number of global and national inclusive education policies (Pandit 2017). The "Education for All" initiative from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children (1989) was one of the first, where targets were set to increase the number of children at school, with a focus on marginalised groups. The primary global policy for inclusive education was formed at the Salamanca Conference in 1994 by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO 1994). The outcome was the Salamanca Statement, which describes education as a basic human right for everyone, regardless of individual differences. Inclusive education is progressively being accepted as an effective means by which biased attitudes towards students with disabilities may be reduced (Mugnusson 2019; Subban and Sharma 2006). Since the original declaration in 1994 how much progress towards inclusive education has taken place can be difficult to state with certainty (Anderson and Boyle 2019), but it is clear that achieving inclusive

education as the *de jure*, if not exactly the *de facto,* standard has moved closer (UNESCO 2020). In 2015, the United Nations Agenda for Sustainable Development was clear about the importance of continuing to strive for inclusive education. The fourth sustainable development goal (SDG4) aimed to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all…" (United Nations 2015). This SDG is to be fully enacted by 2030 according to the declaration. The focus on inclusive education has created a pedagogical shift in education, which requires commitment at both practitioner and systemic levels and will help teachers develop confidence and self-efficacy to be partners in an inclusive environment. While the introduction of inclusion has been slow, most commentators now believe that inclusion should mean complete access to the mainstream curriculum instead of purely the physical presence of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) in mainstream schools (Mugnusson 2019; Boyle and Anderson 2020).

The evidence behind the justification for inclusive schooling is strong (*see* Anderson and Boyle 2019 for a review). The goal of education —to give every child a high-quality education— justifies the need for inclusive education, which is best achieved within an inclusive setting (Pandit 2017; Subban and Sharma 2006). Furthermore, national and international legislation dictates the need for inclusive education, with UNESCO (1994, 2020) supporting the concept as a basic human right. Research has also shown that students with special needs who are educated in mainstream schools do better academically and socially than comparable students in special non-inclusive settings, regardless of the type of disability or age of students (Rose and Shelvin 2019; Vargas-Sanchez and Smith 2017). Additionally, in a large-scale study involving more than 11,000 students with disabilities in the USA, Blackorby and colleagues (2005) found that students with special education needs who spent more time in inclusive classrooms had fewer absences, performed closer to grade level than peers in special needs schools and had higher test achievement scores. Overall, this study supported

the idea that children with special educational needs in mainstream schools outperformed their peers educated in separated settings on standard-based assessments. This reflects the academic benefits of inclusive schooling.

Together with many other countries in the world, Australia has accepted the legislative challenge of inclusive education and provided the impetus for inclusion in Australian schools. The Australian Disability Discrimination Act 1992 amended (2010) is Australia's national inclusion policy, which provides a legal framework from which to implement inclusion for Australian teachers and educators (Anderson and Boyle 2015). One of the new amendments is the unjustifiable hardship principle whereby education providers will not be required to make adjustments for students with disabilities if making those adjustments would cause them unjustifiable hardship. Without this principle, education providers were hesitant about accepting students with disabilities because of potential costs, however with this principle, education providers can accept students and apply for funding as the situation requires. This is coupled with the Disability Standards for Education (2005), announced by the Commonwealth Government as legal protection for students, whereby it is unlawful for an educational institution to reject entry based on disability and reasonable adjustments must be made to assist children with special needs in all parts of their school life. These policies increased the opportunities available for students with disabilities to be able to be educated in a mainstream environment.

While it is important for such policies to be made, both on a national and global stage; it is just as important for these policies to be taught to students about to become teachers and also through appropriate in-service teacher training courses. Forlin and Chambers (2011) examined pre-service teacher attitude changes before and after inclusion courses. They concluded that the greater the knowledge base about legislation, both local and global, the more positive they were towards inclusion and less concerned about its implementation (Forlin and Chambers 2011). Such findings have also been replicated in in-

service teacher populations (e.g., Sharma and Jackobs 2016; Sokal and Sharma 2014; Subban and Sharma 2006). However, Costello and Boyle's (2013) study of Australian preservice teachers' attitudes to inclusion did not support this position. They found that as students go through the teacher training programme the less inclusive their attitudes become. This was an interesting finding, but it should be noted that the students were not followed through the years, so this finding reflects different students at different stages of their courses.

3.2   In-Service Teacher Attitudes

Educator attitudes are of primary importance in the implementation of inclusive programs. Elliot (2008) demonstrated that there are positive outcomes associated with teachers who have positive attitudes, such as teachers giving students more practice attempts at problems, thus increasing children's chance at success. Overall, successful implementation of any inclusive policy is primarily dependent on teachers' positive, accepting and supportive attitudes (Gabdrakhmanova and Guseva 2016). Research into teacher attitudes provides the possibility for policy-makers to initiate programs that increase attitudes towards inclusion and individuals with special needs.

Generally, attitudes of teachers are examined and computed as a total variable representing the whole general attitude of an individual towards another person or concept. However, some studies (e.g., Avramidis et al. 2000) have divided teacher' attitudes using a three-component model (Eagly and Chaiken 1993), which classifies the components of attitudes as cognitive, affective and conative (conscious effort to perform an act). Many studies will report a total attitude variable for use in comparisons and statistical analyses (e.g., Boyle et al. 2013; Hoskin et al. 2015; Kraska and Boyle 2014; Varcoe and Boyle 2014). This is what will be referred to as a teacher attitude score unless stated otherwise.

One of the most basic distinctions is that of gender and this has led to very inconsistent findings regarding their attitudes towards

inclusion, with some studies finding support for one being more inclusive than the other while some studies do not find a difference (Avramidis and Norwich 2002; de Boer et al. 2011; Galaterou and Antoniou 2017). The natural tendency for female teachers to outnumber male teachers provides a constraint of studies comparing teacher gender (Spandagou et al. 2008). Another demographic variable, age, is often linked with teaching experience and is sometimes found in a significant relationship with teacher attitudes (Avramidis and Norwich 2002; Rakap and Kaczmarek 2010). This seems to be a common belief in the profession where the anecdotal perception is that the older (but actually what is meant is the length of time in the teaching role) you are the more against inclusion you are. This is linked to the impression that teachers become more cynical the longer they are on the job. Whilst the evidence as to whether this is true or not has not been properly addressed, Boyle et al. (2013) found that the length of time in a teaching job made no difference, after the first year. The only significant difference with regards to attitudes to inclusion was the change in attitudes between the probation year and the first year as a fully qualified teacher.

One of the most powerful methods of modifying teachers' attitude towards inclusion in a positive direction is through training in inclusive education (Boyle et al. 2012; Forlin and Chambers 2009; Sharma et al. 2008; Yada and Savolainen 2017). Teachers with inclusive education qualifications show less resistance towards inclusive practices and more favourable attitudes to those they have learned to teach than those without training (de Boer et al. 2011; Rakap and Kaczmarek 2010). Inclusive education courses can increase the attitudes of both general education and special education staff with general education staff showing the greatest improvement (Avramidis and Norwich 2002; Bentley-Williams, Grima-Farrell, et al. 2017). Teachers with postgraduate qualifications and further training have higher levels of efficacy, confidence, knowledge and attitudes about inclusion than those without further training (Hsien et al. 2009). The authors posited that these increases

were due to the information that teachers receive about disability types and child development. These findings have been found in other studies and contribute towards improving teacher attitudes (e.g., Subban and Sharma 2006). Teachers without training in inclusive education lack the required beliefs, attitudes and techniques to handle inclusive situations (McMillan et al. 2018).

Compared with inclusive education training that is actively undertaken, teaching experience is passively accumulated, and a large number of studies have examined the effects of experience on teacher attitudes towards inclusion (Avramidis and Norwich 2002; Bentley-Williams et al. 2017; Boyle et al. 2012, 2013). Various studies have found a negative relationship between teacher attitudes and experience; however, the classification of experience in years into a categorical variable is always different. Research shows differences to be between the first and second year of experience for new teachers, yet still in the same direction (Page et al. 2019; Boyle et al. 2013). Teacher attitudes dropped after their first year in service and then proceeded to remain flat. This conclusion was reinforced by a synthesis of primary school teachers' attitudes where it was found that teachers with fewer years of teaching experience held more positive attitudes towards inclusion than teachers with many years of experience (de Boer et al. 2011).

The relationship between teacher experience and teacher attitudes is not completely clear, however, as some studies find no evidence of a significant relationship (Memisevic and Hodzic 2011; Tomani 2016). A qualitative study by Berry (2011) showed that instead of a relationship between experience and attitude towards inclusion, the reality may be more complex. It was found that when compared with veteran teachers, early career teachers were more concerned with instruction than knowing the child. This raises the possibility that the difference between early career teachers and late-career teachers may be more detailed than is indicated on a global attitude towards inclusion scale.

In terms of teacher experience, the principal is one of the most experienced educators at a school

(Subban and Sharma 2006). Continuous support and encouragement about the implementation of inclusive practices from the principal of a school is an important factor in shaping teacher attitudes (Anderson and Boyle 2013). Following previous research on teaching experience and attitudes, principals may be expected to demonstrate less positive attitudes than those of other teachers in a school. Praisner's (2003) research showed that only one in five primary school principals' attitudes towards inclusion was positive, with most being uncertain about practising inclusion in their school. This reflects the attention that must be paid towards senior educators in order to increase the likelihood of positive attitudes in the teachers of a school (Boyle et al. 2012, 2013).

Teaching experience can be further examined by studying the experience of teaching in inclusive classrooms. Teachers who are or have previously taught in inclusive classrooms or schools have more positive attitudes than those not in an inclusive program (Avramidis and Norwich 2002; de Boer et al. 2011; Rakap and Kaczmarek 2010). Throughout implementation, teacher commitment and positive attitudes only emerge at the end of the implementation cycle after they have gained expertise in inclusive techniques (Bentley-Williams et al. 2017). This concept is consistent with research on contact with people with disabilities, as positive attitudes only occur when teachers have proved themselves capable of managing students with disabilities, possessing experience in inclusive schooling (McMillan et al. 2018). There are limits to this relationship as Rakap and Kaczmarek (2010) found; teachers who had three or more children with SEN in their classroom had similar attitudes to teachers who had no children with SEN in their class. The low-level acceptance of those teachers might be attributed to the difficulty of meeting the individual needs of more than a few students with special needs in regular classrooms.

As teachers encounter pupils with disabilities their attitudes can be determined not only by experience or training but also by the type of difficulty experienced by the child. Teachers are most willing to include pupils with mild difficulties because they are seen as requiring the least effort to accommodate within the mainstream class (Avramidis and Norwich 2002; Subban and Sharma 2006). This means that teachers felt most competent including pupils with difficulties such as learning disorders and speech and language difficulties (Scruggs et al. 2011). Disabilities that created extra problems and required additional teaching competencies on behalf of the teacher were associated with lower competence and attitudes (Scruggs et al. 2011). Primary school teachers were found to be most negative towards the inclusion of children with severe learning disorders, ADHD and other behavioural problems (de Boer et al. 2011). Teachers will react better towards student difficulties that do not require large amounts of effort to include them in their class, such as physical disabilities, compared with cognitive and behavioural disabilities that raise a host of issues that teachers have to address (Rakap and Kaczmarek 2010). Students with a severe disability are also only hesitatingly included because teachers felt that these students should not be held to the same performance level as their peers (Agran et al. 2002).

3.3 Pre-service Teacher Attitudes

In Avramidis and Norwich's (2002) review, it is suggested that the direction of future research should be towards examining factors, which influence the formation of attitudes towards inclusion. Research on the patterns of attitudes at pre-service level and how they develop are important factors, which must be examined in order to understand how we can better prepare our future teachers and at the same time facilitate the professional development of those currently teaching. The provision of extensive opportunities for training at the pre- and in-service levels should be seen as a top priority for the policymakers (Avramidis and Norwich 2002). It has been suggested that if pre-service teachers were able to gain the skills required for 'inclusion' to a sufficient level, then perhaps they will become more committed to the change (McMillan et al. 2018). As they develop the skills and acquire the

experience required for inclusion, their attitudes might become more positive as a result.

It is clear that teacher attitudes are developed through experience, and hence it is important to study the education process of teachers to understand how this affects the formation of their attitudes (Boyle et al. 2020). Pre-service training may be the most apposite time to improve attitudes and modify negative attitudes towards inclusion (Forlin and Chambers 2011). There is evidence that if pre-service and in-service teacher attitudes are increased and that leads to embracing inclusive practices, then teacher performance will improve (Demeris et al. 2007). As the move is taken towards an inclusive future, teacher training institutions will become a key checkpoint for ensuring teachers have the appropriate attitudes and skills to institute inclusion effectively.

Before an individual begins training to be a teacher, their previous levels of education can influence their attitude levels. In Sharma, Forlin, Loreman and Earle's (2006) international comparison study, it was suggested that the reason respondents from Canada were more positive than Australian, Hong Kong and Singapore respondents was due to their higher qualifications, as education can only be studied at the post-graduate level in Canada. This theory is aligned with research showing a relationship between higher qualifications and better attitudes (Sharma et al. 2003; Sharma et al. 2009). However, contradictory findings were also found showing that pre-service teachers with an undergraduate degree had more negative attitudes and improved less than pre-service teachers without an undergraduate degree (Forlin et al. 2009). These students also improved the least after completing inclusive training. This theory complements research on level of education and teacher attitudes in in-service teacher populations (McMillan et al. 2018; Bentley-Williams et al. 2017).

As part of most pre-service teaching courses, students can complete a module in inclusive education, making them more knowledgeable in this area and equipping them with pedagogical techniques that can be used to handle a differentiated classroom (Forlin and Chambers 2011; Forlin et al. 2009; Hopper and Stogre 2004).

These modules can be either compulsory or optional as determined by their course regulators; however, more inclusive education modules are becoming compulsory as they are known to increase attitudes and confidence in inclusion, replicating the same effect of inclusive training of in-service teacher populations (Forlin and Chambers 2011; Spandagou et al. 2008). Further examination of this relationship showed that younger pre-service teachers were more likely to change their opinions about people with disabilities after completing a module on inclusion than the older cohort, as they required more intensive work to be persuaded (Forlin et al. 2009). However, Forlin and Chambers (2011) suggested that there were many other relevant variables in this relationship, such as quality of the inclusive education course and that only looking at training completion is not a thorough method for asserting a complete understanding.

While the quality of inclusive education courses may be important, it is difficult to ascertain through commonly used self-report measures, and instead research has focused on the structure of inclusive education courses and their impact on pre-service teacher attitudes. Lancaster and Bain (2007) examined three types of inclusive classes differing in terms of practical experience and class work. They found no difference in attitude changes between the three course types, although all three courses significantly raised the attitudes of the pre-service teachers. In a further study in 2010, Lancaster and Bain proceeded to target only two types of courses; one focused on field work with children with a disability and the other focused on 'embedded design' class work where they learnt about inclusive schools and systems. Lancaster and Bain (2010) found an overall positive increase in self-efficacy and no difference between embedded design and applied experience. Inclusive experience is not a sole factor in modifying attitudes, and as such, it is important to study all aspects of mandatory inclusive education courses to properly establish their effects on self-efficacy and attitudes.

As Lancaster and Bain (2010) suggest, the pitfall of course comparison study is the lack of

experimental control due to external restraints. This includes the inability to randomly assign participants to groups, as students enrol themselves in subjects by their own choice. Likewise, the limitation of sample sizes limits generalisation and interpretation. However, whether these particular research markers are good indicators of success in education especially that of inclusive education is a moot point as many teaching interventions and support are, quite rightly very bespoke. It thus follows that what is regarded as 'evidence' in the inclusive education debate is not clearly defined (Boyle et al. 2020).

Kim (2011) examined 110 pre-service teachers in either a combined, separate or general teacher preparation program. As with Lancaster and Bain (2007, 2010), Kim found that all three courses increased attitudes significantly, but there were no significant differences between the course types. Kim suggests that the lack of difference may be the effect of the pre-service teachers coming to the courses with pre-existing attitudes that were not measured by this study, measured only indirectly through participants' personal experience with people with disabilities. The type of qualification that the pre-service teachers are studying may have a greater influence on their attitudes than the type of preparation course (Kim 2011). This may explain the similar findings for different types of inclusion courses. This opens up another avenue for future study, along with details of quality of instruction and experience, length and other variables, types of degrees can be compared.

Students who had contact with students with disabilities during their studies did not have significantly more positive attitudes than those who did not have such experience (Forlin and Chambers 2011). Forlin and Chambers also found that pre-service teachers who had the most interaction with people with a disability were less supportive of the inclusion of students with a broad range of disabilities, compared with those who had limited prior contact. It was thought that these negative attitudes arose from negative encounters. Similarly, Richards and Clough (2004) found that some pre-service teachers have been socialised into accepting the idea of

children with special educational needs educated in separate institutions by acquiring work experience in an institution where inclusion was not fully implemented. Similar to these findings, Kim's (2011) results did not replicate findings found in in-service teachers regarding their experience with disabled students found in earlier research (LeRoy and Simpson 1996). They found that pre-service teachers' field experience with disabled students did not have a significant direct relationship to their attitudes towards inclusion. However, the findings must be held in light of the limitations of the study possessing only a small, skewed sample and as such, these findings may not be generalisable.

Comparably, pre-service teachers who had either previous frequent contact or site-based placements with an individual with a disability exhibited improved degrees of comfort and coping skills in their perceptions of people with disabilities (Forlin et al. 2009; Hopper and Stogre 2004; Lancaster and Bain 2007, 2010). These findings support the equivalent findings of in-service teachers (Avramidis and Norwich 2002; Kraska and Boyle 2014). Contact with people with disabilities has also been evaluated within the training of pre-service teachers (Bentley-Williams et al. 2017). Forlin (2003) found that involving students with intellectual disabilities on campus tutorials broke down many of the myths that pre-service teachers held about expectations of these students. Therefore, practical experience with students with disabilities is thought to improve attitudes (Hopper and Stogre 2004; Lancaster and Bain 2007, 2010).

As with in-service teacher populations, the management of positive encounters with individuals with disabilities is of upmost importance, as not all studies have reported significant positive relationships between contact and pre-service teacher attitudes (e.g., Alghazo et al. 2003; Spandagou et al. 2008). If teachers experience positive contact with individuals with disabilities then they are likely to form positive attitudes towards people with disabilities, however, if they are to have contact with individuals that results in negative outcomes, such as more stress for a teacher then they are more likely to

form negative attitudes (Richards and Clough 2004).

Learning more about disabilities and child development is one of the benefits of training in inclusive education for pre-service teachers. Campbell et al. (2003) used the level of pre-service teachers' knowledge of disabilities as a factor to modify their attitudes during a longitudinal study before and after the completion of an inclusive unit. Campbell et al. (2003) selected Down syndrome as a specific disability to test because pre-service teachers are known to hold misconceptions about this condition. Following completion of the inclusive education module, which educated the pre-service teachers about Down syndrome, the pre-service teachers had less stereotypical views of children with Down syndrome and more positive and accurate views towards them, leading the teachers to be more inclined towards inclusive practice involving children with Down syndrome. Additionally, the pre-service teachers' attitudes towards children with disability, in general, also improved, thus increasing their attitudes towards inclusive education (Campbell et al. 2003). It is unknown, however, whether the positive changes elicited through education about disabilities continue into the future, as teachers gain experience. Further research should examine the longitudinal effect of this kind of knowledge about disabilities and its effect on attitudes towards inclusion.

3.4   Examining within Teacher Differences

It has often been found that there are attitude differences between high school teachers and primary school teachers (Costello and Boyle 2013; Varcoe and Boyle 2014). One US research study has suggested that high school teachers were more positive than junior high school and elementary school teachers (Hull 2005). However, it is generally found that the relationship is the reverse, where primary school teachers are more positive than secondary school teachers (Avramidis and Norwich 2002; Boyle et al. 2011). The consensus towards this difference

results from a focus of high school teachers towards subject matter that is less compatible with inclusion than a focus on student development, which is the focus of primary school teachers where a more holistic and inclusive ethos is projected. This theory has been supported by research that found lower-grade primary school teachers to have more favourable attitudes towards inclusion than higher-grade primary school teachers (Memisevic and Hodzic 2011). Memisevic and Hodzic suggested that a possible source of difference is from the greater gap in achievement between children with special needs and children without, that is seen in higher year levels. This creates pressure on the teacher which, according to the type of special needs the child has, causes teachers to have negative attitudes. Therefore, it is likely that these two causes, subject content focus and achievement gaps, altogether contribute to the decline in teacher attitudes.

The majority of studies on pre-service teachers such as Forlin and Chambers (2011) and Boyle, Topping and Jindal-Snape (2013) are typical in the way that their sample may only include one school level of pre-service teacher such as primary or secondary pre-service teachers. While this kind of sample allows for conclusions of a single school level, it leaves further opportunities open that may further contribute towards understanding the way pre-service teacher attitudes change. A further hindrance of this goal, are studies such as Kim (2011), who did not specify the school level of pre-service teachers that are selected in the sample. Without making the distinction between primary and secondary school level, it limits the generalisation of its findings. Studies examining a single school level allow for insights that can be used by policymakers only for that particular level. This is also somewhat limiting, as there are educational policies that also apply to all school levels.

Theoretically, primary pre-service teachers and secondary pre-service teachers should be evaluated and classified separately in research on attitudes towards inclusion because they are different. They have different teaching objectives as is evident by the findings of in-service teachers,

and differences between primary and secondary teachers, and distinctive ways of teaching. It is not enough to only broadly consider these students as pre-service teachers, because there may be underlying patterns that modify attitudes that are not acknowledged with this general classification. For example, primary pre-service teachers' attitudes may increase as they near completion of their degree; however secondary pre-service teacher attitudes may decline as they near completion of their degree. On the other hand, perhaps primary and secondary pre-service teachers respond differently to having completed a course on inclusion. These patterns of attitudes lie unassessed as research fails to ascertain the differences between school levels of pre-service teachers. It will take research that tests both primary and secondary pre-service teachers on the same scale at the same time to compare and contrast those results. In this way, policy may be constructed with the detailed knowledge of the particular patterns of difference between different school levels of pre-service teachers.

3.5 Conclusion

Further research into inclusive education research calls for the continual identification of how and why pre-service teachers' attitudes change and the effect that this has on teaching practices, colleagues, students and other educators. It is more efficient to tackle the problem of improving teacher attitudes towards inclusive education at the pre-service stage, so that positive attitudes can be embedded as teachers enter the workforce. Research now indicates similarities between in-service and pre-service teacher attitudes, creating a clearer picture of how teacher attitudes towards inclusion develop. The incongruence in pre-service teacher findings suggests opportunities to further clarify the relationship between different factors and their effect on teacher attitudes. It is proposed that some of these debated findings may be resolved by comparing primary and secondary pre-service teacher response patterns, with particular emphasis on

the practical tools that educators may implement (Subban and Sharma 2006).

Inclusion has been discussed in the context of education; however, its significance is far-reaching. Both the understanding and adoption of inclusion into school systems not only ensure equality of education but also pave the way for wider societal change. Such change may be achieved through the careful application of inclusive education research.

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Christopher Boyle, PhD, FBPsS, is a Professor of Inclusive Education and Educational Psychology in the School of Education at The University of Adelaide, Australia. He is a Fellow of the British Psychological Society and a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. He was previously the Editor in Chief of The Educational Academy. He was previously the Editor in Chief of The Educational and Developmental Psychologist (2012–2017) and is the founding co-editor of Belonging and Human Connection (with Kelly Allen) launched in 2022. He is an internationally recognised and respected academic and author on the subjects of inclusive education and psychology. He is a registered psychologist in the UK and Australia.

Kelly-Ann Allen, PhD, FAPS, is an Educational and Developmental Psychologist and an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education, Monash University, and an Honorary Senior Fellow at the Centre for Wellbeing Science, University of Melbourne. She is also the Lead-director and founder of the Global Belonging Collaborative and is the Editor-in-Chief of the Educational and Developmental Psychologist as well as the current and founding Co-Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Belonging and Human Connection with Professor Chris Boyle. The quality of her research has been acknowledged through several awards, including recognition by The Australian's data-science partner, The League of Scholars and independently ranked as Best In Field for research contributions over a four year period.

Christopher L. Barrell, PhD, FBPsS, is a Lead Product Manager for Edrolo, an education content provider and publisher. He has a background in organisational psychology.

The Importance of Pre-Service Secondary Teachers' Attitudes Towards Inclusive Education: The Positive Impact of Pre-Service Teacher Training

4

Christopher Boyle, Shane Costello, and Kelly-Ann Allen

Abstract

For many people, the opportunity to access and engage in education is an expectation that is widely accepted. For people with disabilities and additional educational needs, such expectations have developed as a result of systemic change in the field of education over the current and past centuries. Inclusive practices, attitudes and approaches are continually evolving to meet current social pressures and needs. In fact, the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (United Nations 2015). *Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* prioritises inclusive education. Teachers are responsible for implementing an inclusive approach to education, and research has focused on the attributes of successful inclusive teachers. Research has found that the attitudes of inservice and pre-service teachers have a considerable bearing on the implementation of inclusive practices, and yet it has been reported that only a minority of secondary teachers could be described as inclusive. Research studies have suggested that ongoing professional development for trained teachers and a greater emphasis on training for inclusive education for pre-service teachers would improve competencies and attitudes towards inclusive education. Secondary teachers and pre-service secondary teachers face unique challenges in implementing inclusive education, with a considerable emphasis placed on curriculum, performance and standardised results. It is not the purpose of this chapter to debate whether inclusion is beneficial for students with disabilities or additional support needs, although this debate exists in many places. Rather, the purpose of this chapter is to consider the development of inclusion as an evolving concept and to examine the impact of pre-service secondary teacher attitudes and training to implement inclusive practices in the mainstream classroom.

C. Boyle (✉)
University of Adelaide, Adelaide, Australia
e-mail: chris.boyle@adelaide.edu.au

S. Costello
Monash University, Melbourne, Australia

K.-A. Allen
School of Educational Psychology and Counselling, Faculty of Education, Monash University, Clayton, VIC, Australia

Centre for Wellbeing Science, Melbourne Graduate School of Education, University of Melbourne, Parkville, VIC, Australia

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 Defining Inclusion

Defining inclusion is no simple task. One of the complications of defining inclusion is the necessity to also consider two other terms that have been widely used—segregation and integration. Segregation is perhaps the most straightforward term to define in the context of education and can be defined as the act or state of setting someone or something apart from others (Thomazet 2009). In a somewhat ironic example of how widespread the use of segregation in education has been, the Oxford dictionary (2011) gives an example of the use of the word as "the segregation of pupils with learning difficulties".

Integration was a commonly used term to describe the changing process of education practices throughout the 1970s and 1980s (Costello and Boyle 2013). Taking children with special education needs that have previously been separated and providing an education in mainstream classes is an example of integration, however, this is not necessarily an inclusive practice (Boyle et al. 2012). It has been suggested that integration can be further categorised as physical, social or pedagogical (Thomazet 2009). Physical integration involves integrating children with special education needs into a mainstream school without any involvement in activities with other students; social integration involves shared socialisation time such as lunch time, without any shared classroom experiences; and pedagogic integration is where all the students are present in the regular classroom and participate with differentiated objectives.

Defining inclusive education is complicated by the number of different interpretations utilised throughout the literature. Boyle et al. (2011) focused on inclusive education within the educational context and as the process of including children with special education needs in the regular classroom, rather than removing them to receive services in a separate area. This definition can be seen to be quite similar to pedagogic integration, as described by Thomazet (2009),

where the emphasis is on the classroom rather than including all children in education. These definitions somewhat limit the scope of inclusive education to the placement of children with special education needs in a mainstream classroom, rather than promoting a philosophy of inclusion for all children (Boyle and Anderson 2020a).

One definition of inclusion includes restructuring mainstream schools to accommodate all children, regardless of disability (Avramidis and Norwich 2002). The key difference in this definition is the evidence of a process of change to promote inclusion, rather than simply a place for education. Inclusive schools are able to adapt to accommodate all children, rather than expecting children with special education needs to assimilate into mainstream schools. Graham and Slee (2008) suggested that defining inclusion was considerably more complicated than simply including children with special educational needs, and that to include was not necessarily inclusion. Despite now being over 16 years old, Zoniou-Sideri and Vlachou (2006) were able to capture the essence of what inclusive education should be. They defined inclusive education in a manner which highlighted the depth of the philosophy of inclusion:

> Inclusion and inclusive education are concerned with the quest for equity, social justice, participation, and the removal of all forms of exclusionary assumptions and practices. It is based on a positive view of difference and has at its heart the principle that all pupils, including those who are 'different', are considered to be valued and respected members of the school community. (p. 379)

McMahon et al. (2016) conducted a study of teaching practices that supported inclusive education and suggested that inclusion needs to be acknowledged as a complex practice that involves adaption of teaching and curriculum with attention to community participation, roles and social grouping including that of an ecological framework (Anderson et al. 2014). Similarly, Boyle et al. (2020a) suggested that an inclusive approach to education was beneficial for all children, and the rewards of an inclusive environment are not limited to children with

special education needs but can be gained throughout the school community. McMahon et al. (2016) also highlighted the influence that school belonging had on successful inclusion and this connection in which they complement each other in becoming more pronounced in inclusion research (e.g. Allen and Boyle 2018). Inclusive education is as much aligned with social justice as it is with curricular advancement. Topping (2012) was very clear that inclusion is about the involvement of the community including schools, all equally participating and achieving in lifelong learning. An inclusive approach to education is more than the location of education or curriculum taught, and it is related to the much larger concept of social inclusion and valued status for all people in society irrespective of differences or disability. Inclusive education ensures that all children have access to quality education and opportunities for lifelong learning, and it is entrenched as a global priority under Goal 4 (Quality Education) for Sustainable Development (United Nations 2015).

In the absence of a single, clear definition for inclusive education, it is appropriate to summarise the several examples given. Inclusive education is the process of providing education to all children irrespective of individual differences or abilities; inclusive education aims to include all students in a classroom as active participants in learning, and the process of inclusion is beneficial to all involved; inclusive education is fluid and adaptable to provide education for all not only in schools but it is also the attitude and connection with the wider community. In this way, it helps promote equality and well-being for all at all ages.

4.2   A Brief History of Inclusion

In 1994, the most well known international attempt to improve the education opportunities for children with special education needs occurred in Salamanca, Spain. The United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) conducted a conference to discuss access and equality in special needs education.

There were more than 300 participants representing over 90 countries involved in the conference. The resulting framework aimed to reaffirm the rights of education for all children as described in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations 1948), and provide guidelines for action to implement change towards a more inclusive education for all (UNESCO 1994).

A key principle in the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action was the concept that inclusion was not limited to considering only children with special education needs. Rather, the suggestion was that schools should be inclusive towards all children, regardless of physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other abilities. Similarly, schools should offer an inclusive environment for children of differing socio-economic status, ethnic background and disadvantaged or marginalised backgrounds.

Ainscow and César (2006) suggested that in the 10 years since Salamanca, a considerable effort has been made across many countries to implement more inclusive educational policies and practices. In 2019, the 25th anniversary of the Salamanca Statement again showed that without question, improvements in education had been achieved but that some barriers identified have remained including a reluctance in many jurisdictions to move to a fully inclusive model and thus the continuation of separate special education provision (Anderson and Boyle 2019). However, the level of recognition that inclusive education is the best way to achieve social equality in school and beyond is a crucial aspect of the legacy of Salamanca (Ainscow et al. 2019). It concluded that the concept of inclusion is sometimes limited to only children with special educational needs, rather than to all children. Further barriers include the continuing confusion regarding inclusive education, as well as the difficulties in implementation that can arise due to this confusion, including discussion around what is "evidence" for supporting inclusive education (for a wider discussion, see Boyle et al. 2020b).

Just how inclusive education is achieved is based on jurisdictional differences. For example,

Anderson and Boyle (2019) acknowledge that inclusive education in Australia has come a long way in the almost 30 years since Salamanca. However, they also suggest that students for whom the education system generally is not working will probably be from some form of disadvantaged background. Serious investment is required if education in Australia is to become a fully inclusive environment. However, it is more complex than investment alone as it is an attitudinal shift, not only from teachers but also that of society that is required to achieve that type of change (Boyle et al. 2012, 2013).

4.3 Inclusion in Secondary Schools

Secondary teachers experience unique challenges in implementing inclusive education, with special consideration given to curriculum, assessment and subject matter (Deppeler et al. 2005; Pearce 2009). A study by Ross-Hill (2009) found that these unique challenges contributed to the less positive attitudes towards inclusive education held by secondary teachers when compared to teachers of younger children. This aspect was also found in more recent studies (Costello and Boyle 2013; Varcoe and Boyle 2014). A key difference between secondary education and education for younger children is the pedagogical approach to education used in secondary education. Pedagogy can be defined as the study of teaching methods (Carrington et al. 2010). Child-centred pedagogy refers to teaching methods that have been developed around a child's unique learning circumstances and is more prominent in preschool and primary education than secondary education (Lawson and Jones 2018). Results-centred pedagogy refers to teaching methods developed around a teacher (or school or organisation)-derived curriculum and tends to be prominent in secondary education (Pearce and Forlin 2005).

Adopting a child-centred pedagogical approach to education allows for individual differences and abilities when determining what is to be taught, and how it is to be taught (Power et al. 2019). Results-centred pedagogy focuses on predetermined levels of achievement that are seen to be desirable for students at a particular time, to ensure progression to higher levels of education. Inclusive education is considered to be more achievable in a child-centred pedagogical approach to education, and this was reflected in studies which demonstrated that child-centred teaching could be more effective and more inclusive for all children than results-centred teaching (Aliusta and Özer 2017; Hartley 2009; Di Biase 2019).

4.4 The Importance of Teachers' Attitudes

In considering the importance of attitudes, it is relevant to briefly consider Bandura's social cognitive theory. Bandura (1986) suggested that individuals pursue activities and situations where they feel competent; conversely, individuals avoid situations where they do not feel competent. When presenting the argument for the importance of positive teacher attitudes for successful inclusion, it is suggested that a positive attitude reflected a teacher who felt confident to implement inclusive practices in the classroom (Boyle et al. 2012, 2013).

Secondary teachers in Australia face unique challenges not experienced by primary or early childhood teachers. In particular, secondary schools are more structured than primary schools, with each student attending multiple classrooms, taught by multiple teachers and adhering to a strict timetable. Secondary education also maintains a considerable emphasis on curriculum, performance and standardised results, which could be seen in principle to be limiting the application of an inclusive education (Pearce 2010). An example of the curriculum focus can be seen in the "My School" website (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority 2010), which published demographic and academic results for schools across Australia, however made no mention of inclusiveness. A results-centred approach to education can be a barrier to an inclusive environment, and secondary teachers' attitudes can be negatively

impacted by the emphasis on curriculum learning and achievement at the expense of individual needs (Hardy and Boyle 2011).

It is widely assumed that successful inclusive education was dependent on the positive attitude of the teachers involved. In a survey of English primary and secondary school teachers, it was found that those teachers who reported successful inclusive classroom practices were also found to hold positive attitudes towards inclusive education (Avramidis et al. 2000). It was also noted that professional training in inclusive education was related to positive attitudes towards inclusion.

Boyle et al. (2013) conducted a study on the attitudes towards inclusion of secondary teachers in Scotland. While attitudes were found to be positive overall, there was a significant decline in inclusion scores in teachers after the first year of teaching. This decline did not continue with any significance after the first year of teaching, leading the authors to question whether anything occurs specifically over that first year of teaching to cause the decline. This was a relatively unique finding as earlier studies supported the theory that teachers with more experience tended to be less positive towards inclusive education than teachers with less experience (Forlin 1995; Leyser et al. 1994). In fact, this was an established truism that the longer (or older a teacher was) a teacher had been in service, the more negative they were to inclusion. However, studies of Australian pre-service teachers indicated that although these teachers held positive attitudes towards inclusive education, there was a significant decline in their positive attitudes through their years of study (Costello and Boyle 2013; Hoskin et al. 2015; Kraska and Boyle 2014; Varcoe and Boyle 2014). Costello and Boyle (2013) note, however, that those participants who also studied a module on inclusive education held significantly more positive attitudes towards their training, perceived competence and inclusive education. In addition to this, Yaraya et al. (2018) determined that the level of teachers' personal and professional commitment, positive attitudes towards inclusion, and sense of readiness also contribute to their attitudes towards inclusion.

It has been suggested that other demographic differences may affect secondary teacher attitudes towards inclusive education. Differences in age have been suggested to contribute to differences in attitudes, with older teachers tending to be less positive towards inclusion than younger teachers (Mastropieri and Scruggs 2001). Further, while some studies have found that female teachers tend to be significantly more open to inclusive education than their male colleagues (Boyle et al. 2013), others suggest no difference between male and female teacher attitudes about inclusion (Galaterou and Antoniou 2017). Since secondary teachers are also subject specialist teachers (Hodge et al. 2009), it has been suggested that attitudes towards inclusive education may vary between teachers of differing areas of specialty. Boyle et al. (2013) found no significant differences between teachers of practical subjects and teachers of non-practical subjects on their attitudes towards inclusion, which was not consistent with previous work which found that significantly more negative attitudes were held by practical subject teachers (Ellins and Porter 2005). Interestingly, Galaterou and Antoniou (2017) researched teachers' attitudes towards inclusion based on demographics and job stressors and found that teachers who expressed higher levels of occupational stress held less positive attitudes towards inclusive education than those who expressed experiencing less stress.

4.5 The Impact of Professional Development on Teachers' Attitudes

Professional learning and development for teachers can assist in improving teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education. One study of Hong Kong secondary teachers compared scores before and after completion of a government funded 30 hour professional learning course on inclusive education (Forlin 2010), and found that there was an improvement in attitudes as a result of participating in the course. This compares with Boyle et al. (2013) study which found that

secondary teachers who had been on even a short course on inclusion were more likely to have a significantly positive attitude. However, somewhat worryingly over 60% of those surveyed were unsure if they had actually had any training in inclusion. This was not a glowing endorsement on any training which may (or may not have taken place) with those participants.

Topping (2012) suggested that professional development for teachers should focus on community development, rather than simply the specifics of children with support needs in schools. By creating a collaborative community within schools where teachers could share resources, techniques and skills, it was suggested that a more inclusive environment could be created (Boyle et al. 2012). This was supported by the suggestion by Nind and Wearmouth (2006) that inclusion was a complex process and should not be limited to considering only academic processes and curriculum changes.

Forlin et al. (2008) conducted a study into teacher attitudes towards inclusion in Australia and found that 93% of teachers surveyed felt that they had insufficient pre-service training to cater to children with special education needs in a mainstream classroom. The implication for teacher training for inclusive education was that while ongoing professional training for existing teachers was beneficial, a greater emphasis for pre-service teacher training for inclusive education was required (Hoskin et al. 2015).

4.6 The Importance of Pre-Service Teachers' Attitudes

If the attitudes of existing teachers were an integral component of successful inclusive education, then it followed that teachers must be prepared for inclusion through their training and tertiary education experiences. Pre-service teacher attitudes towards inclusive education have been the target of many studies (Costello and Boyle 2013; Kraska and Boyle 2014; Varcoe and Boyle 2014). Kraska and Boyle (2014) found that attitudes of pre-service teachers towards the philosophy of inclusive education were positive,

however, there was a marked concern about training and preparation. A review of several studies was conducted by Sze (2009), who concluded that teacher attitudes were a significant predictor of successful inclusive practices in the classroom, and that pre-service teacher attitudes towards inclusion benefitted from a formalised study module and exposure to working with children with a disability during teacher training (cf. Boyle et al. 2013).

Demographic differences have been found to be reflected in the attitudes of pre-service secondary teachers towards inclusive education, although not all researchers agree. Loreman et al. (2005) found that female pre-service secondary teachers in Australia were more likely to be open to implementing inclusive education than their male colleagues, and this was supported by earlier research into pre-service secondary teachers in Britain (Ellins and Porter 2005). In contrast, a study by Subban and Sharma (2005) into pre-service teacher attitudes in Victoria, Australia, found no significant differences due to gender. A similar study by Stella et al. (2007) found no significant gender differences in pre-service secondary teachers' attitudes towards inclusion.

4.7 The Impact of Training on Pre-Service Teachers' Attitudes

Attitudes are influenced by beliefs and values. Understanding one's own beliefs would help pre-service teachers to understand and, if necessary, challenge their own preconceived value system and would assist in developing support for the philosophy of inclusion. A key aspect is being positive about inclusion and thus gaining the competence to implement inclusive practices begins with developing the rationale and will to do so, which was reflected in pre-service teacher training for positive attitudes towards inclusion (Boyle et al 2011; Gamble et al. 2015).

In an international study of pre-service teachers in Canada, Australia, Hong Kong and Singapore, it was found that pre-service teachers who had completed training in inclusive education or disability studies scored higher on a

measure of positive attitudes towards inclusion (Loreman et al. 2007). This study also considered other demographic variables such as previous training and teaching experience; knowledge of policies and legislation; and pre-service teacher confidence and found that each contributed to improved attitudes towards inclusive education. It could be argued that a successful training program for inclusive education would improve participants' knowledge of policies and procedures, and also increase confidence in abilities to implement an inclusive practice in the classroom. In contrast to the above finding, Costello and Boyle (2013) reported that the attitude of pre-service teachers to inclusive education became less positive as they progressed through their training (see Fig. 4.1).

The authors suggest that this effect may be down to pre-service teachers gaining more practical experience "… and [as they gained] a greater understanding of their future role as teachers, any deficiencies in training may become more evident" (p. 139). It should be noted that Costello and Boyle did not follow the same cohort through the years of testing.

Another international study was conducted to determine the effects of different methods of pre-service teacher training for inclusive education. Sharma et al. (2008) compared several universities across Australia, Hong Kong, Singapore and Canada. Each university utilised differing approaches towards training for inclusive education, however, the primary distinction was between those that taught inclusive education as a single, standalone subject, and those that used an "infusion" approach where students were introduced to inclusive education over a long period and over multiple units. The results were not conclusive as to which approach to training was more effective, however, the importance of the content of the training was reinforced; and also, the benefit of an increased level of personal experience for pre-service teachers in working with children with disabilities to improve attitudes towards inclusive education.

The positive impact of pre-service teacher training on attitudes is not universal. Lubke et al. (2019) conducted a study into attitudes of pre-service teachers and found that attitudes towards inclusive education differed by types of disabilities, with less positive attitudes towards inclusiveness when children presented with behavioural and emotional difficulties than those with learning disabilities. Hastings and Oakford (2003) conducted a similar study and noted that a limitation to categorising disabilities in this manner was that many pre-service teachers may have had little or no personal experiences or specific training with children in either or both categories, and attitudes may be indicative of stereotypes in the absence of personal experience or specific training. It could also be suggested that for the pre-service teacher with limited practical experience, observing and failing to manage even a single behavioural outburst by a child with a disability may result in a loss of
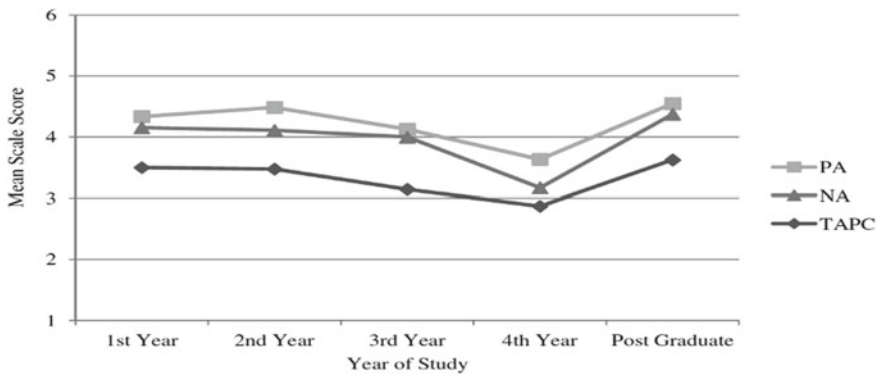
Fig. 4.1 Mean scores for positive affect (PA), training and perceived competence (TAPC) and negative affect (NA) by year of study (Costello and Boyle 2013)

confidence and lower positive attitudes towards inclusion for similar students. Categorising all students with emotional and behavioural difficulties together, as done by Hastings and Oakford, may result in more of these students receiving their education in a special school unit and a modified curriculum that is not suited to the needs of the individual (Boyle 2007; Lauchlan and Boyle 2007). One implication from the study by Hastings and Oakford may be that pre-service teacher training may require further expansion in coping techniques for aspects of behavioural management, which may lead to an increase in perceived competence and improvement in attitudes towards providing an inclusive education for all students.

4.8   Conclusion

From a review of the literature, it seems evident that the role of teacher attitudes plays a significant role in achieving an education system which fully, or at least reasonably, encompasses inclusive practices. The importance of preparing teachers for inclusive environments—through their university training and education—is worthy of continuing research. Previous literature suggests that secondary teachers and pre-service secondary teachers are generally positive towards inclusion; however, there is a perception that insufficient training is provided in pre-service teacher education. An area that has been previously overlooked in research is pre-service secondary teachers' attitudinal changes over time through training, and the impact of inclusion-specific training throughout this time. While the opportunity for all students to access inclusive education in many countries has greatly improved over several decades, considerable work still needs to take place before that goal can be fully realised. Pre-service secondary teachers hold the responsibility as future educators to provide an inclusive educational environment for all children, and continuing investigation is warranted into pre-service secondary teacher training and attitudes towards inclusive education over the years of study.

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Christopher Boyle, PhD, FBPsS, is a Professor of Inclusive Education and Educational Psychology in the School of Education at The University of Adelaide, Australia. He is a Fellow of the British Psychological Society and a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. He was previously the Editor in Chief of The Educational Academy. He was previously the Editor in Chief of The Educational and Developmental Psychology (2012–2017) and is the founding co-editor of Belonging and Human Connection (with Kelly Allen) launched in 2022. He is an internationally recognised and respected academic and author on the subjects of inclusive education and psychology. He is a registered psychologist in the UK and Australia.

Shane Costello, Ph.D, is an Educational and Developmental Psychologist with a special interest in psychometrics and psychological assessment, as well as psychopharmacology clinical trials and treating complex mental illness using transcranial magnetic stimulation. He is a Lecturer in the Faculty of Education, Monash University, Adjunct Research Fellow at Neurocentrix, and private practice owner.

Kelly-Ann Allen, PhD, FAPS, is an Educational and Developmental Psychologist and an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education, Monash University, and an Honorary Senior Fellow at the Centre for Wellbeing Science, University of Melbourne. She is also the Lead-director and founder of the Global Belonging Collaborative and is the Editor-in-Chief of the Educational and Developmental Psychologist as well as the current and founding Co-Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Belonging and Human Connection with Professor Chris Boyle. The quality of her research has been acknowledged through several awards, including recognition by The Australian's data-science partner, The League of Scholars and independently ranked as Best In Field for research contributions over a four year period.

Preparing Practitioners for Inclusive Practice: The Challenge of Building Schema to Reduce Cognitive Load

5

Greg Auhl and Alan Bain

Abstract

Teachers in contemporary classrooms can expect to teach students with a diverse range of learning needs. As a result, there is a requirement for those teachers to be well prepared for teaching student populations with a broad range of learning backgrounds and characteristics. This chapter will explore teacher preparation from the perspective of schema building, and how preparing graduates with a well-developed schema for inclusive practice can reduce cognitive load in classroom contexts, allowing practitioners to be more responsive to the needs of learners. The chapter also aims to link specifically to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goal 4 (Quality Education), Goal 10 (Reduced Inequalities) and Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-Being).

Keywords

Schema · Cognitive load · Teacher cognition · Pre-service teacher preparation

G. Auhl (✉)
Division of Learning and Teaching, Charles Sturt University, Bathurst, NSW, Australia
e-mail: gauhl@csu.edu.au

A. Bain
School of Teacher Education, Charles Sturt University, Bathurst, NSW, Australia

5.1 Introduction

In contemporary classrooms, there has been a global focus on the implementation of practices aimed at maximising student learning outcomes. At the same time, mainstream classrooms internationally have seen a substantial increase in the representation of students with disabilities (Dempsey and Arthur-Kelly 2007). Graduate teachers need to enter the profession prepared to meet the challenges presented by these more diverse learning environments. Kirch et al. (2007, p. 673) describe "one goal of many teacher-education programs is to provide coursework and field experiences to introduce future educators to diverse student populations and provide a framework for accommodating a range of learning styles". However, these authors (among others) suggest that, for many practitioners, that goal remains largely unrealised. If educational inequality for students with disabilities is to be reduced, consistent with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal (UNSD) 10, such a capacity is an essential attribute for graduating teachers.

This chapter will examine one approach to help facilitate the development of the knowledge and skills necessary for practice in inclusive contexts. Using schema theory as its baseline, and considering the cognition and cognitive development of pre-service teachers, the chapter will explore the role of schema development in

teacher preparation. The relationship between teacher cognition and teacher behaviour is an important consideration in schema construction while the development of schemas can help reduce the cognitive load experienced by practitioners when they commence their careers. This reduction allows for increased cognitive processing capacity in dealing with the day-to-day events of the classroom, and a better sense of well-being from instructors as their stress levels are reduced (UNSD Goal 3).

5.2 Schema Theory

Schema theory is a useful construct when trying to understand the impact of teacher-preparation programs on the cognition of graduates. Within the literature, the terms schema and schemata are frequently used synonymously; however, for much of the existing research, the terms are used such that schemas are constructed of individual schemata, each of which contributes to bigger picture understanding.

The concept of schemata was first proposed within the fields of psychology and education in the 1930s by the British psychologist, Frederic Bartlett. Bartlett (1932) proposed that memory was "organised around schemas containing summaries of familiar stories or situations" (Marshall 1995, p. 10). These schemas were activated when some aspect of a new situation resonated with existing schemata. Schemas were built by repeated interaction with the same or similar situations. Schema theory explained how complex knowledge structures could be stored and later activated from the memory to allow responses to both everyday and novel situations. The further development of Bartlett's early work did not, however, eventuate until the 1970s through the work of Minsky (1975), Schank (1977) and Winograd (1972), while in 1980 Rumelhart consolidated schema theory as an "explicitly psychological theory of the mental representation of complex knowledge" (Brewer 1985, p. 23).

Marshall's (1995) work builds on that of early researchers in cognitive psychology and the concept of a schema such as Wiener (1948), Miller (1956), Neisser (1967), Minsky (1975) and Rumelhart (1980), among others. Marshall (1995, p. 39) describes a schema as "a vehicle of memory, allowing organisation of an individual's similar experiences" in a way that "assists their day to day activities and develops from an individual's experiences and guides the individual's responses to the environment". Importantly, schemas can also exist on an organisational level. In practice fields, schema can also refer to "a commonly held set of professional understandings, beliefs and actions" (Bain 2007, p. 44) within a particular field. In the case of teachers, these understandings, beliefs and actions would refer to the processes involved in teaching and learning.

The concept of a schema in psychology is important in that it describes the manner in which an individual's cognition is organised and activated. Individuals develop schemas through their interactions with their environment. The development of these structures then allows the individual to respond appropriately to known situations without impacting on working memory. The working memory indicated is then available for attending to novel situations (Kirschner et al. 2006; Paas et al. 2010; Sweller 1988, 1994).

Schema theory has been applied in a number of contexts to help in understanding cognitive processes. Seel et al. (2006) investigated the development of a schema for problem-solving within a group of engineering students in a US university. Wulf (1991) and Marshall (1995) both describe the use of schema theory in the instruction of students, although in widely disparate areas. In investigating motor learning in children, Wulf (1991) found that variable practice assisted children in developing a schema for throwing which was then utilised by participants in a novel situation. Marshall researched problem-solving in arithmetic, finding that a structured approach to teaching a problem-solving methodology allowed students to better understand both the problem and their approach to it.

Other researchers have also used schema theory in a variety of instructional contexts.

Meade et al. (1995) investigated the effects of schema-based instruction on preschool children in a variety of career placements, finding that explicit schema-based instruction improved children's outcomes in several major competency areas (e.g. intrapersonal skills), while Timperley and Robinson (2001) investigated ways of achieving school improvement through attempting to challenge and change teachers' schema about the causes of low academic achievement. These authors found that it was possible to challenge and change beliefs about "the causes of low academic achievement from external factors … to internal factors such as the contribution of their own teaching practices" (Timperley and Robinson 2001, p. 1).

5.3   Cognition and Schema

Work by researchers such as Kirschner et al. (2006) refers to a "human cognitive architecture", "concerned with the manner in which our cognitive structures are organised" (p. 76). In particular, they describe the process of learning from a cognitive perspective. Learning is seen as involving the processing of information in working memory and transferring this to long-term memory. Sweller (1994) describes working memory as the cognitive structure where "the information at hand is consciously attended to" (p. 297) and is particularly important when the information is new. Long-term memory is the cognitive structure where previously learned material is stored. Such material is able to be "processed automatically without conscious effort" (Sweller 1994, p. 297), hence making little demand on working memory and allowing an individual to simultaneously focus elsewhere. This memory is effectively unlimited and "is viewed as the central structure of human cognition. It contains huge amounts of knowledge that can be described as hierarchically organised schemas that allow us to categorise different problem states and decide upon the most appropriate solution moves" (Paas et al. 2010, p. 116).

Kirschner et al. (2006) also note two well-known characteristics of working memory described by the accumulated research in the field. The first of these is its limited capacity. The second is its limited duration. A seminal paper from the perspective of capacity is that of Miller (1956). Miller synthesised the existing work of the time about information measurement and the "amount of information" (p. 81) capable of being processed to determine what he referred to as the "magical number" (p. 81) of seven, plus or minus two individual pieces. Further studies have indicated that Miller may have been optimistic in this determination. Ongoing research into short-term memory capacity (Broadbent 1970; Sanders 1968; Sperling 1960) indicates a variation in capacity, with Cowan (2001) suggesting that this number could be as low as four.

From the perspective of the construct of duration, (which is concerned with the time information stays in the short-term memory), an early study by Peterson and Peterson (1959) examined the short-term retention of individual items by participants. These researchers found that the ability to accurately recall items decreased exponentially with time, over small time periods (with a maximum of 18 s used). Advances in technology, such as fMRI, coupled with significant research into the causes of human cognitive degeneration (such as that due to Alzheimer's disease) have allowed significantly more detailed exploration of brain structure and function (see, for example, LaRocque et al. 2016) since those early discoveries, however, the baseline for capacity and duration has changed little.

The human cognitive architecture described in the previous section concerns short- and long-term memory involving a number of cognitive structures, known within the field of cognitive psychology as schema. From a psychological standpoint, the understanding of schemas builds on the preceding descriptions by researchers examining how individuals process information, learn and remember, without overloading their capacity. In providing this support, schemas are described as cognitive structures that help individuals to understand the world, allowing them to survive in a changing environment (Nadkarni and Narayanan 2007). The development of

schemas assists individuals in their environment because they become familiar with typical situations in their everyday routines, thus limiting the cognitive processing required. An individual can organise new perceptions into schemata, and associated schemas, and act without effort, as thought processes are effectively automated (Kleider et al. 2008).

As noted previously, work in the area of schema theory progressed significantly through the 1970s and 1980s, led by the work of researchers such as Minsky (1975) and Rumelhart (1980). Minsky saw distinct parallels between work in his area of expertise (artificial intelligence) and human cognition. Minsky concluded that "humans were using top-down schema-based information to carry out many psychological tasks" (Brewer 2001, p. 67). Minsky posited that understanding these processes better could be helpful in his attempts to design computer models that exhibited human intelligence. Rumelhart, while working within the area of human cognition, was also interested in artificial intelligence, in particular computer simulations of perception (Rumelhart and McClelland 1986). From the perspective of schema theory, Rumelhart (1980), building on the work of Minsky, described how schemata were able to represent knowledge at all levels of complexity, from the simplest to the most abstract. New knowledge would be processed by the brain and would either add to an already existing schema, or begin a new one. In this way, an individual would build schemas that were able to represent "all levels of our experience, at all levels of abstraction. Finally, our schemata are our knowledge. All of our generic knowledge is embedded in schemata" (Rumelhart 1980, p. 41).

Marshall's (1995) work focuses on schema as an organising construct that allows an individual to recognise newer, additional experiences that were similar (and likewise ones that were dissimilar) to existing frameworks; it would allow access to a "generic framework" containing the essential verbal and non-verbal elements of similar experiences; it would allow individuals to "draw inferences, make estimates, create goals and develop plans using the framework"; and it allows the utilisation of skills, procedures or rules when faced with a problem that is relevant for a particular framework (Marshall 1995, p. 40).

Such an understanding is consistent with the work of earlier researchers, described above, as well as Sweller and Cooper (1985) and Seel et al. (2006). These researchers perceive schemas as ways in which individuals recognise patterns in the world, classify these and link them to existing cognitive structures, and respond appropriately. Seel et al. (2006, p. 303) describe these frameworks, or mental models, as providing "a powerful mechanism for storing knowledge in the human mind" that, because of their ability to "influence human behaviour … have significant impact on virtually all forms of human activity." The development of schemas assists individuals with both memory and managing learning because they become familiar with typical situations, thus limiting the processing required. An individual can organise new perceptions into schemata and act without effort, as thought processes are effectively automated (Kleider et al. 2008).

Schemas are also described by Sweller (1988) as being a primary factor in allowing novices and experts to be differentiated in problem-solving. Sweller argues that in the absence of well-developed schemas, the demands associated with problem-solving are such that it requires all of the processing ability of a novice, often precluding the activation of related prior knowledge and preventing ongoing schema development. To allow schemas to develop, Sweller (1999) proposes that information needs to be processed by working memory. Instruction, therefore, needs to ensure that working memory load is reduced, allowing long-term memory changes characterised by schema acquisition to occur. Once a schema has been developed for a given activity, its activation in familiar, though often complex, situations allows for a reduced load and for working memory to focus on other activities. Reducing cognitive load in this manner makes teachers more able to deal with the challenges of inclusive classrooms, thus reducing inequality in student learning and improving both student and teacher health and well-being, consistent with the UNSDG, 3, 4 and 10.

5.4 Teacher Cognition and Teacher Behaviour

Existing research about teacher cognition in all stages of career development is limited. Some studies have indicated that, for PSTs, cognitive change, in terms of a deep understanding of how students in classrooms learn, and ways to structure effective lessons for them, can be determined to have taken place as a result of teacher-preparation programs (Adams and Krockover 1997; Grossman and Richert 1988). While Grossman and Richert (1988) found cognition of PSTs, from the perspective of a broad and deep understanding of the requirement of effective practice, was enhanced moderately by engaging with their courses, this was described by the authors as an unintended result of such engagement and for many of the PSTs involved, little overall development was apparent from their preparation. Further, studies in the area have tended to rely on self-report and inferential measures, with limited evidence derived from validated objective measurement.

Our understanding of cognition—the way the human mind processes information, transfers learning from short- to long-term memory and builds increasingly complex schemas—advanced significantly in the decades between 1950 and 1970 (Leary and Tangney 2012). As these developments in the field of cognitive psychology took place, they began to resonate more specifically within the field of education, teaching and the ways in which "teachers played a much more active and central role in shaping educational processes than previously acknowledged" (Borg 2015, p. 6). As early as the late 1960s, an almost exclusive research focus on teacher behaviours in the classroom was beginning to come under scrutiny as developments in cognitive psychology "highlighted the influence of thinking on behaviour" (Borg 2015, p. 6). The importance of the cognition of teachers as the focus of the research was highlighted by the 1975 report of the National Institute of Education conference in the US, which concluded that "what teachers do is directed in no small measure by what they think" (p. 1). The capacity of teacher-preparation programs to instigate cognitive change, impacting ultimately the actions of graduates within the classroom, is an important consideration for understanding whether PSTs develop cognitive structures allowing them to translate what has been learned in their programs into their own practice.

Teacher cognition can be thought of and defined in terms of "what teachers think, know and believe and the relationships of mental constructs to what teachers do" (Borg 2003, p. 81). Kagan (1990) defined teacher cognition as "pre- or in-service teachers' self-reflections; beliefs and knowledge about teaching, students, and content; and awareness of problem-solving strategies endemic to classroom teaching" (p. 419). Common to these definitions is the explicit connection between beliefs and teacher thinking as a part of the cognition of teachers and the clear link to teacher behaviour represented by what teachers do in the classroom.

We propose that, given the focus of PST preparation on meeting the standards-based frameworks that have come into play in many jurisdictions (derived from the literature on effective teaching practice), and the importance of cognitive mediation, the schema development of graduate teachers should reflect what is learned in their preparation programs. Graduate teachers, as a result of their experiences, should develop schemas for implementing effective teaching approaches in their practice, albeit at an introductory level.

In examining the influences impacting teacher cognition, Borg (2003) describes how research has indicated that a number of factors have an impact. These influences include an individual's own schooling experience; the input from their preparation program; their experiences of classroom; and other contextual factors (Borg 2003). Importantly, Borg's (2003) model affirms that PST coursework has the capacity to impact teacher cognition. This impact, however, is mediated by other factors pertaining to the individual's own biography (such as their own school experience). Failure to account for such

influences in the delivery of coursework can severely limit its impact on cognition. Other aspects of PST preparation programs, such as practicum experiences, also have an influence either subconsciously, or through reflective practice structured into such experiences. Contextual factors such as the site of practicum experiences or first teaching placement are also significant in developing teacher cognition. The complex interplay between these factors is important in determining the cognitive development of pre-service teachers, which in itself is a predictor of classroom behaviours.

5.5 Cognitive Load

In the late 1980s, the work in cognitive psychology developed by previous researchers such as Minsky (1975) and Rumelhart (1980) around the development and activation of schemas began to focus on the concept of cognitive load. This work was further progressed by Sweller (1988), who developed cognitive load theory. Cognitive load theory "is concerned with the learning of complex cognitive tasks, in which learners are often overwhelmed by the number of interactive information elements that need to be processed simultaneously before meaningful learning can commence" (Paas et al. 2010, p. 116). Sweller's ongoing research with colleagues has included the application of ideas about memory structures and information processing to classroom contexts and the teaching/learning process (Yu et al. 2002).

Cognitive load can be understood as the amount of working memory required by an individual to carry out a particular task, and is often differentiated into three types—intrinsic load, extraneous load and germane load. Intrinsic load is defined as the degree of difficulty associated with a particular task (Chandler and Sweller 1991). In delineating instructional approaches to decrease the cognitive load of complex problems, these authors describe how the difficulty of a task as a whole cannot be altered. The instructional techniques can, however, be altered by using techniques such as

breaking complex tasks down into separately taught components, then recombining. In the context of a graduate teacher, for example, this might be exemplified by breaking down a complex mathematical operation into steps, teaching these steps and then showing how they fit together as a whole. The instructional approaches chosen by instructors are defined as contributing to the extraneous cognitive load, which is the unnecessary load placed on a learner by a poor choice of instructional approaches or materials.

Using the example above, a failure to break the mathematical operation into steps, or to appropriately sequence these steps, will contribute to the extraneous load, thus allowing the learner less processing capacity for learning. Where a task has a high intrinsic load, it is imperative that clear, well-scaffolded, instructional materials are designed to avoid using limited working memory resources in having to process poorly designed approaches.

Germane load is delineated as that devoted to the processing, construction and automation of schemas (Sweller et al. 1998). It is this aspect that is responsible for "learning" as schema construction takes place from the processing of information in working memory, for storage in long-term memory. Sweller et al. (1998) describe the relationship between cognitive load and schema development in terms of knowledge development. These authors describe how "knowledge is stored in long-term memory in the form of schemas" (p. 255). When stored in this manner, schemas provide both a "mechanism for knowledge organisation" (p. 255) as well as a way of reducing the load applied to working memory. As the capacity of working memory is limited, schemas act to allow it to focus on novel aspects of a scenario by retrieving knowledge already previously mastered. Sweller et al. (1998, p. 255) describe the development of complex schemas as an "active, constructive process". For the classroom-based example above, developing a schema about a particular process and appropriate instructional approaches during their pre-service coursework would assist a graduate in ensuring that potential pitfalls when designing learning activities were avoided. From the

perspective of learning, the scope and sequence of materials is an important consideration, as "it is through the building of increasing numbers of ever more complex schemas by combining elements consisting of lower level schemas into higher level schemas that skilled performance develops" (Sweller et al. 1998, p. 255). Also from the perspective of learning, Sweller et al. (p. 265) describe the importance of ensuring that instructional approaches and materials "reduce extraneous cognitive load and redirect learners' attention to cognitive processes that are directly relevant to the construction of schemas".

Given the understandings described above, building schemas represent a necessary contribution of teacher-preparation programs if they are to be effective in preparing beginning teachers for the complex environment of the classroom. In classroom environments, graduates are expected to plan for and engage a diversity of learners in developmentally appropriate instruction, while simultaneously managing the day-to-day interactions arising in that environment. Schema development allows the management of familiar situations, while simultaneously allowing sufficient working memory to respond appropriately to situations not previously encountered. Consideration of aspects of cognitive psychology such as working memory, short- and long-term memory, cognitive load, schema development and learning is of vital importance for the design of teacher-preparation programs. These considerations underpin and help explain the possible changes in PST cognition that enable graduates to instantiate their learning and operate in the complex environment of the classroom.

It would be expected that these schemas are based on teaching standards, which are themselves grounded on the literature describing effective teaching practices. These standards are the basis of a graduate's preparation program, and are intrinsically linked to how graduates respond to different situations, in authentic settings, on completion of their preparation. It is reasonable, therefore, to suppose that graduates will develop schemas for practice as they progress through a professional preparation program and graduate with schemas that could be reasonably expected of an entry-level professional. These schemas, along with the relationship between cognition and behaviour already described, can help to ensure the success of early-career practitioners in the classroom context.

5.6 Schema Development of Pre-Service Teachers

One of the cornerstones of Marshall (1995) work is the description given of four levels of "knowledge" which, when taken together, comprise a functional schema for a particular situation or concept. The knowledge types articulated in this work consist of identification knowledge, elaboration knowledge, planning knowledge and execution knowledge, and are consistent with other researchers such as Sweller (1988) and Seel et al. (2006), who describe schema development as a result of internalising new experiences into existing structures. In Marshall's model, identification knowledge centres on pattern recognition and is described by Marshall (p. 41) as the "most common gateway to schema activation". In identification knowledge, there is concurrent processing of the features of a situation matched against previous experiences of similar encounters. While two or more schemas may share some aspects, each schema has its particular foundation of knowledge.

Elaboration knowledge involves individuals activating further information about the situation, both verbal and visual, from their experiences. Using elaboration knowledge involves creating a mental model about the situation and testing it against a "template" based on previous interactions (Marshall 1995, p. 41). This testing allows an individual to make an interpretation as to whether the situation fits into an existing schema or not, then involving either adoption of the existing schema or modification to it, or the creation of a new structure.

Marshall (1995) describes planning knowledge as that which allows a schema to be used to "make plans, create expectations and set up goals and sub-goals" (p. 41). The complexity of the

planning that occurs depends substantially on the level of experience of the individual; it is not until individuals develop knowledge at the planning level that they are considered to have a functional, working schema for a given situation (Marshall 1995, p. 41). It is the attainment of this level of schema knowledge, and the interface between it and execution knowledge that is crucial. In teaching, for example, it is at this level that the planning about how to respond to a typical classroom scenario comes into play. Execution knowledge "is knowledge that allows the individual to carry out the steps of the plan" (Marshall 1995, p. 41). Execution knowledge is often drawn from many schemas, and hence experiences. It dictates what action should arise from the planning stage.

During the 1990s, schema theory was used by Marshall (1995) both as a mechanism for instruction, for example, in teaching approaches to mathematics problem-solving techniques, and as a means of assessing learning. Marshall proposes that when used as the basis of instruction, schema approaches facilitate the creation by students of the fundamental connections that need to be made between often disconnected aspects of a concept. In solving a mathematics problem, for example, a schema might consist of an individual having previously developed a step-by-step approach to interpreting the problem, then representing it symbolically and finally solving it. In terms of assessment, she argues that the use of schema-based assessment would allow greater exploration of the deep learning and cognitive changes attained by students, rather than the shallower surface-level aspects explored by traditional examination techniques.

Using Marshall's (1995) framework, early-career teaching professionals can be seen to require knowledge related to the identification of professional practice, the elaboration of that knowledge as it relates to the content and pedagogy of teaching, knowledge required to plan for the enactment of professional practice and knowledge required for the execution of those professional plans in classroom settings. With

teaching increasingly described as a collaborative exercise, a schema for practice on both an individual level and for the profession are important considerations for teacher preparation programs. For example, Auhl (2018) employed Marshall's (1995) knowledge levels for schema development and the SOLO taxonomy developed by Biggs and Collis (1982) to produce the following schema descriptors for pre-service classroom teachers as they engaged with the demands of the inclusive classroom:

1. Pre-structural/pre-schematic responses indicate no understanding of an appropriate professional response with no valid strategies and no connections between suggested strategies.
2. Uni-structural/identification knowledge response indicates a limited understanding of an appropriate professional response with the identification of a limited number of valid strategies to address the needs described, with low-level understanding of the implementation and the connections among them.
3. Multi-structural/elaboration knowledge responses show some understanding (albeit incomplete) of a professional response indicating an ability to elaborate on the strategies identified along with some basic evidence of how to apply them.
4. Relational/planning level knowledge indicates a good understanding of an appropriate functional professional response including a number of valid strategies; how to implement them; an ability to make clear connections among the strategies constituting a workable plan for execution.
5. Extended abstract/advanced execution level response involves a complete professional response including significant inter-relationships and connections among different strategies and a sophisticated interconnected plan for execution.

The levels as described create a link between Marshall's (1995) more general descriptors of schema development and their application in a

professional context like teaching in an inclusive classroom. The levels can be used to benchmark the extent to which graduates possess the learning derived from their activities and inputs associated with their professional preparation programs.

Considerations of cognitive load, schema development, learning and their implications for teachers in the complex classroom environment have been examined by a number of researchers (Sweller 1988; Sweller et al. 1998). Feldon (2007, p. 123) describes how feelings of being "overwhelmed by the amount of simultaneous activity in a classroom" are well represented in the literature about teaching, in particular when applied to pre-service or novice teachers. Such cognitive overload impacts not only the ability of individuals to perform in conditions of high cognitive demand but also their ability to process and learn from such situations. Provision of experiences allowing the incremental development of schemas, using approaches aimed at decreasing extrinsic cognitive load, is described by a number of researchers as one way of facilitating a reduction in cognitive load and allowing teaching practitioners to better attend to the immediate requirements of the classroom (Feldon 2007; Rogers et al. 1997; Sweller 1988).

From the perspective of teacher preparation, schemas for practice would be expected to develop through involvement in activities and input related to the knowledge and skills required of practitioners. These activities and inputs based on teaching standards progress incrementally over the course of a student's professional preparation. Further, through the inter-relationship of both theoretical and practicum components of preparation courses, an individual, on graduation, could be expected to have built such schemas on which they could draw. Having these schemas then allows a graduate to respond to situations, while at the same time allowing working memory to continue to process newer information from their practice to continually modify these schemas.

5.7 Implications for Teacher Preparation

Our initial research on the schema development of Australian pre-service classroom teachers (Auhl 2018; Auhl and Bain 2020), using the schema levels described earlier, indicate very low levels of schema development (predominantly uni-structural) for inclusive classroom practice in the jurisdiction studied. While that work did not establish a causal link to the nature of the preparation programs from which the student graduated, it did raise a number of important questions/implications for future research: First, the overall low levels of schema development call into question the extent to which the programs studied are successfully meeting the standards for inclusive teaching on which they are based; and whether the problem is more pervasive. This is an important area for investigation given the critical importance of standards in managing the quality of teacher preparation internationally and the expectation that those standards when used for the purposes of accreditation are serving as quality control mechanisms. It is also an important question given the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals pertaining to both quality education (Goal 4) and reduced inequalities (Goal 3) both within and across countries in terms of accessible education for all children. A second question involves the extent to which the programs studied provided enough depth in their treatment of the skills and knowledge associated with the standards related to inclusive practice for schema development to occur. Our research showed little schema development in each year of a preparation program. Third, given that schema is a developmental construct, is there sufficient coherence in the organisation of those programs for a schema to build developmentally and for skills and knowledge to reach the planning level of schema development (described earlier) deemed necessary for successful entry-level classroom practice? Our research showed little

cumulative schema development in the students studied. Fourth, is there sufficient opportunity in the programs for students to engage in quality professional practice supervised by individuals who are experts in the practices described in the pre-service teaching standards? And fifth, is that practice sufficiently connected to the university classroom experience of the pre-service teachers so that their cognition about effective inclusive practice could be translated into high-quality action?

Given existing research showing concerns about teacher preparation for inclusion (Woodcock et al. 2012), the effects of cognitive overload (Sweller 1988); the propensity for graduate teachers to be overwhelmed by the challenges of the inclusive classroom (Feldon 2007); the link between schema development and problem-solving (e.g. Sweller 1988); and our research showing low levels of schema development in graduate teachers, we contend that the investigation of teacher cognition and schema development is an important area for continuing investigation. We know that the teaching field is faced with high levels of early-career burnout and attrition, which may be linked to the high cognitive load and problem-solving demands faced by graduate teachers. The development of links between the design of teacher preparation programs and successful schema development may improve the problem-solving capability of graduates and reduce cognitive load in ways that make the early-career challenges of the inclusive classroom more accessible for graduate teachers, and contribute more fully to their ongoing good health and well-being (UNSDG 3).

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Greg Auhl, Ph.D, is a Senior Lecturer in Academic Development, and the Course Director for the Graduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education at Charles Sturt University, Australia. He has a lengthy background in school and higher education, teaching and researching in science, mathematics and inclusive education.

Alan Bain, EdD, is an Associate Professor in Inclusive Education at Charles Sturt University, Australia. He has led comprehensive organisational change processes focusing on inclusivity in schools and higher education. He is the author/co-author of numerous books and research articles on educational innovation and educational change. He has consulted nationally and internationally with leading technology companies and educational organisations.

Part II
Inclusion for Specific Populations

Young People with Serious Mental Health Problems: A Case for Inclusion

6

Heather Craig and Kelly-Ann Allen

Abstract

Every young person has the right to access education and participate in school, regardless of psychiatric disability or mental health problems—as acknowledged by the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. Social inclusion is achieved when both the aspects of objective participatory experiences and subjective feelings of acceptance and belonging are provided to an individual. This chapter will explore the impact of mental illness on social inclusion and argue that schools are poised to meet the needs of young people with mental health problems or serious mental illness in respect of ensuring an inclusive environment that fosters a sense of belonging.

6.1 Introduction

A notable priority in global mental health is the social inclusion of individuals with mental illness in society (Baumgartner and Burns 2014). Mental health problems in childhood and adolescence represent a major "disease burden" in terms of the implications when considering not only physical health and mortality but also future social and economic functioning (Deighton et al. 2018). Mental health problems also place a burden on these young people.

People with serious mental illness (SMI), defined as a mental illness that requires rigorous and continuing treatment with or without hospitalization, are 7–10 times more likely to commit suicide when compared with the general population (Gardner et al. 2019a).

People with SMI and mental health problems, including young people with such conditions, face barriers that are both related to participation and finding a sense of belonging (Allen 2020). Stigma is a substantial issue. Better social functioning (i.e. current employment) predicted greater social inclusion, highlighting the importance of participation in determining social

H. Craig (✉)
School of Public Health, Monash University, Melbourne, VIC, Australia
e-mail: heather.craig@monash.edu

K.-A. Allen
School of Educational Psychology and Counselling, Faculty of Education, Monash University, Clayton, VIC, Australia

Centre for Wellbeing Science, Melbourne Graduate School of Education, University of Melbourne, Parkville, VIC, Australia

inclusion (Gardner et al. 2019a). Just as employment facilitates social inclusion, so would being actively involved in education. This chapter will examine the crucial need for social inclusion in young people with SMI and mental health problems, and argue that schools are poised as opportune environments that cultivate inclusion and opportunities for belonging (Allen and Bowles 2012). Providing quality education to those with SMI and working towards inclusion will reduce inequalities in education as well as the wider community, thus progressing towards the Sustainable Development Goals described in this series.

6.2   What is Social Inclusion?

What is social inclusion? A socially inclusive society can be defined as "one in which all people feel valued and have the opportunity to learn, work and connect with others and their local community" (Whatley et al. 2015, p. 428). Social inclusion can be thought of in terms of two interrelated components. It entails both objective participatory elements (such as education and employment) and subjective elements (a sense of belonging and acceptance). Thus, social inclusion may be thought of as a sense of acceptance and belonging, coupled with a person being satisfied with the opportunities they have to embrace valued social connections across various domains—including education (Gardner et al. 2019b).

Social inclusion is a term that was initially used in the UK and Europe in relation to the adoption of the European Social Policy Agenda that aimed to combat poverty and promote social inclusion. People with mental health problems were considered to be at particular risk of social exclusion. In the US, the terms *social integration* or *community integration* are more commonly used (Baumgartner and Burns 2014). For the purpose of this chapter, the term *social inclusion* will be used.

Part of the process of recovery from mental health problems is recovery from social exclusion (Baumgartner and Burns 2014). Social inclusion for such individuals should encompass feelings of trust and reciprocity with other members of the groups in which the individual is included (Hall 2009).

Huxley et al. (2012) suggest two approaches to social inclusion and mental health. The first is a rights-based approach that emphasizes social exclusion and a lack of rights as a member of a citizen of a society or community. The second approach looks at the opportunity to participate in activities of the community.

Adolescents and young adults relate to their peers in a different way than they identify with family members (Sargent et al. 2002). Adolescence is a period of unique sensitivity to social inclusion, and research shows that unwanted social exclusion correlates with anxiety and depression (Newman et al. 2007).

There is a paucity of research on subjective indicators of social inclusion in young people, and there is a pressing need for multi-dimensional measures of social inclusion for young people with or without SMI. By incorporating both objective and subjective indicators of social inclusion, a multi-dimensional measure will make it possible for researchers to generate normative and clinical data (Gardner et al. 2019a).

The multi-dimensional measures of social inclusion need to be used to develop an understanding of the discrepancies that seem to exist between young people with SMI and those without such an illness. An understanding of these discrepancies would lead to further understanding the relationships between objective and subjective components of social inclusion, and how these elements relate to the psychological distress commonly experienced by young people with SMI (Gardner et al. 2019b). Such knowledge of these components and the impact they have on young people with SMI or mental health problems could then provide clues as to appropriate interventions.

Young people with mental health problems or SMI face barriers to social inclusion during a sensitive period of development. Education may be the answer.

6.3 Mental Illness in Young People

Mental illness in young people can interrupt both participation in education and having a sense of belonging at school (Allen et al. 2018; O'Brien and Bowles 2013). The mental health of young people is a global concern (Allen and McKenzie 2015). In terms of more serious mental health problems, the period of adolescence and young adulthood is often the time that SMI transpires, and such SMI creates a potential disruption to normative development, including vocational development (Caruana et al. 2018).

According to Caruana et al. (2018), SMI often impedes a young person's capacity to function at the best of their ability and can affect every aspect of life, from the biological to the emotional, and psychological. Furthermore, SMI interferes with an individual's ability to participate in vocation. For example, one study of 15–24-year-olds with borderline personality pathology found that upon entering specialist clinical care, 33.3% were not studying or working (Caruana et al. 2018). Lack of opportunity to participate also affects a person's mental well-being, creating a negative feedback loop.

6.4 Mental Illness and Inclusion

6.4.1 The Impact of Mental Illness on Inclusion

The impact of SMI on inclusion in young people is significant. Historically speaking, the mental health sector has seen social exclusion as resulting from the symptoms of mental illness (Whatley et al. 2015). In a study of individuals with First Episode Psychosis, there was no effect found for psychotic symptoms on social inclusion. Therefore, it is not the case that individuals with SMI should be prevented from pursuing vocational goals based on the assumption that symptoms will interfere (Gardner et al. 2019a).

Instead, individual factors should just be one part of tackling the barriers to inclusion and participation in daily life (Whatley et al. 2015).

The symptoms experienced by the individual are only one contributing factor posing a hurdle for young people with SMI or mental health problems being able to take part in activities, including education, and developing a sense of belonging (Allen and Kern 2017; 2019).

Young people with SMI face extra challenges on top of the significant demands that adolescence already involves, in adapting to the extraordinary range of biopsychosocial changes that occur during this period. For example, these young people may face demands that are related to the onset and management of their illness, which may also affect the processes of social inclusion (Gardner et al. 2019a).

Adolescence brings with it a sensitive period that marks a test for social inclusion. This is a critical period for identity formation, and the influence of peers on adolescents is immense. If the need for social inclusion is not met during this important time, it is difficult to achieve later in life. Adolescence, as well as being a time of transition when youth build a sense of identity, sees young people begin to build social roles that they hope to occupy into adult life. Evidence into social inclusion in young people with SMI so far has been derived from objective indicators in isolated domains, such as unemployment (Gardner et al. 2019b).

The importance of social inclusion cannot be underestimated. Reducing inequalities has been identified by the United Nations in their Sustainable Development Goals. For young people with SMI, the evidence suggests that social inclusion may be a protective factor against the risk of suicide (Gardner et al. 2019a). The need to highlight the issue of social inclusion for young people with SMI has been noted by both researchers and clinicians.

6.4.2 Mental Illness and Participation in Education

Mental illness affects the participatory component of inclusion. Untreated mental disorders lead children and adolescents to have significantly

lower academic performance (Hoagwood et al. 2007), experience greater developmental difficulties (Bain and Diallo 2016) and be at greater risk of comorbid conditions such as substance use, suicide, school dropout and incarceration (Rajaleid et al. 2016; Stagman and Cooper 2010). Whilst Australian population-level research shows that 6.84% of healthy people aged 15–19 years were not studying or working, this is compared to 13.68% of age-matched peers who have an affective disorder (Caruana et al. 2018).

SMI and mental health problems interfere with participation in daily life, including education. Caruana et al. (2018) examined vocational measures of young people with depression, psychosis or Borderline Personality Disorder, and for the 46 people who were partially involved in a course of study, 52.2% had poor attendance, 30.4% reported a decline in grades or were currently failing and 17.4% were attending study but reported either not completing or not understanding the work.

Killackey et al. (2013) conducted a randomized controlled trial of vocational intervention for young people with first-episode psychosis. People with the psychotic illness have also been shown to have less education. In Australia, more than 80% of individuals have successfully completed Year 12 by the age of 24. However, educational attainment for people with psychotic illness shows that between 25 and 50% have less than the completion of Year 10, whilst only approximately one-third had finished Year 12 (Killackey et al. 2013). In fact, the evidence suggests that rates of high-school completion are as low as one-quarter in individuals with SMI, compared to 84% rate of completion among healthy peers of the same age (Gardner et al. 2019b).

A cross-sectional study of people with psychosis looked at a number of variables, including productivity, prior to the onset of psychotic illness and at the time of the study. There was a sizeable reduction in the number of participants who were in work or education in the year prior to illness onset compared to the last year (Killaspy et al. 2014).

Low educational attainment, in part, results in unemployment being the predominant psychosocial disability for people with psychotic illnesses (Killackey et al. 2013). In fact, such a low level of education would create barriers to successful vocational outcomes in life, regardless of mental illness. Students' academic achievement is associated with negative sequelae in terms of future academic success, employment, and depression, alcoholism and violent behaviour (Deighton et al. 2018). Education settings provide students with the basis upon which to develop employment opportunities (Gardner et al. 2019a).

6.4.3 Classifying Mental Illness in Young People

When considering the effects of mental ill-health on social inclusion, SMI and mental health problems in young people can be considered in terms of internalizing versus externalizing symptoms. According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5), the clustering of disorders in terms of internalizing and externalizing factors is an empirically supported framework (APA 2013). "The internalizing group represents disorders with prominent anxiety, depressive and somatic symptoms, and the externalizing group represents disorders with prominent impulsive, disruptive conduct, and substance use symptoms" (APA 2013, p. 13).

6.4.4 The Impact of Symptoms on Learning

Symptoms of mental health problems and mental illness interrupt young people's capacity to engage in education. Both internalizing and externalizing disorders affect learning. Deighton et al. (2018) drew upon a large data set and employed a 2-year cross lag design to assess the pathways between mental health difficulties and academic performance during middle childhood and early adolescence. They examined

internalizing symptoms and externalizing problems, academic attainment, special educational needs and socio-economic deprivation (Deighton et al. 2018).

Deighton et al. (2018) found that in a sample of primary-school-aged students, externalizing problems were associated with lower academic attainment at later stages of schooling, and low academic attainment predicted internalizing symptoms in future schooling. They also found that in the secondary-school-aged students, higher levels of internalizing symptoms and externalizing problems both led to subsequent reductions in academic attainment.

According to Deighton et al. (2018), the "Adjustment-erosion model" states that internalizing and/or externalizing problems lead to academic struggles later on in education. Aggressive behaviour may, for example, impede learning due to problematic effects on peer acceptance and relationships with teachers. Internalizing symptoms—for example, emotional distress—can also prove a barrier to academic progress due to the influence of distress on cognitive functions associated with learning which results in decreased classroom participation.

It has also been found that externalizing problems may lead to the development of internalizing symptoms at a later date. It is thought that behavioural problems disturb interpersonal relationships, which then affects emotional distress. On the other hand, when internalizing symptoms occur earlier in childhood, it may actually reduce the chance of externalizing problems later on. This is because the self-isolation and withdrawal that are related to internalizing problems are thought to reduce the risk of disruptive behaviour in future (Deighton et al. 2018).

The *Academic incompetence model*, as explained by Deighton et al. (2018), suggests that, in fact, issues related to academic competence either lead to or exacerbate pre-existing internalizing and/or externalizing problems. According to this model, low academic achievement may lead to disruptive behaviour which may stem from frustration and/or educational placements that increase contact with

deviant peers. Internalizing problems may occur due to academic failure which can eventuate in feelings of worthlessness or low self-esteem.

The "shared risk" hypothesis argues that the association between academic achievement and internalizing/externalizing problems may be explained by another third variable that has an impact on a number of interrelated developmental domains. These are termed *risk markers* (Deighton et al. 2018, p. 112) and include intellectual ability, quality of parenting and deprivation/socio-economic status.

Deighton et al.'s (2018) findings supported the adjustment-erosion hypothesis. They therefore argued that internalizing and/or externalizing difficulties lead to later academic difficulties. The deleterious nature of the effects of SMI on education is evident.

6.4.5   Social Exclusion and Stigma

When considering social inclusion in young people with mental health problems or mental illness, it is necessary to also consider the impact of exclusion. Students may be prevented from taking part in education, or they may face the issue of not feeling like they belong or are accepted (Slaten et al. 2016, 2018). This exclusion is in direct contraindication of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

People with SMI and mental health problems face social exclusion and stigma, and unfortunately young people with SMI are not immune. Poor mental health may be both a cause and a consequence of social exclusion (Morgan et al. 2007; Payne 2006; Social Exclusion Unit 2004). Stereotypes see individuals with a mental illness described as "dangerous", "violent", "less intelligent", "incapable" and "weak" (Ke et al. 2015), and subsequently prejudice is formed as a result of cognitive and emotional responses to stereotypes (Overton and Medina 2008). Such prejudice may lead to discrimination, which is the behaviour that occurs as a result of the emotions and beliefs that prejudice generates (Overton and Medina 2008). Individuals with mental illness face alienation and social isolation, and what's

more, the stigma that they face is debilitating (Ke et al. 2015; Overton and Medina 2008; Sholl et al. 2010).

People with mental illness may face both discrimination and prejudice (Overton and Medina 2008). According to the Care Service Improvement Partnership (2009), teenagers actually have less tolerant attitudes about mental health.

Stigma, according to social cognition theory, is a multi-dimensional concept consisting of cognitive, emotional and behavioural elements. The cognitive element includes attitudes and stereotypes. Emotional elements refer to the expression of prejudice, such as being fearful of people with mental illness. Behavioural elements include an individual's intention to interact with people who have a mental illness, generally based on discrimination, and are characterized by avoidance, devaluation or social distance (Petkari et al. 2018).

Perceived stigma is an individual's perception of "how most other people view themselves as individuals with mental illness" (Min and Wong 2017, p. 854). Perceived stigma has been shown to be a barrier to recovery from mental illness due to decreases in life opportunities, impeding access to and compliance with effective treatments, reducing self-esteem and self-efficacy, and negatively affecting the quality of life. Perceived stigma has been shown to negatively affect the quality of life even within the context of an effective treatment program (Min and Wong 2017). In the study by Min and Wong (2017), higher levels of social support from friends, family and mental health professionals was related to a decreased level of perceived stigma.

Stigma, caused by society's lack of understanding about mental health, is a significant barrier for adolescents seeking treatment (Sakellari et al. 2011). Peer rejection and depressive symptoms are related, and rejection by peers predicts increases in depressive symptoms longitudinally (Kiesner et al. 2003). Measuring the number of friends and how often a young person with SMI is harassed by their peers suggests that these students are chronically excluded (Gardner et al. 2019a).

6.4.6 Addressing Stigma in Schools

One step towards providing inclusion within schools for young people with SMI or mental health problems is to actively address the stigma which may impede both participation and belonging (Allen et al. 2016, 2018). Young people with SMI and mental health problems are confronted with stigma and social exclusion, and there is a definite need for inclusion to be a priority in schools.

Kiesner et al. (2003) assessed peer networks both in school and after school. Depressive symptoms could be explained by both peer preference in the classroom, and in-school network inclusion. Kiesner et al. (2003) also found that being nominated as a network member of an after-school network may be a protective factor against the negative effects of low network inclusion in the school. Peer relations, both school-wide and after school play an important role in explaining the behaviours of students.

Adolescents are close to becoming active participants in adult life and therefore overcoming social exclusion and stigma in this group can positively influence the whole community. Recovery from mental health problems and SMI is enhanced by improvements in self-esteem and self-confidence, and by expanding an individual's social network and feelings of social inclusion (Sakellari et al. 2011).

Approaches to developing supportive environments in the community in the past have been problematic. Specialized programs specifically designed for individuals with mental ill-health have been criticized as continuing to foster individual's feelings of being separate from their local communities and also such programs don't meet people's social needs. Mental health practitioners have been urged to support people with mental ill-health to access the "naturally occurring opportunities" in local communities (Whatley et al. 2015)—including schools.

Mental health professionals have a compelling need to understand how inclusive environments can be developed that provide opportunities for participation for people recovering from mental illness, and also promote social inclusion (Whatley et al. 2015). One such way of doing so is to take advantage of education, as schools afford the possibility of both providing opportunities for young people with SMI to participate, and are also places which offer a sense of belonging (Allen and Boyle 2016; 2018; Allen et al. 2019; Roffey, Boyle and Allen 2019).

Adolescence is an appropriate time to promote positive attitudes, and lessen the stigma associated with SMI (Sakellari et al. 2011). One meta-analysis found that a clerkship program for students preparing to work in healthcare professions had a beneficial influence on their levels of stigma surrounding patients with SMI (Petkari et al. 2018).

Stigmatizing attitudes in children/youth have been effectively reduced through approaches employing a combination of education and direct contact, or video-based contact, with individuals who have a mental illness. However, previous interventions have been limited by constraints such as a need for a number of classroom sessions, demand of time outside of school hours, direct contact with people with mental illness, and a requirement for well-trained individuals to implement workshops (Ke et al. 2015).

Some brief interventions have been shown to be effective. For example, a four-session psychosocial intervention with a class of 13- and 14-year-old students was successful in promoting more positive attitudes about mental health (Sholl et al. 2010).

Ke et al. (2015) examined the effects of a very short, 1 h classroom-based workshop on secondary school students (aged 14–17) in British Columbia. They measured stigma (including stereotype endorsement and desire for social distance) in a total of 279 students immediately before (T1), immediately after (T2) and one month after the workshop (T3). Ke et al. (2015) found that scores on the scale measuring stigma showed a 23% reduction between T1 and T2 ($p < 0.01$). This finding was also evident one month

after the workshop, with a decrease of 21% of scores on the stigma scale compared to pre-intervention ($p < 0.01$). Therefore, this study found that a 1-h workshop that is both easy to implement and cost-effective was a promising way to decrease adolescents' stigmatizing attitudes (Ke et al. 2015). This would suggest that similar, brief interventions could be delivered in schools to target stigma.

6.4.7 Schools Are Communities

What makes a school a suitable place to target social inclusion and offer students with mental health problems a sense of belonging? Schools are communities. "Community" can be understood in two ways—the first is geographical (people sharing an environment), the second is psychological (feelings of shared values, sharing an emotional bond and interdependence) (Roffey 2011). Being involved in a community provides individuals with a sense of belongingness and general social identity (Kawachi and Berkman 2001).

Evidence suggests that social ties are associated with the maintenance or improvement of psychological well-being. Participation in the community, such as the school, makes it more likely that an individual will construct and maintain interactive ties in social networks (Kawachi and Berkman 2001). Research has found that depression and anxiety symptoms decreased significantly in people with mental illness who took part in recreational and therapy groups targeting social isolation (Cruwys et al. 2014; Haslam et al. 2016).

Community development approaches to mental health recognize that communities have social capital and the opportunity for individuals to develop capabilities and resources whilst also offering additional support as needed, when appropriate. This approach establishes an authentic context for allowing an individual the chance to participate in the occupation. A community development approach establishes networks that are inclusive of people in recovery from mental illness (Whatley et al 2015).

According to Whatley et al. (2015), communities, including schools, also present obligations, rights, responsibilities and an expectation that an individual will contribute to the community. People have a chance to interact in various roles rather than just having a limited role. The community also provides a local culture that people can influence or create.

Whatley et al. (2015) conducted an ethnographic study to look at how a supported community garden enabled occupational participation and social inclusion for people living with mental ill-health. The study showed that creating a community, creating a flexible environment that supports participation and creating a learning environment all contributed to the community garden being a socially inclusive environment. Surely such principles could be applied to a school community.

6.4.8 Belonging

A key component of social inclusion is a subjective feeling of belonging and acceptance. Anant (1966) suggested that belonging is an important consideration when looking at mental health and illness through a relational perspective. Belonging to a social group is positively associated with mental health, and individuals with a mental illness are affected by a lack of sense of belonging (Allen et al. 2018; Newman et al. 2007). Sargent et al. (2002) suggest that the social stigma commonly associated with mental illness may contribute to the issue.

One study showed that both boys and girls display fewer internalizing and externalizing problems when they have a sense of group belonging (Newman et al. 2007). In the context of a community, such as a school, individuals are provided with the opportunity to build a feeling of belonging and a sense of identity (Whatley et al. 2015).

School belonging is defined as "the extent to which students feel personally accepted, respected, included and supported by others in the school environment" (Goodenow 1993, p. 80). A feeling of belonging and acceptance within

one's social group is a fundamental human need (Roffey 2011), and according to the Wingspread Declaration (2004), students who feel connected to school are less likely to show emotional distress.

Peers are likely to play a key role in school belonging. Caring relations with teachers and other staff were found to have the least predictive value in relation to adolescent negative affect problems (Shochet et al. 2011). Low belonging can have a significant, negative influence on adolescents' experiences with serious repercussions on psychological and physical health (Allen and McKenzie 2015). One of the most important factors contributing to loneliness is being accepted or rejected by peers at school (Roffey 2011).

6.4.9 Mental Health Promotion in Schools

Besides offering environments in which young people with SMI or mental health problems can participate and feel a sense of acceptance and belonging, schools can be locales that actively promote and nurture mental health (Allen et al. 2018). Schools can contribute to addressing three of the Sustainable Development Goals: good health and well-being, quality education and reduced inequalities. However, a number of perceived barriers mean that many of the one in five adolescents who meet the diagnosis of a mental disorder do not receive services or seek help. Easily accessible mental health services are needed, and schools can provide interventions and fill the gap in mental health service provision (Franklin et al. 2017).

Franklin et al. (2017) report findings from a systematic review and meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials (RCTs) that looked into the value of psychosocial interventions delivered by teachers on internalizing and externalizing outcomes, as well as factors that potentially moderate these outcomes. Overall, the review examined 24 studies, with N = 32, 985.

Teacher-provided school-based psychosocial interventions showed a statistically significant

positive effect on internalizing outcomes but not on externalizing outcomes (Allen et al. 2021). Other school mental health literature also suggests that teacher-delivered Tier 1 interventions are effective (i.e. school-wide approaches which target all students in the school that may be delivered in the classroom) (Franklin et al. 2017). Greenberg et al. (2001) conducted a study that aimed to find rigorously evaluated interventions that either reduced psychological symptoms (such as depression, aggression and anxiety) or that had a positive influence on factors that are associated with the risk of mental health problems in children.

The authors (Greenberg et al. 2001) argue that there has been significant progress in the research of school and family preventive programs. The programs that were validated led Greenberg et al. (2001) to draw some conclusions about preventive programs. Enduring benefits were associated with multiyear approaches, as compared to short-term programs. More effective programs focused on a number of domains (i.e. the individual, the school and the family) rather than looking only at the child.

Successful prevention programs looked at combining approaches that highlight changing the child's behaviour, teacher and family behaviour, home-school relationships and school and neighbourhood support (Greenberg et al. 2001). At the school level, Greenberg et al. (2001) state that a central focus of the preventive programs should be the school ecology and climate—therefore, highlighting the need for school belonging.

6.4.10 Schools and Opportunities for Participation and a Sense of Belonging

Keeping in mind the fact that social inclusion consists of an objective, participatory component and a subjective feeling of belonging and acceptance, schools can provide opportunities to develop both these components and hence social inclusion (Allen et al. 2017). This has beneficial outcomes both for the individual and the general population. For example, higher levels of education have reliably been shown to predict lower rates of unemployment and higher wages in the population. It has also been found that the relationship between educational attainment and employment also applies to individuals with schizophrenia, regardless of the course of the illness (Killackey et al. 2013). By targeting stigma in schools, particularly with adolescents, students with SMI are more likely to stay in school and thus benefit from their education.

The area of school belonging offers promise as a potential intervention for mental health promotion (Allen et al. 2018; Allen and McKenzie 2015). Resnick et al. (1997) looked at emotional distress in 12, 000 adolescents from Grades 7–12. The study used a 17-item scale measuring symptoms of depression—e.g. feeling depressed, moodiness, sadness and poor appetite as well as fearfulness, crying and loneliness. This study showed that 13–18% of the variance in emotional distress across different age groups was explained by school connectedness.

In a study of students aged 12–14 years, when prior depressive symptoms were taken into account, school connectedness predicted future depressive symptoms (Shochet et al. 2011). For both boys and girls, increases in school connectedness had a corresponding decrease in depression scores. School connectedness had a corresponding decrease in anxiety scores for girls but not for boys (Shochet et al. 2011).

School belonging is an important predictor of adolescents' depression and anxiety symptoms (Allen et al. 2018). Lower perceived peer acceptance is associated with higher levels of depressive symptoms. Perceived peer rejection also relates to emotional problems, and even if prior negative affective symptoms are controlled for, acceptance and rejection are unique risk factors for future negative affective problems (Shochet et al. 2011).

Shochet et al. (2011) argue that there is significant value in intervening in the reciprocal cycle between negative affects and perceived acceptance and rejection in the school setting at the level of school belonging. Schools can

provide the setting to implement educational programs designed to develop and achieve well-being as well as teaching students and staff about the need for early intervention in mental health (Allen and McKenzie 2015).

In research drawing from data collected from the Australian Temperament Project, an extensive longitudinal study of more than 2000 Australian children, it was found that children who began the study with high levels of anxiety and depression, but who had good social skills, better relationships with their parents and peers, and more positive experiences at school, showed improved adjustment (O'Connor et al. 2010, 2011). Such children actually became less depressed and anxious in their adolescence. This demonstrates that school belonging may be part of an effective mental health promotion strategy.

Stakeholders need to see value in schools promoting mental health. Allen et al. (2017) examined schools' values and mission statements in order to ascertain whether an objective measure of a school's average academic achievement was related to the degree to which the school explicitly prioritized mental health promotion and school belonging as well as academic motivation. The study (Allen et al. 2017) used two approaches to code the statements. It showed that, using a lexical approach, mental health promotion was related to better academic achievement as measured by the NAPLAN (an annual, standardized test undertaken by Australian students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9). The potential impact of including mental health promotion in a school value and mission statement on academic achievement can nevertheless demonstrate to the public that the school values mental health (Allen et al. 2017). The statement can also promote healthy behaviours.

According to Allen et al. (2017), a value and mission statement is one contributing factor in the development of school climate—and also communicates to the students, staff and the wider school community that mental health, as well as other aspects of the whole student, is a priority for the school.

6.5   Conclusion

Young people with SMI or mental health problems face a number of barriers to social inclusion. At a time of their life that young people are forming an identity, symptoms of mental ill-health interfere with young people's capacity to engage with learning. Prejudice and stigma can pose barriers to participation and social interactions at school. Opportunities to participate in social roles, including education, can provide young people with SMI with both the objective, participatory component of social inclusion as well as the subjective satisfaction and sense of belonging. Participation in school and learning provides young people with SMI or mental health problems with skills that may prevent unemployment, which is one of the major causes of disability in adults with mental illness. Thus, social inclusion for young people with SMI or mental health problems is advantageous not only for the individuals but for wider society. By providing quality education and reducing inequality, as well as promoting mental health, schools are poised to contribute to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals that are described in this series. Social inclusion for young people with SMI or mental health problems is imperative.

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Heather Craig is currently a PhD student at Monash University, in the School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine. With a particular interest in Positive Psychology, Heather is currently completing research into the association between optimism and health outcomes in older Australians.

Kelly-Ann Allen, PhD, FAPS, is an Educational and Developmental Psychologist and an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education, Monash University, and an Honorary Senior Fellow at the Centre for Wellbeing Science, University of Melbourne. She is also the Lead-director and founder of the Global Belonging Collaborative and is the Editor-in-Chief of the Educational and Developmental Psychologist as well as the current and founding Co-Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Belonging and Human Connection with Professor Chris Boyle. The quality of her research has been acknowledged through several awards, including recognition by The Australian's data-science partner, The League of Scholars and independently ranked as Best In Field for research contributions over a four year period.

Standing Out While Fitting in (SOFI): A Counternarrative on Black Males' Strivings for Inclusiveness at a Predominantly Black High School

7

DeLeon L. Gray, Nicole Leach, Diane Johnson, Shayne Zimmerman, Jason Wornoff, and Quinton Baker

"Stereotypes of a Black male misunderstood…and it's still all good."

Christopher Wallace

Juicy (1994)

Abstract

This chapter examines the idea of inclusiveness from the perspective of Black males, with a special emphasis on the strategies they use to stand out while fitting in (SOFI) at school. Relative to ethnic and gender groups in the United States, Black males receive more disciplinary referrals and are thus more likely to be subjected to exclusionary practices that prohibit their full participation in scholastic activities in the school environment. Using the critical race theory methodology of counter-storytelling, we outline themes emerging from focus groups that are designed to understand the ways in which Black males go about addressing their social desires for uniqueness and similarity to peers. The voices and perspectives of Black males in this chapter provide a roadmap for educators seeking to honor and affirm the intersectional identities of these students in a manner that is culturally sensitive and developmentally appropriate.

Keywords

Adolescence · Black Americans · Inclusion · Uniqueness · School belonging

D. L. Gray (✉) · D. Johnson · S. Zimmerman · J. Wornoff
Department of Teacher Education and Learning Sciences, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC, USA

N. Leach
Department of Educational Psychology, University of North Texas, Denton, TX, USA

Q. Baker
Department of Psychology, Eastern Washington University, Cheney, WA, USA

7.1 Introduction

Listeners of the classic, *Juicy*, encounter a peaceful, melodic sample of an early 1980's funk song met by a passionate recital of raw hip-hop lyrics. The celestial bliss created by a bass guitar, a gentle background vocalist, and the cadences of the Notorious B.I.G.'s words make it easy for his conscience-provoking statements to be eclipsed by the track's all-but-hypnotizing flow. The late hip-hop mogul targets young Black males in a consoling statement for difficult life

circumstances—calling for his ingroup to see the silver lining when stigmatized during their daily life events. As young Black males are reminded in the song's identity-affirming hook, "You know very well who you are."

Relatedly, identity-related research teaches us that *who you are* dictates the *why* behind *what you do*. Specifically, identities can serve as the basis for behavior (Tajfel and Turner 1989)—yet without an appreciation for the way Black males are defining themselves, we are limited in our capacity to make sense of their behaviors or address underlying needs or concerns that are driving the behaviors that we see. For this reason, research paradigms that fail to investigate the identity processes of Black males will likely be impractical for educators who strive to reach this population.

In this chapter, we focus on the strategies Black males are using to successfully achieve a sense of inclusion in their high schools—with a special focus on their efforts to *stand out while fit in* among their peers. We begin this chapter by raising questions about current conceptualizations of psychological membership at school; we then offer a standing out while fitting in (SOFI) perspective on inclusion, and finally—in order to disrupt dominant narratives regarding young Black males and honor the experiential knowledge of these individuals—we employ a counter-storytelling approach which documents the ways in which Black males are achieving a sense of inclusion by standing out while fitting in among their peers. This provides insights into the perspectives of Black male students that will help educators identify ways to promote inclusion and equality in school.

7.1.1 Problematizing Psychological Membership at School

An examination of how Black males navigate the social terrain of their high school environments can be situated within the larger body of research on psychological membership at school. But first, it is necessary to outline the specific conceptual contributions this chapter makes to this literature

base. Our approach to understanding how psychological membership is linked with the in-school behaviors of Black males stems from three issues that we have detected within this body of work.

First, we question whether the fulfillment of social needs should always lead to outcomes that are consistent with long-term academic success and well-being. Indeed, quantitative investigations generally converge on the notion that students' sense of psychological membership (or belonging) is positively associated with important academic and psychological outcomes (see Baker et al. 1997; Freeman et al. 2007; McMahon et al. 2009; Pittman and Richmond 2007; Roeser et al. 1996). However, researchers occasionally report negative associations between school belonging (Anderman 2002; Anderman and Hughes 2003) or strivings for school belonging (Fuligni et al. 2001) and learning outcomes. These findings are particularly striking because they present a direct challenge to the way researchers discuss the role of school belonging in students' daily experiences at school. On the one hand, these findings could be taken to be spurious, and could therefore have little interpretational value or logical merit. On the other hand, these findings could perhaps mean that there is more to school belonging than the way it is presently characterized in the literature. At the very least, these counterintuitive findings beg for a more careful consideration of the ways in which school belonging may be associated with students' in-school behavior. In light of these findings, Anderman and Freeman (2004) called for a more nuanced understanding of school belonging to explain how the satisfaction of students' social needs may be related with outcomes that are at times compatible with scholastic achievement, and at other times, incompatible with scholastic achievement.

Perhaps a more basic question is whether the terminology, *school belonging*, has a clear definition. Over the past decade, researchers have reported their struggles with defining this concept (Demanet and Van Houtte 2012; Libbey 2004; Summers and Svinicki 2007). One popular definition of school belonging is a sense of

acceptance, respect, inclusion, and support (Goodenow 1993). This definition encompasses four potential constructs. Perceiving acceptance means that we believe others approve of who we are and the role we play in their lives. Perceiving respect means that we feel that others hold us in high esteem. Perceiving inclusion means that we feel part of a group, or larger collective. Perceiving support means that we view others as instrumental to our personal growth and development. At the surface level, these concepts all speak to how students may connect with others in their school. Yet conflating these concepts into one metric becomes problematic if researchers are working toward providing educators with concrete recommendations for strategies which can augment students' social experiences in school, and yield positive academic and psychological outcomes in return. This illustration is not meant to devalue the relevance of Goodenow's scholarly contributions. To be sure, Goodenow's seminal research has served as the basis for countless studies in this line of inquiry —including this one. This illustration is, however, meant to draw attention to a practice that has—until this point—remained endemic to the study of school belonging. Understanding the nuanced role of school belonging in students' academic engagement, and well-being, requires more careful consideration of what we *mean* by school belonging. It also requires an appreciation of various school belonging-related constructs for their unique contribution to understanding students' social needs in school environments.

An additional question is whether school belonging research has firm theoretical underpinnings. This issue was raised by Allen and Bowles (2012), who—in their review of school belonging research—reference several frameworks that involve a belonging component, but argue that school belonging itself fails to be appropriately represented within a theoretical framework. We agree with Allen and Bowles that there should be little discrepancy between the way authors describe the concept of school belonging and the way the concept is represented in their theoretical framework. At the same time, we contend that each facet of school belonging

may not be associated with motivation and well-being in the same way or through the same process. For this reason, multiple models of school belonging can and should coexist, and should be employed in research to appropriately represent the facet, or facets, of school belonging under investigation in a given study.

7.1.2 A Standing Out While Fitting in (SOFI) Perspective on Inclusion

In this chapter, we remain sensitive to each of the aforementioned critiques to school belonging research. Correspondingly, we (1) do not assume that greater fulfillment of social needs will necessarily lead to positive academic beliefs and behaviors, (2) do not conflate different components of school belonging, and (3) work toward a model of social processes that appropriately represents the specific facets of inclusion that we investigate in the present study, namely the needs for standing out (uniqueness) and fitting in (similarity).

The primary psychological phenomenon being examined in the present study concerns the (dis)comfort a Black male high school student feels about how he sees himself in relation to other students in a schooling environment. Discomfort may arise when a student feels ordinary, typical, or pedestrian—just another face in the crowd, or an altogether replaceable member of one's clique, classroom, or school. It is the feeling of being the proverbial "average Joe." At times, feeling "regular" can lead a person to wonder, *what makes me unique?* Motivation to stand out from the crowd may have implications for students' achievement behavior, and more generally, their in-school behavior. Along the same lines, being very different from other students can also be an uncomfortable experience. When students see little overlap between themselves and others—even if they are not ostracized by their peers—they can feel like "outsiders." Feeling too much "out of the ordinary" may pose a psychological threat regarding their potential for membership in a clique, classroom, or school.

Building on research in the tradition of optimal distinctiveness theory (Brewer 1991), researchers have recently embarked on explaining the motivational significance of being socially unfulfilled in terms of uniqueness and similarity. When conducting multi-study research on the motivational patterns of college students, Gray and Rios (2012) reasoned that students respond dynamically to social triggers in their academic environments. Using a cross-sectional approach (Study 1), Gray and Rios found that students were more likely to place importance on academic tasks when they perceived engaging in these tasks as helpful for standing out from, or fitting in with, their classmates. In an experiment (Study 2), they found that—when wanting to stand out—students worked harder and performed better on an achievement task that they believed would help them assert their uniqueness from their peers. Gray and Rios also found that—when wanting to fit in—students worked harder and performed better on an achievement task that they believed would help them assert their similarity to their peers. Gray (2014) demonstrated that the extent to which students' efforts to stand out are linked to their motivation to engage in scholastic activities is contingent upon the extent to which engaging in scholastic activities also helps students fit in. Further, students expressed the greatest value for engaging in tasks they viewed as helping them stand out and fit in at the same time. This study also revealed that student' perceptions of the task as an opportunity to fit in is, in part, contingent upon their perception of their classroom context as one that compares students to one another based on their academic performance.

Taken together, these studies indicate that students may be motivated to achieve even when they are socially unfulfilled, and the choice of whether or not to strive for achievement depends on the social affordances of the academic task they are evaluating. These findings indicate that a student will be motivated to engage in a task if there is a match between their unfulfilled need to stand out or fit in, and whether the task helps satisfy this need. This principle may also be applicable to students' in-school behavior in general.

The ways in which students' strivings to stand out and fit in manifest will likely depend, at least in part, on the cultural experiences of students, and the norms of their school. As aptly stated by Zusho and Clayton (2011), researchers who develop and test motivation models should examine these models broadly, and understand how the processes proposed therein operate among individuals from various ethnic groups and economic backgrounds. This is important not only for the sake of extending the reach of the claims made by a particular motivational model, but it is also essential for understanding the social, emotional, and behavioral responses of members of an ethnic group in response to psychological threats (Shah and Gardner 2008). Zusho and Clayton (2011) recommend a *universalist* approach to motivational research—an approach that recognizes the existence of universal motivation processes, but remains open to the possibility that the interpretation of what these processes mean, and how they operate, may be contingent upon the culture of the individual. According to Zusho (2013), a universalist approach to motivation research involves exploring commonalities and distinctions among members of the same cultural group, examining the mechanisms that are responsible for within-group differences, and employing research methods that allow for nuanced investigations of motivation processes. Recent conceptual belonging by Gray et al. (2018) has moved scholars closer to exploring such social processes among Black adolescents. Correspondingly, we employ a counter-storytelling method in the present study in an effort to understand the ways in which the needs to stand out and fit in are manifest among African American males in a predominantly Black urban high school.

7.1.3   Critical Race Methodology

According to Solorzano and Yosso (2009), critical race methodology is defined as "a theoretical grounded approach to research that (a) foregrounds race and racism in all aspects of the research process…[while showing how race,

gender and class] intersect to affect the experiences of students of color; (b) challenges the traditional research paradigms, texts, and theories used to explain the experiences of students of color; (c) offers a liberatory or transformative solution to racial, gender, and class subordination; and (d) focuses on the racialized, gendered, and classed experiences of students of color" (p. 131).

Race is a complex, socially constructed term constantly in flux and altered by socio-political struggle (Calmore 1995; Scheurich and Young 1997), yet battles against racism persist in American society (Parker and Lynn 2002; Solorzano and Yosso 2009; Taylor 2009). Critical race theory (CRT) begins with a promotion of race-consciousness and a rejection of "integrationist" ideology that identifies colorblindness as positive progress toward racial harmony (Gotanda 1995; Peller 1995). The primary concern of CRT is to challenge the normative universality of White values, morals, narratives, authority, control, expressions, and experiences while legitimatizing people of color's norms, experiences, agency, and values (Calmore 1995; Smith-Maddox and Solórzano 2002; Taylor 2009).

CRT began as part of the critical legal effort to redress the backlash against progressive movements that struggled for continued legislative changes for racial equity and to accelerate the perceived slowed rate of racial reform post-Civil Rights Movement (Ladson-Billings 1998; Taylor 2009). CRT has traditionally been applied to education in terms of addressing race-based educational inequities in culturally insensitive curricula, instruction and assessment, school funding, and desegregation (Ladson-Billings 1998). CRT is a radical paradigm that struggles for the erasure of the root causes of racism as opposed to liberal pedagogies that seek to incrementally decrease the symptoms of racism by altering the law (Ladson-Billings 1998; Parker and Lynn 2002; Solorzano and Yosso 2009). If racism were an illness, the liberal approach would be to mitigate the pain with aspirin while the radical approach would be to kill the virus. CRT employs a culturally sensitive research paradigm, which seeks to place value on the knowledge constructed through people of color sharing understanding and experiences of specific phenomena (Tillman 2002). Culturally sensitive approaches are necessary when examining a Black experience as cultural context is necessary for proper understanding of the researched phenomenon. Devoid of such context, research conducted on Black folks lacks the ability to *know* the Black experience. Tillman (2002) argues for five necessary elements of culturally sensitive research: research methods that contextualize the socio-economic and political factors affecting people of color, culturally specific knowledge, critical knowledge that resists dominance, data interpretation that validates the legitimacy appropriateness of Black experiential knowledge, and culturally informed theory and practice. One such culturally sensitive approach is the counter-storytelling method.

7.1.4 Counter-Storytelling

CRT as a methodology embraces an intersectional framework, challenges dominant Eurocentric ideology, legitimizes experiential knowledge, commits to social justices, and uses an interdisciplinary approach to research (Solorzano and Yosso 2009). Counter-storytelling evolved in the legal literature as a method of subverting the sterile language of litigation, which more often than not serves only to legitimize the current social order and devalue those who would venture to challenge the institution. Delgado (1989) describes how the majority group's dispassionate narrative of civil rights issues can serve to create a "screen" of practicality and neutrality that strips an event of context and eliminates its power to outrage. The same event, storied from the point of view of an out-group member, can challenge habitual mindsets and enrich conversations. As Matsuda (1989) suggests, there is value in mediating between these "different ways of knowing in order to determine what is true and what is just" (p. 2321).

Counter-storytelling is a pedagogical tool used widely in CRT research conducted in the

educational framework (Ladson-Billings 1998; Taylor 2009). CRT argues for the legitimization of storytelling as a form of knowledge construction as stories provide context, interpretation, and understanding of a given experience (Ladson-Billings 1998). Counter-storytelling is defined as "a method of telling the stories of those people whose experiences are not often told" and it is thus a "tool for exposing, analyzing and challenging" the dominant white narrative and a manner of strengthening "traditions of social, political, and cultural survival and resistance" (Solorzano and Yosso 2009, pp. 138–139). Counter-storytelling serves to humanize experiences of oppression and build a sense of community for those who share experiences expressed in these stories, challenge dominant values by providing context for understanding marginalized experiences, and aid in the co-construction of marginalized experiences. Moreover, storytelling is liberating and emancipatory as it gives voice and power to the marginalized and allows for the majority to truly hear the marginalized and come to understand and challenge the status quo (Ladson-Billings 1998; Parker and Lynn 2002).

There are three types of counter-storytelling: personal stories (autobiographical), other people's stories (biographical), and composite stories (narrative data combined to tell the story of a character placed in a specific context) (Solorzano and Yosso 2009). Counter-storytelling as a method involves first collecting narratives from primary sources. These data are then combed with a critical, racialized, classed, and gendered lens to examine specific concepts determined a priori. Secondly, the researchers are to examine literature across disciplines related to those specific concepts. During this process, music, art, literature, short stories, and poetry are examined to seek the appropriate emotions expressed in focus groups and interviews. Thirdly, the researchers add their own personal and professional experiences and reflections as congruent with the specific concepts. Finally, the narrative is created. In a biographical or autobiographical narrative, the individual's narrative is constructed. However, in a composite narrative, the three sources of data are combined and analyzed to create composite characters and a narrative is crafted with data used to create dialogue between the characters.

7.2 Methods

7.2.1 Participants

Sixteen adolescent males from a historically Black high school[1]—hereafter referred to as Oxon Hill High School—in North Carolina's Raleigh-Durham area participated in focus-group interviews. Oxon Hill's cohort graduation rate for the year of the study (2012–2013) was 83%. In terms of the ethnic make-up of Oxon Hill's faculty and staff: 28.5% are Black males, 42.3% are Black females, 8% are White males, 17.5% are White females, and other ethnicities make up approximately 4% of the faculty. Participants were recruited from three freshman science courses; one focus group was conducted for each class. Specifically, their teacher was asked to select a mixture of African American male students for the study who ranged from being low-achieving to high-achieving science students, and who might be socially withdrawn, athletes, class clowns, and socially connected. The average age of participants was 15. All the participants self-identified as being African American, with the exception of one student (Paul—pseudonym) who self-identified as being Hispanic. Other students' responses did not appear to be affected

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[1] Like many other locations across the United States, African American students in the Raleigh-Durham area were allowed into, or forbidden from, schools on the basis of their race. High schools that were erected for the purpose of educating African American students hold the special designation of being "historically Black" high schools. These schools can carry unique traditions and the evolution and impact of these schools is preserved in various museums and exhibit halls. Readers who are interested in learning more about Historically Black high schools in the Raleigh-Durham area are encouraged to explore *A Lost Legacy: Our Historically Black High Schools Conference and Exhibit*, which can be found at http://bit.ly/13QibHY.

by Paul's presence. Table 7.1 displays descriptive information for each focus group participant.

Focus groups lasted approximately 45 min each and took place within a school conference room. A semi-structured focus group protocol was developed in a manner to confine group discussion to the research topic while allowing conversations to flow naturally. This study deliberately utilizing semi-structured interviewing as "an open-ended question allows the participants to share their experiences, in their own words, rather than being forced into pre-established lines of thinking developed by researchers" (Speziale & Carpenter 2003, p. 18). Allowing participants to share their experiences in their words is crucial to the research question of understanding Black adolescent males' experiences of fitting in and standing out. Questions posed to the students were as follows:

- What standards are males judged by at Oxon Hill?
- What do males do in your school to fit in? Stand out? Be specific.
- Does doing well in school, academically, help male students to fit in or stand out? Explain.
- Does doing well in extracurricular activities help male students at this school fit in or stand out? Explain.
- Can a student fit in with their cliques or small group, but not fit in at school in general?
- Can a student stand out within their cliques or small group, but not stand out at school in general?
- Can a person fit in and stand out at the same time?

7.2.2 Positionality of the Principal Investigator

Before proceeding, it is important to note the perspective and experiences of the principal investigator. The principal investigator, who also is the first author and interviewer, is an African American male who graduated from a predominantly Black high school (over 85%) in the Washington, D.C. area in the previous decade. He has knowledge of many of the references, asides, and colloquialisms advanced by students during the interviews due to the fact that he was approximately 11 years older than the average study participant when interviews were conducted, owns similar articles of casual clothing, and shares an appreciation for hip-hop music, as well as basketball and football. The principal investigator also has spent the past academic year mentoring African American males from this high school—providing feedback on college admissions applications, providing tips on how to communicate effectively with teachers, and discussing appropriate attire for formal and informal occasions. The principal investigator's interactions with students have taken place in formal settings (e.g., meeting in classrooms or conference rooms) as well as informal settings (e.g., sharing meals or playing mentor–mentee pick-up basketball games). As has been the case in previous qualitative research of this sort (e.g., Harper 2009), shared life experiences and the principal investigator's intimate knowledge of students' school and community environments preclude the principal investigator from making claims about the objectivity of the present counternarrative. At the same time, these experiences do enhance the likelihood of meeting the ultimate goal of the present study—to honor the perspectives and voices of African American males at a historically Black high school.

7.2.3 Data Analysis

The second author read and re-read the three focus group transcriptions, watched the focus group video recordings, and took notes to create a characterization profile for each participant, noting their tone, language, mannerisms, demeanor, views, and personality. She then created themes from the focus group transcriptions using the constant-comparison method of coding

Table 7.1 Descriptions of focus group members

Focus Group	Name	Classification	Age	Expected science grade	Lunch price	Estimated GPA	Athlete	Member of academic club	Social person	I speak up in class	Take my schoolwork seriously	I have a fun time in school	Wear high-fashion clothes	Different person than when i am at home
1	Bob	11th	16	A	Free	Half Bs and Cs	N	N	5	1	4	5	5	1
1	Paris	9th	16	A	Full Price	Half Bs and Cs	N	Y	5	1	3	5	5	4
1	Brandon	9th	14	B +	Reduced Price	Half Bs and Cs	Y	N	4	3	5	4	3	5
1	Jim	9th	16	B +	Free	Half Cs and Ds	N	N	2	2	4	2	3	3
1	Steve	9th	15	A	Free	Half As and Bs	Y	Y	3	5	4	5	5	3
1	Earl	9th	14	B +	Free	Mostly Bs	Y	N	3	3	4	4	4	3
2	Paul	9th	16	A-	Full Price	Half As and Bs	N	N	2	2	3	4	2	4
2	Davon	9th	14	B	Full Price	Mostly Cs	N	N	3	5	5	4	4	5
2	Noah	9th	15	A	Free	Mostly Bs	Y	N	5	3	3	5	5	1
2	Derrick	9th	15	A-	Reduced Price	Mostly As	N	Y	3	3	4	3	5	4
2	Maurice	9th	15	B +	Reduced Price	Half Bs and Cs	N	N	2	3	3	–	3	5
2	Tyrone	9th	14	B	Full Price	Mostly below Ds	Y	N	3	2	2	5	3	4
3	James	9th	16	A	Free	Half Bs and Cs	N	N	3	3	5	5	1	1

(continued)

Table 7.1 (continued)

Focus Group	Name	Classification	Age	Expected science grade	Lunch price	Estimated GPA	Athlete	Member of academic club	Social person	I speak up in class	Take my schoolwork seriously	I have a fun time in school	Wear high-fashion clothes	Different person than when i am at home
3	Tariq	9th	14	A	Full Price	Half As and Bs	Y	N	4	2	4	3	4	1
3	Marcus	9th	15	A-	Reduced Price	Mostly Bs	N	N	4	4	3	4	4	3
3	Aaron	9th	15	A	Free	Mostly Bs	N	N	5	1	5	5	5	1

Note. Students provided self-ratings on a scale from 1 = *Not at all True* to 5 = *Very true* in terms of their own sociability, the frequency in which they spoke up in class, how seriously they took their schoolwork, how much fun they were having in school, their fashion sense, and the extent to which they portrayed different selves at home and at school

(Strauss 1987). The first focus group transcription was line-by-line open-coded for instances of fitting in and standing out. The second and third focus group transcriptions were line-by-line compared to the first transcription and codes were accordingly modified. A codebook was created and the third and fourth authors of this study were asked to use the codebook to code each of the transcripts for an inter-rater analysis. The second author then used these coded transcripts to calculate the inter-coder reliability using the Kappa Coefficient (Cohen 1960). This process involves comparing the number of concordant ratings to the number of discordant ratings. This study found an inter-coder rating of 0.74, indicating solid agreements.

The data were axial-coded to create categories from the data, then categories were connected in a selective coding process to develop a thematic story of participants' experiences using the tenets of CRT as a theoretical interpretation of the data. Four themes emerged from the data: (1) Black masculine literacy practices such as being noticed based on clothing, (2) standing out while fitting in (SOFI) in the classroom, (3) group affiliation, and (4) domains of excellence versus adequacy. This thematic story was the foundation for the narrative reported in the results.

Composite characters were developed through an examination of individual participants' stories and how each individual spoke fitting in with and standing out from their peers. This included examining how each participant viewed himself, related to other Black males, related to females, and interacted in his school environment. These composite characters were placed in a sociopolitical setting to discuss the five themes. Additionally, an analysis of literature, cultural media, and professional and personal experiences led to additional layers woven into the narrative (Solórzano & Yosso 2002). Throughout this process of creating the narrative, the second author worked with the first author for a secondary analysis of the narrative, then the third and fourth authors were consulted for a tertiary analysis of the narrative.

7.3 Findings

The setting is Oxon Hill High School, a historically Black high school in the Raleigh-Durham region of North Carolina. Like many historically Black schools, Oxon Hill is considered an at-risk school in the sense that the school leadership is making important adjustments to ensure that the school will significantly improve its performance on state-mandated tests and cohort graduation rates. The Oxon Hill community prides itself on its strong football team and has excelled greatly in this area for a number of years. This is evidenced by a recent state championship title, in addition to the fact that many students from Oxon Hill's football team receive sports scholarships to Division 1 athletic programs, including the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Georgia Institute of Technology, Duke University, and The Ohio State University. During the lunch period, a conversation is struck between Mr. Byron and two students, Keith and Isaac. Mr. Byron is a graduate student at the university nearby Oxon Hill High School studying the in-school experiences of Black adolescents. Beyond his research ties to Oxon Hill, Mr. Byron tutors Oxon Hill students in algebra each Tuesday and Thursday. Keith is a sophomore who earns mostly Bs and Cs and works part-time at a nearby Chipotle. Isaac—a junior and starting cornerback on the Oxon Hill Panthers varsity football team—works part-time stocking produce at the Harris Teeter grocery store.

"May I sit here?" Mr. Byron asks as he points to an empty chair at the end of a long rectangular table during fourth period lunch. Keith (seated next to the empty chair) and Isaac (seated across from the empty chair) both stop mid-sentence. "Sure," Keith says while removing his *Beats by Dr. Dre* headphones and shifting his backpack slightly to make room.

As Mr. Byron takes his seat, he looks down at the table to find four other male students. All of the young men wore color-coordinated ensembles of name-brand clothing. Nodding down the table of meticulously dressed young men, Mr.

Byron asks Keith in a low voice, "What's going on? You all coming from a fashion show or something?".

"Naw, man," Keith retorts—wearing a loud, colorful Hawaiian shirt and fitted cap—reminiscent of Oklahoma City Thunder star point guard, Russell Westbrook, "it's Fly Friday!"

Mr. Byron gives Keith a quizzical look.

"You know, I gotta stay ♪flyer than the rest of 'em, flyer than the rest of 'em♪", Keith sings in a manner reminiscent of a popular song, "Nike Boots" by renowned hip-hop artist, Wale.

Isaac, noticing Mr. Byron's brows furrow deeper, tries to explain, "You gotta look your best on Fridays, everybody's coming in their best and you have to step your game up if you wanna fit in by rockin' the latest."

Mr. Byron nods in understanding, "So you want to fit in with everyone else by dressing the same."

"Nooo!" both Keith and Isaac shout simultaneously in a tone of feigned offense.

Isaac points to the infamous Nike *Lebron 8* sneakers on his feet, "The South Beaches?? Nobody got these right here! I even had a shoe hook-up at *Finish Line* and I STILL had to stand in line outside that shoe store all night. Barely got them." Then Keith makes a grand sweeping motion from head to toe, "And can't nobody put it together like this. This is *me*, all day!".

Quickly, Mr. Byron apologizes, "Okay, okay, so you're not all dressed the same. So you're unique?".

"Yeah," both Keith and Isaac say together. Isaac explains further, "If you want to fit in, you can't be a Stan," referring to Eminem's rap song in which he tells a story of a fan who wanted to be just like him, "You've got to be fresh in your own way and do it big."

Mr. Byron wonders aloud, "So what constitutes 'fresh in your own way,' if almost every young man in this school wears, or wants to wear, Nike sneakers by Jordan, Kobe, LeBron, and Kevin Durant?".

Keith stops what he is doing on his phone and points the phone at Mr. Byron, "That's what I'm telling you. It's not just about having the right shoes, it's about putting yourself together right.

You make a statement if, say, the new grape Jordans came out and you put that together with a grape colored shirt, shorts, socks, and hat." Keith refocuses his pointed phone from Mr. Byron to Corey—a young man sitting two tables over wearing purple from head to toe while eating grapes for lunch. Mr. Byron grins, seeing the grape ensemble. "See, nobody gonna do it like that but *him*," Keith states with emphasis.

Mr. Byron turns back around and catches a glimpse of Keith's phone screen, noticing that Keith is researching the newest Kobes. He takes a few bites of his tuna salad, calculating how much that grape, name-brand ensemble must have cost. "Those Jordans by themselves are over $150, not to mention the rest of what he's got on. Does everyone have a job?".

"I do," Isaac answered. "Most here do some part-time something. They work to pay for their gear and give money to their family. I ain't gonna lie, a few steal thinking they're tough."

Mr. Byron wonders aloud, "So if I were a student and I walked the halls on Fly Friday without expensive, name-brand clothes…".

Isaac finishes, "You could do it, some do, but you won't fit in."

"That seems contradictory…standing out to fit in" Mr. Byron notes.

Isaac takes a long pause to consider this, then shrugs, "Well…that's the way it is."

"Well, if that's what you do to fit in, then how do you stand out?" Mr. Byron asks.

Keith furrows his brows at Isaac, who takes a bite out of his sub-sandwich and thinks for a minute. It is quite a long pause before Isaac finally answers, "Well, um…same things I guess, if you want to stand out in a good way."

"A good way? Is there a bad way to stand out?" Mr. Byron asks. "Well, yeah," Keith explains, "If you have a bad odor, or you're extra smart…"

Isaac interjects, "I don't know about the smart thing. I mean, girls don't like a dummy."

"So showing you're smart helps you fit in?" Mr. Byron is slightly confused.

"It's like this," Isaac clarifies, "Showing you're smart helps you get a girl, and having a girl…"

Keith interjects,"Having a *bad*[2] girl…".

Slightly irritated Isaac continues, "Having a *bad* girl helps you fit in."

Still confused, Mr. Byron asks, "And what makes a bad girl?".

"She would be rockin' the new Jordans too, you know, a girl that has her ♪nails done, hair done, everything did♪" Keith sings the chorus to Drake's "Fancy" while nodding his head to the beat. "She can't be busted like that," Keith states as he takes a picture of a girl wearing a dingy t-shirt of a yellow smiley face emoticon with Old Navy jeans and flip flops. "That's goin' straight to Instagram!"

Isaac shakes his head at Keith's clowning, "It's not all about that for me. A bad girl for me is a female with goals. You know, somebody who's doing something with her life.""But it's not all about girls, it's about who you surround yourself with. I fit in with people I hang with 'cause I hang with people that have similar goals," Isaac says while making a sweeping motion at the four young men seated next to Keith and himself who are engrossed in a debate on the best fantasy football starter lineup. Mr. Byron takes a long look at the young men, noticing that Isaac, Keith, and the other four young men are all eating sub-sandwiches, an item not available through the school cafeteria. "So you all eat the same food?"

"We eat the same food, we hang out a lot outside of school, we're interested in the same things…that's what makes us a clique I guess. Almost everybody is cool with everybody around here, but I fit in with them cause we're a lot alike," explains Keith, "But other guys do different stuff to fit in with their cliques. They like to act all tough, you know, fight, smoke, act a fool in class."

Isaac audibly sucks his teeth and says in an accusatory tone to Keith, "And you don't hang with cliques like that?".

Keith defensively stammers, "I'm a different person when I'm with different people. Like when I'm at home, I'm quiet."

"Yeah, most are like Keith, a different person in different situations, but I stay me. People change themselves to be part of a crowd or gang or frat,[3] but I'm me all day."

A buzzing bell sounds indicating the end of the lunch period. "So where's everyone off to?" Mr. Byron asks while crumpling his brown paper lunch bag. "To Physics," Isaac says demurely while lingering, taking his sweet time in cleaning up the remains of his lunch.

"Not excited?"."Class is hella easy and there's no reason to rush cause everyone knows where I sit."

"Assigned seating in high school? Wow.""Naw, people just sit with their crowd," Keith interjects, "I'm going to Bio and we sit in the back and clown. The class is boring, we don't do nothing but bookwork." Keith smirks cunningly, "So why not make it enjoyable for everybody?"

Mr. Byron mentally goes through all of the students he tutors, noticing a slight gender pattern, "So do you think the females here are smarter than the guys?" Keith retorts, "Naw, I do my work." Isaac cocks his head to the side, frowns at Keith, then throws a straw at him. Keith then amends his statement, "I *mostly* do my work, but I pay attention even if it don't look like it to the teacher."

In the early fifties, a Black female teacher on lunch duty walks through the cafeteria knocking on the tables of students still seated, yelling, "Lunch is over, head to class!" to no student in particular. Keith, Isaac, and some of the other students who barely responded to the bell begin

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[2] The term, *bad*, as used here, must be distinguished from its literal meaning. Ordinarily, an individual may refer to a person as bad if the individual is wicked, poor in quality, or morally corrupt. Here, the term is used in a flattering sense to refer to a person who is visibly attractive and/or superior to others on dimensions that are important to the appraiser.

[3] Black Fraternity Chapters often maintain strong connections with Historically Black high schools in the Raleigh-Durham area. For example, *Kappa League* is a leadership development initiative of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. This program is designed to groom young men at Oxon Hill to be achievers who assume leadership roles in their communities in order to make substantive contributions.

moving a bit more deliberately after the teacher knocks on their specific table. Mr. Byron rises, "So clowning helps you fit in because you're getting noticed?".

"Well…kinda. Yeah," Keith says cautiously while nodding his head slowly, "It's not just about your tie game, you need to have some kind of personality or be good at sports or something to be noticed. Take my man Isaac here. He's a starter and gets good playing time so he gets noticed even though he walked out the house today with Chucks".

Isaac feigns offense, "Man, these are throwbacks!".

"You right, they are throwbacks, and you need to throw them back in your mama's basement!" Both laugh while throwing away their trash.

Mr. Byron laughs along, "Aiight then," he nods to Keith and Isaac who are headed to the science hallway. Keith and Isaac nod back, "Later."

7.4 Discussion

Four primary themes emerge from the present investigation: Black masculine literacy practices, standing out while fitting in (SOFI) in the classroom, group affiliation, and domains or excellence versus adequacy. Each of these themes serves to counter negative stereotypes about Black males while simultaneously broadening our understanding of school belonging. In turn, we discuss each theme and implication for future research.

7.4.1 The Practice of Literacy Among Black Males

The present counternarrative bolsters prior research on the literacy practices of Black males. As noted by Kirkland and Jackson (2009):

Youth, in particular, practice literacy by weaving together identities and common world views. They use numerous symbolic tools, sometimes even clothes, to communicate values, produce meanings, and participate in desired social and cultural communities (p. 279).

In this way, practicing literacy is as much of a written practice as it is an oral one—as much of a gestural practice as it is a visual one. From the present narrative, we can understand Black masculine literacies as being motivated by their needs to feel different from, and similar to, their peers at school. Standing out and fitting in is accomplished largely by being noticed. The way he presents himself using his personality, demeanor, and speech can get a young Black male noticed by his male peers for being funny, witty, cool, or stylish. All of the behaviors that get a Black male noticed among his male peers will also get him noticed among females, although being noticed by females additionally requires a demonstration of adequate academic ability.

Of the many ways of getting noticed by peers, wearing name-brand shoes is the most prominent method for young Black males in this study. This is consistent with Kirkland and Jackson's research on Black males (2009), who found that "cool kids used clothes as language to express desire—among other things—to be accepted and to stand apart (c.f. Piacentini and Mailer 2004)" (p. 292). To the untrained eye, the practice of purchasing expensive clothing by Black males in urban areas is a nonsensical, uneconomical practice that only serves to further decrease the life quality of individuals who already reside in impoverished neighborhoods. But William James (1890) reminds us that:

The body is the innermost part of *the material Self* in each of us; and certain parts of the body seem more intimately ours than the rest. The clothes come next. The old saying that the human person is composed of three parts—soul, body and clothes—is more than a joke. We so appropriate our clothes and identify ourselves with them that there are few of us who, if asked to choose between having a beautiful body clad in raiment perpetually shabby and unclean, and having an ugly and blemished form always spotlessly attired, would not hesitate a moment before making a decisive reply. (p. 292).

To James, the clothes we wear *are* who we are, and what we want to represent. Black males at Oxon Hill—despite wearing similar brands of clothing—do not see themselves as carbon copies of one another. They are asserting their uniqueness through their coordination of clothing in ways that other individuals who understand this literacy practice would appreciate. According to one student, who had suffered a bad experience after purchasing some "fake Jordans," "If they looked at yo shoes and laugh you have a problem." Another student remarks: "For like people who can't like afford to buy the shoes or whatever don't get noticed as much as people who buys them and wears them, and make them say 'oh, that person got the new Jordans that just came out'. The people that don't have them, nobody notices them." Finally, a different student states, "It's not like you just go in a store and you pick out a pair of shoes, people just wait on shoes to come out pretty much."

During one focus group, one student indicated that only five students in his school had a specific pair of Jordans. At first glance, it is easy to hear this statement as only part of a larger point he was attempting to make about the rarity of a particular pair of shoes. On second look, however, we might want to ask ourselves how one student could be absolutely certain that five students had a particular *style* of a particular *model* of Jordans, bearing in mind that the school has well-over 1,000 students. To students at this school, their shoes are much more than shoes—they provide these students with the opportunity to *be known* (after Wallace et al. 2012) and thereby serve as a vehicle for fulfilling their basic social desires.

There does seem to be a caveat to the rule on trendy items needing to be expensive. Students argued that wearing "throwbacks" also is trendy, even if the shoes are not expensive. However, there is disagreement among students on which "throwbacks" are trendy and how long a pair of shoes needs to be out of trend before they can be considered "throwbacks." Unfortunately, Nike has picked up on this trend in recent years. Now, throwbacks are more expensive than the original shoes, and can retail for over $200.

The bantering tone among Black males in the focus group also should be noted. Their references to certain celebrities, clothing items, and hip-hop songs were seamlessly woven into the conversation. These individuals were, in this way, orally communicating at an extremely high level. Focus group conversations were saturated with subtleties—the same caliber of fine indirect referencing that can be found in some, but certainly not all, forms of hip-hop music. The sophisticated use of language within the focus groups runs counter to perceptions of Black males as having a limited grasp of the English language.

7.4.2 SOFI in the Classroom

The narrative serves to counteract the assumptions that young, Black males "misbehave" in class for the purposes of being disrespectful, and because they devalue scholastic engagement. Participants were very clear that academic learning is important to them. They also expressed that classwork can be repetitive, boring bookwork instead of the interactive learning they are craving. Indeed, high-quality achievement motivation among students can be squelched by practices emanating from high-stakes testing. Across the United States, policies reward or punish teachers for their students' performance on tests, but largely ignore students' deep processing of material. It is understandable that these pressures may cause teachers to sometimes implement practices that are likely to yield the greatest returns on standardized tests—even if these practices produce boredom and limit a deep understanding of the material at hand (Nichols and Berliner 2007). Such practices may be particularly prevalent in urban and traditionally low-performing communities, which are likely to be the most carefully scrutinized and are thus under the greatest pressure to increase the performance of their students.

Scholars have argued that Americans are sometimes conditioned to view Black students as socially deficient and "needing to be contained, subordinated and to some degree, broken"

(Ullucci 2009, p. 13). In addition to "clowning" for the purposes of satisfying their social needs, "clowning" also appears to be a pushback against institutionalized, repetitive, and isolating teaching practices. Students expressed that a desire to stand out from or fit in with peers is related to student behaviors such as classroom disruption, seating arrangements, and participation. At the same time, they note that widespread class boredom is the key situational feature which makes the behavior of "clowning" appropriate, adaptive, and successful for the purposes of standing out and fitting in Weiner (2003) makes a philosophical argument that teachers in urban schools are often conditioned to view students of color in a deficit paradigm believing students to be amotivated academically, and often point toward Black students' community and culture as the cause of academic deficiency. Students did not indicate that teachers themselves were unappreciative of their culture or looked down on the communities in which they lived. At the same time, comments during the focus groups did suggest that teachers' interpretations of clowning behaviors—which inadvertently leave Black males prone to classroom infractions and other disciplinary actions—only are seen as a problem that resides within the student and is not seen as a problem that resides within the test-focus teaching practices to which inner-city teachers often succumb.

7.4.3 Group Affiliation

When too many people are included in a group, membership in the group is less precious. For this reason, individuals—even students within a school—are likely to form smaller groups in an effort to provide a clearer sense of self-definition, and to make meaning of their membership within the school itself. Group affiliations can aid in both standing out and fitting in for Black males. Black males may fit in with a clique by eating similar food, spending time with clique members, consuming drugs, or presenting oneself as aggressive and tough—depending on the characteristics of the group they are intending to fit in

with. It is important, however, to situate a student's proclivity toward maladaptive group-related behavior under the evolutionary axiom that humans are adapted to functioning in groups, and would have grave difficulty "surviving outside of a group context" (Brewer 1991, p. 475). Thus, affiliating oneself with a group—whether the group is a gang, fraternity, sports team, or clique—is a survival mechanism students are employing to fulfill their basic psychological needs for differentiation and assimilation.

In an era where historians must publicly argue for the relevance of Black Fraternities (NPR 2011), students' perceptions of Black Fraternities suggest that the existence of these organizations could not be more important. Fraternity chapters that remain actively involved in the lives of Black male adolescents are providing these students with opportunities for group affiliation. Importantly, mentions of Fraternities were juxtaposed against mentions of gangs. This subtlety could imply that the same mechanisms of affiliation, brotherhood, tradition, and symbolism may underlie Black males' involvement with both gangs and fraternities. The present narrative thus presents a strong counter to the argument that the practices and activities of Black Fraternity may be obsolete. It is possible that an increased presence of Black Fraternity programs within high schools might render the existence of gangs less attractive—if not meaningless—for Black males who view strong group affiliations as a potentially meaningful means of standing out and fitting in.

7.4.4 Domains of Excellence Versus Adequacy

The level of achievement needed to fit in or stand out alters by activity. For activities such as obtaining name-brand shoes, playing sports, or putting together clothing ensembles, one needs to be the first to obtain the expensive name-brand items, the best athlete, or the best at putting together an ensemble. However, for behaviors related to academic achievement or leadership, simple adequacy, or being in the middle of the

pack, is considered sufficient. Particularly when speaking of academic achievement, students stated that being a "dummy" was bad, and prevents a Black male from fitting in and attracting females. At the same time, having all *A*s and *B*s also may not hurt a student who is trying to fit in, but it will not help either. Thus, having average academics is sufficient for fitting in for many young Black males. However, this fluctuates depending on the clique the individual associates himself with, as some cliques expect high achievement to fit in while other cliques expect low achievement to fit in.

The dominant narrative regarding young Black males and academic achievement is that they are uninterested, apathetic, and fail to engage in coursework. Beginning from a deficit paradigmatic belief that students are amotivated and uninterested in academics is not only a stereotypical assumption about young Black males, but may also lead to ineffective strategies in addressing underachievement in this population of students as it is an inaccurate assumption. Consistent with prior research on the collegiate level (Harper 2009), Black males clearly communicated that they are neither amotivated nor apathetic regarding their academics. Students discussed how academics can aid them socially when trying to present themselves in a socially acceptable manner to their peers in general, or to females more specifically. As one male remarked in a feminine, high-pitched tone: "You a three year freshman, why you talking to me?" He adds, "That's how it's gonna be if you like…dumb." It seems that a certain degree of academic achievement is necessary for most to build relationships and meet their social needs. The results of this study suggest that there are not unmotivated students, but rather some young Black males who believe adequacy in academics is sufficient instead of striving for excellence. These perceptions are based on their current understandings of "what it takes" to stand out and fit in because—as shown in experimental research Gray and Rios (2012)—these perceptions of "what it takes" can be tweaked to enhance motivation and achievement behavior.

7.4.5 Implications for Future Work

During the process of providing a counternarrative of Black males' experiences in a high school setting, we were able to examine school belonging in a very distinct manner. Specifically, we (1) did not assume that the fulfillment of social needs leads to increased academic motivation, (2) were deliberate in focusing on specific facets of school belonging—namely, the needs to stand out and fit in among peers, and (3) progressed toward developing a theoretical perspective that is tailored for examining the specific facets of inclusion which were of interest in the present chapter. This approach to understanding school belonging enriches our theoretical formulations of the concept in important ways. Students in the present analysis were asked about the strategies they employ to successfully stand out and fit in at school. Typically, researchers approach the study of a sense of school belonging from the perspective that the environment only is acting upon the individual. However, as we have shown, students take on an active role in satisfying their own needs. It appears that school belonging is actively sought after by students.

A number of conceptual complexities emerged from the focus groups that should be investigated further in future research. First, some Black (heterosexual) males mentioned changing themselves to stand out or fit in, depending on the situation, emotions at the time, the environment, a female he is attempting to impress, or the crowd he is around. A few students countered that they themselves do not vary, but instead defend their uniqueness and individuality. These individuals claim to surround themselves with people who are similar to them to fit in rather than changing their own personality to suit the situation. For these students, their uniqueness appears to be an axis. Who they fit in with revolves largely around their identities that they perceive to be stable or constant. Some basic psychological questions are (1) whether one of these approaches is more adaptive than the other over the long term, (2) whether individual differences in rejection sensitivity or self-concept

clarity are responsible for these different approaches, or (3) whether these approaches change over the course of students' high school journeys depending on where they are in their identity development.

The richness of studies on a single ethnic group lies in the within-group variance that is captured during the research process. The dominant narrative often homogenizes young Black males, and depicts them as having the same motivations, aspirations, identities, and self-expressions. Students strongly defended their individuality and when making statements regarding patterns of behavior among their peers, students were careful to qualify their statements with "*some* students do…" or "*a few* students think…" Even though these young men share certain experiences, the focus groups revealed that there is great diversity in terms of how these young males think, act, and rationalize. Such diversity is important to continually explore. This study represents the narratives of Black males from a historically Black high school in an inner city. Black males attend different types of schools (including prep schools and private schools) in different communities (suburban and rural), so this narrative is by no means a comprehensive representation of the Black male experience. Such rich diversity (or commonalities) in the Black experience cannot be acutely captured in a single investigation of school belonging.

It is suggested in the interviews that females are influential in determining whether a fashion choice is favorable or not. Female reactions, as well as those of other Black males, rapidly and widely conveyed by social media, arbitrate local successes and failures. Additionally, it appears that the larger realm of social media, celebrity endorsements, and the music industry are dictating the resources of young Black males. Several of these individuals will, for the foreseeable future, continue to camp out at shoe stores overnight in hopes of purchasing a new pair of sneakers for $200 in order to satisfy their more basic psychological needs. As education researchers and practitioners, we should *swim with the current* by recognizing Black masculine

literacy practices as legitimate while also devoting our mental energies to leveraging their energy, resourcefulness, and creativity in ways that are consistent with scholastic achievement and healthy psychological outcomes.

7.5 Conclusion

High school years are critical because they serve as the referent for social encounters upon entering college settings. The present research suggests at least three constructive methods by which Black male students may maintain the fulfillment of their desires to stand out and fit in. First, the present findings call for an increased presence of Black male organizations in Black high schools. Such a presence potentially serves as a constructive means of standing out and fitting in for those who crave affiliation, brotherhood, tradition, and symbolism during their high school years. Second, in contrast to control-value theorists' arguments that high competence buffers against feelings of boredom (Pekrun et al. 2010), students in the present study who were deemed as "high achievers" by their science teacher actually were the most vocal about their boredom in class. The present research thus calls for diminishing feelings of boredom through interactive and socially based learning activities. Such practices may decrease "clowning" behaviors in class, student referrals, and teacher stress. Finally, the present research calls for in-school exercises that provide pathways for enhancing student reliance on high scholastic achievement as a means of standing out and fitting in. The United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals, as part of their 2030 Goals for Sustainable Development, emphasize the importance of reduced inequalities, empowering and promoting the social inclusion of all, irrespective of race.

In line with this target, investigations of students' social experiences must continue to stretch research on inclusion from the perspective of "the actor." Students' social desires are likely to pervade many aspects of their in-school behaviors. Further exploring student behaviors to satisfy their social needs could potentially uncover

several domains in which students' unfulfilled social needs are the driving culturally based explanations behind the behaviors that educators observe from day to day. Considering the students' experiences and perspectives will serve as a guide for schools to develop policies that will ensure inclusive education and equality.

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DeLeon L. Gray is an Associate Professor of Educational Psychology and Equity at North Carolina State University. During the 2019-2020 academic year, he served as a Scholar-in-Residence in Michigan State University's College of Education, and has previously held appointments at the Association for Psychological Science, the American Institutes for Research, and the National Institutes of Health. He aims to support educators, parents, leaders, and mentors in unpacking the concept of motivation, and works jointly with them to disrupt structural aspects of schooling environments that leave marginalized students vulnerable to anxieties about belonging.

What Norwegian Individuals Diagnosed with Dyslexia, Think and Feel About the Label "Dyslexia"

8

Mads Johan Øgaard, Christopher Boyle, and Fraser Lauchlan

Abstract

This project interviews six Norwegian individuals with dyslexia that explores their understanding of this label and their attitudes towards it. The study examines the often overlooked area of the self-esteem, attitudes, and motivation of individuals with dyslexia, both in children and in adults. It has been argued that individuals are often overlooked in the ongoing and lengthy debate that is now commonly referred to as "the Dyslexia Debate" (Elliott and Grigorenko 2014). This current study shares the viewpoints of Norwegian individuals who have been diagnosed with dyslexia and seeks to analyse and understand the issues. Individuals with dyslexia are rarely asked about their opinions and feelings regarding the support they have received in school, and whether the diagnosis and support actually helped them with their dyslexic difficulties. The results provide some further questions to consider regarding how individuals with dyslexia feel and their under-standing of the impact of dyslexia both in everyday life and within a school setting.

8.1 Introduction

This research uses interviews to further research and explore what Norwegian individuals diagnosed with dyslexia, think and feel about the label `dyslexia' and how dyslexia has and will continue to impact their everyday life. The significance of this topic lies in the importance of understanding how individuals with dyslexia feel about dyslexia and the support that they were given or currently receive throughout school and further into their adult lives (Fairhurst and Pumfrey 1992; Gerber et al. 1990; Gjessing and Karlsen 1989; Lewandowski and Arcangelo 1994). The study aimed to better understand and improve the nature of the support that is given to individuals with dyslexia, and explore whether the support provided within the school setting and beyond (e.g. society at large) has benefited those individuals with dyslexia and potentially shaped their life (Burden and Burdett 2007; Edwards 1994; Humphrey and Mullins 2002; Riddick et al. 1999).

M. Johan Øgaard
University of Exeter, Exeter, UK

C. Boyle (✉)
University of Adelaide, Adelaide, Australia
e-mail: chris.boyle@adelaide.edu.au

F. Lauchlan
University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, UK

To be specific, the current research focused on what individuals with dyslexia think and feel about being labelled with "dyslexia". The participants included six individuals with dyslexia, three below 25 years of age and three above the age of 30. With the use of questionnaires inspired by narrow academic research in the field of dyslexia, the issues of self-esteem, attitudes and identification were explored (Burden and Burdett 2005; Humphrey and Mullins 2002; Riddick et al. 1999). The notion was that by attempting to gain answers directly from those individuals who have been diagnosed with dyslexia themselves, one can both challenge and further investigate previous research in this field. For instance, the research will investigate views that dyslexia is a socially constructed concept (Elliott and Gibbs 2008; Elliott and Grigorenko 2014), as well as the views of Davis (2010) who suggests that dyslexia is a gift, and Grant (2008) who suggests that dyslexia affects an individual on so many levels in everyday life that it may as well be considered a lifestyle.

8.1.1 Understanding Dyslexia in Norway

According to Dyslexia Norway, the country makes a clear difference between Dyslexia and Specific Language Impairment (SLI). SLI is similar to dyslexia, only that the individuals with SLI struggle with oral language rather than the literacy skills that affect individuals with dyslexia. However, both diagnoses deeply affect the individual's ability to learn, despite their intelligence and the opportunities laid out for them (Bishop and Snowling 2004).

Dyslexia Norway refers to a study called the *Programme for International Student Assessment* (PISA)—a survey done in 2005, revealing that about 5% of the Norwegian population had a serious difficulty that was considered specific to literacy (Ministry of Education, 2006; in Hausstatter and Thuen 2014; dysleksinorge.no, 2017). This correlates roughly with associations in other countries such as the British Dyslexia Association who claim that about 10% of the British population has dyslexia (bdadyslexia.org. uk 2017). Regardless, the exact estimates of how many individuals who have difficulties vary widely (dysleksinorge.no, 2017). The reason for this may be because the diagnostic tests differ from country to country, depending on what the specific definitions of the diagnostics are (dysleksinorge.no, 2017). In addition to this, there may be several undiagnosed individuals with dyslexia. According to Dyslexia Norway, about 10% of the individuals diagnosed with dyslexia have additional SpLDs.

8.1.2 Defining Dyslexia

While it is accepted that arguments about defining dyslexia have been ongoing for many decades, for the purposes of the current research we define dyslexia as a specific—yet complex—reading and writing difference (or difficulty) (see Grant 2010; Elliott and Grigorenko 2014 for further discussion). If we accept the British Dyslexia Association definition of dyslexia as a spectrum with no clear cut-off points (bdadyslexia.org.uk 2017), then one can see that there can be considered just as many different "types" of dyslexia as there are individuals who have been diagnosed as such. This has clearly contributed to the problems there are when trying to develop a clear definition of dyslexia (Edwards 1994; Elliott and Grigorenko 2014; Grant 2010). Central to most definitions is the description that dyslexia primarily affects the individual's reading and spelling skills (Grant 2010), usually within reading accuracy and fluent word progression, but it may also include difficulties in phonological awareness, verbal memory and verbal processing speed (bdadyslexia. org.uk 2017; dysleksinorge.no 2017; Grant 2010). Co-occurring difficulties may be included, but these are not by themselves signs of dyslexia - for instance, aspects of language, motor coordination, mental calculation, concentration and personal organization (bdadyslexia.org.uk 2017; dysleksinorge 2016).

8.1.3   Self-Esteem and Attitudes Towards Dyslexia

While most research papers have focused on how to define dyslexia (and whether we can accept it as a separate difficulty from general reading difficulties), there has been comparatively little research undertaken to understand the perspective of people with dyslexia, in terms of issues of self-esteem, attitudes, and motivation of those with dyslexia, including both children and adults (Burden and Burdett 2005; Riddick et al. 1999; Humphrey and Mullins 2002). The research that has been conducted clearly shows the potentially negative impact that difficulties related to dyslexia can have on an individual's self-esteem (Humphrey and Mullins 2002).

Publications such as "The Gift of Dyslexia" by Davis and Braun (2010), "Scars of Dyslexia" by Edwards (1994) and Grant's (2008) book "That's the way I think" illustrate the need for an overall understanding of how dyslexic individuals are labelled, how they feel about having the label, how dyslexia has shaped their understanding of self, and their academic potential and motivation (Burden 2008). Many researchers who have examined the topic of self-esteem seem to agree that issues of self-esteem are most prevalent in individuals who have been diagnosed as having dyslexia, yet despite this, there has been an exponential rise in the number of books and articles on diagnosis and the identification of dyslexia as a syndrome or phenomenon, but rarely on the thoughts and feelings of young people with dyslexia themselves (Burden and Burdett 2007; Carroll and Iles 2006). There may be several reasons for why those individuals with dyslexia have poor self-esteem; for instance, it seems to be more common in children who attend mainstream schooling, resulting in their academic motivation being hugely affected, especially if they do not receive the support required to thrive in a mainstream setting (Crozier et al. 1999; Humphrey and Mullins 2002).

However, as Humphrey and Mullins (2002) stated based on their interview data, problems related to self-esteem appear to surface regardless of the placement attended by individuals with dyslexia. Research shows that teachers have a huge impact on the development of self-esteem in individuals with dyslexia, and unfair treatment from teachers can impact negatively on self-esteem (Edwards 1994; Humphrey 2001; Humphrey and Mullins 2002).

Riddick (2010) interviewed 22 children with dyslexia, along with their parents and teachers, with the results showing that the children with dyslexia felt "disappointed," (Riddick 2010). Roughly half of the students in Riddick's study had experienced frustration, shame, exhaustion, sadness, depression, anger and embarrassment by their difficulties due to bullying (Edwards 1994; Humphrey and Mullins 2002; Riddick 2010). In addition, several students had bad experiences in mainstream education involving teachers who were ignorant of, or did not acknowledge the existence of dyslexia (Edwards 1994; Humphrey and Mullins 2002; Riddick 2010). This was further shown in Humphrey and Mullins's paper from 2002, which was in line with Dewhurst's (1995, in Riddick, 2010) findings, that almost half of the participants in their study had been taught by teachers (usually prior to diagnosis) who refused to believe in the existence of dyslexia, or that dyslexia was the cause of their difficulties. As a result of their lack of understanding, the teachers called these students "lazy," "stupid" or "thick" (Edwards 1994; Humphrey and Mullins 2002).

A study has shown that parental support is vital for dealing with the potentially negative impact of dyslexia, and parents are often active in taking steps towards an assessment and diagnosis (Glazzard 2010). Additionally, even though there is strong evidence for a clear relationship between being dyslexic and having low academic self-esteem, it is important to stress that it is possible to change this relationship into a more positive one (Glazzard 2010). Glazzard's study showed that the most significant aspect that contributed to students' self-esteem was the positive diagnosis of "dyslexia" and an ownership of this label—he concluded that an early diagnosis of dyslexia is crucial for creating a

positive self-image (Glazzard 2010). An "ownership" of a label might seem strange to some given that there are often negative consequences of the practice of labelling, such as bullying, stimatisation, the generalisation of children's difficulties neglecting specific individual issues, and a focus on within-child deficits and lowered expectations (see Lauchlan and Boyle 2007, 2020).

Burden and Burdett (2005) explored attitudes of 80 boys with dyslexia between the ages of 11 and 16 who attended a specialist boarding school. Most of the individuals reported positive attitudes about having the label and used metaphors to illustrate their attitudes. Burden and Burdett (2005) describe the use of metaphors as a helpful means of exploring the deep-rooted thoughts and feelings of children and young people diagnosed with dyslexia. Their study not only demonstrated the insights of the children, but also their creativity in the way they were able to explain and understand their dyslexia through the use of metaphors (Burden and Burdett 2005). In total, 44 different metaphors were collected.

Regardless of the "positive" attitudes described, the study showed that the majority of the students' metaphors described their understanding of dyslexia as some form of obstacle or barrier that was interfering with their learning process (Burden and Burdett 2005). An example of a positive metaphor by a 10-year-old student was the following, "It's like a lock and key. If you've got enough persistence, you can sort of find that key to unlock that door. If you keep doing it, you keep unlocking all the doors, so eventually, you get to the end passage. It's like a maze with doors that you've got to unlock, so you have to keep persisting" (Burden and Burdett 2005, p.103). The study revealed several levels of understanding and can be thought of as a continuum with positive and negative on each end. One of the most negative metaphors was from a 7-year-old, who expressed having dyslexia as follows: "A head with a knife through it, split into two sides with a knife going through the middle. There's another head with a head inside—the one on the inside sad and the one on the outside happy" (Burden and Burdett 2005, p. 104).

Researchers agree that there is an urgent need for further research into the connection between how dyslexia (and SEND in general), can affect a person's sense of identity, possibly throughout their lives (Riddick et al. 1999; Humphrey 2002; Burden 2008; Glazzard 2010; Lauchlan and Boyle 2014). There may be a danger of negative interactions with peers and teachers prior to diagnosis, resulting in low self-image, self-esteem and feelings of isolation (Edwards 1994; Glazzard 2010). Research also shows that after diagnosis, learners' confidence increases and dyslexic students are more able to differentiate between their specific difficulty with literacy and the notion of intelligence (Burden and Burdett 2005; Edwards 1994; Glazzard 2010).

8.1.4 Identification and Social Construction of Dyslexia

Elliott and Gibbs (2008) and Elliott and Grigorenko (2014) argue that dyslexia has lost its meaning, that it should be considered "at least partially" (Elliott and Gibbs 2008) a social construction. They suggest that there are several reasons why dyslexia has become a convenient social label; and moreover that the use of the dyslexia label has led to the inequitable use of resources. In other words, that an individual without dyslexia who has literacy difficulties does not tend to gain the same amount of support as one with the dyslexic label (Elliott and Gibbs 2008). Elliott and colleagues argue that our current knowledge of dyslexia is based on a mistaken belief that dyslexia is different from those who encounter reading difficulties; "the debate about how we should understand the concept of developmental dyslexia has sometimes become oversimplified to the point that the very existence of a biologically based reading disability has been questioned" (Elliott and Grigorenko 2014, p. 166).

Throughout their research, they argue against several common explanations and definitions of dyslexia, that often are used to support the clinical values of the concept of dyslexia. In doing so, they also question to what extent dyslexia

may have become a convincing and valid label and they conclude that dyslexia is a socially constructed concept (Elliott and Gibbs 2008). They do emphasise, however, that this does not mean that the potential difficulties that an individual with dyslexia experiences are not real or meaningful (Elliott and Grigorenko 2014). Moreover, they highlight that the interest in what causes reading difficulties (or dyslexia) cannot and should not be underplayed (Elliott and Gibbs 2008).

Elliott and Gibbs (2008) and Elliott and Grigorenko (2014) further stress that the critical concerns expressing the value of the construct of dyslexia have been misunderstood or changed by some, which, in turn, results in the term "dyslexia" being considered or associated with an "excuse" for laziness, stupidity, or poor teaching (Edwards 1994; Humphrey and Mullins 2002). However, few researchers hold this view—in fact, the great majority of researchers in academic literature (Elliott and Gibbs 2008) have acquired a more varied perspective that denies such notions (Elliott and Grigorenko 2014). Elliott and Gibbs (2008) further discuss that many of the difficulties that one can argue are typical of dyslexic symptoms can also be found in younger, "normal" readers who read at the same age level, suggesting that such difficulties are characteristic of a certain stage of reading development, as opposed to demonstrating pathological features.

As Eliott and Gibbs (2008) highlight, so-called "Dyslexia Friendly Schools" do seek to be inclusive for all, and this is generally something that they have achieved (Elliott and Gibbs 2008). In fact, the Dyslexia Norway Association promotes "Dyslexia Friendly Schools" as being inclusive and useful for all learners with and without diagnosed SEN (dysleksinorge.no, 2017). Furthermore, it has been suggested that such schools should not be restricted to a dyslexic subgroup (Elliott and Gibbs 2008). Instead, through using the term "dyslexia" in a general way to describe almost all forms of reading and spelling difficulties makes the definition much less confusing.

Elliott and Gibbs (2008) point to the British Psychological Society's (1999) definition:

"Dyslexia is evident when accurate and fluent word reading and/or spelling develops very incompletely or with great difficulty. Which focuses on literacy learning at the 'word' level and implies that the problem is severe and persistent despite appropriate learning opportunities" (BPS, 1999). Dyslexia is clearly a very broad term and Elliott and Gibbs (2008) and Elliott and Grigorenko (2014) suggest using a wide-ranging definition of dyslexia which could hugely benefit those individuals with literacy difficulties who are currently restricted from further support due to not yet being diagnosed with dyslexia.

However, if dyslexia is to be understood as a social construct, Elliott argues that "a given set of cognitive or behavioural features (given levels of IQ and reading scores, a working memory deficit as indicated by a particular centile level), constitutes dyslexia and then ergo, it exists" (Elliott and Gibbs 2008, p.14).

Lauchlan and Boyle (2007) outlined an ethical approach to labelling. They argued that this might include providing the child and his or her family with the opportunity to accept or reject the label, prior to a decision being made. An ethical approach would also consider whether the application of the label would be potentially valuable, not in terms of whether the label has been applied accurately, but instead in terms of whether the label "opens [and not closes] doors and creates opportunities for the person concerned" (Gillman, Heyman and Swain, 2000, p. 407). Edwards (1994) describes how important it is for an individual to understand the proper definition of their label, so they are fully able to comprehend it, thus allowing them to decide how they feel towards it. To accomplish this, she points to herself as a parent of two children with dyslexia and to her work as a teacher of students with SEND. Furthermore, she explains how important it is to intelligently educate the child and their parents about their label, with both good and bad sides (Edwards 1994). Edwards describes how she personally experienced students who were stupefied over their positive test results after they finally understood more about how they learn best. This was surprising to them

as they had always thought of themselves as stupid, lazy, bad or even crazy (Edwards 1994). However, afterwards, these students expressed feelings such as; "I wish someone had told me this years ago" and in the case of one of the adults involved in the study, "I have wasted my life" (see Edwards 1994).

When it comes to the debate about labelling children, Edwards (1994) recognizes the potential consequences that it may bring, especially regarding self-esteem, identity and the risk of being viewed as "different" by the society. Edwards (1994) further refers to and sympathizes with parents who are confused and worried about this debate if their child should be labelled with dyslexia or with SpLD. However, when it comes to dyslexia, Edwards (1994) points to her study where she has examined eight boys' experiences with dyslexia, showing that individuals with dyslexia often are unrecognised, misunderstood or punished by other people. It is this kind of ignorance, she argues, that creates so many difficulties, resulting in both parents and staff alike being confused, bitter and vulnerable. Every individual's struggles with any learning difference should be taken seriously in order to potentially prevent the destruction of their future life (Edwards 1994).

8.1.5 Where Does This Research Project Fill in the Gap and Expand?

As clearly shown in the literature review above, there are only a handful of researchers who have investigated these very important subjects of self-esteem, attitudes and motivation within the individuals with dyslexia (Burden and Burdett 2005; Humphrey and Mullins 2002; Riddick et al. 1999). Not only is it necessary to do more research into this area of dyslexia, but it could be, like most of the researchers in the field suggest, essential for supporting and to better comprehend the manifestation of specific literacy difficulties (Burden 2008; Glazzard 2010). The current study will explore in detail the differences in self-esteem between young adults who have been diagnosed as having dyslexia.

To further explore the participants' understanding of dyslexia both as a label but also their feelings about the label personally, Davis and Braun's (2010) research ("The gift of dyslexia") was used to develop questions on whether the participants perceive dyslexia as something positive or negative. Questions were also developed using Grant's (2008) book "That's the way I think", to explore how dyslexia affects an individual in everyday life and whether having the label of dyslexia might be considered a lifestyle.

The participants of this study were also asked for their opinions on Elliott and colleagues' (Elliott and Gibbs 2008; Elliott and Grigorenko 2014) research of dyslexia as a socially constructed concept. In doing so this could potentially provide an interesting view based on their own experiences of dyslexia and could further help to better shape our understanding of their specific learning difficulties. Some of the questions were based on Edwards' (1994) study. In other words, the project aimed to contribute to the research into how individuals diagnosed with dyslexia feel, comprehend and are shaped by dyslexia, within a Norwegian setting.

8.2 Methodology

This project's overall question is "How do Norwegian individuals diagnosed with dyslexia, think and feel about the label 'dyslexia' and how does having the label dyslexia impact on their everyday life?" In order to answer this, a questionnaire composed of ten main questions was created (see Appendix 1). The questions were categorised into two sub-groups: *personal* and *philosophical* questions. The former focussed on how the individual had experienced dyslexia and how it had impacted on their own life, and the latter focussing more on dyslexia as a concept and the individual's comprehension of the label within a social/communal setting. The first six questions were based on the questionnaire of Edwards (1994), while others were adapted from Davis and Braun's (2010) research. The last four questions were "philosophical questions," where

participants were asked about their opinions on several researchers' work, such as Elliott and Gibbs (2008) who suggest that dyslexia as a socially constructed concept and discuss whether dyslexia has become a "convenient label," and Grant´s (2008) work, which suggests that dyslexia may be considered a lifestyle. The questions were open-ended, allowing the participants the opportunity to be free in their answers; they were not limited by a multiple-choice question format.

Some questions were also based on the first author's own understanding of the label. For instance, 'What do you think about a philosophical/spiritual approach towards dyslexia?' This question was included in order to observe what participants' views were outside of what is generally known by society, and as a way of observing the participants' own understanding of their dyslexic diagnosis.

8.2.1   About the Participants

Participants responded to an online advertisement looking for individuals with dyslexia who were willing to share their experiences and opinions of dyslexia. When the participants agreed to be interviewed, they received more detailed information about the project. To preserve anonymity the names of the participants have been changed to pseudonyms. The three younger participants were: Ana who was 18 years old, Siri who was 20 and Rolf who was 22. The older participants were: Julian at 38 years old, Embla at 49 and Marc at 55 years old.

8.3   Findings

8.3.1   Individuals with Dyslexia's Self-Esteem and Attitudes Towards Dyslexia

The participants expressed two contrasting opinions towards dyslexia. For most of the participants regardless of age, dyslexia was, or still is, something primarily negative, with words

such as 'handicap', 'curse', and 'defect' being used, and their interviews containing memories and experiences of difficult times throughout their lives, especially throughout their school days, such as bullying. When they were further asked about what the worst aspects of dyslexia were, many of the participants had similar answers; being "special" in a negative way, failure, stigma, working more than others, being a slow reader, having bad handwriting, knowing other individuals who do not understand what dyslexia is, not being able or have the courage to take the education that they wanted, and, in the case of some of the adults, the feeling of guilt that their children had inherited their learning difficulty.

In addition to negative connotations of dyslexia, younger individuals also associated dyslexia with new friends and better comprehension of self, which they credit Dyslexia Norway for. As such, it comes as no surprise that the best thing about having dyslexia was also Dyslexia Norway. However, there were those who said that there were no good qualities about having dyslexia, for instance, Embla: *This is a question that is almost impossible for me to comprehend*.

Some also added that they were happy that being labelled gave them the support and the tools that helped them to cope better, even though several mentioned throughout the interview that the support was not that good. Siri, Ana, and Marc expressed that they had learned to live with their dyslexia diagnosis, and that to them, dyslexia is positive because it has forced them to go further in life. On the other hand, there were consequences along the way including countless hours of hard work and tears. For example, Siri explained: "*When you have worked your way through all the frustrations, it is like a gift, because you appreciate all the things you previously took for granted, and you gain the courage that you otherwise would not have gained.*" Ana further expressed that; "*it depends on your perspective of it, for example, Dyslexia Norway organized trips and summer camps, which is a gift to be able to attend because of my dyslexia. However, from a school perspective, it*

is more negative, but with the right support, to me, it is not really a problem and therefore is not really negative."

The majority of participants agreed that dyslexia had made them more self-aware but stressed that this was not necessarily in a positive way. The pressure from school made some of the participants look at themselves in a negative light, but they also became more aware of how they work, how to act and express themselves in front of other people and what effect being diagnosed with dyslexia could have on those around them. Siri expressed; "*even to this day I have loads of doubt, I apologize a lot since I am a slow reader. I have doubts that I will never make it and that I am not able to perform equally to everyone else.*"

Most of the participants said that they do not feel like they are more curious than others. Some also stated that it may depend on the subject. Siri however believes that she is more curious than others, since dyslexia made her work extra hard she gained the desire to prove to others that she can make it regardless of having dyslexia.

Some of the participants did not like the idea of dyslexia being considered a lifestyle, as they felt that dyslexia controlled too much of their lives. Others said that there might be some truth to this explanation because dyslexia does significantly impact an individual's life.

Surprisingly, regardless of the primarily negative associations, the majority of participants said that they would not remove their dyslexia, as they have learned to live with it, almost as if they had taken "ownership" of the label as described earlier. It had become part of them, and they couldn't conceive of a reality without dyslexia. They had learned to live with it and accept it. However, it is also true that those participants who could be considered as having a more negative perspective towards the label said that they would remove their dyslexia if given the choice.

8.3.2 Identification of Dyslexia

Two out of six participants felt that it was useful to be diagnosed with dyslexia. The remaining four expressed that it didn't make much difference to them, since the schools and teachers did not understand what dyslexia was and therefore could not help them, even though some schools received the tools to do so.

All had interesting stories about how they received the diagnosis:

Siri: I received my diagnosis at the end of my second grade in primary school. I had a speech problem; I could not say "S" so I was taken out of class. Therefore, my dyslexia was discovered pretty fast. However, I could read, but that was because my sister taught me before starting school. But when the teacher realized that new words were very difficult for me, then the teacher told my father who worked at the Educational and Psychological Counselling Service (PPT in Norway), from there I was sent further into the system. So that is why I received the diagnosis at eight years old.
Ana: I was diagnosed with dyslexia in fifth grade.
Rolf: I received the diagnosis at the first year in college/high school, I was 16, my sister was diagnosed before me, when she was ten years old, she is five years younger than me, and I was 15 when she was diagnosed with dyslexia. The reason that I got diagnosed late was because of the facilities at my secondary school was extremely bad. Therefore, in the last year there, we decided that there was no point anymore and decided not to fight anymore, we waited until college to then start over. At college, I received very good support, and things worked well.
Marc: I received it in my second year at primary school. However, there was no one that understood what dyslexia was or how to give any support. So it didn't really help to be diagnosed that early.
Julian: My SEN teacher came to me one day, when I was in fifth grade, in a break and said; "Tomorrow do not bring anything to school tomorrow, we gonna test you if you are ill or stupid." So that was my introduction to dyslexia.
Embla: I didn't really understand that it was dyslexia I had since there was not anyone who used that word, but when I was in fourth grade, I had extra classes, together with another person who could not see the difference between b and d. Regardless no one told me what I struggled with and what I could improve on. So, the word dyslexia wasn't used, but they thought I was stupid.

All participants, regardless of their age, received close to none or very little support from their primary schools. Some experienced slightly more support in secondary school. Almost all participants were offered some tools and/or

exceptions, nevertheless, it was not to the level where they felt supported. For instance, Julian explained: "For me it felt like I was the first human in Norway to get dyslexia."

The younger participants expressed that they all received help from both parents and siblings to an extent, and that their parents often called their school to fight for their children. In comparison, the older participants expressed that there was minimal support from home, mostly because there was no knowledge of what dyslexia was. They also believed that one of their parents likely had a learning difficulty themselves as well.

8.3.3   Social Construction of Dyslexia

The topic of dyslexia as a social construction was a difficult question for some of the participants to fully comprehend. Everyone, except one participant, strongly believed that dyslexia in itself was not a socially constructed concept. However, some did point to aspects of dyslexia that show how the society understands and defines it, resulting in aspects of it becoming a socially constructed concept.

Julian strongly believed that it is socially constructed and pointed to the self-destructive processes that one needs to get through in order to receive the label. He expressed much concern over his daughter who is currently going through this process, and how he struggles to explain to her that she is not ill, and that the system does its best to tell her otherwise.

To an extent, the majority of the participants do feel that dyslexia extends beyond reading and writing, as it affects them in several more ways. Embla expresses that when you struggle with something, it shapes you as a person, and that dyslexia has influenced her, and those around her, her whole life. She believes that there is so much that we currently do not understand about dyslexia. Furthermore, Siri believes that it is a serious mistake to say that it is just a reading and writing struggle. He explains that one of the reasons is that the additional struggles are so complex, and so one can not put all the

individuals under the same roof because it is different for everyone—some can actually read but not write and vice versa. For some the support helps and for others it does not; some need something totally different.

Rolf states that he usually defines dyslexia as primarily reading and writing struggles, and he sees the additional struggles as being separate from dyslexia. He also recognises that it depends on how each person defines dyslexia.

The participants seem to agree that the current definitions of dyslexia as well as its "name" works very well and therefore should not be changed, as this will make no difference to what it is called. However, they also express the difficult nature of dyslexia as it is so complex. In addition, they express the thin line between dyslexia and literacy difficulties. It is practical to gain the dyslexia diagnosis, as you then get support items, however, if you have literacy difficulties, then you do not receive the same support. They also stress the importance of gaining the right diagnosis, since if done wrong, it can have a huge effect on an individual's academic comprehension, future, and self-esteem. For example, to give individuals with ADHD a dyslexia diagnosis because it may be more practical due to society's sometimes negative views on ADHD, will have huge consequences in the long run and will become a hindrance to that person. There remains much stigma around dyslexia, and people are divided because many do not want the label. Instead, they want the support. There is also the issue of bullying because you are perceived as being different as a result of receiving the said support. Thus, participants' conclusion is that society's understanding of dyslexia needs to change in order to improve perceptions.

8.3.4   A Concluding Summary of Key Findings and Identification of Emerging Issues

The findings show that even though the connotations of dyslexia were primarily negative, it seems that the participants (at least the younger

ones) had higher self-esteem than originally expected, which—it could be argued—may be due to the recent work of Dyslexia Norway, who have strived to tackle issues of low self-esteem. However, one can clearly see that they all are affected by their school years in a negative way, especially on the topic of their dyslexic identification process and the support that was provided once they were each diagnosed. With regard to the social construction of dyslexia, the findings reveal that, even though the majority do not believe that dyslexia is a fully socially constructed concept, they do acknowledge aspects that are. It was also unexpected to see those with children feeling guilty over possibly having genetically transferred dyslexia to their children.

8.4 Discussion

8.4.1 Individuals with Dyslexia's Self-Esteem and Attitudes Towards Dyslexia

Similar to every other study that has considered self-esteem within individuals with dyslexia, the findings of the present study also recognise the impact that dyslexia can have on an individual's self-esteem (Barrett and Jones 1996; Burden and Burdett 2005; Carroll and Iles 2006; Elbaum and Vaughn; Glazzard 2010; Humphrey and Mullins 2001, 2002). Furthermore, it is important to bring to light that, from the knowledge provided by the participants, all did attend mainstream schooling. Also, the participants did state several times throughout their interviews that the provision that was given, did not, for the most part, meet their needs. Some said that even if they did receive equipment for support, they had to figure out how to use it in addition to their academic struggles, which further factored into their poor self-esteem. These findings correlate with those of Chapman (1988) and Crozier et al. (1999).

Unsurprisingly, most of the participants, if not all, had negative associations of dyslexia, some more than others. Most perceived it as a drawback in some way. As stated before, the younger participants had more positive attitudes in certain

aspects, which correlates with most research in the field of poor self-esteem in individuals with dyslexia, both in children and in adults (Burden and Burdett 2005; Edwards 1994; Humphrey and Mullins 2002; Riddick et al. 1999). It also further highlighted, as several researchers have pointed out, that there is strong evidence to suggest that teens and adults with a long history of SpLD, appear to be at higher risk of poor self-esteem (Fairhurst and Pumfrey 1992; Gerber et al. 1990; Gjessing and Karlsen 1989; Lewandowski and Arcangelo 1994). For instance, as Embla explained: "*There is a significant difference in age between each of us, which shows in those around me who have a very negative view on dyslexia, in comparison to your age where the information is much better and more accepted, so age has a lot to say here.*"

Interestingly, both the participants who have children, admit that they felt guilt that their children may have inherited their parents SpLDs. These findings were not mentioned in literature, as based on their interviews, it was clear that both have a poor attitude to learning differences. This is an area of concern, as these children might adapt their parent's attitudes to their learning difference and could be at potential risk of poor self-esteem. This further demonstrates how important it is to do more research in the area of self-esteem, attitudes, and motivation in adults with dyslexia, as several researchers have stressed (Fairhurst and Pumfrey 1992; Gerber et al. 1990; Gjessing and Karlsen 1989; Lewandowski and Arcangelo 1994). With that being said, both interviews of these participants clearly highlighted how both of them work really hard to support and fight for their children who struggle in school due to their learning differences.

However, it is interesting that Norway's dyslexia association has positively impacted the self-esteem of the participants (especially the younger ones) to a level where they associate dyslexia with Dyslexia Norway and therefore associate it with friends and understanding of the self. With Dyslexia Norway, they were able to be 'normal' without fear of being themselves. Siri, Ana, Rolf, Marc and Embla all had interacted with Dyslexia Norway in some way. Maybe this could be

matched as equal with Thomson (1990), who conducted tests which showed that individuals tended to have better self-esteem in specialist schools. Could this be due to a place which does understand and fully provide the needs of those individuals?

Those individuals who did have primarily a positive outlook on dyslexia, did express gratitude that they were able to learn so much about themselves through their difficult times. However, as Marc expressed, it took him around 25 years just to admit that he was struggling and had dyslexia. Furthermore, he says once he realized this difficulty, he turned dyslexia into something more positive, which made his everyday life easier, thus showing similar results to Davis and Braun's (2010) discussions on dyslexia as a 'gift'.

The study further showed that teachers, as well as schools, were difficult to work with. This was especially evident in the older participants who experienced that the teachers and schools had an extremely low understanding of their dyslexic needs. They were also called "lazy", "stupid" or "thick" by teachers, and even SEN teachers, which several researchers also have evidenced (such as Edwards 1994; Humphrey and Mullins 2002). This was especially evident for Julian. It seems like the social understanding of dyslexia has improved somewhat over the years, however, the younger participants have experienced similar situations as well. In contrast to Edwards's (1994) study, no one mentioned any physical abuse from teachers. However, some of the participants did experience ignorance of the existence of their dyslexia, which once again matches previous research (Edwards 1994; Riddick 2010; Humphrey and Mullins 2002).

Rosenthal's (1973) and Glazzard's (2010) studies show the importance of parental awareness and contribution. The present study showed a clear contrast between the younger participants who had very supportive and active parents, and even had helpful siblings, compared to the older participants who experienced minimal support at home. All of the older participants expressed different ways that their parents tried to support

them regardless. For example, Julian explained: *My dad is the least pedagogic person I know. Therefore, there was little help from him; he used force as a solution, which didn't work at all.*

8.4.2   Identification and Social Construction of Dyslexia

When it comes to the dyslexia debate that Elliott and Gibbs (2008) and Elliott and Grigorenko (2014) discuss, the participants express that this was a difficult subject. The majority of the participants clearly believed that dyslexia, in itself, is not a socially constructed concept, and some did come up with examples for why it was not. For example, Siri explained: "*My grandma didn't know what dyslexia was, she always had the same "problems" that I had. Also, even though my mother isn't diagnosed with dyslexia she still has reading and writing struggles, and has all the additional struggles that I have. I didn't know that my grandma and my mother also had the same problems as myself, until I was much older. I realized that there was a common trait between individuals with dyslexia, I didn't read the definitions of dyslexia at first, because I didn't want to define myself. This was before I joined Dyslexia Norway, when I got there I read the definitions as well as the additional challenges that some individuals may experience. It was like reading about myself, as it described exactly the way I had it. So that the society has created a concept that we live after, that can't be true, since those who do not know what those definitions are, still fit into the category. Yes, it's not like every one of us have the exact same problems.*"

Elliott and Gibbs (2008) explain that it is not about whenever dyslexia exists or not, but rather it is about how dyslexia is defined that affects individuals who fall outside this category. In addition, there are those who have misunderstood or have changed the meaning of the label. Something similar was expressed by some of the participants as they realized that there are aspects of dyslexia that could be considered a social construct.

However, the findings seem to suggest a more similar view to that of Edwards (1994)—that participants generally agree that the definition of dyslexia itself is strong. Furthermore, as Edwards (1994) suggests, it does not really matter what you call dyslexia, as the issues of it will arguably still be the same unless "the dyslexia debate" ends and society itself changes its attitudes, towards SpLDs. The participants also stress that the current view on dyslexia needs to change on all levels. Grant (2010) suggests that dyslexia affects the individual on so many levels that it could be considered 'a lifestyle', and although this statement did seem frightening to some as they did not want dyslexia to define their whole life, many did agree that it could be some truth to this statement. However, Julian did have an interesting view on this; "*Yes, that might be, it's like a handicap. Yes, agree with this; it is very difficult. I try to tell my daughter who is 10 years old and has dyslexia. I find it difficult to motivate her to do homework. I have to tell her that you are not dyslexic, you are with dyslexia. It is difficult to construct her identity without including dyslexia, since lately there been a lot of focus on dyslexia. The school or the society are good at telling her that you are not sick or different, but it is a form of handicap, so the focus becomes so huge that she thinks that she is dyslexic. For children I think it could be too much for them to identify their "problem" as dyslexia. I think that reading and writing differences is a more suitable label. As it provides an easier explanation rather than saying 'I am dyslexic'. I think that if she were told that you have reading and writing differences and these we can train so you can be better, I think this would have been easier than being labelled dyslexic.*"

Julian's perspective is clear and in line with both Elliott and colleagues' views (2008, 2014) and Edwards (1994), as well as several other researchers who have researched dyslexia. The most important aspect is not really what dyslexia or SpLDs are called, but what is done in order to ensure dyslexic (and those not labelled as dyslexic) individuals who struggle with reading and writing receive the support they need. Just as Elliott and colleagues (2008, 2014) and Edwards

(1994) express their frustration over the never-ending debate of what dyslexia is, it is imperative that we focus on what dyslexia feels like as well.

8.5 Strengths and Limitations of the Study

The small sample size can be considered both a strength and a limitation of the study. It could be considered a strength as it allowed the researcher to spend more time focusing on obtaining extensive detailed information from each participant, in a manner similar to how Edwards (1994) conducted her research. Simultaneously, the lower number of participants could be considered as a limitation, as it would have been ideal to use a larger sample of the Norwegian population diagnosed with dyslexia. With a larger sample, project comparisons could take place on a larger scale, alongside researchers such as Skaalvik and Hagvet (1990) who researched the relationship between academic self-concept and achievement in 600 Norwegian primary school children that had ASD. If the present study could compare with such numbers, it could explore and draw connections to ASD and dyslexia.

Furthermore, the narrow academic research in this specific field of dyslexia (Burden and Burdett 2005; Riddick et al. 1999; Humphrey and Mullins 2002) could be considered as limiting within a Norwegian context. Then again, this could also be argued as a strength, as it has the potential to become more "relevant" within limited research conducted in the field of self-esteem, attitudes and identification. The fact that it can contribute to an area where more research is needed works as a strength. In addition, the majority of researchers' stress that this area of research so desperately needs attention (Edwards 1994; Elliott and Gibbs 2008; Elliott and Grigorenko 2014; Glazzard 2010).

A clear strength of the present study, where it may stand out from other similar research in the field, is the comparison between the younger and older participants. This project strength provides a clearer understanding of the evolution of SEN provisions in Norway. However, on the other

hand, it can also be argued that this works as a limitation for this project as having fewer participants does not allow for strong conclusions about the evolution of SEN provisions in Norway to be drawn. Furthermore, it has to be noted that the main researcher and first author might unintentionally be biased to views that match his own vision of dyslexia, and as such, this would be a limitation to the present study. There is also the potential limitation that the participants do not always fully comprehend the questions based on research in the field.

8.6 Conclusion

What do Norwegian individuals diagnosed with dyslexia, think and feel about the label "Dyslexia"? The findings suggest that Norwegian individuals diagnosed with dyslexia are not by any means different to other individuals with dyslexia from other countries. This study further provides evidence of the need to recognise that each individual has emotions, skills and dreams that come before their label, and these need to be fully supported (Burden and Burdett 2005; Edwards 1994; Elliott and Gibbs 2008; Elliott and Grigorenko 2014; Glazzard 2010; Humphrey and Mullins 2002; Riddick et al. 1999). Sadly, this research as well as other studies, show that those with dyslexia are affected not only from their learning differences, but from the social ignorance and mistaken constructions as well (Burden and Burdett 2005; Edwards 1994; Elliott and Gibbs 2008; Elliott and Grigorenko 2014; Glazzard 2010; Humphrey and Mullins 2002; Riddick et al. 1999).

Similar to previous researchers, this study also highlights the urgent need for more research to be done in the field of self-esteem, attitudes and motivation of those individuals with dyslexia (Burden and Burdett 2005; Glazzard 2010; Humphrey and Mullins 2002; Riddick et al. 1999). Furthermore, this study suggests that it would be beneficial to study parents with dyslexia who have children with dyslexia. Such studies need to be recognised and acted upon. There appear to be few options of how one

should improve these issues. One way is to properly and diligently educate the children, their parents and teachers about their label (Edwards 1994; Glazzard 2010). This is possible, and the solution already exists in ways such as the Davis method, which already (as previously mentioned) has successfully supported more than 1,500 children and adults with learning differences (Davis and Braun 2010; Noboru, 2017). With such a solution being evidently successful, it is imperative that we act and resolve this ongoing issue which impacts on so many lives.

Appendix 1 - Questionnaire

Personal Questions:
1. What does the term dyslexia mean to you?

   (1a) Do you look at dyslexia as a negative/curse/affliction or as a positive/gift?
   (1b) Did dyslexia force you to become more self-aware?

2. How early were you diagnosed?

   (2a) Was it helpful being labelled dyslexic?

3. What is the best thing about being dyslexic?
4. What is the worst thing about being dyslexic?
5. What is your preferred learning style?
6. What type of support did you receive from:

   (6a) School?
   (6b) Family?

Philosophical Questions
7. This study aims to argue that dyslexia is more than a 'reading and writing struggle'. What're your views on this topic?
8. There are some researchers that have suggested that:
   (8a) Since dyslexia may affect the individual beyond reading and writing and affects the individual in so many different ways, that one could consider it a lifestyle, what do you think about this?

(8b) Dyslexia is a socially constructed concept, what is your opinion about this?

(8c) Dyslexia is passed down through generations; could this mean that dyslexia is something more than just a socially constructed concept?

(8d) That dyslexia has become a "convenient label" and therefore should change. Does this match up with your own experiences?

9. What are your thoughts about taking a more philosophical/ spiritual approach to dyslexia?

10. If you could, would you remove your dyslexia?

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Mads Johan Øgaard is an award-winning artist and special education teacher from Norway. He is a public speaker who shares his experiences about how it feels to have dyslexia and dyscalculia through the school system, how this affects mental health and how to find personal learning strategies. He is known for the multi-award-winning animated short film I AM DYSLEXIC.

Christopher Boyle, PhD, FBPsS, is a Professor of Inclusive Education and Educational Psychology in the School of Education at The University of Adelaide, Australia. He is a Fellow of the British Psychological Society and a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. He was previously the Editor in Chief of The Educational Academy. He was previously the Editor in Chief of The Educational and Developmental Psychologist (2012–2017) and is the founding co-editor of Belonging and Human Connection (with Kelly Allen) launched in 2022. He is an internationally recognised and respected academic and author on the subjects of inclusive education and psychology. He is a registered psychologist in the UK and Australia.

Fraser Lauchlan is a registered educational psychologist and an Honorary Lecturer at the Universities of Strathclyde (Glasgow) and Manchester. He runs a training and consultancy business in the UK (http://www.fraserlauchlan.com) and his main research interests are in the use of dynamic assessment by educational psychologists, mediated learning, labelling and the cognitive benefits of bilingualism.

Social Inclusion to Promote Mental Health and Well-Being of Youths in Schools

9

Gökmen Arslan , Murat Yıldırım, Ahmet Tanhan, and Mustafa Kılınç

Abstract

Social inclusion has a complex nature that is associated with a wide range of positive educational and developmental outcomes, including psychosocial health, well-being, prosocial behavior, and academic functioning. There is burgeoning research suggesting that social inclusion is an important resource to promote mental health and well-being, however, creating these relationships within highly complex educational systems can be challenging. This chapter aims both to reflect ongoing literature and to contribute to a new research agenda that focuses on the value of examining important aspects of social inclusion to foster youth mental health and well-being in school contexts. This chapter emphasizes the importance of inclusive experiences for the improvement of psychological health and flourishing, points out strategies for enhancing inclusive experiences, and fosters the adaptive strategies enabling youths to find ways to improve their sense of belonging and connectedness in schools. Given the empirical evidence that points out both short- and long-term outcomes associated with social inclusion, implications for widespread benefits are possible for schools that prioritize positive experiences improving social inclusion and belonging for youths. School-based prevention and intervention services that improve the inclusive experiences at school may contribute to better mental health and well-being.

G. Arslan (✉)
Department of Psychological Counseling and Guidance, Mehmet Akif Ersoy University, Burdur, Turkey
e-mail: garslan@mehmetakif.edu.tr

Centre for Wellbeing Science, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Australia

M. Yıldırım
Department of Psychology, Ağrı İbrahim Çeçen University, Ağrı, Turkey

A. Tanhan
Department of Psychological Counseling and Guidance, Adıyaman University, Adıyaman, Turkey

M. Kılınç
Department of Measurement and Evaluation in Education, Mehmet Akif Ersoy University, Burdur, Turkey

9.1 Introduction

Human beings are social creatures that rely on group life for their mental health and well-being (Baumeister et al. 2007). People have the desire to form and maintain positive and meaningful

relationships with others, which is a basic and universal need (Baumeister and Leary 1995). Thus, the need for inclusion is associated with important psychosocial consequences for healthy development and functioning from childhood to adulthood (Arslan 2018; Sheldon and Bettencourt 2002; Valcke et al. 2020). This need helps people to survive and thrive psychologically and physically (for a review see Baumeister and Leary 1995). Social inclusion is characterized by personal feelings of being valued, accepted, encouraged, respected, and welcomed from others or a particular social group (Arslan 2020b; Arslan and Duru 2017; Duru and Arslan 2014; Osterman 2000). Therefore, social inclusion involves both physical and emotional aspects of social interactions with others and is essential to form and maintain meaningful social relationships with other people.

There is a growing literature suggesting that social inclusion is an important resource to improve mental health and well-being in youths; however, establishing and sustaining these relationships within highly complex educational systems is not without challenges. There is also very limited research focusing on school-based inclusive services and strategies to facilitate youth mental health and well-being. This chapter, therefore, aims both to reflect ongoing literature and to contribute to a new research agenda that focuses on the value of examining important aspects of social inclusion to foster youth mental health and well-being in school contexts. This chapter emphasizes the importance of inclusive experiences for the improvement of psychological health and flourishing, points out strategies for enhancing inclusive experiences, and fosters the adaptive strategies enabling youths to find ways to improve their sense of belonging and connectedness in schools.

9.1.1 Social Inclusion in Youths

People have an inherent need to experience social inclusion in their social relationships, and they participate in social interactions often expecting inclusion (Wesselmann et al. 2017). Social inclusion is an essential need for people's overall health and well-being throughout the lifespan; however, this need is especially crucial during the period of adolescence. During this transition, children spend more time in different social contexts outside of their family, often looking to resources for support, such as peers, teachers, or other adults (Allen and Kern 2017; Telef et al. 2015). Young people especially need to feel included, respected, supported, and accepted by peers and adults, and to experience new roles in their social environment (Haugen et al. 2019; Newman et al. 2007). They may modify their behaviors to gain acceptance from peers or other people (Newman et al. 2007). The need for inclusion is therefore crucial for youths' successful transition from adolescence to adulthood (Duru and Arslan 2014).

Most people spend a considerable part of their childhood and adolescent years within the school surrounding. Schools are an important microstructure that represents a broader society, and young people learn how to build a sense of inclusion and connectedness within the school context. Schools, therefore, provide an imperative environment for youths' academic, psychological, and social development (Arslan and Duru 2017) and are well placed to explicitly target social inclusion because the majority of their associates are peers (Ladd and Kochenderfer-Ladd 2016). Socially included adolescents perceive themselves as a valuable part of a social group or environment (Duru and Arslan 2014) and feel subjectively accepted and respected by others, especially their teachers and peers in the school surroundings (Allen and Kern 2017a, b; Arslan and Duru 2017; Goodenow 1993). How young people feel about their relationships with their peers and teachers and the feeling that school is a setting where they feel accepted, supported, and respected is strongly related to their healthy functioning and flourishing (Allen and Kern 2017a, b). School is thus a valuable social context for young people to satisfy the need for inclusion.

9.1.2 Social Inclusion: The Need-to-Belong Context

Although the positive consequences of inclusion in the psychology literature are widely emphasized, studies on belonging have primarily focused on the negative impacts of social exclusion (Begen and Turner-Cobb 2015). Social inclusion and exclusion are two separate but related constructs referring to two key components of people's quality of social relationships and the sense of belonging. Unlike social inclusion, social exclusion is an experience involving youths being disengaged from others physically (e.g., rejection, social isolation), and psychologically (e.g., being ignored) (Arslan 2018c; Riva and Eck 2016). Arslan (2018b) reported that social exclusion is a person's subjective feeling of being ignored and rejected by others. Social exclusion is negative in nature and thwart basic psychological needs, including the need to belong (Arslan 2019b; Baumeister 2012; Williams and Nida 2011). Social exclusion is not only associated with current youths' functioning and well-being but is also a risk factor for future developmental and adjustment problems (Arslan 2018b; Shochet et al. 2011). Therefore, young people socially excluded tend to be academically, psychologically, and socially disadvantaged, in terms of school achievement, self-esteem, social skills, loneliness, and psychological symptoms (Arslan 2019b; Begen and Turner-Cobb 2015; Ladd and Kochenderfer-Ladd 2016).

Several theoretical frameworks have well-established that the need for inclusion is a basic and universal human need. For example, the self-determination approach has indicated that the need for relatedness is one of the fundamental psychological needs that is essential for well-being and psychological health (Deci and Ryan 2000). Similarly, the sociometer theory highlights the importance of relational value to people's mental health and well-being, with low perceived value leading to a number of psychological health problems (Leary 2005). Self-esteem serves as a "sociometer," proposing to ensure a person remains accepted, included, and supported by others. It might be a subjective

gauge of interpersonal inclusion and exclusion and reflects the youths' evaluation of the implications of their behavior for social exclusion and inclusion (Leary 1990, 2005). Self-esteem is, therefore, an internal indicator of the degree to which the youth is being excluded or included by others (Leary et al. 1995).

The need-to-belong theory (Baumeister 2012) is another promising framework for understanding how social inclusion may associate with young people's mental health and well-being outcomes. This approach has emphasized that people have a basic need to belong; critical implications for overall health and well-being are likely when this need is unmet (Baumeister 2012; Baumeister and Leary 1995). Baumeister and Leary (1995) have highlighted that "human beings have a pervasive drive to form and maintain at least a minimum quantity of lasting, positive and significant interpersonal relationships" (p. 497). This basic psychological motivation can operate in a wide variety of settings, and satisfying this need (i.e., social inclusion) improves flourishing and psychological health, whereas a failure to satisfy it (i.e., social exclusion) produces a variety of psychological and pathological consequences (Baumeister and Leary 1995; Osterman 2000).

Considering these theoretical frameworks, social inclusion and social exclusion are two separable-yet-related sides of the same coin (Arslan and Duru 2017; Baumeister and Leary 1995; Malone et al. 2012; Osterman 2000). Malone et al. (2012) have argued that some people may have a feeling of belonging because they feel accepted and included, whereas others may have a feeling of belonging because they do not feel rejected and excluded. Within the school context, Arslan and Duru (2017) have also emphasized the importance of inclusion and exclusion experiences in understanding and measuring youth school belonging, indicating that sense of belonging is a function of the individual–environment interactions associated with youth self-concept. Social inclusion is a positive and desirable outcome and a strategy to improve the sense of belonging and social connection, while social exclusion is an indicator of

poor belonging or social cohesion (Arslan 2020b; Rimmerman 2012). It, therefore, appears that social inclusion is a key indicator of a satisfied need to belong and a powerful resource for self-concept. The desire to form and maintain positive and meaningful social relationships with others has important contributions to young people's well-being and mental health.

9.1.3 The Need for Inclusion: A Basic Psychological Need

All people have a basic need for inclusion and, when this need is met, it can have positive social, psychological, and physical consequences. Social inclusion is thus a fundamental psychological construct associated with youth mental health and well-being, not only at a theoretical level but also at an empirical level (Arslan et al. 2020; Arslan and Tanhan 2019; Baumeister and Leary 1995; King et al. 1996; Malone et al. 2012; Newman et al. 2007; Osterman 2000; Shochet et al. 2011). Being socially included is associated with positive experiences, such as happiness, positive feelings, calm, and contentment, whereas being excluded often is related to intense negative moods, including anxiety, depression, and loneliness (Baumeister and Leary 1995; Osterman 2000). However, little research has explored the effects of inclusion experiences on young people's outcomes. Much of the literature has focused on how social exclusion influences psychological, social, and behavioral health and well-being in individuals from childhood to adulthood (Arslan 2018c; Baumeister et al. 2007; Coyne et al. 2011; Gilman et al. 2013; Leary 1990; Stenseng et al. 2015; Williams and Wesselmann 2011). More research is needed to better understand the complex association between social inclusion and youth valued outcomes to develop more effective preventions and interventions.

The United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals, as part of their 2030 Goals for Sustainable Development, emphasize the importance of reduced inequality within and among countries. One of their key targets is to empower and promote the social inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, or economic or other status. Thus, research focusing on social inclusion in youths is crucial, given that adolescence is a critical period of major psychological and social changes and a point when mental health problems and low flourishing can arise (Arslan et al. 2020; Allen and McKenzie 2015). Worldwide, 10–20% of young people experience mental health challenges, and half of all mental health disorders in youths begin by the age of 14 (World Health Organization 2020). Moreover, adolescence is a critical time for the development of social and emotional abilities that are the basis for later mental health and flourishing. Considering that adolescence is a period of vulnerability for the beginning of mental health challenges (Arslan 2020a;), inclusive experiences in the school and communities may provide important contributions to protecting and fostering young people's mental health and well-being. Numerous studies have supported this notion indicating that social inclusion positively influences youth mental health, and people socially included report fewer psychological, social, and behavioral challenges (Arslan 2020b; Arslan et al. 2020; Arslan and Duru 2017; Baumeister and Leary 1995; Duru and Arslan 2014; Osterman 2000; Sacco and Bernstein 2015; Valcke et al. 2020).

9.1.4 Social Inclusion for Better Mental Health and Well-Being

A recent report has indicated that one in four youths around the world does not feel a sense of belonging to their school, and this rate is increasing (The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development 2017). The most at-risk youths are the ones who are already vulnerable (Aerts et al. 2015; Uwah et al. 2008), and this not only influences their current health and well-being but also impacts them into adulthood (Arslan et al. 2020; Shochet et al. 2011). Young people who lack a sense of inclusion are therefore more likely to engage in behavioral

problems, suffer from mental health challenges, and experience low school achievement (Arslan 2016 2019a; Arslan and Allen 2020; Arslan et al. 2020; Arslan and Tanhan 2019; Büyükcebeci and Deniz 2017; Gilman et al. 2013; Napoli et al. 2003; Osterman 2000). Youths with emotional problems, for example, report greater social exclusion and less social inclusion. Importantly, their feelings of social inclusion more strongly contribute to both their current and later emotional well-being compared with feelings of exclusion (Arslan 2019c).

Valcke et al. (2020) has emphasized that the need for inclusion is a positive psychological orientation contributing to people's mental health and well-being. When considering the approach-and-avoidance framework (Gable 2006), social inclusion is a specific approach motivation contributing to improving individual's social relationships, whereas social exclusion is a form of motivation aimed to avoid being ignored and rejected by others (Valcke et al. 2020). Social inclusion, as approach motivation, positively contributes to people's psychological, emotional, and social well-being and mental health by decreasing a variety of challenges, such as psychological symptoms, relationship insecurity, and loneliness (Gable 2006; Valcke et al. 2020). Similarly, self-determination and the need-to-belong theory (Baumeister 2012; Deci and Ryan 2000) have stated the importance of the need to have positive and meaningful bonds with others in improving people's overall health and well-being. Social inclusion, as a relational value, contributes to youth valued outcomes, with low perceived value leading to various mental health problems and low flourishing (Leary 2005). Thus, socially included young people are more likely to report greater positive health and flourishing outcomes, including elation, happiness, and contentment, as well as fewer mental health challenges, such as depression, anxiety (Baumeister and Leary 1995). That is, young people who have a strong sense of inclusion tend to feel happier and greater mental well-being than those who do not.

Shochet et al. (2011) investigated the association between school belonging factors (caring relations, acceptance, and rejection) and mental health challenges using a multifactorial approach among youths. Their results indicated that social inclusion had a significant predictive effect on youth mental health problems for both genders at all three-time points, with lower levels of inclusion at school being associated with higher levels of depressive symptoms. Additionally, social inclusion was found as an important predictor of future youth depressive symptoms, even after controlling for initial depressive symptoms (Shochet et al. 2011). Importantly, social inclusion in school was longitudinally reported a stronger predictor of adolescent well-being compared to social exclusion (Arslan et al. 2020), and young people with low emotional well-being and high distress reported fewer inclusive experiences at school (Arslan 2018a; Arslan and Allen 2020). Arslan (2020b) reported the strong predictive power of social inclusion on mental health, well-being, and loneliness, and youths with low levels of social inclusion reported greater internalizing and externalizing problems (Alkan 2016; Arslan 2019a; Arslan et al. 2020; Shochet et al. 2011), as well as less subjective well-being (Arslan 2020b).

School-specific inclusion does not only contribute to young people's current mental health but is also essential for their subsequent outcomes (Shochet et al. 2011). Consistent with the approach- and avoidance-based processes (Elliot 2006; Gable 2006), empirical evidence also revealed that social inclusion had a strong predictive effect on well–being indicators (e.g., life satisfaction and happiness) whereas social exclusion strongly predicted mental health outcomes, such as depression (Arslan 2019a; Arslan et al. 2020; Malone et al. 2012). That is, when young people feel that they are being accepted, respected, and valued from others in school, they gain a sense of inclusion, which results in greater well-being and fewer mental health challenges. It is clear that social inclusion matters for cultivating better psychological functioning and flourishing outcomes among young people.

9.1.5 Fostering Social Inclusion in School

There are growing concerns about youth mental health and well-being suggesting that more actions need to be taken in this space. However, very few empirically tested interventions are available to address mental health and well-being through social inclusion strategies. Social inclusion in school is likely to occur when administrators and teachers improve positive social interactions and avoid practices that highlight differences and segregate young people (Juvonen et al. 2019). Youths spend most of their daily life at school, and schools are an important setting for organizing and providing effective intervention strategies contributing to mental health and well-being in young people (Arslan and Duru 2017; Patton et al. 2000).

The Gatehouse Project intervention was developed to enhance young people's sense of inclusion and connectedness to school and, in doing so, foster emotional well-being and mental health in children and adolescents (Cahir 2002; Patton et al. 2003). These project-based interventions have focused on three priority areas for action in improving the sense of inclusion at school: building a sense of trust and security, improving skills for good communication, and constructing a sense of positive regard by valued participation in all aspects of school life (Bond et al. 2001; Cahir 2002; Patton et al. 2000). Given this framework, school communities have an essential role to improve a sense of inclusion and connectedness. Moreover, these elements (i.e., security, communication, and positive regard) are fundamental to young people's emotional well-being and mental health by building inclusive experiences in school settings (Cahir 2002; Juvonen et al. 2019). For example, positive regard is associated with young people's perceptions of being able to participate fully in daily school activities, and a sense that these contributions are valued, recognized, and acknowledged (Cahir 2002). Young people who have positive regard are thus more likely to feel accepted, valued, and supported in school.

Social and emotional learning is another example of a promising intervention to improve a sense of inclusion and connectedness to school. The approach integrates youth development frameworks and competence promotion to decrease risk factors and promote protective factors, allowing for positive psychological adjustment and flourishing to take place (Durlak et al. 2011). Social and emotional learning is a strengths-based approach fostering young people's skills and capacity for social connection, empathy, and self-expression, with the ultimate aim of supporting their ability to manage their feelings and work well with others (Durlak et al. 2011; Juvonen et al. 2019; Weissberg et al. 2015). More recently, social-emotional interventions have emphasized improving positive group dynamics among young people in school settings (Jones et al. 2019; Juvonen et al. 2019). Teachers have an essential role in facilitating youth inclusion and cooperation; new teacher training tools (e.g., learning about the social dynamics of classrooms) have been recommended to be incorporated into social and emotional learning programs (Juvonen et al. 2019). Social and emotional learning programs provide young people with opportunities to experience a sense of inclusion and connectedness through promoting personal and social resources. Young people feel valued and experience a greater sense of inclusion contributing to better mental health and well-being outcomes (Durlak et al. 2011; Juvonen et al. 2019).

After bringing many of the different interventions together and providing a scientific rationale for strategies that promote social inclusion, Juvonen et al. (2019) suggested the proactive inclusion model that facilitates social inclusion in the school context through providing the following strategies:

- Maximizing diversity and ensuring equitable access,
- Increasing teachers' awareness and use of inclusive strategies,
- Promoting shared goals outside of the classroom context, and
- Facilitating cross-group friendships.

These strategies contribute to improving the inclusive experience, which in turn promote young people's mental health and well-being in school. Specifically, school administrators and teachers have an essential role in improving inclusion and reducing exclusion (Juvonen et al. 2019). Allen et al. (2020) have emphasized the importance of positive student–teacher interactions and teacher support in improving youths' sense of inclusion and highlighted the role of school administrators in promoting strong relationships in school settings. School administrators have both the opportunity and the responsibility to provide an environment that can foster mental health and well-being in those they lead (Allen et al. 2020). Research on students' sense of inclusion thus appears paramount to youth valued outcomes and requires further research to reveal the mechanisms for increasing social inclusion. We suggest that forming environments of inclusion and providing inclusive experiences are prioritized to foster youth mental health and flourishing in the school context.

9.2 Conclusions and Future Directions

Considerations are given to some of the future directions for social inclusion research and practices to foster mental health and well-being of young people. Schools are a critical space for youths to develop the capabilities and skills to interact and connect with other people. However, there are some challenges to the connections that school leaders and educators have with students, such as discipline policies, teacher instructional practices, and social conditions (Allen et al. 2020). While some studies find that the sense of inclusion at school is one of the fundamental constructs to the functioning and adjustment of young people, less is known about how to promote inclusive experiences and environments that will contribute to healthy youth development and better adjustment. Empirically, there is a need to consider proactive strategies for promoting inclusive experiences contributing to

fostering young people's mental health and well-being in schools.

Studies on belonging have primarily focused on the negative impacts of social exclusion, and the effects of social inclusion have not thoroughly been examined (Begen and Turner-Cobb 2015). While some research reports that social inclusion is a key element for mental health and well-being, less is known about how to improve inclusive experiences, specifically in school settings. Social inclusion is a critical mechanism and strategy to improve youth outcomes and contributes to fostering mental health and well-being in the context of challenges (Arslan 2019b). Young people need inclusive conditions and opportunities to feel accepted, cared for, valued, and affirmed in their school. Future work might empirically consider resources and mechanisms of good sense of inclusion and specific strategies for improving school-based inclusive experiences, across different school contexts.

School leaders and educators play important roles in fostering social inclusion and reducing social exclusion in schools by providing conditions that help students feel they are valuable, safe, and accepted (Juvonen et al. 2019). Specifically, peers and teachers are powerful resources that help young people understand and explore their social world. Peer relationships provide a social context in which young people acquire social competencies and skills such as prosocial behaviors, as well as cognitive abilities, such as the ability to understand their peers' perspectives (Will et al. 2018). Teacher-student relationships and teacher support are another essential resource for promoting young people's positive outcomes. However, there is limited research focusing on the impacts of these resources on student sense of inclusion because the relationship is generally considered to occur naturally (see Allen et al. 2020).

Teachers not only serve as an authority to help youths learn the rules of society but also manage their social dynamics to promote their mental health and well-being. They contribute to young people's experiences in peer ecology with their developmental needs and social characteristics

(Farmer et al. 2018, 2019). Teachers need to develop strategies that help to improve positive peer and teacher–student interactions and that promote an engaged school climate for all young people (Farmer et al. 2019). Education programs might, for example, be organized to educate school leaders or teachers about group dynamics and social processes to foster young peoples' sense of inclusion at school. Alongside the traditional roles of teachers, their responsibilities and roles need to be redefined in light of the needs of children and adolescents (i.e., learning how to relate to others in accepting ways) to facilitate the social inclusion of young people (see Juvonen et al. 2019). Future work might empirically focus on the development of productive relationships between students, teachers, and peers, as well as effective interventions and strategies for improving positive interactions that support social inclusion within the school context.

As discussed in this chapter, a sense of social inclusion, including personal feelings of being accepted, encouraged, respected, and welcomed from others, is a vital force for cultivating young people's both mental health and well-being. When young people experience social inclusion, they are more likely to be healthier and happier. Research indicates that social inclusion experiences play a role in developmental and flourishing outcomes, and young people with a high sense of inclusion appear to fare better psychologically, behaviorally, socially, and academically. A sense of social inclusion may foster the adaptive strategies enabling youths to find ways to improve their sense of belonging and connectedness in schools. Existing research suggests complex relationships between social inclusion and youth-valued outcomes. A fruitful area of future studies is the exploration of the pathways of social inclusion with mental health, flourishing, and social resources (e.g., teachers support and peer relationships). School-based prevention and intervention services that improve the inclusive experiences at school may contribute to better mental health and well-being. We specifically acknowledge the value of offering evidence-based social and emotional learning interventions and suggest the integration of social inclusion as a critical component of these programs.

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Gökmen Arslan is an associate professor at Burdur Mehmet Akif Ersoy University in Burdur, Turkey. He is a researcher in the field of counseling psychology, with a core interest in children and adolescent mental health and wellbeing. His research explores how best to provide meaningful programs and resources that promote positive youth development and well-being.

Autism Spectrum Disorder and Inclusive Education

10

Abbas Abdollahi and Nastaran Ershad

Abstract

Autism spectrum disorder significantly impacts various aspects of the lives of the affected individual and their family, including education, health, and overall well-being. In regards to the lifespan of autism spectrum disorder, individuals with autism need successive and purposeful education from the time of diagnosis to the end of life. As a result, both family and educational settings are directly linked to the educational issues of individuals with autism. In this chapter, the most important challenges in the lives of individuals with autism in their family and educational settings are discussed. Additionally, attention is given to the challenges of regular schools that are under the integrated and comprehensive education system which are receptive to individuals with autism.

10.1 Introduction

Sophia has just started first grade, and her parents are worried lest their daughter be bullied at school. It seems that Sophia is reclusive and has no desire to interact with her schoolmates. The class teacher constantly complains that Sophia is not involved in group and classroom activities and does not respond well to the classroom reward-punishment system. Many classroom activities are boring for her, and she mostly sits alone in a corner of the classroom. Sophia only talks about topics she is interested in; her teacher sees her as a solitary and inflexible child. Sofia's unreasonable crying and laughter would sometimes incite surprise and protests among her classmates. The teacher notices that Sophia has repetitive behaviors and would not follow the rules of the game. The other children sometimes tag her as spoiled and whiny, but the teacher does her best to get her to participate.

Sophia does not like to write and does most of her homework in her head. Her good performance in subjects such as math and reading labeled her as inattentively intelligent. Her

A. Abdollahi (✉)
Department of Counseling, Faculty of Education and Psychology, Alzahra University, Tehran, Iran
e-mail: a.abdollahi@alzahra.ac.ir

N. Ershad
Department of Exceptional Children, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran, Iran

teacher, surprised, admitted that "Her performance in some subjects is even higher than the class standard, but I am sometimes confused about how to deal with her." The combination of these characteristics lead to Sofia being referred for a psychological assessment. The result of the assessment is that the school has to decide whether Sophia could stay in a regular school or has to be transferred to a special need's school. Sophia suffers from a mild neurodevelopmental disorder known as autism, and now the school's staff and parents must make the proper decision about her educational future.

10.2 Definition of Autism Spectrum Disorder

Every year, a significant number of students like Sophia enter the regular school system, making it necessary to undertake a scientific perspective on educational assessment, planning, and implementation of an appropriate curriculum for this group of students. The first task for researchers is to formulate a precise definition of neurodevelopmental autism spectrum disorder.

According to the American Psychiatric Association's (2013) definition of neurodevelopmental autism spectrum disorder, the disorder is characterized by both difficulties in communication and repetitive behaviors. An individual with the disorder experiences persistent impairment in social interactions and communication in different situations, including the destruction of mutual social–emotional relationships to varying degrees, impairment in nonverbal and verbal communication behaviors, and ultimately flaws in establishing, maintaining, and understanding personal relationships, especially in finding and participating in shared fantasy games or lack of interest in peers (as in the case of Sophia). An individual with autism spectrum disorder also experiences an emergence of repetitive interests, behaviors, and limited activities. They are often abnormally intensely focused on an extremely limited and fixed range of interests. Furthermore, these individuals can react more or less than usual to sensory stimuli, for example being easily startled by

loud noises. The above symptoms often develop in early stages of growth and cause significant impairments in social and occupational aspects of the individual's functioning. Intellectual disability and autism spectrum disorder often occur together, but a dual diagnosis is only made when social communication is less than is expected at the individual's age. Autism spectrum disorder is diagnosed and recorded based on the severity of the symptoms as well as the amount of support needed in social interactions.

10.3 Levels of Autism Spectrum Disorder

The "spectrum" in autism spectrum disorder implies that individuals fitting the same diagnoses can vary widely on symptomology, severity of symptoms, and level of external care needed. While the disorder is more recently thought to exist on a continuum, three general groups or "types" of autism spectrum disorder are introduced (Diagnostic and Ststistical Manual of mental disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM5), 2013).

- Level three (severe autism) individuals need very substantial support, in which there is a severe impairment of verbal and nonverbal communication, leading to a sharp decline in function, as well as behavioral inflexibility, difficulty adapting to environmental changes, and severely limited behavioral patterns.
- Level two (moderate autism) individuals need substantial support. At this level, even with the ongoing support of caregivers, there are still shortcomings in verbal and nonverbal communication, and there are many limited and abnormal responses to environmental stimuli. Strange and unconventional nonverbal communication and limited and repetitive behavioral patterns are such that they attract the attention of others. These individuals are uncomfortable in novel situations and behavior patterns are difficult to change.
- Finally, level one (mild autism) individuals need support, but have more independence. These individuals have limitations without at-

home support and have difficulty initiating communication and interactions, often give unconventional responses to the invitations of others, with behavioral inflexibility interfering in one or more different situations. These individuals have difficulty planning and organizing their behavior and relationships, such that they cannot have independent personal connections.

Individuals with autism categorized in level one are more independent than levels two and three, and are more competent in self-help skills and homework assignments. Individuals with autism spectrum disorder categorized in levels two and three are typically admitted to children's special needs' schools due to the high severity of functional impairments and repetitive behavior, as the services and educational facilities of these schools are much more suitable than regular schools for this group (Mehling and Tassé 2016).

Individuals with autism categorized in level one may meet requirements to enter regular schools, but may face additional difficulties due to limitations in social interactions and communication. The presence or absence of these children in regular schools has both disadvantages and advantages that must be carefully examined.

10.4 Characteristics of Individuals with Autism Who are Eligible to Benefit from Inclusive Education

Inclusive education involves the complete integration of children with various disabilities. Given that the characteristics of individuals with autism warrant additional support, there must be some fundamental infrastructure in place in regular schools to accommodate these children (Larcombe et al. 2019). Evidence has shown that level two and three individuals with autism are rarely accepted by regular schools because their needs prevent them from being effective in the community of peers and normal environments. However, individuals at level one can largely act independently, and their level of language

impairment is not severe enough to prevent them from communicating effectively. They are usually educable, academically competent, and with a little support, they can do academic work. They have fewer sensory problems, rarely exhibit restricted behaviors, and have the ability to understand commands and behavior chains. Oftentimes, these individuals are somewhat aware of their disorder and respond to challenging behavior management programs. They are successful in self-help and self-care skills and are expected to participate in classroom reward-punishment systems. If they do not have any special physical limitations, they can perform manipulative and operational activities well.

Individuals with autism (especially level one) are among those who sometimes show special abilities and can be greatly helped if specialists can use this characteristic as their most important strength. Sometimes this paves the way for flexible planning and acceptance of these children in regular schools. It is important to note that the child should not be deprived of education just because of the nature of autism spectrum disorder, and any decision made should be to improve the autistic child's status (Little 2017).

10.5 Key Challenges of Inclusive Education for Individuals with Autism at Different Ages

Kimia is a second-grade elementary school student and has just entered a regular school. According to her medical report and educational assessment, she suffers from mild autism (level one). The educational expert has decided that Kimia should spend second grade in a special need's school, and any decisions on her educational status should be made after further testing. Kimia is a calm child and has little inclination to communicate and make friends, has few sensory problems and language deficits and lacks echolalia, but the monotonous tone of her speech attracts the attention of those around her. Even so, her educational progress is such that experts decided that the child should be admitted to a regular school under inclusive education, and the

liaison teacher would accompany her. The process of transferring a child from a special need's school to a regular school requires several stages of testing and assessment, and in these trips, a lot of physical and mental pressure will be imposed on the family and the autistic child. Kimia's parents acknowledged that within the past year, they have endured a lot of anxiety and worry because, on the one hand, they want their child to attend regular school and be among her peers enjoying all the facilities and environments of normal school. On the other hand, they are worried that classroom conditions and Kimia's presence among normal peers will cause confusion for her, and she will not be able to stand the regular school environment.

Careful study of the obstacles and problems of the family and the individual with autism shows that these individuals face different and unexpected challenges at different times, so they must be prepared to face these challenges. In the following section, we will take a closer look and study the challenges of the individual with autism and their family at different ages.

10.6 Challenges Faced by the Family and the Individual with Autism Before Primary School

As mentioned earlier, autism spectrum disorder is a neurodevelopmental disorder, indicating that large changes will occur during the child's developmental process. With the onset of symptoms from the age of two, family members often experience a major emotional shock. In fact, for pre-school ages, the family's emotional crisis may be the most important challenge in the face of the news of a child's disorder.

After the birth of their baby, parents have the best scenarios in mind for educating their child. However, when developmental issues start to arise, the parents may find that their dreams of a standard, good education may not come to fruition. The need for supportive and informative family counseling programs is very important during this time. Additionally, parents should consult with a professional assessor in order to fully understand their child's developmental impairments. The child should be examined on all aspects of the disorder, including speech impairment, behavioral problems, and sensory issues. A counseling team should be tasked with showing the family the right path to suitable intervention, emphasize the lifelong nature of this disorder, and prepare the family to face various challenges (Peters and Matson 2020).

The earlier parents begin specialized education programs for their child, the more successful the child will be at coping with their disorder (Dawson 2008). Prior to entering primary school, children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder are educated in early intervention settings which can occur at home or at centers. A clear and realistic roadmap for families can help reduce parental anxiety and stress, and allow parents to enjoy time with their child. Intervention programs for pre-school and even later aged individuals with autism include speech-language pathology, physical and mental occupational therapy, and exercises related to sensory integration. Since language is a means of communication and verbal skills are an educational requirement, one of the most important parts of a child's autistic intervention services before school is speech-language pathology.

The child's physical and sensory status should also be assessed to determine if physical and mental therapy is necessary. In addition, the child should be closely monitored for a lack of sensory integration, as sensory problems are one of the main obstacles to healthy development (Jones et al. 2020).

Educational services should be provided for the child alongside intervention services, which are composed of self-care skills and perceptual development (perceptual development refers to the development of the five senses: sight, sound, taste, touch, and smell). Parents and other caregivers play a critical role in their child's success and progress during this stage. Studies show parental involvement in the autistic child's education improves the family's sense of worth and self-esteem, which allows them to support their

child's greater psychological security (Bearss et al. 2015). Additionally, the family can help improve and support the autistic child's interactions and communication. The role of counseling organizations is also important in supporting the family and the autistic child by providing appropriate services to facilitate his or her transition to the next stages of education.

10.7   Challenges of the Family and Individuals with Autism in Primary School

The child with autism's entry into school as the first formal education environment may be considered one of their most challenging life periods. In order for a child with autism to be able to demonstrate his or her abilities and capacities, the basic school infrastructure, including the classroom environment, the teacher, books and teaching aids, peer group, and school service facilities, must be provided for them. In fact, environmental conditions must be provided with a minimum limitation for individuals with autism. School is the first environment in which children have the opportunity to make friends based on relatively common goals. However, as one of the main characteristics of individuals with autism is a lack of skills in communication and social interactions, it is difficult for individuals with autism to form relationships with their peers and teachers. Most children with autism are unskillful in the process of making friends and following the rules of friendship, and are therefore ignored by their peers. In addition, according to theory of mind (Baron-Cohen 2000), individuals with autism have difficulty analyzing their audience's verbal and nonverbal behaviors, as well as understanding complex ironies, proverbs, and interactions. With this in mind, intervention programs should be implemented to assist these children in communicating effectively with their peers and teachers.

For example, Ali is a third-grade autistic student. Many of his classmates are reluctant to communicate with Ali because he does not participate in group games and is not willing to

share his food with others because of his poor social skills. All of his classmates agree that Ali is a stingy individual and would leave him alone during the break. To show him the right course of action, they would distribute food among themselves, but Ali also ignored this. This defective behavior chain, as well as the lack of attention on Ali's part to the feelings of his peers, leads to Ali's rejection by his classmates. Therefore, one of the basic actions of the liaison teacher and class teacher is the correct placement of the child with autism with other children with autism.

In addition to the above issues, a lack of sensory integration can be one of the key barriers to the autistic individual's education. Sometimes a child with autism loses useful time in class because of emotional problems caused by sensory overload, which can lead to academic problems. Teachers are in an important position to learn the child's sensory issues, and can work to assist the child in overcoming these learning barriers. Children that fall in the level one category and are learning in an inclusive education environment can aim to work with their sensory problems in times of emotional distress, and then ask for help.

The normal school environment should be ready to accept the individual with autism. Providing a safe and stress-free environment for the child with autism can improve the individual's condition. One of the things that can help is the peers' awareness of the behavioral crisis and the sensory turmoil of the individual with autism. Peer awareness of the child's autistic status causes fewer irrational reactions to the individual and, with empathy and cooperation, helps the child with autism overcome these emotional and behavioral crises.

For example, Taha, a fourth-grade autistic student at a regular school under inclusive education, suffers from a severe lack of sensory integrity in his senses of smell and taste. He goes into crisis with the slightest agitation and constantly hits his head on the table in times of distress. Taha's behavior frightened his classmates and disrupted the order of the classroom to the extent that the teacher prevented him from entering the classroom, which deprived Taha of

classroom education for a month. With assistance from his parents, Taha was able to learn to manage this behavior and to express himself in simple language. When Taha returned to the classroom and faced this intense emotional distress, he would show a red card to the teacher and classmates, announcing that he needed help and was on the verge of emotional distress. The class teacher prepared a pillow for him to hit his head on. After two months, Taha's challenging behavior was completely controlled, and not only did negative feedback from the teacher and peers' decrease, but more students volunteered to help him. Taha's case highlights the need for peers and teachers to approach the child with empathy and have correct information about the characteristics of an individual with autism. Individuals with autism sometimes have difficulty in reading, writing, and calculating. It needs to be carefully considered whether the child has these problems simply because of the characteristics of the autistic disorder or whether they suffer from accompanying disorders.

Proper diagnosis allows specialists to determine appropriate educational strategies and prevent the child from missing valuable education time. It is important to note that any type of diagnosis should be made solely for the purpose of further assisting the individual with autism and paving the way for his or her education. Therefore, if an individual with autism can acquire the necessary academic and behavioral skills in primary school, they have a good chance of being successful in later educational phases as well as adulthood.

10.8 The Challenges Faced by the Family and the Individual with Autism in Adolescence and Puberty

Around the world, adolescence is known as a period of significant change, with the individual facing many novel mental and physical challenges. Additionally, in the transition from childhood to adulthood, adolescents seek to find

their own individual identity, which can present new challenges for everyone within their family unit (Mandy et al. 2016). This time is challenging for even the most mentally healthy individuals, so it is unsurprising that teenagers diagnosed with autism face even more obstacles as they traverse through adolescence.

One of the most confusing challenges for the adolescent with autism is puberty. Many individuals diagnosed with autism struggle when there are changes to their environment or self, and there are many during this phase. It is important that adolescents with autism learn about their physical, sexual, and emotional changes before, during, and after puberty. Adolescents with autism should be aware of the physical changes that occur in their body so that they do not become confused and distressed by these changes. Training in self-protection skills, crisis management, and sexual health should be considered, especially for girls with autism. They should also be informed of the potential dangers of various forms of sexual and physical abuse.

Family members play a key role in educating their teen on these matters, and should consult with professionals throughout the process. The family needs to have correct and appropriate answers to the questions asked about autism in adolescence to best support their teen.

Unfortunately, due to the poor social skills of individuals with autism, cases of sexual and physical abuse from their peers have been reported (Hannah and Stagg 2016). An adolescent with autism should be educated on how to talk about sexual issues, avoid situations that may lead to abuse, and express appropriate sexual thoughts and behaviors. In addition, autistic teens, like normal teens, should be encouraged to make lasting friendships and have a good way to spend leisure time.

Many teenagers with autism find they have a growing interest in becoming independent, and spending more time outside of the home. However, unstructured and unsupervised time requires life skills that individuals with autism may not possess. Therefore, family members are encouraged to schedule leisure time outside the home, but under supervised conditions, such as

art classes or guided nature walks. Both fun and safety can be integrated into any activity for the individual (Walton 2019). Another challenge during adolescence for individuals with autism is the sometimes overwhelming amount of lessons and educational material. For most children, lessons on social and life skills diminish during adolescence. During adolescence, however, an individual with autism continues to learn these skills in addition to difficult school lessons, often given by multiple teachers on multiple disciplines. The more the autistic adolescent's educational program is tailored towards becoming more independent and the individual acquires more communication and interaction skills, the easier it will be to face life challenges, such as living and working independently.

10.9 Readiness to Move on to Professional and Career Life

For adults with autism spectrum disorder and their families, graduating from school and entering adulthood is a confusing time, fraught with many unknowns. Gaining independence in all areas of life is the ultimate goal of the training that an individual with autism receives from diagnosis to the end of their life. One of the most important steps in breaking an autistic individual's dependence on family is gaining financial independence through employment (Carter et al. 2012). Research has shown that social problems, society's attitude towards individuals with autism, education level, family support, access to services, and motivation of the disabled individual are the most important factors in predicting their employment status. Unfortunately, few individuals with autism spectrum disorder enter the job market, and those who do often need help throughout the employment process (Chen et al. 2015).

After high school, few individuals with autism attend university. If they do, they often need additional support from their families and the university. Others are able to enter the semi-professional job market directly from high school (Ohl et al. 2017). As many individuals have special talents that they can apply in the job market, families should monitor and promote these talents to help the child succeed professionally. The family and intervention team collaborating to understand the individual's abilities and weaknesses can help them make realistic decisions about their career. For other individuals who cannot live independently and enter the job market, the most important aim for family and intervention team is providing rich intervention services to obtain greater autonomy for them.

Additionally, the need for public awareness and social support should not be overlooked. Government and supporting agencies hold responsibility to create conditions for individuals with autism to enter society as effective members as well as social assets, and to use the same facilities as mentally healthy individuals. The United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals, as part of their 2030 Goals for Sustainable Development, emphasize the importance of decent work for all. While individuals with autism do face additional barriers to living and working independently, the goals of the SDG suggest countries need to put forth the resources to remove these barriers.

10.10 Main Aspects in the Inclusive Education of Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Creating and maintaining the right conditions for an individual with autism is not without its challenges, however it is possible to include individuals with autism in the inclusive education system. With more acceptance and understanding of the individual differences of persons with autism, these individuals can enjoy an increased quality of life. In the following, we will look at some of the key aspects of inclusive education for individuals with autism.

10.11 Acceptance, Responsibility, Effective Action, and Communication for Individuals with Autism

Arshia is a third-grade student. His hallmark traits are aggression during emotional distress, as well as exacerbation of echolalia in anxious situations. The exhibition of these symptoms has caused his parents to encounter many problems in enrolling their child in regular schools. The school's ignorance of his condition made his school attendance conditional until he was referred to a specialist for further examination at the insistence of the school's teachers and staff. The child has mild autism (level one) and is currently enrolled in the inclusive education environment.

It can be said that accepting individuals with autism by regular school staff as well as other students is one of the most difficult stages of their educational placement. Both the physical and psychological acceptance of the individual is crucial for the student's success. The physical acceptance of these individuals denotes that the teachers, staff, and students accept the student's physical presence in the classroom and all school educational and training programs. Psychological acceptance suggests that teachers and students do not merely tolerate the student, but fully accept and support the individual with autism (Goodall 2018). Accepting individual differences, relying on strengths, and avoiding exaggerating the weaknesses of individuals with autism can provide the right conditions to improve their educational and social lives. The individual's family often has a close relationship with school staff and teachers in order to assist with changes in the classroom.

10.12 Parental Involvement in the Inclusive Education of an Individual with Autism Spectrum Disorder

The family members of the individual with autism are the most important supportive factor, assuming the family takes initiative in helping the child. Collaboration between the family and the school is essential, because firsthand parental knowledge of the child's needs and abilities can assist the teacher in structuring a more supportive learning environment for the child. Some parents play a variety of roles in classroom programs, including coach, supporter, and participant. These roles are helpful to their child's educational experience, but should be balanced to allow the other students in the class to thrive as well.

10.13 Peer Participation in Inclusive Education for Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder

The child with autism can face a number of negative consequences when their peers do not accept them, including bullying and ostracization. Both teachers and parents have an important role to play in facilitating an accepting environment for all students. Establishing friendly and cooperation-based relationships with peers helps the individual with autism greatly improve their communication skills. It is important for other students to accept the individual differences and character traits of the individual with autism. Acceptance can result in a feeling of responsibility for the individual to feel as though they are an equal member of the classroom (Matthews et al. 2020).

10.14 Involvement of Regular School Teachers in the Inclusive Education of Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Autism-informed teachers and staff are critical in order to support the child throughout their educational journey. If the teacher is ignorant to the challenges of autism, they will often fail to create an inclusive environment for the child. When this occurs in early education, the critical formative years of his/her education are lost. Therefore, teachers should be trained prior to receiving a child with autism into their classroom, and support should be given to the instructor. The liaison teacher should suggest suitable educational approaches for individuals with autism available to the regular teacher so that he or she has fewer teaching difficulties. The active participation of the regular teacher in the education of a child with autism is one of the key areas of inclusive education that should be given special attention.

10.15 Physical Aspects in the Inclusive Education of Individuals with Autism

According to the rules of inclusive education, an environment with the least restrictions should be provided for the individual with special needs. In this regard, the presence of an individual with autism in regular schools requires the provision of a series of facilities and prerequisites. The physical and mental environment of the school must be adapted in various ways and be ready to accept the individual with autism. Discussion on this topic is very broad, but the most important topics are noted here.

10.16 Environmental Adaptation (Environmental Adjustment and Environmental Simulation)

Adaption of the physical environment is one of the key factors that needs to occur for an individual with autism to attend regular school (Altenmüller-Lewis 2017). While the whole-school environment cannot be changed, some conditions can be adjusted and simulated for the individual with autism. For example, a quiet resting room or crisis room can be made available for the child to use whenever they are fatigued or in distress. A number of items that pacify an individual at home can be moved to this room. For example, in his childhood, Mohammad hugged a soft red blanket in times of emotional distress, and the liaison teacher set the blanket in the room to simulate calm conditions for him. Also, the child's bench in the class should be in a place where there is adequate light and sound. Other students should be made aware that the child may need to use this room, so bullying or judgment does not occur.

As most individuals with autism suffer from sensory problems, crowds and activity during break times can often be overwhelming. To lessen the impacts of these times, the teacher can release a child from the classroom a few minutes early where they can meet with a caretaker or teaching assistant and find a quiet spot. In addition to teaching class rules to the child and encouraging them to follow these rules, the educational schedule and the child's presence in the classroom should be flexible so as not to cause fatigue and disinclination to the child. By role-playing, parents and intervention teams need to create the right conditions for the child to use these strategies when needed. The need to secure

and monitor high-risk areas of the school, such as stairs, backyard areas, and toilets, should be kept in mind. In addition, the school's sanitary services, including valves, doors and door locks, and the drying system must be properly and accessibly placed so that the individual with autism can use them independently. In general, the classroom and school space should be properly designed and secured so that the child can use the school facilities with the least concern and alongside all the other students.

10.17 Adaptation of Textbooks, Educational Materials, and Exam Materials

Preparing an environment with the fewest restrictions and adaptations also includes textbooks, teaching materials, and exams (Cai and Richdale 2016). Sometimes it is necessary to have books with thicker fonts or less complexity for the individual with autism, or textbook material can be recorded in an audio format.

Educational aids, especially if acquired with the child's own participation, will greatly help the child to understand lessons. Especially in primary school, the use of tangible and practical teachings is recommended. The child with autism must have a clear understanding of the material through direct manipulation and experience with the tools. For example, preparing a visual lesson plan or planning book is one of the educational requirements for individuals with autism, as it can teach the child what to do at any given time and reduces confusion.

When possible, individual examinations and assessments should be given to the child away from additional stimuli. Other comorbid disorders, such as ADHD or other learning disabilities, can also have a negative effect on the child's performance. The purpose of the assessments

should be to determine the child's educational level and also to determine the next steps in their educational programs.

10.18 Holding Training Courses for Regular School Teachers

With the increasing number of individuals diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder, the need for regular teachers to become more familiar with the inclusive education system is becoming more apparent. In this regard, training courses should be prepared containing familiarity with autism spectrum disorder, its various types and levels, appropriate educational strategies, and educational ups and downs of these individuals. Informing staff of regular schools has its challenges, but without proper information, the child will struggle in their education (Stahmer et al. 2018). Familiarity with the teaching methods specialized for individuals with autism is one of the key training courses that regular teachers need. It is not expected that these methods will be used entirely by the teacher, but they can pave the way for special teaching techniques. They should also be informed about the behavioral and mood characteristics of individuals with autism to accept and maintain the presence of the individual in the classroom.

10.19 Providing Practical Solutions for Inclusive Education for Individuals with Autism

Despite the general characteristics of individuals with autism, there exists a large range of individual differences between them, so classroom solutions must be tailored to that specific individual. However, a number of general tactics have had positive effects on the education and

placement of these individuals in regular schools, which are briefly outlined here.

10.20 Forming Support Groups Among Students

Observational learning and creating empathy between students and the individual with autism is a key strategy in inclusive education. The formation of support groups contributes to the participation of the individual with autism in classroom programs and improves the level of their interactions and communication, while also promoting a sense of empathy and self-worth among other students (Schulze et al. 2018).

In these groups, the child with autism receives positive support from their peers through additional opportunities to learn from and interact with others. Observational learning also causes the individual with autism to learn many things without the direct intervention of the teacher, which can prevent waste of time and the forming of a negative view of them. An important issue in educating individuals with autism is to teach them by imitation and observational learning. Such individuals often do not incline to participate in group activities and classroom work, so that observation and imitation help them to learn skills that are not so complex. Observational learning requires the coordination of cognitive functions and the processing of social information, if a person's performance is enhanced in cognitive skills and social interaction, observational learning can be expected to help these people (Foti et al. 2019).

10.21 Forming a Counseling Center Among Regular Teachers

Forming a counseling center for regular teachers is one of the essential steps that must be taken by the liaison teacher and school counselor. Information should be provided in the form of brochures and lectures, holding question and answer sessions and role-playing sessions, and video presentations for teachers to fully understand the characteristics of an autistic student (Lindsay et al. 2014). Updated and realistic information about this disorder should always be made available to regular school staff. It should not be forgotten that the education of an individual with autism should be in the form of a collaborative work consisting of a regular teacher, liaison teacher, counselor, family, and school staff. Coordination between these individuals is strengthened through a counseling center.

10.22 Correcting Misconceptions About Individuals with Autism and Avoiding Labeling (Stigma)

Occasionally, misconceptions or exaggerations of the problems of individuals with autism can lead to their being rejected and labeled by both teachers and students. Accurate and unbiased information helps these individuals significantly, so misconceptions about their abilities and weaknesses need to be corrected. Expectations of the individual with autism at level one should be at exactly the same level they are, and their education and intervention programs should be tailored to their strengths and weaknesses.

Labeling by peers and sometimes school staff leads to discriminatory behaviors towards the individual. Even seemingly positive labeling, such as overemphasizing a talent through terms like savant or genius, puts pressure on the child and creates "other-ness" in the classroom. It is clear that accurate information is the best way to prevent misinterpretations and unrealistic expectations, as well as to avoid labeling individuals with autism spectrum disorder. Furthermore, efforts should be made to view the child as a whole child, not as their disorder.

10.23 Holding Half-Time and Full-Time Parallel Classes for a Child with Autism

Because of the comprehension and communication problems they face, most individuals with autism need additional instruction to make it through their educational program. One suggested solution for the individual with autism is to take parallel or full-time classes, so that the child attends compensatory classes after school and reviews all the lessons with the help of the liaison teacher. Lessons can be planned in such a way that the child is involved in the exercises at all times, which can be done in the form of games or formal teaching. The family has to deal with the child's extra learning time until that the child has a relative mastery of the educational material, and in this regard, parallel and full-time classes can help the individual learn the material on the same timeline as their peers. However, given the additional time and effort needed to learn the material, parents and teachers should be aware of the child's limits.

10.24 Presenting Educational Programs at Home in Line with Normal School Programs

In addition to the parallel and full-time classes, the children's at-home educational program should be in line with the classroom teachings. By no means should there be a dichotomy between home and classroom instruction; a close relationship between the family and school, especially the classroom teacher, can help the child reach educational goals. Active parental involvement in the child's education is very necessary for children to be successful (Simmons and Campbell 2018).

10.25 Use of Special Educational Systems for Individuals with Autism in Regular Schools (Such as PECS and TEACCH), Necessity of Using Images and Visual Guides

There are various and practical methods in educating individuals with autism, but these methods are not expected to be used in regular schools because they require special facilities and equipment. These tools, however, can help inspire further educational material and methods. For example, Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), or constructivist learning (TEACHH), can be used to improve the individual's visual communication and spoken language. Visual symbols and guides can be used to improve a child's understanding and lead them to greater independence (Lai et al. 2013). Preparing an illustrated lesson plan, using reward-punishment cards, presenting different pictures of different parts of the school to the child, and simplifying the content of books, can help the child to recognize different parts of the school. When available, these assistive methods should be explained to peers and school staff to prevent labeling and unusual viewing of the child with autism.

10.26 Assessing Student Performance and the Level of School Cooperation, Modifying the Curriculum, and Providing New Solutions

The goal of educating an individual with autism in a regular school under inclusive education is to meet the school's education goals under a principled and fair evaluation, and to use existing

facilities like others. Therefore, student performance should be measured carefully and without any bias with the goal of improving their condition (Klug et al. 2018). Among the key issues that should be considered in measuring a child's performance are the child's strengths and weaknesses, their progress in academic and social skills, the level of cooperation of regular school staff and teachers, and shortcomings and how to address them. A principled and scientific assessment will correct the shortcomings of the curriculum and also put into place more effective solutions, and will help the liaison teacher and the family to facilitate the best conclusions for the student.

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Abbas Abdollahi is an assistant professor and faculty member at the Department of Counselling, Faculty of Education and Psychology, Alzahra University, Tehran, Iran. He is the associate editor of the Journal of School Psychology International.

Nastaran Ershad is a PhD student in the field of psychology and education of exceptional children at the Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran, Iran. She has had highly practical experience in the treatment of individuals with autism spectrum disorder.

LGBTQ Relationships and Sex Education for Students

11

Lefteris Patlamazoglou and Panagiotis Pentaris

Abstract

In this chapter, we focus on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning (LGBTQ) students in primary and secondary education. Diverse identities of gender and sexuality are realised primarily during adolescence, however sex education features sparsely in the curriculum of primary and secondary schools and is prominently influenced by heteronormative and cisgender ideologies. As such, LGBTQ students are at high risk of experiencing social exclusion and being exposed to discriminatory attitudes and victimisation within the school environment and the broader community. The increasing popularity of social networking sites among adolescents and the growing representation of sexual and gender diversity in popular culture over the past decade have enabled novel avenues of relationships and sex education (RSE) for LGBTQ young people. Through a critical review of the literature, we highlight the benefits and challenges of RSE through formal (school) and informal contexts (social media) for LGBTQ students. We identify gaps in the relevant literature and explore suggestions for further research in LGBTQ-inclusive RSE. We conclude the chapter by discussing the practical implications of the extant literature for LGBTQ-inclusive relationship and sex education for policymakers and educators.

11.1 Introduction

Education is paramount for any society, while its functions remain key to maintaining structured, culturally coherent and peaceful living environments. The United Nations' report on education emphasises that the institution of education reduces inequalities and contributes to peace-making in society (United Nations 2020). In his address at the *Education Reform Summit 2015*, Minister Nick Gibb in the United Kingdom stated that it is the ideal of delivering a fairer society that drives change in the curriculum and institutional structures (Department for Education 2015).

This said, education and its role in the lives of learners are more than simply providing new knowledge. Education contributes to human growth and development on the whole, with the

L. Patlamazoglou (✉)
Monash University, Melbourne, Australia
e-mail: lefteris.patlamazoglou@monash.edu

P. Pentaris
University of Greenwich, London, UK

aim to facilitate the development of values and morality in society (Durkheim and Sartre 1956). Shukla (2004, p. 6) argued, "When we talk of developing values among our children, we emphasise on the effective objectives of education, i.e., the development of the social, moral, aesthetic and spiritual sides of man's personality". In other words, education's responsibility includes the development of human values, balanced with the ideal of freedom in society.

Human values, societal ideals, aims, goals, common laws and structures are neither static nor one-dimensional nonetheless, which makes education's role more complicated. Education is in demand for constant change to ensure a balanced reflection of societal changes (Ottaway 1980), and across cultures (Leung et al. 2019). Education is a process rather than a momentary solution. If we want to envision an LGBTQ-inclusive educational environment, we need to integrate such values in the process of education, and not simply present the curriculum with reactive input. Jenkins (2017) alluded to a similar argument when questioning whether the agenda of relationships and sex education (RSE) is enough to meet the needs of young people in secondary education. A firm answer is not yet available.

This chapter recognises the tensions between fast-paced and ongoing societal changes and education's capacity to respond in a timely manner. Yet, the chapter is not exploring education on the whole but focuses on LGBTQ-inclusive education for secondary school students. The Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS) defines sexuality education as encompassing age-appropriate and medically accurate information about various aspects of sexual identity, such as sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression, human development, relationships, personal skills, sexual behaviour, sexual health management, society and culture (SIECUS 2019). By way of further introduction, it is necessary to identify that as education's role includes pastoral support and social education, RSE are part of it, too. The umbrella term personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education encompasses all of the above, providing a curriculum segment that facilitates non-mainstream topics for learning.

The inclusion of RSE in primary and secondary schools is fairly recent (e.g., only becoming mandatory in the UK in September 2020; Department for Education 2019), and understood in varied ways, too. This addition to the curriculum has not, however, been welcomed by all. It has been met with mixed responses from policymakers, educators, students and parents or guardians, as well as stakeholders from LGBTQ communities (Jenkins 2017). RSE contributes to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 4 (i.e., Quality Education), 5 (i.e., Gender Equality) and 10 (i.e., Reduced Inequalities), hence this addition is important on a policy and political level (United Nations 2020). Yet, when comparing this value-set with that of more local communities in a society (e.g., St. Albans in the UK city reacting to leaflets on sex education), a clash of ideals surfaces, one that is often linked with religious beliefs (Bijelić 2008; Clark 2001).

RSE has been informally undertaken, on the other hand, by often non-qualified or anonymous actors within and across online networking and social media (Reeves 2019). During adolescence, young people experience physical, hormonal and emotional changes, all related to forming and breaking relationships, establishing or exploring gender identities and sexuality, as well as responding to peer pressure in relation to the above (Chilman 1980). Social media nowadays have added a layer of informal education among young people; one which often takes the lead to facilitate a very important dialogue about relationships, gender identities and sexuality, on which schools need to place more emphasis. This chapter extends the dialogue about LGBTQ-inclusive education and draws generalisable implications for policy and practice in the end.

11.2 Sexuality, Gender and Formal Education

Adolescence is a critical period during which sexual drive increases, sexual values are explored and sometimes established, sexual and gender curiosity increases, and sexual behaviours are initiated (Moore and Rosenthal 2007). This process is convoluted, highly demanding and possibly energy draining, especially when combined with peer pressure, as well as mixed messages from the various institutions in society (e.g., family, education, religion) about sex, gender and sexuality altogether (Mollborn 2017).

LGBTQ-inclusive curricula are not a new need in education. Adolescent sexuality, or otherwise the exploration of sexual feelings, gender identification, hormonal changes during the pubertal period and body changes, has been scientifically discussed for over a century (Chilman 1980). Yet, societal limitations, inclusive of the disenfranchisement of the diversification of sexualities and gender fluidity (Pentaris 2019; Rahman and Jackson 1997), legislation and previously held values that wanted (and often still do) the concepts of heteronormativity and cisgenderism to dictate acceptance and inclusion (Johnson 2003) have delayed the action recognition. The ideology of heteronormativity determines that heterosexuality is the default, if not the only form of sexual orientation. Similarly, cisgenderism supposes that there is a normative relationship between one's gender identity and sex assigned at birth. Heteronormativity and cisgenderism categorise diverse identities of sexuality and gender as pathological, marginalised, objectified and often dismissed (Ansara 2015). Heteronormativity and cisgenderism foster discrimination, victimisation and marginalisation of diverse gender and sexual identities on the basis that they are considered "non-normative" or inferior. Such oppressions further complicate the mental health of LGBTQ people. Peer victimisation, bullying, and safety concerns within the school context have negative mental health outcomes for LGBTQ young people, such as depression, despair, stress and suicidality

(Mackie et al. 2021). On the other hand, a sense of school belonging and connectedness serve as protective factors for mental health. Meyer's Minority Stress Theory (2003) posits that this health disadvantage in LGBTQ people results from stigma experienced in relation to this status rather than identification with it, which, in turn, contributes to poorer access to health care and higher levels of stress. Social expectations may also become internalised and cause LGBTQ young people to experience shame and guilt due to the influence of oppressive ideologies on their belief systems (Herek 2009).

The delayed response to including RSE in the curriculum presents challenges that often deem it problematic (Jenkins 2017; Ottaway and Patel 2016). Ottaway and Patel (2016) opined that RSE in schools, both primary and secondary, remains inadequate. They argued that the key to effective education in this area is its high quality, one which is influenced by the structures in place, the educational institutions and their moral and foundational values, religious influence, personnel and the curriculum itself, among other things. However, of all the above, current practices appear to include the addition to the curriculum only (Burns and Hendriks 2018).

The lengthy absence of education from such matters, unless to regulate sexual behaviour (Stout and Rivara 1989), however, has resulted in a predicament situation when education decides to explore this area. Current educators in secondary schools have rarely received any formal training as part of their qualification regarding LGBTQ-inclusive curricula (Burns and Hendriks 2018; O'Brien et al. 2019), while new policies like the *Relationships education, relationships and sex education (RSE) and health education* (Department for Education 2019) are not necessarily guiding teachers how to implement RSE in the classroom.

Guidelines about LGBTQ-inclusive curricula are highly influenced by heteronormativity and cisgenderism (Steck and Perry 2018). Such guidelines encompass a clear identification of 'the other', but 'the other' is never the heterosexual or the cisgendered; it is a reference to

whoever does not fit into these classifications. This type of recognition, of course, is not necessarily what inclusivity suggests. According to Berlach and Chambers (2011), the concept of inclusivity remains highly contested but primarily led by legislation about disabilities when in the context of education. Inclusivity, in these terms, is not about tolerance or inferiority in the process; rather, it refers to full recognition, acceptance and equalisation, and it requires the actors to show humility and high value. Yet, on this occasion, when heteronormativity and cisgenderism shape up RSE in secondary schools, the curriculum runs the risk of being LGBTQ-exclusive (Steck and Perry 2018). To the contrary, there is a high risk of developing and sustaining further stigma, but this time in a subtle manner (Fine 2017; Palkiki and Caldwell 2018), and LGBTQ students are at higher risk of experiencing social exclusion and being exposed to discriminatory attitudes, behaviours and interactions within and beyond the school environment (De Pedro et al. 2018). The sexual behaviour of LGBTQ young people reflects high-risk behaviour that is placed within the target areas of LGBTQ-inclusive RSE (Meadows 2018). For instance, lesbian, gay and bisexual young people are more likely than their heterosexual peers to engage in sexual intercourse and have at least two sexual partners by the time they complete high school (Institute of Medicine 2011). Further, sexually diverse young people are more prone to using substances before encounters with sexual partners, thus engaging in sexual behaviour with likely reduced decision-making capabilities and hesitancies (Kann et al. 2016).

Young people in their adolescent years, especially in the first two stages (up until 17 years of age), are not well equipped to tackle inequality amongst their peers and in their communities. Therefore, the above-mentioned risks may also lead to an unwanted perpetuation of stereotypical and biased views and behaviours. Another reason why current attempts for LGBTQ-inclusive education are problematic is that current RSE curricula very rarely take into account LGBTQ youth with disabilities (Brown

2019). This is an important area for exploration, particularly as disability is the leading cause for education exclusion (Kirby 2017), let alone the intersection of disability and LGBTQ identities.

In this predicament situation, wherein the intentions for inclusive education and learning environments are noble. Still, the historical and consequential circumstances have prepared neither educators nor policymakers to adequately respond to the needs of young people in this area, social media and popular culture came to fill in the gap. The portrayal of LGBTQ people in popular culture (film, literature, music, books, etc.) has not only increased in the twenty-first century, but the biased and negative input has minimised (McInroy and Craig 2017), yet not eradicated (Waggoner 2018). Gender fluidity, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, lack of sexuality, are but a few of the concepts that have seen increased popularity in social media, while reflections of sexual and gender diversity altogether are present on popular media daily.

School students turn to informal sources of information and especially social and popular media to self-educate about adolescent sexuality and gender diversification (Reeves 2019). Sources like blogs and fanfiction websites are not evidence-based and may often be misleading. Hence, the risks associated with self-education about relationships, sex and health reproduction via the internet or other social media (e.g., misinformation and negatively impacted choices) need to be explored at length to build strategies that will respond to them adequately.

Schools constitute the primary source of RSE for students (The Guttmacher Institute 2020). However, RSE curricula are generally exclusionary of the LGBTQ populations by pathologising them and silencing their experiences (Gowen and Winges-Yanez 2014). LGBTQ young people in particular, feel excluded by the use of derogatory language in relation to their identities and the limited representation of sexually and gender diverse populations in the general curriculum (Formby 2011). An educational curriculum inclusive of diverse identities challenges heteronormativity and cisgenderism and promotes a safe and positive school

environment for students across the sexuality and gender spectrums (Snapp et al. 2015). However, the scope and depth of RSE vary between countries and schools. For instance, in countries with prominent and broad relationships and sexuality programs, such as the Netherlands, lower pregnancy rates, abortions and birth have been observed (Weaver et al. 2005). Students reported that sexual and gender identity issues were not regularly covered in RSE in the Netherlands (Baams et al. 2017). Further, having broader sexuality education and more topics addressed was associated with increased willingness to intervene upon witnessing harassment against LGBTQ students from teaching and support staff. Evidence from emerging research supports that extensive RSE contributes to raised awareness of sexual and gender diversity (Baams et al. 2017; Snapp et al. 2015).

Many school-based resources and RSE programs lack essential information that is inclusive of sexuality and gender development and health among LGBTQ young people (Kosciw et al. 2018). LGBTQ secondary-school students typically receive less comprehensive education about the development of diverse sexualities and genders and perceive RSE as primarily exclusive (Gowen and Winges-Yanez 2014). Moreover, LGBTQ young people are more likely to seek and access sexual health information online when compared to their heterosexual and cisgender peers due to limited alternative options (Mitchell et al. 2014). Informal online spaces offer a platform with novel opportunities for identity expression and sexual exploration (Lucero 2017).

11.3 Relationship and Sex Education Through Social Media

The wide availability of sexuality and gender information and user-generated content and the access to networks of LGBTQ peers afforded by social media may validate the diverse and possibly disenfranchised identities of LGBTQ young people as normative. The majority of LGBTQ young people wish to establish romantic relationships with others. However, they are faced with challenges in meeting potential partners who have openly disclosed their romantic sexuality within the school environment and physical places that they frequent (Mustanski et al. 2014). There is a limited number of potential romantic partners due to heterosexual and cisgender identities being more commonly encountered in community spaces and several LGBTQ identities remaining unexplored or undisclosed among young people. Consequently, LGBTQ people have few opportunities to practice and advance their relational skills during adolescence (Mustanski et al. 2015).

The role of the internet is becoming increasingly important for the sexual and gender identity of LGBTQ young people. Social media are used for various forms of learning in sexuality and gender identity development, as they enable young people to access LGBTQ content in order to gain knowledge, gather information and develop virtual networks with peers (Fox and Ralston 2016). Consuming peer-generated material affords young people the opportunity to connect with social media users with similar interests and concerns. Connections with sexually and gender diverse peers via social media may promote a sense of belonging and participation in the online community; however, there is a risk that such connections may be ephemeral, indirect and even overwhelming or toxic (Byron et al. 2019).

Social media are situated within a broader framework of informal education that has historically involved the interaction with peers and family members (Moore and Reynolds 2018). Online spaces surpass the boundaries of geographical location and offer users some anonymity that substantially increases the likelihood of developing romantic relationships for LGBTQ youth. At the same time, online spaces may present a risk to the healthy sexual development of users as some of the content may contain noncredible or inaccurate content (Mustanski et al. 2014). Sexually explicit material that is freely accessible online may also reflect relatable yet misleading notions about sexual behaviour, thus

promoting biased education about RSE (Arrington-Sanders et al. 2015). Anonymity provides LGBTQ youth with a sense of protection from gender and sexual stigma and facilitates their communication with peers and social groups which may be unavailable offline (Hanckel et al. 2019). The anonymity also enables social media users to adopt attitudes and behaviours that are not typically associated with their offline social roles (Connolly 2016). While exploring their sexuality and gender, LGBTQ young people worry about or experience stigmatisation due to their diverse identities (Mustanski et al. 2014). Hence, LGBTQ young people are apprehensive about seeking support from their social networks (Payne and Smith 2013). On the contrary, LGBTQ young people can explore genders and sexualities in the online sphere without fear of disapproval and judgement from social friends and family.

Online friends play a pivotal role in the social support of young people and especially the LGBTQ population. LGBTQ young people are more likely than their heterosexual or cisgender peers to develop friendships and draw support from online friends (Ybarra et al. 2015). The emotional support that LGBTQ people experience from online networks is also considered more valuable than the support they receive from in-person friends. Although online spaces generally cultivate an environment of safety for LGBTQ young people to socialise and receive support from friends, the rates of online peer victimisation and sexual victimisation are alarmingly higher for LGBTQ young people when compared to non-LGBTQ populations (Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network, Center for Innovative Public Health Research & Crimes against Children Research Center 2013; Ybarra et al. 2015). It is noteworthy that the perceived quality of social support from both online and offline sources falls short of decreasing the risk of victimisation among LGBTQ young people, who commonly report peer victimisation and sexual harassment.

Parents have the capacity to play an essential role in the identity development and relationships of LGBTQ young people. However, parents may be unaware of their children's diverse identities and needs or apprehensive about acknowledging them (Kubicek et al. 2010). Parental support may be unhelpful and even harmful when it is primarily influenced by heteronormativity or cisgenderism or is not openly inclusive of LGBTQ issues (Pearson and Wilkinson 2013). A natural outcome of limited parental involvement and perceived support of gender and sexuality development is that LGBTQ young people have fewer means of empowerment and mentorship. The limitations of physical spaces and inadequate social support and education about diverse sexual and gender identities from formal settings point at the internet and social media as viable alternative options.

Social media operate as an avenue for LGBTQ young people to explore diverse sexuality and gender identities in ways that are not readily accessible through formal education. As the nature of many offline environments is typically heteronormative and cisgender, learning about relationships and identity development from online sources involves a process of unlearning biased information (Robinson and Davies 2019). Online LGBTQ communities help young people review their previous relevant knowledge (Hanckel et al. 2019). The limited offline and formal sources of sexual health education motivate LGBTQ young people to search for relevant knowledge online. Research has established that LGBTQ young people are substantially more likely than non-LGBTQ people to resort to online sources of information regarding sexual health (Mitchel et al. 2014). There is currently emerging research to support the viability, acceptability and preliminary efficacy of online and multimedia programs of sexual health interventions for LGBTQ young people (Mustanski et al. 2015).

Social media enable LGBTQ young people to curate supportive spaces where they navigate their gender transition or disclosure of diverse sexual identity (Hanckel et al. 2019). In the past decade, young people have used the internet and social media to publicly and proudly disclose their diverse identities (Alexander and Losh 2010). This by no means suggests that LGBTQ

young people are less prone to unsolicited negative responses, victimisation or feeling shame (Varjas et al. 2013). By making strategic use of their digital literacy, young people negotiate potential risks, such as unwarranted public disclosure or forced outing of their gender and sexuality and exposure to heteronormative or discriminatory content. In this way, young social media users help develop networks that facilitate selective disclosure and support this process.

Before disclosing their diverse sexual or gender identities online, young people typically share LGBTQ-related content or express support for such issues online (Palmer et al. 2013; Fox and Ralston 2016). This implicit or preliminary self-disclosure allows LGBTQ social media users to gauge the reactions of their social network and establish an association with LGBTQ identities. Online self-disclosure usually precedes disclosure in social settings and generates a sense of sexual empowerment through connection to a community of peers (Duguay 2016). Self-disclosure within a safe and supportive online space promotes feelings of group membership, belonging and self-acceptance, which subsequently increases wellbeing and mental health (Hanckel et al. 2019; Naezer and Ringrose 2018). Such outcomes position online self-disclosure as a process of self-empowerment and a means of obtaining social support.

11.4 Implications for Policy and Practice

Striving for equity and inclusion in education should constitute part of both the values and goals of schools. Although goals represent specific tasks that motivate school personnel and students to advance their performance, and provide a measure of progress, values, continuously guide the principles and standards of behaviour. LGBTQ-inclusive and extensive RSE in secondary schools must be evidence-based and reviewed on an ongoing basis in order to challenge the varying iterations of oppressive ideologies, especially heteronormativity and cisgenderism. Dismantling oppressive systems

contributes to eliminating discrimination, inclusive of sexual orientation and gender identity, cultivating human rights and a culture of peace and non-violence and ultimately widening ethical practice in educational institutions and morality in society (SDG 4.7; SDG 5.2; United Nations 2020).

The broader impact of RSE extends beyond the school curriculum and climate, encompassing entire communities, policies and social laws. For RSE to be truly inclusive, emphasis must be placed across the gender, sex and sexuality spectrums to promote the health and wellbeing of LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ young people. In this way, RSE may be well placed to address the SDGs of social inclusion for all (10.2) and promote appropriate and inclusive policy (10.3; United Nations 2020). Student-driven learning increases the relatability of content and creates learning environments for all (SDG target 4.A; United Nations 2020). Students become motivated to engage with school material when they feel active contributors to the educational discourse (Elia and Eliason 2010). As the gender identities and relational patterns start to form soon after birth, age-appropriate elements of LGBTQ-inclusive RSE must be delivered as early as kindergarten (Meadows 2018). Further, the risk-taking involved in the sexual behaviours of LGBTQ young people necessitates that this population has access to inclusive information about fertility and aspects of safe sex, such as the use of condoms, birth control and sexually transmitted infections and diseases.

The impact of RSE may be amplified when it is informed by the theoretical framework of intersectionality. With its underpinnings situated within the feminist movement, intersectionality posits that multiple social identities interlock to create novel experiences distinct from their component identities (Crenshaw 2017). Such identities are defined by sociocultural privilege and power and are often based on one's race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, class and faith—to name a few. The lived experiences of students who identify with more than one diverse group are nonadditive and irreducible to the sheer sum of their original components. RSE should

recognise that the intersection of identities may operate as reasons for both privileges and oppression or exclusion. In the school context, for instance, the empowerment of transgender women of colour necessitates an RSE curriculum that simultaneously challenges cisgenderism, patriarchy and racism while also celebrating gender and racial diversity.

Teacher training is fundamental for sustaining and expanding the role of RSE in the school environment and the commitment to teacher training and adequacy (SDG target 4.C; United Nations 2020). The use of discriminatory and derogatory language in school settings perpetuates and augments the negative outcomes of heteronormativity and cisgenderism for LGBTQ young people. Teacher intervention in instances of sexuality or gender-biased name-calling or harassment not only decreases their occurrence but also provides a positive role model to students (Slaatten et al. 2015; Wernick et al. 2014). Nevertheless, teacher training about gender and sexuality inclusion and LGBTQ issues is generally limited and under-resourced (O'Brien et al. 2019). It is, therefore, counterintuitive to expect teachers to educate or inspire students about RSE when they have not received sufficient guidelines or access to appropriate resources.

11.5 Suggestions for Further Research

An overview of the body of literature on RSE illustrates several areas that are in need of further research evidence that will help consolidate, expand and perhaps reconsider the existing knowledge. Although RSE in formal education has received a considerable amount of research, the same is not true for LGBTQ-inclusive RSE. There is currently a paucity of research exploring the role of informal sources of RSE and identity development, such as social media and popular culture. There is also limited research on the factors that may motivate teaching and support personnel to intervene upon witnessing harassment towards LGBTQ students.

More studies are needed to investigate online sexual health education for LGBTQ young people beyond the scope of sexual and gender identity development. Interdisciplinary research that encompasses psychological, social, medical and educational perspectives is likely to provide a comprehensive understanding of LGBTQ young people's multifaceted needs and the impact of inclusive RSE. Additionally, longitudinal studies could shed light on the relationships between online self-disclosure and identity development over time, which would further inform emerging knowledge on this topic. Moreover, the extant body of literature will benefit from research with younger LGBTQ populations and comparisons between young LGBTQ subgroups.

The distinct needs of young people with diverse sexualities and diverse gender identities warrant researchers to explore these groups both independently and intersectionally. Studies that specifically explore transgender-inclusive RSE and the sexuality and gender development of transgender young people are presently extraordinarily limited in number. The theoretical lens of intersectionality, whereby several diverse identities multiply to create novel experiences of oppression distinct from their component identities, should inform future research to facilitate comprehensive explorations of LGBTQ young people's experiences.

11.6 Conclusion

There is sufficient research evidence to establish that RSE falls short of accommodating the needs of sexually and gender diverse students in the school system. Non-inclusive RSE poses a threat to health equity by perpetuating and augmenting the marginalising effect of the oppressive ideologies of heteronormativity and cisgenderism (Meadows 2018). On the contrary, LGBTQ-inclusive RSE strives to uphold *gender equality* (SDG 5; United Nations 2020) by progressively contributing to eliminating gender and sex discrimination within and beyond the school system.

As an outcome of the insufficiencies of RSE in school, LGBTQ young people resort to informal sources of support and education, while risking exposure to misleading content and harmful interactions. For the schools to remain the primary source of RSE for students and *reduce inequalities* (SDG 10; United Nations 2020) across the sexuality and diversity spectrums, policies and practices must adopt a comprehensive approach that is inclusive of LGBTQ issues and celebrates diverse identities. LGBTQ-inclusive RSE promotes a safer school environment for students and teachers who are informed on issues of sexual and gender diversity (Baams et al. 2017). Comprehensive RSE is a core component of *quality education* (SDG 4; United Nations 2020). It ensures that all students obtain the required knowledge and skills to promote sustainable lifestyles, appreciate diversity and, importantly, support human rights.

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Lefteris Patlamazoglou, PhD, is a counselling psychologist and lecturer in psychology and counselling at Monash University, Australia. Lefteris has worked with clients with issues relating to migration, grief, trauma and LGBTQIA+ identities. Lefteris has a particular research interest in the wellbeing, grief and belonging of LGBTQIA+ young people and adults.

Panagiotis Pentaris, PhD, is an Associate Professor of Social Work and Thanatology at the University of Greenwich, UK. Panagiotis has practised social work with dying children and adults, and bereaved individuals. His teaching areas include social work, loss, grief, religious literacy, migration, and critical and reflective practice.

An Inclusive Response to Students with Rare Diseases from a Community Perspective: The Importance of the Active Role of Associations

Zuriñe Gaintza and Leire Darretxe

Abstract

Ensuring an inclusive and equitable education for all students is a challenge that we must continue to address globally. Today, there is a wide diversity of students in schools around the world. In particular, one of the groups that requires special attention is that composed of children who have a rare disease (RD), a highly heterogeneous group that needs an educational response adapted to their academic, health and social needs, eliminating any contextual barriers in order to facilitate a more inclusive environment. This chapter—based on a study carried out in Spain—is concerned with the need to give a voice to children and adolescents with RD and their families to ensure good inclusive practices for their schooling based on their own experiences and opinions. What emerges from the results, unexpectedly, at different times and from different voices, is that the term "association" is central to this chapter, that is, its importance and role both for children and young people with RDs, and particularly for families. Following an analysis of the results, the study concludes that, due to the information they provide, RD associations are key to raising awareness about RDs in schools, particularly when it comes to promoting positive attitudes toward them among teachers and students. In short, in order to make progress in the educational inclusion of students with RDs, it is essential that the associations involved work together with the educational centers from a community perspective.

12.1 Introduction

In recent years, it has become clear that the world continues to be committed to inclusive and equitable education, as shown by UNESCO (2020) in the Declaration of Incheon of 2015 and the International Forum on Inclusion and Equity in Education held in Colombia in 2019. All of these international mandates highlight the need for each country to commit to transforming its educational system in order to comply with Sustainable Development Goals (López et al., 2020). Thus, according to de Haro et al. (2020) it is essential to identify the barriers to learning and participation in order to reflect on essential aspects that need to be considered to achieve

Z. Gaintza (✉) · L. Darretxe
University of the Basque Country, Leioa, Spain
e-mail: zuri.gaintza@ehu.eus

SDG number 4, that is, an inclusive, equitable, and quality education.

> Whilst these encouraging developments from around the world provide an impressive range of strategies to build on, they also reinforce the argument that context matters. Promoting inclusion is not a matter of importing practices from elsewhere. It requires an analysis of the situation in each country in order to identify and address barriers experienced by some learners (UNESCO, 2020, p. 15).

Therefore, inclusion is a central objective of the policy agenda (Azorin and Ainscow 2020), although, as Anderson and Boyle (2015) note, the way in which the term educational inclusion is defined can vary significantly between schools, districts, or even countries. As Beasy et al. (2020) point out when defining inclusion and diversity, care must be taken because of the multitude of interpretations of these terms. Thus, on the one hand, "there is no clear understanding of what inclusive education should look like, and therefore no consistent idea of what needs to be done to achieve it" (Anderson et al. 2020, p. 4) and, on the other hand, diversity, a holistic term, is an ambiguous and complex notion with numerous definitions (Messiou et al. 2020): (a) Diversity as related to specific groups of students; (b) Diversity as related to all; (c) Diversity as related to issues other than the learners; (d) Diversity as a problem; and (e) Diversity as an asset.

Given that diversity is such a wide and varied concept, there are several themes around inclusive education that school professionals formulate in their dialogues, covering thematic areas such as (López et al. 2020): (1) a school that welcomes and accompanies; (2) a school for all; (3) a school focused on the personalized integral development of the child; (4) spaces, materials and times designed for children; (5) an educational team committed, coordinated and prepared to respond to diversity; and (6) a school open to families and the community. Thus, and taking as a starting point concepts such as "Diversity as related to all" and "A school open to families and the community", the present study emerged, which, by focusing on children and adolescents

with rare diseases (RDs), aimed to develop an educational response adapted to the characteristics of such diseases, involving both people affected by RDs and their families in the process.

12.1.1 Rare Diseases

As noted by Wakap et al. (2020, p. 165) "Rare diseases are numerous, heterogeneous in nature, and geographically disparate." Overall, RDs refer to a heterogeneous group of chronically debilitating diseases that, in some cases, are life-threatening (Picci et al. 2015; Slade et al. 2018) and require long-term care (Cardinali et al. 2019). RDs affect at least 3.5–5.9 percent of the world's population, with an estimated 18–30 million people affected in the European Union and 263–446 million worldwide, and it is thought that this number is likely to be even higher (Wakap et al. 2020).

Because of its low prevalence and lack of interest, relatively little is known about the concept of RDs, making it difficult to understand the magnitude of what such diseases entail (Avellaneda et al. 2006). In fact, although research on people with RDs has focused almost exclusively on medical aspects (Ridao and Rodriguez 2016), even in this field, investment in research and development is scarce, with very little research devoted to RDs affecting children (Ali and Tubeuf 2019). It is known that approximately half of the cases occur in early childhood (Orphanet 2013) and that, in a study conducted in China, the frequency of cases of various diseases increased significantly between 2002 and 2011 in children aged between 3 and 14 years (Lin et al. 2013), which confirms their presence in schools. Thus, of the 7000 diseases catalogued as rare, approximately 75% affect school-age children (Posada and Groft 2010). Among the RDs affecting children of school-age are Dravet syndrome, Angelman syndrome, West syndrome, Prader-Willi syndrome and Williams syndrome. These, and many others, are medically difficult to diagnose, and are severe, chronic and highly disabling diseases (Palau 2012).

Due to their presence in the school environment, children with RDs, in addition to medical needs, also have educational needs (Garcia 2013) and little is known about the attention, care, or needs of these children in that context (Posada and Groft 2010). In fact, in the educational context, relatively little research has been conducted on children with RDs in the standard classroom setting (Darretxe et al. 2017), and therefore, in many cases, these children are invisible in schools. Furthermore, there are differences in the implementation of inclusive education policies across European countries. For example, in countries such as Germany, France or the United Kingdom, special schools continue to be an education option for this type of student (Linertová et al. 2019). The little research that has been conducted in this field indicates that, in regular schools, students with RDs have more complex educational needs than their peers who do not have such a condition, and it is therefore essential to offer appropriate educational support strategies (Han 2008). Subsequent studies have indicated that, in order to organize a comprehensive response, it is essential to take interdisciplinary and intersectoral approaches involving health and educational services (Paz et al. 2020). Or, as Gaintza et al. (2018, p. 250) point out, in relation to students with spina bifida (a type of RD), "It is necessary to work together, not only on the part of professionals in the educational context, but also between professionals from different contexts (educational, medical and social)". However, while children with RD can benefit from participation with others in a regular school setting, there are challenges for both the educational system and these children and their families (Paz et al. 2020).

In the case of families with a son or daughter with a RD, it appears that here too there are very few studies of these cases, and those that do exist "most often only relate to a specific disease under study, are largely based on small sample sizes, and are often limited to a particular country/culture" (Pelentsov et al. 2015, p. 476). This study concludes that, despite the various characteristics of the diseases and the different cultural realities, the needs presented by these families are universal. In general, the scarce knowledge about RDs at the medical level often causes a significant delay in diagnosis and subsequent treatment (Jonas et al. 2017) and, as a consequence, families associate the care of their son or daughter with significant stressors. These include the need to accept the diagnosis, the adaptation to new functions derived from the disease, the increased demand for time and the need to administer daily, sometimes uninterrupted, care to the son or daughter (Dellve et al. 2006), and yet a considerable psychosocial and emotional impact is generated (Kole and Faurisson 2009). Although the families of children with RDs live with great uncertainty on a daily basis, with frustration and concern about the course their child's disease will take (Fernandez & Grau, 2014) during their development, they "are concerned about academic achievement as it is relevant for their children" (Paz et al. 2020, p. 4).

Given these concerns, the present study aims to promote inclusive processes that include participants as active subjects capable of thinking and transforming their environment, in this case, their school context. This approach is supported by both the European alliance of organizations for rare diseases (EURORDIS 2017),[1] which aims to make the voice of RD patients and their families heard in those spaces where they receive services, using empirical research. In this regard, the research project INCLUD-ED (2009), *Strategies for inclusion and social cohesion in Europe from education* (2006–2011)[2] identifies successful actions that contribute toward academic success and social inclusion at the level of compulsory education and makes a clear

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[1] EURORDIS is a non-governmental patient-driven alliance of patient organizations representing 932 rare disease patient organizations in 73 countries. It is the voice of 30 million people affected by rare diseases throughout Europe.

[2] This is an Integrated project funded by the European Commission within the Sixth Research Framework Program, priority 7. For more information, see https://www.schooleducationgateway.eu/files/esl/downloads/13_INCLUD-ED_Book_on_SEA.pdf.

commitment toward creating participatory, egalitarian, democratic systems that include the voices of all people.

While the person who develops a chronic disease, is able, from a very early age, to examine his or her disease situation and learn from his or her own experience (Da Costa et al. 2020), many families come together in partnerships to collaboratively solve the questions that arise and the problems they encounter. At the international level, RD associations are numerous and have united to form larger organizations or federations to influence public policy, such as the National Organization for rare disorders (NORD)[3] in the United States or the European Organization for Rare Diseases (EURORDIS)[4] in the European Union. In the case of Spain, various RD associations comprise the Spanish Federation of Rare Diseases (FEDER in its Spanish acronym)[5] (Armayones et al. 2015). FEDER is an organization composed of children and young people with RD and their families and is committed to integrating RDs into the overall planning of general health care coverage, in line with the objectives of Agenda 2030.[6]

Thus, with the support of FEDER, the present research was initiated with the objective of giving a voice to children and adolescents with RDs and their families in order to identify, analyze, and make progress with regard to the appropriate educational response that should be taken to address the needs of these people in Spain.

12.2 Method

This study, an addition to employing the traditional paradigm that understands people as objects of research or as informants, focused on an inclusive research model (Parrilla, 2010) and in this sense, from a qualitative research approach, since, as already mentioned, children and youths with RDs and their families, that is, the research subjects, were given a voice and participated in the process.

Thus, with the main objective of obtaining information from the participants based on their perceptions, professional experiences, beliefs, and general experiences and opinions, the focus group technique was chosen, which, as the research indicates, is an appropriate technique, given the characteristics of the participants and the context being studied here. Thus, "The focus group interview is a technique for talking in a purposeful way with a select group of interviewees in order to gain insight into educational effectiveness" (Costigan 1990, p.127) and, furthermore, in the case of people with disabilities, it is known that focus groups favor inclusion, participation and empowerment (Barr et al. 2010; Cambridge and McCarthy 2001; Kaehne and O'Connell 2010). Therefore, from the beginning of the study, we tried to create an environment that would help participants to talk about their perceptions, ideas and thoughts in a relaxed way, in order to thoroughly understand the reality and experience of these participants in the educational context through their own voice (Krueger and Casey 2000).

12.2.1 Participants

In nine Autonomous Communities of the Spanish state, depending on their characteristics, participants were divided into two focus groups, that of families, and that of both children and young people with a RD (Table 1):

A total of 56 families participated in the focus groups, represented by 54 mothers and 5 fathers (3 of them accompanied their partner) and all of

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[3] https://rarediseases.org/.

[4] This is a non-governmental patient-driven alliance of patient organizations representing 932 rare disease patient organizations in 73 countries. It is the voice of 30 million people affected by rare diseases throughout Europe. https://www.eurordis.org/es/quienes-somos.

[5] The Spanish Federation of Rare Diseases (FEDER) was created in 1999 with the purpose of serving as the main voice of more than three million people living with some of these diseases in Spain. It is made up of non-profit organizations from any field, the aims of which include helping and promoting those affected by rare diseases http://www.horadeayudar.org/ongs/feder/.

[6] https://enfermedades-raras.org/index.php/actualidad/12104-trasladamos-a-pedro-s%C3%A1nchez-su-objetivo-de-integrar-las-enfermedades-raras-en-la-agenda-2030.

Table 1 Families and children and young people with a RD in each autonomous community

	Families	Children and young people with a RD
Andalusia	8 m*	–
Castile and Leon	9 m + 1f**	–
Valencia	4 m	1
Extremadura	3 m	4
Balearic Islands	6 m	4
Madrid	10 m (including 2 f)	2
Murcia	3 m	–
Navarra	4 m	3
Basque Country	7 m (including 1f) + 1f	9

*m = mother; **f = father

them with a son or daughter with a RD. The average age of these participants was 42.23 years (range = 28–56) and the average age of the sons and daughters with RDs was 11.27 years (range = 2–18). The RDs of their sons and daughters were highly heterogeneous, not only in terms of the degree of disability and the limitations they faced on a daily basis, but also with respect to the diagnosis (some families were still waiting for a diagnosis), the time of onset, and whether or not a treatment was available for the disease. Thus, these families included people with RDs such as; Ondine Syndrome; Prader-Willy Syndrome; Rubinstein-Taybi Syndrome; Klippel Feil Sprengel Syndrome and Apert Syndrome, among others.

The focus group of children and young people with a RD was composed of 23 people with an average age of 19.4 years (range = 7–41). All of the participants had studied or were studying in regular schools, both in a comprehensive and inclusive education model. As with the RDs in the previous group, the characteristics of their RDs were also highly heterogeneous, ranging from skin diseases such as epidemiological hyperkeratosis to, for example, Apert, Turner, Jourbert or Cushing's syndromes. It should be noted that not all communities had this focus group because, although there were minor and young patients in the associations, certain features of the disease made their participation difficult.

Given the characteristics of the study, which involved 9 Autonomous Communities of the Spanish state: Andalusia, Castile and Leon, Valencia, Extremadura, the Balearic Islands, Madrid, Murcia, Navarra and the Basque Country, a total of 25 researchers (5 men and 20 women) from the field of special and/or inclusive education from different public universities participated in this research project. These researchers were responsible for coordinating each focus group in their respective communities.

12.2.2 Design/Procedure

The researchers from the various universities contacted FEDER in their autonomous community to access the participants of the study, both families and minors/young people with a RD. The participants were selected, and initial contact was made via telephone with each community with the help of FEDER. Once their participation was confirmed, they were called to a preliminary meeting where they were presented with information about the study, including its purpose and characteristic. The participants gave their informed consent after being assured of the anonymity and confidentiality of the information provided.

Depending on the number of participants in each community, focus groups were held or, in cases where there were only one, two or three participants, individual interviews were conducted. It is

Table 2 Objectives of the sessions

Session 1: Who am I? A typical day in my life
•Getting acquainted with the group of people comprising the focus groups
Session 2: The Schooling Process •To delve deeper into the aspects that characterize the education process •To reflect on participant contributions / participation •To reflect on advice or suggestions for improving the school •To identify the most significant moments in their education
Session 3: Significant Persons/Changes •To identify the changes that they have experienced during schooling •To remember the persons who have been significant in schooling •To validate those good practices found in schooling
Session 4: What would the ideal school be like? •To identify what the ideal school would be like from the different spheres (support, professionals, family-school relations, objectives, methodology, evaluation, etc.)

important to note that one of the main characteristics of these diseases is their low prevalence (Litzkendorf et al. 2020) and therefore, the sessions varied slightly between focus groups and individual interviews.

For the focus groups, a total of 4 sessions were held, each of which lasted for approximately two hours. The groups met fortnightly and depending on the number and availability of the researchers and participants, the meeting took place at the same time for both groups, and at different times. The sessions were designed to focus on the educational field and covered various objectives (Table 2). One of the researchers assumed the role of moderator and with a semi-structured script facilitated dialogue and participation; while the other observed and took notes in a notebook. At the end of each session, a debriefing was conducted to summarize the main ideas. A subsequent session was held to triangulate the data in the report for the focus groups. All sessions were recorded with audio.

A semi-structured interview model was designed, which was divided into three blocks for the autonomous communities that did not have a sufficient sample for the formation of focus groups. The first block focused on general socio-demographic questions while the second block raised questions related to the first two focus group sessions, and the third raised questions from the latter two sessions.

12.2.3 Data Analysis

The recordings of the sessions were transcribed directly. Data analysis was conducted by the two researchers in each community. The data generated, both from the recordings and from the field notes taken during the sessions or during the interviews, were analyzed using the thematic analysis technique (Braun and Clarke 2006). The ideas gathered in the sessions were coded in brackets: first with the name of the autonomous community Andalucía (AN), Castilla and León (CL), Comunidad Valenciana (CV), Extremadura (EX), Islas Baleares (IB), Madrid (MA), Murcia (MU) Navarra (NA) or Basque Country (BC), followed by the focus group [youngster (J) or family (F)] and the number of the session in which the idea emerged. For example, (MA. F., S4) would be used to indicate that the idea was noted in the 4th session of the family focus group of the community of Madrid.

12.3 Results

Although the design of the sessions was focused on education in order to address different objectives and did not explicitly refer to patient associations, the role of these and their importance has been addressed in the various autonomous communities of the study. It appears that RD associations are a reality and a reference point for all participants, both for minors and adolescents with RD and for their families. There are many voices that, in one way or another, reflect on the role and importance of the associations including their work, their functions, or their personal or collective and community interest.

> The association is not important, it is essential (IB., F., S4)
> To know that there are people like me. Seeing children of different ages, seeing their projection in life. I needed to be able to talk face-to-face, without being pitied (PV., J., S2).

Thus, knowing and being aware of its importance, the families of children with RDs, regardless of place of residence or proximity, try to find and enroll in the association that most resembles the characteristics of their son or daughter's disease. This is a very striking reality, particularly in the case of the community of Castilla and León, since although all the families live in the province of Burgos, they are members of different associations with headquarters that are even in other autonomous communities such as Madrid, Asturias or Santander, quite a few kilometers from their homes.

However, although their importance is reflected in both focus groups, the voices expressed differ significantly between these two groups. Thus, while the voices of the families highlight the information or support provided by the association or its administrative role, the voice of minors and young people revolves more around their peers and focuses primarily or exclusively on the school context.

12.3.1 The Voice of the Families

In general, families come to the association to obtain information, learn, receive advice or exchange information about the development of their children, both with other families who are in a similar situation to theirs and with the professionals who run or work in the association:

> You need to know about other people, families who have been through the same thing, to know what is coming to you (MU., F., S3)
> I wanted to see children. I thought it was wonderful; I saw children walking, others not, another blind person… (PV., F., S2)
> You get information, resources, emotional support, counseling… (IB., F., S3)
> I have been able to get in touch with other families who have children with the same syndrome (AN., F., S5)
> They give you the guidance and information on the path you have to follow (NA., F., S4)
> They play an indispensable role in raising awareness, providing information, resources and programs (CV., F., S1)
> I have felt very supported, as far as the other parents are concerned, the same disability… any question has been addressed… a space to share (PV., F., S2)

In addition to providing information, the association, by the mere fact of contacting other families in a similar situation, also provides them with psychological and/or emotional support:

> The association has become a help, since, with the respite service created by the volunteers, my son has a day of home respite (IB., F., S4)
> They receive stimulation or attention from various associations (MU., F., S1)
> You see that you are not alone, that you are not the only one to whom it happens (NA., F., S3)
> It allows you to look out a small window at your future and that gives you emotional stability (PV., F., S2)
> My main psychologists were the mothers…. we supported each other (MU., F., S4)
> Talk a lot because it is important to talk. It is a therapy that is needed (IB., F., S3)
> It is an environment where you share feelings and needs that you would not otherwise, even with the family (PV., F., S2)

Seeing people who have been through the same thing (CYL., F., S1)

It was tremendous when I was with an older person with the same disease as my daughter and she told me, 'Don't worry, it's okay' (MU., F., S3)

They also consider that the associations "provide strength, at a collective level. It is not the same to go through this alone as it is to go under the name of the association. You have more strength" (IB., F., S4). Therefore, the association is a great help to them, not only through making contact with the school context and raising awareness of the situation of their children, but also by making demands or securing resources in other areas or other institutions:

From the association, solidarity campaigns are carried out and talks are given in schools (CV., F., S1)

Once the Association's psychologist went to the center to talk to the counselor and the teachers, she told them that it was mandatory to adapt the exams (EX., F., S2)

They are involved and collaborate so that medical research and educational innovation go hand in hand (CV., F., S1)

The association is the driving force behind being able to have that voice to say we are in this situation and to say let's make that change (PV., JX., S6,)

Through the association I requested a change of health center (MA., F., S1)

You feel more accompanied. You get contacts (MA., F., S3)

We belong to the association… I believe that together we will have more strength than when being alone (AN., F., S3)

Perhaps for this reason, in the different autonomous communities, it is believed that the associations should be the driving force behind their complaints to the institutions and play a more active role in requesting resources (personal and material), obtaining economic aid, raising awareness or simply providing better information:

When you have the reports, the demands of the families, it is not enough to publish them on Facebook, or Twitter, you have to go to the counselor on duty and say these are the problems and we want a solution now (MU., F., S4)

They should be more active (PV., F., S5)

They don't inform enough, with the amount of resources there are, with the social networks… (MU., F., S4)

But the association does not organize speech therapy, physical therapy or any event where the kids can be and do things together (AN., F., S3)

Despite their claims, the participants are aware that these duties do not necessarily fall within the remit of the associations, but rather that these should be the responsibility of the State's public administrations in order to ensure the fulfillment of the rights that these organizations establish and regulate. Therefore, in the absence of an institutional response, on many occasions it is the families themselves who create the association or become notably involved in order to "claim" the rights of their children:

I created the association of the disease with 5 people, I made it international and there are now 30 of us (MU., F., S3)

I have held a management position in the Prader-Willy Association (MA., F., S1)

We are one hundred percent involved, as volunteers, as representatives of parents of children with RDs, as delegates of associations, participating in the schools (CL., F., S1)

12.3.2 The Voices of Children and Youths with RDs

The young people believe that the work of the association is essential for them to become visible and to be known in the school context. They want more information about their disease, so that, on the one hand, their classmates know what is happening to them and can thus better understand why they display certain behaviors or have particular needs, and, on the other hand, so that their teachers are better able to adapt to the educational needs that they have as a result of the disease:

The role of the associations should be to help, to get involved in the methodology that is in the center working in collaboration... To have meetings with that teacher and that student (PV., J., S6)

From the association, informative talks are given by the schools (PV., J., S6)

> The association is essential for explaining our situation to the schools and providing them with information about the disease (CV, J., S1)
>
> It's good for children to see that there are others like them, others who also have a catheter (PV., J., S2)
>
> I have brought a didactic story for training in the schools, and photographs with the symptoms of the disease in my legs (CV., J., S1)

12.4   Discussion

Research on RDs points to both the lack of a clear diagnosis (Paz et al. 2020) and subsequent information about such diseases since knowledge about them in the medical field is scarce and disaggregated (Aymé et al. 2008). As a result, families with sons or daughters with RDs go through a long period marked by uncertainty and the search for information, and it is very important and helpful, as stated in the study by Litzkendorf et al. (2020), for these families to meet and talk to people who are in a very similar situation. In some cases, the families in this study were able to find an association of families of children with the same diagnosis. Sometimes this is close to the place, city or town where they live or can often be quite a few kilometers away, while in other cases the families begin the "titanic" task of founding an association named after their son or daughter's illness. However, for the families, these associations are a source of information, a meeting place, and an approach to the disease from the perspective of other affected people.

Thus, the role of the associations in the lives of the families, as, for instance, agents that aim to provide improvements, help, resources, presence, voice or, "awareness", are in line with, to a great extent, the functions of the associations as defined in Pino's study (2016) and in other studies conducted with RD associations. The need and search for information leads participants to the associations because, as stated in the study by Pinto et al. (2016), they offer information and support to their members, both affected people and their families. This support, is, above all, provided psychologically and emotionally, and is found by these families when they come into contact not only with the professionals of the associations, but also with other people who live or coexist with their same illness. As pointed out by Litzkendorf et al. (2020), contact with organizations satisfies more specific demands through self-help groups, issues that are not resolved by searching for information on the Internet. This is a reality that has already been found in a study conducted in Spain by Castillo et al. (2015), who concluded that associations are a very valuable communication tool for people with RDs, with peer support and interaction between people being the main reasons why they are used so much in that country and, undoubtedly, because of the active role that associations play in the development of policies and research projects on the diseases themselves (Moliner and Waligora 2017).

When analyzing the voices gathered in this study, it was observed that the voices of the families were more predominant than those of the minors and young people when it comes to mentioning the associations. This could be due to the fact that the sample of participants with RDs —in addition to being limited by the disease itself—was smaller than that of the families (49 people in the family focus group versus 23 adolescents). Furthermore, the voice of the young people was focused on the school context, on their visibility and awareness, while families see a variety of other roles in addition to awareness, such as bringing the demands of patient groups to the attention of policy makers (Choudhury and Saberwal 2019).

Thus, the voices of children and young people with RDs are primarily focused on awareness and sensitization, and in this sense, they consider it necessary to "be visible" in the school context by informing both students and teachers about what it means to study and live with a RD. It is known that, in order to advance in the inclusion of people with disabilities, it is necessary to develop actions that facilitate the visibility of the

disability itself (Giaconi et al. 2017). Therefore, RD associations, as stated by Rosales and Stolkiner (2018), focus on raising awareness of the disease in society by disseminating information in different contexts.

According to the research conducted on RD associations, it appears that the voices and opinions of children and young people are scarcely considered when designing studies, with families being those who figure centrally in the published works. Moreover, little is known about the presence of the associations in the school environment. Although Almendro et al. (2020), gave a voice to a group of young people with Duchenne muscular dystrophy, they focused on health-related issues and in the thematic scripts for the interviews no mention was made of educational concerns. Hence, in general, families experience a lack of understanding on the part of professionals both in kindergarten and in schools (Zelihic et al. 2020).

Although there are differences between countries with regard to the type of schools attended by children with RDs (Linertová et al. 2019), school is a major arena in the lives of all children (Johansen et al. 2013) and, unfortunately, as Choudhury and Saberwal (2019) point out, the education system in general is not geared toward meeting the needs of children with RDs. Therefore, both the families and young people participating in this study consider that the information and awareness raised by associations are of great importance in the school context because this allows for direct access to those people who spend the most time with students with RDs on a daily basis, that is, teachers and students.

Using associations to make schools aware of the realities faced by people with RDs implies making public the presence of the disease in the context in which the RD patient spends most of his or her time. Thus, by dealing with their fellow students when carrying out solidarity campaigns in the centers or by simply informing them, the associations give visibility to the student with a RD. Further, by informing and educating professionals (e.g., teachers, counselors, assistants) on the characteristics and needs of the student in

relation to their particular RD, their understanding increases and the educational response is more adequately adapted to the needs of their son or daughter, thus leading the way toward a more truly inclusive school. Thus, by overcoming the language of differences and fostering strategies for participation and learning, the associations assume a commitment to new and different ways of support for students that promote a positive vision of children and young with RD in the school context. A commitment that is aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 4 to *"ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all"*.

In short, by adopting this approach, teachers and students in the classroom will not only share a space with the child with a RD but will be more familiar with the reality of the disease with which he/she lives. This will lead to progress toward inclusion for two reasons: one, the success of the inclusive education of this student body depends on the classroom teachers implementing educational responses adapted to their needs (Van Steen and Wilson 2020) and; two, the attitude toward the group of people with disabilities is more positive when they are in contact with the person (in this case with the affected student) and they know him/her (de Boer et al. 2012; Siperstein et al. 2007; Slininger et al. 2000). In these cases, from the sharing of spaces, knowledge and understanding of the disease, the sensitivity, empathy and attitude of teachers and students without RDs increases. This positive attitude is one of the most important variables for successful inclusion: "teachers with a positive attitude toward inclusion provided all of their students with significantly more practice attempts, at a higher level of success" (Elliott 2008, p. 48) and "negative attitudes can lead not only to avoidance of contact with peers with disabilities, but also to disruption during interactions" (Grzegorz et al. 2020, p. 2). Perhaps this is why the voices of young people are focused on the need to inform so that, by virtue of the association's approach toward the educational community, positive attitudes toward RD patients can be promoted. As stated by Verdugo and Rodríguez (2008, p. 24) "whether inclusion translates into

success or failure will depend on the collaboration of different people at different levels of the system", and it is unquestionably the case that, at present, associations of people with RD represent a significant level within the system. There is no doubt that one of the key factors in promoting inclusive education is collaboration between families, schools and communities (López et al. 2020; Miller et al. 2020).

12.5 Conclusion

The present study shows that in the Spanish State, the families of children with a RD[7] are involved in associations that are affiliated with FEDER. These associations were formed with the objective of combining efforts to generate knowledge and research, gather and disseminate specialized information on the diseases, ask for resources, claim spaces, promote understanding and public awareness (to be known, to be visible) or to simply create a space in which to find company, advice and/or emotional support from other people who are in a very similar situation. Therefore, it can be concluded that the existence and work of associations for people with a RD is fundamental for both the people who suffer from these diseases and for their families.

Undoubtedly, the main conclusion of this study—conducted to make advances in the

inclusion of children with RDs in the context of ordinary schools—is the role of associations for people with RD. Through their actions in the school context, they have raised social awareness by developing positive attitudes among teachers and students toward those individuals with RD. The authors of this study consider that RDs should be perceived positively in schools, and that the associations have a fundamental role to play in the improvement of the educational system in terms of its social and educational functions by promoting the exchange of experiences and the transmission of values such as solidarity, empathy and awareness, along with more demanding functions such as ensuring the rights of all children, regardless of their condition. This conclusion requires two types of actions, on the one hand, it is necessary to design and develop educational policies considering the voice of all the actors involved, in this case the voice of children and young people with RD and their families. And, on the other hand, it is also necessary for associations to get involved and participate in the school creating alliances for inclusive education. Ultimately, it is essential that both schools and associations take responsibility for the commitment made by the 2030 Agenda to "leave no one behind" on the road to sustainable development and a fairer world, equitable and respectful of diversity.

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[7] The participants of this study are members of around 20 RD associations, organizations or bodies in Spain that are dependent on FEDER.CREER_ Centro de Referencia Estatal de Atención a Personas con Enfermedades Raras y sus Familias (CyL); ABAIMAR_ Asociación Balear de Niños con Enfermedades Raras and AEDM_ Asociación de Mastocitosis (IB); Berritxuak and ASEBI_ Asociación Bizkaia Elkartea Espina Bífida e Hidrocefalia (PV); D´ GENES, ASSIDO_Asociación para personas con síndrome de Down y AMDIB_ Asociación Murciana de Disfagia Infantil y Botón Gástrico (Murcia); GERNA (NA); FMF_ asociación de enfermos de Fiebre Mediterránea Familiar y Síndromes Autoinflamatorios (CV); Asociación Española del Síndrome de Williams, AEPMI_Asociación de Enfermos de Patologías Mitocondriales; Asociación Síndrome de Sjögren and Fundación Menudos Corazones (Madrid); ASIC_ Asociación Española de Ictiosis (VA); Fundación Alpe Acondroplasia (Asturias); Asociación Síndrome de Williams de Cantabria (Santander).

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Zuriñe Gaintza is a lecturer in the University of the Basque Country in Spain. Dr. Gaintza previously worked for eight years as a primary school teacher before entering the academy. Her current principle field of research is on schooling children with rare diseases in mainstream education; a subject she has published extensively in. Dr. Gaintza's pedagogical and research experience in many different schools has afforded a wide knowledge of the educational reality of the Basque Country.

Leire Darretxe is a lecturer and researcher in the Department of Didactics and School Organization at the University of the Basque Country. As well as her doctorate in pedagogy she also has a Masters in Special Education, and a Diploma in the Teaching of Early Childhood Education. She has also trained in a biennial course on educational psychomotor practice and specialization course in Early Care. Dr. Darretxe's research has deepened in various matters related to the field of educational and social inclusion, specifically in community action and vulnerable groups such as children in a situation of vulnerability, and people with rare diseases. She has participated in various research projects and various educational innovation projects. Dr. Darretxe has been a visiting professor in Spain, UK, Holland, Ecuador and Chile.

Who Belongs in Schools? How the Education System Fails Racially Marginalised Students

13

Hannah Yared, Christine Grové, and Denise Chapman

Abstract

This chapter examines school belonging in relation to students' intersecting social identities. Specifically, it explores how race plays out in school settings, as well as how schools themselves can be barriers to inclusion for marginalised students. Classrooms traditionally adopt one-size-fits-all approaches to respond to all students. One-size-fits-all practices fall short of inclusive education standards and can be harmful to students' well-being and their sense of belonging. This chapter also explores how racial identity, racial bias and racism impact students' experiences of inclusion and belonging at school. Finishing with suggestions for moving towards inclusiveness by including intersectional and anti-racist pedagogical practices that cater to the needs of all learners.

H. Yared · C. Grové (✉) · D. Chapman
Faculty of Education, Monash University, Clayton, Australia
e-mail: christine.grove@monash.edu

13.1 Introduction

The mention of race, racism or racial bias can evoke a polarising and visceral reaction from some people (Lund and Carr 2010), which can lead to the denial of its existence (Konrad 2018) or the assumption that any discussion about race is divisive (Modica 2015). Some people may also hold the misguided view that we live in a post-racial society and that race no longer matters (Konrad 2018; Ku et al. 2019). However, race does in fact matter (Byrd and Ahn 2020; Evans et al. 2017; Kohli et al. 2017; Udah and Singh 2018). Not in the pseudoscientific, falsified eugenics sense that racially discriminatory science has backed in the past, but rather in the socially constructed sense whereby societies around the world have created a racial hierarchy that situates whiteness at the peak (Carr 2017; Weiner 2012; Yancy and Davidson 2014).

In addition, there is controversy garnered when simultaneously discussing racial issues in relation to education or to children (Evans-Winters and Hines 2020; Patton and Jordan 2017; Swanson and Welton 2019). Education is hoped to be a great equaliser, providing equitable opportunity and a springboard to success for all students. However, there are various barriers within the education system that hinder the

achievement of marginalised[1] students and advance the interests of other students (Bodkin-Andrews et al. 2010). These barriers discriminate against a multitude of students such as those with disabilities (Duncan et al. 2020; Graham et al. 2016), neurodiverse students (Aubé et al. 2020; Cook et al. 2020; Starr and Foy 2012), students from the LGBTQI community (Gato et al. 2020; Nappa et al. 2018), refugee and asylum-seeking children (McIntyre and Hall 2020), and students from low socio-economic backgrounds (Goodman et al. 2012). The focus of this chapter will be on the experiences and barriers that racially marginalised students face in education.

This chapter is particularly relevant to the United Nations (UN) 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (United Nations 2015a). This ambitious yet necessary global call to action includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) targeting 169 areas, which aim to remove economic, social and environmental barriers and increase equity around the world (United Nations 2015b). The SDGs build on what remains unfinished from the 2015 UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (United Nations, n. d.). This chapter relates most strongly to the Quality Education goal. Examining barriers to education for marginalised students will provide avenues for intervention to increase equity and access to quality education globally. In addition, this chapter will indirectly impact all of the other

goals, particularly Poverty Eradication and Reduced Inequalities. The importance of education cannot be overlooked in providing a flow on effect that will assist in achieving these important goals set forth by the UN. Education is the cornerstone to change in all areas of economic, social and environmental growth—without equitable access to education for all, the UN goals will remain a virtuous yet unattainable endeavour.

13.1.1 Understanding Racial Issues

While there has undoubtedly been a growth in awareness and uptake of more inclusive pedagogical practices in schools, there are still steps that schools can take to support classrooms that are equitable and inclusive (Pang 2016; Santoro 2009, 2015; Santoro and Allard 2005). However, in order for educators and researchers to move towards racially inclusive schools that are also sustainable, an understanding of what race, racial bias and racism are and how they manifest is important. Race is a social construct with no biological basis (Smedley and Smedley 2005). Racial bias is a belief that some racial groups are either inferior or superior to others, leading to unfair evaluations about different racial groups (Hall et al. 2015). Racism involves institutional and systemic power that creates and maintains the superiority of certain racial groups over others (i.e. racial bias coupled with power structures) (Aboud et al. 2012; Kohli et al. 2017; Scheurich and Young 1997; Solorzano et al. 2002). Racism functions on various levels. Three such levels are: (1) systematic racism, (2) individual or personal racism and (3) internalised racism (Trent et al. 2019). Racial bias and racism can manifest in conscious or explicit ways (e.g. telling a racist joke) or in automatic or implicit ways (e.g. a teacher unconsciously perceiving students from some racial groups as more disruptive) (Dovidio et al. 2003). There is also evidence to indicate that as we age, our explicit racial bias becomes more egalitarian, however, our implicit bias remains stable (Baron and Banaji 2006). In addition, racial bias and racism

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[1] The terms *marginalised*, *minoritised* and *marjoritised* were used instead of terms like *minority* and *majority*. This is purposeful, with the aim of reflecting the social construction of active exclusion and subordination in a variety of institutions (e.g. education) (Harper, 2012). This chapter aims to acknowledge that these individuals are often not minorities in number, rather they have been minoritised by systems that other them and treat them as less than. Using systems-focussed language more accurately represents these systemic issues, as opposed to using terms like *minority* and *majority*, which focus on the individual/s. Focusing on the individual/s insinuates that issues lie inherently within marginalised groups themselves, rather than within the human-made systems that create barriers and perpetuate cycles of injustice for racially marginalised groups. Further, using terms such as *minority* and *majority* tends to perpetuate white-normative paradigms that situate whiteness as the norm for which everything else is compared or othered.

can have detrimental health and psychological impacts on certain racial groups (Priest et al. 2013). Therefore, while race is not biologically based, a racial hierarchy has been constructed whereby society is heavily influenced and impacted by the concept of race (Feagin and Elias 2013).

It is also important to acknowledge the intersectional nature of identity when discussing racial issues. Intersectionality highlights how multiple identities (e.g. race, gender, sexuality and socio-economic status) often coincide within individuals, leading to an accumulative effect when experiencing instances of discrimination (Crenshaw 1989; Trent et al. 2019). In addition to acknowledging these overlapping and interlinking identities, intersectionality aims to highlight the heterogeneity within groups and minimise homogenous assumptions (Bešić 2020). This avoids assuming that all people within a particular group are the same and highlights the diversity of their experiences. In the context of power structures, intersectionality also illustrates how individuals can be both disadvantaged and privileged at the same time. For example, a black cisgendered man will face societal barriers due to race, yet will be privileged in most contexts due to gender identity (Bešić 2020). Therefore, not all people from a particular race, gender identity, socio-economic status, are the same. They each have their own belief systems, views, experiences and identities. When considering intersectionality in the context of inclusive education, it is imperative to maintain a person-centred focus and an understanding that pedagogical practices need to be tailored to individual children and not to broad groups of people.

13.1.2   The Development of Intergroup Attitudes

Adults tend to underestimate children's capacity to engage in discussions around racial issues, resulting in an avoidance of these important conversations (Sullivan et al. 2020). However, children do notice race and are capable of engaging in these discussions (Rutland and Killen 2015; Yared et al. 2020). A critical stage of children's social-cognitive development progresses during their primary and secondary school education. Racial bias and racism do not begin in adulthood. They begin in infancy, where children hold the capacity to differentiate phenotypic variances between racial groups (Sangrigoli and De Schonen 2004; Vogel et al. 2012; Xiao et al. 2018). From here, bias begins to develop in childhood, persisting into adolescence and becoming solidified by adulthood (Rutland and Killen 2015). During children's social-cognitive development, racial bias develops concurrently as racial awareness (pro-social views) and morality are developing (Aboud et al. 2012; Dahl and Killen 2018; Dahl and Kim 2014; Raabe and Beelmann 2011; Rutland and Killen 2015; Smetana et al. 2012). Given that children are simultaneously developing prejudice and pro-social views, understanding how adults can guide children towards pro-social views and increase their racial literacy, is important. At present, adults tend to avoid these topics with children (Sullivan et al. 2020). However, avoidance of these topics does not necessarily stop children from thinking about racial issues and may lead to children developing incorrect and stereotypical information about different racial groups. On the contrary, having open, honest and age-appropriate conversations with children about racial issues, has been shown to decrease bias and increase pro-social views (Perry et al. 2020).

Collectively, current research runs contrary to the belief that "children don't see race" (Yared et al. 2020). Thus, given children begin school during a crucial stage in their social-cognitive development, how can schools impact this development to increase racial awareness and racial literacy? Can schools implement inclusive strategies that guide students towards pro-diversity and anti-racist views and away from bias? These questions will be explored in more detail throughout the chapter.

13.1.3 Racial-Ethnic Socialisation Potential of Schools

As well as feeling as though children are too young to discuss race, many adults feel as though social justice issues have no place in education (Freire and Valdez 2017). However, if social justice issues do not belong in the classroom, where the aim is to educate future generations to be well-rounded and intercultural human beings, then the question is—where do they belong?

Research has moved beyond the idea that children's greatest or only racial-ethnic socialisation influence stems from the home environment (Castelli et al. 2009; Hughes et al. 2009; Pahlke et al. 2012; Sinclair et al. 2005). Racial-ethnic socialisation refers to the process whereby children of all races navigate their understanding of diversity within race, ethnicity and culture, and how they come to learn about associated issues such as racism (Priest et al. 2016). Development of children's racial-ethnic attitudes and bias is complex and multifaceted (Byrd and Ahn 2020). Evidence indicates that schools are racial-ethnic socialisation spaces for students (Byrd and Ahn 2020; Hughes et al. 2009; Smith et al. 2003). Given that inclusive education is built on the foundations of social justice (Pantić 2015; Pantić and Florian 2015) and is embedded in policy (Ainscow et al. 2019), it is important to consider how educators can foster and cultivate the ethnic-racial socialisation potential of schools. Understanding these aspects will assist in building inclusive classrooms by ensuring that biased views are minimised and that educators have adequate skills to cater to racially diverse students.

13.1.4 Racial Exclusion in Schools

Children and young people experience racism in multiple facets of their lives. Given that schools are a microcosm of society, racism is also frequently experienced in children and young people's learning environments (Priest et al. 2014; Trent et al. 2019). Schools have been cited as one of the most common spaces children experience racism (Mansouri and Jenkins 2010). School exclusion on the basis of race is shaped by educational policies and practices that overlook minoritised students' knowledge and experiences, subsequently relegating them to the margins of the education system (DeNicolo et al. 2017). This is due to an education system which traditionally adopted a eurocentric "one-size-fits-all" approach when designing and implementing education policies, curriculum materials and pedagogical practices. However, researchers and educators have realised that the "one-size-fits-all" or "average" model of teaching does not adequately support the educational needs of *all* students (Godinho et al. 2017). A one-size-fits-all approach also perpetuates exclusionary paradigms used in schools that contribute to marginalisation such as, the illusion of meritocracy (Au 2013, 2016), deficit-thinking models (García and Guerra 2004), white-normative pedagogy (Yared et al. 2020), colour-evasive ideologies (Blackmore 2010; Bonilla-Silva and Dietrich 2011; Yared et al. 2020) and teacher biases (Chin et al. 2020; Gershenson and Papageorge 2018; Quinn 2020; Warikoo et al. 2016).

Meritocracy ignores the influence of systemic barriers (e.g. due to race, gender or wealth) and focuses on an individual's capability and hard work as their reason for advancing or not advancing in society (or in the classroom) (Au 2013, 2016; Flores and Rosa 2015). Deficit thinking models emphasise student weaknesses and situate them, and their cultural values, as the problem (Lichtenstein 2018). Deficit thinking models further entrench the illusion of meritocracy by blaming student shortcomings, as opposed to systemic barriers, for racial disparities in education.

Further, white-normative ideals tend to be privileged in classrooms (Yared et al. 2020). This occurs when colonial and eurocentric values are situated as the "norm" for which everything else is subsequently "othered" (Walton et al. 2014). This norming of whiteness and othering of non-whiteness can lead to the invisibility and erasure of racially marginalised students, especially those who are educated in predominantly white schools (Delpit 2012). Colour-evasiveness on the other

hand tends to be more subdued in its exclusionary potential. Colour-evasiveness occurs when there is an emphasis on amplifying sameness and minimising racial difference (Priest et al. 2016). This is frequently done by promoting messages such as "everyone is equal" when in reality this is not the case, nor should children be taught that everyone needs to be treated the same (Rizzo and Killen 2016). This messaging silences students' experiences of racism and does not consider the importance of equity, which subsequently perpetuates racial injustice (Neville et al. 2013; Rizzo and Killen 2016; Yared et al. 2020).

Each of these paradigms and teaching practices directly feeds into the "average" or "one-size-fits-all" approach by designing systems that fail to account for diversity that strays from eurocentric and colonial ways of thinking, as well as failing to acknowledge the barriers to achievement that impact many students (Griffin and Trudgett 2018). Exclusionary paradigms are further perpetuated with biases evident in teachers, school leaders and students themselves. For example, students from disadvantaged and racially minoritised groups are disproportionately likely to receive a disability diagnosis and make up the majority of those educated in segregated settings (Anderson and Boyle 2019; Cooc and Kiru 2018; Grissom and Redding 2016; Sweller et al. 2012). Students from racially minoritised backgrounds are also suspended and expelled from school more frequently compared to white students (Bryan et al. 2012; Graham 2018; Skiba et al. 2002).

A critical analysis of the reasons behind these issues is lacking in many articles and often perpetuates victim blaming and deficit-thinking models. In addition, attempts to rectify these issues often avoid focussing on bias or racism as being core facilitating factors (Kohli et al. 2017). Sidestepping the root cause results in the focus being framed as a problem inherent within the individual, rather than within the system itself. When delving deeper and applying a more nuanced and critical approach to these issues, a different pattern emerges. For example, studies have found that regardless of aptitude, teachers hold lower cognitive and academic expectations

for racially marginalised students, particularly Black students, compared to white students (Jacoby-Senghor et al. 2016; Tenenbaum and Ruck 2007; van den Bergh et al. 2010). This may explain the referral patterns that have led to students from certain racial groups being referred to special education at higher rates compared to their white peers with similar cognitive profiles. It has also led to minoritised students being excluded from gifted education programmes (Grissom and Redding 2016). Moreover, there is research to indicate that teacher expectations have profound impacts on student achievement in the way of self-fulfilling prophecies (Gentrup et al. 2020). Thus, teacher bias that fuels low expectations for racially marginalised students, may be hindering the achievement of these students. It should be noted that racial disproportionality within education is not a phenomenon with a simple or easy explanation. It is a multi-dimensional issue that should also account for cultural/contextual, historical and socio-political elements (Artiles et al. 2010; Harry 2002), as well as the complexity of intersectionality that may also perpetuate these inequities (Artiles 2013).

In addition, the language used to discuss these issues is important, as it is not possible to address issues that are not properly labelled or defined. Also, ensuring that inclusive language is used will subsequently ensure that the very systems put in place to protect marginalised students and increase equity within education, are not inadvertently contributing to their marginalisation. In this sense, it is not accurate to discuss issues of inclusion and equity in education as an "under representation" or "over representation" of students in particular programmes. It is also not an "under achievement" of certain students, it is not necessarily due to their cognitive abilities, or to their motivation. It is due, at least in part, to systemic racism and discrimination. We must move beyond discussing the "what" and move to understand the "why" and the "how". If we begin to look at why and how students are "under performing" or "under achieving" in classrooms, we will begin to shift our thinking and our language to reflect barriers to achievement such as

systemic racism. Once we correctly identify and label these issues, we can accurately address them.

Other examples of biases disadvantaging minoritised students are evident in disciplinary practices in schools. For example, racially marginalised students are suspended and expelled at higher rates compared to their white peers, even when the severity of the transgressions are similar (Bryan et al. 2012; Skiba et al. 2011). Further research has indicated that when matching student and teacher race, reductions in unfair exclusionary disciplinary practices are seen for Black students (Lindsay and Hart 2017). This is important to consider in relation to the demographic of the teaching profession, which is largely dominated by white females, particularly in western nations such as Australia and the United States (Forrest et al. 2015; Priest et al. 2016; Taie and Goldring 2017). Moreover, harsh disciplinary practices have consequences that follow students long after they have been excluded from school. For example, the "school-to-prison" pipeline has been documented extensively in the literature (Curtis 2014; Nance 2016; O'Brien and Trudgett 2020; Skiba et al. 2014). The school-to-prison pipeline reflects the notion that students who are disciplined harshly or excluded from school, are more likely to have contact with the juvenile justice system. Following each contact with juvenile services, the risk of engaging with those systems continues to increase (Motz et al. 2020). Exclusionary practices also result in decreased instructional time with teachers, which further amplifies achievement inequality for these students (Morris and Perry 2016).

A recent review of racism in Australian primary schools indicated that some of these exclusionary practices (e.g. white-normative pedagogy, colour-evasiveness and silencing) may be due, in part, to a lack of school leadership and teacher competency and confidence in dealing with racial issues in the classroom (Yared et al. 2020). Many educators were observed by researchers to lack competency in responding to the racial diversity of their classroom. Further,

the review found that teachers expressed a lack of pre-service and in-service teacher training and a desire to learn the skills necessary to support their diverse student population.

In addition to experiencing racism at systemic levels and from school leaders and teachers, students also report experiencing racism from their peers at school (Mansouri and Jenkins 2010). This supports research highlighting that school students have the ability to embody racially biased views and to act in racially prejudiced ways (Baron and Banaji 2006; Yared et al. 2020). This strongly challenges the notion that children do not see race. It also challenges the assumption that schools are always safe spaces for racially marginalised students. For many racially marginalised students, schools can be the opposite of safe and are often a space where they experience significant levels of racism (Mansouri and Jenkins 2010; Priest et al. 2019a, 2020; Yared et al. 2020). However, given schools are a collective hub, they also have the potential to embody an ethos of acceptance and anti-racism, which enables them to respond positively to student diversity and mitigate incidents of racism. When this occurs, both marginalised and non-marginalised students are supported as instances of racism are minimised and/or dealt with appropriately. It is also possible that this approach may help guide students towards more pro-social views and increase their racial literacy. Determining how schools can achieve the latter is an important step in the journey towards equitable and anti-racist education.

13.1.5 Impact of Inclusion and Exclusion in Schools

There are innumerable negative impacts that school exclusion can have on racially marginalised students. In contrast, there are innumerable benefits that school inclusion can have on racially marginalised students, as well as on other students. These positive and negative impacts will be discussed further in the following section.

13.1.5.1 Mental Health and Well-Being

In addition to negative impacts on academic achievement, experiences of racism have detrimental health implications for children, adolescents, adults and family units (Priest et al. 2013, 2019b; Trent et al. 2019). These detrimental health impacts can occur through direct experiences of racism, as well as through experiences of vicarious racism (witnessing or hearing about an incident of racism) (Mansouri and Jenkins 2010; Priest et al. 2014). This extends to hearing about racism experienced by family members (Priest et al. 2013). Direct and vicarious experiences of racism have been linked to an increase in loneliness, depression (Priest et al. 2014), anxiety, negative self-esteem and behavioural issues (Priest et al. 2013) for young people. In addition, racism in schools poses significant health and well-being issues for students (Priest et al. 2013).

In general, early life experiences impact various facets of later life such as educational opportunities, as well as social and health outcomes (Priest et al. 2013). Similarly, these early life experiences can have an impact across a multitude of levels from the individual to family units, communities and socio-political settings (Priest et al. 2013). As such, early experiences of racism in and out of school contexts can have implications that extend beyond the classroom and follow students throughout their lifespan. Although there is a lack of longitudinal research in this field, a systematic review by Priest et al. (2013) found evidence that racial discrimination can lead to negative health and well-being outcomes, especially related to mental health, across various age groups from childhood through to adulthood. For example, racism was associated with birth issues (e.g. premature birth), substance use, anxiety, depression, lower self-esteem and various other health and mental health-related issues. Further, there are other racial inequities such as those within education, access to health care, employment and juvenile justice systems, which may also contribute to these detrimental health outcomes (Trent et al. 2019). These studies highlight the public health concerns around racism and the importance of intervening early in development to avoid long-term health and well-being consequences.

13.1.5.2 Identity and Belonging

Racism can also lead to a child or young person adopting negative stereotypes about their race, resulting in internalised racism (Trent et al. 2019). Internalised racism erodes young people's concept of their own racial identity (Trent et al. 2019). Whereas positive racial identity assists in mitigating oppressive experiences and contributes to better outcomes for young people (Brody et al. 2015; Trent et al. 2019). Fostering positive racial identity at school can minimise the impact of racism for young people, highlighting the importance of supporting students to develop a positive sense of their racial identity. Efforts to build a positive racial identity should also be coupled with interventions to reduce racism and racial bias occurring in schools. This is to ensure that the cognitive and emotional labour necessary to mitigate instances of oppression does not fall solely on the shoulders of marginalised students. Placing the burden of racism on marginalised groups removes accountability from individuals and systems who are perpetuating racial injustice, and transfers that burden to those who are already carrying the weight of these injustices.

Identity and experiences of discrimination also have an impact on the sense of belonging and connectedness at school (Byrd and Chavous 2011). A student's sense of school belonging is developed with each encounter they have with the world around them. It is intricately built upon their understanding, experiences and perceptions of their school environment (Murphy and Zirkel 2015). Students' sense of belonging at school can be shaped by peers (Murphy and Zirkel 2015), teachers and the general school culture (Shaunessy and Mchatton 2009). School belonging undoubtedly has many benefits to the academic, psychological and behavioural aspects of children's lives (Allen and Kern 2017). However, considering marginalised students face discrimination and prejudice from each area that contributes to the development of their sense of belonging (i.e. from peers, teachers and the school as a whole), it is important to consider

how these experiences may shape their sense of school belonging.

There is some inconsistency in the field surrounding whether there is a connection between school belonging and racial or ethnic identity (Allen and Kern 2017; Murphy and Zirkel 2015; Walton and Cohen 2011; Walton and Cohen 2007). This highlights that the universality in how belonging has been conceptualised and understood in the literature, may not adequately capture the diversity in how belonging is actually perceived by some students, such as those from marginalised backgrounds (Murphy and Zirkel 2015). In this sense, race and ethnicity may impact how students perceive and understand the social components of educational settings (Gray et al., 2018). Academic contexts stigmatise racially marginalised students in a way that leads them to be conscious of situations that may impede on their sense of school belonging (Gray et al., 2018; Walton and Cohen 2007). For example, experiences of discrimination faced by racially marginalised students can negatively affect their sense of belonging at school and within their community (Paradies et al. 2009; Casinader and Walsh 2015). Given these frequent experiences of discrimination, marginalised students may enter school or classroom situations at best, uncertain of their potential to belong and at worst, with the expectation that they will not.

In addition, the primary and secondary school years are crucial for children and young people to learn social and interpersonal skills. It is also a period where concerns about fitting in with peers may be heightened. Students report concerns around peer rejection and difficulties with perceived belonging when constantly faced with questions surrounding their identity and nationality. For example, many minoritised students report being asked "where are you *really* from", regardless of how long they have lived in a particular country or whether they were born there (Murphy and Zirkel 2015; Shimpi and Zirkel 2012). This may be particularly poignant for minoritised students who attend predominantly white schools and institutions (Murphy and Zirkel 2015). Some research suggests that

interventions to increase connectedness and belonging may have greater impacts for traditionally excluded students, compared to white students (Walton and Cohen 2007, 2011). This may be due to a greater appreciation for belonging and connectedness due to being historically excluded.

In terms of exploring belonging in diverse students, some research has suggested the need for an ecological framework in understanding school belonging in Black American students. This framework conceptualises school belonging for Black students as being tied to their social, cognitive and emotional development, which in turn is rooted in cultural and political aspects of school contexts, wider communities and historical events (Gray et al. 2018). This framework may also be relevant for other racially marginalised students. Further, drawing on culturally responsive perspectives of school belonging can assist in creating a better understanding of how to provide students with opportunities to develop and strengthen their racial-ethnic identity, which may subsequently increase their sense of school belonging (Gray et al. 2018).

In addition, educational psychology literature tends to conceptualise school belonging by centring whiteness as the norm (Gray et al. 2018). This centring of whiteness may not account for the differences in how marginalised students experience belonging and may also perpetuate colour-evasive ideologies. Decentring whiteness is necessary to understand how and why school belonging may differ for marginalised students. Understanding these potential variations and nuances in how belonging may be understood by different racial groups, should be considered when developing inclusive school spaces and in belonging research.

While the focus here is on racially minoritised students, this interplay between belonging, belonging uncertainty and identity is relevant for other marginalised groups too, especially those with intersecting identities. We also acknowledge that belonging is undoubtedly important for all students. However, the conceptualisation and significance of belonging may vary for marginalised students who are exposed to negative

stereotypes. Moving beyond white-normative perspectives of belonging will assist in understanding how we can build classrooms that promote belonging for all students, regardless of their background.

13.1.5.3 What Happens When Students Belong in School?

When students are included in schools and feel a sense of belonging, there is a significant positive impact on their mental health, well-being and academic achievement (Allen and Kern 2017). School inclusion is not just beneficial to historically excluded students; it can have immense benefits for *all* students. When students are given the opportunity to engage with and build relationships with peers who are different from them, this leads to improvements in their ability to think critically and problem solve (Wells and Cordova-Cobo 2016). Having diverse peers from a young age equips students to be able to navigate the diversity they will experience throughout their life (e.g. in the workplace).

13.1.6 Moving Towards Equity and Anti-Bias

Some argue that moving towards universally equitable and inclusive classrooms is costly and time consuming for already under-resourced and overworked staff. These are legitimate concerns, however, there are approaches that can be adopted in schools that implement inclusive education in efficient ways by focussing on three crucial levels:

(1) Broader systemic issues
(2) The classroom/school context and
(3) The individual teacher

These elements will be important initial steps in removing educational barriers for marginalised students. Considerations to increasing inclusion for racially marginalised students such as increased self-awareness, anti-racist/anti-bias pedagogy and teacher training are discussed below.

13.1.6.1 Broader Systemic Issues

Policies need to move beyond a focus on cultural diversity and multicultural education. Traditionally, these educational policies have been built on eurocentric and colonial ideals (Bishop et al. 2019). These policies trickle down into school settings and are not adequate in supporting the needs of racially marginalised or in removing educational barriers for them. There have been improvements in policies, especially those that have included marginalised voices such as First Nations Peoples (Bishop et al. 2019). However, for these policies to be successful, there is also a requirement that individual teachers and schools ensure these policies are implemented within their classrooms, which historically has not occurred (Bishop et al. 2019; Craven et al. 2014). Further, for policies to be truly equitable, they must be strongly underpinned by the principles of social justice, anti-bias and anti-racism. These factors will be discussed further in the following sections.

13.1.6.2 The Classroom/School Context

Similar to policies, classroom practices need to move beyond a focus on cultural diversity and multicultural education. A targeted focus on adopting anti-racist and anti-bias practices in schools, that are culturally responsive to the educational needs of all students, is necessary to reduce the marginalisation of students based on their race. Anti-racist approaches differ from non-racist approaches in that they move beyond race-neutrality (King and Chandler 2016). Anti-racism aims to mitigate racism through actively interrogating and opposing the power structures that uphold these oppressive systems (e.g. whiteness and white supremacy), in order to redistribute power and achieve equity. Within education, this can be conceptualised as acknowledging how systems perpetuate racism in schools and how they transform social constructs such as race into visible entities (Alderman et al. 2019; King and Chandler 2016). Through these processes, a construct (race) is transformed into a tangible entity that has psychological and developmental consequences on

students' academic achievement, identity, belonging, health and overall well-being. Many educators and researchers have argued in favour of diversity approaches to inclusive education, such as multicultural education. While these approaches may support increased inclusion, they fall short in adequately addressing the systemic challenges that racially marginalised students experience (Alemanji and Mafi 2018). Anti-racist education extends multicultural education in order to fill these gaps. Many multicultural education programmes fail to take into account the racial hierarchy that impacts racially marginalised students and privileges white students (Alemanji and Mafi 2018). Inclusive education approaches rarely acknowledge students' experiences of racism that can occur both inside and outside school contexts (Alemanji and Mafi 2018). Instead, multicultural education often operates from a deficit-thinking standpoint, situating the learner as the problem and attempts to find ways to assist them to excel (Alemanji and Mafi 2018).

Research into increasing school inclusion has largely focussed on conversations around racial diversity, multicultural education and achievement gaps, sidestepping examinations of power structures within education and systemic barriers to achievement (Harper 2012; Kohli et al. 2017). Race-neutral approaches to inclusive education that actively avoid critical discussions pertaining to racism and power, do not combat the issue. For example, practices or events such as "Harmony Day" are of little use and are unlikely to be effective unless they are built upon continuing pedagogical practices that are culturally responsive and reflect the needs of all students (Casinader and Walsh 2015). Anti-racist and anti-bias practices, on the other hand, enable educators to adopt approaches that directly address issues to do with racism in school settings (Alemanji and Mafi 2018). Anti-bias education infuses principles of culturally responsive and culturally relevant pedagogy, with an awareness of how privilege and power impact marginalised groups (Iruka et al. 2020). Anti-bias frameworks also include a focus on providing students with the adequate tools and language to ensure they have

the necessary skills to address different forms of bias (Iruka et al. 2020). Given the racial-ethnic socialisation potential of schools, adopting anti-bias practices may assist in guiding children towards more pro-social and anti-bias views. Anti-bias practices that affirm the identities of students such as, pictures, posters, books and other teaching materials that are relevant and reflective of the diversity of students, are important (Iruka et al. 2020). These practices also include directly addressing racism that occurs within schools. Anti-bias goals that target identity, diversity, justice and activism, may also assist in instilling these pro-social views in students (Derman-Sparks and Edwards 2010). In addition, culturally responsive and anti-bias teaching practices may assist in building positive racial identities in students, while also increasing belonging by minimising discrimination. These teaching practices may be further strengthened by adopting principles from trauma-informed pedagogy to ensure that teaching practices themselves do not become traumatising or triggering for marginalised students (Blitz et al. 2020; Crosby et al. 2018).

13.1.6.3   The Individual Teacher

Dismantling inequitable policies and adopting anti-bias and anti-racist practices in schools are important steps in the right direction. However, this alone is not enough to dismantle the oppressive structures within education that are hindering the achievement of racially marginalised students. Teachers and school leaders have historically framed racism as an institutional or systemic problem, rooted in inadequate policy, subsequently removing accountability from schools and individual staff members (Casinader and Walsh 2015). While policies are undoubtedly a factor in perpetuating racial inequity in education, as indicated above, we cannot ignore the profound impact that individual teachers and schools have on inclusive education. This is especially true in light of the discussions throughout this chapter highlighting teachers' level of racial bias. Teachers also play an important role in ensuring they are not complicit in racism by ignoring the racism displayed by

their students (Casinader and Walsh 2015). However, unfortunately, teachers often do not directly address instances of racism in their classrooms.

Further, every teacher has a social positionality that influences the ways in which they see the world and the ways in which they conduct themselves in the classroom (Gregory et al. 2016). To deeply understand one's positionality, is to critically reflect on personal biases, worldviews and experiences (Muhammad et al. 2015). This reflection cannot be done in isolation to one's own experiences; rather it requires an active examination of how these elements interact with power dynamics, oppression and privilege (Jafar 2018; Muhammad et al. 2015; Rehm and Allison 2006). One can be privileged and disadvantaged at the same time and this will change based on the context. Similar to teachers, students also have a social positionality that they bring to the classroom. The positionality of teachers will change the ways in which they interact with their students, as well as how their students will interact with them. Understanding this positionality may increase teachers understanding of their students' experiences and assist in fostering better teacher–student relationships with diverse students. Understanding positionality should be guided by racial and cultural humility. Cultural humility moves beyond the mastery understanding of cultural competency (i.e. that there is an end point to learning about racial, ethnic and cultural differences) and acknowledges the necessity for reflexive practices whereby learning is a lifelong interrogation of self-reflection and self-critique in the context of social power dynamics between institutions, teachers and students (Foronda 2020; Trevalon and Murray-García 1998).

Moreover, teacher racial bias has permeated classrooms to create inequitable learning environments. Increasing teachers' self-awareness to their biases, privilege and positionality, may be an important step in dismantling racism in classrooms. This may be further strengthened by introducing pre-service and in-service teacher training that directly addresses these elements. This training must move beyond an "add-on"

model such as individual inclusive education classes or cultural competency workshops. Understanding how to engage with and teach racially diverse students, as well as other marginalised students, should be imbedded throughout the teacher training courses (Yared et al., 2020).

Finally, within each of these three levels, it is imperative to centre the perspectives and voices of racially marginalised groups, especially those who identify as First Nations Peoples (Bishop et al. 2019). Without this critical input, truly equitable classrooms will remain out of reach. This is also true for those conducting research within this space. Amplifying the voices of marginalised researchers, who have a lived experience of racial discrimination and of navigating the education system from the margins, may assist to lessen the emphasis placed on white-normative understandings of inclusion and belonging. This decentring of whiteness within research will subsequently filter down into the decentring of whiteness within the classroom.

13.2   Conclusion

There has been a push in recent years to move away from a one-size-fits-all approach to teaching. One-size-fits-all approaches tend to teach to the "average" student, however, in doing so, they do not adequately support all students (Murray et al. 2004). Through additional research and policy change, educators globally have moved towards teaching models that cater to all students from the outset, rather than retrospectively fitting classrooms to individual students. There has been concern around the feasibility of some of these models and the additional workload this may place on teachers. However, the move towards anti-bias and anti-racist teaching practices will be more efficient as it prioritises equitable classrooms that cater to the individual needs of students from the outset, mitigating the need to retrospectively fit classrooms to individual students.

It is time that educators move away from thinking models that view marginalised students

as problems that need to be changed or fixed. Instead, there is a necessity to look inward at individual biases, as well as looking outward at systemic barriers. Removing barriers is at the heart of inclusive education. Therefore, applying this to removing barriers for racially marginalised students is necessary if we are to achieve truly equitable education for all students, regardless of their background. This may require additional and targeted pre-service and in-service teacher training that focuses on racial bias reduction and teaching anti-bias principles. Efforts to increase the racial diversity of teachers and school leaders should also be a priority.

Exclusionary practices in schools, whether that be from white-normative pedagogy, colour-evasiveness, punitive disciplinary practices or suspensions and expulsions, inflict extensive harm on young people. How can marginalised students be expected to engage in education when we give little opportunity to create a sense of belonging and build positive racial identities? Systems need to support educators, researchers and school leaders to respond to the needs of their students. The United Nations has set a clear path to achieve this change and has provided ways to address barriers to equitable education. Change is uncomfortable. However, we are doing a disservice to our students if we do not lean into this discomfort. So, it is time to disrupt the status quo and begin to create equitable and inclusive classrooms that truly honour education for all, ultimately giving every student a place to belong.

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Hannah Yared is a Psychologist, Teaching Associate and PhD Candidate at Monash University. Her PhD research examines race and racism in Australian schools. Specifically, her research aims to amplify student voices by exploring their racial literacy, experiences of racism and how this connects with their racial identity and sense of school belonging.

Christine Grové is an Educational and Developmental Psychologist and Fulbright Scholar. Dr Grové is an Associate Editor of the Educational and Developmental Psychologist. She works collaboratively with health care professionals, teachers, parents and young people to support the individual and unique needs of youth. Her research interests lie in engaging with the young persons perspective using participatory research methods. Her work is also characterised by collaborating with youth as active agents in research.

Denise Chapman is a counternarrative storyteller, digital media-creator, spoken word poet, and critical autoethnographer who lectures in children's literature, early literacy and new media/technology at Monash University. She has served as a literacy specialist focused on home literacies and critical media literacy within diverse communities in Australia, Fiji, and the United States. Denise uses oral stories, children's literature, film, and interactive digital content as windows for transformation.

Part III
Inclusion for Families and Schools

Inclusive Secondary Schooling: Challenges in Developing Effective Parent-Teacher Collaborations

14

Linda Gilmore, Glenys Mann, and Donna Pennell

Abstract

Parent-teacher collaborations have important benefits for students and may be especially beneficial for children with disability in inclusive settings. At the secondary level of schooling, collaborations can be more difficult to achieve because of developmental expectations for older students and more complex school structures. In this chapter, we discuss the importance of parent-teacher collaborations that are based on mutual trust, respect and understanding. Drawing on data from a recent study of parents and teachers in inclusive secondary schools, we focus on obstacles to successful partnerships. For parents, these obstacles include poor communication and lack of trust. Teachers often appear to view parents as needy and demanding, without acknowledging the potential value of their input. We conclude that parents and teachers seem to be differently invested in the development of collaborative relationships and that meaningful partnerships cannot be achieved without parental input being actively sought, valued and enabled by teachers.

14.1 Introduction

A substantial body of research shows that the benefits of education are maximised when parents and teachers work together (Pushor and Amendt 2018). These benefits include improved literacy (Egbert and Salisbury 2009), greater academic success (Castro et al. 2015; McCoach et al. 2010), increased self-esteem (Albright and Weissberg 2009), and improved well-being (El Nokali et al. 2010).

At the secondary level of schooling, parent involvement appears to decrease (Elias et al. 2003; Seginer 2006). This may be due to the expectation that older students will display more autonomy and personal responsibility (Hill and Taylor 2004) as well as the fact that secondary schools tend to be larger and more complex systems within which each student has an array of specialist teachers (Park and Holloway 2018). The nature of parent involvement also tends to change, from more active support (e.g., practice with reading and supervision of homework) in primary school to more advisory support (e.g., guidance on subject selection and study strategies) at secondary school (Elias et al. 2003). Yet

L. Gilmore (✉) · G. Mann · D. Pennell
Faculty of Creative Industries, Education and Social Justice, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia
e-mail: linda@lindagilmore.com.au

parent involvement and collaborative relationships between parents and teachers are still important in the secondary years. Dotterer and Wehrspann (2016) demonstrated a link between parental involvement and greater academic success for adolescents, while Jeynes (2011) reported a connection between parent-teacher relationships in secondary schools and improved student grades. In Chinese secondary schools, the parent-teacher relationship was found to be important for students' academic and personal development (Deng et al. 2017).

Parent involvement in the secondary years is particularly important for students with disability, and this is especially so in an inclusive education context. While other secondary students move towards greater autonomy in their studies and social life, students with disability are more likely to continue to rely on their parents, to varying degrees, for these aspects of their lives, or take longer to develop their independence. Depending on the student's disability, development in both academic and non-academic spheres is likely to depend on good communication between parents and teachers. A successful parent-teacher relationship helps to ensure inclusive education and promote students' wellbeing.

In this chapter, we discuss the experiences of parents and teachers of students with disability in inclusive secondary schools. In particular, we focus on the challenges of developing effective parent-teacher collaborations. We draw on data from a recent research study in which we asked Australian teachers and parents of mainstreamed students with disability about their experiences of inclusion at secondary school.

The research was conducted in two Catholic secondary schools with the broad aim of understanding parent and teacher perspectives on inclusive education. Both schools were located in the city of Brisbane, within suburbs that are ranked on socioeconomic indicators as average and relatively low, respectively. From a total student enrolment of 730, the first school had 66 students who had been verified as having disability, while the second school had 49 students with disability among the 955 enrolled students.

The students were reported to have various disabilities including autism and Down syndrome. Semi-structured interviews were conducted individually with 10 volunteer parents (all mothers) of students with disability and eight school staff, including the two principals, two learning support teachers, and four general teachers who were nominated by principals. The sessions focused on core beliefs and values within the school, particularly with respect to diversity, and the participants were asked to share their own experiences and opinions about inclusive schooling. The research did not specifically ask participants to comment on the parent-teacher relationship.

We begin the chapter by describing the challenges of inclusive secondary schooling for students with disability and their parents. We discuss the importance of parent-teacher collaboration and then focus on obstacles to successful partnerships from the perspectives of both parents and teachers. In the concluding section, we summarise the issues and propose future directions.

14.2 The Challenges of Inclusive Secondary Schooling

Significant differences between primary schooling (which in the Australian context occurs from ages 5 to 11) and secondary education (ages 12 to 17) require adjustment for both students and parents. Transitions are a normative but often demanding aspect of growth and development. The move from primary to secondary school is a key transition and, while this is a predictable and potentially exciting milestone, it presents new challenges that create increased vulnerability for young people (Benner et al. 2017). As Coffey (2013) points out, the move usually means relocation to an unknown campus, different organisational structures, and an unfamiliar peer group. Having many subject-specific teachers means encountering and adjusting to different teaching styles and classroom expectations, as well as coping with more advanced academic demands. New levels of organisation and responsibility need to be developed to manage

timetable requirements, such as moving from one classroom to another, and arriving at the right classroom at the right time with the correct materials in hand. Such challenges are vastly different to the primary school experience where students spend their days in the same classroom, with the same teacher and the same group of friends, and with all personal resources conveniently sourced within the classroom. Students at secondary school are generally expected to display greater autonomy, accept more responsibility for their own learning and behaviour, contribute to the school and wider community, and develop future career and life goals. This is a developmental stage where students desire more independence. Peers play an increasingly important role, and parents have less involvement in students' lives, including at school. Consistent evidence suggests that the transition to secondary school can potentially have a negative impact on students' wellbeing (Newman et al. 2007; Benner et al. 2017), on their engagement, motivation and school enjoyment (Barber and Olsen 2004), and on their grades and academic performance (Benner and Graham 2009). It is therefore critical to monitor adolescents during this time of change and vulnerability. Schools and parents share a role in acclimating, stabilising and buffering the transition experience (Brenner et al. 2017).

For children with disability, especially those with an intellectual disability and/or autism, transitions are likely to be even more difficult (Makin et al. 2017; Strnadová et al. 2016). Secondary school environments may exacerbate difficulties with communication and social interactions, sensitivities around specific interests and routines, and academic demands (Dillon and Underwood 2012). The environments of secondary schools are often large, noisy and boisterous which can easily overwhelm or create stress for those with autism (Makin et al. 2017). The shift from a single classroom with extended contact with one teacher, to navigating multiple rooms with many teachers can mean getting used to different expectations and ways of working, with fewer opportunities for a close student–teacher connection and therefore a loss of safety,

security, and an anchoring relationship (Dillon and Underwood 2012). In addition, when students experience difficulties with forming relationships or expressing themselves, there are increased risks of becoming isolated and misunderstood by both teachers and peers (Makin et al. 2017). While typically-developing peers are increasingly moving towards independence from parents and finding their sense of identity and belonging in the more complex social peer group (Strnadová et al. 2016), adolescents with disability tend to spend more time with their families than with their peers (Solish et al. 2010).

Of note is the changing nature of parents' roles as their children move to secondary schooling. In primary schools, parents potentially have many roles including visiting or helping out in the classroom. In secondary schools, however, parents have fewer opportunities to be involved. They may spend little or no time at the school apart from occasional parent-teacher interviews that can last no more than five to ten minutes. Parents of a child with disability may be invited to attend planning meetings once or twice each year and may be asked to come to the school to discuss any serious issues that arise. However, other types of parent involvement in the school are unlikely unless the parent joins the Parents and Friends Association or volunteers to work in the school's uniform/bookshop or tuckshop. In addition, most teachers at secondary school are specialists in specific subject areas, potentially creating greater separation from parents who view them as experts.

The parents in our research overwhelmingly reported that the transition to secondary school had been a stressful "baptism of fire" for them and for their children with disability. One mother said that she had felt "quite intimidated" at the beginning of the secondary school year. Another indicated she felt less empowered to advocate for her child: "We've always had to fight just for simple things … (but) when you get to high school … you have to let that fight go". With the many different classes attended, parents were often unsure if the various teachers understood their child's disability and associated adjustments. One parent referred to a "disconnect":

> In primary school you have fairly constant communication; your teacher is there, and she sees (your child) every day, all day, and you get a lot of feedback, you get a lot of input. But high school is a different thing. He might have 6 or 7 different teachers—they might not know me, I might not know them.

Differing goals of primary and secondary school were also mentioned in our conversations with parents. One said: "In primary school, teachers are teaching them to get the best, whereas at high school it is about preparing them to leave; parents (of students with disability) don't think that way because we're always two or three years behind".

Parents' comments suggested feelings of isolation for both child and parent following the transition to secondary school: "It's a really big jump because in primary school you are always there, you know everyone, and when you get to high school you know nobody; you know no children, you know no parents". These findings are similar to those of Makin et al. (2017) who found that parents of secondary school students with autism felt alone and unsupported and worried about how to get their child's needs met. Their study also noted other stresses that parents experience in the move to secondary schooling—for example, struggles to enrol their child in the first place and tension around how best to provide support without drawing attention to their child's disability. Parents felt anxious about their child's immature or inappropriate behaviours and were more focussed on their holistic needs, happiness, and independence than on academic achievement.

In summary, students with disability and their parents may have difficulty adjusting to the different demands and expectations at secondary school. Students need to cope with a more complex school structure and a new group of peers. They are expected to be more autonomous, and parents are expected to be less actively involved. Although positive parent-teacher relationships may be more difficult to achieve at this time, they can potentially buffer the difficulties and challenges for students with disability (Leyser and Kirk 2011; Rodriquez et al. 2014).

14.3 Parent-Teacher Collaboration

Parent-teacher collaboration involves more than the attendance of parents at brief annual interviews with teachers or their relatively passive participation in meetings where an individual education plan (IEP) has already been developed by school personnel. Collaboration implies an equal partnership between parent and teacher that is characterised by effective two-way communication, mutual trust and respect, and a shared commitment to agreed goals (Turnbull et al. 2006).

It is often acknowledged that, although parents are "theoretically equal stakeholders" in processes involving their child (Tucker and Schwartz 2013, p. 3), the formation of partnerships that are characterised by equitable participation is challenging (Bennett et al. 2020). The focus of research appears largely to have been on identifying factors that facilitate parental engagement and satisfaction with the school, and on the issues parents identify as beneficial or detrimental to the parent-teacher relationship. Parental engagement is likely to be enhanced when schools present a welcoming environment, when parents have opportunities to participate in school activities, and when teachers communicate regularly with parents about a student's achievements and difficulties (LaBarbera 2017; Tucker and Schwartz 2013). Parents say that they appreciate regular communication from teachers about their child's achievements and difficulties, prompt and clear teacher responses to their questions, and invitations to attend IEP meetings (Tucker and Schwartz 2013).

But less attention appears to have been given to the 'other side' of the partnership. To what extent do teachers value parent involvement and which particular parent characteristics and behaviours facilitate teachers' engagement with parents? Although non-engagement of parents is clearly a significant barrier to collaboration, Rusnak's (2018) research in a regular school highlighted teacher resistance as another major issue. In a thoughtful analysis of the complexity

of parent-teacher relationships, she described the 'struggle for common ground' that is often evident. She argued that a profound lack of trust undermines collaborative relationships, with 'mock cooperation' and a lack of meaningful dialogue potentially producing mutual frustration and misunderstanding.

In our research, neither parents nor teachers described positive collaborations. A striking finding was that, although the parent-teacher relationship was mentioned spontaneously by every parent, most of the teachers had little, if anything, to say about parents and, when they did refer to parents, their comments tended to be negative rather than positive: "A single meeting with one of my needier parents took a hundred minutes—one hundred minutes!" It seemed that parents were expecting and hoping for the kind of involvement they had in their child's primary school, while most secondary school staff appeared not to be seeking, or even recognising the potential value of, parent involvement. Our findings echo those of Makin et al. (2017), who reported that teachers spoke little about the role of parents except in relation to parent attitudes affecting the school's ability to work effectively with the family. Teachers believed that parents who supported 'working together' with the school helped their child to adjust to the demands of secondary schooling, whereas it was said to be harder for them to work effectively with parents who anticipated difficulties. Although teachers viewed specialist staff as a valuable support, they did not see parents as a useful resource.

One possible explanation for the apparent scarcity of successful parent-teacher collaborations is that teachers and parents may hold different views and conflicting understandings of disability (Lalvani 2015). Parents have reported inconsistency between their views and teachers' views regarding the practices that should be implemented for their children and the services that should be provided (Fish 2006). Language and cultural differences between the family and school personnel have also been highlighted as barriers to parent-teacher collaborations (Schultz et al. 2016). In addition, parents and teachers may not share the same future goals for a student

with disability. Secondary schools tend to focus strongly on post-school academic study and career options, while these goals may be less salient for parents of a student with disability.

A second explanation for the complexity of parent-teacher relationships may lie in the perceived role imbalance. Lawson (2003), for example, found that because parents lacked power in school decision-making processes, their voices and opinions were valued only insofar as they acquiesced to the needs of the school. Consequently, when parents disagree with school beliefs and practices, they may be left with little recourse but to become confrontational or to stay uninvolved in their children's schools. This can be a 'no-win' dilemma for parents. Even when they believe their knowledge and experiences are important, parents who assert their views may be seen as difficult, while those who avoid confrontation can be seen as disengaged.

Given the importance of parent-teacher collaboration, and considering one of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals for 2030, which is to ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective outcomes (Goal 4, Quality Education; https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal4), it is imperative to understand the barriers to productive, positive partnerships. Because of the differences in roles and perspectives, our discussion of obstacles will focus on parents and teachers separately in the following sections.

14.3.1 Obstacles to Parent-Teacher Collaboration: Parents' Perspectives

The parents of secondary school students in our study identified several obstacles to effective parent-teacher relationships. First, many said that their input did not appear to be sought or valued by teachers: "All my knowledge on my daughter was not welcome or wanted" and "All the things I had to offer were not taken up". Comments from some parents suggested that they felt a lack of respect from teachers: "When I tried to tell

them she can do something … I was met with a shaking of the head" and "Are they just patting me on the head?".

Research suggests that educators typically see parents in a passive role—for example, as receptacles to be filled with teacher knowledge (Hodge 2006) and to listen to information and answer questions in IEP meetings (Childre and Chambers 2005). Childre and Chambers reported that families described minimal collaboration with the school staff and felt pressured to agree with pre-set agendas including student goals and educational placements. These findings were supported by a large study of transition in the United States reported by Turnbull et al. (2007). Around half of all families with a child with intellectual disability or autism reported that the school developed IEP goals for their child without much parental input. Many families reported wanting higher levels of participation in IEP decision-making. Similarly, Hodge and Runswick-Cole (2008, p. 645) found that teachers viewed parents as "passive partners" who carry out "developmental tasks set by the 'real' experts". It seems that many teachers do not see parents as equal partners (Schultz et al. 2016) and want them to be involved only to a limited extent (Bezdek et al. 2010).

A second obstacle reported by almost every parent in our study was communication with teachers: "Communication was just very, very poor. I kept asking and nothing came across". Although there were some examples of positive communication (e.g., "We email each other twice or three times a week" and "I have a say in nearly all of the decisions") problems with communication were mentioned constantly. Parents expressed their desire for more information from the school: "It would be nice to know a bit more about what was going on … so that if she [daughter] comes to me about something, I know what it means". Parent concerns about communication with teachers are commonly reported in the inclusive education literature. Parents stress their need for frequent and open communication with teachers (Stoner et al. 2005). At times, however, they see the teaching team as a 'closed

shop' (Tveit 2009) from which they feel excluded. In addition, the educational jargon used by some teachers can be confusing for parents and a further obstacle to productive communication (Schultz et al. 2016).

Poor communication has been linked with a loss of trust in educational professionals—trust which, once lost, is difficult to regain. Trust has been highlighted as a critical aspect of positive parent-teacher relationships (Rautamies et al. 2021; Scorgie and Sobsey 2017) but parent trust in teachers declines over time, with lower levels evident at secondary school (Adams and Christenson 2000). The findings of our study indicated several factors that potentially weakened parents' trust in the partnership. For example, many parents reported that their input was not used by teachers and expressed their frustration when meetings failed to produce the promised outcomes: "They always agreed with me; they would take notes about what they were going to do, but it never, ever, ever changed". Another parent said:

> I said (to the teacher) 'I can't tell you how many times I've asked for something to happen.' …. She (the teacher) said 'Well, be reassured something will happen this time.' … but I never got a phone call back.

Another apparent barrier to the development of a trusting relationship was that parents and teachers rarely met in person and then only at brief routine parent-teacher sessions:

> There are teachers I've never even met for more than five minutes in the parent-teacher interview. If it is second term, there are no interviews, so you don't meet the teachers in the second half of the year at all.

Trust was also undermined when communication happened only if there were issues or problems: "I have a lot of phone calls about her medical safety which is fine, but they could put as much effort into feedback on what is happening in the classroom as well". Previous research has highlighted the importance of the *quality* of parent-teacher interactions, rather than their number and frequency, for building trust (Adams and Christenson 2000).

14.3.2 Obstacles to Parent-Teacher Collaboration: Teachers' Perspectives

In our research, teachers' comments tended to confirm what parents said - that their input was not sought or valued. Teachers described parents as "needy" and "demanding", rarely mentioning their involvement beyond meeting attendance. Although every parent we interviewed commented spontaneously on the parent-teacher relationship, most teachers did not. When they did refer to meetings with parents, this was often in a cursory fashion, with a sense of obligation to have parents present rather than a valuing of their input. Teachers talked about parents "taking over the agenda" in ways that were "really destructive" and about parent motives that were "not necessarily for the greater good". Contact with parents was described by one teacher as "completely and utterly exhausting because they are incredibly needy". One teacher talked about "high anxiety parents who see everything wrong with (the school)", and another referred to parents as ungrateful, even though their child was the "single individual taking the most resources". Only one of the eight teachers in our study showed some awareness and positive acknowledgement of parents who "usually will go to the ends of the earth for those kids".

The difference between teachers' views of parents and parents' views of teachers was remarkable. In contrast to the negative or limited teacher perceptions of the parent-teacher relationship illustrated in the previous paragraph, conversations with parents suggested that they were treading very carefully in their relationships with teachers. Parents acknowledged how challenging inclusive education can be: "We understand more than anyone else how difficult it is" and were cautious about "making a nuisance" of themselves. While teachers did not seem to be very understanding of, or interested in, parents' experiences, many parents seemed to be sensitive to teachers' perspectives: "I sometimes think it is too much to ask the teachers, because you have such a broad range of abilities and you're trying to get the teachers to cope with all that". Despite this understanding, parents also expressed frustration because they felt that if teachers would only listen to their input "they would … be a much better teacher".

14.4 Conclusion

Parent-teacher collaborations are clearly important but are likely to be more difficult to achieve in secondary than primary schools, partly because of developmental expectations for older students and partly because of the different structure of secondary schooling. Adolescents are expected to be more responsible and autonomous in their learning and behaviour as they move towards independence from their parents. In primary schools, most students have a single classroom teacher but in secondary settings the development of parent-teacher relationships is more complicated because each student can have 6 to 10 different teachers, and each teacher may be responsible for hundreds of individual students. Inevitably, the distance between individual parents and individual teachers widens, with parents likely to be uncertain about who to target for collaboration, and teachers feeling less individual responsibility for developing relationships with parents.

Effective parent-teacher collaborations are characterised by shared beliefs in the importance of the relationship and a commitment to establishing and maintaining it (Minke et al. 2014). Mutual trust, respect and understanding are essential components of positive relationships (Rautamies et al. 2021). As we have seen in this chapter, parents and teachers do not necessarily place the same value on, or display equal commitment to, developing positive relationships. In addition, their goals may diverge, with parents placing more importance on their child's well-being and social inclusion, and teachers emphasising academic and career goals. The findings from our own research do not reveal any evidence of mutual trust, respect and understanding within parent-teacher relationships. The comments of many parents were respectful of teachers, reflecting an acknowledgement of the

importance of their role and an understanding of the challenges they faced. But it was striking that teachers mentioned parents so rarely, and none commented on positive relationships. Indeed, it seemed that teachers viewed their contact with parents, at best, as an obligation or, at worst, as a time-wasting annoyance.

There is a preponderance of literature focused on parent perspectives and engagement within inclusive schools; by contrast, little attention appears to have been given to *ways of engaging teachers in genuinely collaborative relationships with parents*. Previous research and our own findings suggest that parents and teachers are differently invested in the development of collaborative relationships, with many teachers seemingly unaware of the potential value of collaborating with families. While parents consistently express their desire to work with teachers, teachers often appear to view their communications with parents as no more than procedural responsibilities, and indeed at times to see parents as a hindrance rather than a potentially beneficial support. It has been suggested that teachers may not have the necessary skills for creating meaningful partnerships with families (Murray et al. 2008). Arguably, such skills need to be a focus within teacher training programs (Smith and Sheridan 2019).

Almost 25 years ago, in their call for greater collaboration between parents and teachers in inclusive educational settings, Soodak and Erwin (1995) proposed significant proactive organisational change in schools. They argued for more democratic school structures in which parents are involved in decision-making and policy decisions. Parent involvement needs to extend well beyond the mere approval of IEPs that have been developed by school personnel. A successful inclusive schooling agenda is predicated on the validation of parental expertise regarding their children and acknowledgement of the critical nature of positive, productive parent-teacher relationships. When parent input is actively sought, valued, and enabled by teachers, the meaningful work of partnering with parents can begin. Such collaborations would likely have benefits for the development and well-being of not only individual students with disability, but also their parents and teachers, as one of the mothers in our study pointed out in her passionate plea:

> Please use every special needs (child's) parent. We are here to help you because we all know that the easier that we can make it for you, the easier it can be for our child, and we would do anything!

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Linda Gilmore is a psychologist and Professor of Educational and Developmental Psychology at Queensland University of Technology. Her research and practice focus on learning and developmental disorders, motivation and self-regulation, family support, and attitudes towards disability. She has a particular interest in the developmental consequences of very rare genetic syndromes.

Glenys Mann is a senior lecturer at Queensland University of Technology. Her background is in primary teaching but she has also worked in advocacy and community organisations. Her research interests include the role of parents in inclusive education contexts, parent-teacher relationships, and the inclusion of students with intellectual impairment.

Donna Pennell is a senior research assistant at Queensland University of Technology. Her background is special education but her day-to-day work is research that focuses on inclusion and improved educational outcomes for students with disabilities. Her PhD considered how schools are protecting those vulnerable to bullying.

Working with Families of Students with Disabilities in Primary Schools

15

Gerald Wurf

Abstract

Internationally, jurisdictions are enacting legislation and comprehensive procedures that recognise the right of all students, irrespective of their abilities, to receive an education at their local school. As well as recognising this right, schools are increasingly being held accountable for making appropriate adjustments and accommodations that facilitate learning for students with disabilities. Despite this, surveys of parental attitudes consistently find significant concerns with the implementation of inclusive practices in primary schools. The need for educators to work collaboratively with parents and families with children with disabilities has repeatedly been stressed in the early intervention and effective schools literature. Well documented advantages of closer school-family relationships include smoother transitions into school, higher levels of academic achievement, improved acquisition of reading, higher motivation for learning, and fewer school-based behavioural problems. Importantly, there is evidence that the effects of parental involvement in schools may also be stronger during

the primary, rather than the secondary school years. Long standing research has highlighted that teachers believe that building parental and family engagement with schools should be a priority and that professional development to support teachers to work collaboratively with families is required. In this chapter, international findings from quantitative surveys of parents' perceptions of inclusion will be reviewed and summarised. Although early research in the US found that parents with children with disabilities often reported less favourable attitudes towards inclusion than parents of typically developing children, more recent findings indicate strong support for inclusion across various parental groups in widespread jurisdictions. Parental support for inclusion has been found to be influenced by the prevailing social norms, and it is likely to be enhanced when key education professionals promote inclusion as a school norm. In addition, findings from qualitative research will be reviewed which suggests that even in jurisdictions which have been at the forefront of developing inclusive education practices, parents often report feeling disempowered. Too often parents continue to report that inadequate school supports, the use of gatekeeping, and other restrictive practices prevent students with disabilities from accessing the full range of curriculum options that are available to their peers. It is argued that the use of seven collaboration principles and

G. Wurf (✉)
School of Educational Psychology and Counselling, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia
e-mail: gerald.wurf@monash.edu

best-practice individual plans (IPs) can be effective to ensure families are respected partners in the education of children with disabilities.

Keywords

Inclusive education · School-family collaboration · Parents' perceptions · Primary school

15.1 Introduction

15.1.1 Parental Involvement with Education

Parental involvement in students' education has been defined and measured in different ways; however, a consistent finding from the broader educational literature is that when parents keep in contact with teachers and are involved in school activities, particularly in the primary school years, better outcomes on a range of measures are found. Advantages of having parents involved in schools include smother transitions into school, higher levels of academic achievement, improved acquisition of reading, higher motivation for learning, and fewer school-based behavioural problems (Jeynes 2012; Kohl et al. 2000; Perkins 2014; Shute et al. 2011; Wilder 2014). The effective schools literature also highlights that by strengthening positive family connections and by buffering potentially negative family influences, schools can obtain better learning outcomes for their students (Reynolds et al. 2016).

Parents of children with disabilities have played a critical role in advocating for better support, improved services, and increased opportunities for their children to attend mainstream schools. Parents typically decide which school their child attends and entrust the school to educate and socialise their child. The extensive knowledge that parents can bring to a school about their child's needs and how to manage their child's behaviour is invaluable for both

teachers and support staff (Ashman 2015; Leyser and Kirk 2004; Turnbull et al. 2015).

15.1.2 Parents' Perceptions of Inclusive Education

Three decades of intermittent Western research have confirmed that most parents of children both with and without disabilities hold positive perceptions towards inclusion. Pioneering studies even found that some parents preferred to have their typically developing child in a multi-ability classroom because best-practice inclusion was seen to improve learning, behaviour, and the socialisation of all students (Lowenbraun et al. 1990). Kelly (2001) surveyed parents in Nevada, US, and found consistently favourable ratings for inclusion. However, statistically significant higher ratings were found for parents of children with disabilities on two out of the six questionnaire items they used. These items related to the social benefits of inclusion and the need to place special education teachers in mainstream classrooms.

Peck et al. (2004) found that 64% of US parents surveyed after their typically developing child had been taught in an inclusive classroom held positive attitudes towards inclusion. A further 26% of their sample were neutral towards inclusion. If given the opportunity in the future, 73% of parents indicated they would enrol their child in a classroom that included children with disabilities. Parents of typically developing children frequently noted the social benefits that inclusion provides for all students.

As well as highlighting the benefits of inclusion, parents of typically developing children in Australia, the US, and Western Europe have at the same time consistently articulated concerns with integration. Earlier research findings (e.g., De Boer et al. 2010; Duhaney et al. 2000) concluded that parents were concerned that teachers in multi-ability classrooms would lower the expected achievement standards for all students, irrespective of the students' ability level. As a consequence, parents believed that less time

would be available to deliver quality instruction. Parents were also concerned that children with disabilities could use inappropriate behaviours or communication and that undesirable behaviours could be copied by their classroom peers.

In addition, De Boer et al. (2010, 2011) emphasised that parents' attitudes and behaviour will have an influence over the attitudes and behaviours of their children. Parents who did not support inclusive education were seen to have a negative influence over their child's attitudes and behaviour. In turn, this affected the way their child perceived and interacted with school peers. Finally, parents have consistently reported that there is a lack of training for teachers in how to effectively manage inclusive classrooms (De Boer et al. 2010; Duhaney et al. 2000; Elkins et al. 2003).

From their international review of the literature De Boer et al. (2010) found that a prominent concern of parents of children with disabilities was related to the amount of individualised instruction and teacher attention their children would receive in inclusive classrooms. Additionally, the extent to which parents of typically developing children accepted having children with disabilities in regular classrooms was an important consideration for parents of children with disabilities. Overall, early studies concluded that parents of children with disabilities were more likely to hold more negative attitudes towards inclusive education than parents of typically developing children.

Irrespective of where research has been undertaken, or whether survey respondents were parents of a child with a disability or not, significant concern about the preparation of regular teachers to support children with disabilities has been consistently noted (Elbaum et al. 2016; Leyser and Kirk, 2004; Love et al. 2017; Starr and Foy 2012; Westwood and Graham 2003; Whitaker 2007). Leyser and Kirk found that more than a quarter of parents surveyed felt that inclusive classroom teachers are unable to adapt classroom programs for students with a disability. Similar comments were made by Australian participants in a study conducted by Elkins et al. (2003). Parents felt that teachers and school staff

tried to meet students' additional needs, but lacked the knowledge and skills required to effectively teach their child.

More recently, Love et al. (2017) concluded that the situation had not changed and that specific school structures and institutionalised procedures regularly exclude parents from school decision making processes. Teachers continue to report that working with families is one of the most challenging aspects of their work and that they do not have the skills and knowledge to collaborate effectively with families (Elbaum et al. 2016). Adding to this concern, Rodriguez et al. (2014) found that just as many parents became involved with schools because of their child's unsatisfactory educational progress as those who became involved because of proactive family engagement attempts that were initiated by school personnel. The future of classroom preparedness for inclusive education is anticipated to improve as nations employ the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The promotion of and guidance towards equitable education for all will facilitate inclusive structures that parents and teachers can help create, manage, and implement.

Participants in Whitaker's (2007) research in the UK highlighted how a lack of understanding of disabilities was linked with a failure to deploy appropriate, inclusive teaching strategies. Concerns were raised by parents about the lack of resources and support materials available to teachers in mainstream schools. Runswick-Cole (2008, 2011) conducted in-depth interviews with parents of children with disabilities and concluded that schools in the UK continue to construct barriers that hamper inclusion. Parents often believed that schools lacked the experience and commitment that is necessary for successful inclusive education. Of significant concern, some parents believed their children were being taught almost entirely by teaching assistants and that individualised instruction from the classroom teacher was very limited. This was more likely to be the case when students had more substantial learning needs.

Leyser and Kirk (2004) found the severity of the child's disability, the child's age, and the

number of years the child had been in mainstream schooling were related to parents' perceptions of inclusion. The level of schooling a parent had completed, as well as their occupation, also influenced their perceptions. Parents with more favourable perceptions had children with milder levels of disability, had younger children, and their child had only been in a mainstream school for a year or two. Parents with higher education levels were more positive towards inclusive education, and this was explained by their better access to information and resources. It has also been recognised that a parent's culture is likely to influence their perceptions of inclusive education (Carter et al. 2012; Duhaney et al. 2000) and the different experiences of non-Western parents warrant further investigation. Nevertheless, results from a recent Hong Kong study are broadly consistent with the above findings. Major variables that predicted positive perceptions of inclusion in Hong Kong were parental knowledge and the promotion of inclusion as the social norm for schooling by key stakeholders (Lui et al. 2015).

15.1.3 Contemporary Parental Perspectives and the Reality Gap

In contrast with early findings, more recent Western studies have found even stronger support for inclusion. Sosu and Rydzewska (2017), for example, reported that 90% of parents in a nationally representative Scottish sample held a generally positive overall perception of inclusive education. When more specific perceptions were examined, such as the benefits of inclusive education for typically developing children or children with disabilities, perceptions were less favourable. Similarly, in our own research, Stevens and Wurf (2018) reported that the majority of parents that were surveyed strongly agreed that children with disabilities have the right to be educated in inclusive settings. Parents also agreed that inclusive education benefits their children.

Stevens and Wurf (2018) also reported that parents' satisfaction with inclusion was more varied than their strong belief in the right of children to be educated in inclusive settings. Parents we interviewed were 'undecided' about the progress their child was making in inclusive classes and expressed concern about the ability of teachers in primary schools to support inclusion. This included expressing negative or undecided perceptions about teachers' knowledge of and ability to deliver individualised instruction. Further, parents were concerned about the lack of specialised supports that could be accessed in mainstream primary school settings.

While quantitative investigations into parents' perceptions have continued to show strong, and even increasing support for inclusive education, qualitative analyses of parents' satisfaction with inclusion have highlighted significant concerns with the uptake of classroom practices that foster inclusion. From our work with parents, inclusive education was seen as having multiple, beneficial effects, and all parents agreed that it was a right of children with disabilities to be educated in mainstream schools. Parents felt that inclusion prepares all children for the real world and that it provides children with disabilities the opportunity to participate in a wider range of activities than are offered in specialised schools. Inclusion also provides opportunities for all students to learn about individual differences. In contrast to previous research which found parents of typically developing students had significantly more positive attitudes towards inclusive education, we found no statistical differences between parents except that parents of children with disabilities were more likely to strongly agree that it is their child's right to be educated in mainstream schools. This may reflect a growing awareness and acceptance of inclusive education within Australian schools.

When we discussed inclusive education with parents, a gap between the ideals of inclusive education and school practices was evident. Parents' generally positive perceptions of inclusive education were tempered by the reality of

everyday school practices, and they raised broader themes related to ongoing discrimination, everyday frustrations, restrictive practices, and the need for well-coordinated, consistently delivered instructional programs and services for students with disabilities (Stevens and Wurf 2018).

From our research parents of children with disabilities also highlighted school practices which restricted opportunities for the broader participation in the everyday routines of school. They strongly agreed that teachers lacked adequate training in managing students with disabilities and outlined their frustrations when excursions were planned and funding/additional supports were needed. A lack of coordination and consistency in the use of discipline/consequences and inconsistent school-home communication about educational performance were specific issues noted by parents.

Parents also discussed their frustration with a lack of appropriate resources, negative peer influences, and a lack of understanding by staff about the needs of students with disabilities. Many of these issues appear to by systemic, school-wide issues, rather than specific issues with individual class teachers. Poed et al. (2017) found similar concerns across a survey of Australian parents and advocates for children with disabilities. They noted that 70% of respondents reported that one or more instances of gatekeeping and other restrictive or exclusionary practices had been used by schools. Practices that were reported included students spending large amounts of time outside the classroom, being sent home or suspended for minor transgressions, limited instruction from the teacher, and inadequate support from teaching assistants. Worryingly, practices that may breach policy and law were also reported including the use of restrictive practices for behaviour management and refusal by some schools to enrol a child with a disability.

From our research it was not uncommon for parents of children with disabilities to feel that they were treated differently by both teachers and parents of typically developing children. Parents of children with disabilities acknowledged that they may pose a greater problem for classroom teachers than parents of typically developing children. They felt that they are often perceived as 'helicopter parents', continually hovering around the school to check on their child. Frustration with the perceived inappropriate spending of government allocated funding was common. Parents felt that funds were unfairly allocated and they should be prioritised to support students with the highest needs. Better targeted funding that was directed towards training teachers in inclusive education and supporting a wide range of learning and behavioural disorders was preferred.

Despite the need for regular school-family communication being stressed in their early research on inclusion, and being acknowledged as an essential principle in best practice collaboration (e.g., Elbaum et al. 2016; Grove and Fisher 1999; Turnbull et al. 2015), parents still stated that open and honest communication was not consistently delivered. Nevertheless, good school-family communication was seen as essential for successful inclusion. Parents wanted schools to maintain an explicit focus on their child's education, social, and behavioural development. They were keen to hear about their child's progress. They did not want to be constantly relied upon as an extra school resource, but they wanted to be consulted and kept up to date.

An analysis of the parent data yielded four major themes. Firstly, parents perceived discrimination still occurred in inclusive settings. Inequalities in how students are disciplined, discrimination from parents of typically developing children, and discrimination from peers were raised as salient issues. As one parent noted:

> I had parents coming up to me and going, you know, is this the best environment for your child? Shouldn't he be at a special school?

A second theme identified was that parents were often frustrated and disappointed with educational services. In particular they were frustrated with a perceived lack of training and support for teachers, a lack of school-home communication, and a lack of empathy shown by

some school personnel and peers towards students with disabilities.

> Some teachers … don't seem to have empathy and understanding of what's going on. It could be as simple as the lights too bright … or the fan … making too much noise… some teachers seem to think [students] are using that as an excuse for their behaviour when they are not, it's a sensory thing … it's a real issue.

Participants also outlined how parental knowledge can contribute to more effective educational outcomes and that when schools promote open and regular communication with parents, additional expertise can be accessed.

> Listen to the parents, we know our children … first and foremost I am an expert on my child.

All parents agreed that while some school staff were excellent, there was a lack of on-going school wide professional development related to inclusive education. Frustrations with funding were also raised, and there was a perception that teaching assistants worked with students with the greatest behavioural challenges, rather than students with established disability diagnoses and targeted funding.

> I get frustrated because I think teachers blame the lack of funding too much. At the end of the day you've chosen to be a teacher, you should have the children's best interests at heart and you should do the training that needs to be done to cater for that child. If you're serious about education and you're serious about your students then you go out and you educate yourself.

A third theme related to restrictive practices and exclusion from participating in a full range of educational opportunities. This theme was especially apparent when excursions and other school events were planned. Often, planning failed to take account of the needs of students with disabilities because of poor planning access to activities was often restricted or denied.

> I probably have a tiny issue with … a couple of excursions that require walking and they don't have an aide. If I can't go to the school, [my child] is actually excluded. … they'll ring me [and] give me the option of keeping him home for the day. … I've said to them to ask [my child] what he wants to do, whether he wants to go to the library or he's happy to go on the iPad.

A final theme was the lack of well-coordinated, individualised, and consistently delivered services and strategies to support learning for students with disabilities. Parents felt that teachers were sometimes inconsistent with implementing discipline strategies and in utilising resources. All parents agreed on the need to maintain consistent and coordinated approaches. As one participant stated, an issue at her child's school is

> Not following through with the strategies, getting comfortable with them and thinking they don't need them.

Another participant stated that while her child was consistently disciplined for inappropriate behaviour, other students were not disciplined for the same behaviour.

> … some of the kids … bait him and they'll stir him up and they'll push him to the point where they know he is going to snap … he is the autistic child, so he is the one … who's gonna get into trouble.

Although parents of children with disabilities and parents with typically developing children held similar, positive attitudes towards inclusive education, it was also evident that parents of children with disabilities struggle with additional school related issues. As Carter et al. (2012) argued, parents are not just support networks for schools or recipients of information. Our research suggests that parents need to be clear about what they want from an inclusive school setting and schools and teachers need to be consistent in providing agreed supports. Findings from as far back as 1997 (Bennett et al. 1997; Carter et al. 2012; Grove and Fisher 1999; Elkins et al. 2003; Leyser and Kirk 2004; Westwood and Graham 2003; Whitaker 2007) have highlighted that whereas parents and teachers are generally positive about inclusive education they are dissatisfied with the lack of specialist professional development for teachers and the transparent allocation of resources. These results again underscore that high levels of parent-teacher collaboration need to be maintained for inclusion to be successful. It is one thing to have positive perceptions of inclusive education, but these perceptions need to be put into effective

practice and to be supported by ongoing education and professional development. Similarly, if the targeting and training in the use of additional resources is ineffective, then the value of these resources will remain limited.

15.1.4 Teachers and Students' Perceptions of School-Family Collaboration

The educational literature acknowledges that it is not just parents who want closer communication and involvement with schools. Building parental engagement with schools has also been widely recognised as a long standing, key priority by many teachers. In a comprehensive Australian survey of 4574 teachers, for example, 82% of respondents identified that they required additional professional development in order to work more effectively with families (Doecke et al. 2008). Indeed, working with families was the most requested professional learning activity. Teachers have also been found to share similar perceptions as parents in relation to the need for more comprehensive preparation and ongoing training in inclusive education (Boyle et al. 2013; De Boer et al. 2011; Westwood and Graham 2003). Within the academic literature extensive concerns have been expressed about the quality of the preparation provided in initial teacher education courses as well as the need for additional programming time.

Students also recognise the overarching importance of family in their school learning and personal well-being. Results from a representative sample of years 4, 6 and 8 students who participated in the Australian Child Well-being Project showed students consistently ranked family above school, health, friends, neighbourhood and money/things as the most important factor in their well-being (Redmond et al. 2016). There is also strong evidence showing that when children are involved in setting educational goals and are consulted about solutions for challenging behaviours their learning and behaviour improves (e.g., Greene 2018).

15.1.5 Collaboration and Individual Planning

When considering high leverage practices for educating students with disabilities, McLeskey et al. (2017) identified collaboration as a key element in ensuring effective learning and teaching. Collaboration with families/caregivers and other professionals has been found to be essential in designing and implementing effective educational programs that meet the needs of students with disabilities. Turnbull et al. (2015) identified seven principles that are supported by research and best practice recommendations to define collaboration. These seven principles are as follows:

1. **Communication**: Teachers and families communicate openly and honestly in a way that is accessible for the family.
2. **Professional competence**: Teachers have the qualifications and competencies to work with diverse students, are committed to life long learning and hold high achievement expectations. High expectations are communicated to students and families.
3. **Respect:** Teachers treat families with dignity, honour cultural diversity, and affirm family strengths.
4. **Commitment:** Teachers are available, consistent, and go 'above and beyond' what is expected.
5. **Equality:** Teachers recognise the strengths of teams, avoid hierarchies and foster empowerment. They focus on working in partnerships with families.
6. **Advocacy:** Teachers focus on forming partnerships with families and getting the best solution for students.
7. **Trust:** Teachers are reliable and act in the best interest of the student, sharing their vision and actions with the family.

Although the benefit of collaboration with parents is well acknowledged, effective partnerships are not necessarily easy to achieve. Collaboration is influenced by a range of factors including the amount of time and ongoing effort

that is required to build trust and sustain open communication (Murray et al. 2013). Conflicts can also occur when teachers and parents' priorities differ. It may be necessary to overcome past negative and difficult interactions to build trust. Further, family experiences with the recurrent grief that can accompany parenting a child with complex disabilities and significant socio-economic disadvantage can complicate effective collaboration with schools. Adding to this, efforts to promote school-family collaboration are likely to be even more crucial and difficult to achieve when students lack family support for their learning.

In work where we analysed data obtained from a sample of regionally located students in socio-economically disadvantaged, inclusive schools (Hall and Wurf 2018) students identified issues with low family support for their school learning. Using the Student Engagement Instrument (SEI; Appleton 2012; Appleton et al. 2006) our data revealed that students rated teachers highly on subscales measuring supportive student–teacher relationships and the use of classroom behaviours that promote engagement with learning. In contrast, the lowest ratings on the six subscales that are derived from the SEI were obtained from students' ratings of family support for their learning. This finding underscores the challenges for schools in collaborating with parents who have limited resources and social capital to support their child's learning. A direct policy implication is the need for increased coordination of services offered by schools, health authorities and family support/welfare organisations to ensure socio-economically vulnerable families have sufficient resources to enable young students with disabilities to experience success at school.

Fundamental to the delivery of appropriately tailored educational interventions for students with disabilities has been the Individual Plan (IP). IPs are student-centred and articulate specific goals for learning as well as individual learning needs and supports. McLeskey et al. (2017) recognised IPs as a high leverage educational strategy for delivering services to students with disabilities, and it is not uncommon that

they are required to be reviewed regularly, at the least on an annual basis. Blackwell and Rossetti (2014) cite a range of evidence that links active involvement of students and their families in the IP process with improved learning outcomes.

Despite this, it is not uncommon for families to leave IP meetings feeling overwhelmed and to report that they did not understand the proceedings. Family members have also been noted to be more passive recipients of information at IP meetings, rather than equal and active partners (Hammond et al. 2008; MacLeod et al. 2017). Too often they feel like outsiders in the process. Without a strong foundation of collaboration, the effectiveness of the IP in improving learning outcomes is diminished. To improve this process it is recommended that families be given multiple opportunities for full participation in the IP process (McLeskey et al. 2017). This can include measures such as sending out information and maximising opportunities for participation in the planning and assessment process prior to the actual IP meeting. The value of all team participants input into the IP needs to be stressed and equal partnerships honoured. McLeskey et al. further highlight teachers' roles in encouraging families to learn how to self-advocate and to effectively support their child's learning.

As well as embedding best-practice school-family collaboration into the IP process, Elbaum et al. (2016) found that out of the multitude of specific strategies that have been identified to improve school-family collaboration two additional strategies were most predictive of positive school-family partnerships. Firstly, schools with teachers who were responsive to family input more generally i.e., beyond just input into the development of the IP, obtained higher ratings on measures capturing school-family collaboration. Responsive communication was timely, respectful, accepting and positive. The second strategy involved the rigorous monitoring of student progress and providing periodic feedback to parents. This feedback should include information about positive progress and alerting parents to any challenges and problems with progress. Elbaum et al. recommend direct invitations to parents to participate in a problem solving

process as a follow-up activity when problems are recognised. Both responsive communication and regular feedback about academic progress underpinned successful school-family collaboration with families of students with disabilities.

15.2 Conclusion

In this chapter, evidence has been reviewed that demonstrates strong and increasing support for inclusive education by parents of children with and without disabilities. Support for inclusion has been found to be strongest in the primary school years. Nevertheless, parents have also repeatedly articulated a range of concerns with the actual practice of inclusive education in primary schools. These concerns include: ongoing discrimination, frustration with the lack of adequate training for teachers and support staff, and the use of restrictive and exclusionary practices. Parents were also concerned about poorly co-ordinated and inconsistent use of effective instructional strategies and school-family communication.

It was argued that school-family collaboration using the seven principles outlined by Turnbull et al. is essential in designing and implementing effective inclusive education. The IP was seen as fundamental to the delivery of appropriately tailored instructional programmes, and IPs are enhanced when families are actively included in the pre-assessment of student's learning needs and goals, as well as the actual planning meeting. Nevertheless challenges with collaborating with families were acknowledged. Evidence was reviewed that suggests that students facing significant disadvantage may rate family support for their learning much lower than the support they receive from schools and teachers. The role of teachers in promoting self-advocacy by students and their families is highlighted, as well as teachers' roles in educating parents about how to best support their child's learning. The role of responsive teacher communication and regular feedback about academic progress was stressed in successful school-family collaboration with families of students with disabilities. Furthermore, families can provide valuable inputs that can help schools develop inclusive education policies and ensure equal learning opportunities for all students.

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Gerald Wurf joined Monash University in 2017 as a senior lecturer in educational psychology. Prior to this, he worked in teacher education. He has taught in Hong Kong and consulted extensively with a range of schools. Gerald is currently Chair of the Australian Psychological Society's College of Educational and Developmental Psychologists

Parents' and Educators' Perspectives on Inclusion of Students with Disabilities

16

James M. Kauffman, Bernd Ahrbeck,
Dimitris Anastasiou, Jeanmarie Badar,
Jean B. Crockett, Marion Felder,
Daniel P. Hallahan, Garry Hornby,
Joao Lopes, Paige C. Pullen,
and Carl R. Smith

Abstract

We, the authors, support inclusion in public education for most students of diversity, including many (but not all) students with disabilities, because disability is a unique form of diversity that requires special consideration in education. The way that various forms of disability are understood has fundamental implications for framing policies and their implementation. We briefly review the literature pertinent to parents' advocacy, views of, and attitudes toward inclusion. We also review the literature about teachers' attitudes toward inclusion, focusing on systematic reviews revealing nuanced views of inclusion and not monolithic attitudes. Nuanced views in both parental and teachers' perspectives may indicate that effective instruction and appropriate education (as mandated by law in the USA) should take precedence over the place of instruction (bodily inclusion). We conclude that inclusion based on learning progress and outcomes rather than bodily inclusion in general education should be the primary concern of policy makers because the majority of parents and educators are more concerned about children learning academic and life skills than about where children are taught.

J. M. Kauffman (✉) · D. P. Hallahan
University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA, USA
e-mail: jmk9t@virginia.edu

B. Ahrbeck
International Psychoanalytical University, Berlin, Germany

D. Anastasiou
Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL, USA

J. Badar
Independent Scholar, Afton, VA, USA

J. B. Crockett · P. C. Pullen
University of Florida, Gainesville, FL, USA

M. Felder
University of Applied Sciences, Koblenz, Germany

G. Hornby
University of Plymouth, Plymouth, UK

J. Lopes
University of Minho, Braga, Portugal

C. R. Smith
Iowa State University, Ames, IA, USA

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16.1 Introduction

The fourth sustainable development goal (SDG 4) of the United Nations Agenda for Sustainable Development includes a specific education goal

and other education-related targets as one of its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). SDG 4 aims to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" by 2030 (United Nations 2015). We critically analyze what inclusive education may and may not mean for students with disabilities (SWD), their parents, and their teachers.

One or more of the authors have experienced one or more of the following: (a) Teaching in general and special education, including students with and without disabilities in various environments; (b) assessing the abilities and needs of children with disabilities; (c) administering general and special education; (d) working with parents, families, and other educators; (e) preparing general and special education teachers; (f) parenting children with disabilities; (g) advocating for fair and effective education for all students; (h) researching effective teaching; and (i) having or having had a disability. Taken together, these experiences have influenced our views on inclusion that are discussed in this chapter.

We are supportive of the inclusion of most forms of diversity in education, including many (but not all) children with disabilities. By "inclusion" we mean inclusion of the human body (unless otherwise stated), what Kauffman and Badar (2020) refer to as *habeas corpus* inclusion. Inclusion meaning students being engaged in appropriate, meaningful instruction (what Kauffman and Badar called *proprium instructio*) is one and the same as *habeas corpus* inclusion for most, but not all, diverse students. Habeas corpus inclusion and *proprium instructio* inclusion are distinctly different with respect to students who are diverse by virtue of having a disability.

Disability is a unique kind of diversity that requires responses different from those of all other diversities (Anastasiou and Kauffman 2012). Inclusion does not apply in the same way to all possible forms of diversity when it comes to learning. To assume that disabilities warrant the same thinking and action as any other form of diversity is a mistake. Other mistaken or nonsensical ideas include assertions that special

education is disgraceful. It has even been said to be tainted by or akin to Nazism (see discussion by Ahrbeck and Felder 2021). In response to accusations of disgrace, Zigmond and Kloo (2017) have this to say:

> The disgrace is that we have forgotten that special education is supposed to be special and that wherever it is delivered, it is supposed to be different. That's what we fought for. That's what makes IDEA [the U. S. law known as the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*] different from other civil rights legislation, for minorities, for English language learners, for girls. We fought to have some students with disabilities treated differently, given more opportunity, more intensive instruction, more individually tailored curriculum, more carefully designed instruction. It's time to renew the commitment to students with disabilities and to ensure the programs and resources necessary to fulfill that commitment. (p. 259)

Our perspective is that public schools should be fully inclusive of diversities other than disabilities and of SWD as well, *but only when such inclusion is appropriate*. In our subsequent comments, we write primarily about SWD and *habeas corpus* inclusion. Moreover, our contention is that "segregated" and variants of that word serve no purpose other than to denigrate any educational environment that is dedicated specifically to the education of SWD (Gliona et al. 2005).

16.2 Inclusion of Most Diversities

Most of the diversities we see in public education in all nations of the world—e.g., racial, ethnic, cultural, sexual, and religious diversities—are relatively easily accommodated by changing only the hearts and minds of the public and school personnel. School personnel and families need to accept the specified differences without making drastic changes in instruction. Thus, little or nothing but racial inequities and prejudices prevent the full inclusion of students who differ in those ways. There is little or no need for special instruction of students depending on their skin hue, heritage, gender or sexual orientation, socio-economic status, and many other kinds of

diversity that may be part of one's identity. This is different when educating SWD.

16.3 Inclusion of Students with Disabilities

16.3.1 Parents' Views of and Attitudes Toward Inclusion

Parents of SWD have been extremely important in establishing policy, facilities, and services, including securing the expectation of appropriate education for their children. Some leaders in special education hope that we can provide effective warning for both parents and educators about the difference between simply "being there" and making maximum educational progress.

In the USA, in the 1960s, parents' grassroots efforts resulted in legislation ensuring that children with disabilities were included in public schools. These early parental efforts focused on children simply "being there." More recent grassroots efforts by parents focus not on *where* their children are educated but on the *instruction* their children receive. Decoding Dyslexia (DD), which began with eight parents in New Jersey, is an organization of parents concerned with the lack of evidence-based interventions for children with dyslexia and other language-based learning disabilities that are routinely available in public schools. DD has grown to include chapters in all 50 states and four Canadian provinces. DD's goals include:

1. A universal definition and understanding of "dyslexia" in state education codes;
2. Mandatory teacher training on dyslexia, its warning signs, and appropriate intervention strategies;
3. Mandatory early screening tests for dyslexia;
4. Mandatory remediation programs, which can be accessed by both general and special education populations; and
5. Access to appropriate assistive technologies in the public-school setting for students with dyslexia (Decoding Dyslexia n.d.).

DD advocacy is at least partially responsible for successfully promoting legislation at the state level (Youman and Mather 2018). Legislation is in the books in all but four states—Hawaii, Idaho, South Dakota, and Vermont, and legislation is pending in South Dakota and Vermont (Dyslexic Advantage 2020).

A colleague who recognized the critical support of parents in the formulation of special education law in the U. S. (Martin 2013), now generally known as the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA), spoke to the current role of parents. Martin wrote:

> I wonder if we can link more productively with experienced parents, those who fought for and won Special Ed battles. It is understandable that some parents would be attracted to "inclusion" as a concept, who isn't? But the experienced parents know about sitting in a classroom without any real instruction or improvement. We can warn them about failures to assure that progress is happening. (E. W. Martin Jr., October 16, 2020, personal communication with co-author Kauffman)

The progress to which Martin refers is progress in learning not only academic skills, but also life skills. Both are important for SWD, and failure to acquire and master such skills will hamper their inclusion in activities outside the school environment. Kauffman and colleagues (Kauffman et al. 2020a, b) noted how extreme social policies have created problems in the past and warned that headlong commitment to an ideology or proposition without careful thinking and precise language can become counterproductive. The consequences of failure to think and talk precisely about the particular diversities of SWD will be disastrous for their education and their lives more generally (Kauffman and Badar 2014).

The views of parents about inclusion have long been and continue to be of prime importance in ensuring the effectiveness of education for all SWD. This is especially so because the support and involvement of parents is considered essential for facilitating optimum outcomes for SWD wherever they are educated (De Boer et al. 2010; Hornby 2011; Martin 2013). There is a long history of the views of parents about

inclusion being sought, and there is an extensive literature about this, beginning in the 1980s and continuing to the present day.

In an early study, McDonnell (1987) surveyed 253 parents of children with severe disabilities in the USA regarding their satisfaction with their children's educational placement. Of the 120 parents whose children attended special schools, 66 per cent reported that their children had previously been in integrated (i.e., inclusionary) settings. Of the 133 parents whose children attended classes integrated into mainstream schools, 73% had previously attended special schools. Results showed that there were no differences in levels of satisfaction with their children's current placement between parents of integrated and special school children. Both sets of parents reported high levels of satisfaction with the overall quality of their children's educational program.

Simpson and Myles (1989) surveyed parents of children with learning and behavioral difficulties in the USA concerning their views on mainstreaming. They found that 76% of parents were willing to support the inclusion of their children *if certain specified resources were provided*. Only 25% of the parents were willing to support mainstreaming without guarantees about these additional resources.

Lowenbraun et al. (1990) surveyed parents in the USA to determine their satisfaction with the placement of their children with disabilities in integrated classrooms of typically eight such children and 24 non-handicapped peers. They found that 88% of parents were satisfied with the placement, even though only 42% of them had initially requested it. However, they also found that parents of children who had previously been in resource room placements were slightly more satisfied with this arrangement than with their current integrated class placements.

Kidd and Hornby (1993) surveyed the parents of 29 children in the UK who got transferred from special schools for children with moderate learning difficulties into mainstream schools. Fourteen months after the transfer, they found that, overall, 65% of parents were satisfied with the transfer. However, there was a clear difference between satisfaction rates for parents of children integrated into special classes in mainstream schools as opposed to those placed in mainstream classes. Parents of 92% of the children placed in special classes were satisfied, but this was the case for only 47% of parents of children placed in mainstream classes.

Jenkinson (1998) surveyed 193 Australian parents about the factors influencing their choice of either inclusive education or special schools for their child with disabilities. Parents preferring mainstream schools were more concerned about normalization and academic aspects, whereas those opting for special schools focused on special programs, teacher-student ratios, and children's self-esteem. The majority of parents surveyed expressed satisfaction with the current school setting attended by their child whether this was a mainstream school or a special school.

Runswick-Cole (2008) interviewed 24 parents in the UK that had been contacted through agencies supporting SWD. Some were seeking inclusive school placements, some specialist teaching within mainstream schools, and others sought special school placements. Parents who focused on individual instruction tended to prefer special schools, whereas those who focused on barriers to learning rather than within-child factors preferred mainstream school placements.

De Boer et al. (2010) reviewed the literature on parental views of inclusive education and found that the majority of parents involved in the 10 studies that were analyzed reported positive views about inclusion, but also reported various concerns, including the availability of services and individualized instruction.

Paseka and Schwab (2020) reported data from 2000 parents involved in a nationwide survey in Germany, which indicated that parents' views about inclusive education depended on the specific type of disability of their child. Parents of children with physical disabilities or learning disabilities were more positive about inclusion than parents of children with behavioral disorders or cognitive disabilities.

In conclusion, the findings of research on parents' views of special and inclusive placements suggest that they are neither

overwhelmingly for nor against the practice of inclusion but consider that for some SWD, and at some times, they prefer separate special education placements and at others, they prefer more inclusive placements. Thus, a uniform requirement of placing all SWD in general education settings is certain to override the preferences of some parents and deny them the right to choose the most appropriate setting for their children. This would be the most unfortunate outcome, which might be anticipated if readers of the United Nations CRPD, article 24 interpret "full inclusion" to mean inclusion in the sense of *habeas corpus* (Anastasiou et al. 2018). More appropriate, in our opinion, is the maintenance of a range of placements (in U. S. law called a continuum of alternative placements or CAP) from which parents may choose, depending on the nature of the child's disabilities and the child's age and circumstances.

16.3.2   Teachers' Attitudes Toward Inclusion

A key element in the discussion of inclusion is teachers' views, the professionals who have the major responsibility for implementing it. Teachers' attitudes may be a factor in the success of inclusive practices and can affect their commitment to implementing them. Thus, numerous studies of teachers' views have been conducted for decades (e.g., Cook and Cook 2020; Hornby 1999). We focus here on the most influential systematic reviews and some recent studies on this topic.

Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996) reviewed 28 survey reports from 1958 to 1995, relating to general education teacher perceptions of inclusion. About two-thirds of the teachers (65%) supported the general concept of inclusion, but they indicated different levels of support for including students with different disability conditions. A smaller percentage (53%) of general education teachers was willing to teach SWD in their own classrooms. About half of the general education teachers and about two-thirds of special education teachers considered that inclusion

could benefit students with and/or without disabilities. However, only 33 percent of teachers in 10 reviewed surveys agreed that the general education classroom was the best place for SWD or that full-time inclusion would produce social or academic benefits relative to resource room or special class placement (Scruggs and Mastropieri 1996, p. 65). A minority (28%) of teachers agreed that they had sufficient time for inclusion, and roughly one third (29%) considered that general education teachers had sufficient expertise or training for inclusion.

Avramidis and Norwich (2002) conducted a review of the literature (1984–2000) which showed that teachers are positive about integration/inclusion. However, no evidence of acceptance of "total inclusion" or a "zero reject" approach to special educational provision was found (p. 129). Teachers' attitudes were more influenced by the nature of the disabling condition and environment-related variables (e.g., social and physical support) rather than teacher-related characteristics. Teachers held more positive attitudes toward the inclusion of students with mild disabilities, physical disabilities, and sensory impairments than students with more complex needs. Specifically, they held more negative attitudes toward the inclusion of students with severe learning needs and behavioral disabilities. Teacher-related variables were inconsistent and not found to be a strong predictor of educators' attitudes (Avramidis and Norwich 2002).

About a decade later, De Boer et al. (2011) reviewed 26 international studies (including 10 studies from the USA) published between 1998 and 2008 relating to primary school teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education. They found that most teachers held neutral or negative attitudes toward the inclusion of SWD in regular primary schools. No studies reported clear positive attitudes of teachers. Teachers with less teaching experience held more positive attitudes toward the inclusion of SWD than those with more years of teaching experience. Teachers who had previous experience with inclusive education held more positive attitudes than teachers who had no or less experience with inclusive

education. Finally, teachers held more positive attitudes toward the inclusion of students with physical or sensory impairments but more negative attitudes toward students with intellectual disabilities, attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and moderate or severe emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD) (De Boer et al. 2011).

In a recent meta-analysis, van Steen and Wilson (2020) reviewed 50 international studies published between 1994 and 2019 that included 64 effect sizes. Of the effect sizes, only five came from U.S. studies. They found that effect sizes for in-service and pre-service teachers were medium-sized, with teachers holding overall positive attitudes toward the inclusion of SWD, $d = + 0.51$, 95% CI [0.31, 0.71]. When considering other moderators, student (pre-service) teachers showed more positive attitudes toward inclusion than primary school teachers. Higher levels of individualism, a cultural variable, was related to more positive attitudes toward inclusion. Demographic variables (pre-service or primary school teachers, teacher gender) did not significantly affect teachers' attitudes toward inclusion. However, one of the limitations of this meta-analysis was the relatively high level of missing data in moderator coding (van Steen and Wilson 2020, p. 11).

In a review of highly cited research studies on inclusion, Cook and Cook (2020) included five surveys of teachers and one survey of principals toward inclusion. Teachers' attitudes were generally favorable toward the inclusion of students with physical disabilities, speech, and language impairments. However, teachers and principals were relatively unsupportive of including students with EBD. In general, teachers held more negative attitudes toward students with hidden or not immediately observable disabilities than more obvious disabilities (Cook and Cook 2020). Less experienced teachers were more optimistic about inclusion, whereas more experienced teachers were less optimistic. Two surveys in this review had found that teachers' positive attitudes toward inclusion correlated positively with high self-efficacy (Cook and Cook 2020).

A positive relationship between self-efficacy beliefs and attitudes toward inclusion was found in recent studies in Germany (Ahrbeck and Giese 2020) and Finland (Saloviita 2020b). However, in another Finnish study ($N = 4567$) by Saloviita (2020a)—including classroom teachers, teachers of particular subjects (e.g., math, science), resource room, and special education class teachers—there was very low support for the concept of inclusion. Teachers worried that inclusive placements would cause extra work for them. Positive attitudes toward inclusion were associated with confidence in the existence of support networks and sufficient access to educational resources, such as an in-classroom teaching assistant (Saloviita's 2020a). Savoliita (2020a, b) argued that a vicious cycle exists between resources and teacher attitudes. An adverse climate toward inclusion prevents legislation guaranteeing adequate resources for mainstream teachers in inclusive classrooms, and, in turn, the lack of legal guarantees maintains negative teacher attitudes toward inclusive education (Saloviita 2020a). A survey in Germany found that although 54% of teachers supported inclusive education, 42% of teachers thought that even with adequate resources, SWD should be taught in special education settings (FORSA 2017). Teachers who had experience with inclusion were more favorable toward inclusion. However, even in this group, 38% of teachers with direct inclusion experience rejected it (FORSA 2017). FORSA has been conducting regular surveys in Germany for the *Verband Bildung und Erziehung* (VBE), a teacher's union since 2015. The most recent survey from 2020 came to the conclusion that conditions in schools are still very poor when it comes to inclusion, even after more than 11.5 years of the ratification of the CRPD. Conditions that support inclusive education, such as team-teaching of regular and special educators, smaller classrooms, multi-professional teams, accessible school buildings, and professional development for teachers in the area of special and inclusive education continue to be poorly implemented. This led to the result that in the latest 2020 survey, 83% of the 2127

general education teachers surveyed support the continuation of special schools (VBE 2020). Savoliita (2020a) found that special education teachers had a more positive attitude toward inclusive education than general classroom teachers and teachers of a particular subject (Saloviita 2020b). Attitudinal barriers in Finland seem particularly high in teachers who teach secondary school, possibly because the focus is more on subject matter than student development (Saloviita 2020a). This is consistent with the fact that in some countries (e.g., Germany), inclusion at the pre-school and elementary school level is practiced more often than in middle or high school (Mensch 2020). Thus, attitudes toward the most appropriate setting for education depend a great deal on the student's age and stage of development.

Recently, Heyder et al.'s (2020) study involving 757 teachers found that teachers' attitudes was correlated with the social inclusion of SWD. However, teachers' skills and knowledge about educating SWD in an inclusive classroom may moderate the effects of attitudes. Thus, besides attitudes, teachers' knowledge and skills seem to play an important role in inclusive education (Heyder et al. 2020). Knowledge and skills may make teachers more confident and increase their self-efficacy in teaching SWD.

Overall findings from the numerous studies reviewed indicate that teachers have a more nuanced view of inclusion than that envisioned under a *full inclusion* policy. Empirical research highlights the necessity of special education expertise as well as the need for general teacher training in teaching SWD in inclusive classrooms. Of critical importance for a positive change in attitudes toward inclusion is the administrative support and the availability of resources. Without a reliable and legally binding support system, it appears that attitudes toward inclusion tend to be negative. For example, Heyder et al. (2020) found that SWD felt less socially integrated than their classmates without special educational needs and emphasized that *physical inclusion* does not automatically mean *social integration* (Heyder et al. 2020).

16.3.3 Issues for All Educators

Disabilities present distinct problems for teachers because they are often (but not always) related to learning and often (but not always) demand instruction that is different from that of most other students. In providing appropriate education for SWD, discrimination or prejudice may be involved as well as a need for special instruction. However, in a full-inclusion model, such discrimination may involve denying delivery of appropriate instruction in environments other than the general education classroom as well as denying access to teaching in the general education classroom for SWD who can thrive there. Therefore, failure to see how disability differs from other diversities in its demands for varied treatment can have tragic consequences for SWD in schools (Wiley et al. 2019).

We understand that disability per se does not demand special education, that only the special educational needs of SWD require special education. We also know that students who do not have disabilities sometimes have exceptional educational needs, and we do not object to the assumption that general education teachers meet these educational needs. However, the assumption that general education teachers should be expected to meet <u>all</u> of the special educational needs of <u>all</u> SWD <u>all</u> of the time has no solid empirical evidence.

One special problem of placing all SWD in general education classes is making the judgment that no public-school student is most appropriately taught somewhere other than the general education classroom. Undergirding the idea that such a placement should not be allowed because such students do not exist has become increasingly popular. Part of the idea of full inclusion, explicit or implicit in recent school reform proposals, is that instructional failures are not usually because of the extent of children's needs, but instead are ordinarily caused by teachers' unwillingness or inability to meet these instructional needs. This leads to the judgment that a student's needs cannot be met in a particular environment or placement should never be

accepted because it is always possible for a teacher to find a way to teach that child regardless of where he or she is placed.

In our estimation, such conjecture—the proposition that the general education classroom can be made appropriate for all students—is ill-advised in planning the education of SWD. That is, claims of the advisability of full inclusion for all SWD in general education and claims of the past or potential future appropriate education of all SWD in general education—and the frequent mantra "all means all"—are best met with incredulity. Suppose that all SWD—all of them, each and every one of them—can best be taught in general education along with their age peers suggests unbending ideological commitment to inclusion at the cost of high-quality education (Anastasiou et al. 2018).

We acknowledge the worldwide optimism about inclusion in general public education of SWD. Much enthusiasm seems to have been created by documents from the United Nations (see Anastasiou et al. 2018, 2020) and leaders in the study of disabilities (see Kauffman and Hornby 2020). Enthusiasm is also derived from the idea that differences called disabilities, like those defining color, gender, heritage or culture, and so on, are socially constructed and/or should be treated as similarly inconsequential for the place in which any student is taught. Just why this is the case is not always clear, but a highly esteemed colleague (who shall remain anonymous) emailed observations about contributing factors involving the aims of people in the education community, their attitudes toward scientific evidence to support their suggestions, and their concern for the lives of the students involved:

> Over the years I developed a sense that there are people in the education community (in all areas, and at all levels) who are guided by nothing more than self-interest and dogma. I used to think they had an ideology, but it became clear to me that some elements within the inclusion "movement" have neither the appetite for, interest in, nor capacity for constructive argument; they seek only to push their threadbare, evidence-lite drivel down everyone else's throats, and without a single thought for the young people's lives that are blighted by their poorly formulated ideas.

16.3.4 Students with Severe Disabilities

Many students with severe disabilities need instruction in life skills that those with less severe disabilities (or none) do not. Such SWD may not be included in general education for reasons related to their individual education programs (IEPs in U. S. law) (Bateman 2017; Kauffman et al. 2019). The pretense that students who need instruction in basic self-care skills will receive appropriate instruction in the context of a general education classroom is not tenable (Kauffman et al. 2020d).

We note that the severity of disability is multifaceted. That is, any disability in and of itself can be severe. However, single disabilities are relatively rare. In most cases, students have multiple disabilities, and severity can be a function of the multiplicity of disabilities. In many cases, multiple disabilities create uniquely challenging difficulties for teachers.

16.3.5 SWD Whose Disabilities Are Sensory

Also questionable is the claim that the general education setting is always the best environment for deaf students learning to communicate with others or blind students learning orientation and mobility skills. In fact, the National Association of the Deaf has adhered to a long-standing position statement supporting a full continuum of alternative placements and denouncing full inclusion: "Placement of all deaf and hard of hearing children in regular education classrooms, in accordance with an inclusion doctrine rooted in ideology, is a blatant violation of the IDEA with serious consequences for many deaf and hard of hearing children" (National Association for the Deaf 2002). Zebehazy and Lawson (2017) point out the necessity of understanding the unique educational needs of students who are blind or have low vision, which cannot always be met in general education.

16.3.6 SWD Whose Disabilities Are not Severe

Appropriate instruction of SWD whose disabilities are less severe and the challenge of meeting these students' special educational needs is another matter. For these students, special—i.e., different—education is required. Sometimes, such different, special education is possible in the context of general education, but suggesting that nothing different is required is not consistent with what special education means. Zigmond and Kloo (2017) argued that special and general education must be different and that this is a matter of logic as well as U. S. law.

> Parents, legislators, and teachers themselves complain that general education teachers are not equipped to meet the educational needs of students with disabilities. The disgrace is not that general education teachers are not adequately prepared to deliver a special education to the students with disabilities in their large and diverse classrooms. The disgrace is that we have come to believe that special education is so not-special that it can be delivered by a generalist, busy teaching 25 other students a curriculum that was generated by the school board, or state, or federal level. (p. 259)

The nature of special education and how it differs from general education have been delineated by others as well (e.g., Kauffman et al. 2018; Pullen and Hallahan 2015). Pullen and Hallahan (2015) concluded that special education in the context of general education is not always feasible because it is clear that special education is both qualitatively and quantitatively different from general education. First and foremost, they note, special education instruction is individualized and leads to mastery of specified skills, which is not always possible in the general education setting. Therefore, instruction and environment cannot be considered entirely separate qualifiers of special education.

Teaching is far more complicated than many people think, and teaching groups that are more diverse in what students know and need to learn are more difficult to teach, especially if all the students are to be taught well. Furthermore, the idea that good special education is simply good teaching, that one need not specialize in teaching

specific subject matter or type of student, reflects gross ignorance of the task. Certainly, there are core competencies required for any skilled craft or profession, but in all areas of highly skilled work, specialization is necessary. Kauffman et al. (2020c) denounced the notion that teaching requires no specialization with comparisons of teaching to driving, flying, building, practicing medicine or dentistry or law, and so on.

Yet, in 2014, the Iowa Professional Teaching Practices Commission proposed a single special education endorsement for all levels of instruction (K-12) and all levels of severity for all types of disability. This unfounded assumption of the adequacy of some sort of generic teaching skills led Kauffman et al. (2020c) to conclude:

> Teachers who take their task seriously understand the ignorance of someone who asks, "Who knew teaching could be so complicated?" Experienced, competent teachers also understand how adding to the learning diversity of a group of students (not the group's racial, ethnic, gender, or other diversities that do not determine learning) adds to the difficulty of effective instruction. As with virtually any task, some will claim that whatever activity (teaching, building, playing a musical instrument or sport, etc.) is easy—claim to have a simple solution to the challenge of its mastery. For more than 45 years, some special education leaders have supported the fiction that general educators should be able, at least with help from special educators at their elbows, to teach all children without exception, including those with disabilities (e.g., Reynolds 1974).
>
> In education, differentiation is often presented as an easy, or at least eminently doable, solution to teaching diverse groups. Inclusion of the most difficult students in general education is sometimes presented as something all teachers worth their salt can accomplish with a little extra effort, a little help, and/or reasonable determination. Aspersions are then cast on good general education teachers who say they can't do it or can't do it well. We hope that one legacy of the inclusion movement in education will be better understanding of the complexities and demandingness of teaching. (Kauffman et al. 2020c, pp. 261–262)

Beyond the rational consideration of the task of teaching is coherent thinking about the nature of substantive social justice. The words "social justice" are often used, and rightly so, in defense of individuals who have been discriminated against for reasons unrelated to their disability

(e.g., skin hue, heritage, or religion). That is, people are treated differently (unequally) when there is no good reason to do so. But, what of cases in which there *is* good reason to do so? Then, identical treatment (or failure to provide appropriate treatment) is unfair and discriminatory. Anastasiou et al. (2018) included an analysis of how this is ignored in article 24 (on education) of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (the CRPD), which calls for full inclusion but does not define it.

> The common denominator, under article 24, is over-emphasis of the principle of equality of treatment and under-emphasis of the principle of differential treatment based on special educational needs. … High quality education for all requires that we not disregard the atypical needs of any human being. To paraphrase Aristotle, there is nothing more unequal than the same and invariant educational treatment of people with unequal learning capabilities. [see also Greenhouse 2020] Beyond equality of opportunity as antidiscrimination and/or inclusion as physical presence in general classrooms, we need a pluralistic and contextualized approach to social justice operationalized by a needs-based analysis. For this reason, we need to add two other important principles, relevance and proportion, to achieve social justice Relevance to learning and behavioural special needs demands that people be treated more or less the same, unless there are relevant educational reasons for treating them differently. … A society dedicated to fulfill the needs of all PWD [persons with disabilities] does not depart from ideals of equality if, at some stage in their educational course, students follow different curricula in different settings. Quite the contrary, it extends equality in the direction of fairness and justice, and in our view this is the best way of maximizing learning. (pp. 688-689)

Greenhouse (2020) describes how imprecision of language, and therefore, distorted thinking about justice, is terrifying, not just depressing. Precision of language is sorely lacking in special education (Kauffman and Badar 2014). We who advocate for special education as *proprium instructio*, not *habeas corpus* (e.g., Hornby 2014; Kauffman and Badar, 2020, Warnock 2005), find the prospect of losing special education because of such imprecision both terrifying and depressing (Kauffman et al. in press). An example of imprecise language in speaking of the inclusion of SWD—perhaps, as Orwell (1954) suggested, a reflection of sloppy thinking—is the refrain "all means all." If that phrase is taken literally to mean that all means each and everyone, then how many cases are needed to refute it? Precisely one, of course. If it is not taken literally, then "all" means only those for whom inclusion is found appropriate. And that is precisely why special education law in the USA addresses individuals, not groups with disabilities, requires individual education programs (IEPs) for SWD, and requires that appropriate placement be selected from a full continuum of alternative placements (not a continuum of services, but a continuum of placements).

The gross imprecision of our language about disabilities was described in an essay by Kauffman (1999), who called for the kind of hope without denial exhibited by Hungerford (1950). Kauffman quoted Bible scripture to illustrate a point about inclusion: "… what man is there of you whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?" (Matthew 7:9–10, KJV). He went on to say:

> But there are those who confuse these things, who would not discriminate serpent from fish, who suggest that we let others eat stones and pretend they are eating bread. In this confused state, some would as soon celebrate the gift of disability as give the gift of teaching, would fail to see the difference between the stone of ``being there'' and the bread of learning critical skills, or would accept social deviance in place of prosocial behavior. When it guides practice, this confusion is a moral catastrophe…. (Kauffman 1999, p. xi)

16.4 Summary and Conclusion

We discuss problems in achieving inclusive and quality education for SWD as envisioned by UN's SDG 4, acknowledging that tensions depend on what is meant by *inclusive* education. This tension is also evident in the CRPD (Anastasiou et al. 2018). Inclusive education may mean participation in the worldwide quest for the

right to education of SWD in the same place as all other students *or* to appropriate instruction, even if that means teaching SWD and students without disabilities in different places (environments or settings). Teachers' and parents' perspectives consistently, throughout long-past and recent decades, support a view of inclusive education that puts appropriate education ahead of the place of education. Common learning experiences of SWD and students without disabilities are generally viewed as positive, but not necessarily at all times and also not for all students, depending on their abilities and needs, the abilities of their teachers, and on the resources provided by states and governments. Quality education can only be reached if an individual child's potential can be accessed. It appears that accessing this potential may occur in the general education setting for many—but not *all* SWD. Voices of teachers and parents need to be heard in the quest for inclusive education, as they and their children are the ones who must live with the consequences for the rest of their lives.

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James M. Kauffman is Professor Emeritus of Education, University of Virginia. Before entering higher education, he was a teacher in both general and special education.

Bernd Ahrbeck is professor of psychoanalytic pedagogy at the International Psychoanalytical University (IPU-Berlin); he previously taught at Humboldt University, Berlin.

Dimitris Anastasiou is Associate Professor of Special Education, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale. His publications include disability rights and policy, comparative special education, and educational interventions in reading and writing.

Jeanmarie Badar is an independent scholar who for more than 25 years taught students with a variety of disabilities.

Jean B. Crockett is Professor Emeritus of Education at the University of Florida. Prior to working in higher education, she was a teacher and administrator in both general and special education.

Marion Felder is Professor, University of Applied Sciences, Koblenz, Germany. Her work includes research on inclusion and rehabilitation.

Daniel P. Hallahan is Professor Emeritus of Education, University of Virginia. He is the father of an adult daughter with a developmental disability.

Garry Hornby is Professor Emeritus of Education, University of Plymouth. Before entering higher education, he was a teacher in both general and special education and an educational psychologist.

Joao Lopes is Professor in the School of Psychology, University of Minho, Portugal. Learning and behavior problems, as well as teacher education, are his main areas of work and research.

Paige C. Pullen is Chief Academic Officer and Research Professor at the University of Florida, Lastinger Center for Learning. She has taught in general and special education and is the stepmother of an adult daughter with a developmental disability.

Carl R. Smith has spent most of his professional career working on issues related to serving students with emotional or behavioral disorders. He is Professor Emeritus, Iowa State University's School of Education.

The Importance of Children and Young People's Voices in Debates on Inclusive Education

17

Kim Collett and Christopher Boyle

Abstract

This chapter argues that research, debates and policy on inclusive education cannot be well informed, and successful inclusive practices implemented, without prioritising the voices of children and young people. There are barriers and tensions arising in achieving this especially in secondary school level teaching. Nevertheless, there are examples of how these may be overcome. Recent studies show that there are methods and practices which can work although further research is needed to explore this under researched area in more depth. Placing the voices of children and young people into the context of other key stakeholders is also examined as this can enable a comparison on differences and commonalities, leading to dialogue and more successful change.

17.1 Introduction

The term inclusive education has not had a universally accepted definition since it first appeared in the 1980s (Nilholm and Goransson 2017).

K. Collett
University of Exeter, Exeter, UK

C. Boyle (✉)
University of Adelaide, Adelaide, Australia
e-mail: chris.boyle@adelaide.edu.au

Messiou (2017) suggested that there are six main interpretations of inclusive education:

- Including children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in mainstream education
- Children and young people excluded for disciplinary reasons
- Including all children and young people vulnerable to exclusion
- School for all children and young people
- Education for all children and young people
- An overarching principled approach to education and society.

In the United Kingdom, the definition has historically been entwined with SEND and it is argued that this is still the case (Florian 2019; Symeonidou and Mavrou 2019). However, globally there is a move towards considering inclusion as education for all (UNESCO 2020a). This is not particularly new to many but being clearer that 'inclusive education is good education' (Richler 2012, p. 177) and coming from an international organization with reach and gravitas, such as UNESCO, it is a strong statement. There are additional definitions and concepts within inclusive education which could also be discussed but what is of significance, is that inclusive education can be, and is, viewed in multiple ways (Anderson et al. 2014; Dimitrellou et al. 2018).

A reason for this could be that inclusive education is a socially constructed concept (Florian 2019). Therefore, it is subject to values, cultural interpretations and political preferences. Inclusive education is not a neutral concept but laden with social judgement (Goodall 2018). This leads to different opinions on what the term means, what the focus should be, and how best to implement practices. Nicaise (2012) suggested that this disagreement is not just confined to inclusive education but includes fundamental discussions on equality objectives, the underpinning of inclusivity itself. There are contradictions and ambiguities within the Salamanca Statement (the key catalyst to international inclusive education), the conventions which followed, and policy, which further add to the confusion over what inclusive education is and how to define it (Ainscow et al. 2019; Messiou 2019).

The divergent nature of the term inclusive education causes confusion over how best to adopt inclusive practices, how to measure their success, and how to improve the experiences of the stakeholders involved. Different stakeholders within inclusive education will have different priorities, and this will in turn impact their views and actions (Messiou 2017; Goodall 2018). These stakeholders include policymakers, teachers, parents, and the children and young people who are the focus of inclusive education themselves.

17.1.1 Children and Young People's Perspectives

A significant amount of focus in inclusive education research, and decision making, negates the experiences and opinions of children and young people (Messiou 2019). The opinions and perspectives of 'experts' are favoured over those of children (Veck and Hall 2018). This translates to the facet of a child or young person's experiences of inclusive education being missed from research and knowledge gathering on the topic. There are limited numbers of studies that incorporate the words of children or young people

without a professional's narrative running through them (Goodall 2018).

This is despite the UNCRC stating how children have the right to be heard and should be listened to on issues and decisions impacting them (Rose and Shevlin 2017). This right is often summarised by the word 'voice'. By giving children and young people a voice, the opportunity for them to articulate their experiences, opinions, needs and desires is promoted to encourage adults to not only hear these but listen and act upon them. It is important to highlight that the term voice is normally used but in actual fact 'voices' would be a more appropriate term as children and young people are not one homogenous group. They will have different experiences and views to each other, and these can and will change (Messiou et al. 2020).

This commitment to listen to the voices of children and young people is absent from the Salamanca Statement, and as a significant portion of national policy is based on the themes and intentions of the Salamanca Statement, this could be an explanation as to why it is also absent from policy (Messiou 2019). A more recent revisiting of the Salamanca Statement by UNESCO (2020b) did not include specific consideration of the voices of children or young people but in the six actions that were recommended it would be remiss of subsequent report authors not to specifically included young people in the further development of inclusive education. It was not until 2014 that United Kingdom's legislation fully embraced voice with the passing of the Children and Families Act 2014 (Harris and Davidge 2019). Within this Act, it was written that children and young people should have an active role in decisions concerning them. This would enable them to have a voice and greater autonomy over their lives. However, as Harris and Davidge (2019) discovered there is little evidence confirming this is the case. It appears that children and young people's voices are only really considered when discussing decisions directly impacting individuals, such as writing an educational, health and care plan, and that this consideration is limited by a continued focus on the views and wishes of parents or carers. This is

exacerbated when the child or young person has additional support needs (Byrne 2019; Dimitrellou and Male 2020). Therefore, voices are missing from wider debates, knowledge gathering and policy making.

Messiou et al. (2020) suggested that even when children and young people's voices are sought this is only adopted in a tokenistic manner, through collaboration rather than full participation, leading to very little actual impact on decision making. There are assumptions that children and young people are unable to understand and communicate their experiences, opinions and suggestions for change (Harris and Davidge 2019). There are underlying assumptions on age, maturity and levels of cognitive ability (this is even more so the case if a child or young person has the label of SEND) (Messiou 2019). However, Norwich and Koutsouris (2017) provide an alternative stance on this. In addition to voice, the UNCRC also emphasises the importance of protecting children and young people, parental guidance and acting in the best interests of the child (UNICEF 2020). Therefore, this can provide a dilemma when trying to promote the voices of children and young people as tensions could arise when these elements conflict with each other. It is a difficult decision which to prioritise, and harsh compromises may have to be made (Norwich and Koutsouris 2017).

In addition to these theoretical and assumption based challenges, it could be suggested that the practical gathering of a child or young person's perspective is a particularly ambitious endeavour. Some children can be malleable to suggestion and offer answers which they think adults want to hear (Veck and Hall 2018). This can be exacerbated when culture and location influence the way in which children and young people's roles are viewed (Fay 2018). There are often greater power imbalances between adults and children, and language and ability can cause barriers especially in the field of SEND (Norwich and Kelly 2004). Even if a child can successfully articulate their opinions and experiences, it can be difficult for an adult to interpret these correctly (Florian and Beaton 2018); their narratives are viewed through the adult lens (Rose and Shevlin

2017). Exclusivity can also occur with participants being selected due to their willingness, abilities or experiences, or by the requirements of the research itself, such as the methods adopted and time commitments (Veck and Hall 2018). Thus, only the confident and most articulate children and young people are often considered (Dimitrellou and Male 2020). This then silences the children and young people who may be most at risk of being excluded in education, and society, from knowledge gathering on the topic (Byrne 2019).

Nonetheless, research has shown that children and young people are capable of knowing their life worlds and being able to express their thoughts and feelings on this, as well as make constructive suggestions on how to improve practice and contribute to reform (Allan 2006; Dimitrellou and Male 2020). Goodall (2018) states that even if it challenges theories and notions, promoting the voices of children in the study of inclusive education is a positive approach. Individuals are in the best position to be able to communicate their experiences and this will contribute to a greater understanding of what these are (Rose and Shevlin 2017). By listening to the voices of children and young people, the 'experts' will discover a different perspective, thereby expanding their knowledge and enabling change (Veck and Hall 2018). Therefore, it is important to tackle assumptions and challenges to enable a multiplicity of voices to be heard and acted upon (Messiou 2019; Ainscow 2020).

Despite voices of children and young people being a gap in the literature, there is an increased interest in listening to hidden voices especially those of children and young people, and particularly when they have a label of SEND. There are some researchers who have endeavoured to listen to the voices of children and/or young people in their research on inclusive education in recent studies. Goodall (2018) is a case in point.

Goodall (2018) conducted a study which did focus on listening to the voices of young people. Twelve students with Autistic Spectrum Conditions (ASC) at a mainstream secondary school in Northern Ireland took part in a qualitative

participatory study exploring their conceptualisations of inclusion. The study found that the young people thought of inclusion as being feelings of belonging, value, fairness and support rather than placement in mainstream. These findings challenge some of the key literature on inclusive education where definition is often related to placement (Goodall 2018). This is an illustration of where the experiences of young people do not match the opinions of 'experts' and thus demonstrates why it is important to listen to young people and build this into decisions about inclusive environments.

Boström and Broberg (2018) also conducted a study with the aim of listening to the voices of young people. They used questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with ten students with intellectual disabilities at a special school in Sweden. They concluded that the participants experienced inclusivity both at school and at home but that this could be both protective and restrictive. The study also found that wellbeing was high, and the students experienced positive mental health. Boström and Broberg (2018) highlight how it is difficult to compare these results to results in other literature as the views of young people with intellectual disabilities are absent. However, they could draw on research with parents and note that there were differences between the perceptions of parents and the perceptions of young people with intellectual disabilities. This again illustrates how valuable it is to gather the views of children and young people as they can differ from those of adults, 'experts' or otherwise.

Goodall (2018) and Boström and Broberg (2018) both highlight how the voices and views of young people with SEND can be gathered in research. However, both of these studies focused on a very small sample size and a specific category of SEND. Therefore, it cannot be assumed that the results reflect the experiences of children and young people elsewhere or who fit into other SEND categories, not that this was the aim or claim of either study.

However, what is of significance is that they both highlight the importance of studying the views and experiences of young people as these might be different from those of 'experts' and other stakeholders. Both of these studies recommend that young people are listened to more closely and more frequently. This view is supported by many others with calls to invite children and young people to enact, and to prioritise, the telling of their narratives (Rose and Shevlin 2017; Veck and Hall 2018; Messiou 2019; Messiou et al. 2020; Ainscow 2020).

17.1.2 Other Stakeholders

As previously discussed, seeking the voices of children and young people is vital in understanding inclusive education. However, it is also important to include all stakeholders in research, debate and decision making. Drawing on the experiences, knowledge and expertise of all these groups allows a more comprehensive and accurate insight (Roberts and Simpson 2016; Ainscow 2020). It can also elicit differences and commonalities between, and within, stakeholder groups. By identifying these, dialogue can occur causing a catalyst towards a consensus over what inclusion is, and what inclusive practices work (Ainscow 2020; Boyle et al. 2020). Nevertheless, it can be difficult to involve all stakeholders in research and discussions on inclusion due to being able to effectively offer suitable methods for all and the time commitments it would require.

Norwich (2017), Dimitrellou et al. (2018) and Sosnowy et al. (2018) have, however, conducted studies which sought to compare the experiences and views of children and young people with those of other stakeholders involved. These were primarily teachers but had the aim of drawing out the differences and commonalities.

Sosnowy et al. (2018) conducted semi-structured interviews with 20 participants with ASC to explore their experiences of friendship, having recently left high school. The study compared these with the perceptions of teachers and concluded that the young adults viewed the concept of friendship differently to how teachers viewed them. Thus, support provided at school might have been less effective in

meeting the needs of these participants. This study highlights where the perceptions and experiences of students and teachers differ, and how this might have a direct impact on the effectiveness of practice. Mayes et al. (2020) discuss the problems inherent in developing teachers' learning based on evidence from the voice of students.

Similarly, Norwich (2017) found differences in the experiences and views of teachers, parents and students although not to such a significant degree. Norwich (2017) presented 12 case studies based on interviews with children and young people, their parents, and their teacher or teaching assistant. The participants fell into a wide range of SEND categories as well as being from primary, secondary, special and mainstream schools. The case studies were presented to offer a diverse view on the experiences of children and young people with SEND to inform practice. There are many insights presented which reflects the diversity of the participants and their experiences. However, a great number of the concluding remarks focus on the experiences of the parents and teachers rather than the children and young people. Nonetheless, the case studies do suggest that children and young people can have differing views to those of teachers and teaching assistants in terms of labelling and levels of independent learning. For further discussion on labelling in special and inclusive education see Boyle (2014), Lauchlan and Boyle (2007, 2020), and Arishi and Boyle (2017).

Dimitrellou et al. (2018) have a slightly different conclusion to those of the two studies above (that of Norwich, 2017; Sosnowy et al. 2018, respectively). They used a mixed methods approach across three mainstream secondary schools in England to assess their inclusivity. The study found that a participant's experiences within the school directly impacted their opinion of its level of inclusivity. Therefore, there were differences between the educational practitioners, educational psychologists and the students participating. However, these differences appeared to be about specific details and the three groups of participants all agreed which schools were the most and least inclusive. Dimitrellou et al. (2018)

suggested that this finding is significant as commonalities could indicate that there are practices which are inclusive for all stakeholders. Thus, they call for more research into commonalities in order to confirm what these practices might be, as their study was small scale due to difficulties in recruiting participants.

There are a limited number of studies which aim to compare directly the experiences and views of children and young people with other stakeholders. Nevertheless, Norwich (2017), Dimitrellou et al. (2018) and Sosnowy et al. (2018) all suggested that there is significant value in seeking the experiences of both students and other stakeholders, as the differences and commonalities they share will inform practices and allow change.

Ainscow (2020) explored this idea from a point of practice in his current research. Eight secondary schools across three countries took part in action research where teachers collaborated with each other and students they deemed vulnerable, to plan lessons and evaluate their success. This study concluded that this collaboration, and dialogue, caused the teachers to rethink their teaching which led to more opportunities for their students to actively participate, as well as a change in the assumptions the teachers had made about student capabilities. This inclusive inquiry is currently being developed in 30 primary schools in five countries with greater emphasis on the ways in which teachers and students can create ongoing dialogue to inform everyday practices. This dialogue aims to interrupt the status quo to allow for questioning and creative action. By collaborating in this manner, these stakeholders can aim to develop a consensus on what inclusive practices look like which Ainscow (2020) hopes will filter through to a whole school approach. This dialogue allows for the ongoing promotion of the voices of children and young people. Nevertheless, this approach may prove too time consuming for every school to implement with potential reluctance from some students and teachers to participate. It is important to ensure that it is not just the most vocal stakeholders who are heard (Dunne et al. 2018). As Dimitrellou and Male

(2020) found, teachers may need significant training to allow them to effectively listen to the voices of children and young people, and children and young people have often found attempts to include voice in school programmes disappointing. These barriers contribute to the limited implementation of the views and suggestions of children and young people in practice.

17.1.3   Secondary Schooling

This limited promotion and implementation of voice is arguably exacerbated in secondary schooling where neoliberal and stratified systems are favoured. Norwich (2009) and Done and Andrews (2019) suggested that policies surrounding inclusive education at secondary school level are not necessarily supportive of inclusion and help to reinforce the conflict between achieving high academic standards and embedding inclusive practices. The complex nature of school systems, especially that of secondary schools, ensures that there are various levels of processes and/or soft (people) issues which have to be navigated. Anderson and Boyle (2014) considered the issues of inclusion in schools using an adapted model of Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory. Policies reject heterogeneity by creating generic regulations and guidance which does not allow for individual settings to make decisions based on the needs of their stakeholders (Middleton 2019; Liu et al. 2020). This is echoed by the inequality of stratified educational systems where children are selected, graded and streamed by academic talent and achievement (Done & Andrews 2019). Ability grouping encourages assumptions over capabilities causing lower expectations from teachers and lower self-confidence of students (Mazenod et al. 2019; Middleton 2019). This accumulates into students and teachers being constrained in their choices and behaviours (Mazenod et al. 2019). Thus, a lack of promotion of voices and creative interruptions to pedagogy are experienced (Hauerwas and Mahon 2018).

Secondary schools in the United Kingdom are large and complex organisations which are encultured in this approach of measuring and assessing young people by their academic skills (Florian 2019). This can create tension with the inclusion of students with SEND, for example, as they can be viewed as lowering the achievement ranking of a school due to lower grades (Slee 2018). It is suggested that mainstream schools cannot cater for the needs of individual students (Norwich 2019), and individuals not only do they have to adapt but are responsible for their own trajectories (Done and Andrews 2019; Florian 2019). There becomes a tension between a neoliberal focus on competition and including the voices of young people (Black 2019). Tensions also emerge as settings try to balance the policy and assessment criteria they are presented with, with the values and beliefs surrounding inclusion. Compromises are often required, and the suggestions and views of stakeholders may be casualties of this trade off (Norwich and Koutsouris 2017). Despite the evident complexities, De Vroey et al. (2016) and Van Mieghem et al. (2018) stated in their meta-reviews, there is limited research into inclusive education in secondary schools (e.g., Boyle et al. 2013) with even less research promoting the voices of children and young people within this educational sector.

However, Opie, Deppler and Southcott (2017), Saggers (2015) and Lamb et al. (2016) have all adopted qualitative methods with the aim that this would enable an accurate representation of mainstream secondary school students' voices. Opie et al. (2017) achieved this by conducting in-depth interviews with students who have visual impairments in order to explore their experiences of their support provisions in mainstream secondary schools. They found that the students did not believe they were supported in a way which enabled inclusive education. The study concluded that the experience of these students was contrary to the legal requirements of mainstream schools.

Saggers (2015) also used in-depth interviews, in conjunction with semi-structured interviews, to explore the experiences of children. This study focused on young people with ASC in one school and found that overall their experiences were

positive but there were inhibitors. Saggers (2015) concluded that hearing about inhibitors through the voices of the young people themselves, provided invaluable knowledge, as specifics could be identified and these could inform practice. This study illustrates the importance and benefit of hearing the voices of young people in inclusive education.

Both of the above studies were conducted in Australia, and while there are parallels between Australia and the United Kingdom there are also differences and therefore, these studies may not be representative of the United Kingdom's picture. However, Lamb et al. (2016) did conduct a study in the United Kingdom exploring inclusive education in secondary schools. They adopted a photo-elicitation method and asked students with ASC to photograph their experiences of physical education lessons; these were then used as prompts in unstructured interviews. They concluded that there were barriers to enjoyment and participation in physical education which could be addressed with relative ease in practice. This study concluded that the method of photography helped in empowering the students to show their own experiences leading to their voices being at the heart of the study.

What Opie et al. (2017), Saggers (2015) and Lamb et al. (2016) all have in common is that they advocated the utilisation of qualitative methods to enable a more accurate understanding and, therefore, a more accurate representation of the voices of their participants. This led to specific information being generated that could be used to inform practice. However, it could be argued that there is an overreliance on the method of interviewing to gather data in qualitative research. Opie et al. (2017) and Saggers' (2015) studies, as well as the studies discussed earlier by Norwich (2017), Sosnowy et al. (2018) and Boström and Broberg (2018), relied heavily on interviews to gather data. It has been suggested that interviews, especially semi-structured interviews, have become the default method for qualitative researchers and can be chosen without due consideration to their suitability (Potter and Hepburn 2012). Semi-structured interviews can be a very useful tool as they facilitate participants in telling their stories but with enough structure to keep focus on a study's research questions and aims (Robson 2015). However, the method of interviewing requires a certain level of verbal and cognitive ability from participants, as well as the confidence to articulate their experiences. Therefore, interviews can eliminate potential participants, thus, excluding their voices from the research (Williams et al. 2019). This is particularly important to consider when researching with children or young people, and when researching with people who may have additional needs such as SEND as they may be more likely to experience the barriers interviews present (Strack et al. 2004; Dell-Clark 2010; Call-Cummings et al. 2018). More creative, visual and participatory methods, such as the photo-elicitation method adopted by Lamb et al. (2016) and the mixed method approach by Goodall (2018), can make participation in studies more accessible to these groups (Kramer-Roy 2015; Call-Cummings et al. 2018).

Another arguable limitation of Opie et al (2017), Saggers (2015) and Lamb et al. (2016) studies is that they were all small in scale and cannot claim their findings to be a generalisation. However, none of them attempted to claim that they were. As with the majority of qualitative research (Crotty 1998), these studies appeared to follow the philosophical underpinnings of multiple and socially constructed realities, therefore, believing that the truth varies and changes. Findings are a snapshot of a certain group at a certain time and place which can add insight but cannot be assumed to be representative of the whole population (Atkinson 2017). As such all of the studies recommended further research into the experiences of children and young people with SEND and inclusive education.

Another commonality in which Opie et al. (2017), Saggers (2015) and Lamb et al. (2016) share is that their respective studies focus on one specific disability. Lamb et al. (2016) and Saggers (2015) both focussed on ASC, and Opie et al. (2017) focussed on visual impairments. None of them explored the cross section of students with and without SEND in a typical mainstream setting. Therefore, the voices of

potential participants have not been heard. It could be argued that consideration should be given to specific groups as young people are not a homogenous group (Oliver 2004; Done and Andrews 2019).

We cannot assume that young people at secondary school all share in the same experiences as identity and life worlds are multifaceted (Meerosha 2006; Messiou 2017). Students not only have needs which relate to a label they may have, such as SEND, but also those that all children and young people have, as well as those which are unique to them (Norwich 2009). There are some needs which will be easier to accommodate in a mainstream setting than others as there is such as wide range of requirements (Done and Andrews 2019). Labels can predetermine the treatment a student receives, and there is a risk that such a label comes with stigma and judgements which impact the learning and life chances of a child or young person (Florian 2019). Nevertheless, the removal of such a label is also a risk in itself as it could lead to the loss of support and protection (Norwich 2019). This dilemma of difference (Norwich 2009, 2019) is important to consider when researching and promoting the voices of stakeholders in inclusive education as it may well impact their experiences and views as well as the assumptions made by the researcher or person listening to their views. However, studies into inclusive education can be exclusive in their approach by restricting themselves to specific groups of students and therefore, not include all potential stakeholders who may want to have their voice heard (Veck and Hall 2018). This is an example of another tension which can exist in tying to elicit the voices of children and young people. The methodological or theoretical ideals of promoting the voices of children and young people can be difficult to implement in practice; tradeoffs may be needed (Norwich and Koutsouris 2017).

17.2 Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be argued that a significant barrier to the successful implementation of inclusivity is a lack of voice of the very people who will be required to experience the positives and/or the negatives of the environment. The experiences, views and suggestions of key stakeholders are limited in the debates and policy making surrounding inclusive education. This is especially the case for children and young people due to assumptions, the theorical challenges and practical barriers present. Nevertheless, children and young people are capable of knowing and expressing their experiences and views to the extent where reform can be achieved. Their voices can add insight into what barriers they face as well as what works. Viewing these voices in conjunction with other stakeholders is a valuable exercise where differences and commonalities can act as a catalyst for dialogue and change. There are methods in which this appears to be achievable but not without tensions and dilemmas emerging. Secondary level schooling may have even more of these tensions and challenges due to a continued focus on market competition brought on by incessant surge of neoliberalism in the public education sector. However, this should not deter the objective of promoting voices as this empowers agency and collaboration which is imperative in the strive towards creating inclusive schools.

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Kim Collett is a PhD student at the University of Exeter, and an Associate Lecturer with The Open University. Kim specialises in disability studies and inclusive education with a focus on promoting the voices of those often-facing exclusion.

Christopher Boyle, PhD, FBPsS, is a Professor of Inclusive Education and Educational Psychology in the School of Education at The University of Adelaide, Australia. He is a Fellow of the British Psychological Society and a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. He was previously the Editor in Chief of The Educational Academy. He was previously the Editor in Chief of The Educational and Developmental Psychologist (2012–2017) and is the founding co-editor of Belonging and Human Connection (with Kelly Allen) launched in 2022. He is an internationally recognised and respected academic and author on the subjects of inclusive education and psychology. He is a registered psychologist in the UK and Australia.

Educational Psychology: A Critical Part of Inclusive Education

18

Christine Grové and Stella Laletas

Abstract

How inclusive education is conceived and how this influences opportunities for students to effectively participate in school is a well known challenge. First, we will define and bridge concepts of educational psychology and inclusive education, followed by discussions pertaining to social responsibility that aim to address the challenges in achieving inclusion. We argue for approaches that align inclusive education with its ideals in terms of student-centred practices and policies as well as participatory research methods, sharing implications for the future. The authors draw on their experiences as educational psychologists and educators working in primary and secondary schools with vulnerable students over the last decade. Student-centred practices and participatory methods are approaches that draw on the educational psychologists' skills used when working in a school. We conclude with remarks about how inclusion may be enacted to ensure the best interests of all students including students with a disability and from diverse backgrounds in education and in research.

18.1 Introduction

Inclusive education is a response to global concerns that all children and young people have the right to have equal access to education that is responsive to their needs (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation [UNESCO] 2000). Inclusive education emphasises community and democratic participation in which teachers work together with the student, parents, primary caregiver and/or professionals to support the diverse needs of students. There is no surprise why educators may struggle to implement inclusive education initiatives, when there are different interpretations of practices and understanding of inclusion. As Slee (2006) describes, theory truly does travel and practices and policies are being renamed, rather than being changed. Yet the main objective, guided in part by the United Nations, is to establish 'Education for All' in an inclusive learning environment that relies on schools inflicting change. One of the UN's Sustainable Development goals for the next decade is to support nations in implementing inclusive education for every student. Small changes can lead to larger transformations;

C. Grové (✉) · S. Laletas
Faculty of Education, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia
e-mail: christine.grove@monash.edu

however, it seems that at times the influence of inclusive education policy is struggling to translate into practice (Higgins et al. 2008). This may be underpinned by barriers such as a lack of necessary attitudes, knowledge and skills to implement inclusive approaches that inform social change (Zwane and Malale 2018). Educational Psychology has a critical role to play in inclusive education. In response, there have been calls to conceptualise and understand educational inclusion through the lens of educational psychology and 'demystify' the role of school psychologists (Boyle and Lauchlan 2009; Kershner 2016; Thomas 2012)—the foci of this chapter.

Psychological approaches are often ignored in the conversation about inclusive education (Kershner 2016). There may be rationale for this given that the perception is often one that psychologists only provide assessments; however, this is but one tool in the professional kit of resources (Greenstein 2016). In educational settings, there are pressures and perceived expectations on teacher performance that can promote practices that discourage inclusive approaches in teaching. The authors argue that from a systemic level the field of educational psychology has a critical role to play in bridging understandings about what constitutes inclusive education in schools and how educators can enact inclusive teaching in regular classrooms. From the field of educational psychology, inclusive education is essentially about listening to unfamiliar voices; providing support and opportunities to all students to participate in the learning environment; and being open to new ways of thinking and practice.

18.1.1 The Educational Psychology and Inclsuive Education Connection

It can be argued that the core philosophy of inclusive education, 'Education for All', has not changed over time. Inclusive education became a worldwide priority after the release of The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (United Nations

Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation [UNESCO] 1994), which recommended that students with a disability attend the same educational institutions as the general population and have access to the same curriculum, increasing their opportunities for success and acceptance in wider society. The nature of an individual's participation in events determines their capacity for active citizenship (Hardy and Woodcock 2015).

Inclusive education is about human rights and the possibilities for enhancing lives through education (Cologon 2013). The aim is to achieve social justice by providing everyone with access to education, regardless of circumstances, creating opportunities for all people to experience success (Hardy and Woodcock 2015). For students with a disability, inclusive education involves the provision of services enabling access to a curriculum in regular classroom settings, increasing students' participation in learning and social activities (Nasibullov et al. 2015). The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) (2014) outlines competencies that teachers need to possess. AITSL (2014) states that teachers should understand how students from diverse backgrounds learn (including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners), how best to promote an inclusive environment to support all students, regardless of their background, and they should ensure that the safety and wellbeing of students is a priority. Additionally, the Australian curriculum indicates that it is imperative that students develop an intercultural understanding of the world (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA] 2017). Unfortunately, there is substantial evidence to suggest that we are yet to achieve this vision, which has profound impacts on both minority (Yared et al. 2020; Smith et al. 2003) and non-minority individuals (Baron and Banaji 2006).

A potential challenge of inclusion has arisen because of the current structure of society, which expects people to fit into a pre-existing model of the world. Consequently, the act of being included is misunderstood as the ability to blend in, hiding or suppressing characteristics which may

not be widely accepted (Cologon 2014). Educators do not necessarily understand the concept of full inclusion, affecting their willingness to change the environment of the school to accommodate students with a disability (Hornby 2012). The expectation that students should follow a particular developmental trajectory supports the misconception that integration (supporting students to fit into a 'normal' environment) is synonymous with inclusion (Nasibullov et al. 2015). These issues may be avoided with appropriate support for students, and special education training for teachers. This includes opportunities for teachers to work collaboratively with parents/primary caregivers and professionals, sharing knowledge to improve the support and environment provided to the student (Engelbrecht 2013).

Special education occurs in a segregated environment where students are educated according to a curriculum which differs from that offered to the general population. It is believed that individuals in special education are unable to cope with the demands of 'normal' life (e.g. due to disability) and need to be separated from the mainstream population (Ballard 2012). Inclusive education is geared toward removing roadblocks which prevent individuals from accessing stimulating learning experiences in mainstream settings, by providing resources and opportunities for diverse groups to participate in activities together. However, the action of separating individuals for special education labels them as different which may affect perceptions of efficacy, both internal and external to the individual. In the absence of inclusive education, preconceived ideas about ability will continue to segregate individuals in education. Inclusive education challenges the notion that certain individuals are unable to participate actively in mainstream education, offering those individuals opportunities to study alongside others who fit the socially constructed criteria of 'normal'. Like special education, mainstream education offers learning experiences appropriate for a group. To achieve inclusiveness, educators and policy makers are broadening their perspectives regarding the 'group' which is being catered for,

reinventing the idea of 'normal' to include a wider diversity of individuals who may be considered vulnerable or at-risk. Vulnerable or at-risk students include those who are disengaged or at-risk of disengagement at school—this will include those who are disadvantaged adolescents, newly arrived, those with mental health issues, and those with disabilities, young carers and/or eating disorders. These students may disengage from schooling through absenteeism, being socially isolated or financially disadvantaged (ACARA 2017).

The field of educational psychology has grown over the past 100 years since the early writings of psychologists such as E.L Thorndike (1910), William James and John Dewey (1910). This seminal work and the work of others that followed have shown how psychological theories, such as cognition and learning theories, can inform teaching practice in terms of how teachers can effectively engage and motivate student learning. For educational psychologists, learning is described as a relatively permanent change in knowledge or behaviour because of experience (O'Donnell et al. 2019). Contemporary educational psychology focuses on understanding learning through theoretical knowledge and improving educational practice in school settings. However, while most educational psychologists argue that the importance of their field is to guide the decisions that classroom teachers make, the relationship between educational psychologists and in-service teachers has been described as "historically rocky" (Hanich and Deemer 2005, p. 191). In the context of inclusive education policy, there can lie tension between teachers and educational psychologists in how they perceive their individual roles in supporting student learning in schools (Davies et al. 2008). This is, in part, due to psychology's perceived heritage in standardised testing models that sometimes are used to support the educational segregation of certain individuals and groups of students.

For a long time, the central mode of data collection for educational psychologists in schools has been standardised testing. The process would involve conducting a psych-

educational assessment that includes measurement of both cognitive abilities and psycho-social-behavioural measurement tools. Although standardised assessments and statistics certainly have their merits, it can be argued that the participant's individuality is compromised when students are made to fit into a predetermined idea of what constitutes 'normal' or 'average' in classroom teaching (Keegan et al. 2014). Therefore, standardised testing alone in schools can potentially marginalise learners with strengths other than those captured in testing such as creativity. Another criticism of such conventional approaches to assessment and planning is that while they claim to support individual needs of students, they may deploy pragmatic forms of knowledge that are best suited for "bureaucratic categorisation" (Quicke 2000, p. 261) than understanding the whole student.

Today educational psychologists can potentially play a critical part in facilitating systemic change in educational inclusion. Inclusion refers to ways in which schools can reduce barriers to participation and learning for all students who are at-risk of being marginalised and excluded. For teachers who are required to develop high standards of excellence in traditional academic subjects, the inclusion agenda has presented many challenges for school leaders to date. Within this context, the number of educational psychologists being employed in different countries continues to grow. While their work is seen to centrally involve the whole process of providing assessment and advice to parents of students who have special needs, this is but one part of the support and collaboration shared. For example, educational psychologists can collaborate and liaise with other specialists for multiple audiences (e.g., parents, teachers, and other professionals) to bridge communication, understanding, resources and interventions.

In education, professionals draw on their specialised knowledge, training and expertise to help teachers understand how to support the inclusion of students who may be experiencing challenging or complex needs that impact on their ability to learn. Educational psychologists are needed to help access types of support a student may need

such as develop social and emotional learning skills, resilience, and coping strategies, help inform reasonable adjustments needs of students and/or classroom management (to name a few). They can also help a school monitor and evaluate the programs or intervention that are being provided. Educational Psychologists can also provide therapeutic intervention informed by evidence from the neuroscience field and often facilitate student wellbeing team meetings to help address behavioural and/or learning difficulties with teachers, families and other specialised professionals. They use their skills in client-focused therapy and centred therapy to build rapport and offer supports that catured to the persons need. Some research suggests that often educational psychologists listen to parents more than other agencies and provide emotional support as well as key information in a multi-disciplinary team that helps a student progress by focusing on strength-based approaches (Cooper and Woods 2017).

18.1.2 Bridging Educational Psychology and Inclusive Education to Address the Needs of Vulnerable Youth

An element of the inclusive model is understanding how professionals, such as educational and school psychologists, can best support vulnerable students to access equal education. The funding policies in inclusive education are rapidly evolving. For example, in Australia needs based funding assessments are underway, called the National Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability (NCCD; Department of Education 2019). The NCCD collects information about the adjustments a student with a disability receives to help "enable schools, education authorities and governments better understand the needs of students with disability and how they can be best supported at school" (Department of Education 2019). Assessments are not the core requirement to access funding, rather are part of a pool of

evidence to inform the adjustment some needs. There are many ways educational psychologists can support this process. The role of the educational psychologist is to support the family and educators to make the best educational decisions with the young person. Comprehensive assessment that explores the whole child is one part and pivotal depending on the concerns at hand.

The field of educational psychology lends itself to inclusive education. Working in partnership and collaboration to support the needs of all students is the place of educational psychologists. Educational psychology provides evidence of educational practice with reference to inclusive education. It can contribute to the conceptualisation of the nature, appropriateness and effectiveness of education for children with disabilities and special educational needs. There are different ways in which school psychologists can support inclusive developments in their everyday work. For positive effects to last, arbitrary labelling could be replaced by insightful observations and a focus on relationship building. Diagnostic labels at times can be problematic because of associated meanings, unrelated to the primary function of enabling support (Slee 2013). Labelling a student with a disability potentially can propagate stereotypical ideas about the behaviours they may exhibit and how to respond to those behaviours, limiting the capacity for objective decision making. However, a consideration is whether there are individuals who may benefit from special education and how to identify them. This is certainly not through cognitive assessments only, which tend to measure a specific set of skills, potentially not assessing all the make-up of the whole child. For example, during a cognitive assessment a 6-year-old girl is making shapes with pictures and asked to name them. She could be labelled 'below average' for failing to follow the assessor's instructions. The results may have been different if the assessment included a computer-based component, potentially appropriate for a child born in the digital age. Yet, this assessment (depending on the assessment type and referral concern) may provide evidence for a referral to a special education setting where the cognitive

demands could be considered fewer. This also potentially means that, often, expectations are lower. How is this child going to succeed if she is not adequately challenged? How is she going to feel when she realises that she cannot attend her sister's school, although she is familiar and comfortable in that environment? In an inclusive mainstream educational setting, more frequently, there are higher expectations of students (Morton et al. 2012). In an ideal circumstance, all students should be considered equally capable of success regardless of their educational stream.

However, the way people interpret human rights to education is important for the future of special and inclusive education. According to Hornby (2012), the focus should be on the right of the individual to receive suitable education, not the right to be educated in a mainstream setting, because this may or may not be suitable for the individual to develop the skills they require to actively participate in the community. Providing appropriate support is complicated for educators, especially when students present behavioural challenges (Sharma 2012; Sharma et al. 2021). Students need to be in an environment where they feel accepted and experience a sense of belonging (Allen et al. 2018; Allen and Kern 2017), regardless of whether that environment is a mainstream school or a special education setting, because this is where they will thrive (Hornby 2012).

Practices and research that is of an interdisciplinary nature will further strengthen the awareness and capacity of education systems to support disadvantaged young people to achieve an equitable education. Another way of conceptualising the inclusive education and educational psychology bridge is to suggest that in contrast to our former view of looking 'in towards' to the individual student, we could think about looking 'with the student' or from the student's point of view towards its social and education life (Hedegaard 2012). Yet, overtime there has been a notable lack of contribution to how inclusion is articulated and understood by the young people themselves. Youth should be included to express their views when adults are making decisions that affect them and to have these opinions

considered (Articles 12 and 13 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, United Nations, 1990).

18.1.3 Student-Centred Practices and Policies

A step towards inclusive education involves adopting student-centred pedagogies (Sharma 2012). For students to find their voice, "authentic collaborative partnerships" (Saggers et al. 2012, p. 215) are critical in building rapport and trust between teachers and students. For example, in a study by MacArthur and Kelly (2004) children with disabilities "want teachers to view them as children and young people first" (p. 47) whereas there are examples "where individuals reacted strongly to… person-first language—stating that their disability was an important part of their identity" (Deppeler and Ainscow 2016). However, if facilitators were to view participation as beyond speaking up in class, they most likely would identify more creative ways to better engage with students in conversations or expression of ideas. These could be in the form of drawings, videos or writing, just to name a few. By offering students a multitude of ways to express their voices, their identity in school would be better validated (Morton et al. 2012), potentially increasing their self-efficacy. Teachers and students should consider the types of interactions which promote learning (e.g. effective feedback cycles, active participation) and the types of interactions which present barriers to success (e.g. appropriate adjustments) (Morton et al. 2012). It is difficult to argue with students about their desire to fit in when support is based on a model of deficit (Sharma 2014), insinuating that there is an ideal position that each person should aspire to.

There are powerful reasons to work with young people to develop what we mean by inclusive education. One reason is that a construct that revolves around removing barriers to participation for young people necessarily needs to involve those young people in the way it is conceptualised. Another reason is that young people have rights inscribed in law and policy to have their say in educational matters that pertain to them. For example, under the Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1990) to which Australia is a signatory, articles 12 and 13 articulate children's rights to express their views when adults are making decisions that affect them and to have these opinions taken into account. There is a clear logic between valuing the perspectives of students themselves as holders of unique insights into their social worlds and experiences at school, as well as valuing the input of students into the process of knowledge production. Traditionally, disability research has been conducted as research about the people in question and their experiences in the research process, rather than with these people as (co)-contributors (Goeke and Kubanski 2012). Schools should be more needs focused to provide for students social, emotional and academic growth and this starts with how teachers interact with students, especially those who experience a disability or present behavioural challenges (Grové and Laletas 2019). Educators need to define students' rights in a way which is in line with students' best interests and desires to achieve autonomy and success (Whitburn 2013). Taking away choice takes away peoples' rights, which contradicts the idea of social justice upon which inclusion is built. Respecting how education positions students and acknowledging their point of view will guide educators to make viable decisions regarding students' welfare.

Perceptions relating to how students with a disability should participate in activities have implications for the future of education and how it is structured. For example, exempting students from national assessments (e.g. NAPLAN) may appear reasonable but this is not necessarily equitable because opportunities for participation are limited (Sharma 2014). On the other hand, focusing on academic achievement is short-sighted because it minimises the importance of an individual's right to achieve happiness and wellbeing through desired activities (Liasidou 2012; Grové and Laletas 2019). In Australia and overseas, strategies offered by schools to support students with a disability tend to limit

participation in learning activities (Jahnukainen 2015). These limiting practices are based on the preconceived idea that students are impeded by disability, so their access to the main curriculum is restricted to accommodate for this assumed difficulty (Whitburn 2013, 2014). According to Morton et al. (2012), educators should have a strong belief that all children are learners and adults should always explore the meaning students are expressing. The key of listening to students' voice is a belief in students' capabilities, developing relationships of respect and trust. Trust is not one-sided, children need to trust the educator as well. Student voice has influence to co-construct new knowledge and builds an interdependent relationship between teachers and students, and the education system.

In this way, we should embrace and extend the call for researchers to conduct inquiry in a thoughtful and respectful manner that attempts to move students beyond tokenistic participation (Hart 1992; Shier 2001) to roles that have a genuine influence in shaping the study such as in curriculum design and development and in research design and data analysis (Todd 2012). Ultimately addressing the pressing challenge of "how can researchers and educators include the voices of vulnerable students?"

18.1.4 Addressing the Rhetoric Versus Reality Research Debate: The Potential of Participatory Approaches in Educational Inclusion Research

Participatory methods have the potential to develop a distinct partnership between the two distinct fields of educational psychology and inclusive education with synergy for ongoing evidence-based practices and research. Participatory research methods aim to undertake research processes with the individuals who are at the heart of the research work (Bergold and Thomas 2012). Consequently, the inquiry is developed by two domains as follows: that of educational research and that of practice. Both domains benefit from the participatory process. Participants as co-learners and co-researchers wherein, expertise of the participants is recognised and valued (Lawrence 2017). Participatory research questions aim to include the population researched in the production of new knowledge as co-researchers and, by so doing, work towards boosting empowerment (Bergold and Thomas 2012). For this reason, the skills set of the researcher, educator or facilitator needs the competencies necessary to participate in the research process (Evans and Jones 2014). At the same time, co-researchers should feel personally empowered by the collaborative nature of the research process and develop dispositions such as self-confidence, self-assurance, and a feeling of belonging.

In this way, educational psychologists use their skills in participatory research, of which could be used to inform inclusive education research, whereby youth are co-collaborators and researchers on the matters that affect them. If we keep asking the same questions and not include a collaborative focus to address the challenges in the field the current status quo will likely not change. Given the central tenet of inclusivity, it is notable that inclusive research processes, where young people take an active role in the research process, are the exception rather than the norm (Nind 2014). The disjunction between a focus in inclusive education and the enactment of inclusive practices is indicative of the challenge between rhetoric and reality. This challenge represents a significant issue for educators, governments and students who seek to remove barriers that exclude vulnerable students. Bridging inclusive education and educational psychology draws on approaches that are participatory, emancipatory, transformative, and collaborative (Nind 2014; Laletas et al. 2022). This type of inter-disciplinary approach attempts to engage youths voice through multiple means of representation whereby communication tools are used for all youths regardless of ability express their stories and have them heard (Lawrence 2017; Mitchell 2011). By using multiple ways of knowing and expression (Lawrence 2017;

Mitchell 2011) there is potentially greater flexibility in the use of different tools such as drawings, writing, talking, paintings, photographs, and videos.

While there is a growing pool of participatory research, the roles students tend to take are consultative and it is less common for them to have an active influence on the design and execution of the research itself (Todd 2012; Groundwater-Smith 2011). Students are authoritative commentators on their own experiences and can be engaged as active partners in research (Grové et al. 2016; Grové 2019). This approach acknowledges students not only as beneficiaries of research developed by adults but also (or instead) as competent agents that can be engaged with via participatory and inclusionary practices (Grové et al. 2016). This type of collaboration will have opportunity to support the voices of vulnerable or at-risk students in education and research, potentially providing preventative strategies for vulnerable students to encourage their engagement and participation in their schooling. Educators and researchers should engage in multiple methods for collaborating with students to understand which methods support rapport building, which methods students identify as creating space for their own active participation, and to ascertain which methods yield rich and valuable insights into students' experiences. While participatory research processes are not new in themselves, using them to develop and understand constructs in this manner is an innovation. Educators and researchers should hold views that by working together we may be closer in addressing the rhetoric vs reality debate.

Within the framework of participatory research there are challenges that educators and researchers experience. The biography and social background of the facilitators of participatory methods, call for high levels of interaction, contact and engagement. However, collaborative research with students who have a history of vulnerability is possible only on the basis of trust (Rath 2012). This trust needs to be created; it is building on professional collaboration that is marked by respects, empathy, and emotional contribution. The balance between connection and distance in (co)research or development work is key in participatory approaches. The skills of educational psychologists would be used in rapport building activities and creating a safe and supportive environment, sharing of boundaries and establishing ground rules. All youth are seen as experts and treated with respect. Given the focus of inclusivity whereby all youth are equally invited and supported to participate regardless of 'at-risk' status, ethical care should always be taken to ensure confidentiality and do no harm in the research gathering processes. The researchers together with the youth and primary caregiver should give consideration of how best a student with vulnerability takes part to express their view.

18.2   Conclusion

There is a pressing need to improve the accessibility and participation in high-quality education of all. A key part in bridging the field of educational psychology and inclusion is to support inclusive developments that work towards harnessing school environments that are committed to equity, student agency and participation in the education of all learners. Student-centred practices and participatory methods are suggested approaches that draw on the educational psychologists' skills used when working in a school. Possible outcomes from bridging these fields include a greater understanding of the determinants of educational inequalities in the school system potentially contributing to the development of student focused policies that may improve educational practices, prevent harmful attitudes towards difference and promote education and wellbeing.

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Christine Grové is an Educational and Developmental Psychologist and a Fulbright Scholar. Dr Grové is an Associate Editor of the Educational and Developmental Psychologist. She works collaboratively with health care professionals, teachers, parents and young people to support the individual and unique needs of youth. Her research interests lie in engaging with the young person's perspective and experience using participatory research methods. Dr Grové's work is also characterised by youth as active agents within research.

Stella Laletas is an Educational & Developmental Psychologist and Lecturer in psychology, counselling and inclusive education in the Faculty of Education at Monash University. Stella's professional profile also includes over 20 years' experience as a teacher, program coordinator for students with a disability and school leader in the area of student wellbeing with the Department of Education and Training in Victoria, Australia.

The Value of Flexible Options as Enablers in Inclusion

19

Vicki McKenzie

Abstract

Behaviour often reflects the circumstances of the individual, and school behaviour problems, difficult as they are for schools, are often a marker of a range of underlying concerns. Many young people are not prepared for the academic pressures that come into play in secondary education or find their circumstances are not conducive to patiently and calmly endure the long days in formal education. Some have never really settled to the rigours of formal schooling, and as puberty expresses itself in these students, the impulses to break out, assert themselves or express their unhappiness become stronger. These are the students who are described as 'challenging', 'disruptive' and 'disengaged'. This study involved working with six groups of students who had been identified as demonstrating severe behaviour and in need of some additional intervention beyond the classroom to learn and rediscover the value of working within the mainstream classroom. Part of a bigger study examining youth resources and resilience, the component of the study reported here examined the presentation of these young people over a six-month period, as they left behind their mainstream schools and worked in a withdrawal setting over 10 to 20 weeks, returning to their mainstream program one day a week. Students completed a depression inventory, and their teachers rated their competence, attention, and mental health issues before and after the program. The programs work on motivating the students to contain their behaviour and work for change. Follow-up measures recorded improvements in key measures and reduction in depression scores. This study has implications for flexibility in attitudes to inclusion, as a structured 'time-out' assisted in reducing scores around aggression and rule breaking, and improved sustained attendance for a substantial proportion of these students.

Keywords

Behaviour · Conduct disorder · Attention · Engagement · Inclusion

19.1 Introduction

When we think inclusion, we usually think disabilities and how to modify programs to assist those students who want and need to attend school, and must manage the aspects of their behavioural responses that hinder their active

V. McKenzie (✉)
Educational Psychology, Melbourne Graduate School of Education, University of Melbourne, Victoria, Australia
e-mail: v.mckenzie@unimelb.edu.au

participation in their education program. In primary years this may involve children presenting with challenging behaviour that may be presenting as a component or a response to their disability. These children would be considered having a severe behaviour disorder alongside a diagnosis of conduct disorder, opposition defiance disorder or possibly attention deficit impulsivity disorder (ADHD). When it comes to older children in secondary school the management of challenging behaviour becomes more complex, with multiple teachers, moving between classrooms, and less teacher observation. Developmentally changing bodies and minds bring new capacities and motivations, while a range of mental health conditions may well begin to be seen (Sawyer et al. 2010). These are years when engagement with a school can be a key factor in outcome, and absentee rates start to climb (Cobbold 2017).

Challenging behaviour has been the focus of various initiatives in educational settings, with the aim to engage students more fully in their educational situations and improve the behaviour and safety of children in schools. Interventions have included positive behaviour support, individual learning plans, revised engagement policies, and support services (Department of Education, State of Victoria (DET) 2019). Despite this, we continue to see concerns about student engagement and student absenteeism (Cobbold 2017). The students of concern are frequently in trouble at school, take days off, and generally appear at risk of failing to complete their education (De Jong 2005). Research points to a range of factors to explain the origins of these behaviours such as family problems, including family violence, learning problems, unstable living conditions, substance abuse, and peer relationships (Green 2006: DET 2019). Further, youth mental health needs are increasing and resources are not adequate to provide sufficient support (Costello et al. 2005). A study by Durlak et al. (2011) in the United States reported as many as 40–60% of young people have become disconnected from school. Attendance rates are worrying educators (ACARA 2015, 2018) and up to 30% of young people could be involved in high-risk activities. This is further exacerbated by the reluctance of young people to source assistance (reported in Rickwood et al. 2007).

Several factors have been found to contribute to consistently difficult and noncompliant student behaviour in schools presenting as defiant responses, inappropriate language, disobedience, inattention, impulsiveness, distracting others, anti-social behaviour and aggression, or alternatively withdrawal, absence and lack of engagement. Extreme behaviours are of concern in a classroom but it appears that consistent behaviour that disrupts others gives teachers the greatest distress (Hart 2010). Students who demonstrate these behaviours are less likely to engage with their school program, miss crucial information, and are at risk of leaving school early (Wilson and Lipsey 2007, Lamb and Rice 2008). Compared to earlier years, successful inclusion at secondary level can prove more complex as teachers are less trained in dealing with diversity and may have less face-to-face time with their students (Davies 2017).

Engagement is considered to have three components. Behavioural engagement describes student participation in academic, social and other activities in the school, emotional engagement refers to the sense of belonging or connection to the school felt by the student, and cognitive engagement describes the degree to which the student invests in the learning program (Lamb and Rice 2008). All aspects contribute to a student's involvement in their school.

Youth mental health is a growing concern for the Australian community. Prevalence figures estimate that 14% of children from 4 to 17 years of age have mental health problems and only one in four receives professional assistance (Sawyer et al. 2000, Lawrence et al. 2015). Adolescents are of particular concern as onset of several conditions, such as Major Depressive Disorder and anxiety disorders, occurs during the adolescent years (McGorry and Goldstone 2011). A 2010 report in Victoria estimated that approximately 5550 children and young people were living in out-of-home care and that exposure to traumatising family problems were

common experiences for young people in homeless circumstances. Further, students with learning, communication, or social difficulties or impairments tended to leave school earlier than their peers, and mental health difficulties were experienced by one in seven young people aged between 4 and 17 years. Also, boys were more likely to leave school earlier than girls and rural and Indigenous students were at greater risk of leaving school before completion of secondary studies. Finally, those with a history of truanting and suspension, or with juvenile justice histories frequently left school before Year 10 (DEECD 2010). Local and international research has shown that early school leavers are disadvantaged in many ways. Early leavers in Victoria tend to be spread unevenly across geographical areas, with early leavers being more often from schools with high numbers of disadvantaged students, in lower socioeconomic areas (Lamb and Rice 2008). They are more likely to be depressed and isolated, become unemployed and remain unemployed for longer periods, have poorer physical and mental health, have higher rates of crime, and less often engage in active citizenship in the community (Lamb and Rice 2008). Risk factors can and often compound, with one area of difficulty feeding in to others. Frequent negative school behaviour can be an outcome of the distressing circumstances of students, and schools vary in their capacity and readiness to make accommodations for these students. A supportive school experience can mediate the effect of difficult life experiences and previous experiences of failure.

'Problem behaviour', 'challenging behaviour', 'severely challenging behaviour' and 'emotional disorders' or 'behavioural disorders' have all been terms used to describe behaviours that are found to be difficult to manage in a classroom. Each term describes a range of behaviours which concern teachers and parents. These behaviours include defiance, swearing, disobedience, inattention, impulsiveness, clowning, anti-social behaviour and aggression towards others. There appears to be general agreement that 3–6% of students in Australian schools present with emotional or behavioural disorders

(Carter et al. 2006). However when stringent definitions were applied, these numbers have been disputed (Carter et al. 2006). Arbuckle and Little (2004) reported that teachers rated 18.2% of male students and 7.3% of female students in their classes as needing additional management assistance. Teachers also report more frequent concerns about the behaviour of boys than girls, on a ratio of 9:1 (Carter et al. 2006). Major concerns with boys' behaviours were predominantly disruptive behaviour, distractible attention, off task behaviour, and aggression when disciplined. For girls, teachers were most concerned about distractible behaviour, disruptive activities, lack of concern for others, being argumentative when disciplined, and demanding attention (Carter et al. 2006). These findings are consistent over a range of school types (Carter et al. 2006). Problem behaviours are highly associated with academic difficulty and present a substantial challenge to schools.

In the state of Victoria, one intervention has been to place severely problematic students in alternative settings in Government schools for one term when they are 'experiencing major behavioural difficulties at school,' and are at 'educational risk' (NMR 2006, Appendix 1). A requirement of participation is that the students enrolled must continue to have a connection with the schools they usually attend, maintain their engagement with the school, and demonstrate a high likelihood of continuing to attend school (NMR Appendix 1, 2006). In these settings, the focus is school attendance and behaviour, not mental health, although mental health concerns may be a component of the students' difficulties, and depression may be an underlying factor in negative behaviour (Field et al. 2001). Staff in the alternative settings report that the students experience learning and emotional difficulties along with the prevalence of unsettled familial settings, generating the problems they experience at school. Older students are encouraged to engage in a vocationally focussed program for students at risk of disengagement; however, the 13–16 year old students with behavioural difficulties need to be accommodated in the mainstream system. Alternative settings provided by

the Government and private systems give an option to these students to work in smaller settings with higher staff to student ratios to help them review their behavioural choices. They also learn the skills to change direction, address their learning problems, and make a constructive plan for the future. This study reports on the findings on this cohort in terms of the underlying mental health needs that were found on their entry and the outcomes of their participation.

Students referred to the alternate settings were consistently described as having severe behaviour difficulties by their schools. They had clearly experienced significant adversity and utilised a range of adaptive and maladaptive mechanisms to cope. Maladaptive responses may escalate into mental health problems, which can have consequent impact on the capacity of the student to cope with social and educational demands at school, and can be as debilitating as a disability. Mental health problems presenting in young people can be broadly categorised into externalising and internalising problems and behaviours (Kaufman and Kaufman 2005). Internalising behaviour difficulties are "problems that negatively impact the child's internal psychological world rather than the external environment" (Fite et al. 2008, p. 64). Such problems include inhibited or tightly controlled behaviour sourced in anxiety, and associated with anxiety and depression (Achenbach and Rescoria 2001). Internalising behaviours are concerning as they are less likely to be disclosed or noticed and can be associated with withdrawal from relationships to a degree greater than is the case with normally developing children.

Externalising problems on the other hand are those behaviours that include impulsive and antisocial behaviours, which are associated with rule breaking behaviours such as distracting others, disobeying teachers, and aggression towards others, along with the behaviours deriving from inattention and hyperactivity (Achenbach and Rescoria 2001). At times, externalising can conceal other mental health issues (Carroll et al. 2005; Sawyer et al. 2000). Teachers are more likely to be less accepting of students with these social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties as

they are strongly associated with negativity in the student–teacher relationship (Baker et al. 2008). Furthermore, the association between disruptive behaviour and low achievement is well established, particularly with males (Prior et al. 1999). As externalising behaviours have been associated with subsequent development of antisocial behaviours, difficulty in negotiating social relationships, substance abuse and early school leaving, these behaviours are of considerable concern to educators (Baker et al. 2008). A recent national survey of children from 4 to 17 years placed prevalence rates for internalising at 12.8%, externalising at 12.9% and total mental health problems at 14.1%, with some aspects presenting co-morbidly (Sawyer et al. 2010).

These figures parallel a context of growing concern about increasing violence and problematic behaviour in youth (Tomazin 2009). Costello et al. (2005) found that 25.5% of children were found to have two or more mental health diagnoses.

School improvement to enhance student engagement and achievement has been a high priority in Victorian education policy. This has resulted in policies that encourage reforms targeted at best outcomes for students. Alternative education programs in separate settings or within mainstream schools can be seen as one of a suite of service provisions for this purpose. These programs are specialised educational opportunities generally taking place outside of the school system, designed to support vulnerable students who have difficulty accessing education within mainstream schools who intend to return students to mainstream settings following conclusion of the intervention (Zweig 2003). These programs have been identified as one in a range of best practices in addressing student behaviour issues (de Jong and Griffiths 2006). Interventions in alternative settings consist of short term programs providing individual and small group experiences, where there can be a low ratio of students to staff. Programs offer activity based learning and outdoor education, with an emphasis on teaching self-management of emotions and behaviour, allowing students to be eventually reintegrated into mainstream attendance.

This study investigated the experiences of a group of young people attending brief alternative education programs in Melbourne, Australia. The philosophy and purpose of the behaviour Unit programs fit into the social and emotional learning (SEL) philosophy described in Durlak et al. (2011), where successful mastery of SEL competencies is explained as a "developmental progression that leads to a shift from being predominantly controlled by external factors to acting increasingly in accord with internalised beliefs and values, caring and concern for others, making good decisions, and taking responsibility for one's choices and behaviours" (p. 406). The Units shared the practices of fostering positive behaviours, cooperative activities, positive self-esteem, and most importantly, interest in returning to a mainstream educational context to complete the student's education. Particular student programs were tailored to some degree to the specific needs of the individual. The purpose was to assist the students in learning acceptable behaviour and responses, improve their basic skills, and be encouraged to re-engage with schools and teachers. This is effectively using an exclusion program to create inclusion. Learning and achievement are often difficulties for these students, and most have a history of problems in learning (Cole 2004, Green 2006), and low achievement scores (Lew and Care 1998). There are consistent gender differences, with boys more frequently attending alternative programs (Graham et al. 2010).

We hypothesised that:

1. Students referred to the behaviour Units will have significant ratings on competence and behaviour disorders as measured by the Child Behaviour Checklist Teacher Referral Form (CBC-TRF) on commencement of the programs.

2. Respite from the expectations of mainstream school will allow students to experience different learnings and experiences which will be reflected in the follow-up measure (CBC-TRF).

3. Scores on the Achenbach and the Beck will reflect consistent scores indicating that students that have been referred also have mental health needs.

4. Benefits of the program will be reflected in improved depression scores as measured by the Beck Depression Inventory.

19.2 Methods

19.2.1 Participants

Home room teachers were asked to complete the Child Behaviour Checklist, Teacher Report Form (CBC-TRF). 59 of the 63 students who were approached agreed to participate including 50 males (85%) and nine females (15%) (Units tend to have higher attendance by males than females). The participation rate was 94%. Participants were aged between 12 and 16 years, with the average age at 14 years one month. Students had attended an average of 2.9 schools, and the highest was 10 schools by Year 7. Ethnic background of the students was 52% Australian, 23% European, 15% Asia–Pacific, and 10% unknown. Samples were obtained over three separate terms over a period of 18 months to obtain sufficient numbers and complete data. Six program leaders and 29 home school coordinators were also involved in the study.

As the students were identified by participation in the alternative settings, they constituted a cohort of students who had experienced breakdown, in some form, of their relationships in their schools. This allowed the researcher to investigate particular aspects of the student experience, without asking schools to identify or label students at risk. As a consequence, a matched control group was not feasible. Asking schools to identify students at risk who were not participating in the programs would not have guaranteed that matched students were found and would have involved unhelpful and unethical labelling of students who otherwise would not be singled out, and their privacy would be compromised. Additional problems arise in achieving adequate participation in these cohorts as each program only accepts eight to ten students per term. Due to the consequences of such constraints it was challenging to gain an adequate

sample size for strong statistical power. This is a common problem when evaluating interventions in a clinical or field-based population (Crisp & Hinch 2004).

19.2.2 Procedure

Ethics approval was granted by the University of Melbourne, approval number 0709477.3, and the Department of Education. Young people who participate in the six alternative setting placements participating in the study were invited to volunteer to complete questionnaires. Twenty-nine CBC-TRF's were returned by teachers for students on entry, and 21 were returned on follow-up. There were 26 fully completed depression question-naires on entry and 16 on follow-up.

19.2.3 Instruments

Home school teachers completed the Child Behaviour Checklist, Teacher Report Form (CBC-TRF), and students completed the Beck Youth Inventories for children and adolescents, Depression inventory (BYI-II).

Achenbach, Child Behavior Checklist, Teacher's Report Form (CBCL-TRF) (Achenbach and Rescoria 2001).

The Child Behaviour Checklist is a standardised instrument, used widely to identify problems in children and adolescents, with teacher and parent versions available. The 118 items measure the frequency of a range of psychopathological and behavioural symptoms in children. The Teacher's Report Form is designed to assess the competencies and problems evident in 6 to 18 year old children. The report takes approximately 20 min to complete and is considered a reliable and valid measure (Achenbach 1991; Achenbach and Rescoria 2001),

This form was completed by the student's main teacher or coordinator at the time of student referral, and again on follow-up. Scores were combined to establish a total competence score, corresponding to a T-score and a percentile score, both of which can be compared to a population norm established for the particular age group. A T-score for Competence of less than 37 indicates a clinically significant range for poor adaptive functioning, and a score between 37 and 40 indicates a borderline level (Achenbach and Rescoria 2001). The scores have been separately normed for both genders.

The second section asks the teacher to rate the student on a range of symptomatic scales which incorporate the DSM5 mental health categories of anxious/depressed, withdrawn/depressed, somatic complaints, rule breaking behaviour, aggressive behaviour, social problems, thought problems, and attention problems (APA 2013). There are 113 items in this section with a T-score of 63 or more considered the cut-off, placing the student in a clinical range. T-scores greater than 63 indicate a percentile ranking of greater than or equal to 98, which has been found to discriminate clinical groups from typical individuals.

Scores were also recorded for the global groupings of Externalising, Internalising, and Total Problems. The internalising grouping covers problems within the child, i.e. anxiety, depression, somatic complaints, and social withdrawal. Externalising items include interpersonal conflict and rule breaking behaviour (Achenbach and Rescoria 2001). T-scores allow the measurement of the severity of mental health problems in terms of deviation from the population norm. For the Externalising, Internalising and Total problem scales, T-scores greater than 63, corresponding to a percentile rank of 98, can discriminate clinical groups from individuals in the average range. A T-score of 63 and greater is considered the cut-off to establish the clinical significance of the score that the student has gained (Achenbach and Rescoria). Cross informant agreement for teachers has been shown to be statistically significant (p < 0.05, mean r = 0.05 to 0.88) across all Competence scales, and for the other scales (mean r = 0.64) (Achenbach and Rescoria 2001). The CBC-TRF is used extensively in the United States and Australia to assess behavioural and emotional disorders. Support for using the American population norms with Australian students has been well documented (Sawyer et al. 2000).

The Beck Youth Inventories for children and adolescents 2nd edition—Depression Inventory (BYI-11) (Beck et al. 2005).

The Beck Youth Inventories for children and adolescents are five self-report scales designed to measure children's social and emotional impairment (Beck et al. 2005). These scales may be used separately. The Depression inventory with 20 items is designed to identify symptoms of depression in children and adolescents and includes items that reveal the respondent's negative thoughts and emotions about him or herself, his or her life and future, and feelings of sadness and psychological indications of depression. The scale was standardised in the United States and has high internal consistency ranging from 0.86 to 0.96 across age ranges and gender and correlates well with other measures of depression (Beck et al. 2005). Reliability coefficients have been reported ranging from 0.84 to 0.93. Raw scores are converted to a T-score for a comparison against normative groups based on age and gender.

19.2.4 Data Analysis

Frequencies and percentages were calculated to show the characteristics of the students as indicated on the demographic data sheet. Descriptive statistics were used to evaluate the T-scores for the subscales for the Adaptive Functioning and Competence Scales on the Child Behaviour Checklist data at the beginning and on follow-up. As the sample size was small, no further quantitative analysis was performed.

19.3 Results

19.3.1 Adaptive Functioning and Mental Health Syndromes: Child Behaviour Checklist Teacher Referral Form (CBC-TRF) Results

Unit staff described the difficulties they consistently faced in gaining a good rate of return for notices and feedback from teachers in schools and from parents, which was noticeable in this case. The TRF was used on entry (T1) and on follow-up (T3).

On entry (T1), 36 out of a possible 59 teachers (60%), returned forms to the Units, seven of which were discarded due to incomplete information. At T3, of 29 students, 21 teachers (72%) returned these forms, one of which was incomplete and hence discarded. Return rate was achieved by extensive follow-up by the researcher with the help of the Unit staff members. Descriptive statistics were used to examine the *T*-scores on the Adaptive subscales and the total Competence scores. Similarly the CBC-TRF Internalising, Externalising, and Total Problems scores are described and frequencies provided below. *T*-scores on the Achenbach assessments are standard scores that compare the student's place on a scale with the distribution of scores obtained by the normative sample. Additionally, these *T*-scores allow comparison to be made across all the scales, allowing the investigator to efficiently evaluate where the student scores vary relative to their age-matched peers (Achenbach and Rescoria 2001). It was predicted that, as the students in the study had been identified as having severe problems in mainstream schooling, they would be low in adaptive functioning and high on some mental health measures as indicated by the CBC-TRF.

The hypothesis that the cohort across programs would present with significantly above average scores was supported. Further, in the follow-up group, these concerning scores continued, indicating that although other measures improved, these students continued to show significantly above average problems in the areas measured by the CBC-TRF, relating to adapting to the requirements of their educational environments.

19.3.2 Adaptive Functioning and Competence on Entry

The Adaptive Functioning and Competence Scales include ratings of academic progress,

Table 19.1 Adaptive functioning and competence scales: numbers and percentages of students rated by home school teacher on entry, referenced to standardised scores (Achenbach and Rescoria 2001)

	Academic	Working Hard	Behaviour	Learning	Happy	Competence
Clinical						
Total	13	25	27	19	21	22
% Clinical	50%	86%	93%	65%	72%	76%
Borderline						
Total	5	0	0	5	2	6
Clinical & Borderline						
%Cl & Bord	69%	86%	93%	83%	79%	97%
Normal range (i.e. performing at expected level for age)						
Total	8	4	2	5	6	1
% Normal	30%	14%	7%	17%	21%	3%
N	26	29	29	29	29	29

Table 19.2 Syndrome scores and percentages of students on entering programs on the CBC-TRF

	Anxiety/ Depressed	Anxiety/ Withdrawn	Somatic	Social problem	Thought problem	Attention	Rule breaking	Aggression
Clinical	2	0	1	4	6	9	15	18
Borderline	9	9	5	13	10	10	10	4
Clinical & borderline	11	9	6	17	16	19	25	22
Percentage	38	31	21	57	55	66	86	76
N = 29								

Clinical score > 69, Borderline score 64–69

working hard, behaving appropriately, learning, happiness, and competence. Twenty-nine teachers returned the Teacher's Report Form with this section completed out of the 36 returned forms. On the subscales of the Adaptive Functioning section of the TRF, students on entry to programs scored consistently in the clinical range, with a *T*-score of less than 37, operating well below the level expected for their age. A borderline *T*-score was between 37 and 40, and a normal score, with performance at age expected level, needed to be over 40. These frequencies are reported in Table 19.1.

On entry the teachers rated the majority of these students as clinically below the typical range. Students were rated as severely behind their age-matched peers for working hard (86%), behaving (93%), happiness (83%), and competence (97%). This is shown in Fig. 19.1.

19.3.3 Syndrome Results from the CBC-TRF: Home School Teacher Ratings on Entry

The CBC-TRF scales for mental health symptoms were calculated for this group on entry and at Time 3. Cut-off for the clinically concerning range is a *T*-score greater than 69 or above the 97th percentile. There is a considerable number of students with scores for Behaviour and Externalising in the

Fig. 19.1 Adaptive functioning and competence scales

Adaptive functioning: Numbers of students rated by home school teacher on entry
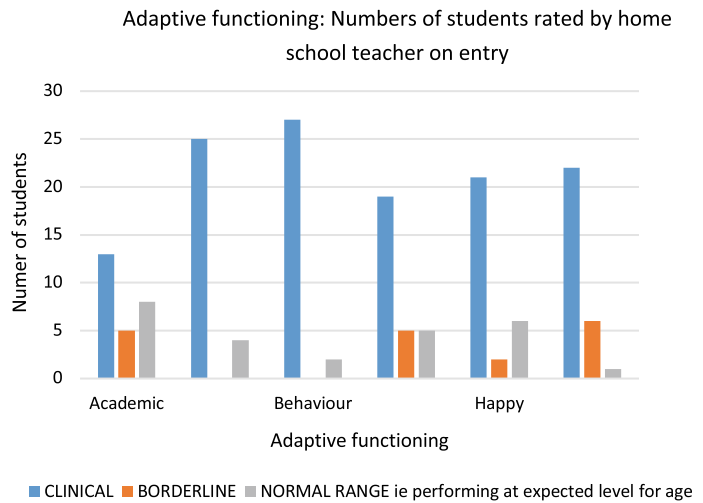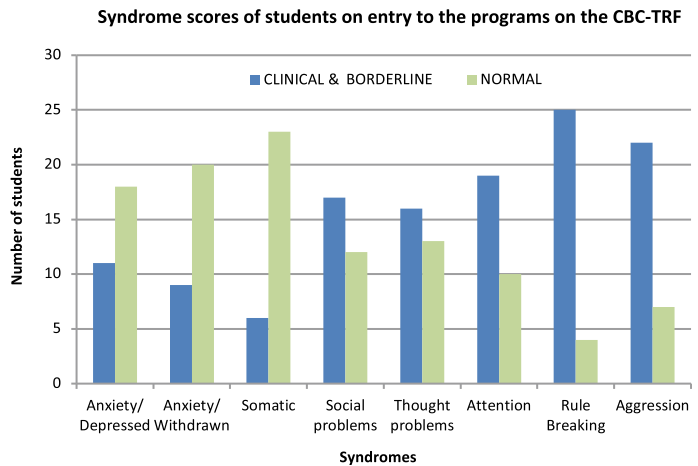
Fig. 19.2 Number of students gaining scores in the clinical and borderline ranges on the syndrome scores on the CBC-TRF on entering the programs

Syndrome scores of students on entry to the programs on the CBC-TRF

clinical range. This is in keeping with the expectations that students attending these facilities have extreme difficulties in managing themselves in the general context of school. The scores on syndrome scales indicate well above average levels in rule breaking, aggression, attention problems, and social problems.

Figure 19.2 demonstrates graphically the concentration of students presenting with significant social-emotional difficulties.

Students scored highly on attention problems as the mean percentile for inattention was 89.67 (SD 4.39), and for hyperactivity/inattention, 92.44 (SD8.35). Scores for this cohort of students showed significant numbers of students

with attention and impulsivity difficulties. Students on entry also scored well above average on the behaviours that relate to externalising and total behaviour difficulties, as seen in Fig. 19.3.

Means and standard deviations of Internalising, Externalising, Behaviour, and Attention scores on entry are included in Table 19.4. On entry, the mean T-score for internalising was 59.41 (SD 8.93), externalising 71.43 (SD 9.56), and behaviour 68.72 (SD6.15). A T-score greater than 69 indicates scores in the clinical range, above the 97th percentile.

The profile of students entering the program indicated significant behavioural difficulties characterised by low capacity to give appropriate

Fig. 19.3 Students rated for internalising, externalising and behaviour on entry to programs

Numbers of students on entry on internalising, externalising, and behaviour on the CBC-TRF
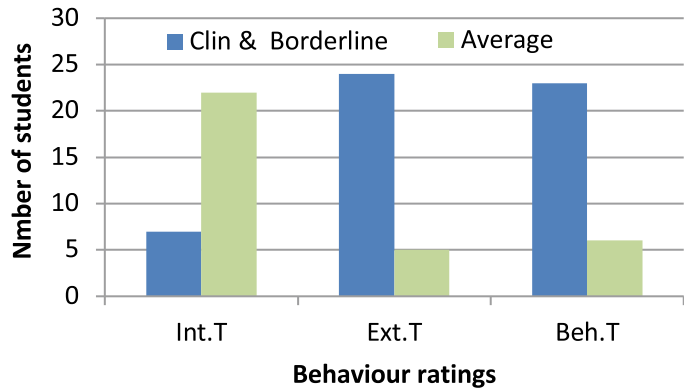
attention to task, a high degree of disruptive behaviours and rule breaking, and a strong tendency to externalise problems. These behaviours make class participation, where listening and attending to tasks are fundamental to learning, rife with problems and frustrations. According to these results, identification of these young people for treatment was indicated as many students in the cohort identified with learning and mental health needs that clearly would interfere with their capacity to make academic gains. There were teacher identified problems in the basic requirements of learning (sit and listen), coping with interpersonal interaction, dealing with difficulties, and cooperating with others. Once the students had completed the intervention, they either returned to their home school or in some cases enrolled in other schools or left the system. Six months later, teachers of students were asked to complete the CBC-TRF, assessing the adaptive functioning and behaviour of the student. Results show a decrease in numbers of students in the clinical range, indicating an improvement in the specified areas of competence (Table 19.3).

Table 19.3 Adaptive Functioning and Competence, numbers of students in each range pre-program and on follow-up

Item	Time	Clinical	Borderline	Clinical & Borderline	Non-clinical
Academic	Pre	13	5	18 (69%)	8
	Follow-up	8	0	8 (38%)	13
Working Hard	Pre	25	0	25 (86%)	4
	Follow-up	11	1	12 (57%)	9
Behaving	Pre	27	0	27 (93%)	2
Appropriately	Follow-up	14	0	14 (67%)	7
Learning	Pre	19	5	24 (83%)	5
	Follow-up	9	3	12 (57%)	9
Happy	Pre	21	2	23 (79%)	6
	Follow-up	6	6	12 (57%)	9
Competence	Pre	22	6	28 (95%)	1
	Follow-up	12	3	15 (71%)	6

Pre $N = 29$, Follow-up $N = 21$

Note a decrease in numbers in clinical and borderline categories indicates improvement in these areas of functioning

Table 19.4 Mean T-scores for syndromes pre-program and on follow-up

CBC-TRFSyndromes	Pre-program (T1) M	SD	Follow-up(T3) M	SD
Anx/Depress	59.72	7.23	57.00	7.42
Anx/Withdraw	59.57	6.42	56.30	5.62
Somatic	56.16	7.18	57.90	11.73
Social problems	63.83	7.97	59.80	8.10
Thought problems	62.79	6.90	58.50	10.07
Attention Problems	65.91	6.48	63.65	7.11
Rule breaking	71.34	10.04	69.30	10.39
Aggression	72.52	12.11	66.60	12.73

Time 1 N = 29, Time 2 N = 20. Clinical score > 69, Borderline score 64–69

There are cautions to consider in relation to the follow-up scores. Teacher Report Forms were completed by a teacher in the home school on intake, and by a teacher in the home school approximately six months after the student participated in the program. As such there is the likelihood of inconsistency from one teacher to another. However, teachers consistently rated these young people, as a group, highly on the Teacher Referral Form scales. Ratings by different teachers may be a result of the post-program students moving to different schools and in some cases in another year level. Further, follow-up scores describe only those students who were available for follow-up. These students, having maintained school attendance, were rated and were six months older. Even so, although the scores do decrease for the follow-up group, there remains a greater proportion of relatively above average number of students with clinical scores on behaving appropriately and competence. This indicates that problems for some students have continued despite the intervention (Fig. 19.4). Figure 19.5 illustrates the shift in balance of the scores of the students and indicates continued concern for some.

Syndromes CBC-TRF home school teacher ratings: comparing mean T-scores on entry (Time 1) to the program, and follow-up (Time 3) of the program.

Mental health syndrome ratings also showed a reduction post-program, indicating that fewer students were rated with clinically concerning scores; however, the mean scores of the group continue to be rated by teachers as indicating considerable mental health concerns.

Fig. 19.4 Adaptive functioning and competence, numbers of students rated clinical and borderline compared with those identified in the average range

Adaptive Functioning and Competence pre-program and on follow-up.
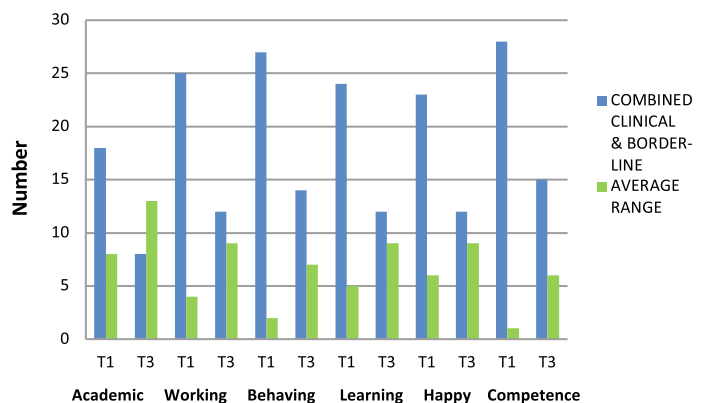
Following the suggestion of Achenbach and Rescoria (2001), Borderline scores were combined with clinical scores. Despite the consequent reduction in overall scores, there continues to be higher than average scores for students with attention problems, rule breaking, and aggression as measured by the CBC-TRF, 6 months after the programs were completed. Even so, a paired samples *t*-test, using the raw scores of the students rather than their *T*-scores, demonstrates a significant improvement in social problems and aggression, with effect size indicated by Eta squared scores of 0.25 and 0.26 respectively, indicating a large effect size. The Eta statistic indicates 0.01 = small effect, 0.06 = moderate effect, 0.14 = large effect (Pallant 2007) (Table 19.5).

Achenbach and Rescoria (2001) recommend using raw scores for syndrome scales as it enables the full range of variation in these scales to be used. For other scales, statistical analyses yield similar results using *T*-scores to those using the raw scores. Achenbach and Rescoria (2001) consider the clinical range for Internalising, Externalising and Total Problems to be indicated by *T*-scores of equal to and greater than 64, with Borderline scores being between 60 and 63 (84th to 90th percentile). A lower cut-off for these scales is recommended due to the numerous and diverse problems that these scales encompass compared with the specific syndrome scales. Achenbach and Rescoria (2001) maintained that combining the borderline and clinical categories, creating a cut-off *T*-score of 60, is also a justified method to discriminate deviant and non-deviant scores. It can be seen from these *T*-score means that the sample presented with well above average concerns in externalising, inattention and hyperactivity/attention before and after the programs.

Results demonstrate that the students who attend the Units generally enter with significant externalising behaviours, severe behaviour problems, difficulties with impulsivity, and high distractibility. Although there are changes over time, scores for follow-up reflect a similar pattern. Tables 19.6 and 19.7 show analysis and further demonstrates that this profile is common across the Units.

Although there is some variation, mean *T*-scores for students from all Units returning these forms were in the clinical range for Externalising and Total Behaviour, both before and after the programs, except for site 3 where the scores are 58.85 and 56.29 respectively. Initially 48.2% of the students were reported by teachers as demonstrating a severe level of impulsiveness and inattention. Post-program follow-up shows a small reduction in this proportion (40%). Note that these scores were derived from teacher ratings, hence only reflect outcomes for those students returning to a mainstream school, some of whom were in new contexts. Marked changes in scores over the period of intervention are noted in the scores on externalising, total behaviour,

Table 19.5 Changes in Syndrome scores: Pre-program (Time 1) to Follow-up (Time 3) using mean difference in raw scores of teacher rankings

CBC-TRF Syndromes	M diff	SD	SE(M)	95% CI	t	df	p	η^2
Anx/depress	0.40	5.68	1.27	−2.26, 3.06	0.32	19	0.76	0.01
Anx/withdrawn	1.30	3.88	0.87	−0.52, 3.12	1.50	19	0.15	0.10
Somatic	−0.60	3.38	0.76	−2.18, 0.98	−0.79	19	0.44	0.07
Social prob	2.15	3.87	0.87	0.34, 3.96	2.49	19	0.02*	0.25
Thoughts	−0.55	3.68	0.82	−2.27, 1.17	−0.67	19	0.51	0.02
Attention seek	4.70	11.42	2.55	0.65, 10.05	1.84	19	0.08	0.15
Rule-break	1.75	6.12	1.37	−1.11, 4.61	1.28	19	0.22	0.07
Aggression	6.40	10.96	2.45	1.27, 11.53	2.61	19	0.02*	0.26

$N = 20$, *$p < 0.05$

Table 19.6 Internalising, externalising and attention scores on the CBC-TRF on entry (T1) and on follow-up (T3)

T-scores	T1 M	T1 SD	T3 M	T3 SD
Internalising	59.41	8.93	56.40	12.15
Externalising	71.43	9.56	67.85	11.53
Total Behaviour	68.72	6.15	64.65	10.47
Clinical range = score of ≥ 64				
Mean Percentiles				
Inattention	89.67	4.39	77.08	34.57
Hyperactivity/impulsivity	92.44	8.35	78.31	34.83
Clinical range > 90th percentile				

T1 $N = 29$, T3 $N = 20$

and hyperactivity/impulsiveness. These changes are statistically significant with Eta squared results indicating large effect sizes in externalising, impulsivity and behaviour, and a moderate effect size demonstrated in inattention (Pallant 2007).

19.3.4 Attendance Outcomes

On follow-up, students were interviewed in their subsequent educational or other placement. Forty-five per cent of students were reintegrated into their school of referral, another 45% changed schools, while a small number of the students had left the school system or could not be contacted.

19.3.5 Beck Youth Depression Scale Results

It was predicted that significant mental health issues measured by the Beck Depression Inventory for Youth would be reduced post-program. Depression scores on this scale were compared at three intervals, on entry to program, in the exit week, and at approximately 6 months post-program. Assessments were administered to the first groups of students across the three intervals; however, it was omitted from the second battery for later students, to make it easier for those students who found it difficult to complete the full battery of questionnaires. The sample for this questionnaire included 26 students at Time 1, and 18 at Time 3.

A paired samples *t*-test with 26 students was calculated with scores for Time 1 and Time 2. A significant reduction in the Beck Depression scores from Time 1 to Time 2 was found. Scores at Time 1 ($M = 15.18$, $SD = 11.65$) were reduced in Time 2 ($M = 12.04$, $SD = 11.82$), t (3.03), $p = 0.006$, *df* 25 (two- tailed), 95% *CI* [0.98, 5.23]. The Eta squared statistic (0.27) indicated a large effect size. Although the sample size reduced the statistical power of these scores, they indicated a significant reduction in reported depression symptoms.

Table 19.7 Syndromes Paired samples t-test using mean difference in T-scores from pre-program (Time 1) to follow-up (Time 3)

Scale T 1 –T3	M	SD	SE(M)	95% CI	t	df	p	η^2
Internalising	2.40	13.59	3.04	−3.96, 8.76	0.79	19	0.439	0.03
Externalising	4.75	9.09	2.03	0.50, 9.00	2.34	19	0.031*	0.22
Behaviour	4.60	9.30	2.08	0.25, 8.95	2.21	19	0.039*	0.21
Inattention	6.85	28.10	6.28	−6.30, 20.00	1.09	19	0.289	0.06
Impulsivity	13.10	27.32	6.11	3.13, 25.89	2.14	19	0.045*	0.19

$N = 20$. *$p < 0.05$

Fig. 19.5 Beck depression scores over intervention
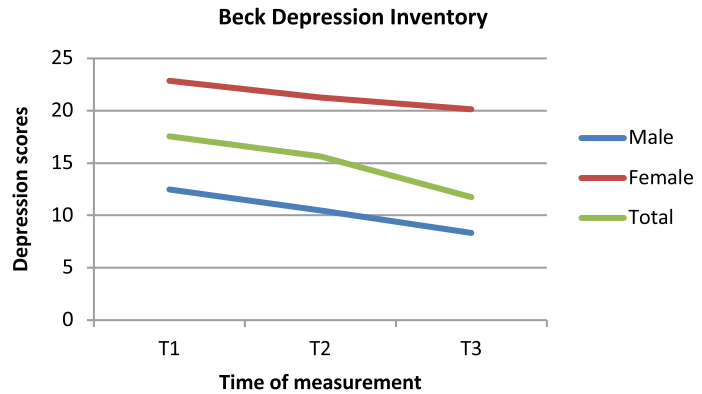
When the follow-up group was included in the analysis, there were 16-paired results on the Beck Depression Scale. Repeated ANOVA results produced significant reductions in scores from Time 1 to Time 3, with a mean difference of -5.81, $p = 0.01$, 95% CI [-1.13, -10.49], the partial Eta squared statistic of 0.46 indicated a moderate to large effect. The Friedman Test was used for analysis due to the small sample size. The Friedman Test indicated that there was a significant difference in Depression scores across the three time points, mean ranks of 2.59, 2.16 and 1.25 respectively, Chi-squared (2, $N = 16$) = 15.77, $p < 0.001$). Median values indicated a decreased score from 20 at Time 1, to 14 at Time 2, and 8 at Time 3. The Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test showed a significantly decreased score on the Beck Youth Depression Inventory scores from Time 1 to Time 2 ($z = -2.69$, $p = 0.007$), with a large effect size (0.48), and Time 1 to Time 3 ($z = -2.47$, $p = 0.01$), again with a medium to large effect size (0.44). Effect sizes were calculated again for the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test by dividing the z value by the square root of N. In this situation, N was the number of observations over the time points, not the number of cases (Pallant 2007). Cohen's criteria for this calculation are 0.1 = small effect, 0.3 = medium effect, and 0.5 = a large effect (Pallant 2007). Sustained improvement occurred at the end of the programs and continued over the following months with this group of young people. This effect is shown in Fig. 19.5. The hypothesis that mental health issues would be significantly reduced on completion and on follow-up, as measured by the Beck Youth Depression Inventory, was supported by the results.

19.4 Discussion

The study suggests several conclusions. A break from the home base school was beneficial to the student and appeared to be worth the risk to self-esteem. Students who needed this intervention were struggling with unfocused attention, self-regulation, and behaviour. Learning needs were a component of their behavioural presentations. Teachers effectively identified these issues but the engagement of the students was difficult in a classroom context. Teachers are not always equipped to deal with severe behaviours and problem behaviour can mask a clinical problem. Inattentive or aggressive behaviour is complex and not always in the control of the student. The 'time-out' with a positive program enabled many students 're-calibrate' and gain greater success on return.

Despite intervention, on return, many of the students were still identified with high needs for accommodations to maintain them at their mainstream school. Specific aspects of change that allowed the students to demonstrate improved adjustment needs to be carefully examined to enable efficient addressing of the needs of these young people by appropriate services. Students with learning and mental health

needs must be linked with supportive treatment of their psychological problems. Academic problems often foster behaviour problems, and students are not able to address these on their own. Support programs that allow students some autonomy while addressing their learning problems can re-engage young people and provide them with another chance to gain an education. One of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is to support nations in providing inclusive education for all students. This goal aims to support schools in providing both tangible assets such as computers, and psychological support, such as additional attention to students in need. It is clear that inclusion can mean offering flexible options to enhance the educational experience of all young people and promote equal opportunities. The challenge however is to find structures in the mainstream setting that can notice and hear the needs of these students, support their efforts to express their issues, link them with appropriate clinical services, while keeping them in the school setting. Additionally, comments from students showed how they valued this extra chance to stay at school, and the gratitude some felt towards the staff who assisted in some reframing of their school attitudes and behaviour.

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Vicki McKenzie, PhD, is an Associate Professor at the University of Melbourne and is Convenor of the Educational Psychology Masters programs. Dr McKenzie has written on the resources, resilience and coping skills of disengaged students, mental health awareness, connectedness, school psychology, autism, and self-determination. She is currently National Chair of the APS College of Educational and Developmental Psychologists.

At the Nexis of Schooling: The Conflict Between "Special" and "Inclusive" Education

Joanna Anderson, Angela Page, and Christopher Boyle

Abstract

Inclusive education has struggled to gain traction in recent years, despite it having been the prevailing philosophy globally for the education of students with a disability for more than quarter of a century, and in more contemporary times, for all students. In many countries there is evidence to suggest segregation and exclusion of some groups of students, particularly those with a disability or other identified needs, is again on the rise. The reasons for this are varied and complex, yet one notion that requires further exploration is the role special education, and those working in the field, have played in the inclusive education debate. Inclusive education emerged from within the special education debate, and much of the discourse around it still attaches itself to 'residual ideas' from each of the exclusion, segregation, and integration eras (Mac Ruaic 2020). Having grown out of the field of special education, inclusive education

consistently gets entangled in the politics of disability and education (Artiles and Kozleski 2016). The challenges from special educators to protect what has traditionally been their educational space are real (Sailor 2017). Slee (2018a) describes the recent push against inclusive education from within the special education field as a 'reassertion of brand special education' (p. 24). Advocates of special education have fought to maintain separate provisions for students with disability, in the form of segregated classes and special schools (Avissar 2018). The argument is based on the premise that this segregation is needed – it is for their own good (Slee 2018b) – because 'special and general education are actually different' (Kauffman et al. 2018b, p. 3). The argument goes that inclusive education, with its focus on place of education rather than on the instruction of education, places students with disabilities at a disadvantage (Kauffman et al. 2018b), and therefore separate placements are required. Imray and Colley (2017) position full inclusion as the enemy of special education, with statements such as this: 'full inclusion seems to be intent on abolishing special schools and classes' (p. 6). Assertions made by special educationalists, such as those described here, have set the debate as one centred around 'inclusion verses non-inclusion' (Jackson et al. 2018). This chapter explores the current literature as described above and connects it to the everyday practice

J. Anderson (✉)
University of New England, Armidale, Australia
e-mail: jander62@une.edu.au

A. Page
University of Newcastle, Callaghan, Australia

C. Boyle
University of Adelaide, Adelaide, Australia
e-mail: chris.boyle@adelaide.edu.au

of primary school principals, who have found themselves caught up in the politics of the special versus inclusive education debate.

20.1 Introduction

Education carries a considerable responsibility when it comes to improving global inequality, and while not everyone thinks this is as it should be (see Muller 2018 for a discussion on this), it must be acknowledged that education matters. Educational attainment has been shown to improve a broad range of life outcomes (Wilkinson and Pickett 2010) and equitable access to education enhances 'social equity' (Harber 2014, p. 20). It is unsurprising therefore to find 'Quality education' (Goal 4) identified as one of 17 goals described within the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (United Nations 2015), a plan of action developed and agreed upon by world leaders designed to 'shift the world onto a sustainable and resilient path' (para. 1). It has been argued that for education to be considered 'quality' it must be inclusive (Anderson and Boyle 2020). If enacted successfully inclusive education can reduce inequalities more broadly, including in the areas of physical and mental health, income and employment, and social connectivity. It is these wider benefits that position inclusive education as a construct of consequence within global discourse, not just within the sphere of education.

Inclusive education has been the prevailing philosophy globally for the education of students with a disability for more than quarter of a century, and in more contemporary times, for *all* students. In 2016 the committee responsible for the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) described inclusive education as follows:

> … a process of systemic reform embodying changes and modifications in content, teaching methods, approaches, structures and strategies in education to overcome barriers with a vision serving to provide all students of the relevant age range with an equitable and participatory learning experience and environment that best corresponds to their requirements and preferences.
> (United Nations 2016, para. 11).

Despite being situated within a document specific to persons with disabilities, this definition refers to all students and therefore aligns with the broader understanding of inclusive education that is accepted by many throughout the world (Boyle and Anderson 2020). Captured within these words is the scale of change required for inclusive education to prevail.

It is not enough to simply place responsibility for inclusive education at the feet of schools, an approach that has been adopted by many systems throughout the western world (Ainscow et al. 2013; Thomson et al. 2012). Inclusive education requires broader change, across all facets of education systems, from policies, to resourcing models, to school building design, to curriculum and pedagogy. The enormity of change may explain in some part both why inclusive education has struggled to gain traction in recent years and why the 'substantial distance between the conceptualisation of inclusive education and its implementation' (Artiles and Kozleski 2016, p. 7) has persisted. In many countries, such as Australia and England, there is evidence to suggest segregation and exclusion of some groups of students, particularly those from minority groups, is again on the rise (Anderson and Boyle 2019; Norwich and Black 2015). Reasons for this are varied and complex, yet one notion that requires further exploration is the role special education, and those working in the field, have played. While the construct of inclusive education has been lauded globally by many policy makers, researchers and practitioners, it has faced unrelenting criticism and resistance (Artiles and Kozleski 2016) with much of this coming from the field of special education (Slee 2018a). This chapter explores the impact of such resistance on the work of primary school principals in Queensland, Australia, as they endeavour to situate themselves as leaders for inclusive education. Before addressing the dilemma of implementing inclusive practices for principals, it

is necessary to position the discussion within the historical context of inclusive education.

20.1.1 From 'Special' to 'Inclusive' Education

Inclusive education emanated from the debate on special education, and much of the rhetoric around it still attaches itself to the 'residual ideas' of exclusion, segregation, and integration (Mac Ruairc 2020). Having emerged out of the field of special education, inclusive education finds itself persistently entangled in the politics of disability and education (Artiles and Kozleski 2016). As a consequence, special educators have fought to protect what has traditionally been their educational space – the education of students with a disability (Sailor 2017). Rather than abating over time, this fight appears to have exacerbated, and Slee (2018a) described the burgeoning push against inclusive education from within the special education field as a 'reassertion of brand special education' (p. 24). Advocates of special education have remained persistent in their endeavours to maintain separate provisions for students with disability, in the form of segregated classes and special schools (Avissar 2018). The argument is based on the premise that segregation is needed, it is for *their* own good (Slee 2018b). Kauffman et al. (2018b) contest this is because 'special and general education are actually different' (p. 3) and therefore require different teacher capabilities, resources, and facilities. The argument goes that inclusive education places students with disabilities at a disadvantage (Kauffman et al. 2018b), and therefore separate placements must be maintained. Imray and Colley (2017) position inclusive education as the enemy of special education, alleging that 'full inclusion seems to be intent on abolishing special schools and classes' (p. 6), resulting in 'the dissolution of a viable and vibrant special education' (Kauffman et al. (2018a, p. 35). While these statements would be difficult to refute, it could be argued that this type of rhetoric is unproductive as it sets the educational debate of students with disability as one centred around 'inclusion versus non-inclusion', rather than being focussed on the needs of all students (Jackson et al. 2018).

Any social movement that confronts 'categories of difference' is going to face challenges by virtue of the 'cultural history meanings and baggage' attached to it (Artiles and Kozleski 2016, p. 13). When people with varied understandings and values of difference attempt to find solutions for a construct as complex as inclusive education, the solutions are at risk of becoming 'caught up in conflicts' among these diverse beliefs (Sailor 2017, p. 1). Perhaps this explains, in some part, the fact that despite having been part of the lexicon for decades, 'inclusive education is still like an island, considered as a separate territory from mainstream education, with its own discourses, policies and practices' (Thomas 2013, p. 475). This is problematic for a myriad of reasons, many more than can be explored here. However, of note in this discussion are the problems created by the consideration of inclusive education as its own entity, like special education, rather than it being viewed as a philosophy that underpins the holistic process of 'doing' education; problems that have presented themselves along the inclusive education journey within Australia.

20.1.2 Inclusive Education in Australia

Australia has espoused inclusive education as the overarching philosophy for all students since it became a signatory to the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO) in 1994. Fourteen years later the federal government endorsed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability (United Nations 2008), and in that same year, set an agenda for the future of education in Australia that outlined a system that was to promote 'equity and excellence' to 'all' (Australia Ministerial Council on Education and Youth Affairs 2008, p. 6). Yet, like many nations, Australia has struggled to effectively deliver an education system that is inclusive of its increasingly diverse student population (Anderson and Boyle 2019). Graham (2020) describes what is currently

happening in Australia as 'fauxclusion' (p.21), with education systems claiming they are inclusive when what they are actually implementing is integration. Not only are schools in Australia misinterpreting inclusive education, a recent study found that the education system nationally is becoming more exclusive, with rates of segregation and exclusion increasing across the board (Anderson and Boyle 2019). Students most affected by these increasing rates of segregation and exclusion are those from minority and/or disadvantaged backgrounds, including those with a disability. A detailed discussion of the reasons for this lack of success in delivering an inclusive education system is complex and beyond the scope of this chapter (see Anderson and Boyle 2019, for further information on this). Instead, a spotlight will be placed on the influence of the perpetual 'special' versus 'inclusive' education debate on the work of those anointed with the responsibility for the administration of inclusive schools, school principals, within one Australian state. Queensland was one of the first Australian states to adopt the philosophy of inclusive education for students with disabilities (The Senate 2002). The ensuing years saw multiple iterations of inclusive education policies, but despite this, a 2017 report (Deloitte Access Economic 2017), commissioned by the then State Government, highlighted a multitude of issues with the provision of education being afforded to the diverse cohort of students across the state, with a particular focus on those with disabilities.

20.1.3 Principal's Perceptions of Inclusive Education

Research has consistently reflected the importance of school leadership as a predictor of student achievement (Óskarsdóttir et al. 2020; Sailor 2017), student well-being (Abawi et al. 2018) and school culture (Fullan 2014; Piotrowsky 2016). Principals have a far-reaching level of influence on students, teachers, parents and the wider school community (Davies and Halsey 2019). Given the importance of school leadership, it is not surprising that principalship is understood as

being critical to the effectiveness of inclusion (Billingsley et al. 2018; Carter and Abawi 2018; Edmunds and Macmillan 2010). Successful inclusive education requires a principal who supports the construct (McLeskey and Waldron 2015; Qvortrup and Qvortrup 2018) and understands both what it means and its philosophical underpinnings (Billingsley et al. 2018). Inclusive education will not happen without the influence and support of school principals (Forlin and Sin 2010). Despite the significance and centrality of the principal's role in successful inclusive schools, little research has been published in this area (Romanuck Murphy 2018). A recent bibliometric review of the literature into inclusive education identified seven areas that have been 'recurrently addressed' in the research (Hernández-Torrano et al. 2020, p. 16);

> (1) teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education, (2) pre-service and in-service professional development for inclusion, (3) practices and principles promoting inclusive education, (4) special education, and (5) participation of special educational needs students. In addition to that, the present study identified two additional topical foci that have not been captured in previous mappings of the inclusive education literature: (6) inclusive education in higher education settings, specifically in terms of accessibility, disability, transition, employability, and sexuality; and (7) educational policy for inclusion.

Neither school principals nor leadership for inclusive education featured in this list in any way. In order to meet the gap in the literature pertaining to the role that leaders and principals play, research was conducted to explore the influence of factors within eco-systems of school leadership on principals' perceptions of inclusive education, and the relationship between these perceptions and their ability to effectively implement inclusive practices.

20.2 Method

A qualitative case-study design was employed to interrogate leadership for inclusive education within seven primary schools located in Queensland, Australia. Schools were all Government run,

and purposefully selected on a number of criteria, including size, diversity of cohort, and their Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) rating (according to the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) it is a scale which allows for 'comparisons between schools based on the level of educational advantage or disadvantage that students bring to their academic studies' (ACARA 2015, p. 1)), to ensure a diverse mix of data were captured. Principals from each school participated in two in-depth semi-structured interviews, which were transcribed and then analysed using an inductive thematic analysis approach. Codes were established and themes developed following the guidelines proffered by Clarke and Braun (2017). Each theme is presented below, along with direct quotes from participating principals, to provide a rich description of the nature of the theme. It should be noted that principals were allocated an alphabetic identifier (PA, PB and so on) during transcription of the interview data, and these have been used here to ensure anonymity.

20.3 Results and Discussion

All principals expressed a belief that supported the principle of inclusive education, however each situated the construct (in multiple ways) within the special education paradigm. Four themes emerged that confirmed the influential nature of the enduring 'special' versus 'inclusive' education debate on the perceptions of inclusive education expressed by the participating principals.

20.3.1 Inclusive Education is about Disability

Principals characterised inclusive education as being about the students with a disability enrolled at their schools. PA described "kids with a disability" as their "inclusive kids", and in a similar vein, PB portrayed the "nature of the inclusivity" within their school as being about

the "70 kids…who have a diagnosis". A diagnosis was considered a positive element, as PF explained that a disability diagnosis helped the school to understand how best to provide for individual students: "We know with the assessments that are done what the diagnosis is. We know what level of support is needed. We provide the people. They have [the student with a disability] got their programmes, which are reviewed, and off we go". Yet not all principals had always felt as sure about their capacity to provide for students with a disability, as PE illustrated when reflecting upon their experience of working at a school in a regional area that did not have a special school close by:

> If a kid came to you who had a disability, you just sort of went, 'Oh god'. But they had nowhere else to go cause everywhere else was a long way away, where you could get rid of them. Well not get rid of them, you know what I mean. But there were no options so if they [the families] were living and working there, that's where they were coming.

The majority of principals in this study had worked in schools outside larger regional areas without access to a special school, and the sentiment expressed here by PE that the enrolment of a student with a disability was something that caused angst, was echoed by other principals. It must be noted however that none of the principals hinted at the notion that they would refuse an enrolment of the grounds of disability.

Associating inclusive education exclusively with disability is problematic in two ways. Firstly, the possibility arises that the needs of other students, without a diagnosed disability, may not be considered within school policies and processes. Secondly, the focus on disability situates this one group of students as being 'other', distinct to the rest of the students and in need of something different. These two points present situations where the possibility arises that different cohorts of students may, in some way, be excluded, which contradicts the very notion of inclusion itself. Cologon (2019) sums it up like this: '…there is no 'type' of student 'eligible' (nor 'ineligible') for inclusion', as 'inclusion is about…all' (p. 3).

20.3.2   Special Education is Part of Inclusive Education

Principals each described inclusive education as a continuum, with 'full inclusion' at one end, and full-time placement in a segregated setting (such as a special school) at the other. In between, principals outlined various options that included placement into special education classes within the mainstream school, dual placements in both mainstream and special education classes, and placements in a mainstream classroom with special education staff support. All of these options were described as part of inclusive education, a conceptualisation that has been described in the literature as common (Rix et al. 2015). This position was legitimised by principals on the ground that not all students could work successfully within the "mainstream" classroom (PG). PC argued that inclusive education must be "reasonable" because it "doesn't necessarily mean that they're [the student] involved with every activity that every child will do"; "there is some inclusion in classrooms". PF explained, as a number of principals did, that decisions about the placement of students were based on "the actual needs of the child…and that will mean different levels of integration into classrooms for different kids at different times". PB described a similar practice, where students experienced "inclusivity… at varying degrees". Special schools were also sanctioned by principals as being "desperately needed" (PD), particularly for students with more complex needs.

Each of these principals asserted a conviction that the use of special education programmes, classes and schools was part of inclusive education, as it was through these provisions that the educational requirements (as identified by the school) of students "need[ing] more than just the mainstream education" (PB) were supported. It is this argument that advocates of special education present in the literature (e.g. Avissar 2018), and like the principals in this study, they situate the practices under the umbrella of inclusion (De Bruin 2020). Graham and Spandagou (2011) lament this position, arguing it has eliminated

any understanding of the 'originating philosophies' (p. 233) of inclusive education in school principals.

20.3.3   Inclusive Education is the Responsibility of Special Education Staff

Each of the principals referred to special education staff – leaders, teachers and teacher aides – in a way that *othered* them from the rest of the school staff. Just like students with disabilities were considered different, so too were the teachers who worked with them. This was evident in PB's description of what they referred to as an "innovative practice", where, "two…special education teachers" were placed "in primary mainstream classes" with cohorts that "a larger portion of students who have a disability".

Principals' lauded the work of special education staff within their schools, so much so that funds were allocated by some to purchase additional special education teacher time. PG explained they employed a teacher "with a special ed background" to drive their inclusive education agenda and considered the decision had been "a really good one". PD employed the same practice and purchased additional special education teacher time which they viewed as having had a positive outcome for inclusive education within their school: "She's [the special education teacher] very hands on and I believe that's what makes a difference."

The conviction that inclusive education was the work of special education staff extended to leadership. PA described their school as not yet being as inclusive as they desired and described why: "We're not there yet in terms of knowledge, we're not there yet in terms of capacity, and we're not there in terms of school culture…and we don't have a leader". This last statement was in reference to the school not having a permanent appointment in their Head of Special Education position. PA situated leadership of the inclusive education agenda as sitting outside their role as

principal and instead considered it to be the job of the middle manager employed in a special education position.

The framing of inclusive education as the work of special educators positions the construct as pertaining exclusively to disability, problematic for the way staff, students and wider school community think about inclusion. In addition, it shifts responsibility for the enactment of inclusive education away from principals and onto staff who may not have the authority, leadership experience, skillset, or resources to influence and shift school culture and school-wide practices. Yet this is precisely what successful inclusive schools require (Macmillan and Edmunds 2010; Yan and Sin 2015).

20.3.4 Inclusive Education is Separate to the Provision of 'Mainstream' Schooling

All principals used language that set inclusive education as being something different to "mainstream" education. "Mainstream" classes were described as being for students who fitted the school's notion of "normal" (a term used by the majority of principals). If students did not fit into this category, they were deemed as needing something "more than just mainstream education" (PB) and this is where inclusive education sat, something in addition to or different from mainstream schooling. PC indicated that for some students "it doesn't matter how much you do with them in the mainstream classroom, they don't move", and practices identified as sitting along the inclusive education continuum, were implemented. The divide between mainstream and inclusive education extended to the way principals considered their resource allocations. PE explained a situation that highlights this:

> There's one really high-risk child in Year 2 who has to have an aide with him at all times, even on the playground. So, someone's paid to follow and watch him. So that money's coming out of [the special education teacher's name] budget, so it's not really out of school money.

The consequence of inclusive education being located as something *other than* or *different to* mainstream education meant that for some principals the alignment between inclusive education and the other obligations for improvement in school outcomes was not clear. PA admitted this caused challenges and they were unsure of how to position inclusive education within their whole school plan: "That whole students with a need agenda I probably put a little bit over to that side cause I can't really see it gelling with the whole school improvement agenda." This is problematic as research has consistently reflected the influential role of principals as key players in the development of school culture (Fullan 2014; Piotrowsky 2016); if they cannot envisage inclusive education as part of their whole school plan then it is unlikely to become part of the whole school culture.

20.4 Influences on Principals' Perceptions of Inclusive Education

Despite inclusive education being presented as the prevailing philosophy within Queensland educational policy for the education of all students, the principals in this study perceived inclusive education as something intrinsically linked, in various ways, to special education, and these understandings had a significant impact on the way principals selected and enacted inclusive practices. This finding is not unique. A study conducted in the Australian state of New South Wales found that 'special education remained a domain of strong interest and concern for principals' (Woodcock and Hardy 2019, p. 12), regardless of the push for inclusive education by the respective education department.

Reasoning for this is complex, as influencing factors are not positioned as single entities resistant to the influence of other factors that sit within eco-systems of school leadership. Yet this does not negate the need to expose and explore, albeit briefly, the factors that did influence the way principals understood inclusive education, given the significant impact this had on their

work as leaders for the construct. In addition to the explicit 'special' versus 'inclusive' education debate present within current educational discourse, propagated by some academics and public advocates (as alluded to earlier), there exists less conspicuous but arguably more insidious phenomena that preserve the entanglement of inclusive education with special education, and influence the way the construct is understood by those working in the field. While an exhaustive discussion is beyond the scope of this chapter, three influential factors will be explored: the role of research, the role of universities, and the role of educational systems.

20.4.1   The Role of Research

Inclusive education is a contested field (Woodcock and Hardy 2017). The complexities of the construct, along with challenges to garner a consistent understanding of what it is and who it is for, means that research in the field comes up 'against inevitable challenges' (Ruppar et al. 2018, p. 791). It is therefore unsurprising to find that contradictions arise within the literature, meaning engagement with research into inclusive education does not necessitate a comprehensive understanding of it. Two points are worth noting here. First, a study looking at the literature on inclusive education in the decade between 2005 and 2015 found that many studies focussed only on particular groups of students without acknowledgment of the wider context and was therefore 'contrary to the principles of inclusive education' (Messiou 2019, p. 146). This is evidenced by researchers who adhere tightly to the bounded understanding of inclusive education as being only about disability (for example Graham 2020); an inherently exclusive practice that situates inclusive education as being a substitute only for those traditionally schooled in special education settings. The second point is the associative use of the terms 'inclusive' and 'special' within the literature. Many articles and books use the terms 'special' and 'inclusive' education within their titles – for example, *What really works in special and inclusive education*

(Mitchell and Sutherland 2020) – while others have adopted the phrase 'inclusive special education' (see Fitzgerald and Radford 2020; Hornby 2015; Radford 2011; Romanuck Murphy 2018). This ongoing appropriation of special education and inclusive education draws a connection between the two constructs as being almost interchangeable, which, for those who consider inclusive education as a distinctive way of thinking about and doing education (eg. Slee 2011, 2018b), is problematic.

It is evident from the examples above that some of the research into inclusive education, even when undertaken by advocates of the construct, situates it as something akin to special education. For consumers, this work cultivates the entanglement of special and inclusive education, blurring the distinctiveness of the constructs. As a consequence, the delineation of what is inclusive practice and what is not becomes less recognisable, and less evident for those working as leaders for inclusive education.

20.4.2   The Role of Universities

Universities also play their part. Studies of inclusive education are often delivered alongside courses in special education, and in some cases, this occurs from within departments or faculties external to those that deliver general education courses. From the beginning of careers, preservice teachers are exposed to the notion that inclusive education is about special education, difference, and segregation (Jackson et al. 2018). It must be acknowledged that, within Australian Universities, this phenomenon is undergoing reform and more courses are being taught with embedded content related to inclusive education. Yet this does not diminish the impact of this practice on the work of current school leaders.

20.4.3   The Role of Education Systems

Via policy documentation and reform mandates, education systems consistently place expectations onto schools to be the enactors of

successful inclusive practice, and as the positional, accountable leader of their schools, principals bear much of this load. Principals are responsible for the development of inclusive polices, processes and routines, and for the provision of schoolwide structures and resourcing models to enable their implementation. This is not an easy task (Woodcock and Hardy 2019). Success necessitates principals 'establish inclusion as an overarching goal that permeates through everything they do' (Macmillan and Edmunds 2010, p. 3), and the findings presented above indicate this was not the way the principals in this study managed the inclusive education agenda within their schools. Instead, its administration reflected the way the inclusive education agenda was managed within the education system within which the principals worked.

Principals' perceptions of inclusive education were a reflection not of what the Queensland Department of Education had profiled in its Inclusive Education policy (which has perhaps become, to adopt Slee's (2018b) turn of phrase, 'empty' rhetoric (p. 20), but rather of its methods of operation. While championing an inclusive education agenda, the Queensland Department of Education operates special schools, special education programmes and staff within regular schools, and utilises a deficit, medical model of ability to resource schools and students. The system in this state needs to acknowledge it cannot just, to coin an old saying, *talk the talk* but instead needs to *walk the walk*. It is change to systemic practice, not to rhetoric, that will influence the way principals view and act upon inclusive education within their schools – change that can overhaul exclusionary practices (Artiles and Kozleski 2016).

20.5 Conclusion

This chapter grappled with the dilemma of the enduring 'special' versus 'inclusive' education debate, and the influence of this on principals' perceptions of and leadership practice for inclusive education. The research findings presented show that these perceptions produced four clear themes. First, principals regarded inclusive education to be specifically about disability and characterised inclusive education as being for the students with a disability enrolled at their schools. Second, they regarded special education to be an inclusive practice, sitting at one end of the inclusive education continuum, with 'full inclusion' at the other. Third, principals described inclusive education as being the work of staff employed in special education roles. Finally, principals considered inclusive education to be something separate to 'mainstream' education and used language to describe it as being something 'different' or 'other'. It could be argued that these findings are unsurprising, given Artiles and Kozleski's (2016) assertion that the constructs of disability and inclusive education are often entangled in political discourse, and as a consequence, the term *special education* is often 'misrepresented' as *inclusive education* (D'Alessio et al. 2018). This notion is reflected in the work of researchers, universities and education systems and this is problematic for the global goal of quality and equitable education (United Nations 2015). Why? Because it seems that while the special' versus 'inclusive' education debate persists, advocates of inclusive education will have an uphill battle to position the construct as it was always meant to be positioned – as a way of *doing* education for everyone.

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Joanna Anderson, PhD, currently lectures in inclusive education, student behaviour, and school leadership at the University of New England, Australia. Dr. Anderson has worked as a teacher and school leader across diverse contexts for more than two decades. She has a particular research interest in leadership for inclusive education and systems of inclusive education across global contexts, and is widely published in these areas.

Angela Page, EdD, currently lectures in inclusive education and classroom management at the University of Newcastle, Australia. She has worked as an inclusive education advisor to schools and governments in New Zealand and the Pacific region. Dr. Page has a particular interest in inclusive and special education practices within new or emerging contexts. As an educational psychologist, she has assisted in the development of inclusive education practices for teachers as well as in the guidance in case management policy and practice.

Christopher Boyle, PhD, FBPsS, is a Professor of Inclusive Education and Educational Psychology in the School of Education at The University of Adelaide, Australia. He is a Fellow of the British Psychological Society and a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. He was previously the Editor in Chief of The Educational Academy. He was previously the Editor in Chief of The Educational and Developmental Psychologist (2012–2017) and is the founding co-editor of Belonging and Human Connection (with Kelly Allen) launched in 2022. He is an internationally recognised and respected academic and author on the subjects of inclusive education and psychology. He is a registered psychologist in the UK and Australia.

Belonging as a Core Construct at the Heart of the Inclusion Debate, Discourse, and Practice

21

Kelly-Ann Allen, Christopher Boyle,
Umesh Sharma, Lefteris Patlamazoglou,
Panagiotis Pentaris, Christine Grové,
Hannah Yared, Emily Berger, Nicholas Gamble,
Zoe A. Morris, Ilana Finefter-Rosenbluh,
Michele Morgan, and Fiona May

Abstract

This chapter intends to present a new and novel perspective on inclusion and argue that inclusion can never be truly achieved without the presence of belonging. Both belonging and inclusion are linked to positive academic outcomes and general well-being of students. Belonging is described as a subjective and dynamic feeling while the definition of inclusion varies among different discourses. The aim of this chapter is to discuss the role of belonging to inclusion particularly among marginalised populations and groups. It highlights the usefulness of assessing an individual's belonging as a true measure for inclusion and its importance as a social and ethical obligation. This chapter further explains that belonging is a vital component to inclusion, equity, and diversity. The chapter concludes with a conceptual model that has implications for future discourse and research.

K.-A. Allen (✉)
School of Educational Psychology and Counselling, Faculty of Education, Monash University, Clayton, VIC, Australia
e-mail: kelly-ann.allen@monash.edu

Centre for Wellbeing Science, Melbourne Graduate School of Education, University of Melbourne, Parkville, VIC, Australia

C. Grové · H. Yared · E. Berger · N. Gamble · Z. A. Morris · I. Finefter-Rosenbluh · F. May
Monash University, Melbourne, Australia

U. Sharma · L. Patlamazoglou
School of Education, The University of Adelaide, Monash, Australia

P. Pentaris
University of Greenwich, London, UK

M. Morgan
DePaul University, Chicago, USA

C. Boyle
University of Adelaide, Adelaide, Australia
e-mail: chris.boyle@adelaide.edu.au

21.1 Introduction

The concept of belonging has been described as the next evolution of, and a characteristic that is central to, inclusion (Midgen et al. 2019; Vandenbussche and Schauwer 2018). The research constructs of belonging and inclusion have both been linked to student satisfaction, motivation, and academic performance (Midgen et al. 2019). It is plausible to think that inclusion in its fullest sense—whether in a school setting, an organisation, or in society at large—requires that the individual concerned has a sense of belonging to the setting or group they feel included within. Significant support for such a

supposition can be found in the central role that belongingness plays in productive learning and general well-being (Midgen et al. 2019). The purpose of this chapter is to provide a narrative synthesis of the literatures relating to inclusion and belonging in order to explore whether, and if so how, belonging is positioned in the literature on inclusion, especially as it applies to diverse populations in which scholarly discussions of inclusion are often built upon.

21.1.1 Belonging

Belonging is a feeling people have about their relationships, or their interconnectivity, with other people, places, and both material and immaterial 'things' (Allen 2020). A sense of belonging, with its relational and affective dimensions, is a deeply subjective feeling (Allen and Kern 2017; 2019; Vandenbussche and Schauwer 2018). It is highly fluid and dynamic, rooted in an individual's perception at any one point in time (Allen et al. 2016, 2018a).

While a sense of belonging is based on the individual's perception, the way in which inclusion is described in the literature is often more variable, shifting between discourses based on inclusion as a philosophy, an organisation goal, a set of practices, and a range of other conceptions (Allen et al. 2018b; Planz et al. 2020). These various approaches to inclusion tend to have as their goal the representation of those who are considered, or who consider themselves, to be a minority, with the ultimate aim being that all voices within a community can be heard and all members can participate in an equitable way. In educational settings, in particular, much of the work carried out on inclusion centres around students with special educational needs (Boyle and Anderson 2020; Slee 2019). Two streams of thought regarding inclusion have emerged in educational settings. On the one hand, purist inclusion advocates, who tend to have their origins in academic fields and who argue that all learners should be fully included regardless of the nature and severity of disability of the

learner, and the inclusion realists, on the other hand, who promote and employ inclusive practices within a system that purists would argue is inherently non-inclusive. This kind of division mirrors that found in the discourse on animal welfare, in which 'purists' argue that the best thing for animals is not to eat or exploit them at all, while 'realists' aim to make animal lives as comfortable as is possible in the context of contemporary society's usage of animals as a commodity or resource. For genuine inclusion, to occur, we are not just giving minority groups the microphone, we are making them a part of the band—irrespective of whether that band plays at Carnegie Hall, New York City or the Transcontinental Hotel, Oodnadatta in outback Australia.

From an inclusion perspective, a sense of belonging offers a space in which everyone feels empowered and safe (Burnette 2019). Inclusion, equity, and diversity are central to creating a sense of belonging in individuals. Without the presence of each element, belonging may not develop in individuals in an organisation and this concept can be extended to include educational settings (Burnette 2019). Without the presence of belonging in individuals, it is questionable whether inclusion, equity, and diversity can truly co-exist. It may be that a type of meta-belonging arises from all the parts of a group/system feeling that they belong to each other and to the group as a whole, and when this is achieved, the whole system can be thought of as inclusive. Public policy makers and change agents thus have a critical role to play in developing the inextricable link between belonging and inclusion in school systems (Allen et al. 2021; Tua et al. 2019).

21.1.2 Importance of Belonging for Inclusion

In educational settings, belonging has been associated with increased student motivation and higher levels of engagement in the classroom (Allen et al. 2019; Roffey et al. 2019). Students who tend to feel as though they belong at school also tend to show increased attendance and academic achievement

(Allen et al. 2017a; Arslan et al. 2020; Abdollahi et al. 2020). Belonging in school has been found to reduce aggressive behaviours such as bullying as well as other disruptive behaviours, such as substance abuse, truancy, and unsafe sex practices (Midgen et al. 2019). Belongingness is a prerequisite to all kinds of learning (Allen et al. 2018b), Allen & Bowles (2012). When learners have a sense of belongingness, they can thrive, but when they do not sense belongingness they struggle with their learning and engage in disruptive behaviours and are likely to drop out of school (Allen and Boyle 2016; Slaten et al. 2016, 2018). Unfortunately, many learners who differ from their mainstream counterparts in terms of their abilities, sexual orientation, and other such characteristics often lack a sense of belongingness in their school settings (Allen and Bowles 2012; O'Brien and Bowles 2013).

21.1.3 LGBTQ Inclusion in School

Heterosexism and cisgenderism render diverse sexual and gender identities non-normative and hence stigmatised (Dyar et al. 2020). In the school environment, such ideologies are linked to a lower sense of belonging for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ) students when compared to their heterosexual and cisgender peers (Aerts et al. 2012; Reisner et al. 2015). Research has also established higher rates of sexual harassment and other forms of peer victimisation, as well as suicidal ideation and substance use among LGBTQ students (Ybarra et al. 2015). In turn, peer victimisation hampers LGBTQ students' sense of belonging (Hatchel et al. 2017).

The importance of school belonging is demonstrated by its role in counteracting gender and sexuality discrimination and promoting positive outcomes. A sense of belonging enables LGBTQ students to feel represented and actively contribute to their school environment (Cerezo and Bergfeld 2013). School belonging also operates as a protective factor against depressive symptoms and the impact of aggression and peer victimisation (Hatchel et al. 2017; Ioverno et al. 2016). A supportive school climate mediates the

relation between peer victimisation and academic performance, mental health and substance use (Denny et al. 2016; Wormington et al. 2016).

School inclusion becomes meaningful for LGBTQ students when it encompasses student-led and institutional initiatives that intentionally promote belonging and connection. Programs like Gender and Sexuality Alliances (GSAs)—commonly known as Gay-Straight Alliances—are designed to improve LGBTQ young people's experiences by cultivating a climate of fairness, diversity, and equality (Hatchel et al. 2017). In GSAs, LGBTQ students find acceptance of their diverse identities and avenues for activities that confront cisgenderism, heteronormativity, and stereotypical thinking. The safe environment of GSAs empowers their members to challenge discrimination, harassment, and self-stigma and garner peer support (Lapointe 2015; Steck and Perry 2016). The presence of GSAs in high schools is also associated with higher levels of social support and lower risk of substance use among LGBTQ young people (Heck et al. 2014).

The true potential of GSAs to transform the experiences of young people across the sexuality and gender spectrums is tied to the way they are integrated into the school system. For GSAs to have a meaningful impact in the lives of LGBTQ students, they must be embedded into the broader school environment rather than operating merely as isolated spaces for their members. On the contrary, pushing GSAs to the periphery of the school environment perpetuates otherness and augments the marginalisation of diverse sexual and gender identities.

GSAs and LGBTQ-inclusive spaces do not mark the end of counteracting discrimination and ensuring a true sense of belonging within the school environment, owing to their self-selection membership. The global operation of schools must be underpinned by non-discrimination and anti-bullying policies that are inclusive of diverse sexualities and genders. Inclusive policies and curricula resonate self-acceptance and ameliorate the psychological distress of LGBTQ students (Day et al. 2019; Woodford et al. 2018). Student interactions are inevitably influenced by the interventions of teaching and support personnel.

Therefore, a comprehensive framework of policies and procedures is useful to ultimately guide the attitudes and behaviours of school staff as well as students and their parents. Ongoing professional development of teaching staff is also crucial for consistency in the promotion of belongingness. Teachers' advocacy for equity and inclusion has been associated with an increased sense of safety within school settings among LGBTQ students (Snapp et al. 2015).

Integration of LGBTQ-inclusive sex education and LGBTQ history into the core curriculum increases the visibility and accessibility of diversity issues and lowers the risk of victimisation and adverse mental health (Proulx et al. 2019). Moreover, school counsellors are key stakeholders in the promotion of belongingness for LGBTQ students. As qualified mental health professionals, school counsellors must advocate and intervene against institutional discrimination that perpetuates marginalisation and obstruct the growth of stigmatised populations as well as offering a range of appropriate therapeutic approaches appropriate to their client (Boyle 2007). Further, LGBTQ-inclusive events (such as proms and networking functions) and spaces (such as lounges and gender-neutral bathrooms) can actively cultivate a sense of belonging and reflect representation in the school context. The need for non-discrimination policies and self-organised alliances extends beyond secondary education, as it is also reflected by tertiary LGBTQ students (Pitcher et al. 2018).

Sexuality and gender are only some of the multiple diverse identities of young people. It is, therefore, counterintuitive to focus solely on LGBTQ issues when addressing school belonging as a core construct of meaningful inclusion. A deliberation of intersecting identities of race and disability must also be included in a comprehensive school belonging narrative.

21.1.4 Belonging, Identity, and Race

School inclusion and belonging play a significant role in the educational experiences of students (Allen and Kern 2017). Unfortunately, there is research to indicate that barriers to inclusion and belonging exist for marginalised students, such as those from the LGBTQI community, as indicated above. Racially marginalised students share similar experiences of exclusion with LGBTQI students (Gato et al. 2020; Nappa et al. 2018). This is particularly true for students with intersecting identities (Stewart and McDermott 2004). This is due to exclusionary education policies and practices that promote Eurocentric and Colonial ideals, subsequently failing to account for the diversity of students (Griffin and Trudgett 2018).

These policies and practices have often relied on a 'one size fits all' model of teaching. This approach has fostered exclusionary practices such as deficit thinking models (García and Guerra 2004), the myth of meritocracy (Au 2013, 2016), white normative teaching practices (Yared et al. 2020), and colour-evasive paradigms (Blackmore 2010; Bonilla-Silva and Dietrich 2011; Yared et al. 2020). While not necessarily ill intended, these policies and practices are considered forms of racism due to their propensity to perpetuate racial inequities within the education system.

Children also report experiencing racism at school directed at them from teachers and from their peers (Mansouri and Jenkins 2010). Research indicates that teachers' implicit and explicit racial biases can influence how they respond to students based on their race. For example, teachers have been shown to hold lower cognitive and academic expectations for racially marginalised students, compared to white students (Jacoby-Senghor et al. 2016; Tenenbaum and Ruck 2007; Van den Bergh et al. 2010). This is evident even when controlling for cognitive abilities (Grissom and Redding 2016). Another well-documented example of teacher racial bias relates to school disciplinary practices. For example, even when infractions are similar, teachers tend to use harsher disciplinary measures for racially marginalised students compared to white students (Bryan et al. 2012; Skiba et al. 2011). This has led to disproportionate rates of suspensions and expulsions for these students, especially for students who are Black (Bryan et al. 2012; Graham 2018). Unfortunately, due to these biases, as well as a lack of competency in

dealing with racial issues, teachers have largely avoided any in-depth discussions around race, racism, or racial bias in the classroom (Yared et al. 2020). An avoidance of these conversations with children does nothing to remove barriers or increase inclusion and belonging for racially marginalised students. In addition to racism from teachers, students also report regularly experiencing racism from their peers (Mansouri and Jenkins 2010).

School belonging is influenced by peers, teachers, and the general culture of the school (Murphy and Zirkel 2015; Shaunessy and Mchatton 2009). When considering that racially marginalised students experience discrimination from each of these sources, we can begin to understand how this may negatively impact their sense of belonging in schools. The impacts of racism on the well-being of racially marginalised students are pervasive. For example, racism experienced by students increases mental health issues such as depression (Priest et al. 2014) and anxiety (Priest et al. 2013). Further, experiences of racism can lead students to internalise these stereotypes, which negatively affects their racial identity (Trent et al. 2019). Conversely, inclusion and a sense of belonging can positively impact psychological well-being, student behaviour, and academic achievement (Allen and Kern 2017).

In order to foster belonging in schools for racially marginalised students, a shift from multicultural education to anti-racist teaching practices is necessary (Alemanji and Mafi 2018). Utilising anti-racist pedagogy in schools will assist in addressing systemic barriers faced by marginalised students, as well as raising an awareness of teacher biases. While there are many areas that need addressing to increase inclusion and belonging for racially marginalised students, addressing teacher biases and implementing anti-racist curricula will be a first step in the right direction.

As is evidenced in this chapter, experiencing a sense of belonging and inclusion at school is important to the well-being and academic achievement of racially marginalised students. It is also important for students from other marginalised backgrounds, such as those with disabilities. The experiences of students with disabilities will be discussed further in the following section.

21.1.5   Disability

Sense of belonging and school inclusion have unique significance for students with disabilities. School inclusion represents a human rights movement and a policy initiative (e.g., IDEA; U.S. Department of Education, 2004) enacted to address social marginalisation of students with disabilities. Many students with disabilities face multiple forms of marginalisation, whereby race and/or class inequities exacerbate school exclusion, limit their experience of meaningful educational experiences, and ultimately impede social mobility.

Sense of belonging is identified as a process marker of efficacy in the implementation of school inclusion policy; 'an educational aspiration …authenticated by practice and not simply a rhetorical flourish or tactical distraction' (Slee 2019, p. 911). With an absence of illusion regarding the countercurrent of competitive individualism (Slee 2019) that frames systems of education, empirical research supports the development of inclusion best practice (McMahon et al. 2016). Sense of belonging informs inclusion best practice and is a salient indicator of the well-being of students with disabilities in the context of education reforms.

In practice, inclusion is multi-dimensional, involving integrated planning and organisational practices (McMahon et al. 2016) intended to support the full membership of students with disabilities in general education settings (Causton-Theoharis and Theoharis 2008; Keys et al. 2014). Within this context, school belonging accounts for the dynamic association between school inclusion and positive academic and psychosocial outcomes for diverse groups of students with disabilities (McMahon et al. 2008). Urban and suburban students with disabilities who feel a greater sense of belonging in their school have better school attendance, academic motivation, and perform better academically

(Anderman 2002; McMahon et al. 2008; McMahon et al. 2011). They also experience higher self-esteem and less socio-emotional distress (McMahon et al. 2008; Sellstrom and Bremberg 2006).

School belonging as experienced by students with disabilities, varies as a function of the quality of inclusion best practice implemented by schools. While inclusion best practice domains (i.e., organisational, academic, assessment and planning, and social inclusion) independently predicted belonging for students with disabilities, schools implemented significantly less social inclusion as compared to the other three domains (McMahon et al. 2016). Ultimately, inconsistency in implementation of social inclusion was associated with students' experiencing less belonging. Social inclusion uniquely measures the extent to which schools foster sustained interpersonal connections with students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment (McMahon et al. 2016). Given the complex nature of relational environments (Zeldin et al. 2018) and oppressive practices of underperforming schools that serve historically marginalised youths (Hanushek and Rivkin 2010), social inclusion best practice may be more challenging to implement.

Schools high in relational quality foster positive student–teacher relationships (Zeldin et al. 2018) and afford students with disabilities equitable access to social networks (Osterman 2000). Positive student–teacher relationships are critical for school belonging (Anderman 2002, 2003; Crouch et al. 2014). Students with disabilities should have access to at least one teacher or well-being coordinator who is always available to provide support to them. Access to such support persons is found to substantially enhance a sense of belonging in students with disabilities (Rivera et al. 2014). Students with disabilities report greater belonging when teachers are encouraging, supportive, understanding (Doubt and McColl 2003), and perceived as fair (Klem and Connell 2004). Conversely, student perceptions of teacher criticism and disapproval predict lower school belonging for multi-marginalised youth with disabilities (Crouch et al. 2014).

These relational factors extend to other interactions that support communal learning environments. For example, higher rates of co-teaching are predictive of students' experience of greater belonging (Rivera et al. 2014). A collaborative climate in the classroom affords relational opportunities for students with disabilities. Teachers serve as guides to learning, power hierarchies and traditional norms are challenged, and students are engaged within classroom communities of learners (Osterman 2000; Rivera et al. 2014). Within this context, students feel less marginalised, respond more positively to teacher appraisal, and ultimately experience more belonging.

School belonging is also enhanced for students with disabilities when they experience proportional representation in wide-ranging school contexts. Making school-sponsored community and extracurricular activities accessible and engaging for students with disabilities enhances students' access to social networks such as close friends and kids with whom they share activities (McMahon et al. 2016; Osterman 2000). Within these contexts, support from staff and peers increased belonging (Doubt and McColl 2003). Conversely, social irregularities, due to in-access are predictive of students' sense of alienation and anxiety (Fyson 2008; Graham et al. 2014). Social irregularities due to in-access are particularly salient among students with emotional and behavioural disorders (SWEBD). For individuals with mental illness, there are numerous social barriers that limit opportunities for belonging and inclusion.

21.1.6   Mental Health, Wellbeing, and a Sense of Belonging

An influence of mental health and well-being is social inclusion and belonging (Allen and McKenzie 2015; Bale et al. 2020). Mental health refers to an individual's cognitive, emotional, and behavioural well-being. It is a multifaceted concept that affects one's feelings, behaviours, and thoughts (Davydov et al. 2010). The status of an

individual's mental health can influence numerous areas of life, ranging from personal relationships to activities in daily life and physical health (Prince et al. 2007). Maintaining 'good' mental health or a healthy mental status requires a balance between all of the events that can occur in one's daily life. The World Health Organization (WHO 2004) defines mental health as:

> a state of well-being in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community (p. 10).

Conceptualising mental health as a state of well-being can lead to misunderstandings when, often, positive feelings functioning as key factors for mental health are emphasised or that mental health relates to disorders only (Galderisi et al. 2015). People in optimal states of mental health often experience emotions such as sadness, anger, and unhappiness, and these experiences of adversity are part of everyday life and being human (Galderisi et al. 2015). The concepts of adversity and negative emotions are largely overlooked by current conceptualisations of mental health, which regard mental health as marked by mostly positive affect, including an ability to feel happy and a sense of mastery over one's environment in everyday life (Keyes 2006). Mental health includes a range of different emotions that all people experience at some point in their lives—including fear, anger, sadness, and grief—while also being able to cope with everyday stress (Galderisi et al. 2015). Mental health encompasses more than only mental disorders, and that a person can have symptoms of mental disorders, yet also have a level of mental health that satisfies their ability to lead a meaningful life and achieve their potential (Patel et al. 2019). This extends beyond the previous simplified notion that mental health is merely the absence of a mental disorder (WHO 2013). Encompassing all the facets of mental health within its definition and construct offers a more inclusive approach to treatment and services, incorporating multiple experiences of mental health and influencing what it means to recover from a mental disorder (Llewellyn-Beardsley et al. 2019).

School belonging is a protective factor for mental health challenges (Parr et al. 2020). Belonging, mental health literacy, and social and emotional learning have been linked to positive social, emotional, and behavioural outcomes in the classroom (Allen et al. 2017b; Durlak et al. 2011; Greenberg et al. 2017; Jones and Bouffard 2012; McCormick et al. 2015), increased engagement in education (Roorda et al. 2017), as well as increased academic achievement (Corcoran et al. 2018); thus, it is recognised as essential for all children, irrespective of individual differences in ability, risk, and vulnerability that children present with. Given that all children need to experience a sense of belonging and positive mental health, recent literature has advocated for more whole school approaches to the delivery of mental health and social and emotional learning among children in order to be as inclusive as possible (Grové and Laletas 2020). It is argued that an overall cultural and climate shift in schools whereby belonging and well-being learning initiatives are extended beyond programs for children and include professional development training and resources to school staff (Grové and Laletas 2020).

While belonging and mental health are distinct areas, they both aim to promote positive outcomes. Rather than separate the two, which may be difficult to address, there is opportunity to unite belonging, inclusion, and mental health programs in education. One way of doing this may be to unite initiatives in collaboration with healthcare professionals and teachers, with a parent and leadership element that aims to educate adult stakeholders alongside children. Knowledge can be reinforced with classroom initiatives, and one way of starting this approach could be by importing mental health and belonging into health and physical education classes.

21.1.7 Disorganised Attachment, Trauma, Foster Care

Inclusion and belonging are at the heart of trauma-informed practice. This is because children and adolescents who have experienced trauma are more likely to show aggression and defiance at school, and therefore are more likely to face suspension and expulsion from school (Perfect et al. 2016). Research has shown that two-thirds of children and adolescents experience at least one traumatic event before 18 years of age (Copeland et al. 2007), and that these young people are at greater risk of academic, social, emotional, and behavioural issues in childhood and adolescence, and disadvantage and mental and physical disability in adulthood (Kezelman et al. 2015). Children and adolescents who have experienced a traumatic event, or multiple traumatic events, are more likely to have dysregulated physiological, psychological, and behavioural reactions towards figures of authority, including teachers, and when exposed to unfamiliar situations or people (Porges 2011; Rotenberg and McGrath 2016). Trauma-informed practice is a specific approach to increase students' sense of school belonging through acceptance, inclusion, and engagement of students who have experienced trauma, and to minimise the economic, social, and employment disparities experienced by these people throughout their life.

Trauma-informed practice frameworks include several pillars designed to instruct teachers on how they can minimise a student's disruptive behaviours, minimise rates of student suspensions and expulsions, and become more inclusive of traumatised students and families. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA 2014) has suggested six guiding pillars of trauma-informed practice in schools. These include: (1) creating a sense of physical and psychological safety for students, parents, and others; (2) collaborating with students and providing students with choices and individualised learning approaches; (3) fostering relationships and trust between teachers, students, and families; (4) creating supportive connections between students, families, and peers; (5) a focus on collaboration and minimising power differences between professionals and others; and (6) recognition and practices to address any cultural stereotypes and biases (SAMHSA 2014). To facilitate delivery of these six pillars in schools, the SAMHSA group and researchers have advocated for more teacher professional development around trauma-informed practice, and school culture and policy changes that are more inclusive and less punitive for students who have experienced trauma.

A review of trauma-informed practice frameworks in schools revealed that these programs can minimise depression and posttraumatic stress among students, and can increase teachers' sense of knowledge and skills to manage the complex needs of traumatised students (Berger 2019). Furthermore, an Australian trauma-informed framework was reported to improve teacher–student relationships and student connectedness with peers as a result of the program (Stokes and Turnbull 2016). However, researchers have acknowledged that there is limited evidence of the effectiveness of trauma-informed practice for improving student and staff well-being and belonging at school (Berger 2019; Maynard et al. 2019). What has been emphasised through research is the close association between trauma-informed practice and models of inclusion, school belonging and positive behaviour support in schools (Berger 2019; Dorado et al. 2016; Holmes et al. 2015). These links include a focus on recognising the strengths and personal gains of students, provision of accessible instruction and learning accommodations for students who have experienced trauma, and at the centre, practices that acknowledge the importance of school belonging and relationships for trauma-exposed students.

21.1.8 Using Individual Belonging as Metric for True Inclusion

In the past decade, education policies in numerous western nations, including Australia, the US, and the UK, have been rigorously promoting student voice-based initiatives, such as students' perception surveys, to identify and assess one's sense of belonging in the classroom or in the school, among other educational aspects (e.g., DET 2019; Finefter-Rosenbluh 2020, 2021; Gehlbach et al. 2018; GOV.UK 2018; see also in Steinberg and Donaldson 2016). This approach is embedded in policymakers' increasing confidence in education systems' role supporting and affecting students' social-emotional development (McCormick et al. 2015; Nagaoka et al. 2015); trusting the key role that survey measures of students' affect towards school should play in evaluation, assessment, and improvement plans (e.g., LaRocca and Krachman 2017; DET 2020[1]). Asking students, the extent to which they 'feel that they are valued members of the classroom community' or 'what is the biggest thing that gets in the way of people in their school getting along with each other better' and 'how well do people in their class understand them as a person?' (Panorama student survey 2020) can help educators understand which sub-groups of students face belonging risk factors, and generate ideas for how to intervene and provide the necessary emotional and social support. At the heart of such contemporary education initiatives lies a simple, genuine notion: recognising, understanding, and nourishing *a student's* social-emotional state and skills can bring to a true inclusive education, where *all* students ultimately get the opportunity to learn and demonstrate their capabilities to the fullest. Identifying and considering a student's ability to thrive in an educational setting—contingent on the setting's capability to listen, meet, and respond to her or his social needs in a developmentally appropriate way—can enhance levels of academic motivation, engagement, and achievement in the classroom (e.g., Juvonen 2006; Roeser et al. 1996). Assessing, therefore, an individual's sense of belongingness is part and parcel of educators' ethical responsibility to ensure inclusive education, where all children receive a genuine opportunity to learn and thrive, and become moral and engaging citizens in the social landscape.

21.1.9 An Ethical Responsibility to Make Belonging at the Heart of Inclusion

All members of the school well-being team have ethical (e.g., APS 2007) and professional (e.g., The Institute 2021) obligations to provide an inclusive environment. Inclusive policy and practice is a necessary but insufficient component of inclusion in educational settings. Beyond enabling diverse individuals to share spaces, a sense of belonging is required for a system to be fully inclusive. Taking an ethical lens, the incorporation of belonging as a key component of inclusion is further supported. Kitchener (1984) outlined five core ethical principles; autonomy, nonmaleficence, beneficence, fidelity, and justice. The table below outlines how belonging is a key construct within inclusive settings from an ethical perspective (Table 21.1).

The examples provided above are not exhaustive but do illustrate the utility of ethical principles for supporting belonging. In inclusive environments where belonging is not present, and isolation and exclusion of minority individuals and groups prevails, it is likely that the ethical obligation of *nonmaleficence* is not fulfilled. Such experiences are likely to have long-term implications for well-being (OECD 2019). Thus, proactive action towards developing a sense of belonging supports the principle of *beneficence*. The principle of *justice* does not promote treating all individuals in the same manner, but encourages fair access and distribution of social resources. Some individuals may

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[1] Practice Principles for Excellence in Teaching—the new recommended approach for schools in Victoria, Australia. See Principal 2: A supportive and productive learning environment promotes inclusion and collaboration.

Table 21.1 Kitchener's (1984) ethical principles as relevant to school belonging in inclusive settings

	Goal	Examples
Autonomy	Providing choices and involvement in the process of decision-making	Regularly collecting data from students on their sense of connectedness to inform policy, decision-making, and intervention
Nonmaleficence	Avoiding engaging in harmful practices (or inaction) that cause harm to others	Actively working towards reducing bullying and isolation for all, but particularly for minority groups and individuals who experience such events at higher frequencies
Beneficence	Promoting learning and well-being by undertaking actions that provide positive outcomes	Implementing evidence-based strategies that support a sense of connectedness for all individuals within a system
Fidelity	Building and maintaining trust	High quality belonging is evidenced by trusting relationships
Justice	Fairness for all individuals including access to education and distribution of resources	Supporting individuals to develop social skills to enable fair access to social connections. Providing opportunities for social inclusion for all

require additional support to remove the barriers which hamper belonging, for example, creating increased opportunities for social connection or supporting the development of skills to enable increased proficiency of connecting with others. Others with greater social capital may require support to be more inclusive in their social interactions, and reduce actions of rejection of others (Harrist and Bradley 2002). In terms of *fidelity*, the quality of one's sense of belonging may be attributed to the quality of relationships and the sense of trust within them. Last, it is important that belonging is not an assumption within inclusive environments, but an evidenced outcome. Due to power relations in social systems, it is important to acquire data from a range of individuals within the system using a manner that encourages honest reporting. This affords a sense of *autonomy*, and enables individuals to participate in shaping policy and evaluation of organisational goals relating to belonging and inclusion.

Inclusion is often undertaken as a top-down process, whereby laws and policies direct behaviours and actions which include minority groups and individuals. It is seen as the responsibility of teachers and principals to ensure equality of access to learning and the curriculum. Although a starting point, this perspective can underestimate the social elements of inclusion; and it is equally important to enact strategies that have social goals such as building positive relationships, connectedness, and a shared sense of belonging. Inclusion is not achieved when strategies are solely focused on the classroom and do not consider the playground, and minority individuals have a right to social networks in addition to accessing education (Björnsdóttir 2017). Inclusion should be everyone's responsibility. From a bottom-up perspective, it is the sense of shared connection and relationships within the system that enable inclusion to be felt by individuals in everyday moments. This goal requires input from all stakeholders, including students, parents, teachers, and leadership.

21.1.10 Belonging as the Glue of Inclusion, Equity, and Diversity

Inclusion is 360 degrees not just top down, so it involves all stakeholders in a system, belonging is the connection between components—beyond the legal obligations for inclusion or the policy, guidelines, and practices that might steer policy
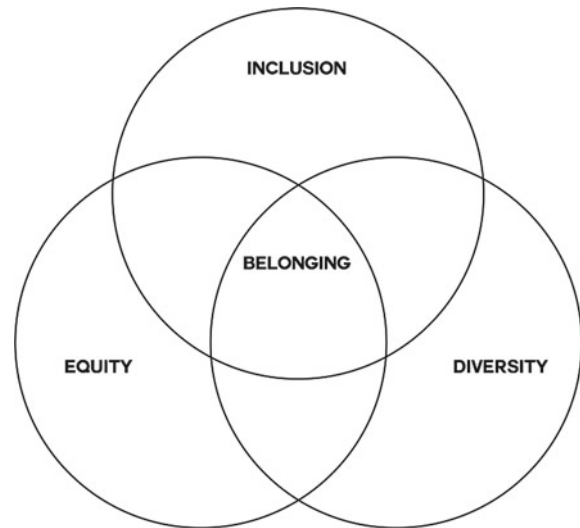
on equity and diversity. Belonging is the 'how' in transforming inclusion from a requirement to a practice. A sense of true inclusion can only happen where individuals feel a sense of belonging.

Surface-level inclusion enables diverse students to be educated within mainstream settings, but belonging encourages their connectedness with others in the mainstream setting. Figure 21.1 depicts the centrality of belonging to the concepts of equity, inclusion, and diversity, and explains how these important elements interact to contribute towards a sense of belonging for students (Burnette 2019). Within the model, belonging is both the outcome of the effective implementation of these concepts in practice, and also the unifying element which ensures each individual concept is effectively realised. Although each element on its own is important, it is when they occur together and in the presence of a sense of belonging, that students can experience the 'full human experience' (Burnette 2019) where individual differences are valued and integrated, within a culture of fairness and respect. This new way of conceptualising the role a sense of belonging plays for inclusion, equity, and diversity may have implications for future research, policy, and practice.

21.2 Conclusion

The success of inclusive practices can be determined by the absence or presence of belonging in the relevant individuals. This view is supported by the definition of belonging provided by Burnette (2019): belonging exists when the three elements of inclusion, diversity, and equity exist together in an organisation. Belonging should be at the heart of all decisions that school leaders and educators make. A leader should ask—*have I done everything possible so that a learner representing from a marginalised group feels that they belong in the school?* A teacher should ask—*do I do everything possible when I teach so that all learners in my class feel that they belong and are proud members of my class?* School leaders and teachers should not just ask these questions, they should also collect student and parent feedback to monitor their school's progress in enacting belongingness in a true sense. When schools succeed in ensuring that all learners experience a sense of belonging, the questions of how to become inclusive are secondary. Belongingness is the foundation to creating highly inclusive schools where equity and excellence for all learners is the norm.

It can thus be concluded that the presence of belonging provides an excellent indicator for determining whether inclusion is present in an organisation or an educational setting.

Belonging is a purely subjective construct, and while belonging and inclusion have been examined extensively in the literature through the different groups in society in which inclusion movements are most represented in, there is further research to be done. This chapter has implications for educational and organisational settings, but positis a new theoretical perspective, that with further evaluation and research, may have implications for the global society more broadly. A belonging focused perspective to approaches of inclusion, equity, and diversity are essential considerations for supporting, and yet at the same time advancing, the Springer Nature's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). The SDGs are based on the themes of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. A belonging-centric perspective such as that presented in this chapter has implications for advancing quality education (SDG4), reducing inequalities (SDG 10), improving gender equality (SDG5), promoting good health and well-being (SDG3), and creating sustainable cities and communities (SDG1).

While conversations around diversity, equity, and inclusion are important, do these things matter if people don't actually feel a sense of belonging?

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Kelly-Ann Allen, PhD, FAPS, is an Educational and Developmental Psychologist and an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education, Monash University, and an Honorary Senior Fellow at the Centre for Wellbeing Science, University of Melbourne. She is also the Lead-director and founder of the Global Belonging Collaborative and is the Editor-in-Chief of the Educational and Developmental Psychologist as well as the current and founding Co-Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Belonging and Human Connection with Professor Chris Boyle. The quality of her research has been acknowledged through several awards, including recognition by The Australian's data-science partner, The League of Scholars and independently ranked as Best In Field for research contributions over a four year period.

Christopher Boyle, PhD, FBPsS, is a Professor of Inclusive Education and Educational Psychology in the School of Education at The University of Adelaide, Australia. He is a Fellow of the British Psychological Society and a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. He was previously the Editor in Chief of The Educational Academy. He was previously the Editor in Chief of The Educational and Developmental Psychologist (2012–2017) and is the founding co-editor of Belonging and Human Connection (with Kelly Allen) launched in 2022. He is an internationally recognised and respected academic and author on the subjects of inclusive education and psychology. He is a registered psychologist in the UK and Australia.

Umesh Sharma, Ph.D, is a Professor in the Faculty of Education at Monash University, Australia where he is the Associate Dean (Equity and Inclusion). He is the chief co-editor of the Australasian Journal of Special Education and the Oxford Encyclopedia of Inclusive and Special Education.

Lefteris Patlamazoglou, PhD, is a counselling psychologist and lecturer in psychology and counselling at Monash University, Australia. Lefteris has worked with clients with issues relating to migration, grief, trauma and LGBTQI identities. Lefteris has a particular research interest in the wellbeing, grief and belonging of LGBTQI young people and adults.

Panagiotis Pentaris, PhD, is an Associate Professor of Social Work and Thanatology at the University of Greenwich, UK. Panagiotis has practised social work with dying children and adults, and bereaved individuals. His teaching areas include social work, loss, grief, religious literacy, migration, and critical and reflective practice.

Christine Grové, PhD, is an Educational and Developmental Psychologist and a Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Education, Monash University. Dr Grové is also the Associate Editor of the Educational and Developmental Psychologist. She works collaboratively with health care professionals, teachers, parents and young people to support the individual and unique needs of youth. Dr Grové's research interests lie in engaging with the young person's perspective and experience using participatory research methods. Dr Grové's work is also characterised by youth as active agents within research.

Hannah Yared is a Psychologist, Teaching Associate and PhD Candidate at Monash University in Melbourne, Australia. Her PhD research examines race, racism and racial bias in Australian schools. Specifically, her research explores children's racial literacy, experiences of racism and how this connects with their racial identity and sense of school belonging.

Emily Berger, PhD, is an Educational and Developmental Psychologist and expert on childhood trauma, trauma-informed practice, and school mental health policy. She is a Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Education, Monash University, and Adjunct Senior Research Fellow in the School of Rural Health, Monash University. Emily leads research on the prevalence of correlates of mental illness after disasters, and trauma-informed solutions in education settings.

Nicholas Gamble, PhD, is a registered psychologist and a Lecturer at Monash University. He has a strong interest in professional ethics in a range of professions and has taught in the field for over ten years. Nicholas is a co-author of Ethical Practice in Applied Psychology and has assisted professional bodies in developing their ethical frameworks for practitioners.

Zoe A. Morris, PhD, is an Educational and Developmental Psychologist and Lecturer at Monash University. Previously as a school psychologist she was actively involved in supporting wellbeing and inclusive practice with diverse learners. Zoe leads research investigating ethical and professional practice issues in the mental health/education sectors such as consent/confidentiality with young people, and teacher professional boundaries.

Ilana Finefter-Rosenbluh, PhD, is a Lecturer in the Faculty of Education, Monash University, Australia. A trained school counsellor who worked in various international settings, and a former Research Affiliate with the Justice in Schools project and Postdoctoral Fellow at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, Dr Finefter-Rosenbluh leads research that lies in the intersection between assessment, ethics, teaching and policy.

Michele Morgan, PhD, is a professional lecturer at DePaul University. Dr. Morgan specializes in integrative and inquiry-based pedagogical approaches and collaborates with social systems to address problems of exclusion of youth in school and community settings. She has coordinated efficacy studies on culturally adapted interventions in schools and facilitated student, family-systems, and school based interventions. Dr. Morgan has also worked with school districts to evaluate the implementation of inclusion policy for educating students with disabilities. Her current research focuses on testing models of social justice education and linking school characteristics and the relational qualities of schools to student outcomes.

Fiona May, PhD, is a registered psychologist and researcher at Monash University and the Parenting Research Centre. Fiona has supported children, families and educators in a range of research, policy and clinical practice roles in Australia and internationally. Her research interests include family and parenting support, student wellbeing and inclusion, and teacher development.

Inclusion Begins at Home: Gender Equity as an Imperative First Step Towards a Truly Inclusive Academy

22

Kelly-Ann Allen, Christine Grové,
Kerryn Butler-Henderson, Andrea Reupert,
Fiona Longmuir, Ilana Finefter-Rosenbluh,
Emily Berger, Amanda Heffernan,
Nerelie C. Freeman, Sarika Kewalramani, Shiri Krebs,
Levita D'Souza, Grace Mackie, Denise Chapman,
and Marilyn Fleer

Abstract

Higher education has been the first frontier for inclusion debate and discourse, yet when examining gender equity in this space, as one sphere of inclusion, it's questionable whether it offers a place of inclusion itself. Traditionally, the professional structure of higher education has provided restricted employment, career, and leadership opportunities for women, which is exacerbated where there is an intersection with race, culture, religion, or age. Women continue to be underrepresented in academia across various disciplines and this lack of representation in senior positions within the professional structure of higher education itself acts as a barrier to more women reaching senior levels within institutions. More women are needed in higher positions to increase representation and visibility, to be truly inclusive of all, and to encourage and mentor others to then aspire to follow a similar path. This critical review examines gender equity across the major career benchmarks of the academy in light of the impact of the personal contexts of women, systemic processes that hinder career progression, inclusion and cultural barriers that impede promotion and career progression. Research-based systemic, inclusive solutions are discussed that work towards improved gender equity for all women. The findings from this critical review highlight the need for systemic change globally in higher education to create equities that are inclusionary in the employment, career, and leadership opportunities for women.

K.-A. Allen (✉)
School of Educational Psychology and Counselling, Faculty of Education, Monash University, Clayton, VIC, Australia
e-mail: kelly-ann.allen@monash.edu

Centre for Wellbeing Science, Melbourne Graduate School of Education, University of Melbourne, Parkville, VIC, Australia

C. Grové · A. Reupert · F. Longmuir ·
I. Finefter-Rosenbluh · E. Berger · A. Heffernan ·
N. C. Freeman · S. Kewalramani · L. D'Souza ·
G. Mackie · D. Chapman · M. Fleer
Faculty of Education, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia

K. Butler-Henderson
School of Health and Biomedical Sciences, RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia

Shiri Krebs
Faculty of Business and Law, Deakin University, Melbourne, Australia

22.1 Inclusion Begins at Home: Gender Equity as an Imperative First Step Towards a Truly Inclusive Academy

The main source of inclusion research and policy emerges from the higher education space, yet when gender equity is examined, it is questionable whether higher education actually offers an inclusive workspace for the people who advocate for inclusion themselves. This has certainly been the experience of people working in academia who identify as women which has been very different to that of men (Moss-Racusin et al. 2012; Ovseiko et al. 2019). Discrepancies in academic work (e.g., in terms of positions reached and outputs realised) between men and women have been apparent for several decades (Aiston and Fo 2020; Mason and Goulden 2004; Safilios-Rothschild 1975), with gender inequities unfairly disadvantaging women (Mason and Goulden 2004), and women from minority groups in particular (Gabster et al. 2020; Khan et al. 2019). It has also been noted that the tension involved in balancing academic demands with caring responsibilities leads women to report increased feelings of social isolation, exclusion, and of being an outsider (Gatta and Roos 2004; Wright et al. 2003).

Recent research in the context of COVID-19 has raised further concerns, with additional obstacles emerging during the global pandemic. This is especially true for those in caregiving roles who need to juggle their research and teaching loads with additional pressures resulting from diminished childcare, school closures, and the need to homeschool their children, or moving family members with chronic health conditions into the family home. During the COVID-19 pandemic period, publications by women have dwindled across disciplines, while the proportion of research published by men has increased (Andersen et al. 2020; Muric et al. 2020; Vincent-Lamarre et al. 2020). More males than females have been called on as COVID-19 experts (Gabster et al. 2020; Rajan et al. 2020), and the overall research productivity of female academics has been lower than that of men (Cui et al. 2020; Muller and Nathan 2020; Myers et al. 2020), particularly in the higher education space (Butler-Henderson et al. 2020). The effects of COVID-19 are particularly concerning because they have amplified many of the disparities in research outputs and leadership roles that already existed before the pandemic. While gains had been made in some areas, COVID-19 has intensified gender inequity and the exclusion of women in the academic workplace. This article aims to provide a critical review that examines gender equity and inclusion across the major career benchmarks of the academy. In particular, the article examines equity in the light of the personal contexts, inclusionary practices, and the experiences of women. It then goes on to propose systemic solutions aimed at the creation of a positive and inclusive culture that allows women to thrive irrespective of their caregiving responsibilities or their domestic load. "If inclusion is unable to begin at home, is it possible for the aims of inclusion outside higher education to be achieved?"

22.2 Defining Equity in Academia

Gender equity in academia has most frequently been examined through the lens of equality, that is, in terms of the goal of women reaching parity with men in employment gains, salary, leadership positions, career progression, and the absence of harassment (Aiston and Fo 2020; Mason and Goulden 2004). This kind of framing usually also includes the goal of parity in the hallmark metrics of academic performance (e.g., publications, funding success, and academic impact) (Bailyn 2003; Mason and Goulden 2004). While this definition of equity is important, we also need to consider elements in the personal lives of women that differ from the experiences of men—such as childcare roles and broader family responsibilities—and ask how these may impact, and be impacted by, their work. This is particularly important given the strong correlations between satisfaction in these

areas and personal wellbeing and family outcomes (Mason and Wolfinger 2004). Although the goal of women achieving equality in academic metrics may be an appropriate aspirational target, the personal and social costs for women of pursuing these outcomes must also be considered. Bailyn (2003), for instance, suggests that equating equality with equity in academia ignores life outside of the academy. Research that has examined the careers of women in academia has found persistent family-work conflict (Gatta and Roose 2004). Other studies have also noted that female academics with caregiving responsibilities report feelings of guilt about not being able to fulfil their expected responsibilities or a sense of discord between work priorities and those of life outside the workplace (Toffoletti and Starr 2016; Ward and Wolf-Wendel 2004). Along with such feelings come stress, fatigue, and anxiety (Acker and Armenti 2004; Ward and Wolf-Wendel 2004). Overall, even the quest for gender neutrality (social structures which treat men and women equally) ignores the individual experiences of women, especially in respect to their homelife (Bailyn 2003).

Bailyn (2003) proposed that equity and inclusion in academia should be understood fundamentally in terms of fairness. Accordingly, considerations of equity should not assume a view that only encompasses the experiences of women in the workplace, but rather a more holistic perspective that also considers the life outside of work, as well as the intersections and overlaps between these two domains. A definition of equity based on fairness is underpinned by the notion that equity cannot be achieved when any one group is systematically disadvantaged and excluded in relation to another, resulting in untenable and unrealistic ideals which judge what it means to be a successful academic against benchmarks designed for the advantaged group (Bailyn 2003). From this perspective, a holistic assessment of the position of women in academia and of gender imbalances in traditional academic measures of success becomes relevant and important for the design of new systematic responses aimed at promoting equity and inclusion in the academy.

22.2.1 Equity and Inclusion in the Presence or Absence of Children

Being both a woman academic and a mother entails a challenging balancing act that can feel akin to walking on top of broken glass (McCutcheon and Morrison 2018). The metaphorical path of broken glass represents *the motherhood penalty*, the barriers academic mothers face within the academy that cause their careers to lag behind those of academic fathers and academic women who are child free (Cummins 2017). Unequal home workloads, living arrangements, and institutional barriers may perpetuate these gaps, resulting in increased working hours, raised stress levels (Baker 2012), destructive forms of working, and eroded wellbeing (Cummins 2017). Minello (2020) points out that the age at which most females embark upon their career in academia also corresponds to their peak reproductive period. The decision to either have children or not can be met with bias and discrimination, yet research provides us with compelling evidence that those women who choose to have children are at the greatest disadvantage (Myers et al. 2020). The challenge involved in balancing the dual roles of mother and academic leads to a greater frequency of work-family conflicts (McCutcheon and Morrison 2016). Such conflicts may be responsible for many women choosing to no longer pursue a career in academia or the over-represented proportion of female academics employed as casual staff. However, ameliorating the challenging workload burdens and known structural barriers can result in higher levels of success for women in the academy (Cummins 2017).

The argument regarding gender equity and inclusion of women in academia often centres around the additional child-rearing responsibilities taken on by women who are mothers in comparison to men who are fathers. This is despite research which clearly shows that women academics are more likely to delay having, or choose not to have, children when compared to non-academic women (Gatta and Roos 2004). Toutkoushian et al. (2007) argue that it is an

asset for men in academia to marry a non-employed wife who can support their academic pursuits, while marriage and children for women in academia can limit a woman's career growth because women tend not to make decisions which may negatively affect their husband's career (such as relocating for a tenured academic position). Baker (2010a) suggests other reasons, beyond caregiving for children, for the academic gender gap between men and women, including the greater perceived social capital of men compared to women, different academic priorities (women prioritising teaching over research), the shorter career length of women, and the greater likelihood that women will care for elderly parents, move or forgo a tenured position to support their partner's career, and/or accept more responsibility for housework. A holistic approach to understanding the academic gender gap and to reducing gender discrimination in academia should thus also pay due attention to women who do not have children.

22.3 Research Performance Standards

Research performance standards and assessments of the impact of academic research have been criticised on the grounds that they fail to reflect the core work of academics engaged in research-active duties, since the typical workload often includes significant amounts of time spent on teaching, supervision, and dissemination of research (Allen et al. 2020; Allen 2019; Miller 2019; Spence 2019). The reported problems of binary-based performance and productivity have been found to have negative outcomes for academics, including mental health problems, untenable workloads, and high levels of stress (Else 2017; Evans et al. 2008; Gorczynski 2018; Winefield et al. 2003). These problems are intensified by issues related to a lack of gender equity which have been widely documented across a range of research performance standards (van der Besselar and Sandstrom 2016). This section will explore the evidence for gender inequity and exclusion across these standards and

its implications for career-based outcomes such as salary and professional progression.

22.3.1 Grants and Funding

Universities in most nations draw their research funding from a range of sources, with government funding schemes usually being the most sought after and, therefore, the most competitive. Success in securing such highly sought-after funding can be pivotal for a researcher's career (Aiston and Fo 2020). In Australia, for example, the 2020 Australian Research Council (ARC) grants had a success rate of 21.4% across all schemes (ARC 2020). The ARC criteria are weighted to consider applicants' past successes and are therefore biased against early career researchers. This weighting also contributes to the higher likelihood of men being successful, given that they generally enter academia at a younger age and are less likely to have had career interruptions (Baker 2010b).

A review of the 2019 ARC data shows that of the 13,960 applicants across all schemes, only 27.5% were women. While the success rate was slightly higher for women applicants—24.5% compared to 22.8% for men—the outcome was that 2,307 males secured funding in comparison to 939 women (ARC 2019). The ARC statistics have been explained by the organisation as reflecting a consistent pattern in which women apply for prestigious grants only once, whilst men apply up to three times, or until successful. Few studies have been published examining the distribution of research funding, but what has been published tends to bear out the Australian data set. For example, a study of grant amounts awarded by the USA's National Institute of Health found that the average female first-time primary investigator (PI) received 24% less funding than their male counterparts (Oliveria et al. 2019).

A multiplier effect emerges. Because more men receive ARC grants, this means that men have more opportunities to further their research agenda and are thus more likely to be better positioned to gain promotion at an earlier point in their career than are women. This contributes to

the disparities found in senior university appointments, with men accounting for approximately three-quarters of Level E (Professor) positions (9,043 men compared to 3,048 women) (ARC 2020). The disparity in progress along the research track has a knock-on effect on employment roles more broadly in the university sector, with women holding nearly twice as many (62.2%) teaching and learning positions as men (33.7%) (ARC 2019).

22.3.2 Publishing and Citations

Determining the number of women who publish in comparison to men is critical, since quantity of publications, frequency of citation, and the quality of publication outlets are often prerequisites for tenure and promotion. Moreover, making sure that women are appropriately represented as academic authors (including in citations) ensures that their contributions are acknowledged and their perspectives included and heard. Using a sample of more than 1.5 million medical research papers, Nielsen et al. (2017) reported a strong positive correlation between women authorship and the likelihood of a study including gender and sex analysis, an important variable in medical research that is critical when determining how health services should respond to women.

Despite the positive outcomes that can be expected from an equitable share of publications, the global figures for female authorship across many disciplines are bleak. In an analysis of 5,483,841 research papers and review articles across the sciences, social sciences, and the arts, Larivière et al. (2013) found that women accounted for less than 30% of fractionalised authorship. While some scientific fields (including nursing, education, and social work) showed higher rates of publication by female authors, others (such as engineering, high-energy physics, mathematics, computer science, philosophy, and economics) had much lower rates, and the humanities as a whole were also heavily dominated by men. More recent studies have identified the same disparity in political science (Teele

and Thelen 2017), higher education (Williams et al. 2017), medicine (Nielsen et al. 2017), surgery, computer science, physics, and maths (Holman et al. 2018). The COVID-19 pandemic has further contributed to these disparities. One study has shown that, since the outbreak in January 2020, only a third of all authors across 1370 COVID-19 related papers have been women (Pinho-Gormes et al., 2020).

Not only are there relatively fewer female academic authors, but their papers also tend to be cited less frequently than those of their male counterparts. Larivière et al. (2013) found that articles with women in first author positions received fewer citations than those with men in the same positions. Interestingly, an analysis of 1.5 million research papers across a broad range of disciplines also found that men cited their own papers 70% more often than did women (King et al. 2017).

Author order is another measure of success: in science, the first author is often the academic who is tasked with executing the study, while the last is the academic responsible for leading the study. Both positions are important depending on the stage of an academic's career. Across disciplines, Lariviere et al. (2013) found that for every article with a female first author, there are nearly two (1.93) with men as the first author. At the same time, Filardo et al. (2016) found that meaningful gains could be detected in the assumption of the first author position by women between 1994 and 2009, but that female first authorship seems to have plateaued over the last decade and has even declined in some high impact journals. In the field of cardiovascular research, Lerchenmüller et al. (2018) found that women were more likely to be listed as first author, but that this positioning is detectable primarily for publications in less influential journals, and that these first authorships did not translate into last author (leadership) positions years later. Finally, in a 2017 study of 1.5 million medical research papers, 40% included women as first authors while only 27% had women as last authors (Nielsen et al. 2017).

Some evidence has found that women submit papers at lower rates than men (Teele and Thelen

2017). Such a disparity in research output may arise from a combination of many, possibly interrelated, factors. Women may lack the confidence to submit their work to highly prestigious competitive journals (Correll 2004) or may have few role models or mentors who encourage them to aim high (Holman et al. 2018). Opportunities to publish research may be another factor (a result of diminished grants and funding). Research has also shown that women are more likely than men to have their conference submissions rejected (Hospido and Sanz 2019), which means fewer opportunities for collaboration and co-authorship. In STEM subjects, men are roughly twice as likely as women to be invited by editors to submit their work (Holman et al. 2018), with another study finding that journal editors and editorial board members in medicine are more likely to be male (Alonso-Arroyo et al. 2020). The methodological preferences of top-tier journals may exclude the kinds of work that female scholars are disproportionately interested in, such as qualitative research (Teele and Thelen 2017). Male-dominated networks and institutions that are unsupportive of family-related career disruptions are additional barriers standing in the way of women submitting and publishing their work.

22.3.3   Service

Recent literature suggests that a gender imbalance can also be detected with regards to faculty service loads, with women being more likely to undertake service roles, and internal service roles in particular (Guarino and Borden 2017). The time demands of service roles impede women from taking up leadership opportunities and this may impact women more heavily if they are employed on a part-time basis (Hannum et al. 2015). Further, it is necessary to consider the intersection between gender and race, culture, religion, or age, which further impedes service opportunities for women, as can be seen in studies focussing on the experiences of African American (Davis and Maldonado 2015), Chinese (Zhao and Jones 2017), Saudi (Abalkhail 2017),

and South Asian (Bagguley and Hussain 2014) women. However, leadership opportunities increased in these cultures when there was family support for the woman (Abalkhail 2017; Bagguley and Hussain 2014).

Differences can also be identified at the discipline level, with more women in the liberal arts taking on service and public policy roles than in the fields of business, law, fine arts, and STEM (Guarino and Borden 2017). Whilst service roles can contribute to promotion, these roles are often performed at the expense of other activities, such as research and external collaborations, which are more valuable for achieving promotions and external appointments (Guarino and Borden 2017).

22.3.4   Professional Development and Conference Attendance

Professional development—activities ranging from attending seminars, workshops, and conferences, to undertaking training courses and peer mentorship—continues to play an important part in career advancement. Whilst many institutions provide funding for professional development for all staff, women frequently report that career responsibilities make it difficult to attend, including the scheduling of events outside of school hours, or the need to travel for attendance (Abalkhail 2017). International travel is a major barrier, making it difficult to access professional development and engage in networking opportunities (Thomas et al. 2019), a situation that is further exacerbated in cultures in which women are not permitted to travel alone (Abalkhail 2017). In addition, compared to men, women have fewer opportunities of taking part in professional development opportunities related to leadership or management (Abalkhail 2017; Hannum et al. 2015).

Further, the increasing casualisation of university teaching in many countries has an additional impact on professional development. Professional development, outside of standard *Introduction to Teaching* courses, is often not made available to casual and sessional teaching

staff (Crimmins 2017). Where professional development is available, casual and sessional staff are often required to complete it unpaid and in their own time, rather than as a compensated part of their work. The casualisation of staff in academia may be an additional burden on women with responsibilities external to their work.

Institutional, non-gendered, inclusion focussed policy and workplace culture should facilitate, not limit, women when it comes to pursuing regular professional development opportunities (Moodley and Toni 2017). This includes allowing time for travel—including planning and recovery time pre- and post-journey—and providing more equitable and inclusive access to professional development for geographically dispersed faculties (Thomas et al. 2019). Chuang (2019) proposed that institutions offer women-only training programmes (WOTP) to promote equality in professional development. Such programmes have already been implemented in many higher education institutions and their effectiveness requires further evaluation. Moreover, the long-term impact, of international travel and budget restrictions, resulting from COVID-19 on professional development opportunities on women is yet to be seen.

22.3.5 Leadership Opportunities

There is an extensive literature on the topic of leadership opportunities, or the claimed lack thereof, for women in higher education. At the simplest level, the fact that the proportion of females in academic posts diminishes at each successively higher step on the academic career ladder provides strong supports for the hypothesis that there is such a lack of such opportunities (Carr et al. 2018; Diamond et al. 2016; Jena et al. 2015; Thornton 2005). Further, such outcomes do not account for the intersection of gender with discipline, race, age, and other factors, all of which can result in an increase in this barrier. While the presence of women in the sciences, for example, has been increasing, an alarming differential attrition can also be detected at the highest levels (e.g., among tenured faculty). In

Germany, for instance, between 2005 and 2010, the proportion of STEM professors who were women saw a marked increase of 4.1 per cent. However, many German women still seem to avoid pursuing such careers, noting that the male-dominated STEM culture prevents them from reaching top academic positions (see Best et al. 2013). Similarly, an examination of the areas in which women hold senior leadership positions in higher education identified a trend towards teaching and learning or community engagement roles instead of research-based senior leadership roles (Moodley and Toni 2017). Simply put, a culture which steers women into posts that are less likely to support promotion will provide fewer opportunities for women to hold leadership positions (Valian 2004). Often, this lack of leadership opportunities can be linked to a lack of support.

22.4 Promotions and Career Progression

The recent tradition of benchmarking academic performance standards across metrics such as grants and funding, publications and citations, and service, professional development, and leadership roles may have a detrimental impact on the promotion and career progression of women. Marital status and the presence of children under six years old in a household inversely correlate with the proportions of women who secure tenure track positions, sometimes referred to as an 'ongoing permanent position' in certain countries (Wolfinger et al. 2008; Baker 2010b). It has been reported that 70% of tenured positions are held by married men with children compared to only 40% of married women with children (Mason and Goulden 2004).

In addition to the cumulative impacts of disparities across particular metrics, career progression in academia also reflects the broader gendered barriers that are evident in society at large. Women are often represented equally at lower professional levels yet underrepresented among roles with higher status and higher salaries (Catalyst 2021). Women in academia

perceive barriers to career progression less often in terms of incidents of specific discrimination and more often as a result of the 'pervasive subtle institutional or cultural forms of discrimination' (Monroe et al. 2008, p. 216). As an example, Monroe et al. (2008) found that when women hold higher status positions in academic settings, others often perceive their role as one involving service, while when the same role is occupied by a male it is seen as a position of power. Subtle internalised biases of this sort may combine with the more overt inequities faced by women to create barriers that persist even in the face of attempts at structural reform.

This narrative review of the literature on gender equity in academia has revealed discrepancies between men and women in relation to the major career benchmarks of the academy: grants and funding; publishing and citations; and service, professional development, and leadership roles. It is plausible that being a woman leads to career disadvantage and that this disadvantage is intensified for women from minority groups (Khan et al. 2019). Given the assumed goal of securing gender equity in academia, there is merit in exploring the systemic solutions offered in the literature. The remainder of this review will focus on strategies and approaches which address gender inequity in the academy.

22.5   Systemic Solutions

Findings of gender inequity across major career benchmarks serve as a call for radical changes in policy and practice in academia. Gatta and Roos (2004) identified the personal accommodations made by female professors as a way in which to cope with gender inequity at a large state university in the United States of America. They determined that, rather than agitate against university policy and practice, the female professors interviewed found it easier to modify their own personal circumstances in order to manage the conflict between work and home. One of the most concerning accommodations reported was the choice to delay having children as a way of overcoming the challenges of childcare. Another

study reported that some female academics adopted a 'life strategy' of only having one child in order to minimise the years of childcare and child rearing that would compete with their work commitments (Lendák-Kabók 2020). The personal coping and the resiliency of women towards institutional processes that might wittingly or unwittingly undermine gender equity and inclusion should not be discounted. Nonetheless, it is imperative that leaders within the academy also pursue best-practice gender equity and inclusive initiatives that have specific fit and merit for their institutions. Our review identified six areas for potential systemic intervention: legislation, community level support, university policy, leadership and support, the professional structure of higher education, and culture, including norms and attitudes.

22.5.1   Legislation

Gender equality and diversity in the Australian academic sector is governed by a legal and regulatory framework which has progressed and developed throughout the past four decades (Winchester and Browning, 2015). The main laws governing gender equality and diversity in Australia include the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth) and the Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012 (Cth) (the WGE Act). The WGE Act established the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA), which is responsible for administering the WGE Act and is charged with promoting and improving gender equality in Australian workplaces. More comprehensive than its preceding legislation, the Workplace Gender Equality Act expands its coverage to include men, requires the reporting of outcomes rather than processes, and amends the compliance framework (Sutherland 2013).

In addition to the general legislation that applies in the workplace, the Australian Government introduced regulatory frameworks tailored specifically for the academic sector. The Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) was established in 2011 to regulate and assess the quality of Australia's large, diverse,

and complex higher education sector. In 2017, TEQSA issued a guidance note focussed on diversity and equality, applying the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2015. This legislation (and the guidance) includes a reference to student diversity and equality, yet does not include a similar reference to staff diversity or to the gender composition of the academic staff (TEQSA 2017).

While the legislative framework described above provides the necessary legal basis for promoting gender equity and inclusion in academic institutions, additional measures are required in order to improve the representation of women in higher education, especially at senior levels, and to better reflect the diversity of female academics, including indigenous women, women of colour, women from non-English speaking backgrounds, and women with disabilities. Winchester and Browning concluded that the focus of the legal framework, as well as of national organisations (such as Universities Australia), on productive diversity—as opposed to gender equality—has been a positive shift which is reflected in the opening of universities to wider participation from the Australian community (Winchester and Browning 2015). Lipton, however, found that, paradoxically, the structure and discourse of equality and diversity prevents the development of a sustainable and lasting change (Lipton 2017). Overall, the existing data about the effects of various legal interventions on actual outcomes is anecdotal, and the existing literature does not provide direct evidence regarding the causal relationship between legislative developments and changes in gender equality and diversity in the academic sector. More research is thus needed if we are to further understand the effects of various legislative approaches on diversity and equality, to evaluate their implementation, and to measure their outcomes.

22.5.2 University Policy

Gender-focussed equity policies have been increasingly common in institutions of higher education since the 1980s. However, despite decades of university policy designed to redress issues of equity and inclusion, the evidence suggests that women academics still face significant systemic barriers in their work. Cummins (2017) notes that, despite the presence of family-friendly policies in higher education, academic women who utilise these policies are often penalised for doing so, and micro-inequities as well as micro-politics within the culture of higher education are frequently founded on the expectation that women must 'fit in' (Aiston and Fo 2020). An examination of gender equity at a policy level is critical, given that men remain over-represented in the leadership positions that are often involved in the creation or oversight of policy. Anicha et al. (2020) explicitly noted that people who identify as men are less likely to be personally affected by the very issues such policies are developed to address. Anicha et al. (2020) emphasised that this lack of lived experience of the impacts of gender bias and discrimination implies the need to raise the critical consciousness of university policymakers, a consciousness that should, importantly, be informed by an intersectional lens that recognises the interplay of gender, race, and (dis)ability in academics' experiences and working lives.

Critiques of formal policies and programmes, such as the Athena SWAN programme, that are designed to increase the participation and inclusion of women in the academic workforce and to improve career advancement include: (a) the claim that they are focused on 'fixing the women' rather than the system; (b) feminist critiques of the programmes' close ties to neoliberal views and managerial practices which favour metrics and performative targets and goals; and (c) that such programmes are limited in the reality of what they can achieve given the need for individuals to change their own practices in order to ensure their success (Tzanakou and Pearce 2019). Universities' research policies have increasingly shifted to focus on *quality* rather than on capacity building (Blackmore 2021). These policy shifts hold particular challenges for women who more often have to balance caring responsibilities in their personal lives as well as frequently taking on more caretaking

responsibilities in the course of their work in the form of administrative and pastoral care roles, while their male counterparts tend to have more freedom and flexibility to focus on research (Aiston and Jung 2015; Gatta and Roos 2004). Calls persist for policy development that is intersectionally informed, capable of addressing complex challenges, and, first and foremost, grounded in notions of epistemic justice and the importance of valuing knowledge production in all academic disciplines (Blackmore 2021). When women have influence over policy-decisions, the number of women in senior leadership positions increases (Sabharwal 2013).

22.5.3 Leadership and Support

Until systemic change occurs across higher education, there will be a continued disparity in the presence of women in senior leadership roles in higher education. Policies and processes continue to be barriers to the appointment and promotion of women, particularly into leadership positions and require urgent change (Abalkhail 2017; Hannum et al. 2015). For example, in Saudi Arabia, men hold a high proportion of senior leadership positions, so unless men support changes to recruitment and promotion practices, the cycle will continue, blocking the career progression pathway for many women in this country (Abalkhail 2017).

Role models and mentorship continue to be strong facilitators for women taking on leadership roles (Davis and Maldonado 2015; Hannum et al. 2015). A direct correlation has been established between a lack of mentorship opportunities and the limited number of women in leadership positions in higher education (BlackChen 2015; Hannum et al. 2015). Effective leadership and mentoring schemes (Eveline and Booth 2004), and workshops aimed at identifying and tackling gendered barriers to women's advancement within institutions (Bird 2011) and within disciplines (for example 'Society for Women in Philosophy' [http://swipuk.org/]), also show strong potential for addressing gender inequity in academia.

It may be important to track women as they progress through the academic pipeline in order to identify specific leaks and barriers from an organisational perspective (not at the individual researcher level) so that comprehensive policies and implementation plans can be developed. Most interventions in this field focus on the individual academic, asking them to opt into, and thus give their time to, participation in mentoring, education, professional development, and networking opportunities (Laver et al., 2018). As a result of these interventions, Lavers et al. (2018) found some, albeit small, improvements in promotion, retention, and remuneration, with the authors recommending that institutions instead employ 'top-down' approaches that change culture and management.

22.5.4 The Professional Structure of Higher Education

Research has suggested that the main reasons for the current gender gap in higher education are common structural barriers experienced by women, such as lack of institutional support, academic culture, and greater caregiving responsibilities (Peterson 2017). In response to these structural barriers, a range of frameworks and action plans have been implemented across some institutions in Australia with the aim of tackling this gender gap, including The Women's Executive Development Programme (WEXDEV) and the Australian Vice Chancellors' Committee's Action Plan for Women Employed in Australian Universities (Winchester et al. 2015). The notion of 'family-friendly' policies has played a prominent role within some of these strategies, with the aim of allowing women to make use of more flexible working hours and involvement in the workplace as they juggle their caregiving responsibilities. For example, the implementation of increased flexibility in the tenure clock has gained increasing popularity (Gatta and Roos 2004). The existence of tenure tracking began at a time when the typical academic was a white male with a wife (Hoschild 1975; Thornton 2005). A tenured position is an

indefinite academic post, so the notion of flexibility in tenure tracking means pausing or stopping the clock, or lengthening probationary periods, to match the needs of, for example, caregiver responsibilities or maternity leave (Thornton 2005). Such flexible approaches may help to stabilise women's roles within institutions and assist women in eventually climbing towards more senior roles. However, recent research has found that *family-friendly* practices such as these are not always as effective as originally intended. These policies have often been found to be applied unevenly across staff and those women who make use of them are viewed as less dedicated to or serious about their jobs, ultimately impacting their chances of reaching top-tier positions (Manchester et al. 2013). Such perceptions should be a consideration for institutions adopting such plans.

22.5.5 Culture, Norms, and Attitudes

Long-held cultural norms about femininity may contribute to ongoing cultural norms and attitudes towards women in academia. Cultural sexism, social disadvantage based on gendered positioning, has become a normal feature of women's academic lives (Savigny 2017, 2019). For example, the *Old Boys'* network in academia is regularly attributed to the masculinist exclusion of women from decisions, mentoring opportunities, and promotions (Savigny 2017). Stereotypes and cultural norms continue to emphasise the role of women as caregivers (Blair-Loy 2009; England 2010; Hays 1996). Women are often expected to take on the primary responsibility for the care of their family and home life, even if employed and earning an income (Blair-Loy 2009). These norms and expectations are influenced by gender stereotypes which can be perpetuated by the absence of equal gender ratios in leadership positions. In order for institutions to challenge norms and social attitudes, women need to be valued, respected, represented, included, and visible in senior roles.

A more gender-balanced pool of referees, editors, and editorial boards might also lead to a more balanced acceptance of conference presentations and publications. Pinho-Gomes et al. (2020) suggest a voluntary disclosure of gender in the submission process to allow editorial boards to monitor gender inequalities in authorship and to encourage research teams to foster equality. Given that female referees evaluate male- and female-authored papers in a similar way, but male referees are more positive towards papers written by men (Hospido and Sanz 2019), professional development might be offered to male reviewers and editors in order to raise their awareness of this issue and challenge underlying biases, assumptions, and automatic exclusionary responses. In addition, triple-blind reviewing, in which the author's identity is blinded to both reviewers and the editorial team, could become more common practice.

Westring et al. (2012) supported the notion that a culture conducive to women's academic success should be informed by four key areas: equal access, work-life balance, freedom from gender biases, and supportive leadership. In this article, we also suggest that institutions should consider their role in legislation and university policy as well as challenging the traditional professional structure of higher education and culture, norms, and attitudes that perpetuate gender inequity. Although universities can adopt systemic changes to minimise inequality and exclusion between men and women, it is also necessary that academic women and their partners critically examine inequities in their relationships, domestic duties, and career sacrifices as well (Baker 2010a).

There are undoubtedly differences in the ways in which women experience academic work, and these differences may be further intensified by factors such as cultural background, the decision to have or not to have children, and the choice of relationship partner. Research performance standards sit against a backdrop of systemic pressures driven by governmental priorities and university rankings (Allen 2019; Allen et al. 2020). Institutions that hope to operate in a way that is truly equitable and inclusive to all women should consider instances of multiple marginality (Turner 2002).

22.6   An Ethical Responsibility

It is inevitable that the ethical responsibility for (re)assessing and addressing the balance of gender equality in academia should lie with policymakers and leaders. In an effort to respond to local and global market pressures, the priorities of policymakers seem to focus (not necessarily consciously or deliberately) on advancing male academics. Operating from an *ethic of markets*, policymakers acknowledge the economic priorities of their government, reflecting the need to advance local university rankings and research image in a competitive global marketplace. Such needs involve, among other things, the 'seal of excellence' provided by steady success in winning grant funding and in creating high-quality publications—features that are not conducive to research hiatus, flexible working hours, or a focus on teaching, all of which may be perceived as associated with women. In other words, in seeking to position local academic institutions in an international space that appeals to global standards, gender equality is often treated as a financial sacrifice made for the 'national and institutional good' within an economic environment that may be hostile to such goals (see also Finefter-Rosenbluh and Levinson 2015).

With this in mind, increasing attention is being paid in the literature to the moral purposes of leadership and policy (e.g., Levinson and Finefter-Rosenbluh 2016), with calls to place a greater emphasis on the shared-value outcomes of twenty-first century educational institutions. Such values include gender and racial equity, inclusion and diversity, social justice, and work opportunities for all (e.g., Furman 2003). As Furman (2004) noted, while traditional leadership and policy studies have taken a somewhat value-neutral approach to examining what leadership is or how it is done and by whom, contemporary scholarship appears to be focussing on the moral purposes of leadership and on how these may be achieved in educational institutions as communities of practice.

Thus, in addressing the (im)balance of gender equality in academia, it is worth taking account of and (re)emphasising the tripartite ethical framework commonly used in the field of education. Developed by Starratt (1994, 2003), this framework highlights three complementary forms of ethics which underlie the ethical practice of an institution. These 'ethics' are as follows: (a) The *ethic of justice*, according to which fairness and equal treatment are a key value in an institution that uniformly applies the same standards (of justice) to all working individuals. (b) The *ethic of critique*, which highlights barriers to fairness, acknowledging that it is inadequate to work for fairness within existing social and institutional arrangements if they themselves are unfair. Individuals must, therefore, critique the system and explore how policies, practices, and structures might be unfair and involve moral issues that benefit some groups while failing others. (c) The *ethic of care*, which highlights the importance of an absolute regard for the dignity and intrinsic value of each individual as a human being. In discussing the ethic of care, Starratt incorporates the foundational work of Gilligan (1982) and Noddings (1984), and in particular the premise that relationships are, ultimately, at the centre of human social life. It is, therefore, crucial to highlight the responsibility of individuals to be caring in their relationships with others, including in academia.

Drawing upon these ethical frames for thinking about gender balance in academia may help to create a novel social discourse in which the voices of the marginalised are clearly heard and institutional inequities are carefully and systematically treated. In order for academia to truly meet the aims of being equitable and inclusive, and to meet the standards set by the United National Sustainable Development Goal 8:

> to promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all, the international community aims to achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value,

the academic sector needs to ensure the structures and systems within the workplace are operating inclusively, particularly the institutions that set the standards of inclusivity and conduct

research in relation to inclusive education. In workplaces that do not cater for all, economic and intellectual growth will likely not be as productive, successful, and inclusive.

22.7 Conclusion

Considering the core concerns outlined above for the pursuit of gender equity and inclusion of all in academia, we propose several areas in which the pursuit of systemic approaches towards gender equity, as identified in the literature, have merit. These are: legislation, university policy, ethical leadership and support, inclusionary practices and approaches, the professional structure of higher education, culture, including norms and attitudes. As we have seen both throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and before, women's work in academia has not been treated with equity when compared to the work done by men and this inequity and exclusion is evident across all major career benchmarks: grants and funding, publishing and citations, service, professional development, and leadership opportunities. Indeed, the recent pandemic has magnified the inequities that already existed (Myers et al. 2020). These major benchmarks have already been criticised on the grounds that they are at odds with the core purpose of the academy (i.e., seeking truth and new knowledge) (Allen et al. 2020; Allen 2019; Miller 2019; Spence 2019), and to this critique can be added the fact that the pursuit of these metrics can come at a ruinously high personal and social cost for women.

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Kelly-Ann Allen, PhD, FAPS, is an Educational and Developmental Psychologist and an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education, Monash University, and an Honorary Senior Fellow at the Centre for Wellbeing Science, University of Melbourne. She is also the Lead-director and founder of the Global Belonging Collaborative and is the Editor-in-Chief of the Educational and Developmental Psychologist as well as the current and founding Co-Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Belonging and Human Connection with Professor Chris Boyle. The quality of her research has been acknowledged through several awards, including recognition by The Australian's data-science partner, The League of Scholars and independently ranked as Best In Field for research contributions over a four year period.

Christine Grové is an Educational and Developmental Psychologist Fulbright Scholar and Academic. Dr Grové is the Associate Editor of the Educational and Developmental Psychologist Journal. She works collaboratively with health care professionals, teachers, parents and young people to support the individual and unique needs of youth.

Professor Kerryn Butler-Henderson Director of Digital at RMIT University, is a well-respected digital health academic, with more than twenty years' experience working in health and higher education. She is known for her dedication to the promotion and advocacy of the specialised digital health workforce.

Andrea Reupert is a psychologist, Professor and Head of the Educational Psychology and Counselling School at Monash University. She is an internationally renowned expert in school-based mental health initiatives with methodological expertise in engaging with a variety of stakeholders to promote sustainable systems change.

Fiona Longmuir is a Lecturer in Educational Leadership with a background of 15 years teaching and leadership at schools in disadvantaged, urban communities. She works with aspiring school leaders on issues of social justice and student engagement. Fiona's research interests are at the intersection of educational leadership, change and student empowerment.

Ilana Finefter-Rosenbluh is a Lecturer in the Faculty of Education, Monash University, Australia. A trained school counsellor who worked in various international settings, and a former Research Affiliate with the Justice in Schools project and Postdoctoral Fellow at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, Dr Finefter-Rosenbluh leads research that lies in the intersection between assessment, ethics, teaching and policy.

Emily Berger, PhD, is an Educational and Developmental Psychologist and expert on childhood trauma, trauma-informed practice, and school mental health policy. She is a Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Education, Monash University, and Adjunct Senior Research Fellow in the School of Rural Health, Monash University. Emily leads research on the prevalence of correlates of mental illness after disasters, and trauma-informed solutions in education settings.

Dr. Amanda Heffernan is a Senior Lecturer in Educational Leadership at Monash University. Her research interests include educational leadership and education policy, and her current projects focus on principal attraction, retention, and wellbeing.

Nerelie C. Freeman is a psychologist and lecturer within the School of Psychology and Counseling at Monash University. Her research interest includes developmental and intellectual disabilities. She worked as a researcher in various organisations such as the Melbourne Health and the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Melbourne.

Sarika Kewalramani is an Early Childhood/Primary STEM Lecturer at Monash, Faculty of Education. Her research contributes towards an improvement in the learning outcomes of disadvantaged young children, and narrowing the gaps in educational outcomes that are associated with socioeconomic, cultural and gender difference and neurodiversity.

Shiri Krebs is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Business and Law at Deakin University. She is a Law and Security Fellow in Stanford Center on International Security and Cooperation, Stanford University. Her research interests include law of war, commissions of inquiry, law and psychology, and social biases.

Levita D'Souza is a Lecturer in the School of Educational Psychology and Counselling, Faculty of Education, Monash University. As a Counselling Psychology she works extensively with clients in the perinatal period. Her research interests are in psychological transition to parenthood and infant mental health and culturally inclusive safe sleep practises for the parent-infant dyad.

Grace Mackie is a psychologist and PhD candidate at Monash University. As a psychologist, she works predominantly with neurodiverse and gender diverse young people and their families across a range of settings and contexts. Her PhD research is exploring transgender young people's mental health and school counselling experiences.

Denise Chapman is a counternarrative storyteller, spoken word poet, and critical autoethnographer who lectures in children's literature, inclusion in children's media, and early language and literacy at Monash University. Denise uses oral stories, trickster folktales, children's literature, poetry, and digital images as counternarrative windows for social disruption and liberation.

Marilyn Fleer is a Laureate Professor within the School of Educational Psychology & Counseling at Monash University. She is the Foundation Chair in Early Childhood Education and Development and recipient of the Kathleen Fitzpatrick Australian Laureate Fellow. She researches in the area of early childhood science, STEM, and family studies.

The Inclusive Paradox: The Lived Experience Versus the Theory

23

Kelly-Ann Allen and Christopher Boyle

Abstract

This final chapter brings together the themes of the many contributions to this volume. The lived experience of a student placed in an inclusive environment is highlighted and the question as to whether an inclusive mainstream placement was of benefit. The chapter delves into the real issue of what inclusion actually means in a modern society and whether the debate has plateaued over the past 10 years. The real and genuine question is asked as to whether inclusive education can include separate specialist provision or is it an oxymoron that can never be joined.

K.-A. Allen (✉)
School of Educational Psychology and Counselling, Faculty of Education, Monash University, Clayton, VIC, Australia

Centre for Wellbeing Science, Melbourne Graduate School of Education, University of Melbourne, Parkville, VIC, Australia

C. Boyle
University of Adelaide, Adelaide, Australia

23.1 Introduction

Each and every person has the right to access equitable education, regardless of their race, gender, religion or disability. Whilst in the past quite often the understanding of inclusive education had been focussed on students with a disability, the current focus in most countries is much more to do with burgeoning diversity in schools and communities (Boyle and Anderson 2020b). The notion of what inclusion actually looks like and what it means must change and be flexible to changing circumstances (Boyle and Anderson 2020a). When we consider the decisions that are taken in order to decide the best level of support for students with additional needs, there is a question as to the benefit to the person at the centre of the decision-making. There is no evidence from the young people involved at the time as to whether or not they view their placement as being successful or not. Over several decades, the views as to what inclusive education is has changed, or maybe more accurately, been reinterpreted. Whether an alternative placement was required for some students is reflected in the opinions of school personnel including teachers, psychologists, speech and language therapists, sometimes teachers, and rarely if ever the young people who, of course, are at the very centre of any decisions which will be made about them. The young person could be educated in mainstream

or some form of alternative placement which could include units in mainstream schools. The point is that when all learning and social needs are taken into consideration have these placements been successful? These decisions can have life-long implications for the young people; yet, present decisions do not seem to be predicated on data that indicates whether particular placements are effective and whether they were a good decision from the retrospective position of that young person. Let us consider and reflect on the following vignette about Taylor.

Taylor was born with classic Autism. She lives in her own world, is withdrawn, is low functioning and frequently has tantrums. At the age of 2, she was taught to engage with the world around her by practising the skills of imitation and modelling. These were fundamental skills needed for her to connect with others that are often taken for granted. The frustrating aspect is, Taylor went from not wanting to connect with others to wanting to over connect with others, like many females on the Autism spectrum. Her enthusiasm and motivation for talking to people, mixed with a poor understanding of social nuances and social skills, created challenges for Taylor. Paired with the fact she was a very tall child already at 4, she would tower above her peers, perhaps unwittingly intimidating them. Taylor was taught fundamental conversational skills like turn-taking when engaged in conversations, and physical proximity. Her parents would organise playdates to practise, but finding playdates became increasingly difficult during her preschool years.

When the time came for Taylor to start school, her parents were adamant that she would attend a mainstream school and not go to a special school. They believed that this was an opportunity for her to belong to society and to be accepted. Taylor's psychologists, teachers and paediatricians all disagreed, but her parents fought for her right to attend local primary school and they even secured funding in order to do this with some support.

Then something amazing happened—Taylor thrived. She was like a local celebrity. The teachers and her peers loved her. She was extremely interested in music and drama. In primary school, she learned patience, empathy and inclusion that helped her to connect with the children around her, who then also connected with Taylor.

Then, high school started. Taylor transferred to a new school where she was bullied and ostracised. She longed to be accepted and have at least one friend. She did not understand why she got into trouble when the other students instructed her to do inappropriate things. Taylor was deeply sad and confused about the consequences of her actions. Eventually, she became depressed and her tantrum behaviours increased at home. Her parents then made the heartbreaking decision to send her to a special developmental school (SDS)—putting aside their own beliefs. Inclusion experts would say that her academic needs would be met in an SDS, but that her social needs would not.

Taylor started special school and amazingly, she became the school captain and had more friends than she could ever have imagined. All the other students had no boundaries and overshared—just like her. She even invited all 50 of them to her birthday party. The whole school and her friends encouraged her to pursue her interests. Despite often being represented as anti-inclusive in the inclusion literature, the SDS for Taylor became a place of inclusion and belonging. She was happy and her academic self-efficacy skyrocketed.

What was it about the SDS that offered a sense of inclusion for Taylor? Was it small class sizes or the students with less ability giving her academic confidence and self-efficacy? Or the absence of bullying towards Taylor meant a feeling of acceptance and an environment that allowed her to be her own person? Or more targeted teacher support with an emphasis on functional skills and leadership opportunities?

23.1.1 Did It Matter?

Taylor's experience represents a very common story often heard by parents of children with additional support needs or a disability. It is a

story where inclusion does not always mean immersion in mainstream school settings. Perhaps *inclusion,* as a construct, is just as dynamic and individualised as the diverse group of people it represents. Inclusion to one person and may mean something entirely different to another. This particular issue can mean that if a concept is difficult to define, then it can be difficult to measure. This presents a problem when attempting to consider what evidence supports either position on inclusion. It is not clear how to measure the concept; therefore, how can satisfactory evidence be found either way (Boyle et al. 2020). Therefore, in the case of Taylor, the dilemma of school placement is a very real one.

Taylor's story demonstrates that inclusion is a multifaceted construct that is deeply subjective. We sometimes overlook individual perceptions when we are discussing inclusion, rather we focus on what people, governments, schools and communities *should* be doing. In reality, we should not assume what someone needs for inclusion. In Taylor's case, her parents thought it was attending her mainstream high school. Attempts to promote and advocate for inclusive environments have in the past been without regard to the unique needs of the individual. So-called inclusive practices may have indeed created more harm or even exclusion for students than what may have been intended.

The way we think about inclusion has shifted dramatically in the last decade. We now understand that inclusion can flourish in a variety of settings—it is not an experience reserved only for mainstream education. We also recognise that inclusion represents a broad spectrum of racial, ethnic, cultural and sexual diversity that we see in almost all modern schools—inclusion is no longer the domain of the disability sector alone. After all, is inclusive education not just *good education?*

Anderson and Boyle (2015) argue that a concerning feature of contemporary modern education systems is that there are no standards or guidelines to measure the effectiveness of inclusive education. How inclusion is defined and applied between schools, districts and even countries can vary markedly, thus an

international understanding of inclusion is urgently needed. Thus, a driving impetus of this volume *New Directions in Inclusive Education: Perspectives, realities, and research,* is to best represent international perspectives and research on inclusion to work towards a more consistent, collaborative and global understanding. Recognising good practice and thinking about what inclusive education should mean is one of the goals of this volume. By bringing together various international thinkers and researchers (who are sometimes both of these), the editors are attempting to look deeply into what inclusion really is, what it can be and what it should be.

Often previous definitions of inclusion have related specifically to students with a disability; however, more recent definitions have moved away from disability-centric perspectives to view inclusion as embracing the full diversity that is characteristic of most modern schools (Anderson and Boyle 2019; Boyle and Anderson 2020a). That is, inclusion sees the delivery of equitable, accessible and quality education for all students (Anderson and Boyle 2015).

We know that educational exclusion occurs around the globe for a variety of reasons beyond disability (e.g., race, gender, sexuality); therefore, it is imperative that researchers and educators in the field are equipped with contemporary understandings of inclusion to shift attitudes, prioritise school visions and missions and ultimately aide government-level priorities and resourcing to meet the needs of all students (Anderson and Boyle 2015).

Given the diversity of schools across the globe, fostering truly inclusive and respectful environments is a growing need and interest for schools (Anderson et al. 2014). Yet schools are contextual organisations that represent the broader society, culture and values in which they reside, thus, how inclusion is practised at the society level has an implication on schools. The labelling and categorising obsession which is inherent in our society has a major role in special and inclusive education. Considering again Taylor's educational experiences, it could be that having a label provides access to resourcing for the school and thus there is an encouragement to

pursue the diagnostic route which may have a positive outcome for Taylor (Lauchlan and Boyle 2007, 2020) or lead to issues of life-long stigmitisation because of the label (Algraigray and Boyle 2017; Arishi et al. 2017). The school placement for a student with additional needs like that of Taylor is of paramount importance as this decision will be part of Taylor's existential narrative for life. The benefits of whatever placement have to have advantages for the person who has to live with their consequences, good or bad, so the decision has to made from a position of evidence which must benefit the student (Boyle 2014).

This extensive volume has attempted to bring to the reader a smorgasbord of debate and discussion around inclusion. It is now not exclusively about students with a disability or specific learning needs, it has become much wider in that it is now much more reflective of wider societal views about equity and equality. There are not many sectors where segregation or categorisation is still regarded as acceptable. However, in education this still seems to be the case, at least in part. As has been discussed in different chapters (e.g., Kauffman and colleagues), it is not absolutely clear that some form of separate schooling is unnecessary for some students, for example, those with the most complex needs. However, the argument for full inclusion comes down more often to resourcing and the 'what if finance was not an issue' type of question, and it would follow then that all should be educated in their local mainstream school irrespective of need. In forwarding this argument, one must be aware that there is a reality issue in that educational funding is not unlimited and at some point, even the most generous advocate of government spending must decide that the expenditure has reached its level and cannot go any further. The factor of teacher attitudes must also come into play as was discussed in Chaps. 1–4, where the particular aspect of the power of attitude becomes paramount to success of an intervention and in this case, a strong inclusive environment which can be effective.

By providing an insight and grounding of the main arguments surrounding inclusive education, the reader will be able to make informed decisions as to what is best for students with additional support needs. Moreover, whether an inservice or preservice teacher or even academic, the various discussion points presented here are put forward as not only a starting point but as a marker for the continued and rich discussion which perennially features in the practicalities of inclusion in a modern society.

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Kelly-Ann Allen, PhD, FAPS, is an Educational and Developmental Psychologist and an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education, Monash University, and an Honorary Senior Fellow at the Centre for Wellbeing Science, University of Melbourne. She is also the Lead-director and founder of the Global Belonging Collaborative and is the Editor-in-Chief of the Educational and Developmental Psychologist as well as the current and founding Co-Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Belonging and Human Connection with Professor Chris Boyle. The quality of her research has been acknowledged through several awards, including recognition by The Australian's data-science partner, The League of Scholars and independently ranked as Best In Field for research contributions over a four year period.

Christopher Boyle, PhD, FBPsS, is a Professor of Inclusive Education and Educational Psychology in the School of Education at The University of Adelaide, Australia. He is a Fellow of the British Psychological Society and a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. He was previously the Editor in Chief of The Educational Academy. He was previously the Editor in Chief of The Educational and Developmental Psychologist (2012–2017) and is the founding co-editor of Belonging and Human Connection (with Kelly Allen) launched in 2022. He is an internationally recognised and respected academic and author on the subjects of inclusive education and psychology. He is a registered psychologist in the UK and Australia.