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Sara Weuffen · Jenene Burke · Margaret Plunkett · Anitra Goriss-Hunter · Susan Emmett *Editors*

Inclusion, Equity, Diversity, and Social Justice in Education

A Critical Exploration of the Sustainable Development Goals

Springer

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Anitra Goriss-Hunter •
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Editors
Sara Weuffen
Institute of Education, Arts and Community
Ballarat, VIC, Australia

Jenene Burke
Institute of Education, Arts and Community
Ballarat, VIC, Australia

Margaret Plunkett
Institute of Education, Arts and Community
Ballarat, VIC, Australia

Anitra Goriss-Hunter
Institute of Education, Arts and Community
Ballarat, VIC, Australia

Susan Emmett
Institute of Education, Arts and Community
Ballarat, VIC, Australia

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Foreword

This book is a particularly important collection because in each of the chapter, authors remind us, in different ways, that the onus should be on all educators to acknowledge, recognise, respect, and engage with the diversity of students and the knowledge and cultures that they bring to educational contexts. I cannot overemphasise this point because narrow, neo-liberal concerns with testing, accountability, and standards have pervaded educational governance and policy for the past 30 years and steadily displaced professional concerns that were gradually being asserted by educators in the previous decades. The most important of these was an emerging ethos of equity and social responsibility in schools, which required educators to know their students, understand where they were coming from, and to move to meet them by being willing to negotiate the curriculum and pedagogy to make learning more relevant to their everyday lives and experiences. This kind of professional attitude has been displaced by a much more impersonal ethos of competition and performativity at all levels of education. The result is that there is now little place for understanding and accommodating the social, cultural, and experiential worlds of diverse young people. The hardening of the educational policy regime and of educational attitudes in virtually all countries (especially the English-speaking ones) has meant that, instead of schools accommodating and celebrating the diversity of students, both the competitive market arrangements and the heavy accountability regimes of mandatory standardised testing force many educators to comply with impersonal and remote standards. Students and teachers are expected to turn themselves into the kinds of people demanded by ostensibly high performing schools that excel in high-stakes tests. This book challenges such logic. In doing so, the authors as a group are deliberately responding to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 4 (Quality Education) which emphasises the importance of inclusive and equitable education.

We know from decades of research that schools do not necessarily work to the advantage of all young people. To be sure, some students are highly motivated and culturally disposed to acquire the scores and grades that will ensure their future educational and life chances. For them, the expected trajectory is that they will be educationally successful. But such is not the case for less-advantaged children. For them, even deciding to make a real effort to be successful at school is problematic because they and their families and communities are likely to lack the particular social and cultural resources

and supports that are generally available to more advantaged families. This makes the reproduction of disadvantage especially likely, which is why it is critically important for teachers to do everything they can to engage such students—to understand them, their histories, and their communities and to make sure that they have a personal connection with teachers and a stake in what the educational setting is perceived to offer. Students need to know that, while they are trying to understand and belong, the teachers are reaching out and trying to understand them rather than simply expecting them to adjust to entrenched, normalised school, and teacher paradigms. Students need to recognise that attempts are being made to engage them in relevant and interesting school experiences in which they are able to recognise their own community, values, cultures, and knowledge. Such an approach to education, as the contributors to this book make clear, is, of course, always difficult, and it always involves tensions and contradictions. Nonetheless, the real strength of the book is that the authors provide encouraging examples of good, inclusive education that can be achieved in diverse contexts.

The critically important point being made in the book is that if we are serious about the authentic engagement and learning of less-advantaged and marginalised students, we must advocate for education that is inclusive of their lives, social circumstances, and hopes. This book interrogates embedded taken-for-granted assumptions about the presumed neutrality of mainstream education and provides insights into the ways in which notions of individualism, competition, and performance in standardised tests have enabled school failure to be represented as the responsibility of individual students, their schools, their parents, and their communities. The logic of such discourse is one of deficit. It assumes that marginalised people should be willing to take individual and community responsibility for fixing their supposed dysfunctions by becoming more like the white, middle-class mainstream. In such ways, the marginalised are pathologised. Too often overlooked are the sociopolitical, cultural, and economic factors that contribute to educational performance. The result is that the students who most need support are more likely to be disillusioned, ignored, and even denigrated by the education system. It's small wonder many of them respond with hostility and rejection of schooling. The message of hope in this book is that all this can be changed.

The editors and contributing authors in large part model and embed principles of inclusivity into the book itself. There is a range of authors from a range of educational backgrounds—university academics, school teachers, parent–educators, early childhood educators, educators with disabilities, Indigenous educators, and members of particular equity groups and minorities. The process of constructing the book has required expensive collaboration, modelling, and mentoring. Likewise, within an overall concern for notions of inclusivity, the topics covered are illustrative of diversity and range from an investigation of the effects of COVID-19 on education, to an analysis of children's rights in India, to the perspectives of teachers with disabilities. Such real-world examples of struggle for social justice and inclusion in a number of national contexts provide fascinating accounts of the micropolitics of education formation and community engagement. A focus

on power relationships, identity, culture, and contested interests illuminates the relationships between education and other social contexts that bear down heavily on marginalised peoples. The result is that readers can understand the complexities and dynamics of educational success and failure and may begin to see ways forward for bringing about greater educational inclusion and social justice.

Lawrence Angus
Adjunct Professor, Institute of Education
Arts and Community
Federation University
Ballarat, Australia

Acknowledgements

The editors acknowledge the Wadawurrung, Wurundjeri, and Gunai Kurnai people as the sovereign Traditional Owners and Custodians of the lands and waters upon which this volume has been conceptualised and compiled. As a collection, the authors acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the lands and waters upon which each piece of scholarship has been produced. Given the international scope and social justice lens of this edited volume, we respect and uphold a commitment to supporting and advancing the human and sovereign rights of First Nations communities in specific and mainstream education spaces. We recognise the nuanced education practices tied inextricably to sociocultural practices within First Nations communities and act as allies to participate, and continue, the perpetual practices of learning and teaching that have taken place on sovereign lands for centuries.

The editors wish to thank all who were involved in the production of this volume, particularly the authors who contributed chapters, Prof. Lawrence Angus for writing the Foreword, Grace Ma from Springer, and the colleagues who generously acted as peer reviewers.

This edited book was conceived and executed as a project by the Social Justice, Inclusion and Diversity in Education (SJIDE) research focus area in the Institute of Education, Arts and Community at Federation University Australia. SJIDE members undertake research and scholarly engagement with social justice in education within the broad themes of equity, diversity, inclusion, opportunity, regionality, and well-being in formal education as well as non-formal education settings.

The editors take great satisfaction in bringing this project to fruition and look forward to the conversations and changes in practice that may result.

Contents

1 Inclusion, Equity, Diversity, and Social Justice in Education in the Twenty-First Century 1
Anitra Goriss-Hunter, Jenene Burke, Sara Weuffen, Margaret Plunkett, and Susan Emmett

Part I Interrogating Perspectives of Diversity and Inclusion

2 Policy, Discourse and Epistemology in Inclusive Education 13
Jenene Burke, Anitra Goriss-Hunter, and Susan Emmett

3 The Wicked Problem of Social Equity in Higher Education: The Conflicting Discourses and the Impact of COVID-19 . . . 29
Ana Larsen and Susan Emmett

4 Issues and Solutions: A Literature Review of the Deficit Discourses Concerning Under-Represented Students 43
Ana Larsen and Liam Frost-Camilleri

5 Learning Through an *Undisciplined* Lens: The Centring of Indigenous Knowledges and Philosophies in Higher Education in Australia and Sweden 57
Jillian K Marsh, Sheelagh Daniels-Mayes, Kristina Sehlin MacNeil, and Melissa Nursey-Bray

6 Insights into the Education System in India and the Current Impact of COVID-19 on Child Rights 77
Anjali Rana and Rachel Daniel

7 The Fallacy of Cultural Inclusion in Mainstream Education Discourses 91
Sara Weuffen and Kym Willis

Part II Foregrounding Diverse Voices and Inclusive Practices

8 A *Possible Me?* Inspiring Learning Among Regional Young People for the Future World of Work 109
Cheryl Glowrey, Stuart Levy, Monica Green, Anna Fletcher, and Margaret Plunkett

9 Do not Enter? An Autoethnographic Encounter with Policy and Practice Workforce Agendas in Early Childhood Education and Care 125
Kim Browne

10 Parent–Teachers: Experiences of Supporting our Children with Dis/ability in Schools 139
Amy Claughton, Sara Weuffen, Deborah Robertson, and Kylie Nice

11 African Girls' Experiences of Gender in School Communities: Observations and Reflections from a Researcher 153
Catherine Oxworth

12 Social and Cultural Capitals of Parents from Indian Immigrant Background: A Case for Developing Children's STEM Learning 167
Sarika Kewalramani and Gillian Kidman

13 Identity and Intersectional Responsive Pedagogy in Higher Education: Insights from Two Locations in Regional and Urban Australia 181
Anitra Goriss-Hunter, Verity Archer, and James Arvanitakis

Part III Disrupting Mainstream Education Through Capacity Building

14 Implementing Inclusive Pedagogies: What Regular Primary Classroom Teachers Know and Do 199
Moya Elvey and Jenene Burke

15 Bridges and Barriers: Building an Innovative Model of Support for Teachers of Students with ASD 217
Wendy Holcombe and Margaret Plunkett

16 Digital Technology for Inclusive Education: Reflecting on the Role of Teachers 233
Helen Coker and Duncan Mercieca

17 Moving Towards a Sustainable Future for Women in Afghanistan Through Increased Tertiary Education Participation: Challenges and Possibilities 245
Parwaiz Najibi and Claire McLachlan

18 The Role of International Study Tours in Cultivating Ethnocultural Empathy: Preservice Teacher Standpoints 261
Marcelle Cacciattolo and Greg Aronson

19 Working Towards a Sustainable, Responsive, Inclusive, and Diverse Global Education Future 277
Sara Weuffen, Jenene Burke, Anitra Goriss-Hunter, Margaret Plunkett, and Susan Emmett

Author Index 287

Editors and Contributors

About the Editors

Dr. Sara Weuffen is a teacher-researcher specialist with a Ph.D. in cross/intercultural education research between non-Indigenous people, Aboriginal peoples, and Torres Strait Islanders in Australia. She specialises in learning and content design for diverse cohorts across a broad range of platforms; online, blended, and face to face. As a non-Indigenous woman born on Gundijtmara Country (Warrnambool) and living on Wadawurrung Country (Ballarat), Dr. Weuffen draws upon her formative grey methodological approach—where both post-structural theory and Indigenous methodologies are bought together—and collaborations with Australia's First Nations Peoples, to critique dominant structures and ideologies, interrogate binary discourses, and push educational boundaries for emancipatory and success-orientated shared-learning outcomes and positive social progress.

Prof. Jenene Burke is the Director, Academic Operations in the Institute of Education, Arts and Community at Federation University Australia. Jenene convenes the Social Justice, Inclusion and Diversity in Education (SJIDE) research focus area in the institute. She is the president of the World Federation of Associations for Teacher Education (WFATE) and leads the WFATE Inclusion and Social Justice in Teacher Education in Global Contexts research development group. As a researcher, she is best known for her world-class research into play spaces as inclusive environments for children and their families. She is particularly interested in research that privileges the voices of participants, especially children and young people. She has a secondary teaching background and 20 years of experience in Higher Education as a teacher educator. Her learning and teaching interests centre on educational responses to student diversity, with respect to inclusive education and disability studies in education.

Dr. Margaret Plunkett is an adjunct Associate Professor in the Institute of Education, Arts and Community at Federation University Australia. She has been a teacher educator and a researcher for more than three decades, specialising in the fields of rural and regional education, teacher professional learning, and gifted education. She has extensive research expertise in both qualitative and quantitative methodologies and across all educational sectors,

particularly in relation to diverse student populations in rural and regional areas, with much of the work focusing on the intersection between aspirations, rurality, and achievement. She has conducted research with schools in the Gippsland region, focusing on how educational environments can help develop knowledge, skills, and competencies that assist in building meaningful and sustainable relationships and emotional competence within communities. She is an associate editor of the *Australasian Journal of Gifted Education* and a member of a range of national and international education associations.

Dr. Anitra Goriss-Hunter is the Director, Learning and Teaching, and a senior lecturer at Federation University Australia. Her research and teaching focus on gender and education, inclusion, and pre-service teacher (PSTs) education. She was awarded the prestigious Australian Women's and Gender Studies Association Award for the most outstanding Ph.D. thesis. Her research investigates women's careers in Higher Education; ways to improve female participation in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education; and the development of inclusive teaching approaches that offer authentic learning experiences for PSTs. Her contribution in the last field was recognised when she was awarded the Federation University Vice-Chancellor's Award—Citation for Outstanding Contribution to Student Learning 2020.

Dr. Susan Emmett has been extensively involved in early childhood education and the translation of research into the practical environment for over 35 years. Her professional experience includes early childhood teaching in a range of settings, work as an early childhood educational consultant and teaching and researching within TAFE and Higher Education sectors. She is a senior lecturer in Education at Federation University Australia where she coordinates and teaches in early childhood and manages partnerships with external organisations both domestic and international. Prior to this, she worked as a research fellow within the School of Social and Policy Research at Charles Darwin University where early childhood literacy was central to her research, particularly in relation to rural and remote indigenous education. Her research interests also include the well-being and resilience of children and educators including trauma informed, inclusive pedagogy, and relationship-focused practice in early childhood contexts. Her expertise is in the use of qualitative methodologies, including grounded theory. She has recently published journal articles, reports, and chapters in these areas. She also applies and works with mixed methods research processes including designing and conducting randomised control trials. In 2016, she won the Federation University Vice-Chancellor's Award for Contributions to Student Learning and Teaching Excellence, and in 2015, she was a recipient of *The Deans Award for dedication to partnership work and consequent provision of enriched learning experiences for education students from a diverse range of backgrounds*.

Contributors

Verity Archer Institute of Education, Arts and Community, Federation University Australia, Ballarat, Australia

Greg Aronson College of Education, Victoria University, Footscray, Australia

James Arvanitakis Institute for Culture and Society, Western Sydney University, Parramatta, Australia

Kim Browne Faculty of Arts and Education, Deakin University, Victoria, Australia

Jenene Burke Institute of Education, Arts and Community, Federation University Australia, Ballarat, VIC, Australia

Marcelle Cacciattolo College of Education, Victoria University, Footscray, Australia

Amy Claughton Institute of Education, Arts and Community, Federation University, Ballarat, Australia

Helen Coker Division of Education and Society, University of Dundee, Dundee, Scotland, UK

Rachel Daniel Institute of Education, Arts and Community, Federation University Australia, Ballarat, VIC, Australia

Sheelagh Daniels-Mayes Faculty of Arts, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Australia

Moya Elvey Institute of Education, Arts and Community, Federation University Australia, Ballarat, Australia

Susan Emmett Institute of Education, Arts and Community, Federation University Australia, Ballarat, VIC, Australia

Anna Fletcher Institute of Education, Arts and Community, Federation University Australia, Ballarat, VIC, Australia

Liam Frost-Camilleri Institute of Education, Arts and Community, Federation University Australia, Ballarat, Australia

Cheryl Glowrey Institute of Education, Arts and Community, Federation University Australia, Ballarat, VIC, Australia

Anitra Goriss-Hunter Institute of Education, Arts and Community, Federation University Australia, Ballarat, VIC, Australia

Monica Green Institute of Education, Arts and Community, Federation University Australia, Ballarat, VIC, Australia

Wendy Holcombe Institute of Education, Arts and Community, Federation University Australia, Churchill, Australia

Sarika Kewalramani Department of Education, Swinburne University of Technology, Melbourne, Australia

Gillian Kidman School of Curriculum Teaching and Inclusive Education, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia

Ana Larsen School of Access Education, Central Queensland University Australia, Mackay, Australia

Stuart Levy Institute of Education, Arts and Community, Federation University Australia, Ballarat, VIC, Australia

Kristina Sehlin MacNeil Várdduo - Centre for Sami Research, Umeå University, Umeå, Sweden

Jillian K Marsh School of Architecture and Built Environment, University of Newcastle, Newcastle, Australia

Claire McLachlan Institute of Education, Arts and Community, Federation University, Mount Helen, Australia

Duncan Mercieca Division of Education and Society, University of Dundee, Dundee, Scotland, UK

Parwaiz Najibi Institute of Education, Arts and Community, Federation University, Mount Helen, Australia

Kylie Nice Institute of Education, Arts and Community, Federation University, Ballarat, Australia

Melissa Nursey-Bray Department of Geography, Environment and Population, The University of Adelaide, Adelaide, Australia

Catherine Oxworth Institute of Education, Arts and Community, Federation University Australia, Ballarat, Australia

Margaret Plunkett Institute of Education, Arts and Community, Federation University Australia, Ballarat, VIC, Australia

Anjali Rana Institute of Education, Arts and Community, Federation University Australia, Ballarat, VIC, Australia

Deborah Robertson Institute of Education, Arts and Community, Federation University, Ballarat, Australia

Sara Weuffen Institute of Education, Arts and Community, Federation University Australia, Ballarat, VIC, Australia

Kym Willis Institute of Education, Arts and Community, Federation University Australia, Ballarat, VIC, Australia

Abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACARA	Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority
AGDESE	Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment
AITSL	Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership
APA	American Psychological Association
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
ATAR	Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank
BBMS	Bridges and Barriers Model of Support
CALD	Culturally and linguistically diverse
CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services)
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease
CRP	Critical Race Pedagogy
CRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CSA	Child sexual abuse
DDA	Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Australia)
DDS	Demand-Driven System
DEECD	Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria, Australia) (August 2007–January 2015)
DEET	Department of Education, Employment and Training (Victoria, Australia) (October 1999–March 2002)
DESA	Department of Economic and Social Affairs
DESE	Department of Education, Skills and Employment (Australia)
DET	Department of Education and Training (from March 2002 to August 2007) (January 2015–current)
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia)
DMIS	Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity
DSE	Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Australia)
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
EYLF	Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework (Australia)
FAWEZA	Forum for African Women Educationalists (Zambia)
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation

FiF	First in Family
FISO	Framework for Improving Student Outcomes (Department of Education and Training, Victoria)
FPE	Free Primary Education
G	Gender Fluid
GAD	Generalised Anxiety Disorder
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEP	Department of Geography, Environment and Population, University of Adelaide (Australia)
GOI	Government of India
HECS	Higher Education Contribution Scheme
HELP	Higher Education Loan Program (Commonwealth of Australia)
HEPPP	Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (Australia)
HIE	Highlands and Islands Enterprises (Scotland, UK)
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
IAG	Indigenous Advisory Group
ICIP	Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property
IST	Indigenous Standpoint Theory
LBGTQIA+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and Asexual. The + Represents Sexual Identities Outside Heteronormative Identifications.
LGA	Local Government Area
LLEN	Local Learning and Employment Networks (Victoria, Australia)
LMCB	Lower Middle-Class Background
LVA	Latrobe Valley Authority (Gippsland, Victoria, Australia)
M	Man
MCB	Middle-Class Background
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MoE	Ministry of Education (Afghanistan)
NCERT	National Council for Educational Research and Training, India
NESB	Non-English-Speaking Background
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NRVA	National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (Afghanistan)
NUEPA	National University of Educational Planning and Administration, India
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OED	Oxford English Dictionary
ONS	Office of National Statistics (Scotland, UK)
OVC	Orphans and Vulnerable Children's Centre
PBF	Performance-Based Funding
PIB	Press Information Bureau (Delhi, India)
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment

POCSO	Protection of Children From Sexual Offences
PSD	Program for Students with Disabilities (Victoria, Australia)
PST/PSTs	Pre-service Teacher/Pre-service Teachers
PTSD	Post-traumatic Stress Disorder
QDTP	Quality Differentiated Teaching Practice
SDG/SDG4	Sustainable Development Goals/Sustainable Development Goal 4
SDT	Self-determination Theory
SES	Socio-economic Status
SJIDE	Social Justice, Inclusion, and Diversity in Education
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
UDL	Universal Design for Learning
UID	Umeå Institute of Design, Umeå University (Sweden)
UMCB	Upper Middle-Class Background
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, aka Children's Convention
UNESCO	United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
VCE	Victorian Certificate of Education (Victoria, Australia)
VEYLDF	Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (Victoria, Australia)
VIT	Victorian Institute of Teaching (Victoria, Australia)
W	Woman
WCB	Working-Class Background
WFP	World Food Programme
WoW	World of Work

List of Figures

Fig. 2.1 United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4. Adapted from United Nations Department of Global Communications (2020). 15
Fig. 2.2 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 3, 5, 8, 10 and 16. Adapted from United Nations Department of Global Communications (2020) 23
Fig. 6.1 Proportion of children and youth out of school 2000–2018 (United Nations 2020). 80
Fig. 9.1 Image of a person sitting on stool in a gallery, drawing sculpture on a stand. 132
Fig. 9.2 Image of a white clay sculpture on a large black box stand. 134
Fig. 9.3 Image of completed etching of a sculpture, interpreted from a sculpture in the gallery. 135
Fig. 14.1 Strands of inclusive teaching practice 206
Fig. 15.1 Components of the bridges and barriers model of support 222
Fig. 15.2 Example of a completed BBMS profile. 230
Fig. 17.10 Education participation by gender Reproduced from UNESCO Institute of Statistics (2020) 251
Fig. 18.1 Praxis Inquiry Protocol (modified from Gudjonsdottir et al. 2007, p. 168). 267

List of Tables

Table 2.1 SDG4 Targets (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs n.d.) mapped against particular social groups 19
Table 6.1 Number of affected learners in India due to school closures caused by COVID-19 (UNESCO 2021a) 81
Table 12.1 Participant families profile summary 172
Table 12.2 Parent interview protocol 173
Table 14.1 Inclusive classroom practices 204
Table 14.2 Variations in class structure, grade level, teaching experience, and school size amongst teacher research participants 208
Table 15.1 Challenges faced by educators in fulfilling their role 224
Table 15.2 Educational considerations for the support of students with ASD in schools. 225
Table 15.3 Student strengths and abilities. 228
Table 15.4 Bridges and Barriers experienced by students with ASD 229
Table 15.5 Markers of educational success as described by the participant group 229

1 Inclusion, Equity, Diversity, and Social Justice in Education in the Twenty-First Century

Anitra Goriss-Hunter, Jenene Burke, Sara Weuffen, Margaret Plunkett, and Susan Emmett

Abstract

The chapter offers a road map that charts the key issues raised in this edited collection that contributes to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) series. Throughout the book, questions are raised, tensions observed, and practices highlighted, often through passionate discussion, regarding the ways in which considerations of equity, inclusion, and social justice are configured, challenged, observed, or ignored in a range of educational settings. All chapters address the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4: Quality Education which advocates for the provision of inclusive and equitable education and the promotion of lifelong learning for all. This chapter extends the focus of diversity, inclusion, and social justice to examine the inclusive approaches embedded in the production of the book. Rejecting potentially exclusionary publication processes, the editors mobilized inclusive approaches to selecting, reviewing, and editing chapters and the development of edited scholarship. Focusing on connections and capacity building, a diverse range of authors, reviewers, and editors worked together in a supportive, inclusive, and encouraging framework to produce an interwoven contemporary narrative about the state of diversity and inclusion in mainstream education settings.

Keywords

Social justice · Diversity · Inclusion · Sustainable Development Goals

Author Positioning Statements

Anitra: From my experiences as a first in family, working-class woman of color in predominantly middle-class education settings, I have developed a strong sense of being an imposter. This lived experience, however, has also ignited a drive to use the knowledge and understanding I have gained to help students negotiate their own way through the labyrinthine pathways of tertiary institutions. Editing this book with a range of colleagues has reinforced my commitment to teaching and researching in collaborative, equitable, and inclusive ways.

A. Goriss-Hunter (✉) · J. Burke · S. Weuffen · M. Plunkett · S. Emmett
Institute of Education, Arts and Community, Federation University Australia, Ballarat, Australia
e-mail: a.goriss-hunter@federation.edu.au

J. Burke
e-mail: js.burke@federation.edu.au

S. Weuffen
e-mail: sl.weuffen@federation.edu.au

M. Plunkett
e-mail: margaret.plunkett@federation.edu.au

S. Emmett
e-mail: s.emmett@federation.edu.au

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Jenene: As an educator for over 40 years, I have been actively involved in teaching across a broad range of education settings. My interest in disability as a socially constructed concept emerged from my doctoral studies into children's experiences of play in purpose-built inclusive play spaces.

Sara: I am an early-career researcher with considerable academic and life experiences with equity, inclusion, and social justice matters. Growing up in a lower socioeconomic environment in regional Victoria, experiencing marginalization based on gender, sex, and body image, and being the first in my immediate family to attend higher education, I personally and professionally champion humanistic notions of inclusion for transformative education.

Margaret: My interest in diversity and equality of opportunity stemmed from three decades of teaching and researching in Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programs in a regional university. My extensive involvement with rural and regional students, who although highly academically capable often did not achieve to a level commensurate with their potential, fueled my passion for providing guidance and resources to help preservice and practicing teachers and school students understand the important relationship between aspirational outcomes and opportunity.

Susan: I have been an early childhood teacher as well as a tertiary teacher for over 40 years. I have worked as an educator and researcher within many diverse communities throughout Australia including remote Indigenous settings, and I have observed and experienced just and unjust educational environments. The underpinning reasons for inequity have both intrigued and bothered me, and I have sought to understand how we recognize unfairness and proactively work to create inclusive educational contexts. I have learnt the crucial nature of addressing inequality as early as we can in a child's life.

1.1 Inclusion, Equity, Diversity, and Social Justice in Education

In twenty-first century education, while the notion of social justice is postulated as underpinning egalitarian pedagogies and curricula, students defined as different to the middle-class, white, heterosexual, and able-bodied norm have vastly disparate education experiences and outcomes. Despite social justice ideologies and a focus on diversity and inclusion, these students are frequently viewed through a deficit lens with their lived experiences and knowledge seen as something to be fixed, modified, or negated (Binns 2019; Patton Davis and Museus 2019). Yet, over the past decade, there has been a growing body of literature highlighting the unique skills and attributes these students bring to classrooms, including how they enrich school environments, pedagogies, and social development (Slee 2018).

While there has been an increased focus on diversity and inclusion in education settings globally, metric-driven pedagogies combined with additional workload pressures on educators have resulted in entrenched and homogenized lenses influencing understandings and processes. This, in turn, has created education systems where the extent of diversity may be invisible and where educators may feel uncertain, reticent, and ill-equipped to integrate inclusive pedagogies for student success (Jarvis 2019; OECD 2019). For instance, Jarvis' (2019) research observes that over half of Australian graduate teachers feel unprepared to teach students with additional needs. For inclusive education to work in genuinely transformative ways, educators need to be well equipped with pedagogical knowledge and skills employed through a lens of inclusivity as well as a deep understanding of a diverse range of learners. Both educators and learners need to be open to unlearning what has become centralized and assumed knowledge and re-learning/creating new ontologies and epistemologies.

This chapter provides a road map for the collected edition which explores narratives from a diverse range of educators who all seek the fulfillment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, and 16 in various contexts around the globe. In this book, questions are raised, tensions observed, and practices highlighted, often through passionate discussion, regarding the ways in which considerations of equity, inclusion, and social justice are configured, challenged, observed, or ignored in a range of educational settings. Within this collected edition, the authors offer nuanced explorations of the complexities of inclusion, equity, and equality measures, as well as the impacts that these approaches may have on the experiences and learning of students and educators. The collective narrative provides a significant contribution to understandings of how approaches that combine inclusion, equity, and equality measures may be understood and employed critically and creatively in a variety of practices and contexts.

The authors in this edited collection are teachers within early childhood education, primary (elementary), and secondary school backgrounds; academics from school and higher education sectors; teacher-academics with disabilities; parent-educators; people associated with equity groups; proud sovereign Indigenous peoples; research by higher degree students; and academic leaders. The authors' unique combinations of identity factors are indicated in their positioning statements at the beginning of each chapter. These positioning statements provide a snapshot of the diverse narratives of academics who are active researchers and educators at various career stages who often draw upon their own lived experience to investigate and write about equity and social justice. This focus on lived experience, as indicated in the positioning statements, endows the narratives in the book with nuanced, and at times personal, perspectives.

In their chapters, authors respond to the experiences, challenges, ambiguities, and tensions of diversity and inclusion characteristic in a variety of education settings across the globe including in Afghanistan, Africa, Australia, China, India, Scotland, and Sweden. These discussions are presented from within interpretivist education and social science disciplines, and they foreground lived and associative experiences. The authors occupy a variety of intersectional positions and mobilize a range of theoretical frameworks to interrogate political, philosophical, and social normative ways of thinking about and acting regarding diversity and inclusion to promote the notion of justice beyond legal and educational conceptions.

The book itself is both provocation and process melding theory and practice. As a provocation, it challenges the reader to think about ways in which assumed knowledge can be challenged and unlearned. With a focus on transformation and educators as agents of change, the book encourages the reader to interrogate the ways in which they think about and interact with concepts and practices of inclusive education, equity, and social justice that are manifested in the SDGs. The collected edition gives voice to a range of academic authors who are diverse yet connected, in their pursuit of utilizing the SDGs and interrogating the discourses and policies of educational institutions and settings. In doing so, the book provides real-world studies about how diversity and inclusion are enacted within education across the globe and discusses the critical factors associated with building capacity for social justice.

While the book works as a provocation, calling for an examination of thought and practice using a lens of inclusivity, it is also a demonstration of the principles of inclusion and equity which are embedded in the processes of the book's production. Rather than writing about these concepts while employing what could be argued as traditional and exclusionary selection, reviewing, and editing procedures privileging experienced writers, the editors made a decision to embrace and embed inclusive principles within the fabric of the book and the ways in which it was developed. Inclusive editorial processes celebrated diversity by working with inexperienced writers and reviewers, from a range of backgrounds and circumstances through a network of mentors. Those who had previous publication experience monitored the progress of the project and mentored colleagues for capacity building throughout various stages of production.

When appropriate, editors reached out to less experienced authors, and those who for a variety of reasons either requested or appeared to need support, to offer assistance, and informally monitor the progress of writing. When challenges arose, they were examined from all sides and met. These experiences built capacity for critical engagement with concepts, discourses, and philosophies and the ability to objectively critique writing while also facilitating the emergence of diverse voices of the authors and the participants in their research. The drawing on principles of inclusion in this process also highlighted the importance of responsive and relational approaches when working with a diverse range of people on a collected edition.

The editors of this volume encourage the reader to reflect on their personal and professional experiences and practices and consider how they might advance the fulfillment of the SDGs by using inclusive approaches, identifying diversity, and fostering success for all their students. The authors invite readers to reflect critically on the following questions:

- What are the educational challenges you currently face/have faced?
- How might you disrupt these challenges?
- What kinds of resources could you draw on, and equally, what resources and supports are missing, that would be beneficial to overcoming these challenges?
- By what avenues might unique experiences be expressed?
- When advocating for diversity and inclusion, what is one thing you could do tomorrow that would instigate positive change in the situations and experiences you observe?

1.2 A Critical Exploration of the Sustainable Development Goals

As an edited collection of critical discourse, this volume contributes to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) series. Each chapter speaks to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4: *Quality Education* which aims to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" (UN 2015). This is achieved through the presentation of an intersectional and holistic narrative about the historical, the current landscape, and future of mainstream education where diversity and inclusion are concerned. In addition, Sustainable Goals 3, 5, 8, 10, and 16 are addressed by various authors to illuminate the interconnectedness of SDGs across various educational settings. These include.

- Ensuring good health and well-being (SDG3)
- Achieving gender equality and empower all women and girls (SDG5)
- Promoting a sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all (SDG8)
- Reducing inequalities within and among countries (SDG10)
- Promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development and providing access to justice for all and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels (SDG16).

The chapters are organized in three thematic parts: Part I: Interrogating perspectives of diversity and inclusion; Part II: Foregrounding diverse voices and inclusive practices; and Part III: Disrupting mainstream education through capacity building, to present a scaffolded narrative about the current state of diversity and inclusion in education spaces, and envisioning a future for more sustainable, inclusive, and diverse education systems.

1.3 Part I Interrogating Perspectives of Diversity and Inclusion

In the first part, the authors interrogate policies, discourses, epistemologies, and theories underpinning the concepts of inclusion, equity, and equality that drive the SDGs, which are the focal

point in this collected edition. In Chap. 2, Burke et al. (2022) unpack the concept of inclusive education by discussing how it has been applied and understood globally in policy and practice with a focus on educational environments. The chapter works in tandem with the following chapter (Larsen and Emmett 2022) to investigate fundamental concepts including human rights, social accountability, inclusive education, difference, and intersectional analysis that underpin discussions throughout the rest of the collected edition. In Chap. 3, Larsen and Emmett (2022) interrogate what they call *The Wicked Problem of Social Equity in Higher Education*, paying attention to political and historical narratives. The authors argue that these discourses of equity in higher education are fueled by complex and sometimes disparate narratives (Larsen and Emmett, 2022). Extending the investigative narrative of equity, in Chap. 4, Larsen and Frost-Camilleri (2022) conduct a scoping literature review of the discursive constructions of underrepresented students in tertiary institutions, noting that these student cohorts are often targeted in formal literature concerning equity and inclusive policies which construct non-traditional tertiary students in terms of deficit discourses. In Chap. 5, Marsh et al. (2022) consider the challenges and associated theoretical frameworks concerning the "re-centering" of Indigenous knowledge and philosophies in curricula and pedagogies in Australian and Swedish tertiary institutions. Using Indigenous Standpoint Theory (Foley 2006; Moreton-Robinson 2009; Nakata 2007; Nakata et al. 2012) and Critical Race Pedagogy (Dunbar 2008; Jennings and Lyn 2005; Page et al. 2019), the authors argue for the establishment of "an ethno-relative and culturally responsive approach that effectively and consistently centres and privileges Indigenous knowledges and philosophies to graduate students … that are critically and racially aware, in a position to advocate for social justice" (Marsh et al. 2022, p. 9). In their exploration of the impact of COVID-19 on education systems and child rights in India, in Chap. 6, Rana and Daniel (2022) examine education, health, and equity issues involved in the movement from face-to-face schooling to online learning. They posit that despite positive government interventions, the impact of COVID-19 on the Indian education system and child welfare has highlighted connections between disadvantage and exclusion (Rana and Daniel 2022). Weuffen and Willis (2022) in Chap. 7 interrogate current thinking and educational experiences regarding the teaching of Australia's shared history involving Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations. The authors contend that despite prevalent discourses of inclusive education and social justice, Australian educational systems are still struggling to implement authentic and culturally inclusive education curricula and pedagogies (Weuffen and Willis 2022).

1.4 Part II Foregrounding Diverse Voices and Inclusive Practices

In the first chapter of this part, Glowrey et al. (2022) explore the World of Work (WoW) experiences for youth in a disadvantaged region of Australia. WoW refers to a range of activities mediated by schools that attempt to engage students in the identification, understanding, and preparation for future career and education opportunities (Australian Government 2020; OECD 2020; Torii 2018). The authors employ a combination of self-determination theory (Reeve 2012) and the theory of possible self (Markus and Nurius 1986) as a framework to interrogate and interrupt conventional discourse that constructs regional Australian youth in deficit terms (Glowrey et al. 2022). In Chap. 9, Browne (2022) examines a topic about which there is a dearth of research—perspectives and experiences of early childhood teachers with disabilities. However, Browne (2022) adds critical knowledge to this topic by exploring autobiographical experiences of teachers with disabilities in obtaining work and their experiences while in work. From the unique viewpoint of parents who are also teachers, Claughton et al. (2022), in Chap. 10, explore the challenges that occur at individual and systemic levels for parents who are also teachers caring for a child(ren) with a

disability attending Australian schools. The authors highlight that a significant lack of attention has been paid to date about the experiences of parents and their journeys as advocates for inclusive education (Claughton et al. 2022). In a similar vein, in Chap. 11, Oxworth (2022) argues for the implementation of inclusive teaching approaches that enable equal access to education for all students by drawing on insider–outsider observations and conversations with education professionals in Kenya and Zambia about how girls negotiate gender in the school environment. Returning to parental viewpoints, in Chap. 12, Kewalramani and Kidman (2022) examine a topical issue concerning the exploration of the challenges that Indian parents who have immigrated to Australia might encounter while attempting to support their children's engagement with science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) subjects. In speaking with parents, the authors identified that STEM knowledge was a priority for the adults, but significant negotiation of the terrain of the Australian education system was required to build that knowledge (Kewalramani and Kidman, 2022). Shifting focus from the Australian school system to higher education, in Chap. 13, Goriss-Hunter et al. (2022) investigate an under-researched topic regarding the impact that identification with non-typical identity factors might have personally and professionally on academic staff in two Australian universities. To enable access to learning for all students, the authors draw on their own atypical identifications and backgrounds to develop an Intersectional Responsive Pedagogy which blends social, active, and inclusive teaching approaches (Goriss-Hunter et al. 2022).

1.5 Part III Disrupting Mainstream Education Through Capacity Building

In Chap. 14, Elvey and Burke (2022) interrogate the approaches and practices of teachers who identify and respond to the academic, emotional, and social needs of *all* students to establish a genuinely inclusive educational environment. Their study focuses on a number of Australian mainstream primary school teachers and is positioned in the field of Disability Studies in Education that seeks to disrupt ableist education discourses (Elvey and Burke 2022). Another example of disturbing conventional education systems and capacity building occurs in Chap. 15 where Holcombe and Plunkett (2022) investigate the establishment and use of the innovative Bridges and Barriers Model of Support (BBMS) that mobilizes a strength-based approach for children who have been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder to support their success in Australian schools. The authors contend that the BBMS is designed for a whole-of-school adoption as well as being a framework that could be used to develop personalized plans for individual learners in which their strengths, goals, challenges, and support options are recorded (Holcombe and Plunkett 2022). In Chap. 16, Coker and Mercieca (2022) employ the theories of Fraser (2008) to critically examine the ways in which digital technology might support inclusive teaching approaches by enabling the participation of students, teachers, schools, and communities in learning opportunities. Drawing on vignettes from educational settings in Scotland, the authors aim to open "democratic dialogues" in relation to digital technology as a conduit and as a challenge to participation in learning (Coker and Mercieca 2022).

Using a gendered lens of investigation, Najibi and MacLachlan (2022), in Chap. 17, critically investigate the policies and rights that promote Afghan women's participation in education, as well as the political, religious, social, and cultural discourses that work to limit female engagement with learning in Afghanistan. The authors contemplate ways of moving forward to attain gender equity in educational settings through challenging family expectations regarding children's education; improving girls' access to school and their safety; increasing the number of female role models; and foregrounding *World of Work* programs in schools (Najibi and MacLachlan 2022). Providing an additional example of a program

that builds student capacity is highlighted in Chap. 18 where Cacciatollo and Aronson (2022) examine the ways in which international study abroad programs have contributed to their students' (preservice teachers—PSTs) development of intercultural competency, intercultural sensitivity, and ethnocultural empathy (Bennett 2013; Zhu 2011). They argue that working with overseas mentors and school leadership may enable PSTs to develop a more rounded understanding of different cultural learning requirements. In the final chapter, Weuffen et al. (2022) draw together the interconnections of diversity, inclusion, and social justice that circulate through the diverse narratives of lived experience related by educators in the book, to discuss the implications for more equitable and sustainable education experiences for all.

As authors, we argue that the inclusive practices interwoven throughout the production of each chapter, and the book as a whole, contribute towards the development of greater understanding, compassion, and empathy for different positions and viewpoints. The book and it's production processes embody the notions of diversity and inclusion. In publishing this book, through the provocations offered concerning unlearning redundant concepts and re-learning contemporary knowledge as well as the editorial processes followed, we hope that readers may find in the narratives of inclusion, equity, and social justice, some inspiration, affirmation, or, perhaps, challenges to thinking and practice. After all, it is through the sharing of nuanced accounts and sometimes confronting provocations that we can continue to work toward the promotion of inclusive and equitable approaches that advance lifelong and transformational learning opportunities for all.

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Dr. Anitra Goriss-Hunter is the Director, Learning and Teaching and a Senior Lecturer at Federation University Australia. Her research and teaching focuses on gender and education, inclusion, and pre-service teacher (PSTs) education. Anitra was awarded the prestigious Australian Women's and Gender Studies Association award for most outstanding Ph.D. thesis. Anitra's research investigates women's careers in Higher Education; ways to improve female participation in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education; and, the development of inclusive teaching approaches that offer authentic learning experiences for PSTs. Anitra's contribution in the last field was recognized when she was awarded the Federation University Vice-Chancellor's Award—Citation for Outstanding Contribution to Student Learning 2020.

Professor Jenene Burke is the Director, Academic Operations in the Institute of Education, Arts and Community at Federation University Australia. Jenene convenes the Social Justice, Inclusion and Diversity in Education (SJIDE) research focus area in the Institute. She is the President of the World Federation of Associations for Teacher Education (WFATE) and leads the WFATE Inclusion and Social Justice in Teacher Education in Global Contexts research development group. As a researcher, Jenene is best known for her world-class research into play spaces as inclusive environments for children and their families. She is particularly interested in research that privileges the voices of participants, especially children and young people. Jenene has a secondary teaching background and 20 years of experience in Higher Education as a teacher educator. Her learning and teaching interests centre on educational responses to student diversity, with respect to inclusive education and disability studies in education.

Dr. Sara Weuffen is a teacher-researcher specialist with a Ph. D. in cross/inter-cultural education research between non-Indigenous people, Aboriginal peoples, and Torres Strait Islanders in Australia. She specializes in learning and content design for diverse cohorts across a broad range of platforms; online, blended, face-to-face. As a non-Indigenous woman born on Gundijtmara Country (Warrnambool) and living on Wadawurrung Country (Ballarat), Dr. Weuffen draws upon her formative grey methodological approach—where both Poststructural theory and Indigenous methodologies are bought together—and collaborations with Australia's First Nations Peoples, to critique dominant structures and ideologies, interrogate binary discourses, and push educational boundaries for emancipatory and success-orientated shared-learning outcomes and positive social progress.

Dr. Margaret Plunkett is an Adjunct Associate Professor in the Institute of Education, Arts and Community at Federation University Australia. She has been a teacher educator and researcher for more than three decades, specialising in the fields of rural and regional education, teacher professional learning and gifted education. She has extensive research expertise in both qualitative and quantitative methodologies and across all educational sectors, particularly in relation to diverse student populations in rural and regional areas, with much of the work focusing on the intersection between aspirations, rurality and achievement. Margaret has conducted research with schools in the Gippsland region, focusing on how educational environments can help develop knowledge, skills and competencies that assist in building meaningful and sustainable relationships and emotional competence within communities. Margaret is Associate Editor of the Australasian Journal of Gifted Education, and a member of a range of national and international education associations.

Dr. Susan Emmett has been extensively involved in early childhood education and the translation of research into the practical environment for over thirty-five years. Her professional experience includes early childhood teaching in a range of settings, work as an early childhood educational consultant and teaching and researching within TAFE and Higher Education sectors. Susan is a Senior Lecturer in Education at Federation University Australia where she coordinates and teaches in Early Childhood and manages partnerships with external organisations both domestic and international. Prior to this, Susan worked as a Research Fellow within the School of Social and Policy Research at Charles Darwin University where early childhood literacy was central to her research, particularly in relation to rural and remote indigenous education. Her research interests also include the wellbeing and resilience of children and educators including trauma informed, inclusive pedagogy and relationship-focused practice in early childhood contexts. Susan's expertise is in the use of qualitative methodologies, including grounded theory. She has recently published journal articles, reports, and book chapters in these areas. She also applies and works with mixed methods research processes including designing and conducting randomised control trials. In 2016 Susan won the Federation University Vice-Chancellor's Award for Contributions to Student Learning and *Teaching Excellence, and in 2015 she was a recipient of The Deans Award for dedication to partnership work and consequent provision of enriched learning experiences for education students from a diverse range of backgrounds.*

Part I

Interrogating Perspectives of Diversity and Inclusion

Policy, Discourse and Epistemology in Inclusive Education

2

Jenene Burke, Anitra Goriss-Hunter, and Susan Emmett

Abstract

This chapter begins a conversation about the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the concepts of rights, diversity, equity and inclusion that underpin them, and the ways in which they are enacted in a variety of contexts. There is a specific focus on SDG4 "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all". Based on examinations of the SDGs, the conversations throughout the book give voice to those who work at times within and sometimes outside mainstream education discourse; people who use inclusive approaches to teach early childhood, primary and secondary school and higher education students, parent-educators, parents and carers, academics teaching and researching in the field of inclusion and teachers and academics who themselves have impairments and disabilities. In this chapter, we investigate the policies, discourses and epistemologies that are foundational for the concepts of rights, diversity, equity and inclusion. To examine issues of social justice, epistemic injustice, equity and equality, the authors describe a framework of discourse and intersectional analysis.

Keywords

Human rights · Diversity · Equity · Inclusion · Epistemic value · Inclusive education

Author Positioning Statements

Jenene: As a woman who grew up in rural Australia in the 1960s and 70s and the first in my family to complete a university degree, I appreciate that access to education is not merely about schooling being available. There are a variety of challenges faced by learners that stem from their identities and backgrounds. In recognising these challenges, as a teacher, I strive to be vigilant to the particular needs of my students.

Anitra: As a FiF working-class academic I have drawn on my experiences in educational institutions to connect with students from similar backgrounds and to open up learning opportunities for a diverse range of learners. This ongoing commitment to enabling all learners to access education continues to inform my teaching and research.

J. Burke (✉) · A. Goriss-Hunter
Institute of Education, Arts and Community, Federation University Australia, Ballarat, Australia
e-mail: js.burke@federation.edu.au

A. Goriss-Hunter
e-mail: a.goriss-hunter@federation.edu.au

S. Emmett
Institute of Education, Arts and Community, Federation University Australia, Berwick Campus, Australia
e-mail: s.emmett@federation.edu.au

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Sue: I chose to qualify as an early childhood teacher because I felt a great affiliation with the play-focused learning environment and the many educational benefits this offers children. This inspiring and flexible environment is conducive to teaching and learning about human diversity, fairness and justice, empowerment and advocacy for all living things. My knowledge and skills have been enriched over many years of work with young children, families and communities and this permeates my research, writing and teaching of pre-service teachers.

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will enter into dialogue that will continue throughout the book concerning the importance of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the ways in which they are being implemented in various contexts. The authors of this chapter will investigate the policies, discourses and epistemologies that underlie the concepts of rights, diversity, equity and inclusion. Inclusive education and equitable education, sit side-by-side in Sustainable Development Goal 4: "Ensure *inclusive* and *equitable* quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" [authors' emphasis] (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs n.d.). The chapter will consider the knowledge bases and values that inform these notions of diversity and inclusion, leaving Chapter 3 (Larsen and Emmett 2022) to examine equity in higher education and explore four related discourses. In this chapter, the UN Sustainable Goals will be elucidated, and the fundamental nature of human rights and ethical responsibility will be investigated as the basis for the development of the goals. Then, focusing more on the domain of educational systems, the concept of inclusive education will be examined. Within this complex area, the authors will unpack notions of diversity, discourse, and epistemic value. Further, to interrogate issues raised concerning epistemic injustice, inequality and inequity, a framework will be described combining intersectional and discourse analysis. These concepts are foundational to the explorations and discussions throughout the book. Finally, we will return to the UN SDGs to examine how they might offer some means of moving forward to resolve historical and current issues raised in this chapter.

The United Nations "Education for All" agenda is described in the Muscat Agreement (UNESCO 2014) as a global movement, initiated in 1990 under the auspices of the United Nations, that continues to underpin the current iteration of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Slee (2018) attributes this movement as progressively advancing inclusive education by chronicling "cohorts of excluded students and mobilised governments, education authorities, non-government organisations and civil society" (p. 2). In regard to SDG4 *Quality Education*, Slee identifies that "specific population cohorts are more likely to be excluded from, or within, school" (Slee 2018, p. 2).

Some of the challenges articulated in the Muscat Agreement (UNESCO 2014: 1&2) specified that:

- Across the globe, large numbers of children (over 57 million) and adolescents (around 69 million) did not have access to effective basic education
- In 2011, illiteracy was identified as affecting around 774 million adults, with women outnumbering men 2:1 and over 250 million children lacking basic skills in reading, writing or counting, even after at least four years of schooling
- Inequalities persisted, particularly for the most vulnerable groups, in regard to access, participation and learning outcomes
- By 2011, gender parity had been achieved at the primary level in 60% of countries and at the secondary level in 38% of countries
- Insufficient financial resources had hampered progress towards achieving quality education for all
- Violence in schools had increased

Education as a fundamental human right was considered to be central in the global

development agenda and necessary for "human fulfilment, peace, sustainable development, economic growth, decent work, gender equality and responsible global citizenship" (UNESCO 2014, item 6).

2.1.1 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

In 2015, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), as an element of its post-2015 development agenda, developed 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with 169 targets aimed at addressing the global challenges previously articulated in the Muscat Agreement, such as poverty, hunger, inequality, climate change and environmental degradation. The goals, as part of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,* provided a plan of action for "people, planet and prosperity" across the globe, replacing the unfinished work of the United Nations (UN) *Millennium Development Goals* (MDGs) (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs n.d.). The UN Sustainable Development Goals were adopted by all Member States of the United Nations General Assembly in a 15-year plan (United Nations General Assembly 2015). Consistent with the focus of this book, this chapter concentrates on inclusive education as featured in Sustainable Goal 4 (SDG4) *Quality education*, which aims to "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs n.d.) (Fig. 2.1).

Defining the term education can be difficult as it is often used interchangeably with words such as schooling, teaching and learning. A broad definition of education is "a social system organised to deliver teaching" (Kotzee 2017, p. 325) which fits with the SDG4 concept of "lifelong learning opportunities for all". Education encompasses diverse contexts, teaching approaches and processes. However, the end result of the education process is deep and enduring learning which produces change (Darling-Hammond and Oakes 2019; Wiggins and McTighe 2005). As these education processes can lead to developing student autonomy, empowerment and a respect for essential human freedoms, education is fundamentally important for the promotion, understanding and exercising of human rights.

2.2 Human Rights

While basic human rights are entrenched in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations 1948), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (Australian Government 2021), introduced in 1989 and also known as the *Children's Convention*, specifically emphasises and protects the right of access to and participation in quality and inclusive education for children. Human rights-based arguments in support of social justice, on their own, however, are not sufficient; rights express minimum standards that need to be enacted (Alderson 2000). Alderson (2000) outlines four aspects of the nature of human rights—claimed, aspirational, shared and limited—that indicate a range of access from denial of rights to the realisation of rights. The *claimed* nature of rights means that some people who are potentially vulnerable, for example, children or people with disabilities, may not be

United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4
Quality Education

Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

Fig. 2.1 United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4. Adapted from United Nations Department of Global Communications (2020)

able to automatically claim their rights if they lack the agency to do so. Where available resources are insufficient to provide access to human rights, rights are said to be *aspirational*. Rights are *shared* because the enactment of rights to ensure social justice and fairness favours collective social groups ahead of individuals. The *limited* nature of rights refers to legal constraints which impact or restrict stated rights (Burke 2009).

Reflecting on and commemorating 75 years of working towards transforming aspirational and limited rights to shared and universal ones, the United Nations' *Call to Action* (Guterres 2020) affirmed the global and interconnected nature of rights-based work. The UN explicitly states that this contemporary human rights agenda rests on understanding of a "shared human condition" as it lays the foundation to assist humanity in several ways:

> to meet the challenges, opportunities and needs of the 21st century; to reconstruct relations between people and leaders; and to achieve the global stability, solidarity, pluralism and inclusion on which all depend. It points to the ways in which we can transform hope into concrete action with real impact on people's lives. (Guterres 2020)

This conception of human rights perceives them to be universal as they apply globally to all people, but also individual when particular circumstances and contexts are taken into account. It also fits with the concept of education explored in an earlier section of this chapter that promotes deep and enduring learning as a way of empowering people to understand and exercise their rights while also enabling them to seek justice, equality and equity for others. From a human rights-oriented education, a sense of ethical responsibility can be nurtured in students and promoted in wider communities.

2.3 Ethical Responsibility

Ethical responsibility and social justice are interrelated and apply to all members of society. Reid and Valle emphasise that "social justice is an ethical responsibility for all citizens of a democracy" (2004, p. 469). This raises the important question of how ethical responsibility might be developed in citizens. Barton and Garvis argue that "compassion and empathy should be embedded within all educational practices and curriculum" (2019, p. 5). These authors, however, explain that extraordinarily little has been written regarding the ways in which these qualities can be taught and how teachers themselves can display these characteristics.

Compassion and empathy underpin the capacity to understand and enact the principles of social justice and these dispositions must be taught from the very early childhood years. Brain development research highlights the critical impact of early experiences on future educational outcomes and relationships including social, moral and emotional learning (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child 2012; Siegel 2012). The quality of the environment in which the young child is immersed has a direct impact upon the development of brain neuronal circuitry and lays the foundation for the creation of beliefs and attitudes about relationships with other human beings (Moore 2006, National Scientific Council on the Developing Child 2012). Curriculum frameworks in various international jurisdictions such as *Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* (EYLF) (Department of Education and Training [DET] 2019) in Australia, *Early Years Foundation Stage* in the United Kingdom (UK) (Gov.UK 2021) and *Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework* (Head Start Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Centre 2021) in the United States of America (USA) place prominence upon young children's social, ethical and emotional learning. The Australian framework and curriculum models, including the anti-bias curriculum which was developed in the USA (Derman-Sparks et al. 2020) and *Te Whariki* Early Childhood Curriculum (Ministry of Education 2017) for New Zealand integrate respectful relationships education within the learning and teaching environment and emphasise that educators, families and community are crucial proponents of the promotion of equality and ethical responsibility and

celebration of diversity. Global initiative, the *Think Equal* programme (Think Equal n.d.) is another example of a transformational approach that, through explicit teaching in early childhood settings, gives young children the skills and knowledge to challenge gender bias, as well as cultural and racial inequality with a focus on empathy, emotional literacy, psychosocial well-being and responsible global citizenship.

Expanding upon the work of Early Childhood educators in promoting social and emotional wellbeing, Australian programmes targeted at primary and secondary school students include *Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships* (DET 2021b) and *Building Respectful Relationships: Stepping out against gender-based violence* (DET 2021a). In the United States, the *Compassionate Schools Project* 2014–2021 (University of Virginia and Jefferson County Public Schools 2021) and *The Kindness Curriculum* as developed by the University of Wisconsin-Madison Centre for Healthy Minds (PBS Winconsin Education 2021) and, in the UK, *Relationships Education* and *Relationships and Sex Education* (Department for Education 2019, 2021) are examples of global programmes that promote social justice. However, the core elements that underpin current respectful relationships programmes are the use of age-appropriate learning opportunities embedded in curriculum frameworks that model and encourage the development of positive attitudes and behaviours and focus on the explicit interrogation of concepts of equity, social justice and respect.

Globally, curricula based in social justice and inclusion are fundamental to instilling in young citizens ethical responsibility, while also enabling their agency to challenge bias and injustice and to advocate for human rights. In response to criticisms of education systems that rely on notions of a universal and homogenised child without being cognizant of how identity factors—for example, race, gender, class, able-bodiedness—might impact on student learning experiences, analytical frameworks such as critical multiculturalism (May 1999) and culturally responsive pedagogy (Sleeter 2012) have been previously employed in a range of education contexts. Acar-Ciftci (2016) defines critical multiculturalism in education as "a transformative pedagogical framework that brings diverse experiences and voices to the centre of student discourse and empowers students to critique and challenge the social norms that continue to benefit some groups at the expense of others" (p. 265). Pedagogical responses to limiting the dominant discourse of the homogenised child form the foundation of inclusive frameworks such as culturally responsive pedagogy (Sleeter 2012) and culturally relevant education (Aronson and Laughter 2016) and provide strategies and approaches that aim to identify and employ students' own cultural backgrounds to empower them on intellectual, social, emotional and political levels. Weuffen and Willis (2022) underscore the importance of participating in critical and authentic discussions about Indigenous cultural inclusion. These conversations, Weuffen and Willis argue, will be more likely to transpire when non-Indigenous people deeply reflect upon and scrutinise their own positioning within dominant Anglocentric society. This point is relevant to Indigenous communities across the world. In this book, Elvey and Burke (2022) provide a series of vignettes as specific examples of how skilled teachers with an inclusive mindset can implement curriculum in their classrooms to ensure the particular learning needs of all students can be met. Elvey and Burke identify a series of eight strands that can be used to enact inclusive practice within an education setting.

A lesser recognised issue regarding inclusion in learning environments applies to teachers with a disability. As Browne (2022) points out, socially just environments must actively promote, include and sustain a diverse teaching workforce within an educational community that is open to difference, democracy and participation for all.

2.3.1 Inclusive Education

The concept of inclusive education began to gain traction in the late 1980s as an alternative to practices where students who were different from

the majority were excluded from mainstream classes. Initially, the term *inclusive education* alluded to children with a disability, but it has developed over time to encompass a focus that comprises identity factors including gender, race, class and ability/disability (Messiou 2017). This transition to a broader focus can be summed up in Opertti et al.'s (2014) typology that charts the history of educational approaches to student diversity and proposes four main perspectives in contemporary inclusive education: human rights (1948–), special needs (1990–), equity groups (2000–) and changing education systems (2005–). While the typology clearly shows that inclusion can be considered and investigated from a variety of different perspectives, the core proposition of inclusive education is as Falvey et al. (1995) state:

> Inclusive education is about embracing all, making a commitment to do whatever it takes to provide each student … and each citizen in a democracy – an inalienable right to belong, not to be excluded. Inclusion assumes that living and learning together is a better way that benefits everyone, not just children who are labelled as having a difference. (p. 8)

In the pursuit of the fulfilment of the UN commitment to enabling all people to access learning throughout their lives, educators have turned to inclusive education principles and frameworks. Inclusive education as both a political aspiration and an educational methodology (Slee 2018), was established on a rights-based approach of educational practice (Opertti et al. 2014) and stems from the principles and actions of fairness, justice and equity (Baglieri et al. 2011; Baglieri and Shapiro 2017; Shyman 2015; Slee 2018). Adopting a narrow definition, inclusive education is connected to disability and impairment (Tirri and Laine 2017) and has been closely associated with the inclusion of children with special needs in a classroom. Baglieri and Shapiro (2017) describe inclusive education as "a concept that contains, but also transcends the emphasis on special education placement and service provision in general education. Inclusive education … encompasses the experiences of students with disabilities, but is not exclusive to them" (p. 5).

The *UNESCO Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education* released in 1994 (UNESCO 1994), is rooted in the desire to provide an inclusive learning environment for children with special educational needs stemming from disability, but provides a broad definition of inclusive education that asserts the importance of providing all individuals with authentic opportunities to learn and thrive:

> The guiding principle that informs this framework is that schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, linguistic or other conditions. This should include disabled and gifted children, street and working children, children from remote or nomadic populations, children from linguistic, ethnic or cultural minorities and children from other disadvantaged or marginalised areas and groups. (UNESCO 1994)

This definition is consistent with the concept of inclusive education foregrounded in SDG4 and embodied in the SDG4 Targets (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs n.d.) (Refer to Table 2.1 for targets 4.1–4.7 and 4a–4c) which emphasise that the principle of inclusion is broad, far-reaching and applies to all people. Particular references can be interpreted in the SDG Targets in relation to early childhood education, primary and secondary education, technical, vocational and tertiary education, age, gender, disability, Indigeneity, educational vulnerability, culture and poverty. Table 2.1 illustrates the SDG4 Targets mapped against these identified categories to demonstrate the inclusion of specific traditionally marginalised groups against each target.

The *UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (CRPD) (Australian Government 2021) superseded the Salamanca Statement making inclusive education a legally binding obligation (de Bruin 2019). In 2016, the CRPD released a comprehensive definition of inclusion that is now well accepted:

> Inclusion involves 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

Table 2.1 SDG4 Targets (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs n.d.) mapped against particular social groups

	SDG4 Target, by 2030 …	early childhood	primary and secondary education	technical, vocational & tertiary education	gender	age	disability	Indigenous peoples	children in vulnerable situations	culture	poverty
4.1	… ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.		■		■	■	■	■	■	■	■
4.2	… ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education	■			■	■	■	■	■	■	■
4.3	… ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university.			■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
4.4	… substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.			■		■					
4.5	… eliminate gender disparities in education & ensure equal access to all levels of education & vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples & children in vulnerable situations.	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
4.6	… ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy.		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
4.7	… ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
4a	… build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all.	■	■		■	■	■	■	■	■	■
4b	… substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programmes, in developed countries and other developing countries.			■		■					■
4c	… substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing States.					■					■

> relevant age range with an equitable and participatory learning experience and environment that best corresponds to their requirements and preferences. (UN 2016)

Three important fundamentals of inclusive education have been identified by Baglieri et al. (2011). That is, inclusive education applies to all learners, not just identified minority groups such as children with impairments; that learning experiences in educational settings need to be participatory and inclusive and not just concerned with the learner's physical school location; and, that inclusive education is strongly underpinned by democratic and social justice principles which are firmly embedded in the cultural practices of education.

2.4 Diversity

Inclusion, by definition, applies to everyone, however, because learning environments sometimes exclude, many authors have found it necessary to describe diversity in terms of the characteristics that are catered for within an inclusive setting. Ballard (1999) extends inclusive education to all, including those who could be considered as belonging to traditionally marginalised groups based on "poverty, sexuality, minority ethnic status or other characteristics assigned significance by the dominant culture in their society" (p. 2). Diversity, however, is complicated and difficult to identify and describe in its complexity, meaning that single aspects of identified differences often become the focus of any programme or intervention. Bartolo (2010) uses the catchphrase "one size does not fit all" (p. 106), in an attempt to circumvent this difficulty by describing the diversity that one might expect to find in any education setting and how teachers need to respond to such diversity. As Bartolo (2010) explains, "perceptive teachers are aware that the children or young people in their class are very different individuals" (p. 106) and learners differ in a range of characteristics including physical, cognitive, emotional, social and cultural. Thomas and Loxley (2007) agree, stating:

> children's difficulties at school do not arise solely from putative "learning difficulties" but may arise from a range of factors related to disability, language, family income, cultural origin, gender or ethnic origin and it increasingly seems clear that it is inappropriate to differentiate among these as far as inclusivity is concerned. (p. 124)

To render a nuanced description of diversity among learners, it is useful to borrow a classification from the discipline of information technology (Morrison-Smith and Ruiz 2020). Morrison-Smith and Ruiz (2020) describe three levels of diversity: surface-level, deep-level and functional-level. Surface-level diversity encompasses *observable* differences such as race, age and sex, while deep-level diversity comprises attitudes, beliefs and values, which are often communicated through human interactions. Functional-level diversity refers to a person's knowledge, information, expertise and skills (Morrison-Smith and Ruiz 2020). This explanation highlights the multi-dimensional and layered characteristics of human diversity that make up unique individuals who inhabit social groups, rather than the more superficial categories that tend to be used to divide people into groups or frame a response according to one particular, identified difference.

The often value-laden fallacy of human typicality—the concept of the *normal* child—also raises questions (Baglieri et al. 2011). First, questions emerge about aspects of human difference that on one hand are considered normal and acceptable and on the other hand, abnormal and unacceptable. Second, concerns are provoked about whether this concept of *normal* might serve to marginalise those positioned within certain groups. Slee (2018) agrees, raising the possibility that policies and practices of inclusive education might serve to deepen learner exclusion and underachievement. This includes the processes by which particular children are identified as potential recipients of extra help that may contribute to excluding them from learning opportunities in the classroom. Third, implications surface for ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education. Following these arguments, inclusive education rejects the concept of normality and positions children through a strengths-based ideology, that identifies and builds on their unique combinations of learning abilities and needs within an equitable, shared environment. An example of this strengths-based practice in this edited collection is the *Bridges and Barriers Model of Support* described by Holcombe and Plunkett (2022).

2.4.1 Discourse and Epistemic Value

Discourse and epistemology both trace the contours of knowledge constitution. In Foucault's foundational definition, discourse refers to knowledge production in conjunction with the generation of social practices and subjectivities shaped by societal power relations. Discourse "is not a language plus a subject to speak it. It is a practice" (Foucault 1972, p. 169). Goodley (2017) defines discourses as "regulated systems of statements, ideas and practices representing particular forms of knowledge that we use to shape the subjective sense of who we and others are" (p. 126). Multiple and sometimes competing discourses constantly sit alongside each other. It is in these complex spaces of competing and complimentary discourses that spaces exist for resistance.

Larsen and Emmett (2022) make use of four distinguishable discourses—meritocratic, economist, social justice and human potential—for their examination of equity in the higher education sector. According to Slee (2018), particular discourses indicate where social relations might be disabling and enabling in learning contexts. While the term *special* has signified for some, a discourse of diversity or inclusive education, Slee (2018) argues that the term *special* is not a signifier of inclusion but instead has always been applied to children seen as defective or abnormal, consequently, the word "represents a descending hierarchy of human value" (p. 17). Discourses of inclusion and diversity have evolved not only from social, political and educational viewpoints but also from an epistemological standpoint. Epistemology is not only employed in a general sense to explore fundamental questions of knowledge production and development but is

also used to examine views about knowledge that occur and vary within particular social groups. The question of whether the views and concerns of marginalised groups (Robertson 2013) hold epistemic value is contested, with critics holding that forms of knowledge that "differ from the dominant rationality" (p. 299) are neither credible nor valid. This argument is based on assumptions that there are forms of knowledge, such as science, that are objective and universal (Widenhorn 2013). Widenhorn (2013) and Robertson (2013) are two authors who argue that human diversity has epistemic value and reject the previous criticisms on the basis that social location, experiences and perspectives of traditionally marginalised groups matter, in that they provide more rounded, accurate and broader accounts of social contexts. As Robertson (2013) explains, "marginalised groups have different experiences, perspectives and social locations that hold promise for generating a better understanding of social systems, especially systems of social oppression" (p. 299). Robertson (2013) also argues that the "voices, experiences, perspectives, questions, interests and social locations" (p. 300) of actors are of importance, particularly in the social sciences, which includes the discipline of education. It is a matter of social justice that these diverse and often disregarded perspectives are accessed, captured and used to illuminate examinations of social structures, particularly where social oppression is at play. These perspectives are captured in the emerging concept of knowledge democracy which, as Hall and Tandon (2017) argue:

> acknowledges the importance of multiple knowledge systems, such as organic, spiritual and land-based systems; frameworks arising from social movements; and the knowledge of the marginalised or excluded. It is about open access for the sharing of knowledge, making it a powerful tool for taking action in social movements to deepen democracy and to struggle for a fairer and healthier world. (p. 1)

While it is a matter of social justice that the experiences and perspectives of marginalised groups are included in knowledge production, it is a matter of epistemic justice that conceptual research frameworks provide sufficient scope for such investigations to take place and also recognise the credibility of members of marginalised groups to articulate their experiences (Fricker 2007; Robertson 2013). Epistemic justice, therefore, in "articulating the experience of belonging to one of these groups" (Frank 2013, p. 331) is the product of an inquiry that accommodates and acknowledges diversity.

2.5 Difference and Intersectionality

To examine social contexts, the authors turn to the notion of intersectionality (Crenshaw 1989) which offers two main ways of analysing and responding to injustice. One way is to offer critical tools to enable intersectional approaches for marginalised groups that expose and respond to injustices and the second is to address the epistemic injustice imposed through gatekeeping, directed at scholars who position themselves within an intersectional frame (Collins 2017). Having its roots in Critical Race Theory and Black Feminism (Crenshaw 1989), intersectionality can be both theory and method. It is animated by the spirit of social justice and, as such, is a useful tool that can be employed to investigate and move towards the dismantling of networks of inequality and inequity. The concept of intersectionality proposes that examining interconnections of identity factors or social categorisations such as race, gender, class and/or able-bodiedness, can reveal structures of discrimination and/or privilege which are unique to the individual. Increasingly popular in the social sciences, intersectionality offers a critical epistemology (Moradi and Grzanka 2017) that enables the nuanced analysis of how intersecting identity factors can evoke instances of privilege and injustice. As Crenshaw (2017) states:

> Intersectionality is a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects. It's not simply that there's a race problem here, a gender problem here and a class or LBGTQ problem there. Many times that framework erases what happens to people who are subject to all of these things.

Goriss-Hunter et al. (2022) employ an intersectional analysis to investigate the experiences of academics with non-typical identity factors in the predominantly middle-class domain of higher education. These authors examine the ways in which intersections of identity factors can impact on academics' interactions with colleagues and career progression. In addition, an intersectional approach is identified in the academics' pedagogies which the authors are calling an Intersectional Responsive Pedagogy. This approach is a blend of constructivist and inclusive teaching approaches and occurs when these academics draw on their own backgrounds which enables them to connect with university students who also possess non-typical identifications. Intersectionality, however, requires more than bringing markers of difference together and is also concerned with how "each [marker] supports the constitution of one another" (Goodley 2017, p. 44). Goodley (2017) highlights gender, sexuality, race/ethnicity and class in his discussion on the relationship of various markers of difference that intersect with disability.

While intersectionality provides one way to probe or respond to injustices for marginalised groups, Goodley (2017) sees the field of disability studies as an alternative "transdisciplinary space" (p. 44) that is capable of "subverting the normative tendencies of academic disciplines, testing respected research encounters and challenging theoretical formations" (p. 40). Disability studies, according to Baglieri and Shapiro (2017), is an "interdisciplinary field of scholarship that seeks to expand the ways that society defines, conceptualises and understands the meaning of disability" (p. 5). The field of disability studies emerged from the activism of disabled people who considered disability as a socially imposed phenomenon, rather than a personal attribute. The social oppression perspective of disability studies counters the more mainstream social deviance and deficit perspectives (Goodley 2017). Goodley (2017) pinpoints examples of the academic disciplines of medical sociology, philosophy and psychology that are challenged by the premises that underpin disability studies. When considering forms of oppression, disability is often ignored in favour of these other forms, particularly the holy trinity of gender, race and class (Kincheloe and McLaren 2005) in education and social science. Goodley (2017) proposes a perspective of "critical ableist studies" (p. 44) as an intersectional framework with a blend of disability studies and feminisms, post-colonial theory, *queer* and *crip* theory or theories of social class or poverty. He posits that critical ableist studies would provide a theoretical frame of reference through which to capture these diverse and overlapping perspectives and to challenge social oppression and uncover power structures. This perspective strongly resonates with the Sustainable Development Goals that are captured in this chapter and that underscore the nuanced nature of discrimination, oppression and privilege.

2.5.1 Sustainable Development Goals

Slee (2018) provides evidence that inclusive education is becoming well established in the spheres of teacher education, global research and policy and practice. Some of the indicators on which he bases this conclusion are the implementation of jurisdictional legislation and regulations, increasing availability of funds for inclusive education and associated research, growth in academic literature and publications in the field, incremental availability of professional learning opportunities and integration of non-government organisations in inclusive education. While inclusive education is recognised as a fundamental human right, challenges to its implementation remain. This is why the use of the Sustainable Development Goals as a framework for the mobilisation of just, equitable and accessible global education is vitally important.

The promotion of equity, fairness and justice for all, especially in the domain of education, has evolved pedagogically and epistemologically from a limited focus on individuals with a disability to either encompassing a variety of single social categorisations and contexts or aiming to accommodate multi-dimensional and layered characteristics of human diversity. Authentic

United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 3

Good health and wellbeing

Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 5

Gender Equality

Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 8

Decent work and economic growth

Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 10

Reduced Inequalities

Reduce inequality within and among countries

United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 16

Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

Fig. 2.2 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 3, 5, 8, 10 and 16. Adapted from United Nations Department of Global Communications (2020)

inclusive education provision, however, will not simply emerge from a process of offering access to schooling for all children, but concomitantly requires a robust critique of systemic injustices experienced by learners (Baglieri and Shapiro 2017) and a deep understanding of pedagogies and curricula that support learning for all. Undoubtedly, the issues raised in this domain are complex and sometimes contested, particularly due to the seismic global changes recently occurring as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. While UN SDG4 provides a blueprint for addressing such issues, it should not be considered in isolation from the other 16 goals. Indeed, in this volume, several of the chapters connect SDG4 with other SDGs. Figure 2.2 lists the five goals (SDG 3, 5, 8, 10 and 16) that, linked to SDG4 *Quality Education,* are most implicated in the chapters of this book.

Rana and Daniel (2022) examine the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the lives of children in India, in particular, children's access to quality education (SDG4) but also focusing on SDG3 *Good health and wellbeing*, SDG5 *Gender equality* and SDG16 *Peace, justice and strong institutions*. Concerns for children are around cyber safety and the potential for them to be exploited in circumstances where access to education is diminished.

Three other chapters draw on SDG5 *Gender equality*. Oxworth (2022) examines girls' experiences of negotiating gender in two school communities located in Kenya and Zambia. Data from researcher observations, reflections and conversations with teachers, parents, children and community members, are discussed as gendered encounters. Najibi and McLachlan (2022), seek "to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls", by examining the issue of access by women to tertiary education in Afghanistan. These authors highlight discrimination against the estimated two-thirds of the eligible female population who do not currently attend school and present a case in favour of the participation of Afghan women in tertiary education. Goriss-Hunter et al. (2022), offer an intersectional analysis of the experiences of academics with non-typical identity factors. As well as promoting equitable and quality education (SDG4) within and beyond university, *Gender equality* (SDG5) and an emphasis on *Reduced inequalities* (SDG10) in higher education at domestic and international levels, were evident in each of the emergent themes—career trajectory, interactions with colleagues and teaching approaches.

Glowrey et al. (2022) link their examination of discourses that address the obstacles confronting regional youth transitioning to the future world of work (WoW) to SDG8 *Decent work and economic growth*. And finally, Marsh et al. (2022) draw on SDG10 *Reduced inequalities* in their exploration of the contradictory nature of the academic duality that is often associated with Indigenous Knowledges. These authors argue that the centring of Indigenous knowledges and standpoints within the academy will assist in working towards the achievement of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

These SDGs generate a framework that can be used to assist educators, students and families to imagine and work towards learning environments that ensure access for all learners. In this volume, the authors investigate the ways in which the SDGs underpin their research and practice as they embrace the theoretical challenges to work towards more equitable and equal education systems across the globe.

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Professor Jenene Burke is the Director Academic Operations in the Institute of Education, Arts and Community at Federation University Australia. Jenene convenes the Social Justice, Inclusion and Diversity in Education (SJIDE) research focus area in the Institute. She is the President of the World Federation of Associations for Teacher Education (WFATE) and leads the WFATE Inclusion and Social Justice in Teacher Education in Global Contexts research development group. As a researcher, Jenene is best known for her world-class research into play spaces as inclusive environments for children and their families. She is particularly interested in research that privileges the voices of participants, especially children and young people. Jenene has a secondary teaching background and 20 years of experience in Higher Education as a teacher educator. Her learning and teaching interests centre on educational responses to student diversity, with respect to inclusive education and disability studies in education.

Dr. Anitra Goriss-Hunter is the Director, Learning and Teaching and a Senior Lecturer at Federation University Australia. Her research and teaching focuses on gender and education, inclusion, and pre-service teacher (PST) education. Anitra was awarded the prestigious Australian Women's and Gender Studies Association award for most outstanding Ph.D. thesis. Anitra's research investigates women's careers in Higher Education; ways to improve female participation in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education; and, the development of inclusive teaching approaches that offer authentic learning experiences for PSTs. Anitra's contribution in the last field was recognized when she was awarded the Federation University Vice-Chancellor's Award—Citation for Outstanding Contribution to Student Learning 2020.

Dr. Sue Emmett has been extensively involved in early childhood education and the translation of research into the practical environment for over thirty-five years. Her professional experience includes early childhood teaching in a range of settings, work as an early childhood educational consultant and teaching and researching within TAFE and Higher Education sectors. Sue is a Senior Lecturer in Education at Federation University Australia where she coordinates and teaches in Early Childhood and manages partnerships with external organisations both domestic and international. Prior to this, Sue worked as a Research Fellow within the School of Social and Policy Research at Charles Darwin University where early childhood literacy was central to her research, particularly in relation to rural and remote Indigenous education. Her research interests also include the wellbeing and resilience of children and educators including trauma informed, inclusive pedagogy and relationship-focused practice in early childhood contexts. Sue's expertise is in the use of qualitative methodologies, including grounded theory. She has recently published journal articles, reports, and book chapters in these areas. She also applies and works with mixed methods research processes including designing and conducting randomised control trials. In 2016 Susan won the Federation University Vice-Chancellor's Award for Contributions to Student Learning and Teaching Excellence, and in 2015 she was a recipient of The Deans Award for dedication to partnership work and consequent provision of enriched learning experiences for education students from a diverse range of backgrounds.

The Wicked Problem of Social Equity in Higher Education: The Conflicting Discourses and the Impact of COVID-19

3

Ana Larsen and Susan Emmett

Abstract

Despite Australian universities prioritising social equity in higher education, limited improvement is seen among students in under-represented groups. This has prompted the United Nations (UN) to set Sustainable Development Goal Four (SDG4) prioritising access to education for all. We argue that one of the challenges in achieving goal four is the discourses that relate to the rationale for seeking social equity in higher education. This chapter explores four discourses that can be identified as meritocratic, economist, social justice and human potential. This chapter contends that three factors have or will, significantly impact these discourses. First, the steady massification of higher education where elitist discourses were largely abandoned. Second, key political documents wielded great influence on discourse. Chronologically, this chapter begins with the 1957 Murray Report and ends with discussion of the impending Performance-Based Funding (PBF). The final factor significantly impacting social equity discourse is the COVID-19 pandemic. The purpose of this chapter is to alert stakeholders to the role they play in reinforcing, as well as shaping, social equity discourses and how this, in turn, may affect the achievability of the UN fourth goal. It is also important to counsel stakeholders to discontinue engaging in the debates surrounding discourse and begin collaborating to solve this wicked problem.

Keywords

Social equity discourses · COVID-19 pandemic · Higher education

Author Positioning Statements

Ana: I am a student and a scholar. I am a part-time, mature-aged doctoral student from a low socio-economic, regional background who battles with a chronic health condition because of my circumstances I am passionate about equity in higher education, but it took me a long time to identify precisely where that passion came from. University changed my life, and now I am privileged to see others begin this life-changing journey as they enter higher education through the enabling programme I teach. This chapter was born from my reflections and observations.

Susan: My experience as an educator and researcher over more than 40 years in urban, rural and remote communities throughout

A. Larsen (✉)
School of Access Education, Central Queensland University Australia, Mackay, Australia
e-mail: a.larsen@cqu.edu.au

S. Emmett
Institute of Education, Arts and Community, Federation University Australia, Berwick, Australia
e-mail: s.emmett@federation.edu.au

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Australia has taught me that the development of a person's healthy sense of identity supports their ability to celebrate the diversity of others and to advocate for justice. I believe education is about strengthening the identity of a person whether child or adult and this deeply permeates all the interactions teachers have with learners. I am fervent about education because it can change the lives of people and communities as teachers shape the discourses to champion equitable and compassionate ways of behaving.

3.1 Introduction

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal Four (UN SDG4) echoes how social equity in higher education has been a priority for universities and policymakers throughout Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) nations for more than a decade. With limited improvement to be seen, social equity has remained a concern in higher education. Educational attainment, social equity and retention are complex issues that multiple authors have referred to as wicked problems (see Beer and Lawson 2018; Larsen and Emmett 2021; Sutton et al. 2017). The term wicked problem was coined in social planning, where wicked problems are "generally seen as complex, open-ended and intractable" with high levels of "complexity, uncertainty and divergence" (Head 2008, pp. 101, 103). Often the problem itself cannot be easily defined or there is ongoing debate about the nature of the issue, including the definition of key terminology. Gidley et al. (2010) explain "interpretations of the terms equitable access success and quality and the relationships among them are complex" and then continue stating that each of these terms "can be framed differently in various contexts depending on the underlying ideology of the discourse" (p. 2). Hence, this chapter argues that achieving social equity in higher education and meeting the UN sustainable goal 4.3 may be considered a wicked problem. This may well feature inclusive, empowering and compassionate environments for diverse learners and align with the UN SDG4—Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (DESA 2021). Specifically, this chapter will relate to the UN sub-goal 4.3 which states that by 2030 the UN aims to ensure "equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university" (DESA 2021).

Discourse can be defined as "a socio-culturally distinctive and integrated way of thinking, acting, interacting, talking and valuing connected with a particular social identity or role, with its own unique history …" (Gee 1991, p. 33). Using this definition, the four discourses currently distinguishable in higher education will be considered by drawing on Australian and international literature (see: Gidley et al. 2010; Rizvi and Lingard 2011; Sheeran et al. 2007). These discourses can be labelled as meritocratic, economist, social justice and human potential. This interrogation will reveal the complexity and divergence within the discourses that contribute to social inequity in higher education.

While using the social equity discourses as a lens we argue that in Australia three antecedents have or will, significantly impact these discourses. First, there was the steady massification of higher education where arguably elite discourses were largely abandoned. Second, key documents such as The Bradley Report (2008) wielded great influence. Chronologically this chapter will begin with discussion of the Murray Report (Murray 1957) of the committee on Australian universities and end with a discussion of the impending introduction of Performance-Based Funding (PBF). Massification and the key political documents will be examined to determine the political context that has influenced the discourses to date. The third factor that we argue will have an indubitable impact on social equity discourses is the COVID-19 pandemic. The possible impacts of the pandemic and future implications for higher education will be deliberated.

The chapter is designed to illuminate the existence of multiple, conflicting discourses and prompt consideration of how discourse contributes to the

wicked nature of social equity in higher education. An understanding of discourse will further enable researchers and policymakers to collaborate, solve this wicked problem towards achieving the UN SDG4. First, we will provide an overview of the four aforementioned social equity discourses.

3.2 Social Equity Discourses

Discourses surrounding social equity in higher education are discussed, sometimes as ideologies or philosophies, using a wide range of different terminology (Gidley et al. 2010). Often the authors neither acknowledge nor define the discourse they align with. This chapter defines and analyses the meritocratic, economist, social justice and human potential discourses that can be found in the academic literature.

3.2.1 The Meritocratic Discourse

Most often seen in elite universities, the meritocratic view is concerned with fair access based upon a demonstration of the skills required for success in higher education (Pitman 2015; Sheeran et al. 2007; Smyth and Harrison 2015). Meritocrats support widening participation in the belief that individuals demonstrating a perceived ability should have access to higher education, regardless of their social or economic background (Haveman and Smeeding 2006; Sheeran et al. 2007). The meritocratic discourse reveals social equity as a matter of inducting under-represented groups into the existing habitus of universities and it is the responsibility of the student to fit in Sheeran et al. (2007, p. 257). Massification in higher education is supported by this discourse provided high standards for students and universities, including high entry requirements, are maintained. According to the meritocratic discourse, the role of the universities is to "make it possible for anyone with ability and motivation to succeed" and to "seek out ability, motivation and preparedness wherever it lies and then provide high-quality educational services to … students" (Haveman and Smeeding 2006, p. 129).

3.2.2 The Economist Discourse

The economist discourse, sometimes called neo-liberal or economic rationalism, views higher education as primarily providing economic benefit, increasing the skilled workforce, reducing welfare dependency, reducing crime rates, providing better health outcomes and lower healthcare costs (Goedegebuure 2015; Sheeran et al. 2007). There is an underlying assumption that under-represented groups have, to date, failed to be competitive in the labour market and "students from disadvantaged backgrounds are being enlisted into university in order to achieve the nation's economic aspirations" (Gale and Tranter 2011, p. 42). Multiple authors present this discourse as dominant in Australian key policy documents since the Second World War (Gale and Tranter 2011; Manathunga 2017). This discourse suggests widening participation should be focused on massification and increasing access. According to Gidley et al. (2010) "access is about numbers and percentages" but may not reflect participation and success (p. 9). The economist discourse embraces neo-liberalism in higher education although it is often criticised for doing so. According to economist discourse, the role of the university is to train skilled members of the workforce to build the nation's economy and better perform in a competitive global market (Barkas 2011; Gidley et al. 2010). A privileging of science and technology over the humanities can be viewed within this discourse (Manathunga 2017).

3.2.3 The Social Justice Discourse

The social justice discourse found in widening participation literature has a focus on "human rights, egalitarianism of opportunity, human dignity and fairness for all" (Gidley et al. 2010, p. 10). Massification of higher education is of secondary importance to equity. The primary role of the university is to equip citizens to participate fully in society with respect for their human dignity and thus contribute to equality in a just society (Gidley et al. 2010).

3.2.4 The Human Potential Discourse

The human potential discourse is often referred to as transformational and linked to critical educators whose position relates back to the transformative theory of Mezirow (Sheeran et al. 2007). The human potential discourse is committed to equality and a "belief that the education system can be used to engineer a better world" as individuals experience transformative learning (Sheeran et al. 2007, p. 255). There is a focus on the benefits of higher education to not only the individual or the economy but to wider society (Murray 2009; Sheeran et al. 2007). This discourse places less importance on massification and access to higher education as Gidley et al. (2010) explain "quality in higher education would mean more than global competitiveness or higher levels of access but would be related to human potential and transformation" (pp. 5–6). The human potential discourse opposes the neo-liberal influence in higher education as systematically oppressive (Sheeran et al. 2007). According to the human potential discourse, the role of the university is to educate and transform individuals (Sheeran et al. 2007, p. 255).

3.2.4.1 Summation and Implications of These Discourses

There are some obvious similarities and differences between these discourses yet they exist simultaneously with tensions and conflicts. For example, debates surrounding entry requirements are apparent; difference is clear over the preferred level of massification and views on the neo-liberal nature of higher education differ greatly.

Arguments for and against each discourse can be found within the literature. For example, Gidley et al., state the argument against social justice discourse is that "it spreads the resource efforts too thin leaving a parochial and *dumbed down* system which is not globally competitive" (Gidley et al. 2010, p. 11, italics in original). While the economist discourse may appear prevalent there are many criticisms against it. According to Robinson (2012) the economist view "offers the narrowest interpretation of social inclusion, reliant upon a *trickle down* effect to deliver widening social inclusion" (p. 86. See also Gidley et al. 2010; Sheeran et al. 2007). The alternate view is that the economist view and associated neo-liberalism, encourage diversity and competition between institutions in higher education. For example, Kemp and Norton (2014) argue that competition between universities is "an important driver of efficiency" in the use of resources and "has a valuable role to play in minimising waste and reducing costs" (pp. 8–9). The meritocratic discourse conflicts with all other discourses that suggest the responsibility to provide support services ought to be shared and not solely the responsibility of the student to seek out support (Allen and Nichols 2017).

There are many significant things that are impacted by these discourses. By definition, discourse influences what knowledge is privileged, how problems are approached and solved, how people think and the ways that they communicate (Gee 1989, 1991). Perhaps the most significant thing relating to these discourses is that each one has a different focus in addressing social equity, different solutions are proposed, different support initiatives are favoured and therefore the preferred distribution of resources is altered by the discourse that is adopted. Perhaps, that these discourses have an impact on financial decision-making is the heart of the matter. When, where and how funding is spent is going to be determined, at least in part, by the discourse adopted by the decision makers. Discussion around the differences and conflicts between social equity discourses could continue indefinitely. Likewise, debate on how limited resources in higher education should best be spent may never end. Some may argue that these varying ideas and viewpoints enhance the growth of knowledge. We argue that this debate is not productive. It is in fact more than that; it is wasted time and effort which contributes to the wicked nature of achieving social equity in higher education. We turn now to examine the political context within Australia and how these discourses have emerged over time.

3.3 The Australian Political Context: 1957–2008

The massification of higher education in OECD countries is not contested and participation figures are irrefutable, with 1,562,520 Australian students in 2018 which is almost four times the 420,850 students in 1988 (DESE 2019). However various authors report the beginning of this massification at various points throughout history (see: Bradley et al. 2008; Dobson 2001; Gale and Tranter 2011). We have chosen to begin our discussion with the Murray Report (Murray 1957) which was the first significant federal government report into higher education in Australia (Manathunga 2014). While some argue that an elite discourse remains today, a transition is evident from elite institutions with an elitist discourse to mass education (Kemp and Norton 2014) which encompasses multiple discourses. The social equity agenda and associated discourses developed alongside the massification of higher education.

A concern for student retention can be seen in the Murray Report (Murray 1957) which states that student attrition is "one of the most disturbing aspects of university education in Australia" (p. 35). The Murray Report (Murray 1957) places a high value on intellectual ability, reporting it to be in short supply and championing for the country not to waste it. Increasing participation in higher education is clearly a national priority as Murray (1957) states "every boy or girl with the necessary brain power must, in the national interest, be encouraged to come forward for a university education and there must be a suitable place in a good university for everyone who does come forward" (p. 8). The meritocratic discourse is present here when Murray (1957) refers to the necessary brain power. In addition, the economist discourse can be observed as Murray (1957) talks about intellectual ability as a resource not to be wasted.

The recommendations in the Murray Report (1957) "sparked a decade of research into student selection, motivation and study methods" (Manathunga 2014, p. 84) which in turn had a significant impact on the discourse around quality teaching, retention and of course social equity in higher education.

The next significant transitional period for higher education in Australia began in the 1970s when the Whitlam government abolished university fees (Habel and Whitman 2016; Martin 2016; Stellar and Gale 2016). It was believed that by removing the financial burden of higher education, lower socio-economic students would participate in greater numbers (Martin 2016). While significant increases in enrolments were seen during the 1970s the student cohorts remained "skewed towards more elite students" although at the time the definition and measurement of under-represented groups was inconsistent (Stellar and Gale 2016, p. 41). Multiple discourses can be observed within this period, but it is unique in that equity appears to be a higher priority than university income. Therefore, one could argue that the social justice and human potential discourses were favoured by the Whitlam government.

The free tuition introduced by the Whitlam government ended in 1989 when the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) was introduced by the Hawke-Keating government (Stellar and Gale 2016). These changes were greatly influenced by the Dawkins White Paper (1988).

Calling for equity in higher education the Dawkins White Paper (Dawkins 1988) states "direct and specific strategies are needed at the institutional, state and national levels" (Dawkins 1988, p. 21). This statement clearly suggests that massification alone will not improve equity in higher education. The main objective of the Dawkins White Paper appears to be the allocation of resources within the national higher education system, however increasing participation and social equity proved to be noteworthy despite an absence of specific strategies for addressing under-representation (Dawkins 1988). As such, the economist discourse was present alongside a focus on equity. Six equity groups were acknowledged as under-represented in Australian higher education: low Socio-Economic Status

(SES) students, Indigenous students, regional and remote students, students with a disability, non-English speaking background students and females in certain disciplines. Similar groups are targeted in many OECD nations, for example, the International Association of Universities (2008) identifies "socio-economic status, race, ethnicity, religion, age, [dis]ability or location" (p. 1) as equity groups.

A Fair Chance for All (DEET and NBEET 1990) took the discussion of the equity groups identified by Dawkins (1988) one step further and outlined possible strategies to improve equity (DEET and NBEET 1990). It contained targets and strategies for the equity groups previously identified and for the first time inclusive and equitable education became part of the universities' responsibility (DEET and NBEET 1990; Gale and Tranter 2011). *A Fair Chance for All* (DEET and NBEET 1990) is a very influential policy document and even more than 25 years later it is still considered a foundation to equity in Australian higher education (Stellar and Gale 2016). Despite the recommendations from *A Fair Chance for All* social equity in higher education was far from achieved in the 1990s. One challenge was the consistent and achievable measurement of the equity groups with limited resources.

Martin (1994) highlighted the importance of consistent performance indicators relating to equity to allow for comparisons and attempted to create definitions of inclusion in each equity group. These performance indicators have been reviewed and debate around the definition and measurement of equity groups remains in the literature, adding another layer of complexity to this wicked problem (see Burnheim and Harvey 2016; Harvey et al. 2016).

3.4 The Australian Political Context: 2008 to Present

In more recent history the Bradley Report (Bradley et al. 2008), has arguably been the most influential government report in Australia regarding equity in higher education. The Bradley Report has been noted in overseas literature as an exemplary report (Holland et al. 2017; Singh and Mountford-Zimdars 2016). In line with previous policy, Bradley et al. (2008) placed importance on the attainment of qualifications so that students could receive the full benefit of higher education. Recommendation 2 set a target of 40% of Australians aged 25–34 years of age to have completed a bachelor's degree by 2020 (Bradley et al. 2008). Additionally, Recommendation 4 set a target of 20% low SES participation by 2020 (Bradley et al. 2008, p. xviii).

The Bradley Report (Bradley et al. 2008) recommended an increase in targeted funding leading to the introduction of Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Programme (HEPPP) in 2010. Between 2010 and 2015 there were 2679 projects implemented by 37 universities making HEPPP funding significant within the widening participation agenda in Australian policy (DET 2017). This significance has not waivered as HEPPP funding counted for 112.7 million dollars in the 2019–2020 higher education budget (DESE 2020a). The Bradley Report (Bradley et al. 2008) explicitly supported further massification of the Australian higher education system and acknowledged that "actively encouraging and facilitating entry into higher education for people from groups who are currently under-represented is vital" (p. 10). The authors suggest that the Bradley Report encompasses all four discourses at various points. For further discussion on the discourse present in the Bradley Report, see Rizvi and Lingard (2011).

Additionally, the Bradley Report (Bradley et al. 2008) recommended the introduction of the Demand Driven System (DDS) where universities received funding for as many students as they chose (Kemp and Norton 2014; Universities Australia 2020a). Therefore, available places at university were greatly influenced by the demands of the economy. A review of the DDS was conducted by Kemp and Norton (2014) to assess multiple aspects including equity and cost. Kemp and Norton (2014) found that higher education providers were actively working to identify and better support underprepared students. Enabling and preparatory programmes

were effective in preparing low Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank (ATAR) students for higher education, however, low ATAR students were less likely to complete their degrees (Kemp and Norton 2014). ATAR is the primary method of university admission in Australia (Palmer et al. 2011). In terms of achieving the government goals of massification and improving social equity, the DDS was considered a success by Kemp and Norton (2014). More recently the DDS received a "mixed report card" with gains in equity groups accessing higher education but losses in retention, especially among students with lower ATAR scores (Productivity Commission 2019; Universities Australia 2020a). The DDS ended in 2017 and funding levels remain static until a new Performance-based Funding (PBF) model was introduced (Universities Australia 2020a; Wellings et al. 2019, p. 3).

According to the report released by Wellings et al. (2019) PBF includes four measures—student experience, graduate outcomes, student success and equity group participation. One could suggest that graduate outcomes areas focused on meeting the demands of the economy (and the economist discourse) while the PBF also supports equity group participation (social justice discourse) and student experience (or satisfaction) which aligns best with the human potential discourse. At the time of writing, the PBF has not yet been implemented and the authors can only speculate that the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a delay.

Interestingly the introduction of the Job-Ready Graduates package did not seem to be hindered by the pandemic. The Job-Ready Graduates package was proposed in June 2020 and passed as legislation in October 2020 (DESE 2020b). "Under the Job-ready Graduates Package … Government university funding of $18 billion in 2020 will grow to $20 billion by 2024. The package will create up to 30, 000 new university places and 50,000 new short course places by 2021 and provide additional support for students in regional and remote Australia." (DESE 2020b, para. 1). The package was promoted as part of the solution to "help drive the nation's economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic" (DESE 2020b, para. 3) however, students be warned, there is one small change that could significantly impact them; changes to eligibility for Commonwealth Supported Places and Higher Education Loan Programme (HELP) loans which includes maintaining a "reasonable completion rate" (DESE 2021). This reform demonstrates the meritocratic discourse, supporting only students who are successful in their studies with no suggestion that the responsibility lies anywhere other than with the student. In addition, an economist's discourse is clear as these statements are focused on funding and economic benefit. It is in this political context that the COVID-19 pandemic swept across the world in 2020, impacting the lives of people everywhere in ways that we are still learning about.

3.5 The COVID-19 Pandemic

The enduring COVID-19 pandemic has bestowed a relentless force on the higher education sector and has assaulted universities on multiple fronts. The COVID-19 global pandemic has and will continue to transform the Australian higher education landscape. Discussions continue about returning to normal, but it is most probable that COVID-19 will be assiduous and will impact us in ways over the longer term we have not yet envisioned (Aristovnik et al. 2020; Peters et al. 2020, p. 29). We cannot be sure what COVID normal will mean and not knowing can lead to additional fear and compound anxieties. Economic considerations have become paramount for universities and securing funding to ensure financial viability is an imperative. Within this climate all stakeholders are vulnerable, but social equity considerations may be less likely to be placed in positions of prominence. Two potentially long-term consequences of COVID-19 will be discussed in relation to the Australian higher education sector: the fiscal impact due to the loss of international students and the abrupt transition to online delivery. Discourses surrounding social equity will be shifted and opportunities will also become available. The transformation of higher education could well be afoot!

3.5.1 COVID-19 and the Economic Loss from Declines in International Students

The economic loss from international students has brought universities in Australia and in most OECD nations to their knees. About 400,000 international students were enrolled in Australian higher education institutions in 2018 and the largest group, 38% (152,591), were from China (Department of Education and Training 2018a, as cited in Wellings et al. 2019, p. 2; Ferguson and Sherrell 2019). International students contributed $32.4 billion to Australia's economy in 2017–18 (Ferguson and Sherrell 2019, p. 1). An estimate of the financial losses to Australian universities from the pandemic attributed to the decreased enrolments is between $3 billion and $4.6 billion. (Universities Australia 2020). Australian universities will not each be impacted in the same way depending upon their reliance on international student enrolments. It is of interest that Australia's smaller, regional universities may well experience less impact because they engage fewer international students. How then, may this affect the discourses and social equity?

Universities will need to implement measures to recompense for the large economic loss; they will need to either increase income or cut costs. Hence, the economic discourse in some form will reign supreme. Apple argues that the pandemic "has created an immense fiscal crisis for universities" that will compel universities "to place economic rationality and economic goals first" (Peters et al. 2020, pp. 36–37).

The new Job-Ready Graduates legislation that was introduced as part of the COVID-19 response has undoubtedly affected universities' funding (DESE 2020b). The legislation includes changes to the student contribution, affecting both students and universities. These changes are plainly designed to attract potential students to study areas of expected employment growth, aligning with the economist discourse (Tehan 2020).

There are claims that students will not be disadvantaged by the increased student contribution and on the surface, it appears the reforms do not increase universities' income, via student contribution (Tehan 2020). Some may view the reforms as being about workplace demands for trained professionals and employment opportunities and nothing more. It is noteworthy how closely those objectives align with the economist discourse. But a deeper investigation is required. The Australian government is executing this power in an attempt to entice students to study in the areas of the government's choice. Previously the student contribution was calculated by examining potential future earnings. Now it is largely influenced by government policy. In a world where the government attempts to sway the future career choices of its youth, there may be very little space for human potential or social justice discourses.

Furthermore, if universities consider the situation through the economist discourse lens, they are likely to reach a conclusion that opposes the aims of the Job-Ready Graduates package. Universities may decide that to increase their revenue overall they should offer fewer student places for lower fee courses and more places in higher paying courses. This is indeed the antithesis of the government legislation priorities, as university places in the courses with the best employment prospects (according to the government) would be decreased (Norton 2020).

Universities must continue to explore ways to cut costs. Staffing costs amount to 57% of spending within Australian universities (Thatcher et al. 2020). In 2020 Thatcher, et al. estimated that because of the dramatic decrease of international students, 36 000 university staff positions may be lost. This does not include the large numbers of casual staff who do not have contracts reinstated. It is important to acknowledge that according to Norton et al. (2018) 23% of academic staff are casual when calculated on an equivalent full-time basis. These staffing cuts will have an enormous influence on students who

have a strong need to feel a social and emotional connection to staff and this is particularly the case for students in identified equity groups and, indeed, for student retention and success (Devlin and McKay 2017; Richardson and Radloff 2014). Further, with the loss of experienced staff, the quality of teaching and research will likely be affected (Thatcher et al. 2020).

The vital nature of mental well-being within the workplace is underscored by the recent Productivity Commission Inquiry into mental health (Productivity Commission 2020). The report highlights the responsibilities of employers for providing an environment conducive to psychological health and affirms "the costs of mental ill-health can go beyond just the immediate loss in activity of the person concerned, but also extend to impacts on the productivity of their work colleagues" (2020, p. 49). Staff redundancies may initially be seen as a cost-saving but this can be considered a false economy, as an increase in illness and Workcover claims by remaining overworked staff can compound the issue.

From this, we can conclude that it is likely COVID-19 will empower the economist discourse or force it to evolve into a new but similar discourse. This would potentially be to the detriment of the other discourses. Arguably, the economist discourse has already been dominant within Australian universities, but COVID-19 is cementing its prominence and positioning the financial as imperative. As discussed, when universities act to either increase their income or cut costs there is going to be a negative impact on the student experience which impacts students from equity groups more so than other students. Similarly, the supremacy of the economist discourse will impact all students and most definitely affect those from equity groups more severely. There are three main points to consider.

First, support initiatives such as income support, scholarships, improved infrastructure, enabling programmes and pathways are supported by the economist discourse (Gidley et al. 2010). If university resources are primarily directed to these areas, other support services may be negatively impacted which in turn is likely to have an uneven impact among students.

Second, the economist discourse relies on a *trickle down* effect whereby the benefit felt by middle and higher socio-economic groups supposedly trickles down to benefit lower socio-economic groups (Gidley et al. 2010; Robinson 2012; Sheeran et al. 2007). Many argue that the *trickle down* effect does not work and neo-liberalism, strongly associated with the economist discourse (Larsen and Emmett 2021), in fact, causes the rich to get richer and the poor to get poorer. In economics, this stratification is discussed globally and at a national level. Stratification can also be seen between universities.

If the economic discourse becomes dominant post-COVID-19, potential students, both domestic and international, are likely to perceive this treatment as heartless. Mewett (2020) comments in The Age that the reputation of the university will influence where students wish to study. However, regional and remote students may have less of a choice and be forced to attend a local campus because of inability to re-locate (Devlin and McKay 2017). Ziguras and Tran (2020) caution "we need to ensure we remain focused on the human consequences of this tragedy first. Headlines focusing on lost revenues at a time like this are offensive to international students and everyone involved in international education" (para. 29). The way universities behave during the COVID-19 pandemic will be observed and judged by the global community and this is very likely to impact future international enrolments (Peters et al. 2020).

3.5.2 The Pandemic and the Emergency Move to Remote Teaching

As a result of the pandemic and the massive worldwide closures of schools and universities (Viner et al. 2020), there has been a shift in thinking regarding online delivery. Suddenly online teaching has become an imperative

whereas prior to the pandemic it was more likely viewed as a cost-saving method to grow student numbers at university and to reduce "classrooms or other facilities, meaning staff and infrastructure costs will be reduced" (Lodge 2014, para. 6. See also Coker and Mercieca, Chap. 16; Cowen and Tabarrok 2014; Lambrinidis 2014). However, the complexities associated with online learning in terms of design and development issues tend to be less well considered (Lodge 2014, para. 11). Ensuring that staff are adequately skilled in online teaching and that students are engaged may be more costly than previously considered (Peters et al. 2020).

This transition to remote learning is likely to negatively impact some students more than others. Students from regional and remote areas, those with a disability and low Socio-Economic Status (SES) students may be disproportionally disadvantaged (Drane et al. 2020; International Labour Organisation 2020; Peters et al. 2020). Jackson clearly expresses this idea: "as the world goes online, many get left behind" (Peters et al. 2020, p. 23). Those left behind may not have access to reliable internet access or to a computer or device in their homes (Devlin and McKay 2017; Drane et al. 2020; Vichie 2017). The gender divide must also be considered as women are often more likely to be responsible for homeschooling and caring for children and these duties distract from more sustained online study opportunities (International Labour Organisation 2020). It is noteworthy that learning is "also about behavioural and emotional engagement as well as connectedness" (Drane et al. 2020, p. 6). Research undertaken prior to the pandemic reveals students in learning online are more likely to disengage and to leave study (Deschaine and Whale 2017; Lambrinidis 2014). This attrition can be due to inadequate time for study and other commitments and include the need to undertake paid work (Andrew et al. 2015; Lambrinidis 2014). This attrition would be more pronounced for low SES students who have been found to experience stress and emotional exhaustion (Devlin and McKay 2017). The economist discourse is likely to place less emphasis upon the social and mental health needs of students that have been compounded by the pandemic (Khalili 2020).

Academics have been forced to rapidly adapt learning and teaching materials for online delivery and this has placed additional pressure on these staff as well as learning support and design staff. This in turn has meant that less energy and time has been available to form strong, trusting relationships with students which can enhance the teaching and learning experience. This stressful situation also affects curriculum, pedagogy and assessment (Burgess and Sievertsen 2020). However, there are opportunities here. For example, academics who have not before attempted online teaching and learning have now been able to engage in online delivery and some may have changed their mind about the potential of this medium. Through necessity, they may begin to embrace it and develop further skills in learning design and digital communication. Indeed, the resistance of some academics to embrace online teaching "disappeared in an Aladdin-like puff of smoke as academics, globally put their teaching material, lectures and resources online" (Peters et al. 2020, p. 28). This move to online learning will differentially impact students. Those who are time poor and who are juggling caring duties, study and paid work may benefit substantially (Devlin and McKay 2017), while others who require relationship-focused, face-to-face teaching may struggle.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted the social equity discourses in higher education and provided an overview of the Australian political history which has demonstrated, influenced and strengthened various discourses during different periods. While outlining the political history and discussing key government reports, this chapter has pointed out where each discourse can be observed. Recognising and understanding the impact of discourse on social equity is of high importance, along with recognising the complexity and the wicked nature of the problem. Moreover, the chapter has discussed the

transitional points where significant change has occurred for social equity students and indeed where further substantial transformation is likely to transpire.

The massification of higher education and the political history in Australia are both factors that have shaped the discourse around social equity. The third factor which must be cogitated is the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. This third factor is a catalyst that has heralded a new landscape for universities and their communities. The financial hardship which has ensued from the pandemic is unevenly spread but has adversely impacted students, particularly equity students. As university support services have been cut, staff have often experienced increased workload, stress and are accordingly less available. Moreover, the digital divide has grown in prominence. The drastic decrease in the numbers of international students has been devastating for students and universities.

A watershed moment exists now for universities; a time when universities can choose to focus upon short-term economic gains at the expense of student and staff well-being by deciding to heavily pursue the economic discourse with limited regard for the others. It is vital that universities work diligently to minimise the negative effects on more vulnerable students. This is the challenge for universities and will expose their genuine commitment to values of respect, inclusion and equity; they will have a chance to highlight the way their ethical standards propel their decision-making. Universities can fully embrace their social, moral and intellectual obligations to their local and global communities and can "rethink not only new digital, online and pedagogical possibilities but also the basic purposes of education" (Peters et al. 2020, p. 2). All of us have a complicated relationship with social equity discourses; they influence us and we influence them. We have a responsibility, not only to be educated in these matters but to be active advocates for innovation in this pivotal period. Facing this wicked problem creates an opportunity for transformation, wisdom, re-imagining and ethically-driven decisions. This could be an opportunity for universities to lead the way towards achieving the UN SDG4and provide equitable education for all.

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Ms. Ana Larsen has a multidisciplinary background with majors in Sociology and Psychological Studies which she brings to the field of Education. Her previous role at Federation University saw her teaching enabling students over five years and designing and delivering academic skills workshops to first year students from all discipline areas. Ana is currently at Central Queensland University where she teaches enabling students and provides support to staff and students in the Academic Learning Centre. She is currently completing a Ph.D. through Federation University Australia which examines self-efficacy among disadvantaged students in enabling programs. She is an associate member of the Centre for Research in Equity and Advancement of Teaching and Education (CREATE). Her research interests include transition studies, enabling education and pathways, self-efficacy, social equity and the intersection of disadvantage in higher education.

Dr. Susan Emmett has been extensively involved in early childhood education and the translation of research into the practical environment for over thirty-five years. Her professional experience includes early childhood teaching in a range of settings, work as an early childhood educational consultant and teaching and researching within TAFE and Higher Education sectors. Susan is a Senior Lecturer in Education at Federation University Australia where she coordinates and teaches in Early Childhood and manages partnerships with external organisations both domestic and international. Prior to this, Susan worked as a Research Fellow within the School of Social and Policy Research at Charles Darwin University where early childhood literacy was central to her research, particularly in relation to rural and remote Indigenous education. Her research interests also include the wellbeing and resilience of children and educators including trauma informed, inclusive pedagogy and relationship-focused practice in early childhood contexts. Susan's expertise is in the use of qualitative methodologies, including grounded theory. She has recently published journal articles, reports, and book chapters in these areas. She also applies and works with mixed methods research processes including designing and conducting randomised control trials. In 2016 Susan won the Federation University Vice-Chancellor's Award for Contributions to Student Learning and *Teaching Excellence, and in 2015 she was a recipient of The Deans Award for dedication to partnership work and consequent provision of enriched learning experiences for education students from a diverse range of backgrounds.*

4 Issues and Solutions: A Literature Review of the Deficit Discourses Concerning Under-Represented Students

Ana Larsen and Liam Frost-Camilleri

Abstract

The United Nations (UN) fourth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) is to provide quality education for all. This chapter is a scoping literature review which outlines the historical development of deficit discourses concerning under-represented students in higher education within an Australian context. Under-represented students are defined as those from government specified equity groups or those that have been highlighted as *at risk* in the literature. These student groups are identified as requiring additional learning supports to those typically available. This chapter then highlights the complexity of defining deficit discourses. The impact of deficit discourses on under-represented students is summarised from how it is presented in the literature. The solutions that are proposed in the literature are summarised with the aim of highlighting the current literature that applies to the UN SDG4.

Keywords

Deficit discourses · Equity groups · Literature review · Under-represented students

Author Positioning Statements

Ana: Growing up in regional Victoria in Australia, I experienced the impact of a mentor with high expectations, who encouraged high aspirations. I entered higher education in my late twenties, and it was only through an enabling programme that it was possible. Still, this encouragement is a blessing I know many students do not receive. I have observed tacit judgement and the barriers faced by the enabling students I teach, most of whom can be located in one or more marginalised groups. This experience fuelled this chapter.

Liam: As I was raised in a low socio-economic family and was a "FiF" university student in the early 2000s, I was unaware of my own disadvantage. I did not seek or was not made aware of the services that could have assisted me throughout my university education. I would later understand the impact deficit discourses had on my self-perception and have spent the best part of 15 years trying to educationally undo the damage that was unwittingly caused.

A. Larsen (✉)
School of Access Education, Central Queensland University, Mackay, Australia
e-mail: a.larsen@cqu.edu.au

L. Frost-Camilleri
Institute of Education, Arts and Community, Federation University Australia, Ballarat, Australia
e-mail: l.frost-camilleri@federation.edu.au

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4.1 Introduction

This scoping literature review examines the deficit discourses surrounding under-represented students. According to a national framework for measuring equity performance in Australia's higher education sector, developed by the National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education (NCSEHE) at Curtin University (Pitman and Koshy 2015), the Australian government has defined *six equity groups* in Australia: regional and remote, low socio-economic status (SES), students with a disability, aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, women in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM), and non-English speaking background (NESB) students. Students belonging to these equity groups are known to be under-represented in higher education and less likely to complete their studies (Bradley et al. 2008). There are other student groups within the literature who are known to be under-represented or less likely to complete their studies including FiF, mature-aged, and refugee students. To be as holistic as practical, this chapter examines literature pertaining to students who belong to the government defined equity groups, (except for women in STEM) FiF, and mature-aged students. At risk of over-simplifying the issue, collectively this chapter will refer to these student groups as *under-represented*. More significant though is the idea that these equity groups or *Other* students are tied into deficit discourses and seen as unsuited for entry into higher education (McKay and Devlin 2016a). Any deficit conceptualisation is considered a barrier for a student and deficit discourses are said to be firmly in place in the Australian higher education system (McKay and Devlin 2016a; O'Shea et al. 2017). As a singular definition of deficit discourses is problematic when dealing with multiple interpretations, this chapter will discuss what the discourses have in common. However, it is noted in the literature that deficit discourses position the student as lacking and as essentially responsible for their own development and progress.

Increasing the participation of under-represented students and improving social equity in higher education has been part of the Australian government agenda for decades (Bradley et al. 2008). Similar attention can be seen in the government policy of most Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OCED) nations and in the United Nations (UN) Sustainability Goal (SDG) 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (DESA 2021). This chapter relates specifically to the UN SDG target 4.3 which states that by 2030 the UN aims to ensure "equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university" (DESA 2021). The focus on access for under-represented students has seen an increase in participation across all identified equity groups of students attending university (Holford et al. 2021; O'Shea 2018; O'Shea 2021; Smit 2012). However, the massification of higher education participation has also highlighted the need to offer stronger supports for students as cohorts became more diverse (Briguglio and Watson 2014). In attempts to support under-represented students and improve their retention, the Australian government, like many others, has increased targeted funding and research. For a detailed history of equity in the Australian political context, see Gale and Tranter (2011).

This review begins with an explanation of our method and then an historical overview of how the deficit discourses have developed for under-represented students. This chapter will then present a summary of how deficit discourses are defined within the literature, followed by a discussion of the impact that deficit discourses have on the students and the wider higher education institutions. Finally, this chapter will present a summary of the various solutions or alternative discourses which are proposed within the

literature. In brief, this chapter attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. How are deficit discourses surrounding under-represented students described and defined within the Australian literature concerning higher education?
2. What concerns or objections are raised about the impact of deficit discourses on under-represented students?
3. What alternative discourses or solutions are proposed in the Australian literature in the higher education context?

While this literature review focuses on the Australian context, there is evidence that as the diversity of students has grown, deficit discourses regarding under-represented students have permeated higher education globally (Smit 2012). It is our hope that we can illuminate the issue in relation to the SDGs by increasing understanding of the impact of deficit discourses on under-represented students and in turn positively influence all relevant stakeholders so they may ultimately cease using deficit discourses.

4.2 Method

A scoping review was deemed most suitable to address the broad topic of deficit discourses as the authors expected to locate variety in the literature (Arksey and O'Malley 2005). A systematic literature review is better suited to a specific research question where clearly defined study designs can be identified in advance and was therefore not chosen in this case (Arksey and O'Malley 2005). As the goal of this review is to determine how deficit discourses are defined, discussed, and what solutions or alternative discourses are proposed, this chapter aligns with the third purpose for a scoping review; to summarise and disseminate research findings (Arksey and O'Malley 2005).

After establishing the research questions for this literature review, a search was conducted using EBSCO, ERIC, and Informit which were deemed the most appropriate databases due to their wide reach in Australian academia. The search terms (higher education, equity groups, discourse, low socio-economic status, disability, Indigenous Australian, mature-aged, regional or remote, non-English-speaking background, FiF) and their synonyms were derived from the research questions and combined using Boolean operators. Searches were refined to include only English, peer-reviewed, Australian articles from 2011 to 2021, making our findings more relevant in the current university arena. Initial search results from the three databases returned 507 results. Duplicates were eliminated, and the titles and abstracts were manually examined. Articles relating to K-12 or vocational education were eliminated along with overseas articles. Finally, articles were eliminated if a text search did not locate the term *deficit discourse*. This resulted in 40 remaining articles.

Forty articles were then read in full by both authors. It became apparent that many of the articles only briefly mentioned *deficit discourse* and only a few specifically described or defined what was meant by the term. This finding alone demonstrates that the term's meaning is elusive and varied within the literature. We, therefore, expanded our selection of articles using both forward and backwards snowballing based on information provided in Google Scholar. Finally, we checked for other publications written by the authors of the 40 articles that we had identified in the original database search and included relevant articles in the deficit discourse space by reviewing each article for its content and relevance. A total of 50 articles were included in this review. Sixteen of these discussed multiple under-represented groups, ten related to NESB students, seven discussed Indigenous Australians, seven related to low SES students, eight referred to FiF, four related to regional or remote students, one referred to mature-aged students, and one was about students with disabilities. We would like to acknowledge that while this is not an even spread over the various groups, all equity groups identified previously (Pitman and Koshy 2015) are represented in this chapter.

4.3 Historical Development of Deficit Discourses

Harper and Vered (2017) discussed the origins of deficit discourses concerning under-represented students in academia in the 1950s. They found that in higher education institutions, the assumption prevailed those under-performing students required remedial assistance, rather than academics needing professional development (Harper and Vered 2017). At the time, counsellors were primarily used to address *the gaps* in student understanding, developing the more familiar study skills focus we know today (Harper and Vered 2017). The Australian media also exacerbated the situation, with many outlets drawing connections between illiteracy and multiculturalism (Briguglio 2011). Issues of literacy were perceived to be inseparable from issues in discipline understanding, which led many university systems to offer discipline-based workshops to demystify the content (Harper and Vered 2017).

In the 1980s, the term *at risk* was used to describe students who were from disadvantaged backgrounds (Smit 2012). The original belief was labelling students as *at risk* would help address the current deficit thinking employed by many academics and higher education institutions (Smit 2012). The term *at risk* fundamentally implied that student failure could be predicted and was somehow inherent to these students (O'Shea et al. 2016; Smit 2012). The *at risk* label spawned alternative programmes and support initiatives that were designed to help students deemed to be likely to be unsuccessful in their studies. There was high praise for these initially, but over time, the problematic nature and the ensuing impact of deficit discourses became apparent (Sperling 2019).

In the 1990s, progression had been made towards a more *inclusive curriculum*, however, deficit discourses remained (Briguglio 2011). One of the biggest challenges of deficit discourses concerning under-represented students is the insistence that the students are responsible for developing their skills, allowing institutions to avoid taking responsibility (Smit 2012; O'Shea et al. 2016). This *handing over* of responsibility is particularly difficult for non-English-speaking background (NESB) students, as it is argued that the misalignment between non-native English speakers and university protocols and experiences effectively re-enforce the perceived deficit further (Freeman and Li 2019). However, O'Shea et al. (2016) highlight studies that have shown deficit discourses to be created as an unintentional consequence of institutional programmes and decisions.

4.3.1 Definitions of Deficit Discourse

Many of the authors do not provide specific or consistent definitions for deficit discourses, but it is accepted that deficit discourses are associated with student inability and the notion that improving academic performance is the responsibility of the student. Additionally, these under-represented students are deemed as responsible for *fixing* their own issues of deficit. The deficit may be perceived in many areas including academic (see Briguglio 2011) or cultural (see Kahu and Nelson 2018) as well as physical, emotional, or social (Pitman and Koshy 2015). Smit (2012) states that deficit discourses are the concentration on the deficiency of students, which includes cultural backgrounds or family issues. Additionally, Smit (2012) warns against umbrella terms of *disadvantage* due to individualistic issues not being fully conceptualised. Deficit discourses can also relate to student aspirations to attend higher education. For example, Harwood et al. (2015) write of aspiration discourses, and their ability to frame students under deficits such as lacking effort or inherent inability. Harwood et al. (2015) warn of the impact this can have on young Indigenous Australians in its perpetuation of long held colonial beliefs.

As universities gathered data on students, including that pertaining to race, language and living arrangements, to pinpoint elements of disadvantage and identify support for students, the process highlighted a deficit framing and

served to reinforce stereotypes (Sperling 2019; Smit 2012; McKay and Devlin 2016a). Researchers further warned that deficit framing causes a movement away from seeing the complexity of under-represented students and perpetuates the idea that these students are *problems* that need to be solved (McKay and Devlin 2016a, b).

More specifically, Kahu and Nelson (2018) describe deficit discourses and how they have changed over time by referring to Transition theory which is broken into three chronological elements. According to Kahu and Nelson (2018), deficit discourses developed during the first element of Transition theory which argues that certain students lack sufficient skills to succeed at university. According to Transition theory, this concept was replaced by the suggestion that students need to be inducted into the culture of the university. The third and final element of Transition theory is the belief that the student and university should meet in the middle, and that both parties share responsibility to bridge the gap (Kahu and Nelson 2018). However, Kahu and Nelson (2018) explain the limits of the theory as it fails to capture the constants of transition for university students and it does not consider students who choose to discontinue their studies after the first year.

Some researchers see deficit discourses as a component of language, framing many under-represented students as lacking or in need of fixing (O'Shea 2016b). The word choices of deficit discourses such as non-traditional, at risk, minority, underprepared, challenging, or difficult, implies these students are *Other* to an archetypal student (Smit 2012; O'Shea 2016a). These word choices are said to impact the culture, policy, and practices of higher education institutions in a number of ways including, but not limited to, re-enforcement of stereotypes, lower expectations of under-represented students, and *Othering*, which causes educational facilities to try to fill the student *gaps* or missing qualities (Smit 2012; McKay and Devlin 2016a). This deficit view contrasts with the call to make higher education institutions more inclusive and equitable (DESA 2021).

4.3.2 The Impact of Deficit Discourses

The university experience is nuanced and multi-layered (O'Shea 2021). Adding to this complexity is the additional demands placed on under-represented students, such as many low SES students, who can experience financial pressure (Devlin and McKay 2017). Deficit discourses are said to *follow* under-represented students, with research suggesting that the impacts are structural in nature, following students into post-graduate study, hindering employment outcomes, and future career development (Andrewartha and Harvey 2017; Harvey and Mallman 2019; Nelson et al. 2017). Additionally, deficit discourses are thought to be the biggest barrier for Indigenous students to be accepted into university courses (Hogarth 2017). The under-achievement of Indigenous Australians in education has become normalised through deficit discourses, and the subsequent lowering of expectations has impacted the motivation and aspirations of Indigenous students (Hogarth 2017). O'Shea (2018) also highlights that even after students have been successful in obtaining a university place, there is an expectation to conform to university culture and expectations such as being a successful student in terms of academic achievement and graduation outcomes, effectively reinforcing the deficit.

Researchers are critical of the way higher education institutions create social norms and deficit discourses that position learners as lacking power and agency (O'Shea 2020). Sperling (2019) and Smit (2012) highlight that the rhetoric has become so normalised, that students who are considered *at risk* enter a cycle of deficiency where the deficit view taken by the staff and institutions perpetuate student failure, causing students to further doubt their skills and believe that they do not belong. Additionally, McKay and Devlin (2016b) go as far to say that, particularly for low SES students, deficit discourses at tertiary level are nothing short of discrimination.

Researchers found that some educators view low SES students as troublesome, needy, and lacking in academic ability or suitability while

being associated with low entrance scores and the need for additional training (McKay and Devlin 2016a; O'Shea 2016a). There is also a fear that letting under-represented students into courses will dilute higher education standards, creating a dichotomy between standards and equity in Australia (McKay and Devlin 2016b). Additionally, Sperling (2019) found that students who go into alternative education programmes will often be blamed for their deficit, making them appear to be flawed, or as McKay and Devlin (2016a) explain, seen as the *Other* student when compared with *traditional students*. Devlin (2013) also claims that under-represented students are often associated with low standards, academic struggles, and lower entrance scores.

Even recent attempts to address the impacts of deficit discourses have been problematic. O'Shea (2016b) warns against the deficit actions of funding specific groups for their ability to label students as essentially lacking or insufficient. It is further suggested that some initiatives of moral or social justice that aim to create access and equity tend to exacerbate deficit discourses, especially if students do not take up the initiative, causing staff and students to view under-represented students as lacking in academic ability and suitability (O'Shea 2016b). While in contrast to O'Shea, Briguglio (2011) supports the process of post-entry assessment, she suggests it is overly simplistic at times and may place non-English speaking students in perpetual deficit.

From a student perspective, higher education institutions tend to be viewed as a space of privilege, or an area that some groups, such as FiF students, view as an opportunity to forge a better life (O'Shea et al. 2018). According to O'Shea et al. (2018), the emphasis on economics over the social element of obtaining a degree in higher education is a result of neo-liberalistic or mainly economic focus. Devlin (2013) also explores the notion of the neo-liberalistic sentiment and problematises the idea that students who work hard will be rewarded with higher degrees, as it tends to feed into deficit discourses where failure is exclusively the fault of the student. O'Shea et al. (2018) highlight a defiance in these students, with some equity groups creating a "discourse of betterment and opportunity" (p. 1021). There is a feeling of "crossing boundaries", or a shifting from a life without higher education to a life with higher education (O'Shea 2020, p. 101).

Most students entering higher education will do so immediately after their year 12 education. The Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank (ATAR) is the primary method of determining university admission in Australia (Li and Dockery 2015). In efforts to grant access to more disadvantaged students, many Australian universities have lowered ATAR requirements as an equity measure (Norton 2015). This strategy is contested by those that believe that lowering entry requirements will devalue the education system (Norton 2015; Brown 2013). It is argued that the acceptance of students with low ATAR scores puts pressure on support services, decreasing the overall quality of higher education (Norrie 2012; Group of Eight 2012). Side-lining these debates is the concept that low ATAR and disadvantaged students are perceived as though they do not belong in higher education facilities (O'Shea et al. 2016). There is a belief that low SES students are incapable of educational rigour or that their presence is met with the need to not only lower entry requirements but also to *dumb down* academic material (McKay and Devlin 2016b).

There are also reports that deficit discourses impact the concept of self for some under-represented students. Referencing south Sudanese in Australia specifically, Harris et al. (2015) discuss the *melancholy migrant*, that is, a migrant who, due to negative media stereotypes, is perceived as not only deficit but potentially dangerous. While there have been attempts to push back against these perceptions, many are still struggling with the impact of these perceived deficits (Harris et al. 2015). Fforde et al. (2013) report how deficit discourses are used to negatively frame aboriginal identity, and continues to discuss how such framing is both overt and subtle in its racism. Additionally, deficit ideology is present in the gathering of data (specifically for

funding purposes), in notions of aboriginal authenticity and deliberate disempowerment (Fforde et al. 2013).

The literature highlights that deficit discourses affect under-represented groups have a complex origin and are discussed with various elements of definition and concerns raised. The culture created by some higher education staff, combined with the damaging impacts of deficit discourses, has also reinforced the complexity of the issue. There are not any easy solutions, but there are some recommendations.

4.4 Solutions to Deficit Discourses

Deficit discourses, as defined and discussed in the literature, are complex as they include several different, identified features considered inequitable. These discourses present a barrier to under-represented students in higher education and achieving the UN SDG 4. This review found multiple ways to address deficit discourses and its impacts, however, it is important to note that as the issue is complex, so are the solutions (Smit 2012). While it is acknowledged that there is a need to change the discourses to help facilitate success in higher education for under-represented students (O'Shea 2016b), the approach must be multifaceted, consider the student's agency and encourage systematic change to policies, procedures and attitudes in universities.

4.4.1 Changing Views

Deficit discourses concerning under-represented groups are influenced by the way that students are viewed and understood by academics, wider university staff, other students, and their peers. It is suggested that changing the way students are conceptualised and treated can help address deficit discourses (McKay and Devlin 2016a, b). Smit (2012) highlights the need to understand the nature of higher education expectations and suggests that there are hidden conventions that prevent academics from choosing more student focused pedagogies. These hidden conventions include lower teacher expectations and a movement away from the dichotomy of unsuccessful and successful students. The first important part of this process is to make academic staff aware of the impact that deficit discourses have on students (Berniz and Miller 2017).

Other ways to influence staff and relevant stakeholders in higher education are to begin to value the student diversity that institutions are now experiencing (Smit 2012). O'Shea (2016b) highlights how collaborative partnerships with organisations such as youth centres, health centres, and primary schools have shown promise in developing positive interactions between under-represented students and higher education institutions. Fforde et al. (2013) promote a strength-based approach that challenges deficit thinking and re-focuses on student strengths. A strengths-based approach relies on staff having the opportunity for an open and safe dialogue around complex issues such as Indigenous education (Fforde et al. 2013). Similarly, O'Shea et al. (2017) advocate for raising student aspirations and highlighting their personal strength and capabilities. O'Shea (2015) discusses the need to move away from deficit thinking and promote students' inherent assets such as the support of their family.

To ensure students are involved in the solution, Devlin (2013) advocates for a joint effort between the university and students to enact a change in view. However, there is concern expressed within the literature about the difficulty of creating change with untrained casual staff or overworked permanent staff (O'Shea 2016b). According to O'Shea et al. (2018), the crucial factor in the fight against deficit discourses is presenting under-represented students in a positive light, rather than the belief that these students are *lacking* or do not belong in higher education. This change will undoubtedly take time and effort from all stakeholders. While there are challenges associated with changing views, like any cultural change, there is a steadfast belief from researchers that all students need to be viewed and treated as assets in higher education (McKay and Devlin 2016b; O'Shea 2016b).

4.4.2 Changes to Pedagogy, Curriculum, and Policy

There are several suggestions to alter pedagogy, curriculum, and policy to address deficit discourses. Bat et al. (2014) highlight the need for curriculum to be developed together, with students and academic staff working in tandem, a sentiment echoed by Berniz and Miller (2017) and Kennedy et al. (2019). Additionally, Nelson et al. (2017) express a need for students to be involved in changes in assessment design and learning strategy. However, other researchers insist on a multi-layered model that focuses on language development, self-assessment strategies, and language support that is embedded into curriculum (Briguglio and Watson 2014). Having students become part of the planning process ensures that they feel like they belong to the institution, increasing their connectedness and helping to address deficit discourses. The concept of giving agency to under-represented students in education is discussed widely in the literature (see Hogarth 2017). Some institutions, however, may find student involvement impractical due to time restraints and a lack of resources.

Many researchers are concerned about the lack of study skills in current higher education programmes. Thies (2016) argues that embedding study skills in higher education curriculum would ensure every student receives it and eliminates the assumption of deficit. Similarly, Harper and Vered (2017) highlight the need for inclusive holistic pedagogies to not merely *add on* writing skills, but to embed those skills into pedagogical practices. Freeman and Li (2019) and William and Goldsmith (2013) emphasise the need to support academics through the pedagogical adaptive process and the need to develop academic literacies if the programme is to be successful. If English proficiency became the centre of curriculum in all discipline areas, Briguglio (2011) believes a stronger connection and acceptance to linguistic and cultural differences would ensue.

Harvey et al. (2016a, b) call for universities to create more nuanced policies for specific groups to help higher education institutions better cater for student need. More specifically, Bodkin-Andrews et al. (2019) are concerned that Indigenous graduate attributes are not being implemented in higher education classrooms, despite claims to the contrary. It is therefore recommended that implementation of the Indigenous graduate attributes should be monitored (Bodkin-Andrews et al. 2019). Sperling (2019) goes as far to suggest that policy should be co-constructed with under-represented students, a similar sentiment to Hogarth (2017) concerning Indigenous Australian students.

In summation, the Australian literature calls for an increase in explicit teaching of academic literacies, embedded in the curriculum, which is developed in conjunction with students.

4.4.3 Move Away from Neo-liberalism

Neo-liberalism refers to the economic policy trend since the 1980s whereby the government has minimal interference in the free market (Harrington 2005). There is the assumption that in a free market, any individual can be successful provided they work hard, and if they are not successful, they are at fault. Neo-liberalism rewards competition and individualism while leaving the concept of social mobility and academic aspiration a problem for students to address (Harwood et al. 2015; O'Shea 2018; O'Shea 2021).

Today, universities and schools are managed with an economic focus making them more like businesses where students are viewed as consumers (Delahunty and O'Shea 2019). This focus on economics is said to move teacher attention away from the core business of teaching ultimately leading to a negative impact on students (Delahunty and O'Shea 2019). In addition, Delahunty and O'Shea (2019) highlight a need to look at the definition of success, as many first-year students are interested in developing self-identify and educational connections with their university experiences, rather than a focus on a passing grade.

Researchers in the area recommend that if we are to address deficit discourses, framing processes associated with neo-liberalism must be removed (Sperling 2019). This framing presents a great challenge as many programmes attempt to *fix* under-represented students, as programmes that are proposed to support these students tend to attract large amounts of funding (O'Shea 2016b). However, O'Shea (2016b) also argues that a change in focus towards the structural inequalities present in higher education would be a step towards addressing the negative impacts of wider neo-liberalism.

While it has been established that many under-represented students attend higher education institutions for its economic benefit, O'Shea (2016b) highlights the adverse impact of this focus. Moving away from economic rewards and highlighting the other values of higher education, such as educational or social benefits will help to address both neo-liberalism and deficit discourses (O'Shea 2016b; O'Shea et al. 2018).

Related to the idea of neo-liberalism is the concept of class, or socio-economic status (SES), and the associated barriers experienced by under-represented students. Harvey et al. (2016a, b) claim there needs to be a movement away from class-based barriers. McKay and Devlin (2016a) highlight the taboo nature of talking about class, making it difficult to address the notion of deficit for low SES students. A belief in class being a determinant of success in higher education is common amongst under-represented students (O'Shea et al., 2017) making it a difficult element of neo-liberalism to break.

However, it has been found that many under-represented students find empowerment in their positions when they are acknowledged (McKay and Devlin 2016a). In the case of low SES students, McKay and Devlin (2016a, b) explain how these students become determined, persistent, start to relish academic challenge, and when given the right supports are able to take control of their education by becoming independent learners. The literature advocates for academic institutions to steer the conversation to a more holistic view of education, of which neo-liberalism is merely a part.

4.4.4 Developing Agency

While addressing neo-liberalism and moving away from an economic focus towards supporting students is one step towards addressing deficit discourses, Sperling (2019) along with many other researchers suggests that a stronger approach is an individualised discussion or a development of student agency. Developing student agency requires a thoughtful consideration of student needs, an understanding of their diversity, and an in-depth investigation into the intersectionality of multiple disadvantage and discussion of the complexity within equity groups (Delahunty and O'Shea 2021; Smit 2012).

To empower and develop the agency of under-represented students, it is recommended that the strengths and cultural capital of these students are acknowledged (O'Shea 2016b). Concepts of *cultural capital* arise from the work of Bourdieu (as cited in Habel et al. 2016) and describe the university as a *field* which has particular cultural values, expectations, ways of being, ways of thinking, and ways of communicating. Cultural capital refers to proficiency in, and familiarity with, dominant cultural codes and practices within a field (Harvey et al. 2016a, b).

As highlighted by O'Shea (2016b), many students in equity groups feel unable to share their cultural identities or "experiential capital" under the belief that they do not fit the expectation of higher education (p. 15). Experiential capital is further explored by researchers when listing the strengths of students, such as persistence, resilience, motivation, and their different learning styles and strategies (Bat et al. 2014; Devlin and McKay 2017; McKay and Devlin 2016a).

Another important factor in developing student agency and aiding a successful transition to university is developing a sense of belonging (Nelson et al. 2017; O'Shea 2021). This belonging is developed through rapport and relationship building with staff and peers (Brett et al. 2019; Freeman and Li 2019; O'Shea 2018). O'Shea (2018) highlights the usefulness of a university outreach space in developing and

fostering these authentic relationships as they allow for informal meetings between students and staff.

As stipulated by Marginson (2014), international student agency can be developed by recognising their multiple, developed identities. Seeing NESB students for the ways that they could improve our higher education institutions through their familial supports and linguistic capital is also said to help address the cultural deficit of students and increase agency (Harvey and Mallman 2019).

Developing student agency requires an understanding of student need and diversity as well as a focus on developing student voice and connections with relevant stakeholders (Cook-Sather 2020). While the methods discussed in this section speak to the development of student power and influence in practices, there are additional elements such as maximising democratic control of classroom learning routines and curriculum that could be addressed to further foster student agency (Cook-Sather 2020).

4.4.5 Embracing Alternative Pathways

Alternative pathways and outreach programmes can have negative connotations, presented as staff believing that these *types* of students do not belong in a higher education setting (Thomas 2014). Holford et al. (2021) suggest that these systems are becoming more legitimate pathways for students to access higher education over time. Holford et al. (2021) support the development of these outreach programmes for their ability to instil aspirations in students, a sentiment supported by Wilks and Wilson (2012).

Pitman et al. (2017) explain how enabling programmes provide a good alternative pathway for Indigenous students. In fact, Indigenous students utilise enabling pathways more than any other equity group (Pitman et al. 2017). The belief is that these programmes are successful because they are tailored specifically to the student while instilling confidence and resilience (Pitman et al. 2017). There are other examples of alternative programmes helping to break down barriers and elements of disadvantage, such as programmes that connect and network regional universities (Nelson et al. 2017). But a common theme in the literature is to foster connections between all stakeholders, including schools and career providers.

4.4.6 Additional Research

To help develop and further foster the agency of under-represented students in higher education institutions, it is suggested that specific and focused research needs to continue. An emphasis is made on the experience of under-represented students within research (Smit 2012), or the telling of narratives (O'Shea et al. 2017; Sperling 2019) to help give credence to the complexity of equity that students experience (O'Shea 2020). Fforde et al. (2013) further highlight how deficit discourses are under-theorised, especially in an Indigenous Australian context. Wilks and Wilson (2012) emphasise the need to explore student aspirations and Harvey and Andrewartha (2013) wish to see a review in the connection between post-graduate study and economics to better understand equity of access to higher education.

The research areas are vast and require a multi-pronged approach, but an overall deeper understanding of deficit discourses, their impact, and the needs of under-represented groups will help universities to respond more effectively than they have in the past (Brett et al. 2019).

4.5 Limitations

There are two main limitations within this chapter. First, the findings are confined to Australian literature only. While there are some similarities between the equity groups in the Australian context and minority or under-represented groups overseas, the transferability of the solutions proposed in the literature might be limited. Second, a scoping review always

involves limiting the number of sources examined; it is not exhaustive. Levac et al. (2010) highlight the importance of recording and acknowledging this limitation.

4.6 Conclusion

This scoping literature review has demonstrated how deficit discourses regarding under-represented students in higher education have become a part of the university system over time and can be attributed to neo-liberalism and its origins in practices that seek to support students. These deficit discourses are deeply embedded in the higher education system and have become extremely complex concepts to define and discuss. This chapter has provided a summary of the literature which attempts to define deficit discourses and how they impact under-represented students. The solutions proposed by the researchers were summarised, highlighting the complexity in effectively addressing deficit discourses in the higher education space. The literature calls for changes in pedagogy, curriculum, and policy, the re-framing of neo-liberalist ideas, an increase in student agency, the encouragement of positive relationships with pathways for students and additional research. It is suggested that these proposed solutions are holistically implemented to be effective. A holistic response is especially poignant when considering the UN SDG4 (DESA 2021) of ensuring inclusive and equitable education for all. While equity in higher education is undoubtedly complex, it is further complicated by deficit discourses and associated barriers for under-represented students. We hope to contribute to the solution by increasing understanding of deficit discourses and their nature in higher education institutions. Understanding may be the first step towards positive change as we endeavour to support the UN SDG4. We suggest that the guideline provided by Delahunty and O'Shea (2021) to holistically focus on "achievement, fairness, and opportunity" could remain the focus of higher education institutions when attempting to address deficit discourses (p. 473).

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Ms Ana Larsen has a multidisciplinary background with majors in Sociology and Psychological Studies which she brings to the field of Education. Her previous role at Federation University saw her teaching enabling students over five years and designing and delivering academic skills workshops to first year students from all discipline areas. Ana is currently at Central Queensland University where she teaches enabling students and provides support to staff and students in the Academic Learning Centre. She is currently completing a Ph. D. through Federation University Australia which examines self-efficacy among disadvantaged students in enabling programs. She is an associate member of the Centre for Research in Equity and Advancement of Teaching and Education (CREATE). Her research interests include transition studies, enabling education and pathways, self-efficacy, social equity and the intersection of disadvantage in higher education.

Liam Frost-Camilleri has worked as a secondary school teacher (both private and public), primary school teacher, a Technical and Further Education (TAFE) instructor and in Higher Education for over 15 years. Passionate about education, Liam has taught and specialised in many different subjects such as English, Media, History and VCAL programs. Recently, Liam worked as a Language, Literacy and Numeracy Coordinator of Federation University. Liam is currently completing his Ph.D. study in reengagement pedagogies in second chance education. He continues to research in the area of literacy and numeracy for adult learners and currently holds a position in the Institute of Education, Arts and Community at Federation University teaching in the Foundation Access Studies (FAST) and the Master of Teaching (Secondary) programs. Liam is the Assistant Program Coordinator for the Master of Teaching (Secondary) and a passionate educator who relishes new challenges and experiences as refines his skills and abilities.

5 Learning Through an *Undisciplined* Lens: The Centring of Indigenous Knowledges and Philosophies in Higher Education in Australia and Sweden

Jillian K Marsh, Sheelagh Daniels-Mayes, Kristina Sehlin MacNeil, and Melissa Nursey-Bray

Abstract

Social justice is part of higher education discourse within university mission statements, graduate qualities and university rhetoric globally (Connell in Higher education, pedagogy and social justice. Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 23–36, 2019; Wilson-Strydom in High Educ 69(1):143–155, 2015). In Australia, this focus includes re-centring Indigenous Australian epistemologies and ontologies from the subjugated margins in academia (Moreton-Robinson in Cult Stud Rev 15:61–79, 2009; Nakata in Aust J Indig Educ 36:7–14, 2007) and in Sweden, building an understanding of intergenerational traumas of school-based systemic violence against Indigenous Sámi (Atkinson in Trauma trails, recreating song lines: the transgenerational effects of trauma in Indigenous Australia. Spinifex Press, 2002; Norlin in Samerna och Svenska kyrkan: Underlag för kyrkligt försoningsarbete. Gidlunds förlag, Möklinta, 2017). This chapter highlights opportunities for upward socio-economic mobility for First Nations peoples through surpassing the deficit thinking still prevalent among invader-coloniser populations. Included in this we reference the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals SDG 4: Quality Education and SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities (United Nations in Sustainable development goals, 2021) and its potential to influence educational discourses in teaching practice and curriculum construction in Australia and Sweden. Indigenous Standpoint Theory (IST) and Critical Race Pedagogy (CRP) are utilised as critical frameworks for unpacking the historical background of racial oppression, understanding the complexities of Indigeneity and post-colonising constructs and disrupting whiteness embedded in mono-cultural education. As practicing educators, we have sought in this chapter, to critically explore how Indigenous Knowledges and culturally responsive pedagogies are disrupting ethnocentric ontologies within the university sector through an emergent undisciplined strategy.

J. K. Marsh (✉)
School of Architecture and Built Environment, University of Newcastle, Newcastle, Australia
e-mail: Jillian.Marsh@newcastle.edu.au

S. Daniels-Mayes
Faculty of Arts, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Australia
e-mail: sheelagh.danielsmayes@unimelb.edu.au

K. S. MacNeil
Várdduo - Centre for Sami Research, Umeå University, Umeå, Sweden
e-mail: kristina.sehlin-macneil@umu.se

M. Nursey-Bray
Department of Geography, Environment and Population, The University of Adelaide, Adelaide, Australia
e-mail: melissa.nursey-bray@adelaide.edu.au

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Keywords

Indigeneity · Indigenous Australian · Indigenous Sámi · Indigenous knowledges · First Nations peoples and cultures · Indigenous standpoint theory (IST) · Critical race pedagogy (CRP)

Author Positioning Statements

Dr. Jillian Marsh is an Adnyamathanha woman from the northern Flinders Ranges and adjacent lakes region in South Australia. She spent most of her childhood there and maintains a strong cultural and spiritual connection. Her multidisciplinary background informs her current role as Lecturer in Aboriginal Studies and cuts across Education, Planetary Health and Postcolonialism. Jillian's research includes community-driven research in health, education and caring for Country. Her passion for Indigenous Australian language revitalisation and place-based research is central to her teaching.

Dr. Sheelagh Daniels-Mayes is a Kamilaroi woman who lost her eyesight as a child. She is a lecturer and researcher in Aboriginal education, Indigenous Studies and methodologies, and is a disability scholar and activist. Her work focuses on higher education's responsibilities in achieving equity and social justice. Sheelagh uses CRT, cultural responsiveness and Critical Access Studies to problematise higher education. She is the former coordinator of the Sydney Indigenous Research Network (SIRN) at The University of Sydney.

Dr. Kristina Sehlin MacNeil is a Researcher in Várdduo—Centre for Sami Research at Umeå University in Sweden. Her research interests include: causes of different forms of violence that impact Indigenous peoples such as extractive violence and lateral violence; epistemologies, research methodologies and ethics developed and used by Indigenous peoples; and people-planet relationships and conflict transformation. She is currently involved in two research projects on these topics. Sehlin MacNeil is also the Co-Director of the Umeå University Faculty of Arts Doctoral College.

Dr. Melissa Nursey-Bray is a human geographer who started her working life as a Trainer Coordinator for TAFE, delivering on Country programmes to Indigenous rangers in Yarrabah, Palm Island and Doomadgee. She is now a researcher and educator in socially just conservation and focussed on engaging communities in environmental decision-making in the context of climate change. She coordinates a number of geography courses including one on Indigenous peoples and the environment and with Indigenous partners, co-led a programme on Indigenisation of curricula for the Faculty of Arts, University of Adelaide.

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we explore the duality within academia in relation to Indigenous Knowledges and how this contradicts as well as reinforces violent dispossession through structural and cultural tensions that speak back to dispossession or reiterate mainstream practices and powers. The term Indigenous Knowledges are used to recognise diverse Indigenous knowledge and philosophies as an emerging set of academic intellectualisms based on "… a whole system of knowing, being and acting" (Nakata 2002, p. 28), rather than a focus on ways of understanding Indigenous peoples and cultures.

Tackling the ongoing challenge of racialised deficit thinking within research and education is both pervasive and unacceptable. Indigenous Australian scholar Martin (2003) states, "…we [Indigenous Australian peoples] are present only as objects of curiosity and subjects of research. To be seen but not asked, heard nor respected" (p. 1), a claim also reverberated by Morgan (2003), who insists the practice of appropriation to bolster economic growth of the Western world continues to depend on the exploitation of First

Nations peoples. The core business of reconciliation in universities bidding for social justice includes a commitment to recognising this exploitation and improving cultural competence to address systemic erasure of First Nations cultures (Burt and Gunstone 2018). This movement constitutes a commitment to structural and cultural justice within higher education (Barney 2018; Lowe 2011; Nakata 2002) including setting parity targets for student enrolments, retentions and completions, as well as staff/researcher numbers (Behrendt et al. 2012). Collectively these signal an intention to action the calls from the international community to provide inclusive and equitable education from early childhood to tertiary. We begin this discussion through examining the history of oppression experienced by Indigenous Sámi and Indigenous Australian people in education.

Structural and cultural violence is well documented in the context of Indigenous Sámi and Indigenous Australian people subjected to systemic oppression (Össbo 2021; Sehlin MacNeil 2017). Furthermore, Indigenous Sámi and Indigenous Australian people experience systemic violence in educational institutions in Australia and Sweden within governance and leadership, in teaching and research (Burt and Gunstone 2018; Morgan 2003) and through First Nations epistemologies and ontologies being routinely dismissed and ridiculed as having no value (Atkinson 2002; Norlin 2017).[1] As Wolfe (2006) argues, settler colonialism is not just a historical event in the past or the story of a nation state's origins, but an ongoing process of hegemonic discourses that persists in universities and schools. Similarly, in Sweden, teachings of Indigenous Sámi people's history, society and culture are very limited in the general school curricula resulting in potential invisibilisation or even increased discrimination based on ignorance (Omma 2013; Svonni 2015).

[1] In this paper First Nations peoples and cultures will be referred to as Indigenous Sámi, or Indigenous Australian used in the specific context of Sweden or Australia, or more generally the term First Nations peoples in reference to people who experience colonial subjugation in their sovereign territories.

The intellectualising of terra nullius (Martin 2003; Moreton-Robinson 2009) flows into pedagogies, perpetuating the myth of empty land, silencing First Nations peoples and exoticising both peoples and cultures as passive and static objects of wonder and interest to mainstream Western knowledge (Smith 1999). The emerging discipline of Indigenous Knowledges (Nakata 2002, p. 28) recognise Indigenous peoples and thought within academia and acknowledges those who continue to critique its capitalist applications within Western sciences. It is also in keeping with capitalisation of other disciplines such as History (Nakata 2002).

In this chapter, we present evidence that strongly suggests that the tools of oppression in education continue to operate in tandem with the United Nations Agenda 2030 based on global action through 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This call for action is underpinned by social and ecological justice principles aimed at creating a better future and a fair opportunity in life for all (United Nations 2021).

5.2 Methodology

Indigenous Standpoint Theory (IST) initially borrowed from Feminist standpoint theory, is valuable in unpacking the domain of cultural interface (Nakata 2007) where western education meets Indigenous culture, essential in creating Indigenous understandings or standpoints of social constructivism (Vygotsky 1978) and informed by Critical Theory (Freire 1972) in education. The emergence of Critical Race Pedagogy (CRP) brought into focus the need for a culturally responsive education that recognises the failure within mainstream education to recognise racialised superiority (Daniels-Mayes 2016) and to place higher value on culture and cultural interface as central to creating culturally safe space for Indigenous Knowledges brokering and for Indigenous learners (Nakata 2007). Our methodology is also informed by Indigenous intellectualism in Australia (Moreton-Robinson 2013) through gendered standpoints which directly challenge patriarchal approaches within

knowledge creation and transference. The importance of knowledge construction and validation in education has led to educators increasing their understanding of the "funds of knowledge" (Kiyama and Rios-Aguilar 2018; Klenowski 2009; Zipin 2013) through greater awareness of the distinctions between teacher knowledge and student knowledge.

We use an autoethnographic narrative approach to share our reflections and experiences as academic teachers to create a counter-narrative to the dominant discourses of post-invasion histories (Blodgett et al. 2011; Gillan et al. 2017) and to critically explore relevant literature such as the perceptions of students (Poitras Pratt and Hanson 2020). We reflect on working with students who have limited or no experience outside a Eurocentric discourse and pedagogical practice in education (Bunda 2017) to construct critical understandings of theoretical concepts and praxis that help re-centre content and practice that centres Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing. Our discussion highlights critical analyses of the realities for Indigenous Australians and Indigenous Sámi across the Arctic as problematic on multiple levels (Degai and Petrove 2021; Schultz 2020).

This narrative approach empowers us as professionals to include autoethnographic reflections on our teaching practices and unidentified student feedback received by email or through student evaluations of teaching. Narratives enable us to have a direct voice in this chapter to explore how we engage critically with Indigenous Knowledges (Nakata 2002) and how our philosophical positioning goes beyond the harvesting of Indigenous knowledge as a commodity for Western academia to consume, own and utilise. We use this "portrait vignette" (Blodgett et al. 2011, p. 525) method for grounding the review of literature through our real-life experiences and to provide a snapshot of what each of us observed and/or experienced.

This autoethnographic narrative approach demonstrates how we engage students in developing their critical thinking skills. We feel this approach is applicable to establish a decolonising agenda that acknowledges and speaks back to colonialism and whiteness in education through a culturally responsive student-centred approach to learning and teaching (Morrison et al. 2019). Our individual reflections relate to mandatory coursework offered at undergraduate and postgraduate levels via an Indigenous Studies major, Indigenous standpoints within the fields of Education and Planetary Health, the attempt to decolonise Geography curricula and via provision of opportunities to gain critical views of design, skills in positionality and responsibility in society.

We include a positionality statement from each of the four authors of this chapter, two Indigenous Australians and one non-Indigenous Australian from three Australian universities, in collaboration with one non-Indigenous author from a Swedish university. This ongoing collaboration is an opportunity to critically reflect on teaching and coursework design within the Australian and Swedish university sectors at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. We do this as part of a reflexive practice to explore what constitutes an undisciplined lens in the context of learning and teaching Indigenous Knowledges in higher education in Australia and Sweden.

5.3 Part 1: Four Narrative Autoethnographies

5.3.1 Jillian's Story—Centring Indigenous Standpoints in Theory and Practice

My experiences of asserting Indigenous Standpoints, i.e. knowledges and philosophies within the academy after more than 25 years' experience re-emerged during a stint working with a teaching school where an Aboriginal Studies major was located within the Anthropology undergraduate degree programme. Attempts to review and revise the content of this Aboriginal Studies major were repeatedly met with bitter opposition from anthropologists who argued that their core values (as non-Indigenous and predominantly male anthropologists) must remain central within Aboriginal Studies teaching and

curriculum. Their collective refusal to discard colonial shackles signalled a critical turning point for me and a gradual alienation that would eventually result in my departure as an Indigenous academic both from this major as well as the university where I was working. My requests for a better understanding of cultural safety within the institution fell on deaf ears and were met with an unwilling and at times hostile response. In conversation with other Indigenous educators, I am aware these experiences are not uncommon for academics who refuse to enshrine systemic white privilege and choose to openly challenge such territorial behaviour from within discipline-specific and patriarchal enclaves of higher education (Gilbey and Bunda 2017; Manathunga and Brew 2012; Nakata et al. 2012).

I currently teach at a tertiary institution in a postgraduate Education programme where pre-service teachers (PSTs) bring a mixed level of understanding and exposure to Indigenous Knowledges and the histories of colonialism. My capacity to design a unit *Indigenous Perspectives and Standpoints in Teaching and Learning* provides a sense of academic freedom to reflect on school-based education in Australia critically and reflexively. Another experience of curriculum design and teaching in higher education pertains to the establishment of a new graduate certificate in place-based Planetary Health where my involvement arose because of my multidisciplinary expertise in Indigenous Knowledges and Environmental Studies. The teaching model known as blocking is used across Victoria University, Melbourne provides a syllabus delivered in a four-week intensive programme rather than over a 12-week semester. This model uses asynchronous and synchronous learning, delivered entirely by remote teaching using Zoom classrooms (as a direct result of COVID-19) and online learning spaces. After further experience with this model, I feel the level of cultural immersion in ideas and knowledge that would normally be established and built on over a semester, in person or as a blended programme, is severely hampered as it limits a reflective and reflexive method of learning and teaching. This challenge of teaching in an authentic style located in a very short time frame has been noted in scholarly works as problematic (Nakata et al. 2012).

I feel the opportunity to centre Indigenous Knowledges through IST risks being overshadowed by political tension and mistrust within the academy and a perpetual domination of white privilege that is still largely regarded as normal practice. However, the feedback from students and to a lesser degree from co-teaching staff (all non-Indigenous) regarding their level of new understanding gained through an Indigenous standpoint was overwhelmingly positive. I regard my experiences and these responses as a sign that interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary engagement is important to create a counter-narrative through an undisciplined lens however an ongoing tension of institutional racism is yet to be reconciled.

5.3.2 Sheelagh's Story—Learning on Country

Indigenous Land and Culture is a second-year mandatory course in the Indigenous Studies major offered by the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at The University of Sydney. Students learn about Country and Indigenous relationships with, responsibilities to care for place and the maintenance of land, language and culture. The connection between Country (land, sky and waters) to social and emotional well-being for Indigenous peoples is explored (Corvalan et al. 2005; Grieves 2006). A rights-based perspective is used to investigate Indigenous political history and activism in maintaining and protecting Country and culture. Students survey local and international case studies to illuminate the links between land, cultural rights and human rights (see, for example, Herman 2016; Sehlin MacNeil 2018; Wall 2017). Undergraduate students from all disciplines of Humanities and Social Sciences can elect to undertake the major as part of their degree. There are two mandatory pre-requisite courses: *Introduction to Indigenous Cultures* and *Introduction to Indigenous History* undertaken in year one of their studies. Learning on Country,

place-based learning and place literacies take centre stage. Somerville (2007) describes place as being "both a specific local place and a metaphysical imaginary place" (p. 149) and it is to this place that students undertake their studies.

One assessment involves a 900-word task with two parts: (1) a small group site visit followed by a 20-min classroom presentation; and, (2) drafting of a letter to the Metropolitan Land Council and/or Sydney City Council that reflects on their visit. Using the Barani (Indigenous word meaning yesterday) website provided by the City of Sydney Council (n.d.), students select a site of significance that illuminates "Aboriginal Sydney" (Hickson 2002; Irish 2017). As a small group, they visit the site and report on (a) what they expect to find; (b) what they found; (c) what was missing (if anything); and (d) their own critical reflections. The drafting of the letter in part two is designed to demonstrate to students that they have a voice and power and responsibility to disrupt and partake in decolonisation. In the *Unit of Study Survey* that is undertaken voluntarily and anonymously completed by students at the end of the course, one student stated, "This course helped me find my political voice" (UOSS 2018). During the course emotions run high at times as students, Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike, come to understand how hidden and normal racialised narratives of colonisation, persist into the present.

5.3.3 Melissa's Story —'Indigenisation' of Geography Curricula

Geographers hold the concept of place very dear and the discipline has a history of exploring and interrogating its importance. Yet in Australia, any discussion of place cannot be undertaken without the notion of Country, which involves belonging to, identifying with and being part of —a powerful concept and fundamental to understanding Indigenous experience and perspectives (Herman 2015).

Consequently, teaching geography in Australia brings with it a responsibility to also introduce the idea of Country, as well as bringing students to an understanding that the place we all live in was in fact invaded, is Indigenous Country, always will be and that sovereignty was never ceded (McKenna and Wardle 2019). In contemporary times, students are being asked to re-orient the geography of their minds through critical reflection and are being pushed to understand and appreciate the historical and colonial legacy of the landscapes they now study (Howlett et al. 2013). Yet this is easier said than done to counter the historical role of the Western academy in colonising the production and dissemination of knowledge about Indigenous people. Another challenge is to avoid falling into pre-determined and often romanticised ideals around connection to Country, as McLaren (2009) states, the "practice of hegemony manipulates what stories are told and how they are told and who listens" (p. 67). Building critical engagement with the idea of Indigeneity into curricula matters because "critical geographies of indigeneity insist upon querying the ways universal (i.e. colonial) ontologies operate on Indigenous subjects and spaces" (Radcliffe 2017, p. 41).

To address these issues and embed a teaching practice that assists in achieving this re-orientation, the Department of Geography, Environment and Population (GEP) in the University of Adelaide, participated in a university-wide programme to Indigenise and build decolonised curricula. One subject that was re-developed was called *Indigenous Peoples and the Environment*, with learning outcomes focussed on developing ideas of Indigenous connection to place, the impact of colonisation and how they affect current environmental management. A first step to working towards appropriate and effective Indigenisation of curricula was the establishment of an Indigenous Advisory Group (IAG) which was composed of Indigenous academics, Indigenous students and traditional land owners. There are genuine issues in institutional contexts where the employment of Indigenous staff is limited and where non-Indigenous staff do not perceive the necessity of embedding their own curricula with key messages and content

(McLaughlin and Whatman 2011). The IAG offered a range of expertise and knowledge during the project and articulated a set of key principles and ideas for Indigenisation of GEP curricula which were subsequently implemented as the first step in the curricula enrichment/reform process. These included decolonised practices such as Indigenous-led content delivery, respect and permission for inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges in teaching and co-design and authorship of content. All courses were aligned with these principles and formal Indigenisation of curricula embedded within key narratives and storylines, via the use of visual and aural delivery mechanisms; the development of place-based assessments and the use of co-cultural conversations in safe spaces.

For the course *Indigenous Peoples and the Environment* in embedding key narratives and storylines, the course was structured around three story frames: (1) pre-colonial Indigenous society; (2) colonisation and its impacts; and (3) contemporary Indigenous experience. Given the course focus, these three frames provided opportunities to discuss and emphasise content related to working on Country and the multifaceted ways in which the relationship between Indigenous people and the environment contributes to cultural expression. In order to ensure exposure to as many Indigenous peoples and voices as possible, the course was structured around aural and visual content delivery and the delivery of content/sessions by Indigenous colleagues.

Participation in the Indigenous enrichment of curricula process has necessitated deep thinking about what Indigenising curriculum means, what it looks like and what decolonised and enriched teaching is. While the use of visual and aural modes of delivery is very powerful, in many instances and over time, the Indigenous peoples on the screen may have passed away and there are questions around whether it is respectful to still show these films/images. This debate is beyond the scope of this chapter. Overall, this narrative demonstrates the need to explore the limits of self-reflexivity and build a genuinely anti-colonial and decolonising legacy that creates safe spaces for Country and culture as part of an undisciplined philosophy in education.

5.3.4 Kristina's Story—Decolonising Design Through "Hi/Stories of Change"

The course *Hi/Stories of Change* were offered to masters level students at the Umeå Institute of Design (UID) at Umeå University, in Sweden, in 2018–19. Nicholas Torretta and colleagues (in press) co-ordinated the course as a part of his Ph. D. project. The course was created to provide students opportunities to gain critical views of design and their own positions in society rather than perpetuating the norm: "the way that I saw the education, it would just gather a lot of people from many places in the world and teach them how to design as European white male designers" (N. Torretta, personal communication, Sept 24, 2020). Torretta explained: "The whole course was based around trying to be relational, which is central in Indigenous methodologies, those were the major things we took from Indigenous and feminist perspectives, being relational and positionality" (N. Torretta, personal communication, Sept 24, 2020). He drew on Margaret Kovach (2010, p. 7) who points out that "We know what we know from where we stand" and in the course posed the question: "But do we know where we stand?".

Umeå University is located in northern Sweden, on the Swedish side of Sápmi. Sápmi is the Sámi homeland, stretching over the northern parts of Norway, Sweden and Finland as well as the Kola Peninsula. Sámi people are the only Indigenous people in the European Union and like other Indigenous peoples around the globe, they experience continuous colonial and oppressive structures (Jaakkola et al. 2018; Alfred and Corntassel 2005). Asking students to explore where they stood meant discovering that their university was in fact located on Sámi land—and that the places nearby, that they would travel to and learn about, were Sámi reindeer grazing lands.

The *Hi/Stories of Change* course was a collaboration between the UID, Sámiid Riikkasearvi[2] and Sámi Duodji.[3] It included a series of lectures on Sámi history, colonisation and coloniality, sustainability and oppression, situated knowledges and extractive violence (Sehlin MacNeil 2017); a fieldwork component where students stayed with Sámi families in different locations; a participatory "decolonial check" workshop; and a final interactive exhibition (Torretta et al., in press). At the onset of the course, there was fear, both in the school and amongst the students: "I think there was a very big fear in the institute to work with Sámi communities and Indigenous peoples that they had not engaged at all with" (N. Torretta, personal communication, Sept 24, 2020). The fear proved to be a success factor as "it made [the students] reflect and realise how they were positioned and how they were relating to people—it allowed them to be more humble and open" (N. Torretta, personal communication, Sept 24, 2020). The course had to fit in with an already established syllabus, a challenging exercise as it was focussed on traditional industrial design. However, the outcome was rewarding: "It showed that it is possible to break at least a piece of the more general frames of design" (N. Torretta, personal communication, Sept 24, 2020).

By positioning the course firmly in a local context and encouraging students to explore their positions, both on the land and as individuals in society and academia, the course enabled detailed learning about cultures and human relations, how those affect aspects of design and how design, in turn, affects people. This multilayered exploration of the self in relation to colonial structures and the personal and collective experiences the students had during the course, were reflected in a final exhibition of students' design work, with great focus on issues such as racism and discrimination, colonial privilege, land grabbing and extractive violence.

5.4 Part 2: An Overarching Narrative of Theory, Practice and Presence

5.4.1 Theorising Through an Undisciplined Approach

Two theoretical frameworks have been used to unpack the concept of disciplinary and undisciplined intellectualism through the centring or privileging of Indigenous Knowledges and philosophies. Both IST (Foley 2006; Moreton-Robinson 2013; Nakata 2007) and CRP (Dunbar 2008; Jennings and Lyn 2005; Page et al. 2019) provide a toolkit for deconstructing power relationships, highlighting diverse and oppressed positionalities and critiquing white privilege through the construction of race. Within IST, the lived experiences and worldviews of First Nations peoples are honoured, revealing how social and intellectual inequalities are socially constructed and re-informing dominant knowledges to enable culturally responsive solutions. The momentum for culturally responsive pedagogies is based on the learner's right to celebrate cultural identity and for rights of Indigenous peoples to an education that nurtures Indigenous cultures as encoded in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (Holt 2020). CRP provides critical deconstructions of race at the centre of pedagogical approaches that emerge from critical reflections of past thinking, racially profiled practices and hidden messages in the curriculum. The critique of race in this chapter is therefore necessary to understand tools of oppression that directly impact the lives of Indigenous Australians (Bodkin-Andrews and Carlson 2016; Daniels-Mayes 2021). Racialised discourse is linked to perpetuating poorer life outcomes for Indigenous peoples and an Australian population is hindered in developing deeper understanding of the complexity and diversity within the lives of

[2] Sámiid Riikkasearvi is a politically independent interest organization for Sámi reindeer husbandry, Sámi businesses and social issues in Sweden.

[3] Sámi Duodjo Sameslöjdsstiftelsen is a foundation for Sámi handicraft.

Indigenous Australians (Martin 2003; Moran 2005; Vass 2012). These two frameworks provide a matrix for critical deconstruction of pedagogy and curriculum to create an Indigenous-centred and transformative critical discourse that emphasises culturally responsive teaching and learning within the academy.

Nakata (2002) along with Mackinlay and Barney (2014) argue that attempts to decolonise education through interdisciplinary teaching can risk conforming to Western philosophies and post-colonising disciplines without digression from the colonial spaces of systemic white privilege. An example of this is seen in coursework where the mandating of pre-requisites is fundamental to building prior knowledge to facilitate deep critical reflection that disrupts rather than reinforces post-colonising positions. Furthermore, we tease out how to build an ethno-relative and culturally responsive approach that effectively and consistently centres and privileges Indigenous Knowledges and philosophies in graduate units from across disciplines, so that students become critically and racially aware and in a position to advocate for social justice (Mackinlay and Barney 2014). The conclusive section of this chapter reflects on three key characteristics embedded within CRP: the negotiation of power; the critique of self; and the need to be counter-hegemonic (Jennings and Lyn 2005). These characteristics offer a framework to deconstruct higher education's unique responsibilities in realising social justice for Indigenous peoples and provide a more robust education for the wider society in Australia and Sweden. The messiness of borrowing and blending from various fields, theoretical frameworks and disciplines create a space for theorising that constitutes an emerging or undisciplined space.

5.4.2 Exposing the Biases of How History Favours the Oppressor

> Teachers have fought for our minds. Governments have taken our children. Academics all over the world have quarried our culture. (Mattingley and Hampton 1988, p. 127)

Set against this background of four autoethnographic narratives and theoretical deconstruction of relevant literature we highlight the manifestation of some key factors in teaching practice in Australia and Sweden. In reflecting on our experiences of attempting to implement culturally responsive practices, the tribal nature of universities stands as an intimate and often paralysing force constantly impacting the role of educators seeking to undo their colonial practices, or assert Indigenous standpoints within the academy (Caruso 2021; Gilbey and Bunda 2017; Howlett et al. 2013). The dilemma that arises in many teaching spaces in higher education is the oversimplified binary between Indigenous-Western, or primitive-modern in attempting to engage students in a critically engaging learning experience (Nakata et al. 2012).

To create a historical understanding of oppression and survival, we turn to the historical experiences, concepts and intellectual standpoints that have shaped this evolution. For centuries Indigenous representations, teaching pedagogies and curriculum design and content were informed by narratives of racialised thinking, with non-western knowledges and philosophies being exoticised and ridiculed by mainstream educational institutions (Martin 2003). Little thought or consequence was attributed to self-critique of teaching pedagogies including the power structures and relationships in education (Freire 1970) and the direct impacts these continue to have on accessibility in higher education and research for Indigenous peoples (Barney 2018). The historical denial of Indigenous intellect enables the hegemonic and monocultural standpoints of higher education and research to maintain ethnocentric and post-colonising approaches within scholarship and research. This denial informs school-based education and research elitism in the form of exclusion and cultural superiority, as well as a growing movement of Indigenous resistance (Gillan et al. 2017). Education has played a major role in the erasure of First Nations peoples and cultures and remains underpinned by theoretical constructs that struggle to break free of colonialism and whiteness.

5.4.3 Theoretical Constructs of First Nations Peoples and Cultures

Interrogations of invader-coloniser constructs of race are necessary in establishing a framework for educational rights and freedoms in a post-mission era (Daniels-Mayes 2020) in Australia and elsewhere. Intergenerational traumas of school-based systemic violence against Indigenous people is common to many living in colonised countries such as Australia and Sweden (Atkinson 2002; Norlin 2017) largely on the basis of how race is perceived and enacted as a means of control. The colonial era of race biology, eugenics and Social Darwinism infiltrated our education systems to eradicate what was deemed by invader-coloniser cultures as undesirable characteristics including physical, genetic and behavioural elements compared to the Eurocentric socially constructed white European race (Daniels-Mayes 2016; Foley 2013). Likewise, the legacy of race biology and the role of the State in facilitating racial superiority (Foucault cited in Moreton-Robinson 2009, p. 64) resonates with the Swedish State Institute for Racial Biology which was in operation from 1922. McEachrane (2018) writes of two publications released in 1926 and 1927:

> These books showcased a survey of the height, skull shape, eye, hair, and skin colour of about 50,000 persons, replete with illustrations and descriptions of the racial makeup of Sweden according to categories that were popular at the time. Majority ethnic Swedes were described as a superior Nordic race, minority Finns belonged to an inferior East Baltic/Slavic stock, the minority Saami's in the North were the most inferior of white Europeans, whereas the Roma people in the country belonged to another inferior race altogether. (p. 478)

While the Swedish State Institute for Racial Biology is long gone, the materials are still available to view in an archive at Uppsala University, including pictures of Sámi people without their clothes. The materials display, both in text and pictures, the perceived importance of race as a measurement of superiority and the consequential stereotypical attitudes toward Indigenous peoples. It is a part of Swedish history that has shaped and continues to shape relationships between Sámi and Swedes (Sikku and Griffin 2020). Stereotyped images and perceptions of Indigenous Australian peoples featured in Australian school-based texts during the 1960s and 1970s. These included high school texts such as *Landmarks: A history of Australia to the present day* (Blackmore et al. 1969) and *Birth of a Nation* (Driscoll and Elphink 1974) which created culturally unsafe spaces for Indigenous Australian students in the classroom and perpetuates the oppression of Indigenous Australian sovereignties in schools and universities. Emphasis on global exploration, waves of navigation including the Dutch and Spanish, the search for a penal settlement, the burgeoning agricultural industry and the annexation of British governance feature strongly in the first five chapters (Blackmore et al. 1969) and is entirely absent of any mention of sovereign nations already occupying the lands and coastal regions of the Australian continent. In chapter six (Blackmore et al. 1969) *New Lands New People* is the first substantive reference to Aborigines [sic] and the problem-solving quest to deal with this dying race. Blackmore et al. (1969) briefly note "… the Bass Strait sealers regarded the Aborigines of Van Diemen's Land as less than human and often gave them strong drink to start a fight so they could enjoy the spectacle of men butchering each other" (p. 51) and "Aborigines proved to be no problem … simply killed off or died as they came into contact with white man's diseases" (p. 58). These barbaric perspectives show incredible biases of white privilege, reinforced by the rapid shift of attention to creating the impetus for immigration as a strategy for relieving poverty across Europe and developing agriculture and other capitalist industries in the new lands.

The perpetuation of intergenerational racism regarding Indigenous Australians through the doctrine of discovery and settlement was written into the pages of history books and embedded in the minds of Australians through a racialised superiority model of race biology. Unintentional perhaps but not accidental, these ethnocentric texts perpetuated a racist colonial discourse of

whiteness that justified dispossession through the undermining of First Nations sovereignties. Many of the concepts of erasure and disempowerment have created a colonial modernity based on Eurocentric oneness, unity and systemic white privilege. A persistent psychological terra nullius (Collins-Gearing and Osland 2010; Matthews 2012) is evident by a narrative construct that remains fixated with colonial racialised discourses to create a hidden curriculum reflecting a white dominant discourse based on cultural values and practices believed to be superior (Rahman 2013).

The racialised construction of Indigenous Australians as inferior to non-Indigenous people led to subsequent policy-making legacies (Gillborn 2005) in areas such as giftedness based on Eurocentric criteria that disproportionately underrepresent Indigenous Australian students. The dehumanisation of Indigeneity has left a gap in the Australian psyche (Matthews 2012) that perpetuates racialised deficit thinking and policy-making across Australia. This binary of superior-inferior racialisation created by invader-coloniser discourses underpins a subjugating message via hidden curriculum as noted by the persistence of a psychological terra nullius in teaching and learning (Collins-Gearing and Osland 2010; Matthews 2012). Educators and PSTs must engage in IST and CRP to develop their capacity to identify and disrupt colonialism and racism in their learning and teaching in order to minimise risk of student disengagement and alienation. Educators need to become culturally responsive pedagogues in order to avoid perpetuating racist pedagogies and policies that loom large in the education system at all levels (Daniels-Mayes 2016; Gillborn 2005). The challenge for educators is to be fully equipped in this undisciplined framework to effectively close the gap between outdated racist pedagogy and culturally responsive approaches.

5.5 First Nations Presence Within Education

First Nations educators asserting a presence within the academy in colonised countries highlight the structural and cultural inequalities through sharing their experiences of embodied and emotional labour required to work effectively in the teaching space (Pechenkina and Anderson 2011; Gilbey and Bunda 2017; Poitras Pratt and Hanson 2020). This emotional labour is sometimes described as pain associated with the work of First Nations educators who take risks as they teach and consequently bear the frustrations in their personal and professional lives. Risk takes the form of having to grapple with deep-seated racism among students and colleagues, making a stand against the compromising pressures and inequalities of colonial history and refusing to succumb to the hierarchical decision-making and workload commitment in universities (Morgan 2003). This embodied and emotional labour exists in the context of realisation of the limited success of multiple SDGs that set targets focussed on deficits rather than strengths within Indigenous populations, for example, SDG Target 4.5 (United Nations 2021) which groups Indigenous, disabled and vulnerable people. SDG Target 10.2 focuses on reducing inequality through inclusive practices while Target 10.3) focuses on ensuring equal opportunity and policy reform (United Nations 2021). Since its inception in 2008, the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (Australian Government 2020) has increasingly emphasised a sustainable approach and outcomes that specifically targets empowerment through decision-making and improved institutional access and culturally responsive services. Concerns remain regarding lack of consultation with Indigenous peoples to develop Indigenous-centred indicators of development (Schultz 2020) and structural inequalities within education \ such as \ the need for specialised research and teacher support regarding cross-cultural knowledge construction in teaching practice and policy development (Gillan et al. 2017; Burt and Gunstone 2018).

Knowledge construction and knowledge transfer in schools continue to maintain a style of transmission that favours knowledge primarily of relevance to the dominant white society (Vass 2012). An overview of the policy trajectories in Indigenous education (Fry 2020; Gillan et al. 2017) exposes whose perspectives and

standpoints are validated and raise questions about the racialised and nationwide approach that leans toward a continuation of Indigenous Australians being understood through a non-Indigenous lens and governed as a homogenous group through a focus on disadvantage and deficit. Emphasis on race-based policy frameworks positions education equity as a moral obligation toward Indigenous students rather than good policy and practice in education (Vass 2012). Arguably this perpetuates state-based management, reinforces post-colonising assimilation practices and propagates new waves of oppression that fail to provide equitable learning sites for Indigenous Australians.

The continued lack of institutional validation of Indigenous expertise is evident from the frequency in which Indigenous Knowledges are perceived as new and turbulent understandings for students (Poitras Pratt and Hanson 2020) and this is substantiated by claims that "… an anti-colonial critique is a fundamental beginning point for unsettling entry-level students" presuppositions about Indigenous-Western relations' (Nakata et al. 2012, p. 121). In disciplines such as History, the decolonising of women's histories and Indigenous people's histories intersect to create patriarchal denial prompting a counter-narrative to the colonial versions of history on a personal as well as professional level and a counter-narrative to racial assimilation of Indigenous Australians (Caruso 2021). The learning and teaching space for PSTs remains a critical site for centring Indigenous Knowledges and engaging directly with Indigenous people to address the racialised perceptions held by many entering the teaching profession (Daniels-Mayes 2021). Yet there remains a perpetual hesitancy by non-Indigenous staff and students to engage in Indigenous Knowledges and philosophies (Gilbey and Bunda 2017). The contestation of IST within History maintains a problematic space for Indigenous teachers due to a widespread absence of IST within the educational experiences of students and staff.

The persistence of hegemonic discourses embedded within systemic white privilege that Indigenous academics and educators in Australian higher education frequently encounter is claimed as a mix of both pleasure and pain of being Aboriginal in the university (Caruso 2021; Gilbey and Bunda 2017) and consists of structural and relational challenges often seemingly unnoticed and made invisible by the university sector. First Nations academics speaking back to the othering of knowledge as reflected in our autoethnographic narratives are asserting our experiential standpoint and utilising IST in our pedagogy. This positionality draws on our Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) rights that may not always be valued in a self-determining way or in accordance with international frameworks such as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (Janke 2019). Teaching pedagogy based on the principles of ICIP and standpoint theory is potentially transformative especially when it facilitates decentring of systemic white privilege across all levels of teaching, coursework design and evaluation.

Contributions from Indigenous scholars in science education are linked to a global phenomenon whereby they have rarely been seen as innovative and a normal part of academic evolution, instead such contributions often remain subjugated through a positivist tradition of re-appropriation, removal and reduction (Stewart-Harawira 2013). This favouring of Eurocentric discourses and practices as noted earlier (Bunda 2017) constitutes a phenomenon of resistance and oppression that is counter-productive to the notion of quality education for all people as expressed in SDG 4 (United Nations 2021). Another example is the perpetuation of loss of Indigenous languages (Schultz 2020) which has implications for cultural identities, cultural diversity and connections to people and country across Australia; likewise in the Arctic access to quality education is limited by remoteness and poor infrastructure (Degai and Petrove 2021). The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), particularly Goal SDG 4: Quality Education and SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities (UN 2021) highlights equality and equity in education and learning outcomes but is clearly not sufficient in driving the necessary changes to

curb ongoing oppression of ICIP rights from a teaching and learning perspective.

5.5.1 Creating a Space for Indigenous Knowledges in Education

The disconnect between pedagogical practice and policy, curriculum and assessment practices signals a lack of cultural responsiveness, including a critically reflexive teaching approach based on critical pedagogy. Academic inclusion of knowledge from a First Nations standpoint specifically demands attention to theoretical frameworks that engage with complexities of recognition and identity, ownership and sovereignty and the centring of Indigenous Knowledges and standpoints. Indigenous Knowledges and First Nations peoples remain largely on the peripheral of these artificial and colonial structures, sustaining an academic colonialism that is "antagonistic to other belief systems" (Smith 1999, p. 128). Theoretical unpacking of systemic resistance by mainstream educators requires the use of First Nations' ways of knowing such as metaphors relating to land, water and air (Tuck and Yang 2012) in order to interrogate the culture of Western disciplines and their tendencies to protect and nurture people and intellect located within. The history of excluding First Nations standpoints and peoples through the othering of knowledge that does not traditionally belong within such privileged boundaries can only be addressed by a strong presence of Indigenous people.

The reversal of racialised language is another strategy that examines the organisational structures and disciplinary spaces within academia (Trowler et al. 2012; Manathunga and Brew 2012), to contextualise the terminology within academia that dissects and minimises Indigenous peoples and cultures. The term tribes used to describe Western knowledge disciplines creates a re-assignment of this term as a way of exposing a tendency to "…fossilise outdated disciplinary boundaries …" (Trowler et al. 2012, p. 52) that perpetuate a "… safety of disciplinary rivers …" (Manathunga and Brew 2012, p. 53) for the privileged peoples and knowledges who belong to this space. This reversal of language use exposes tribalism and protectionism through a disruptive presence influenced by Indigenous intellectualism and acts as a mechanism for challenging archaic definitions and potentially creating a new undisciplined space.

5.6 Part 3: A Critical and Contextual Analysis—Findings and Recommendations

> …contextualizing Western Knowledge allows it to be accessible in a moment and in a way that suits individual learning needs, that is, it allows control over pace and increased self-direction in learning, as students make their own pathways through fields of information. (Nakata 2002, p. 288)

As our narrative reflections reveal, a new era of interdisciplinary or undisciplined theorising and constructing is emerging where more equitable safer spaces for Indigenous people in education is directly linked to culturally responsive approaches and the normalising of an Indigenous lens within education institutions. The small numbers of Indigenous staff employed in teaching and research roles is significantly lower than their non-Indigenous colleagues and there remains a sense of invisibility and non-recognition of the substantial contribution made by non-academic staff (Pechenkina and Anderson 2011). Institutional commitment through Reconciliation Action Plans with measurable employment outcomes is one strategy, however, the need for a decolonised workforce is fundamental to shifting the inequalities for Indigenous staff and providing more robust learning outcomes through greater acknowledgement of Indigenous Knowledges as an undisciplined area of intellectual stimulation.

Many of the issues highlighted earlier also relate to the need for an increased presence of Indigenous people and voices within academia. Indigenous staff numbers and student success at university level are explicitly linked to and show a pattern of underrepresentation, lack of mentorship and enormous pressure both in the research sector as well as in teaching

programmes (Pechenkina and Anderson 2011). New programmes subsidised by government funding may enable some initiatives to create lasting change, but questions remain as to the extent to which they will facilitate the centring of Indigenous epistemologies, ontologies and axiologies within these newly created and emerging interdisciplinary spaces. IST alongside CRP creates critically reflective and reflexive spaces in which teaching and learning is inspired through innovative thinking, yet is sometimes problematic when it remains uncomfortable and a site for contestation and resistance rather than a healthy space for debate and critical reflection. We recommend that the safety net of discipline-specific rivers within academia must continue to be openly challenged to drive inspiration for positive change and reform rather than an imitation of what came before the Western imaginaries of Indigeneity, erased Indigenous philosophies, brokered arrangements of oppression and systemic white privilege.

Next, we reflect back on three key characteristics embedded with CRP, namely the negotiation of power; the critique of self; and the need to be counter-hegemonic (Jennings and Lyn 2005).

5.6.1 Re-negotiation of Power

Recognition and re-negotiation of power imbalances in educational institutions require decision-making processes that challenge the economic frameworks of income and expenditure, future marketing and preservation of elitist research expertise that currently dominates. Designing and delivering culturally responsive education requires critical recognition that Indigenous Knowledges have historically been oppressed and erased through colonialism, notably the first phase of moving away from appropriation of Indigenous peoples and cultures (Morgan 2003). The reinstatement of Indigenous-centred epistemologies demands a student-centred or inquiry-based approach within teaching practices and an approach to curriculum based on validation of Indigenous expertise and Indigenous standpoints and perspectives, as illustrated in our case studies. As Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars, we argue that Indigenous knowledge and expertise need to be centralised within the decision-making structures of schools and universities to ensure they are authenticated through engagement with Indigenous peoples directly and embedded as a core part of education rather than a subsidiary or marginalised set of experiential or experimental ways of teaching and learning.

Within the context of good governance of culturally responsive teaching in Australian universities and schools, this approach can be directly linked to Australia's national framework for teacher graduate qualities known as the *Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership standard*s (AITSL 2017). The standards outline a set of professional standards and levels of cultural competence enshrined in policy at provincial as well as national levels. Indigenous scholars are cautiously optimistic of anti-colonial frameworks and theories for education but argue that polarising Indigenous and Western knowledge oversimplifies real-life experiences and aspirations. Instead, a complex understanding of knowledge interface is required and re-learning and re-thinking outside of a colonial mindset take time to avoid complacency or "slippage" (Nakata et al. 2012, p. 125) back into a comfort zone of Western disciplinary thought and colonial practices. The challenge still ahead is for practices of teachers in schools and educators in higher education to become more active in interpreting the policy frameworks that govern inclusive and culturally responsive education in an appreciative and accommodating manner. Each must work harder to facilitate the disrupting and countering of racialised narratives of history, place greater emphasis on building positive relationships with Indigenous families and become good partners and leaders in dismantling the structural and power inequalities within education institutions.

5.6.2 Critical Self-reflection

Continuous self-critique requires a sensitive but decisive reflexive response for change by educators and students and is at the heart of centring

Indigenous Knowledges and philosophies within curriculum and pedagogical best practice. Tertiary educators must adopt critical self-awareness of their own positionality, to become skilled at constructing a contextually astute systemic approach to reconciliation and transformation, to not shy away from Indigenous intellectualities and sovereignties and to develop a deep respect for identity and self-actualisation.

CPR argues that racism needs to be placed at the centre of critical reflection (Dunbar 2008; Jennings and Lyn 2005; Daniels-Mayes 2021). Critical understandings of the structural and relational inequities and which players are dominant and racially marginalised in education help to critique non-Indigenous and colonial narratives that persist in our methods of teaching, our approach to curriculum development and our ways of assessing student success. In reflecting on the role of Indigenous educators it is vital to continuously assess the contributions made to the teaching and learning space and to ensure their intellectual and cultural property is not harvested and exploited in education. Higher education institutions need to recognise ICIP at a policy level to minimise chances of Indigenous approaches to curriculum design and pedagogical practice being exploited or erased and instead systemically value and recognise rather than erase Indigenous contributions.

5.6.3 The Need to Be Counter-Hegemonic

In reflecting back on our narratives, we conclude that to create counter-hegemonic cultures in our educational institutions we must first unlearn racial and cultural bias and how it continues to be reproduced. We must disrupt our understandings and thought processes via methods of learning about cultural relativity and this includes the critical review of our use of language, our ways of conceptualising Indigenous knowledge and our perceptions of where Indigenous knowledge and voices belong in education. As illustrated in the narrative reflections, the emphasis on building awareness of positionality is paramount to unlearning Indigeneity as a hegemonic single culture and replacing this thinking with an understanding and acceptance of Indigeneity as diverse, complex and vibrant. In the Swedish context, where students learn little or nothing about Sámi and Sápmi throughout their schooling, one Sámi scholar argues:

> It would also be beneficial for all students to get education in the Sámi thematic to gain a better understanding for the Indigenous peoples to diminish prejudice and the Sámi students would gain better understanding of the education with a Sámi contextualization. Including Àrbediehtu, the traditional knowledge, in the curricula is one possible way to accomplish intercultural education in Sweden. (Svonni 2015, p. 905)

Àrbediehtu is described as Sámi epistemology and ontology, a wide concept of knowledge and how it is acquired, about present, past and future, that is carried on from generation to generation (Svonni 2015; Porsanger 2010).

In the diverse Australian context of many nations of peoples and localities and vastly different experiences of colonisation for Indigenous Australians, a widespread loss of language exists, hence the need to employ terms such as Country in defining Indigenous Australian connections between people, culture and land:

> Country is much more than a place. Rock, tree, river, hill, animal, human – all were formed of the same substance by the Ancestors who continue to live in land, water, sky. Country is filled with relations speaking language and following Law, no matter whether the shape of that relation is human, rock, crow, wattle. Country is loved, needed, and cared for, and country loves, needs, and cares for her peoples in turn. Country is family, culture, identity. Country is self. (Kwaymullina 2005, p. 1)

The persistence of Indigenous Australian cultural traditions requires counter-hegemonic discourses in education such as an ideology that moves beyond environmental exploitation (Nakata et al. 2012). Teachers must be equipped at engaging students in anti-colonial dialogue to develop greater understanding of the continuity of cultural diversity such as the Australian Indigenous languages that have survived the impacts of invasion.

5.7 Final Thoughts

We recommend that challenging mainstream discourses in diverse education communities continue to occur through the privileging or centring of Indigenous standpoints and perspectives and Indigenous Knowledges within the academy. As more academic institutions genuinely place a value on the presence and voices of Indigenous contributors there will be greater opportunity for fruitful collaborations through respectful relationships and understandings of Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing. This will also help in working towards the achievement of the global goals developed by the United Nations in relation to quality education for all (SDG4) and reduction of inequality within and among countries (SDG10), particularly those 2030 targets relating to Indigenous peoples. The collaboration between Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars from Australia and Sweden as demonstrated in this chapter is an illustration of possibility, of hope and of social justice in practice. We ask that all educators in academia consider becoming culturally responsive in their teaching through an undisciplined lens to enable greater engagement with Indigenous Knowledges. Our vision is for Indigenous Knowledges and Indigenous scholars to occupy a central place within the academy rather than a place in the margins.

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Dr. Jillian Marsh is an Adnyamathanha person from South Australia's Flinders Ranges region, the home of Adnyamathanha for thousands of years. She currently works at the University of Newcastle in the School of Architecture and Built Environment. Jillian's doctoral candidacy in Environmental Studies involved a critical examination of black-white relations in the context of land use. Her community-based educational work has been recognised as a recipient of multiple awards including the Jill Hudson Environmental Award South Australia, and the Nuclear Free Futures International Award.

Dr. Sheelagh Daniels-Mayes is a Kamilaroi woman from the East Coast of Australia. She is the former coordinator of the Sydney Indigenous Research Network (SIRN) at The University of Sydney and lectures and conducts research in Aboriginal Education and Indigenous Studies and methodologies, in addition to her work as a disability scholar and activist. Sheelagh has published extensively on disrupting of colonial narratives, racism in education, and Aboriginal deficit for pre-service teachers.

Dr. Kristina Sehlin MacNeil is a researcher in Várdduo—Centre for Sami Research at Umeå University in Sweden, and Co-Director of the Umeå University Faculty of Arts Doctoral College. She has a background in peace and conflict work and study, holds a Ph.D. in Ethnology and was awarded the Uppsala University Umeåfond Research Prize in 2018 for her work in the area of culture and history in Northern Sweden. Her research interests include epistemologies, methodologies and ethics developed and used by Indigenous peoples, with her focus on extractive violence and lateral violence continuing through post-doctoral research and teaching.

Dr. Melissa Nursey-Bray is a human geographer whose tertiary career began as a Trainer Coordinator in TAFE, working with Indigenous rangers. She works in the Department of Geography, Environment and Population where she teaches into geography courses within the Faculty of Arts at The University of Adelaide. Melissa has interests in Indigenous knowledge, colonisation, and climate adaptation.

Insights into the Education System in India and the Current Impact of COVID-19 on Child Rights

6

Anjali Rana and Rachel Daniel

Abstract

This chapter provides insights into the education system in India and its metamorphosis from traditional face-to-face to virtual learning, focusing on the impact on child rights in the COVID-19 pandemic. The discontinuation of conventional teaching in educational institutions in India has significantly impacted primary, secondary and tertiary education in diverse ways. School students, however, are facing further complications that go beyond the deferment of classes. The achievements of the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of *Quality Education* (Goal 4) and *Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions* (Goal 16) have been set back due to COVID-19 exacerbating existing inequalities in the education system. The pandemic has further highlighted concerns for the safety of children in India who are affected by school closures. The issues relate to children's experiences in virtual environments as well as in their homes and communities. This chapter highlights the violation of child rights in India and its psychological impact on children, along with the long-term implications on the education sector. The authors conclude by critically examining the impact of a pandemic on children from a rights-based perspective and exploring future directions to work towards the fulfillment of the UN SDGs pertaining to quality education, peace and justice.

Keywords

Children's rights · COVID-19 pandemic · India · School education · Child abuse

Author Positioning Statements

My name is **Anjali**. Coming from a conventional subcontinent community in a patriarchal culture made me realise the value of education for upliftment. Though education is a universal human right, I was intrigued by the various class, gendered, caste, social and cultural barriers that hinder or support learning. Whenever the effect of any social phenomena is too disheartening or painful, it is easy to stick with the status quo and not talk. It does not encourage reflection. I am currently researching towards developing an understanding of how sexuality education is incorporated in initial teacher education programmes and I am passionate about child and youth rights. I am developing insights into cross-cultural international perspectives towards child rights and agency.

A. Rana (✉) · R. Daniel
Institute of Education, Arts and Community, Federation University Australia, Ballarat, VIC, Australia
e-mail: anjali.rana2@federation.edu.au

R. Daniel
e-mail: r.daniel@federation.edu.au

S. Weuffen et al. (eds.), *Inclusion, Equity, Diversity, and Social Justice in Education*, Sustainable Development Goals Series, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-5008-7_6

My name is **Rachel**. Though my ethnic roots are from the subcontinent, I have predominantly lived outside India. I did parts of my primary and secondary schooling in the Middle East where discrimination and abuse to women was a part and parcel of survival and racism by the natives against the expatriates was treated as a right. Immigrating to Australia in the beginning of the twenty-first century opened my eyes to respect, privilege and entitlement with "fair go" opportunity for hard work. I was able to reap the rewards towards completing a PhD and gaining an academic position. Given my experience, the current woes of the developing world are so often unrecognised in this prosperous nation and research offers valuable opportunities to reveal them.

6.1 Introduction

Universally, India is acclaimed for its innovative knowledge base in science and other areas of intellectual inquiry and it has a textual heritage that goes back several hundreds of years. Since India's independence in 1947, schools have fulfilled the majority of the needs of developing minds. The Indian higher education system is currently the third largest in the world, next to the United States and China (Rastogi and Priya 2020). According to The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (Parliament of India 2009), the Government of India (GOI) has provided free and compulsory education to all children aged between 6 and 14 years. In the current context of knowledge production and dissemination towards developing sustainable technologies in arithmetic, algebra, astronomy, medicine, chemistry, biology, logic and grammar, it is important that education in different discipline areas be preserved, nurtured and advanced. Nevertheless, the global COVID-19 pandemic has paused life, changed existing norms and has initiated a major crisis in the Indian educational system. The United Nations (UN) has reported that more than two billion children were in some form of lockdown across 186 countries with movement restrictions in place due to COVID-19 and hence, had limited or no access to schools, playgrounds and public parks as per quarantine requirements (Graber et al. 2021). Beginning with primary schools, the pandemic has steadily led to the shutdown of schools and universities across India. The discontinuation of conventional teaching in educational institutions in India has significantly impacted primary, secondary and tertiary teaching and learning in diverse ways. According to data released by the UN, across the globe, the school closures are keeping 90% of all students out of school, while remote learning remains out of reach for at least 500 million students, deepening the digital divide (Burke 2021). The impact of current measures to contain the spread of COVID-19 has produced unintentional consequences, which have impinged on children's rights (Australian Government 2021).

To counter the effects of school closures, the Indian government has tried to continue educational programs online using e-platforms, but digital infrastructure limitations have negatively impacted student learning. The pandemic has further highlighted concerns for the safety of children in India affected by school closures. There are safety issues that relate to children's experiences in virtual environments as well as in their homes and communities. In the virtual realm, children are vulnerable to risks involving the unhealthy use of technology, online extortion, and exploitation through child pornography, all of which can compromise children's right to quality education (SDG4), expose children to violence and threaten gender equality (SDG 5) (United Nations 2020). According to the SDG report 2020, "school closures and the economic downturn caused by COVID-19 may also increase rates of violence against children, child labour, child marriage and early pregnancies" (United Nations 2020, p. 33). There is the danger of a heightened risk of cyberbullying and sexual abuse in the virtual realm when initiation into the online realm occurs at a very young age (Lissak 2018).

The objective of this chapter is to underline the impact of COVID-19 on India's ability to fulfill the SDGs as well as the changes,

implications, and repercussions for students in the Indian education system. It aims to highlight the implications for children's prospects for quality education, their physical, social and psychological well-being, and their right of quality education in reference to the UN SDGs (United Nations 2020). This chapter will focus on Goal 4 Quality Education in India, demonstrating how disrupted education has affected students and focusing on COVID-19's impact on children's rights.

6.1.1 United Nations Sustainable Goals

The UN launched its 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015, aiming to achieve global peace and climate well-being, with an urgent call for action and participation by all nations. Seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were identified with strategies addressing health and education, economic growth, and global climate change for the conservation of the earth (United Nations 2020). SDG4 emphasizes *inclusive and equitable quality education to promote lifelong learning opportunities for all* and addresses human rights, gender equality, peace, and non-violence (United Nations 2020). Target 4a of SDG4, for example, aims to build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability, and gender-sensitive in "safe, non-violent, inclusive, effective learning environments for all" (United Nations 2021). Some of the indicators for Target 4a are ensuring access to the internet and computers for pedagogical purposes and infrastructure that has been suitably adapted for students with special needs.

The SDG report, released in 2020, provides an overview of the progress towards achievement of the SDGs with the advent of COVID-19. It reveals an outline of uneven progress since 2015 and predicts the initial impact of the pandemic on the goals and their targets (United Nations 2020). It was reported that the achievements of the SDGs 2030, Quality Education (SDG4) and Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions (SDG16) have been set back due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic which has exacerbated inequalities in education systems (United Nations 2020).

According to the SDGs 2020 report, prior to the pandemic, progress against the SDGs was "uneven" and the world was "not on track to meet 2030 education targets" (United Nations 2020, p. 32). Figure 6.1 shows a declining proportion of children and youth out of school at primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary levels. On a global level, the number of children and youth out of school has declined from 26% in the year 2000 to 19% and 17% in 2010 and 2018, respectively (United Nations 2020). Albeit slow, these statistics reflect an improvement in access to education, particularly for vulnerable and marginalized children across the world. With the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, the significant gains made toward the attainment of SDG4 were considered to be substantially under threat (UNFPA 2020; United Nations 2020). The report also predicted that the changes in schooling systems were likely to set back progress made so far on access to education.

6.1.2 School Closures

The COVID-19 pandemic instantaneously created a public health emergency in 2020. The Indian government imposed the first lockdown on 25 March 2020, which continues to the time of writing in August 2021 (The Hindu Net Desk 2020). The Government of India (GOI) announced the closures of all educational institutions on 16 March 2020 (The Times of India 2020). As the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus persisted, the government recommended that students stay home from school. India has experienced an extended school shutdown for more than 60 weeks (UNESCO 2021a). With each wave of the pandemic, schools have had to remain closed and this has furthered the necessity to have alternate measures of imparting education. The durability of the pandemic required a viable solution to the problem of children missing formal education. India has conventionally relied on face-to-face learning and teaching and

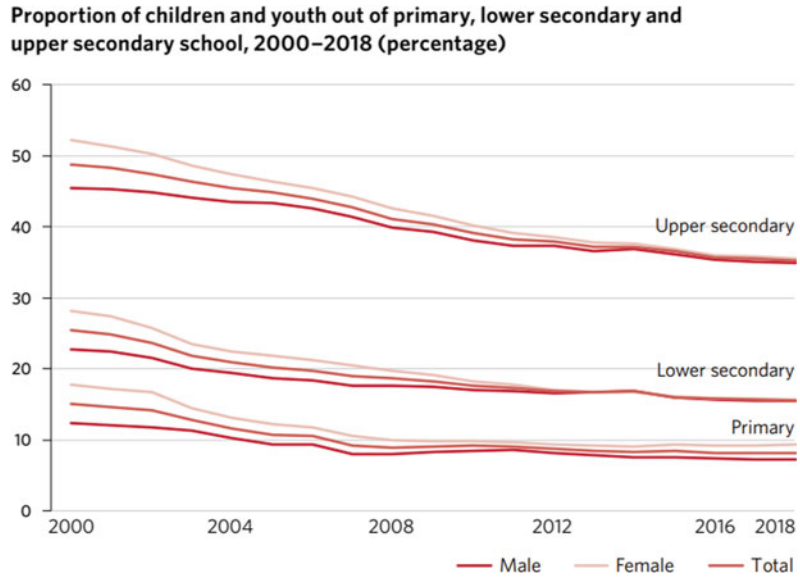

Fig. 6.1 Proportion of children and youth out of school 2000–2018 (United Nations 2020)

the change to online learning in lockdown has foregrounded the need for digital infrastructure (Jena 2020b, 2020c; Ministry of Human Resource Development 2020).

The GOI introduced initiatives to safeguard the right of children to education. To ensure continued learning for all, online learning platforms were promoted (Agnihotri 2021; Raj and Khare 2020; Government of India 2021a). National bodies such as the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) and the National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA) designed e-learning platforms, workshops, and learning material for students and teachers (Government of India 2021a; Jena 2020c). The aim of initiatives put in place by the Ministry of Education (GOI) was to alleviate the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the acquisition of education by children. Some of the digital initiatives involve e-learning portals (DISHA Portal), an e-learning app (e-Pathshala), mass media (Swayam Prabha) transmitting educational content over the television, online platforms that integrate interactive resources and games using several languages for students and teachers (Jena, 2020b, 2020c). Social networks and other online platforms such as Zoom, Google meet, Facebook and YouTube have been used to ensure education for all (Jena 2020c). The Ministry of Education dossier (2021) lists the guidelines for digital education, health and safety, training programs for teachers, resources for teachers and students, mental health and physical health, and nutritional avenues (Government of India 2021a). These initiatives are consistent with the SDGs Quality Education (Goal 4) and SDG Good Health and Wellbeing (Goal 3) (United Nations 2020, 2021).

Online programs, using technology on a variety of e-learning platforms to maintain access to learning, are commendable. However, some factors play an essential role in safeguarding education that needs careful planning and execution. School closures created a ripple effect in the lives of students. It has impacted their learning outcomes, social development, nutrition, and safety (Alvi and Gupta 2020). Mihm (2021) has reflected on how pandemics have shaped the world we live in today. These changes affect the social order, living standards, the economy, and religious observance in everyday life. As also predicted by the SDG 2020 Report, the impact can significantly outlast the pandemic (Gale 2021; Mihm 2021; United Nations 2020). Worldwide, school closures may reverse years of progress in access to education (UNESCO 2021b, 2021c). School students are facing complications that go beyond the deferment of

classes. Simultaneously, youth progression into careers or higher education has been halted due to frozen graduations or postponed or canceled examinations (Jena 2020a). It has disastrous implications for an individual's future progression into higher studies or employment.

As can be observed in Table 6.1, India has a high number of learners affected by school closures. As per the global monitoring of school closures caused by COVID-19, Indian schools remain partially open with 320,713,810 affected learners (Jamnik and Rathod 2020). Ferguson (2021) comments that the preparation of programs or allocation of duties to schools and teachers, for instance in the form of guidelines, does not guarantee a formal online learning opportunity for children from a disadvantaged background. The primary issue is access to technology that is inconsistent between states and urban and rural areas. Other major issues are those concerning remote learning, lack of digital infrastructure, and restricted digital literacy.

6.1.3 Remote Learning and Lack of Digital Infrastructure

Online learning has widened the divide between regional and metropolitan areas and between the privileged and the underprivileged, as access to technology can be a major hurdle towards the acquisition of knowledge for residents in remote areas and significantly among those in the marginalized and low socio-economic sections of Indian society. The biggest challenge to online education is the lack of efficient digital infrastructure and digital skill sets for both learners and teachers (Chaturvedi et al. 2021). Currently, state government education departments have developed numerous measures to ensure that the academic activities of educational institutions are not hindered during the lockdown period by conducting all classes online. The equitable transformation of face-to-face learning to the virtual realm requires digital infrastructure that is available to all, but there have been major hurdles in implementation. "Despite having 2nd largest number of active users in the world … only half of the Indian population has an internet connection" (Raj and Khare 2020, p. 90). India has a considerable population in rural areas where families are unable to afford internet or digital devices. As Raj and Khare report, "27% of students don't have any access to the smartphone/computer to opt [in to] online classes" (2020, p. 90). This need for infrastructure, in turn, excludes a large populace of students. There are also concerns regarding internet access, which is not readily available in non-metropolitan areas, as well as awareness of students about facilities for continuing education. UNICEF has identified that, despite access to devices, awareness about accessing learning programs via television or phones is lacking and hence, the programs are under-utilised (UNICEF 2020a, 2021c).

The lack of available technological resources adds another dimension to the escalating inequalities in education. Despite the lockdown having accelerated the adoption of digital technology in the Indian education system, suitable technology is limited in remote areas (United Nations 2020). Digital learning seems to have exacerbated gender differences in households where there are limited resources, as the male child's education tends to be favored over the female child's education (Korlat et al. 2021). Built on patriarchal foundations, Indian society places a biased value on male children (Rakshit and Sahoo 2020). Due to a patrilineal structure of households, boys are considered the future

Table 6.1 Number of affected learners in India due to school closures caused by COVID-19 (UNESCO 2021a)

School Type	Females	Males	Total
PrePrimary	4,557,249	5,447,169	10,004,418
Primary	72,877,621	70,349,806	143,227,427
Secondary	63,983,677	69,160,694	133,144,371
Tertiary	16,739,686	17,597,908	34,337,594

breadwinners, hence their education takes precedence over girls' education. Girls' usage of *WhatsApp* and *YouTube* was 8% lower than boys' when compared for different categories (UNICEF 2021c). Female students' educational opportunities are significantly compromised (UNICEF 2021c; UNESCO, 2021a, b, c) as they face additional barriers and segregation that must be overcome to achieve basic education (Babb and Pasic 2020; Maithreyi and Sriprakash 2018). Considering inclusion and quality education as fundamental human right, Babb and Pasic (2020) have recognized that the pandemic has placed female students in a more marginalized position.

With inadequate exposure to computers and hence, reduced digital skills, students and teachers are attempting to learn digital skills at an accelerated pace. The digital and infrastructure needs and the skills-based hurdles, both suggest that the pandemic has heightened the relationship between disadvantage and exclusion (Ferguson 2021). The exclusion further contributes to the already existing inequalities. When digital education is available and accessible, over time, training skills develop. However, digital literacy is not available to all children. Some schools are lacking the capacity to provide laptops to students and they have only sporadic and limited internet coverage (Babb and Pasic 2020; Miclea et al. 2020). There is a lack of digital infrastructure and digital skill sets for both teachers and students (Chaturvedi et al. 2021; Ferguson 2021; Raj and Khare 2020). Limited information technology skills can affect the commitment to learning and lead to frustration among students and teachers which leads to a lack of motivation and boredom (Bhattacharyya and Lahiri 2021; Chaturvedi et al. 2021). This can have major repercussions for returning to school and keeping up with knowledge acquisition.

6.1.4 Disengagement from Education

Globally, it has been established that the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the risk of disengagement from education for some students. It can be due to numerous challenges that they are facing in learning from home or other health and well-being factors. This disengagement has resulted in potential learning losses that are significantly amplified in developing countries. In a web-based survey of 1182 students from different educational institutes, 51% of respondents reported that they did not make good use of their time during the lockdown (Chaturvedi et al. 2021). This statistic indicates that time spent on learning did not comply with the Indian government's guidelines for online learning. There is a huge gap between government policy and the implementation of plans at the grassroots level (Chaturvedi et al. 2021). Where digital learning materials are limited or absent and students continue to lose interest. Even in scenarios where digital learning has been made possible, students reported limited class interaction and inefficient timetables (Chaturvedi et al. 2021). Ferguson (2021) argues that there are a "multiplicity of ways in which a child can be in full-time education but also be disengaged from such education" (p. 107).

Malnutrition is another major concern that is a derivative of school closures. India has employed strategies to encourage education using nutrition as an incentive which has assisted in school retention as well as working towards eradicating child malnutrition (Rajan and Jayakumar 1992). The *National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education* (NP-NSPE) was initially launched as a centrally sponsored scheme in 1995 (Government of India 2021a; Ministry of Human Resource Development 2020). By 1998 the scheme was implemented in many regions and was extended to provide for students enrolled in alternate educational institutes which included upper primary school children in 2007. Some states, such as Tamil Nadu, were proactive and introduced the mid-day meal scheme in the 1950s (Rajan and Jayakumar 1992). The introduction of a nutrition program was led by the objectives of retention, reducing attrition, enhancing enrollments (Ministry of Education n.d.; Rajan and Jayakumar 1992), addressing malnutrition, and even promoting girls' education (Borkowski et al.

2021). Schools in India provided students with nutritious, balanced meals each day. The mid-day meal has also been found to have implications for student attendance, health outcomes (Ramachandran 2019), increased attendance, and increased educational outcomes (Bonds 2012). However, school closures have limited the accessibility and delivery of the mid-day meal scheme (Government of India 2021a).

Before the pandemic, children and adolescents were required to spend long hours in crowded schools for mass education. They would socialize with peers, uniformly gain instruction and learn collectively, while in some states, also be provided with valuable nutrition through the noon meal schemes (Kumar et al. 2020; Rajan and Jayakumar 1992). To tackle the extraordinary circumstances of the pandemic, the Central Government in India tried to provide alternate provisions to the nutritious meal scheme such as take-home rations, home delivery of meals, or cash transfers (Borkowski et al. 2021; Government of India 2021a). Despite the best efforts of the government and charity organizations, malnutrition is on the rise**,** as the impact of the pandemic continues to have ramifications such as, increased unemployment and poverty, exposing specifically at-risk children to further perils (UNICEF 2020b, 2021b).

Children are exposed to life-changing events due to the pandemic which is impacting their psychological and physical well-being. In unforeseen ways, education systems have been impacted worldwide (United Nations 2020), now that schools have been shut for more than a year and the responsibilities of providing care, education, and basic nutrition have been transferred from the state to families (Maithreyi and Sriprakash 2018). Given the special needs of children as compared to adults, children can be considered physically and mentally vulnerable (Banerjee 2020; Bolborici 2020). According to Graber et al. (2021), children's rights to play and learn in a safe environment are compromised significantly by changes brought about by the pandemic. The structures that support the schools, specifically the government, parents, and society, are undergoing a tumultuous period (Bhattacharyya and Lahiri 2021). In 2020, due to a lack of employment, the migrant population in metropolitan areas was driven out of cities. This reverse migration (Kumar et al. 2020), of people's movement from urban to rural areas, was observed as one of the first effects of the lockdown. In the absence of any public transportation, families and individuals from the lower economic strata were left to travel long distances on foot during the first nationwide lockdown (Abi-Habib and Yasir 2020). The unintentional refugees in their own land had to walk long distances for basic amenities, which left children vulnerable to starvation and compromised their safety. In such a constant state of movement, children did not have access to education facilities or basic amenities. As UNICEF (2020a) declared: "Children are not the face of this pandemic but they risk being among its biggest victims, as children's lives are … being changed in profound ways." This nomadic life has further endangered children's safety and placed their lives in a doubly disadvantaged position, reinforcing their disengagement with education.

Furthermore, in the pandemic, children are becoming the most neglected group of all. Access to basic amenities such as food and health care is bringing the humanitarian crisis to the forefront of global situations. There is "a rise in vigilante violence", especially among the marginalized and low socio-economic sections of society (Human Rights Watch 2020). The lockdown has inadvertently added further life stressors to people's lives while family resources, responsibilities, and participation have been shaken and shifted.

Children with disabilities are one of the most excluded groups who have been subjected to human rights violations throughout the pandemic (Bolborici 2020). While the closure of schools in the middle of March 2020, was at first welcomed as a long vacation, as time went on, children were being neglected, their safety compromised, and their intellectual growth stunted (Jena 2020c). During COVID-19, children with special needs have been required to stay at home. However, the family members may not be equipped to address their cognitive and emotional needs. Bolborici (2020) discusses the vulnerabilities of

children with disabilities and reflects on the "discrepancy in applying and respecting the elementary rights of the children who need special protection" (p. 71) as they often become victims of violence and abuse (Bolborici 2020). Schiariti (2020) linked disability, health emergencies, and the need for inclusion (2020) and reported that children with disabilities face additional challenges due to *functional limitations* (p. 661) such as physical, sensory, and cognitive issues (Government of India 2021b). There is a lack of support and recognizing that, the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities in the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment released the *Comprehensive Disability Inclusive Guidelines* for the protection and safety of people with disabilities during COVID-19 (Unni 2020). Even though the online initiatives have been planned to enable learning for all, the guidelines are nebulous in terms of catering to people with specific needs. For instance, Sect. 6.6 states: "Additional protective measures should be taken for persons with disabilities based on their impairment who need to be given travel pass during the emergency period and should also be sensitized for their personal safety and protection" (Government of India 2021b, p. 4). The protective measures are undefined and sensitising persons with disabilities is a clause that is open to interpretation due to the different needs of people in this group.

6.1.5 Repercussions for Students

Digital learning has increased the responsibilities of parents or family members in educating their children in such a difficult period. If the parent is uneducated or unable to help with learning tasks, it can lead to further disengagement of students from learning. The following section will explore the impact of COVID-19 on children's rights, mental health, and issues emerging out of online learning.

6.1.5.1 Violation of Child Rights

The pandemic has foregrounded the issue of the safety of children in India following school closures. These safety issues relate to children's experiences in virtual environments as well as in their homes and communities. Apart from physical health and "mass hysteria, chaos and uncertainty" (Banerjee 2020, p. 151), there are other major concerns that have followed, such as digital safety issues, the unhealthy use of technology, online extortion and exploitation through child pornography. Unsupervised screen time (Agnihotri 2021) heightens the risk of cyberbullying and sexual abuse (Ministry of Women and Child Development 2020). According to Poddar and Mukherjee (2020), there is an emerging social crisis across the globe. M'jid (2020) argues for child protection, mental health and other core services to be prioritised during and after the pandemic. A failure to do so will undermine the international community's ability to achieve the SDGs by 2030 and to fulfil its obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

6.2 Child Sexual and Physical Abuse

Due to lockdown, there is restricted access to child protection services and increasing concern over child safety. Perpetrators of child abuse tend to be people who are known to the child and that leaves the child in a doubly marginalised position (Poddar and Mukherjee 2020). Child abuse cases increased significantly in the first year of the pandemic (Ministry of Women and Child Development 2020). There is a rising concern about the violation of child rights (UNICEF 2021a). As Bolborici (2020) points out: "The indirect impact occurs when children are deprived of their fundamental rights, more specifically school closures, reduction or even cuts in social services for children and families in vulnerable situations" (p. 72). Adults have faced job loss or pay cuts, leading to psychological stress, frustration and hence, increased anxiety levels (Kumar et al. 2020). A large study conducted by Gale (2021) involving almost 240,000 COVID-19 patients found that one in three had received a neurological or psychiatric diagnosis within six months of infection. With unemployment on the

rise, pay cuts and mental issues induced by isolation and restrictions on movement, the overall frustration and anxiety of parents and other family members have increased (Maithreyi and Sriprakash 2018). These emotions can be a catalyst for violent behaviour against children who then are sometimes subjected to physical, mental and sexual assault (Kumar et al. 2020). This is one of the multidimensional impacts of COVID-19 within India. Minors could be the target of violence, observe it directly, or be exposed to it which is likely to have devastating consequences on their mental health (Banerjee 2020; Savarese et al. 2020). Some of the after effects are depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), borderline personality disorder, anxiety, substance abuse disorders, sleep and eating disorders and suicide (M'jid 2020).

The shutdown of schools has hindered teachers, friends and counsellors in detecting child abuse. The reporting of any sexual crimes has been stigmatised and when the culprit is a known person, there are difficulties in having the crime reported (Unni 2020). The government is trying to increase awareness of or de-stigmatise reporting of child sexual abuse cases (Savarese et al. 2020). The steps taken include mass messages using telecom service providers, twitter handle *@CyberDost* and cyber awareness programmes (Government of India 2021a; Ministry of Human Resource Development 2020). There are also relief avenues that aim to protect children from sexual offences (POSCO). *CyberPeace* talks and post-lockdown psycho-social assistance (UNICEF 2021b) are being offered to educate and facilitate transition and survival during these unprecedented times. When implemented, these measures could enable parents to understand what COVID-19 is and how it can be prevented, while also assisting in managing related stress, fear and anxiety. Being able to recognise the increased risk of violence would enable people to implement measures to stay safe.

6.3 Emotional State of Children

Many children have been reported as experiencing a constant fear of isolation with little to no coping skills concerning being exposed to an infectious outbreak or pandemic. Their worries may amplify, increasing their predisposition to develop mental health problems. Berger et al. (2021) conducted a systematic review of studies on how pandemics have affected children and found that children and adolescents were likely to develop acute stress disorder, generalised anxiety disorder (GAD), adjustment disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and grief in pandemic times. Such adverse responses to the pandemic can be traumatic in the long run and reduced capacity to move around and socialise with peers further limits their opportunities to dissipate their worries. Due to limited activity and the closure of major social outings for children, an agitated emotional state has manifested in many children in lockdown (Raj and Khare 2020). Chaturvedi et al. (2021) reported an increase in negative emotions such as anger, anxiety, sadness and loneliness which have the potential to affect children's coping skills, while Berger et al. (2021) suggested restlessness, concentration problems, hyperactivity or reduced self-control. In a systematic review of psychological impacts in a scenario of infectious outbreak, Berger et al. (2021) list fear and anxiety as major responses by children to isolation. Often, news and media amplify their anxiety when there are contradictory messages or lack of information. Worry about their family's wellbeing is another factor affecting the mental health of children and adolescents. Children and adolescents have registered apprehensiveness about parents and facing isolation as key concerns (Berger et al. 2021; Ramaswamy and Seshadri 2020).

6.4 Restricted Movement-Developmental Challenges

The pandemic has created challenges that extend beyond physical health. Loneliness, stress, panic, anxiety and other mental health problems have been disrupting life for more than a year (Banerjee 2020). The pandemic has resulted in reduced movement and play (Graber et al. 2021) and has led some children into an emotionally agitated state (Raj and Khare 2020). A review by UNESCO (2021a, b, c) has concluded that children have experienced psycho-social changes involving their self-expression. Decreased social play and increasing time with technology have negatively impacted diet, sleep routines and physical activity among children, heightening the danger of obesity, psychological stress, eye issues and neurological problems (Kumar et al. 2020).

Agnihotri (2021) has claimed that digital learning has also added another risk concerning increased, unsupervised screen time. Already considered a threat to children's wellbeing, excessive screen time due to prolonged exposure to phones or computers for learning purposes can contribute towards fatigue, obesity, eye damage, hypertension and disrupted sleep for children (Kumar et al. 2020). Lissak (2018) has identified that increased screen time among children leads to physical, psychological and psychoneurological repercussions on the developing mind and it hinders psychophysiological resilience. At an age when children are in the process of developing their visual system, prolonged screen exposures have side effects that threaten their psychological wellbeing. Children could develop higher stress levels, headaches, obesity due to physical inactivity, long-term optical issues and neurological problems (Lissak 2018).

Considering that the overuse of screen time can have adverse impacts on young brains (Lissak 2018), the child's relationship with adults in the family needs to be encouraged but this sometimes has contradictory effects on their safety. There has been a 50% surge in demand from those seeking protection from abuse caused by relatives or known individuals (Unni 2020). Moreover, in this scenario adolescents with prior mental health conditions have been placed at a higher risk of abuse and exploitation (Berger et al. 2021). Inadequate accommodation facilities, lack of social interaction, stress and exposure to violence have led to increased cases of isolation and aggressive behaviour among children and in adolescents and it requires serious consideration by local government and educational authorities.

6.5 Digital Learning-Positives

The pandemic has interrupted education in India on a large scale and has drawn attention to the weaknesses in the education system and awakened the need to update and upgrade to the twenty-first century digital world. The changes implemented such as *e-Pathshala* are an opportunity to transform and develop curriculum and innovative pedagogy. The new learning management approaches that are linked to digital learning, once implemented and accessible to the masses, will have the potential to fulfil the promise of a rights-based quality education for all. Digital learning is said to be a part of the rapid large-scale evolution of the education system (Chaturvedi et al. 2021). There are some positives with regard to the adoption of *Digital Learning* with face-to-face learning and teaching. With the increased use of *Learning Management Systems* (Jena 2020b), a blended form of learning has emerged which has encouraged collaborative work and enhanced digital literacy across all age groups. The infectious outbreak of SARS-CoV-2 virus has played its part in revolutionising education. It has introduced a blended mode of learning that has paved the way for technological skill development amongst educators as well as students (Jena 2020a, b). To make quality education accessible to all, an updated curriculum with relevant resources is being implemented. India can meet the SDGs targets when there is country-wide availability of digital infrastructure, with vulnerable and disadvantaged learners having access to it. The pandemic has provided the Indian education system with an opportunity to

evaluate and apply alternative measures. The innovation in *Digital Learning* associated with the pandemic is new and over time, it can help everyone achieve digital literacy skills, henceforth, contributing towards equity. With consistent efforts by educators and the support of the government, children living in remote areas, regardless of their gender, will be able to access education and the SDGs may be achieved sooner than we thought.

On the other hand, there are long-term challenges predicted in the sphere of child rights and education. The SDGs report (United Nations 2020) predicts that school dropout rates will rise and many children will never return to school. Kumar et al. (2020) observe that with the increasing digital divide, children from marginalised sections of society have lost access to education, while children from privileged sections of society are being overworked through online education. Homeless children and those with disabilities are additionally vulnerable as poverty exacerbate child trafficking, exploitation and conscription into unauthorised criminal and terrorist organisations with unforeseen consequences (M'jid 2020). Children in poverty also have an increased risk of abuse and neglect (Briar-Lawson et al. 2020).

Violation of child rights and gender-specific crimes among children has been increasing due to negative impacts of COVID-19, which also extends to gender-based aggression. Child sexual abuse (CSA) has an adverse impact on normal development and the trauma experienced during the abuse could lead to psychiatric disorders. The United Nations Population Fund forecasts that 13 million child marriages may take place over the next 10 years globally (UNFPA 2020). Kumar et al. (2020) claim that across the world, 15 million additional cases of gender-based violence might be anticipated and two million additional cases of female genital mutilation (FGM) could occur over the next few years (UNFPA 2020). The gender-based abuse has ramifications such a PTSD, unwanted pregnancy and social stigma. In conjunction with the Ministry of Women and Child Development, the Press Information Bureau (PIB), Delhi recorded an increase in the number of child pornography/rape, gang rape complaints and child sexual abuse complaints lodged online or through helplines (Ministry of Women and Child Development 2020). Presently, as attributed to the pandemic, paedophilia is on the rise and children's helplines have reported a 50% surge in calls seeking protection from abuse caused by relatives or known individuals (Unni 2020). The statistics are alarming and the scenario with respect to CSA is deeply concerning. The effect of these changes on learning and the rise of traumatic events for marginalised children have set back the progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations 2020).

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the changes in education, the impact on quality education and violation of child rights in India exacerbated by the COVID-19 situation. Children have experienced fear, depression, distress, anxiety and loneliness during these uncertain times. As pointed out by the United Nations (2020): "Without remedial action, the effects of COVID-19 will only add to the obstacles faced by poor children in completing their education". There are steps to realign education and work towards ensuring child rights. The first step towards rights-based quality education for all is to recognise that children and adolescents have been affected. An acknowledgement of the violation of child rights is necessary to develop a trauma-informed practice framework (Berger et al. 2021) in education. It can start with de-stigmatising the reporting of Child Sexual Abuse (CSA), mass awareness of relief avenues for the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) and CyberPeace talks (Ministry of Women and Children 2020). Post-lockdown psycho-social assistance such as workshops, counselling and other avenues to talk about their experiences in lockdown will assist in increasing the resilience of children and adolescents and it would also benefit SDGs goal achievements.

Once the pandemic is over, continued investment in online education is a necessity (Chaturvedi et al. 2021). Training teachers for digital skills and mental health support can prove to be an asset towards supporting students. Exploration of *exclusion* in education (Ferguson 2021) is another area that needs to be addressed as part of the SDGs. There is a need for continued investment in *Online Education* (Chaturvedi et al. 2021).

COVID-19 has pushed humanity into the unknown which has brought to the forefront an unpreparedness for ensuring child rights. The rupture created by the loss of continued educational activity has affected students from the primary school sector to university graduates. Teachers are still struggling with digital teaching and there have been cases of unwanted and inappropriate online behaviour. The lockdown has brought India's attention to its unpreparedness for online education. The internet can promote anonymity and unguided technological use has the potential for misuse. The pandemic has disrupted the education and wellbeing of children and adolescents and there is a need for longitudinal research to uncover the extent of the pandemic's impact on children's access and return to quality education.

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Anjali Rana is an international PhD candidate at Federation University Australia with a background in Education and Psychology. Initially trained as an elementary teacher, she pursued her interests in Psychology and Education as a researcher to explore social issues in education. After a brief teaching period at Delhi University as an Assistant Professor (Guest), Anjali continues to work towards examining Child Rights issues as a Higher Degree researcher. Her current PhD study is focusing on Comprehensive Sexuality Education in Initial Teacher Education Institutes in Australia.

Dr. Rachel Daniel coordinates the English and Academic Preparation (EAP) program at the Berwick Campus of Federation University, Australia. She has been teaching in Australian universities since 2008 and has taught previously for over a decade in a variety of undergraduate programs in the Middle East and Asia. Rachel was previously a member of staff at La Trobe University where she worked as a lecturer in English as an Additional Language (EAL) in the Academic Language and Learning Unit. She was involved in developing the curriculum and providing language and learning support to UG/PG/HDR students across faculties. In addition, she has also worked at Monash University as a Learning Skills Advisor and lecturer to assist and equip low SES students with the required academic skills necessary for their tertiary studies. Rachel has significant expertise in English language teaching and program development through her work at Monash University English Language Centre and her PhD research into English language learning.

The Fallacy of Cultural Inclusion in Mainstream Education Discourses

7

Sara Weuffen and Kym Willis

Abstract

In Australian education discourses, Aboriginal peoples' and Torres Strait Islanders' socio-cultural perspectives are *included* in the national curriculum. This happens via curriculum content made palatable for a largely non-Indigenous population. As the focus of increasing Indigenous content remains a primary objective, power/knowledge process determines what knowledge is legitimate while relegating *other* perspectives to the periphery. In this chapter, we employ a poststructuralist framework through the lens of social justice to interrogate how teachers *include* Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander perspectives of Australian history. Aligning our discussions to the United Nations Sustainable Goal 4: Quality education, we present a triangulation of scholarly discussions, author reflections, and research data to explore how Australia's education system assists learners in acquiring knowledge and skills required to promote a culture of human rights and cultural diversity. Interviews with history teachers and local Elders highlight a reliance on textbooks over trans-generational knowledge as the primary source for *inclusive* teaching. Despite increasing social and political pressure for reconciliation, constitutional recognition, treaty, and sovereignty, the *inclusion* of *other* cultural perspectives in textbooks remains largely absent. As teaching occurs from such mono-cultural education tools, cultural *inclusion* of Australia's Indigenous peoples, cultures, histories, and perspectives will remain a *fallacy* within mainstream education discourses.

Keywords

Indigenous education · Australian history · Cultural education · Post-structuralism · Curriculum and pedagogy

While Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander is the preferred and culturally responsive nomenclature when speaking about Australia's First Nations peoples, being aware of the socio-political discourses, Indigenous has been used hereafter throughout the chapter

S. Weuffen (✉) · K. Willis
Institute of Education, Arts and Community, Federation University Australia, Ballarat, VIC, Australia
e-mail: sl.weuffen@federation.edu.au

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Author Positioning Statements

My name is **Sara**, I am a non-Indigenous woman of German, Scottish, and Welsh descent. I grew up in Warrnambool on Gundijtmara Country; a Country rich with living and archaeological evidence of Aboriginal knowledge and history. Growing up, I knew nothing about the Aboriginality in this part of the world; it was not visible. Later I came to understand that this was because it was hidden behind paleness.

My name is **Kym**. I am of Aboriginal, Scottish, and Irish decent. I do not fit the stereotypical archetype of an Indigenous person. I am of Caucasian appearance. During my education, I was privy to students' and teachers' unfiltered perceptions of Indigenous culture, which demonstrated a peripheral understanding at best. I now understand that this is because Indigenous history, culture, and perspectives were presented within the education system to fit an Anglocentric, socially accepted narrative which failed to acknowledge the rich and sophisticated histories and culture of our nation's First Peoples.

7.1 Setting the Scene

In this chapter, we present a personal and scholarly informed discussion of how Australian Indigenous content is included with Australian education discourses, curricula, and systems. We align our discussions to the United Nations Sustainable Goals, in particular Goal 4: Quality education, to explore how Australia's education system is making progress towards achieving target 4.7: ensuring all learners acquire the knowledge and skills to promote … human rights, a culture of peace and non-violence … and appreciation of cultural diversity, or not (United Nations (UN) 2021). From our unique positionality and experiences, we draw on the body of established literature to examine how Anglocentric onto-epistemologies have influenced the ideology of an inclusive Australian education experience all-the-while creating a fallacy of cultural inclusion. Acknowledging that in doing so, we step beyond familiar academic modes of communication, while also illuminating how our individual identities and experiences are intertwined with the study. We use icons to define and clarify who is speaking (Pappaluca 2018), connect our experiences, and interweave our voices with the scholarly literature in a purposeful manner. We posit that our own experiences of the Australian education system, how Indigenous content has been included from our multiple perspectives—student, parent, teacher, Australian citizen, and critical educational researcher—have been the driving factors leading us to this investigation and our ongoing commitment to critical analysis in this field. It is interesting to note that despite our individual circumstances and educational trajectories, we have experienced similar failings of the Australian educational system and consider such connectivity more than mere causality.

In 2008, the Australian Education Council met to determine Australian curriculum directives, across all educational levels, for the future of education in Australia. This resulted in the publication of the Melbourne Declaration of Educational Goals for Young Australians (MDEGYA) (Australian Curriculum Reporting Authority (ACARA) 2016) which reflected directly the Rudd government's *Closing the Gap* initiative to improve the educational, health, and welfare outcomes of Indigenous students (Australian Government 2018). While created at the same time as the release of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations 2021), the key aim of MDEGYA was to create an education system that ameliorates discrepancies of academic outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. However, it was through the newly established Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) (2020) that this aim was to be achieved via integration of Indigenous perspectives into mainstream curriculum content and connections with local Indigenous communities. Yet, no concrete framework was offered. Rather, onus was placed on individual schools, and by

extension individual teachers, to interpret the cross-curriculum priority intent and implement them appropriately within curricula. By orchestrating this educational process, the Australian government negated any real responsibility to provide all learners with the knowledge and skills to understand and appreciate the cultural diversity on the Australian continent (United Nations 2021), and rather, shifted blame for lack of progress onto the shoulders of teachers and schools.

How these knowledges, practices, and skills are centralised within a particular category is what we now know as disciplines (Foucault 2004). In twenty-first century schooling, while educators are guided—first, through initial teacher education programmes, and subsequently, through established pedagogical practices—to incorporate Indigenous content into curriculum, it must be understood that they do so within western ways of thinking (Nakata 1997). According to Lowe et al. (2021), the presentation of Australia's curriculum

Once I completed Secondary Schooling—the first person in my immediate family to do so and graduate with a Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE)—I worked different service-based jobs for a number of years. Growing up in a lower-socioeconomic status family and just surviving on the poverty line and seeing myself heading down the same track in adulthood, I felt unfulfilled. I wanted to make a difference in this life, I wanted autonomy and freedom, and I wanted to learn. This all led me to start my Education degree in Victoria in 2015 as a mature age student

After successfully completing Year 12, I immediately began my family and did not pursue further education for many years. I enrolled in a Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care as a mature aged student and upon its completion enrolled in a Bachelor of Education (Birth-Year 6) as I felt strongly that I wanted to make a real and tangible difference to the lives and educational outcomes of disadvantaged children.

In Australian education discourses, Indigenous socio-cultural perspectives are *included* into an Anglocentric national curriculum. This curriculum is built from western historical roots of empirical scientific knowledge and coded in relation to constructed disciplines (Nakata 1997). The power of such disciplinary structures determines what content can be included and excluded, what thoughts and skills are considered normal practice within the discipline, what type of knowledge is given precedence over others. and teacher education, mediated through a Anglocentric monocultural lens, suggests that the building of socio-cultural capital and appreciation for Indigenous peoples, cultures, and practices through education, is a piece meal practice at best. On a more sinister level, the prioritisation of western onto-epistemologies in curricula while *including* other perspectives is a purposeful but subtle hamstring manoeuvre to addressing the United Nations (2021) calls for more sustainable, culturally responsive, and respectful citizenship.

Throughout compulsory schooling, I received what can only be explained, at best as tokenistic settler-colonial whitewashing/supremacy teaching of Aboriginal peoples, histories, cultures, and perspectives; boomerangs, nomads, dark skin, extinct, archaic, made-up Dreamtime stories, super-athletic individuals. I grew up seeing—but not understanding why—the kids from Framlingham (Gundijtmara) were constantly in trouble, removed from school, bullied (subtly), avoided, or blamed for all the crime in the town.

At high school, History classes informed me that Indigenous people were untamed savages who were saved by white occupation, presenting a mono-faceted and whitewashed perspective that propagated narrow and stereotypical understandings of Indigenous culture and history. By contrast, during my Diploma studies I observed a subtle cultural shift towards acknowledging and seeking an understanding of Indigenous cultural perspectives. In this environment, educators were scaffolded to develop pedagogies that supported Indigenous ontology and epistemology and their integration into planned educational content.

The established body of literature has highlighted that the lack of pedagogical framework and responsibility on individual expertise for implementation has compromised authentic and effective integration of Indigenous perspectives into curriculum from the primary to tertiary levels of education (Lowe and Yunkaporta 2013). Robust discussion exists exposing how Australia's national curriculum was developed to foreground and promote the notion of European supremacy and authority while simultaneously silencing and/or relegating Indigenous voices to the margins (Hughes 2020; Weuffen 2017). As Nakata (1997) argues, Indigenous knowledge is situated in "relation to what is known by [non-Indigenous peoples]" (p. 24). Such scholarship highlights how the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives occurs via a *diversity* of curriculum content in ways that are made palatable for a largely non-Indigenous teaching population via the determination of cross-cultural curricula. We contend that the construction of such curriculum directives has occurred because of a monocultural ignorance held by the Australian government and misinformed attempts to remedy and address Indigenous disadvantage and academic disparity.

The educational silence around Indigenous perspectives, voices, histories, and cultures persisted until the 3rd year of my Bachelor of Education degree when I was enrolled in the one-and-only compulsory course of study relating to Australia's First Nations peoples. It was only once I began this study that I questioned, "Why wasn't I told about this before?" I felt cheated, angry, saddened, and yes, an undercurrent of white shame.

Over the duration of my degree, I only had one assignment that focused on Indigenous learners. This course primarily targeted inclusion strategies for children with physical, intellectual, and/or cultural impediments to their leaning, placing a negative connotation on each barrier, therefore, firmly positioning Indigenous learners in a deficit frame. Rather than acknowledging and celebrating the capacity of Indigenous learners to achieve, a persistent undercurrent of ingrained racism and white supremacy permeated the fibre of the assignment, reinforcing the notion of Indigenous inferiority.

In the compulsory years of schooling, where educators have attempted to and/or do include Indigenous perspectives into classroom content, evidence demonstrates that this occurs overwhelmingly in vague, non-specific, stereotypical, and/or a peripheral manner (Austin and Hickey 2011). Perhaps this stems from the historical positioning of teachers within the education space being the possessor but passive conduit for knowledge transfer and acquisition by students, despite contemporary discourses of teachers as critical participants and change agents (Weuffen 2018; Yates and Collins 2008). Henderson (2009) argues that the Anglocentric nature of Indigenous inclusion within the curriculum at the school level is due largely to the absence of teachers' pedagogical skills, knowledge, and critical thinking where such content is concerned. Such deficits constrain how teachers and students may explore critically significant moments of intervention and injustice in Australia's history that continue to impact the lives of Indigenous Australians today (Buckskin 2015; Bunda 2015; Nakata 1997). By stating these points, we do not seek to place the blame for poor/non-inclusion on the shoulders of teachers solely, rather, we seek to illuminate how social understanding of the teacher role, associated pedagogies, and curricula is cultural by-products of an Anglocentric education system.

During the single compulsory education course focused on First Nation perspectives, I became aware of proactive, assertive, and eye-opening accounts of Aboriginal peoples' contribution to Australian society delivered by a non-Indigenous male lecturer. This lecturer was obviously driven, invested, and committed to positive portrayals of Aboriginal peoples and their critical analysis and reflection to speak back to the dominant discourse of deficit was infectious. It was what had been missing from any of my previous learning. The seemingly simple act of flipping the lens on European supremacy to Aboriginal people's ingenuity and contribution to life on the Australian Goldfields was a turning point for me wanting to teach better than the education I had received, speak back to deficit and prejudice, and provide a style of education for every student that is inclusive, socially just, positive, and success-orientated.

At university, I was mentored by a non-Indigenous academic who had developed through extensive research an in-depth understanding of Indigenous perspectives and was passionate about creating equitable educational experiences for Indigenous students. Under her mentorship, I have developed the drive to create awareness of the need for a fundamental shift in the content and context in which Indigenous perspectives are delivered in Australian educational settings. Tokenistic and vague mentions of reconciliation and Indigenous perspectives in guiding curriculum documents do little to enmesh authentic representations of Indigenous histories and culture into classroom experiences. This in turn perpetuates peripheral understandings of the complexities and nuances of Indigenous culture that feed subtle prejudices. As a teacher, I consider it my role to advocate for Indigenous culture and histories being examined as equal to, rather than inferior to, Anglocentric ones.

In the past five years, there has been an observable and marked increase of educators wanting to engage with Indigenous content and perspectives. This has given rise to a whole suite of teaching-ready resources and curricula, often developed by Indigenous peoples solely, or in collaboration with non-Indigenous authors. Along with Lowe et al. (2021), we argue that the increasing social and political pressure of reconciliation, constitutional recognition, treaty, and sovereignty are the external drives to such demands. It raises the question of whether such

interest is genuine—in that educators wanting to enact deep change—or whether the *inclusion* of Indigenous content is an Anglocentric approach to reconciliation where non-Indigenous peoples attempt to acknowledge and rectify the wrongs of the past. In this climate, *inclusion* as a pedagogical strategy assumes the supremacy of western/Anglocentric onto-epistemologies over Indigenous ways of being and knowing. In doing so, the sophisticated linguistic, social, and cultural nuances that are at the foundation of Indigenous cultures are picked apart, deconstructed, and remoulded in order to be understood by, and palatable for, non-Indigenous educators and students.

education systems fail utterly to meet, and even start the journey towards addressing, the United Nations Sustainable Goal for all countries to deliver quality education to all of its citizens (United Nations 2021). The curriculum, in its current state, renders impossible the mobilisation of "knowledges and skills needed to promote … human rights, … a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity" (United Nations 2021). Not only does the Australian curriculum, and associated teaching practices, fail to support non-Indigenous student engagement and understanding of Indigenous perspectives and cultures, they continue to marginalise Indigenous students and

Due to the lack of pedagogical rigour to including First Nation's content throughout my undergraduate degree, during my time teaching within the secondary education sector, I didn't know what I, as a single teacher, could do beyond the tokenistic teaching I received to make meaningful change. I used textbooks, google searches, or largely relied on the knowledge of more experienced teachers.

As an Indigenous woman, whose compulsory educational experiences presented Indigenous people as intellectually and culturally inferior, promoting the notion of white supremacy, I am invested in presenting an alternative view to my students. I am driven to break down the unspoken and systemic racism that runs as undercurrent through the planning and delivery of classroom content. By designing and delivering content that places focus on Indigenous cultures and histories via a lens of ableism, celebrating the diversity they represent and the rich contributions that Indigenous peoples have made to Australian history a shift in students' perceptions can be achieved. In this way, the long-held and pervasive view of white supremacy may be diluted as students are afforded the opportunity to develop an alternative view.

Given the Australian curriculum operates within an established set of western principles to guide content inclusion across all subject areas (ACARA n.d.), it is perhaps little surprise that *inclusive* pedagogical practices, to date, do not support non-Indigenous students' responsive understanding and appreciation of Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies; essential threshold concepts to exploring cultures, languages and histories more deeply (Lowe et al. 2021). Rather, Indigenous perspectives are added indiscriminately to educational content in order to force compliance with Anglocentric educational agendas. Delivered in such a manner, the Australian

place them at risk of educational disadvantage by rendering invisible their unique onto-epistemological experiences and/or cultural and linguistic diversity (Gray and Beresford 2008; Pearce and Flanagan 2018; Wigglesworth et al. 2011). The absence of culturally nuanced pedagogical knowledge, skills, and critical thinking at all levels of Australian education has culminated in a systemic culture of fear, avoidance, misdirection, and tokenism all-the-while subtly avoiding any collective responsibility for taking and/or leading action. The systemic social and pedagogical undercurrent of fear and shame that has precipitated the insatiable market for teaching-

ready and *black*-approved content not only reinforces Anglocentric supremacy but becomes the smoke and mirrors of cultural *inclusion*.

7.2 Examining Culturally Inclusive Pedagogy of Australian History

The *data* presented in this chapter is drawn from a Victorian cross-site case study (Weuffen 2017). This Ph.D. study received ethics approval from the University of Ballarat (A13-121), the Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (E018/21022014), the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (2014_002306) and was endorsed by the Victorian Aboriginal Education Incorporation (28/03/2014). The main aim of the study was to determine how Indigenous peoples are represented in curricula through teachers' pedagogical practice, and ways in which local Koorie[1] peoples may be able to influence such practice. The Year Nine Australian History Curriculum was chosen because of the time period under investigation—1750–1918. This period in Australia's history was when race-based interactions between Anglo-Australians and Indigenous peoples of the Australian continent were impacted significantly by governmental assimilation policies. The outcome of these often violent and culturally destructive interactions caused considerable physical, emotional, and spiritual trauma for Indigenous Australians, the effects of which are still being felt today (Smith 2008).

In this chapter, we reject the notion of *data* as disembodied and objective information. Rather, we consider *data* as a descriptive term that captures the deep and rich stories, perspectives, voices, and experiences held by participants (Talja 1999) in relation to learning and teaching about Australia's history. Semi-structured interviews were held with $n = 6$ non-Indigenous teachers and $n = 4$ Koorie peoples. These interviews were transcribed and analysed using grey methodology (Weuffen and Pickford 2019) — a combination of Foucault's notion of power/knowledge relations (1972) and Nakata's Indigenous Standpoint Theory (IST) (2007b)—to determine the interconnectedness and disconnections of cultural knowledge made visible by statements, language, expression, and silences as they relate to Australia's shared-history.

To examine how Indigenous perspectives are *included* into Australian curricula, within this chapter, we employ a culturally interfaced poststructuralist framework viewed through the lens of social justice. Taking up the notion that knowledge, language, attitudes, perspectives, and practices of teaching are encapsulated within discourses (Foucault 1972), we interrogate how teachers are constructed to comply with, or resist, Anglocentric ideologies of supremacy within Australia history curriculum. Because discourses define knowledge about particular topics and construct understandings through language, rules of engagement, normative positioning, and power/knowledge relations (Foucault 1972), an examination of Australian history discourses indicates that Anglocentric practices are privileged, English is the primary language used for communication, and systems of government, society, discipline, and education reflecting European practices and traditions reign supreme. Working from a culturally interfaced framework, we are cognisant not to frame discussions as "just white or black" (Nakata 2007b, p. 8), rather we view the teaching of Australia's shared-history as "a contested space between two knowledge systems" (Nakata 2007a, p. 9) and "a site of historical and ongoing intervention" (Nakata 1997, p. 26). Therefore, employing a grey lens (Weuffen and Pickford 2019) enables us to consider equally the interconnectedness of Indigenous and non-Indigenous onto-epistemologies and methodologies to "further develop understanding of how research itself can be used proactively to speak back to the deficit discourses [and] challenge the societal norms" (Hogarth 2017, p. 32) and avoid marginalising the voices and complexity of participant cultured experiences.

[1] Koorie/Koori is a contemporary collective or group term used to denote Aboriginal people whose traditional lands and waters exists within the boundaries that today frame the state of Victoria (Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc., 2015, p. 2).

7.2.1 Learning from Participants' Stories

Analysis of interviews indicates varied but Anglocentric approaches to the teaching of Australia's shared-history, despite recognition and centring of a social justice perspective. There was a strong reliance by the non-Indigenous teachers to use prescribed textbooks as the starting point for historical investigation with attempts made to move beyond and extend student thinking through independent inquiry. Discussions about the importance of professional development sessions as key to increasing their own knowledge also emerged but pointed to lack of advertisement and/or time to attend them as barriers. By contrast, conversations with Koorie people highlighted—perhaps unsurprisingly—a depth, richness, and counter-narrative embedded deeply within history, Country, and community that challenges the dominant knowledge about Australia's Indigenous peoples. Yet, these same participants experienced a resounding silence and lack of engagement from schools in their regions about their peoples' perspectives, histories, cultures, and stories.

7.2.1.1 Exploring Counter/Narratives

In this section of the chapter, we present a range of counter/narratives about events between 1750 and 1918 in Australia's history. To foreground how the dominant discourse of Australian history is presented as the control against participant's comments, and ensure the trustworthiness of the *data* collected, excerpts of specific events have been taken from the prescribed textbook in each of the research sites: *Jacaranda Humanities Alive* (Darlington et al. 2012). It is interesting to note, that only 33 out of 280 pages of the *Jacaranda Humanities Alive* textbook mentions explicitly content relating to Indigenous cultures, histories, and perspectives. Stating the frequency of references is important because this resource is used as the centraliser to pedagogical practices, as many teachers made comments such as, "*I just start with the textbook* …". Excerpts from the textbook are presented without amendment before contrasting against participant comments presented as portraits (Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffman Davis 2002; Smyth and McInerney 2011; Weuffen and Pickford 2019). To ensure confidentiality, comments have been amalgamated into two broad categories, teachers, and Koorie peoples.

John Batman's Treaty

> Batman founded the Port Phillip Association with the aim of establishing a small European settlement on the banks of a river called Yarra Yarra by the Aboriginal people. Batman negotiated a 'treaty' with the traditional Aboriginal owners of the land by offering to purchase 242,800 hectares of the district in exchange for some tomahawks, mirrors, knives, and blankets. Within a year there were approximately 200 free settlers and 26,000 sheep (Darlington et al., 2012, p. 155).

Teachers

This was the land around Melbourne and Geelong. My understanding is that the traditional owners felt they were signing over the use of the land, but not ownership of the land. Remembering that they were people that had no concept of ownership of land, they used the land or part of the land, but they didn't own it, and

Koorie peoples

One of our ancestors was at the signing of the treaty, and the treaty was all bullshit. He was a bloody land grabber. He came over on behalf of the Van Diemen's land company to look for extra land because they'd used up all the arable land in Tasmania and they needed to expand their operations, so he came up over

therefore how could they sell what they didn't own?

I think that Batman treaty is very interesting example in concepts of ownership; white people there saying we can purchase this off you and the Aboriginal people saying you can use it, but you can't purchase it. They felt they were giving permission to use, rather than to purchase.

From the perspective of the way Indigenous people were seen at the time, Batman's treaty was not accepted because Indigenous people didn't have any rights to make a treaty.

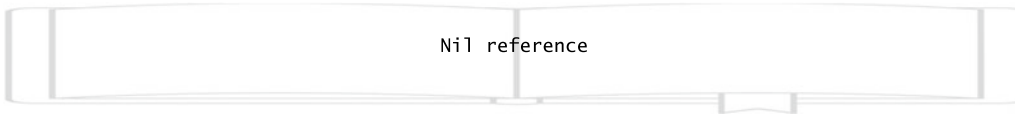
here to look for extra land, and tokenistically did a treaty. It got knocked back because the New South Wales government at the time said, "no bugger off, you're just a bloody land grabber". They don't tell people this.

Seems strange that treaty, all the signatures, all the names of them are the same, all the signatures, all the x's are exactly the same.

They don't tell you that the ceremony he participated in was Tanderrum which is a Welcome to Country, a rite, an invitation to use the resources of that country temporarily; then you're supposed to bugger off again.

How, in one day, was he supposed to have ridden nearly 100 miles on horseback; it says in the journals that he actually rode the boundary. Crap. He couldn't ride the bloody boundary if you paid him to.

Australian Football League / Margrook



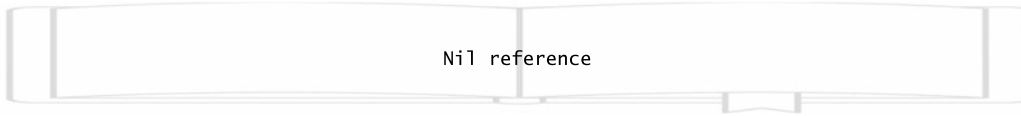
Teachers

No. Sorry. We haven't covered that. I'm not a football person so I sort of avoid that one

Koorie peoples

The story about AFL isn't really told. It isn't really acknowledged where it came from. It was a mongrel compilation of two sports; soccer and rugby, after guy watching people at Horsham playing Marn Grook. But they don't tell you it is a rip off of an Aboriginal game.

William Buckley



Teachers	Koorie peoples
No. No. It's something I'd like to do but haven't done as yet	I will talk passionately about William Buckley when people stop saying how Buckley *survived* with the natives. He was kept alive. He was treated like a king. He did survive, he was hand-fed, he was nurtured, clothed, and given wives. He was spoilt rotten. Then what happened? The first time he had the opportunity to stand up for black fellas, he did a runner. When you hear about the Aboriginal history of Geelong, what do they talk about? Buckley. Not about Wadawurrung, but Buckley.

The Gallipoli campaign and the Anzac legend that emerged from it have had a significant impact on ideas about Australia's national identity (p. 310) … Historians criticising the Anzac legend have said it ignores other important sources of national identity – 'fair go', egalitarianism, gender, race, and social equality (p. 313) … It is only from the late twentieth century onwards that people have begun to systematically research the wartime experiences of Indigenous Australians. We don't know much about how their experiences might have differed. Over 400 Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders served in WWI (Darlington et al., 2012, p. 271).[2]

World War One[2]

Teachers	Koorie peoples
We've got a fantastic text on it. I don't know what it's called, but, we look at why they enlisted, reasons for enlistment, their different duties, if there was any racism within that or whether they were just treated as a normal soldier. We look at the European perspective mostly. I'm not really knowledgeable about Indigenous soldiers. I know they were involved, but I couldn't tell you who, when, where, why, that sorta thing. We do talk about the fact that Indigenous people were asked to participate and were not treated that well.	I wish I could say yes, ["I know family who were involved"], but I don't know. I know Nanny's Brother was in the war, he's in one of the memorial things. There were certainly Aboriginal people from Victoria involved in World War I and actually at Gallipoli. And every war since, and what do we get for it? Nothing. They were not even allowed to walk into the RSL (Returned Services League) to have a beer with their mates after the war. I've got a booklet on Aboriginal soldiers that went to war, and there's a couple of women in there.

[2] A selection of excerpts from the n = 59 references

> One thing I remember learning about World War I is that a lot of traditional owners, or Aboriginal people, signed up as races other than Aboriginal. That really shocked me. I think I've been told in the past, that there were a number of Wathaurong soldiers who went over to fight, and then came back and were denied soldier settlement as well. The one thing that's really stuck in my mind is the fact that these people who were invaded only 100 years earlier were still proud enough of their country and who they were to want to go away and fight for it. Yet, we weren't proud enough that they wanted to fight for their and our country, that we could acknowledge them for who they are and still haven't even acknowledged them in the Constitution. It's ridiculous that we're sitting here in 2014 and a lot of–you can't obviously judge people in the 1800s by today's standards, I know that's the wrong thing to do, but to me I just–sitting back you think to yourself, how can you allow people to fight for your country but then not actually give them any rights when they come back?

7.3 Implications for *Inclusive* Teaching

These counter/narratives provide insight into the strongly Anglocentric Australian history discourses permeating the education of secondary education students across the two Victorian research sites. It is clear from reading through these pages that Anglocentricity occupies the dominant space. Promotion of an adversarial positioning of *us* versus *them* is evident and reinforced further by the History disciple approach of compare and contrast. Such practices are cemented further in the textbook where cultural relations are considered from an Anglocentric position through the use of phrases such as: "attempts to 'civilise' Indigenous people" (Darlington et al. 2012, p. 138); "Aborigines: exploitation" (p. 144); "massacres by colonists" (p. 133); "race relations in colonial Australia following initial British occupation" (p. 125). As official instruments across the teaching disciplines, textbooks such as this one become the mode through which the narrative of Australian History is taught from "the ships of England rather than the shores of Australia" (Craven and Price 2011, p. 59). They are the origin point from which further Anglocentric exploration is promoted.

Conversations with teachers indicated that while they used textbooks to guide curriculum, most of them addressed knowledge deficits by self-sourcing supplementary information. This occurred mostly via google searching, existing shared databases, and drawing upon their own higher education studies. As two teachers said:

> We do have a textbook and so we use that as a guide, but in terms of where I find resources … I guess I Google a lot of stuff … a lot of [time] is my own sitting down at a computer Googling, you know, and just making my own resources to go with what I find … but I haven't found a lot of – there's not one place that you can go like a database that you can go, ok, this is a good resource. We use the textbook, but I [also] take readings from certain [other] texts and then I make up my

> own activities based on those reading. I don't – I never use, or rarely use, the questions in the textbook … because … I don't find them very useful.

However, without exploring the codes of language surrounding such texts, and the undertaking of extensive inquiry around privileged beliefs, "change in [pedagogy] without regard to teacher ideology is doubtful for many, if not most teachers" (Zahorik 1991, p. 195). Perhaps, the deeper level of educational inquiry promoted by postgraduate degrees may offer a glimpse into how teachers may be able to tackle the ideological assumptions of the dominant society. As one teacher with a Masters' degree said:

> Textbooks have improved when it comes to Indigenous [content] … but I feel more confident in my own knowledge, so I use that. I have looked at resources before … I've read through them and thought … well there's a bit missing there in the explanation or in how it's being portrayed … this really needs to be added to.

Even though teachers expressed a desire to extend curriculum inquiry beyond textbook content only, in using this device as the protagonist for learning, they take up and disseminate the shared-norms in discourses of Australian History, whether they are aware of/comply with it or not. While further education has been argued as a successful strategy for educators developing their knowledge and skills for working with Indigenous perspectives (Wolfe et al. 2018), this is not always accessible or attainable avenue for all. Rather, as Sarra and Shay (2019) along with Tualaulelei (2021) proposes, teachers ought to participate in the purposeful targeting of scaffolded professional development activities on a continuing basis to develop culturally responsive pedagogical practices within the context of schooling.

Dominant discourses of Australian History posit Anglocentric superiority encapsulated within Anglocentric onto-epistemologies. This means that the ways in which history is thought about, approached, tackled, investigated, and discussed, occurs from a non-Indigenous lens where centuries of social structure, knowledge formation, and understanding underpin all inquiry. This non-Indigenous lens—while slowly changing—sanitises Australia's shared-and-brutal-history overwhelmingly, and in doing so, relegates the oppressed voices to the margins, or silences them. As a Wadawurrung Elder expressed:

> You don't hear [our] history because Australia does not want to delve into Aboriginal history because of the dark side of it since settlement. And government does not want people to know that there's a huge dark history. Yeah, they don't want to take responsibility for it, but nobody, as far as I know, wants people to shoulder the blame. What they want to do is to get them to know it and acknowledge it and ensure it doesn't happen again.

Whether textbooks or independently sourced information is used for the teaching of Australia's history, Lowe and Yunkaporta (2013) argue that the curriculum itself "does little to provide content that enables exploration of the social context in which knowledge is developed, and the possibility that Indigenous knowledge has its own ontological validity independent of the 'hard' sciences" (p. 8).

The centuries of Anglocentric onto-epistemologies being privileged has cemented the belief that the printed word is more powerful, more accurate, and at less risk of interpretation than other modes. Once again, it reinforces the adversarial positioning of *us* versus *them* by suggesting oral storying—the central onto-epistemological process of knowledge transaction among Australia's Indigenous Nations—is questionable, unreliable, and open to high degrees of variance—the foundational ideology of distrust exemplified in the game *Chinese Whispers* (see for example Bainbridge et al. 2013; Battiste 2002; Harrison and Greenfield 2011; Whap 2001). However, it is interesting to observe that over the past decade, Indigenous pedagogies—8 ways pedagogy, storying through video content, experiential activities, and working with local Indigenous communities—are increasingly being used in mainstream curriculum, albeit, in relation to Indigenous content and curriculum (Burgess et al. 2019). While these pedagogical approaches are methods for teachers wanting to develop their practice, acknowledgement that the privileging of the written word leads to non-Indigenous understandings where there is "a lack of priority given to the position of [Indigenous] speakers and

therefore little understanding of the history of language" (Nakata 1997, p. 93 ought to form the foundation to developing knowledges and skills. This is of utmost importance because as Nakata (1997) says, if this is "not factored into the primary standpoint, then knowledge about their [stories] is diminished" (p. 93). As this happens, the dominant ideological beliefs about knowledge construction underpin exchange to a point where the notion of a society "with no written historical knowledge is [seen as] a one based on myths, folk-tales, totems, and kinship systems" (Nakata 1997, p. 185). It creates an almost unavoidable position for teachers where, while seeming to permit individual pedagogical choice, cultural *inclusion* becomes a fallacy constrained by the very system in which they operate.

It from this space that we observe from interviews and scholarship that Indigenous cultures, histories, and perspectives are *included* within mainstream education settings. The curriculum positions *inclusion* as a key target for education outputs by first accepting that Indigenous perspectives have been an area of inattention previously before providing visibility of specific ways in which it can be addressed, albeit from the dominant Anglocentric position. It suggests that an overarching cross-curriculum priority area, as well as content descriptors, elaborations, and work samples is all that teachers require to ensure student cultural competence. Yet, this monodimensional Anglocentric understanding and approach fails to acknowledge the complexity of Indigenous knowledge tied to culture and in doing so, leaves teachers inept and feeling unsupported to educate in culturally relevant, responsive, and meaningful ways for all students (Guenther et al. 2019). This is despite a wealth of knowledge held within local Koorie communities as expressed by the following Yorta Yorta Elder:

> There's a problem with schooling and what this means for our kids … [We have an] amazing DVD [about our mission]. Just to sit back and listen to your Elders, [It's] very emotional because some of those Elders were talking about my great grandmother when we lived on that riverbank.

The lack of participation by teachers and schools with local Indigenous communities illuminates the legitimacy of avoidance posited by an ideological monocultural education system where inclusion is concerned. Yet, over the past several years, schools and individual teachers have been working with local Indigenous communities on a regular basis to design and deliver curriculum, albeit once again in direct relationship to *cultural* material. While this is one step towards a more inclusive education system, Lowe et al. (2019) encourages teachers to think beyond tokenistic moments—such as Acknowledgement of Country, reconciliation week, and the Arts and Humanities disciplines—to involve local Indigenous communities and/or representatives on a regular basis and at all levels of the school. Having said this, schools need to acknowledge also the cultural fatigue—the emotional and mental exhaustion—that many Indigenous peoples experience as a result of repeated requests for foundational assistance. To combat this, non-Indigenous peoples ought to tackle their white fragility, do the heavy lifting, and undertake independent research to developing knowledge about Australia's Indigenous peoples. Failure to do so will reinforce a system of educational practices where ignorance about Indigenous cultures as a foundation, or the complexities of associated systems for more nuanced understanding, is validated. By extension, it ensures that any type of educational practice where some type of Indigenous practice, knowledge, or peoples are addressed appeases the sense of duty to cultural *inclusion.*

7.4 Moving to a More *Inclusive* Space?

While scholarship and evidence from this study indicate clearly that current Australian educational practices are not as culturally *inclusive* as they profess to be, we question whether this has been a purposeful strategy of relegation or lack of knowledge about the consequences of a monocultural Anglocentric education space. Despite education being labelled as a sustainable development goal globally, it is interesting to note that during the last six years, there is a

resounding silence about any progress indicators relating to the target of 4.7: ensuring all learners acquire the knowledge and skills to promote … human rights, a culture of peace and non-violence … and appreciation of cultural diversity (United Nations 2021). While there was an acknowledgement that "lack of trained teachers … are jeopardising prospects for quality education for all" (United Nations 2021), the lack of reports for this target since 2016 indicates that either there is an absence of research to report on progress, or that this target is a tokenistic inclusion in the sustainable development goals on a global scale. Whether an outcome of omission or purposeful strategy, without acknowledging the realities of the Australian education system, and the impact of a monocultural lens, we argue that there will be a persistent obstruction to obtaining, and sharing, of deeper knowledge and understanding of Australia's shared-history inclusive of the sophisticated traditional cultural, linguistic, and historical perspectives of Indigenous Australians. It will continue to position Indigenous peoples, the Indigenous teacher, and Indigenous onto-epistemologies in an othered space where Anglocentric curriculum reigns supreme.

It is clear from the *data* presented in this chapter that systematic work in required in the space of critical pedagogy. In the absence of an Indigenous-embedded curriculum, such as *Kaupappa Maori* in Aotearoa / New Zealand (Smith 1997)—an issue beyond the scope of this chapter to explore or draw parallels to the Australian context for a whole range of reasons already discussed by other scholars (Bunda 2015; Koerner and Pillay 2020)—in order to move forward at this present time, greater attention ought to be paid to exposing the *fallacy of cultural inclusion* within the current Australian curriculum, and working towards more culturally responsive pedagogies. This could be addressed immediately by the current teaching workforce in the form of critical questioning such as "whose perspective/voice is present here?", participation in more regular professional learning activities, undertaking of independent research, integration of Indigenous pedagogies into mainstream classroom practices, and increased relational pedagogies where meaningful and deeper connections with local Indigenous communities are fostered. Far from progressive, these strategies that have been suggested by numerous scholars over the past decade as a starting point for making visible the monocultural and Anglocentric Australian education system (Bunda 2015; Guenther et al. 2019; Koerner and Pillay 2020).

Without critical pedagogy and commitment to developing knowledge, avoidance of any collective action by non-Indigenous organisations, governments, and policies, to take responsibility and/or lead action on more culturally inclusive education for redirection towards Indigenous-led pedagogy, the smoke and mirrors of reconciliation will remain (Lowe et al. 2021). It will continue to disempower Indigenous students and impede their capacity for upwards socioeconomic mobility offered up by equitable and quality education (United Nations 2021). It will ensure the rhetoric of epistemic inertia (K. Lowe, personal communication, June 23, 2021)—*inaction due to being afraid of getting information wrong*—as tied inextricably to the historically unresolved and underlying social conflict between non-Indigenous and Indigenous Australians will continue to be validated. Ultimately, it will provide the space by which the authority of Anglocentric power/knowledge relations for cultural *inclusion* in the Australian curriculum will continue to be a *fallacy* so long as cross-cultural complexity, sensitivity, and ignorance is legitimised as an excuse for inaction. We put forward, that the first point of call for creating a more culturally inclusive Australian education space begins with non-Indigenous peoples understanding and critiquing their positioning within the dominant Anglocentric society and affirming a commitment to learning about Australia's Indigenous peoples, cultures, histories, and perspectives. It is from this space, that deeper, critical, and more meaningful conversations about cultural *inclusion* may emerge.

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Dr. Sara Weuffen is a teacher-researcher specialist with a Ph. D. in cross/inter-cultural education research between non-Indigenous people, Aboriginal peoples, and Torres Strait Islanders in Australia. She specializes in learning and content design for diverse cohorts across a broad range of platforms; online, blended, face-to-face. As a non-Indigenous woman born on Gundijtmara Country (Warrnambool) and living on Wadawurrung Country (Ballarat), Dr. Weuffen draws upon her formative grey methodological approach—where both Poststructural theory and Indigenous methodologies are bought together—and collaborations with Australia's First Nations Peoples, to critique dominant structures and ideologies, interrogate binary discourses, and push educational boundaries for emancipatory and success-orientated shared-learning outcomes and positive social progress.

Kym Willis is an Aboriginal woman and PhD candidate at Federation University Australia. She currently works as a Primary educator in Metropolitan Melbourne and focuses on building and promoting inclusive pedagogies where Indigenous methodologies are foregrounded to promote Aboriginal students' academic achievement. Kym holds a passionate belief and commitment to social justice and the fundamental right for all students to receive equal opportunities for educational access and success. Her research focuses on interweaving Indigenous onto-epistemological knowledges with Anglo-centric perspectives for the authentic, reflexive, and responsive implementation within Primary educational settings and to support the academic success of Indigenous students.

Part II

Foregrounding Diverse Voices and Inclusive Practices

A *Possible Me?* Inspiring Learning Among Regional Young People for the Future World of Work

8

Cheryl Glowrey, Stuart Levy, Monica Green, Anna Fletcher, and Margaret Plunkett

Abstract

This chapter examines discourses that address the obstacles confronting regional youth transitioning to the future world of work (WoW). Mainstream discourses associated with cultural capital and youth aspirations tend to be deficit focused, highlighting perceived challenges and limitations. As such, this chapter adopts new lenses using possible selves and self-determination theories to inform strategic approaches to support youth transitions into the future WoW in the Latrobe Valley, Australia. These support the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, Quality Education, which promotes educational opportunities that contribute towards a progressive and healthy society. They also link closely to SDG 8, Decent Work and Economic Growth. It is widely accepted that schools, families, industries and communities in partnership have vital roles in preparing young people for the changing WoW and their future lives. The literature informing this chapter identified that interventions to sustain Middle Years student aspirations require active rather than passive experiences with the WoW and are particularly pertinent for regions such as the Latrobe Valley, as they transition away from trades related work roles to an uncertain future.

Keywords

World of work · Middle years · Regional · Possible me theory · Self-determination theory

C. Glowrey (✉) · S. Levy · M. Green · A. Fletcher · M. Plunkett
Institute of Education, Arts and Community, Federation University Australia, Latrobe Valley, Australia
e-mail: c.glowrey@federation.edu.au

S. Levy
e-mail: stuart.levy@federation.edu.au

M. Green
e-mail: monica.green@federation.edu.au

A. Fletcher
e-mail: a.fletcher@federation.edu.au

M. Plunkett
e-mail: margaret.plunkett@federation.edu.au

Author Positioning Statements

Cheryl: I grew up in Gippsland, Victoria and have lived, researched and worked as an educator in the region for most of my life. As a secondary school teacher and administrator in rural communities, I was involved in providing effective strategies to prepare young people for a changing world of work, often outside of their local area. Experience with an industry partnership programme was a turning point in understanding how to engage thinking and curiosity about work with students.

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Monica: I am an adjunct senior research fellow at Federation University. I was born and raised in the Latrobe Valley (Gippsland, Victoria) and have been teaching and researching in the region for the past 17 years. The underpinning focus of this work has been establishing partnerships with local schools, not for profits and the wider community to promote the importance of collaboration as a pedagogical practice, and for building stronger ties with local communities.

Stuart: I was born in the Latrobe Valley, Victoria, grew up in a more rural location in East Gippsland, attended university in the Victorian state capital, Melbourne, and then returned to the Latrobe Valley. At the local university, my research and practice have centred around developing and delivering university entry pathways for regional school leavers and mature age students whose knowledge of world of work opportunities is intensely localised and often only recently developed.

Margaret: Although originally a Melbournite, I have spent more than 30 years living, teaching and researching in Gippsland. The local university provided a welcome and essential hub for passionate educators and researchers like myself, to work together to develop understandings and concomitant support for regional students and educators with regard to maximising educational and career opportunities, which can be less accessible in regional areas.

Anna: I came to Australia as an adult migrant, having spent the first twenty-eight years of my life in Stockholm, the capital of Sweden. My coming to Australia at the start of the new millennium marked a transition for me from being a city girl in an apartment, to living in the regional areas of Bathurst NSW, the Top End in the Northern Territory (where I did my Masters and started my PhD, while working full time as a teacher)—before moving to Gippsland in 2015 to take up my first ongoing academic job as a lecturer. As the first in my immediate family to attend university, and as someone who would never have believed I would find myself as a senior academic on the other side of the world.

8.1 Introduction

It is widely accepted that schools, and education more broadly, play a vital role in preparing young people for the future World of Work (WoW), and to equip them with an understanding of the WoW and their potential roles in it. This chapter examines literature and thinking in relation to the provision of WoW experiences, as a way of helping youth understand the types of opportunities that may be accessible in their specific environments. In particular, the focus of this chapter is on the exposure to WoW experiences that have been found to inspire and provide purpose for learning among Middle Years students (Years 5–8). This is the stage of learning where ideas of future identity—a "possible me"—might be explored before committing to the narrowing pathways of senior school curriculum. The concept of WoW has become popular within literature relating to student futures, and the concomitant role education plays in preparing young people for those futures (Australian Government 2020; OECD 2020; Torii 2018). In this chapter, the term WoW is used in reference to the diverse school-mediated activities designed to provide experiences of, and exposure to, related education, including opportunities to identify vocational interests, abilities and preferred possible future selves. Schools are increasingly required to engage more critically with the skills and capabilities that underpin the future WoW, a role that is aligned with UN (2015) Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4: Quality Education, which promotes educational opportunities that contribute towards a progressive and healthy society. It also links closely with SDG 8, which highlights the importance of decent work and economic growth. Global in its

design and reach, the SDG framework provides significant relevance for local communities, as highlighted throughout this chapter.

The capacity of Middle Years students to navigate a pathway towards achieving their future WoW is linked to complex factors. A key aim of this chapter is to disrupt some of the mainstream discourses associated with regional youth, and their aspirations related to future possibilities. As such, it examines the cultural discourse on student aspirations that has underpinned much research and policy-making in recent decades. Cultural theories, drawing on the early work of Pierre Bourdieu, locate aspirations as an expression of an individual's cultural capital through which social structures are reinforced, ensuring the maintenance of power and class (Bourdieu 1984). Adopting a less determinist standpoint, Appadurai (2004) proposed that aspirations were future-oriented and could be shaped by the navigational capacity of students to achieve change (Gale and Parker 2015b). In contemporary regional contexts, such mainstream discourse for "raising aspirations" lacks consideration of the specific place-based context of students (Corbett and Forsey 2017; Fray et al. 2020). Further, such discourses from a metrocentric policy perspective tend to position regional students in an agricultural construct despite local differences such as mining economies, thereby perpetuating a deficit focus (Pini et al. 2010; Sutton et al. 2017). This chapter proposes an alternative framework for positioning regional students in the Middle Years to engage with the WoW in an uncertain future found in the theory of possible self (Markus and Nurius 1986) and self-determination theory (SDT) (Reeve 2012). The theory of possible selves derives from psychology to explain how desirable future concepts of self are created that include motivational elements, accommodate contextual influences, incorporate individual expectations and acknowledge the importance of developing clear pathways (Harrison 2018). Self-determination theory highlights autonomy, competence and relatedness as attributes of motivation (Reeve 2012).

This chapter examines the context of the coal mining region of the Latrobe Valley, in Gippsland, Victoria, Australia, as a place of transition, which has major implications for young people and their future WoW. As such, the chapter provides an evidence base, derived from a rigorous review of both policy and peer-reviewed research literature in the WoW field to support student aspirations for their "possible me" futures in Gippsland. This review, supported by government funding from the Latrobe Valley Authority (LVA), brought to light significant global trends and practices pertaining to the WoW for regional students and underpins the various sections within this chapter. The timeliness and importance of this exploration and discussion was recently underscored by Hughes and Smith (2020), who observed that without innovative practices to create pathways to success for young people, the disruptions brought on by "COVID-19… Industry 4.0, rapid technological advancement, the challenges of climate change and … an ageing population and workforce" will result in "a potential tsunami of youth unemployment and prolonged transitions between education and the world of work" (p. 7).

The chapter commences by establishing the context of the Latrobe Valley in Gippsland, Victoria. This is followed by a report on global and local research into the expectations of young people and an examination of self-determination and possible self theory. In particular, we examine how these theories provide a lens with which to understand and inspire learning among regional Middle Years students for the future WoW. The next section explores the challenges faced in the WoW for regional students before reporting on current initiatives and innovative responses for schools. The chapter concludes with a recognition that future WoW possibilities in the Latrobe Valley region and young peoples' associated conceptions of their future possible selves are intrinsically linked to and impacted by the SDGs 4 and 8.

8.2 The Context of the Latrobe Valley in Gippsland, Victoria

Gippsland, the easternmost region of Victoria, Australia, makes up 18% of the state's landform. Geographically and demographically complex, it

encompasses multiple, distinct locales, each with their own features of topography, geography, demography, politics, economy, climate, industry and accessibility (Painter 2008). Subsequently, each local government area (LGA) faces its own set of unique environmental, social, cultural and economic challenges, including long established industries undergoing transformation (ClimateWorks Australia 2011). Central to the region is the Latrobe Valley, a bioregion with a population of 76,000 people. The discovery of expansive brown coal deposits a century ago was instrumental in shaping the Latrobe Valley's economic and industrial identity and positioned the energy sector as the region's largest employer, providing financial and intergenerational job security to previous generations (Plowright et al. 2019).

The Latrobe Valley's brown coal/energy narrative was significantly disrupted in 2017 with the closure of the region's biggest and highest polluting brown coal-fired station, Hazelwood. The loss of 450 jobs has since been accompanied by broader realities involving the impending closure of two remaining coal-powered stations, Yallourn in 2026 and Loy Yang in 2048, although such closures may occur sooner (Martinelli et al. 2016). The decisions, which directly correlate with the focus of several of the SDGs, have unsettled the region, further catapulting local communities into economic uncertainty. As Plowright et al. (2019) argue, these seismic events and shifts are writing new layers of trauma onto the people of the Latrobe Valley transitioning into an unknown future. Comparable to other regions that have experienced post-coal to low-carbon economy transitions, the Latrobe Valley is a case study of the contemporary dilemmas communities face when confronted with a significant restructure (Tomaney and Somerville 2010).

As such, the region is slowly coming to terms with its vulnerability; grappling with the challenge of what it wants to look like in a climate adapted world (Stanley et al. 2013). While Australia is still 60% dependent on coal for its electricity needs (Flannery 2020), global trends indicate rapid movement towards cleaner energy sources (Martinelli et al. 2016), as signified via decisions to close the region's coal industry. The global imperative to move away from coal has major social, environmental and economic ramifications for the Latrobe Valley communities. Such a changing and perplexing narrative is not lost on the region's younger generations, many of whom grow up with intergenerational aspirations for coal-related trades-based employment (Gale and Parker 2015a).

Despite current uncertainty and vagueness about the future of work in the Latrobe Valley, it is increasingly understood that the major drivers of change will be constituted through technological and digital skills and climate change (Tytler et al. 2019). In terms of future work for the Latrobe Valley, it has been recognised that new economies which support future WoW opportunities in the region require a whole-of-government approach to leverage investment from a range of sources to deliver long-term economic, social and environmental benefits (Martinelli et al. 2016). This understanding links closely with SDG 8, which sets out to promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.

Currently, youth unemployment in Gippsland remains above the Victorian average, while completion of post-school studies is below the state average (RRV 2021). Unfortunately, imprecise and uncertain future projections about the local nature of the WoW do little to encourage and support young people to be engaged more purposefully with education. This highlights the need for revised school-community-industry partnerships that effectively support and guide the region's young people towards emergent employment opportunities in their local community (Mann et al. 2020; Zipin et al. 2015). As the literature suggests, supporting students to plan and prepare for their transition from school into the WoW is necessarily more complex in regions undergoing transformation towards an uncertain future (Cuervo et al. 2019). Taking action to address the impending inequities of educational outcomes for students of the region is consistent with the philosophy underpinning UN SDG 4: *Quality Education*.

8.3 Review of Related Literature

8.3.1 Global and Local Research into the WoW Expectations of Young People

Research into the expectations of children and adolescents towards the future WoW has been evident in western international literature for decades, with Australian research in this area emerging more recently. Gore et al.'s (2017) recent work demonstrated that aspirations develop throughout schooling rather than just in the senior years, with interest in careers forming in primary school. According to the UK researchers Chambers et al. (2020), "aspirations and stereotypes are set early and are easily visible as young as seven" (p. 21). Recent literature from the UK argues that the character of aspirations is strongly rooted in a young person's sense of what is "reasonable" and "natural" for "people like me" to pursue (Hughes and Kashefpakdel 2019). Moreover, findings from multiple longitudinal studies in the UK (Hughes and Kashefpakdel 2019) strongly suggest clear links among school-age aspirations, engagement in education and later achievement of adult economic outcomes.

An important consideration in changing and building the capacity to aspire "relies heavily on the resources available to aspirers, including what is stored in the archives of experience to which they have access" (Gale and Parker 2015a, p. 148). Moreover, recent literature emanating from Asia on children's aspirations suggests that the terminology of aspiration, when linked with education or work opportunities is not neutral "because of inevitable geographical, gendered, ethnicised and classed inequalities that impact upon young people; their playing field is far from even" (Naafs and Skelton 2017, p. 8). Recently, the UK produced several reports outlining research into WoW experiences within schools (Hughes and Kashefpakdel 2019; Hughes and Smith 2020; Kashefpakdel et al. 2018) that demonstrated the value of establishing formalised and developmentally appropriate frameworks to scaffold WoW experiences both within schools and more broadly in a variety of societal settings. The choices young people make about future work are related to complex social and structural issues such as distance and access to higher education, community aspirations, peers and financial capacity (Cuervo et al. 2019; Gore et al. 2019; Webb et al. 2015). The relationship between aspiration and SES has been acknowledged as complex within western aspiration literature (Farrugia et al. 2014; Gore et al. 2017; Kintrea et al. 2015). Other factors also interact with SES, which is particularly pertinent to regional and rural communities where parent/guardian and teacher views play a significant part in aspiration formation for students (Fray et al. 2020).

Schools, and more historically careers teachers, have been influential in guiding students towards a particular WoW pathway. With their current responsibility and challenge of managing and guiding young people in a changing deindustrialised landscape in the Latrobe Valley, schools and teachers may arguably contribute to the setting of unrealistic aspirations (Bok 2010). In schools, aspirations are raised and then dashed by teachers who inform students that "anything is possible" on the one hand, while aware that barriers such as academic performance, finance and geography may impact the attainment of certain aspirations. Conversely, teachers may assume that some children will not attain their aspiration and redirect or discourage them, possibly contributing to a form of Bourdieu's symbolic violence (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990; Bok 2010). However, as Fray et al. (2020) contend, it is not just schools and teachers that have exclusive sway on young people's aspiration formation: parental views and influences also play a similarly significant part. Additionally, in regional places, communities influence aspirations as do peers (Gore et al. 2019; Cuervo et al. 2019).

A range of theoretical perspectives have been used to research unrealised aspirations held by regional and low SES students in Years 7–9, with

associated descriptions being applied, including "cultural capital", "funds of knowledge" and "archives of experience" (Appadurai 2004; Cuervo et al. 2019; Gale and Parker 2015a; Zipin et al. 2015). Cultural capital refers to the skills and knowledge about society that enable a person to live and form relationships successfully (Zipin et al. 2015). Broadly, theories of cultural capital (Zipin et al. 2015; Cuervo et al. 2019) and funds of knowledge (Zipin et al. 2015) argue that students with higher levels of cultural capital acquired through experiences provided in family and community networks possess broader understandings of the WoW and are therefore more able to achieve their aspirations. Analysis of the research literature indicates that as levels of cultural capital increase, the likelihood of holding higher education aspirations also increases (Cuervo et al. 2019).

Nonetheless, not all cultural capital is valued equally by teachers in schools, particularly for students from low SES, rural and regional backgrounds where family and community experiences are sometimes outside those included in the school curriculum (Reid and McCallum 2013; Roberts 2017). Inherent in the theory of cultural capital is the assumption that all students from low SES backgrounds have similarly low cultural capital, however, in contrast to this belief is research that highlights highly heterogenous aspirations within communities regardless of SES background (Bok 2010). In the UK, criticism of the recent requirement for schools to build cultural capital for students from low SES backgrounds to enhance WoW opportunities (Ofsted 2019) highlights a further devaluing of diversity of cultural capital brought by students and their families to the educational experience of schooling. Naylor and Mifsud (2020) warn that the notion of cultural capital places undue responsibility on students and programmes designed to "uplift" participants through equipping them with the requisite capacities through a process of appropriate enculturation. The effect of which inadvertently perpetuates deficit discourses and is counter to the tenet of SDG 4: Quality Education, and specifically, the target (4.4) by 2030, to substantially increase the number of youth who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.

It is increasingly acknowledged that aspirations, as a basis for understanding young people's conceptions of their future, lack specificity and can incorporate unrealisable "hopes" and "dreams", and for the purposes of "understanding the relationship between imagined futures and agency in the immediate, have failed to produce helpful insight" (Hardgrove et al. 2015, p. 164). Furthermore, as Harrison (2018) acknowledges, the aspiration discourse is flawed in positioning:

> students from disadvantaged backgrounds ... as setting their sights too low … it is increasingly understood that aspiration-raising is unable to explain patterns of participation and that it risks "blaming the victim" by failing to appreciate the structural constraints forged through their socio-cultural context (p. 1)

8.3.2 Self-determination and Possible Selves Theory: Inspiring Learning Among Regional Middle Years Students for the Future World of Work

In this chapter, we apply a theoretical framework that challenges the mainstream discourse of conceptualising aspiration-building initiatives through a cultural capital lens. Instead, we adopt a SDT perspective, and the notion of people needing a sense of relatedness by being involved in warm, caring and responsive relationships with others (Niemiec and Ryan 2009; Reeve 2012). Thus, the WoW initiatives need to provide scope for students to experience relating to others within a WoW context in an authentic, caring and reciprocal way (Reeve 2012). This ties in with a recommendation from Hughes and Smith (2020) for the collaborative co-creation of places and spaces, some of them digital, for "youth engagement that facilitate meaningful conversations about learning and the world of work" (p. 24) and extend their

views about WoW opportunities. The notion of relatedness is also a significant theme in the scoping review of empirical research for influences on aspirations for higher education conducted by Fray et al. (2020). To this end, school-industry partnerships need to provide the opportunity for all students to have their curiosity sparked and become aware of new and emerging professions. Such partnerships support students' development of capabilities that relate to future work; for example, problem-solving, collaboration, digital literacy skills and entrepreneurial mindsets. This is particularly important for disadvantaged youth who may otherwise lack access to networks and employment opportunities (Torii 2018). However, as Hannon et al. (2019) note in their categories of learning systems, there is a distinct shortage of "responsively dynamic" opportunities for students. Such a WoW initiative would entail regional youth developing their learner agency through interacting with a dynamic and self-sustaining community of providers that is responsive to economic conditions and learner demands. In achieving this, providers at the regional level will make a significant step towards meeting the SDG 4: Quality Education target of substantially increasing the number of young people and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship by 2030.

The possible selves theory developed by Markus and Nurius (1986) is regarded by Hardgrove et al. (2015) as more grounded than contemporary aspirations discourse which can be vague and lack agentic behaviours that support "trajectories towards future possibilities" (Hardgrove et al. 2015, p. 164). Along with Hardgrove et al. (2015), we consider possible selves theory to better contextualise present impacts of lived experiences within planned future conceptions of self, for Middle Years students. It accommodates situated awareness of sociocultural political opportunities and constraints, the influence of experienced possible futures conveyed by influencers such as family, community and education, and provides motivational impetus and the development of agentic behaviours when coupled with clear pathways for realisation (Hardgrove et al. 2015). In an educational context, Harrison (2018) proposes that possible selves can be utilised to:

> create a motivational impetus for actions in the present in order to achieve a like-to-be self—or evade a like-to-avoid self [and] ... takes specific account of the individual's expectations and the importance of having a clear pathway towards a long-term destination. (p. 1)

Notably, a well-developed conception of "possible self"—in the form of an individual narrative for the future—is "vital in influencing and motivating current actions [and] … possible selves thus "provide a conceptual link between the self-concept and motivation … providing an impetus to act in the present" (Harrison 2018, p. 6). This confirms and supports Appadurai's (2004) contention that building the future focused capacities of young people requires "practice, repetition, exploration, conjecture, and refutation" (p. 69).

Possible selves entail consideration of desirable and undesirable future selves and the pathways required to transform aspirations into expectations of future WoW participation. When coupled with environments and/or programmes that encourage self-regulated behaviours, the exploration of possible selves can cultivate motivation and a sense of agency for purposeful engagement with education to achieve a desirable and plausible future. In regions undergoing transformation, such as the Latrobe Valley in which the future WoW is not clearly visible to communities, integrated programmes across the Middle Years that systematically and consistently expose young people to emerging future possibilities and the pathways by which to realise them, should be embedded into teachers' curriculum practice to facilitate students' informed subject selections and learning plans. As observed in Hardgrove et al.'s (2015) UK study, "youth did not imagine future possibilities in the work force "out of thin air." They formed self-conceptions … through lived experience and exposure to available possibilities" (p. 168).

8.3.3 The Challenges Faced in the World of Work for Regional Students

The Latrobe Valley in its current context of industrial transformation provides a fertile ground to examine and challenge mainstream discourse about young people's ideas and attitudes concerning their preparation for the future WoW. However, to do so, it is important to first illuminate the challenges they face. As indicated in international, large-scale data sets such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) survey of 15-year olds in OECD countries, young people's interest in skilled trades is decreasing (Musset and Kurekova 2018). In the Latrobe Valley region, where people traditionally have been employed in skilled trades, this is a noteworthy fact. It also raises the question if this PISA trend is true for the Latrobe Valley and whether the indication in the PISA data pointing to a significant increase in interest among youth for highly skilled employment applies (Musset and Kurekova 2018). Moreover, large-scale data representing over half a million 15-year olds responding to questions about expected occupations at the age of 30 and plans for further education after leaving schooling (OECD 2020) points to a considerable misalignment between occupational expectations and educational expectations (and academic potential). Based on an analysis of the 2018 PISA results, young people globally aspire to careers that were well known in the twentieth century, with students from disadvantaged backgrounds at risk of seeking jobs that are most likely to be automated in the future and with a narrow selection from the ten top careers (Mann et al. 2020). Globally, misaligned aspirations are more evident among students from disadvantaged backgrounds (Mann et al. 2020), such that:

> skills mismatch affects two out of five employees in the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) countries… affects 1.3 billion people worldwide and imposes a 6% annual tax on the global economy in the form of lost labour productivity. (Hughes and Smith 2020, p. 8)

Further, aligning student aspirations with future work skills contributes towards SDG 8.2: Decent work and economic growth and specifically, the target to achieve higher levels of economic productivity, technological upgrading and innovation, including through a focus on high-value added and labour-intensive sectors (UN 2015).

As a contradiction, research in Australia and in Britain reveals that Middle Years students from all backgrounds, including low SES, aspire to careers that require university study; in fact, at a rate that exceeds available work opportunities (Gore et al. 2019; Kintrea et al. 2015). British research demonstrated that student aspirations vary only slightly between Years 7 and 9 as a result of learning more about the future WoW, as opposed to Years 10–12 students believing they cannot achieve their career goals (Kintrea et al. 2015). A similar finding was confirmed by an Australian study that determined career aspirations were relatively high and stable between Years 7–9 (Fray et al. 2020). Numerous research studies found that low SES alone did not predict or equate to low aspirations, and that students in general articulate high aspirations between Years 7 and 9 (Gore et al. 2017; Hughes and Smith 2020). Building on these insights, a comprehensive NSW study involving students from Years 3–12 found that student year level, gender and prior achievement were more powerful predictors of student interest in most occupations and interacted with the impacts of low SES in complex ways that varied by career type (Gore et al. 2017). In fact, aspirations in relation to Middle Years students have been found to be tied to traditional gendered roles (Gore et al. 2017).

In part, this contradiction might be explained through more close-grained research that distinguishes between ideas about the WoW that are "desired" and "real" among students in Years 5–8 from lower SES backgrounds (Gale and Parker 2015a; Gore et al. 2017; Zipin et al. 2015). Although students articulate "desired" future careers when asked about what they would like to "do" when they leave school, they qualify these with "real" WoW expectations. Poignantly,

students from lower SES backgrounds are likely to see their future work in jobs similar to those of their parents based on what is possible in the social imaginary of their context (Gale and Parker 2015a). In the rapidly changing economy of industrially transforming centres such as the Latrobe Valley, students from low SES backgrounds are more likely to express interest in desired careers as they observe the changing and dwindling possibilities for them in "real" work (Zipin et al. 2015).

According to the research literature (e.g. Zipin et al. 2015), Middle Years students are likely to talk about ideas for future work in two ways. The first is concerned with representing what they thought was possible based on ideas from popular culture, school and peers and belonging in the *present*. Second and simultaneously, they talk about aspirations that represent what was realistic based on their experiences, family background and perceived local options, ideas belonging in the *past to present*. Research in a low SES secondary school in Melbourne, Victoria identified a third way of talking about aspiration for this age group: that of emergent aspirations which are transformative and *future focused* (Zipin et al. 2015). These aspirations emerge from understandings of local culture and a desire to change outcomes for the future, which underpin Appadurai's (2004) proposition that aspirations are developed in the "thick of life". As Zipin et al. (2015) suggest, learning to navigate the local cultural map to develop emergent aspirations through the existing knowledge of the students offers a way into future worlds of work. International reports from the OECD suggest moving away from conventional and exclusive school-career-based practices towards innovative responses that focus on strengthening the cultural capacity of students through community-based lifelong career guidance services, mentoring, school-industry partnerships and innovative curriculum development (Mann et al. 2020).

Comparisons between urban and rural students often overlook spatial considerations and the structural challenges faced by rural students and the diversity within rural and regional settings (Corbett and Forsey 2017; Cuervo et al. 2019). Lack of access to preparatory resources and experiences for engagement with the future WoW is a barrier for students in rural and regional areas, which has mistakenly been perceived as evidence of low aspirations (Cuervo et al. 2019). However, Victorian research suggests that "students' aspirations and expectations are circumscribed by an awareness of regional and rural 'new times'" arising from changing economic opportunities which may restrict access to aspirations, especially metropolitan university for rural students (Cuervo et al. 2019, p. 846). Furthermore, the notion of the future WoW in a connected and mobile society of contemporary young people suggests that the impact of local economic situations is more nuanced as young people are networked to larger regional centres near them and do not see these places as outside of their sense of place (Farrugia et al. 2014; Kintrea et al. 2015). It is therefore more possible for students to look towards completing a degree in nursing if it is offered regionally than at a metropolitan university, as opposed to selecting a regional TAFE diploma option on the basis of affordability and accessibility.

The WoW experiences that inspire young people's learning are necessarily different in regional centres undergoing transition to those of young people in metropolitan centres and other regional and rural communities. Where the future of work is itself uncertain, it is likely there are fewer opportunities for young people to identify and engage in part-time work while at school that might lead to certainty with future employment. This compounds an identified international trend among young people in school to be in less part-time employment as a preparation for future workforce participation (Hughes and Smith 2020).

This challenge is further exacerbated by the likelihood of employers and industry feeling uncertain as to future workforce requirements and skills, which presents the potential for pervading pessimism. This uncertainty combined with out-dated perceptions of the local future of work is likely to shape the views among parents, who in turn are the principal influence on young

people's future aspirations (Appadurai 2004; Cuervo et al. 2019; Fray et al. 2020; Gale and Parker 2015a; Hughes and Smith 2020; Zipin et al. 2015). These factors highlight the need to place a premium on collaboration between families, community, schools and employers, as did a recent research project in New South Wales that found communities play a key role in fostering and sustaining high expectations for future work (Gore et al. 2019).

Innovations to sustain student aspirations and inspire purposeful learning require active experiences with the WoW to ensure that young people develop appropriate skill sets and mindsets informed by an appreciation of future work possibilities. This is particularly pertinent for the WoW experiences developed for Middle Years students in regions such as the Latrobe Valley that are undergoing transition towards new work futures requiring skill sets, knowledges and aptitudes that may not have been previously localised, visible or valued. Any community transitioning from a coal-based economy to a low-carbon economy faces the significant challenge of coming to terms with an uncertain future, including the changing world of work. Such a transition necessitates improving the community's understanding of the imperative to shift from an exclusive reliance on trades-based skills and occupations (e.g. use of hands, conducive to a coal economy) to more human-oriented interpersonal, enterprising and creative soft-skill roles (e.g. use of head and heart), including strong academic and digital literacy skills, an optimistic mindset, problem-solving, technological knowledge and digital skills for future alternative economies (OECD 2020; Tytler et al. 2019). These shifting circumstances will require greater on-the-job learning opportunities to inform and support young people with the newly identified skills and capabilities (Deloitte Insights 2019; Dupuis 2019). This direction is in keeping with SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth, and in particular, to Target 8.3 (UN 2015), which involves the promotion of development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, encouragement of the formalisation and growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, including through access to financial services. The situation in the Latrobe Valley resonates with Target 8.6 to substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education and training which was due to be met in 2020 and is likely to remain an issue for young people of the region unless addressed.

As reported by Hughes and Smith (2020), "holding bias[ed] assumptions and having narrow aspirations can—and does—go on to influence the academic effort children and young people exert in certain lessons, the subjects they choose to study, and the jobs they end up pursuing" (p. 12). As such, students' aspirations, real and imagined, and their purpose for learning are bounded by the geography within which they can imagine their futures and the prospects that they can most easily observe and experience. Awakening them to new and innovative futures, within industries and workplaces that may not yet be widely established, requires actively assisting and supporting them to encounter these possibilities.

8.3.4 Current Initiatives and Innovative Responses for Schools

Until recently, preparing Australian Middle Years students for future work has been limited in practice with little evidence of the impact of initiatives that have been developed (Ithaca 2019). The introduction of national and state policies for career education at all levels of schooling has heightened attention on the nature of future work experiences in early secondary school. Specifically, Victorian initiatives include accredited professional development for career educators, more resources and the inclusion of Years 7–8 in a rebadged programme to track individual career action plans through a digital portfolio (DET 2018). Globally, by age 15, only 40% of students had received any careers guidance with the most common activities reported as researching on the internet and/or completing a survey (Mann et al. 2020). Nonetheless, the long-

term impact of greater engagement with the WoW for Middle School students has been appreciated for quite some time. In 2014, Mann and Percy reported that in Britain:

> young adults … who experienced four or more employer contacts whilst in education [aged 14-19] could expect to earn, on average in their early 20s, 18% … more per year than their peers, qualified to similar levels, who undertook no activities during their schooling. (p. 508)

More recently, Kashefpakdel et al. (2019) reported that in Britain, "with controls for background characteristics and academic success in place, each career talk with outside speakers at age 14–15 in the mid-1980s was associated with a 0.8% wage uplift in 1996" (p. 20). It is now acknowledged that "after controlling for social background and academic achievement… the way that teenagers think about their futures in education and employment has a significant impact on their employment outcomes as adults" (Hughes and Smith 2020, p. 36).

The Australian national policy response includes embedding specialist career education programmes into school curriculum frameworks where all teachers are responsible for students learning about work. The approach to career education in Years 5–8 is focused on developing transferrable life skills through capabilities in both Australian and Victorian curriculum documents (Ithaca 2019). This application of a developmental continuum of competencies within curriculum frameworks to map the learning of transferable skills for future work is a global trend. In Finland, curriculum competencies include *working life competence and entrepreneurship*, designed to encourage students to explore work, entrepreneurial skills and the possibilities for leisure in their future careers (Ithaca 2019). In addition, Finnish schools are expected to establish curriculum for future work suited to local needs and perspectives. Accordingly, in relation to learning about working life, students are familiarised with the special features of businesses, industries and key sectors in their local area and introduced to working life through collaboration with businesses and organisations outside the school (Ithaca 2019).

The changing role of career advisors, including additional professional development, resources, and the priority to work with students in all year levels places them at the interface between schools and the WoW as facilitators of industry partnerships (Torii 2018). Recent examples that have extended WoW experiences into Middle Years include an annual Year 9 Careers Expo in Gippsland supported by Victorian Government organisations such as the Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs). Another successful school industry partnership initiative is the Broadening Horizons programme which engages Year 7–9 students in resolving real world problems for school-industry partners (LVA 2019). Internationally, careers advisors in partnership with industry have initiated career programmes with some success. For example, in Switzerland, students learn about various occupations—their typical working hours and wages, as well as academic and vocational training paths. They also visit companies and prepare for interviews, which can lead to internships (Ithaca 2019). In Finland, career guidance is provided by a government authority external to the school, which works in partnership with local teachers and communities. In the USA and in Australia, *Big Picture Schools* based on a school partnership with an external organisation are providing sustained and tailored programmes of mentors and coaching expertise for individual students to envisage a "possible me" future aligned with emerging work opportunities (LLEAP 2013).

Nonetheless, while industry remains uncertain about the future WoW—which is the established case in the Latrobe Valley—even the international initiatives that are beyond those currently adopted in Australia will yield marginal gains. Globally, successful elements in career education programmes occur when education providers and employers actively step into one another's worlds. This entails employers and education providers working with students early and intensely, which may include employers hiring youth

in conjunction with their enrolment in a programme to build skills (Ithaca 2019). Engaging with employers is significant in shaping aspirations, particularly in partnership with teacher understandings of student needs within the classroom (Mann et al. 2020). For this engagement to be successful, Mann et al. (2020) suggest it needs to be effective, efficient, equitable and evidenced. The ultimate outcome to be achieved by this approach is treating the education-to-employment journey as a continuum.

In a policy environment emphasising the need to provide better guidance to future work for Middle Years students in Australia and internationally, responses focus on strengthening the cultural capacity of students to navigate towards their aspirations. This includes the provision to students of more detailed and meaningful information and tailored advice about what is needed for specific careers (Gore et al. 2017). Students from lower SES families and regional secondary schools have less access to experiences, knowledge and skills to navigate transitional pathways into the WoW compared to others (Gale and Parker 2015a).

The theories of possible selves and STD suggest new ways to disrupt how to address the aspirational gap in places such as the Latrobe Valley, where the nature of the transition to a future WoW is less certain. Innovation based on workshops inviting students to participate in the co-construction and elaboration of the pathways required to transition from their present to their desired and future possible selves with partnered stakeholders (education, industry, family, and community) is one possibility. These workshops would advocate for the collaborative creation of safe, positive and enabling learning spaces for young people in which to co-create and shape their lives (Hughes and Smith 2020). These learning spaces need to be aligned to local context and ensure young people's voices are listened to. Harrison (2018) affirms the importance of supported spaces in which "young people are allowed to elaborate their own possible selves, rather than passively receive insights from adults about how they should visualise them and what their roadmaps should be" (p. 13). For Harrison (2018), this represents a "conceptual shift … away from directive guidance that seeks to coerce young people and towards … activities that enable them to explore their own futures and devise self-relevant strategies" (pp. 13–14).

Self-evidently, "young people cannot work towards outcomes that they have no ability to imagine in the future, nor will they be motivated to direct their efforts towards imagined futures if there are no (perceived) viable routes to get to them" (Hardgrove et al. 2015, p. 169). Addressing this requires moving beyond the neoliberal paradigm asserting that individual effort and "striving to succeed" will necessarily bring rewards and compensate for individually experienced notional deficits arising from the happenstance of geography or familial cultural capital. What is required are educational partnerships with young people that acknowledge their acquired and diverse competencies and augment these with institutional support networks across multiple stakeholders that provide opportunities to map informed pathways into the WoW. This may enable young people to more effectively navigate the transformations and shifts in the WoW. For some of their peers, these transformations in the WoW have made convoluted, extended and disjointed participation in the "gig economy" an increasingly common experience of the transition from school.

8.4 Future World of Work Possibilities in the Region and a Possible Me

Based on our examination of the wider research literature, we suggest that Middle Years in Australia is an optimum time to engage students in WoW learning activities. Middle Years is when students can begin formulating pathways to further study or the WoW, to turn aspirations into expectations (SDG:4). Possible selves theory (Hardgrove et al. 2015; Harrison 2018), in conjunction with SDT (Reeve 2012), provides a framework for a "Possible Me in the WoW" programme across the Middle Years that systematically and sequentially provides students

with integrated opportunities to explore the transitions necessary to refine and transform their emergent aspirations into post-schooling expectations of WoW and/or further study participation. This approach is likely to be more fit for purpose than the conventional practice of locating most opportunities for experience with the WoW in the final years of secondary school, where work experience, careers fairs and university visits provide an entrée to future possibilities. Oyserman et al. (2011) found that while students from different socioeconomic groups may have similar propensities for constructing possible selves, it was less likely that students from disadvantaged groups would have articulated strategies for achieving them. A "Possible Me in the WoW" programme will help ensure inclusive and equitable quality education that promotes lifelong learning opportunities in keeping with SDG 4: Quality Education and SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth.

While more is being demanded of schools to prepare young people for an unpredictable and uncertain future, including addressing the broader lack of confidence in youth about their working future (FYA 2018), there are limits to what schools can achieve in isolation. The collective role regional society can play in equipping individuals to create meaningful futures will involve Gippsland schools, industry and the wider community working together to understand current regional approaches to creating new economies and mapping future work possibilities within and across those economies.

Hughes and Smith (2020) caution that "[m] any students see no other choice but to rely on the promise that investment in education (i.e. certification) alone will ultimately pay off", and that this proposition "needs to be challenged if we are to engender hope, resilience and optimism for the future among young people" (p. 38). Collaborative partnerships that "make visible" students' possible future selves and the pathways to achieve them can provide locally contextualised experiences attuned to emerging and new WoW futures as they become known to transitioning and evolving sectors of industry. They can be the necessary key drivers for integrated Middle Years WoW initiatives that avoid historically patterned outcomes between schools within a region and support informed aspirations becoming informed expectations.

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Dr. Cheryl Glowrey is a Senior Adjunct in the Institute of Education, Arts and Community, Federation University Australia. She joined the university following more than three decades as a teacher and Principal in rural secondary schools in New South Wales and Victoria. Her research and publications are in rural and regional education and history, including in Aboriginal education and history. Recent research projects have centred on recruitment and retention of graduate teachers for rural and regional schools and the world of future work for students in a region transitioning from a fossil fuel economy. Cheryl is passionate about the significance of rural and regional communities and their schools. The uniqueness of each place is acknowledged in her research, as are the rich histories and promising futures of communities which is often under-recognised in broader educational policies. Cheryl is a co-convenor of the Rural Education Special Interest Group of the Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE). In her role as regional historian, she is the invited speaker for the Gippsland Community Leadership Program (GCLP) which develops future leaders for the region in a time of transition. In this role, and in her teaching, Cheryl is asked to connect the past to the present for pre-service teachers and business entrepreneurs leading the region.

Dr. Stuart Levy is the Discipline Leader Pathways and a Senior Lecturer in the Institute of Education, Arts and Community at Federation University. He has worked for almost three decades in access pathways to higher education in regional Victoria. His expertise is in developing, designing and successfully implementing pathways and concurrent support programs for non-traditional and under-represented student groups to promote wider participation in post-secondary education. This work has included international collaborations and been previously recognised with an Australian national award (2012 Office for Learning and Teaching (OLT) Award for Programs that Enhance Learning, Widening Participation category). He has a proven record in leadership, with a particular emphasis on leading academic staff teams in the delivery of sustainable, impactful pathway programs that underpin subsequent student achievement in higher education. Stuart is a member of the National Association of Enabling Educators Australia (NAEEA) and has worked previously with secondary schools and TAFEs to develop pathways that support students' aspirations for further study. His research interests examine transitions in the international politics of climate change, the efficacy of pathways to higher education and the transitions experienced by these students and he has published internationally in these fields.

Dr. Monica Green is a Senior Adjunct research fellow in the Institute of Education, Arts and Community. Monica joined Federation University Australia in 2014 as part of its merger with Monash University (Gippsland). Monica's research interests lie in pedagogies and curriculum associated with climate and place/community-based sustainability education. Her research focus includes outdoor learning, curriculum frameworks for teaching and learning sustainability, transitioning communities and the role of sustainability change agents. Monica is the Chair of the UN's Regional Centre of Expertise in Education for Sustainable Development (RCE Gippsland), who mobilise education for sustainable development via the Sustainable Development Goals across the Gippsland region. Monica is a selected participant in the 2020-2021 Homeward Bound Women in Leadership for STEMM program.

Dr. Anna Fletcher is the Director, Industry Cooperation in the Institute of Education, Arts and Community at Federation University Australia. In her work as a teacher educator and assessment researcher, Anna works closely with schools both locally and internationally. In recognition of her work in leading and implementing innovative, research-led approaches that enhance Education students' ability to make discerning pedagogical choices, as members of a Community of Practice, Anna was a 2020 recipient of the Australian Awards for University Teaching Citations for Outstanding Contribution to Student Learning. She represents Federation University on the National consortium of universities developing and implementing the Graduate Teaching Performance Assessment (GTPA). She is a highly active researcher with funded projects at regional level, who has instigated local, regional, and international research partnerships.

Dr. Margaret Plunkett is an Adjunct Associate Professor in the Institute of Education, Arts and Community at Federation University Australia. She has been a teacher educator and researcher for more than three decades, specialising in the fields of rural and regional education, teacher professional learning and gifted education. She has extensive research expertise in both qualitative and quantitative methodologies and across all educational sectors, particularly in relation to diverse student populations in rural and regional areas, with much of the work focusing on the intersection between aspirations, rurality and achievement. Margaret has conducted research with schools in the Gippsland region, focusing on how educational environments can help develop knowledge, skills and competencies that assist in building meaningful and sustainable relationships and emotional competence within communities. Margaret is Associate Editor of the Australasian Journal of Gifted Education, and a member of a range of national and international education associations.

9 Do not Enter? An Autoethnographic Encounter with Policy and Practice Workforce Agendas in Early Childhood Education and Care

Kim Browne

In honour of my dear and devoted Dad -Allan always so sadly missed.

Abstract

Entrance into the early childhood education workforce for teachers living with disabilities is a fraught and uncertain space. Contingent on current governing policy and practice agendas in operation, teachers experiencing disabilities face various challenges to obtain and sustain employment in early childhood settings in Victoria, Australia. Following Deleuze and Guattari's ideas in *A thousand plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia,* (1987), their philosophical approaches of assemblage, desire/affect, lines of flights and rhizomes, are interweaved throughout this chapter alongside autoethnographic accounts of disability (*in a gallery space),* and the socio-political discourses at play in a critique of peer-reviewed and grey assembled literature. Illuminating how these assembled texts of policy and practice function—and support or constrain teachers entering work—offer potential to broadly conceptualise and to (re)conceive how teachers living with disabilities are in (ex)cluded in the workforce and to (re)position policies and practice in workplaces as socially just spaces which actively promote and develop a diverse teaching workforce.

Keywords

Early childhood education · Workforce · Autoethnography · Disability · Policy and practice

Author Positioning Statements

I am a proud descendant of Adnyamathanha and Nukunu communities in South Australia, but growing up, I was not able to acknowledge my heritage, or to learn to have any pride in Aboriginal culture. I also live in and through disability everyday by experiencing legal blindness which I acquired as a middle-aged adult. Like learning about my Aboriginal heritage to share with my father, so that he/we could understand more about his/our family and culture, I have come to learn how to challenge unfair and sometimes painful experiences. Through these endeavours, I seek to create equitable, just, and inclusive encounters in my own and family life, and by re-entering educational spaces, as a person of pride and awareness in all of my diverse identities.

K. Browne (✉)
Faculty of Arts and Education, Deakin University, Victoria, Australia
e-mail: kim.browne@deakin.edu.au

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9.1 Introduction

Over four million people live with disabilities in Australia (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, [AIHW] 2019). Evidence shows that around one million people living with a disability participate in the workforce or are seeking employment and report experiences of difficulty finding work with an employer "due to their disabling condition" (AIHW 2019, p. 23) in Australia. The challenges of being in(ex)cluded in the workforce and obtaining and maintaining employment also impact early childhood teachers living with disabilities in the Australian context and on a global scale. As part of the United Nations (UN) 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all UN Member States in 2015, 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have been created as a means to improving education, to reduce inequality and to end poverty for all (United Nations [UN] Department of Economic and Social Affairs [DESA] 2020a). Through the development of the SDGs (DESA 2015; DESA 2020b), the UN have foregrounded equal and inclusive access to education and lifestyle (work) opportunities for all people as a priority, including people experiencing disabilities.

Research indicates that little is known about the perspectives of in(ex)clusion in the of obtaining work and of the experiences of teachers with disabilities being in the workforce (Wilson et al. 2018). Further, the voiced experiences of early childhood teachers with disabilities sharing their understanding of the complexities of obtaining work is absent. How policy and practice agendas function and affect work entry in early childhood education, and care (hereafter ECEC) is currently unknown. This chapter critiques peer-reviewed and grey assembled literature undertaken as part of doctoral studies in Victoria, Australia. Following Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) philosophical underpinnings of assemblage, desire/affect, lines of flight and rhizomes, this chapter interweaves autoethnographic accounts of disability (*lived experience of in(ex)clusion in a gallery space*) with socio-political discourses at play in the literature.

Underpinning these accounts is an examination of the discursive effects of power within in(ex)clusionary territories, interwoven with governing policy and practice agendas of workforce entry in early childhood settings. Mainstream discourses are disrupted and made visible through a critical examination of the literature. Evident in the literature is discourses of productivity within early childhood governance medicalisation and health and riskiness and disclosure, which are entangled with policy agendas in ECEC. Policies interwoven through this chapter include: The Early Years Learning Framework (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations [DEEWR] 2009) (hereafter the EYLF), Victorian Early Years Learning Development Framework (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development [DEECD] 2009; Department of Education and Training [DET] 2016) (hereafter VEYLDF), Victorian Institute of Teaching registration procedures (VIT 2021) (hereafter VIT), and the Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act (DDA 1992).

Illuminating how these assembled texts of policy and practice function—and support or constrain teachers entering work—offer potential to broadly conceptualise how teachers living with disabilities are in(ex)cluded in the early childhood workforce. In doing so, possibilities are made to (re)conceive and (re)position early childhood workforce policies and practice as socially just spaces which actively promote, include, and sustain a diverse teaching workforce. One which may be made open to difference, democracy, and participation for all people (Allan 2012). This next section draws upon a wide range of peer-reviewed literature and grey literature, assembling the current national context of early childhood and disability workforce regulatory conditions and standards in Victoria, Australia.

9.2 Assemblage of the Literature: Analysis

Search strategies were used to locate literature where teachers living with disabilities negotiate employment in early childhood educational contexts within the selected literature. Research avenues included keyword searches within

relevant databases and journals. An extensive search of academic peer-reviewed literature (from 1998 to 2021) through journals was undertaken. The literature search included grey literature such as Australian Government reports, Victorian State Government, Victorian State organisation documents, and international literature by educational institutions to create an assemblage of entangled ideas which interconnect with broader academic literature.

Entangling the social and political discursive territories highlighted discursive themes in operation. Prominent discourses for entry into early childhood workplaces included productivity with early childhood governance platforms, medicalisation and health, and riskiness and disclosure together through the perspective of disability agendas. This chapter seeks to expose and critically analyse these dominant discourses in operation. In doing so, a foregrounding of how these assembled texts "function with and in connection with what other things it does or does not transmit" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p. 4) and ask where this work goes and what it does there? (St Pierre 2011). Furthermore, through these offerings, how these governing agendas support or constrain early childhood teachers living with disabilities entering into work are interwoven to ask which educators may be included or excluded within policy arenas and how this is enacted or prohibited in the workforce? Locating how such lived encounters are discursively enabled and occur (or are less prominent) amongst nationalised reforms is now entered into the next section.

9.2.1 Discourses of Productivity Within Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC): The Productive Teacher

9.2.1.1 Early Childhood and Nationalised Reforms in Australia

Before the election of the Rudd Federal Government in 2007, ECEC in Australia was regulated and administered by individual Australian states and territories. Each Australian domain approached and implemented policy and legislation in ECEC in disparate ways across the nation, where wide-ranging curriculum approaches and practices and regulatory requirements have vastly differed (Hunkin 2016). From early 2000, international research studies had a significant influence on the "educational, social, and behavioural sciences spectrum [and] propelled Australian policymakers to affirm the importance of early life experiences" (Weston and Tayler 2016, p. 28) within the broader Australian context. This research was also concurrent with international reports by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 2006 and 2008, reified to the Rudd Government Australia's poor standing in league tables across international nations (Hunkin 2016). Moreover, these international reports emphasised to the Australian Government "significant barriers to nationally consistent rights-based high-quality ECEC, most notably, insufficient public investment, policy fragmentation, and inadequate training and working conditions for staff" (Fenech et al. 2012, p. 5).

As a response to these barriers, alongside debate as to whether states and territories should continue to make individualised decisions or jointly collaborate (Hunkin 2016), the Rudd Government, with the states and territories, embarked on an agreement for national reform in ECEC. The Rudd Government strategy for a national partnership and governance in ECEC (Rudd and Smith 2007) was declared as the National Quality Framework (NQF). The purpose of creating the NQF was to broadly regulate early childhood curriculum, standards, and workforce productivity, ensure affordability, sustainability, and streamline services within Australia for all early childhood environments (Molla and Nolan 2019). As part of the NQF, the Rudd Federal Government of Australia published a national curriculum framework for children from birth to the age of five to improve the status of ECEC throughout services, called belonging, being, and becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (DEEWR 2009). The Rudd Federal Government and the Council of

Australian Governments (COAG) outlined, in connection with the inadequate findings of ECEC in Australia through OECD (2006, 2008) reports, the importance of increasing "productivity and international competitiveness" (COAG 2009, p. 13), through this early childhood curriculum reform.

Under the EYLF (DEEWR 2009), the child is viewed as capable, competent, knowledgeable, and connected with their changing and ever-shaping worlds (Nolan and Molla 2019). The child is also positioned as a developing and productive learner as part of high-quality play-based early childhood programmes implemented by competent teachers (Olsson et al. 2016). Not only are early childhood teachers required to deliver high-quality-based learning experiences for each young child, but such programmes are expected to be produced by a capable, skilled, and qualified workforce (Nolan and Molla 2019). Whilst teachers have agency in the way, the framework is theorised and delivered, and the EYLF (DEEWR 2009) broadly governs and guides how curriculum is conceptualised. Such governance allows for multiple possibilities of practice in ECEC but also suggests a desirable teacher to deliver curriculum.

COAG also agreed to individual states and territories developing their own ECEC curricula frameworks to align with the EYLF (DEEWR 2009). In contemporary times, early childhood teachers provide programmes in Victoria which operate under both the national EYLF and VEYLDF (DEEWR 2009; DET 2016). Under the VEYLDF, teachers are expected to educate children to meet various learning outcomes (DET 2016). Significantly, the VEYLDF serves children from birth to eight years, and the EYLF caters for children aged birth to five years. Practices and principles within the VEYLDF link to the school-based Victorian Curriculum (VCAA 2013) and "therefore incorporates children participating in the early years of primary education" (Armstrong 2013, p. 38). In line with a nationalised reform agenda of improving the productivity of both the workforce and educational outcomes for children, the principles and practices within the VEYLDF currently prioritise school-based (productive) agendas and children's transition to school (Hunkin 2016), within Victorian early childhood settings. These policies based in productivity require an early childhood workforce deemed suitable to deliver these agendas.

9.2.1.2 Early Childhood Teacher Registration—Victorian Context

The Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) "is an independent statutory authority for the teaching profession whose primary function is to regulate members of the teaching profession" (VIT 2020, para. 1). Linked to government goals for education in Victoria, this registration authority was established through the *Victorian Institute of Teaching Act 2001* by the Victorian Bracks State Government in order to assure "the Victorian community that all teachers are qualified, competent, fit to teach and of good character" (VIT 2002, para. 3). Early childhood teachers, including provisional early childhood educators (such as graduating teachers) and fully registered proficient teachers, must register as teachers with VIT and annually renew registration (VIT 2020). VIT acts as a gatekeeper; it is impossible to teach in a Victorian early childhood educational setting without current VIT registration.

Particular and peculiar rhizomatic moments (Sellers 2015) emerge here. An examination of the complexity and implications of registration arrangements and their effects, particularly at entry points, appears under-explored. As argued by Gibson et al. (2020), "the successful completion of a four-year degree does not automatically entitle graduates to full teacher registration" (p. 86). In the Victorian context, this is significant. The (in)ability to practise as an early childhood teacher is directed through a legislative requirement for degree-qualified teachers to register to practise. (*In a similar way to drawing in an art space*), it tells of who is in. It also tells of who is out. It also tells of what may be told, where telling may bring repercussions.

The interrogation of procedures associated with the responsibilities of teachers deemed by VIT is significant to this chapter. Disability

affects (*in all spaces and environments, including art spaces*), operating within and through the tenets of overarching policy agendas asking teachers to be productive (*and draw productively and competently*). Moreover, disability agendas have focussed upon the inclusion and participation of children and partnerships with families of children living with disabilities (Cologon and Thomas 2014). Little attention has been paid in ECEC to employing teachers in early childhood settings who are living with disabilities and registration processes.

There is currently a lack of research in education, including early childhood educational settings, which critically questions how VIT policies and procedures to obtain and maintain registration to teach (productively) are broadly enacted. Within policy agendas and VIT processes—both seeking a professionalised and competent early childhood workforce—are questions about who the ideal *teacher* (*or the ideal artist*) might be for all pre-school-aged children? Where do teachers living with disabilities fit within workforce strategies and registration procedures as part of a desirable competent and professionalised workforce (*or art space*)? Early childhood teachers living with disabilities (alongside children) may be in(ex)cluded (and discriminated against), within VIT registration processes and reform agendas in early childhood contexts.

9.2.2 Discourses of Medicalisation and Health: The (Un) healthy Teacher

Within a medicalised model of disability, a focus exists upon framing an individual as pathologically defective and abnormal and in need of being *fixed* through remediation and rehabilitation (Goodley 2016), following a person's diagnosed disabling condition. The medical model does not recognise a person's social context and relations with others, nor connections to the community in which a person lives (Cologon and Thomas 2014). The social model of disability recognises disability as a culturally and historically specific construction (Shakespeare 2004). In contrast to the medical model of disability within this framework, a social paradigm contends that disability is imposed and created upon a person by society (such as other people, social and economic structures, and institutions) (Cologon and Thomas 2014). A social model perspective argues that rather than an individual needing to be rehabilitated, disabling barriers oppress people living with disabilities in societies (Shakespeare 2004).

9.2.2.1 In(Ex)clusion and Teacher Registration

One measure of mandatory registration through the VIT requires provisional and proficient early childhood teachers to disclose "physical and/or mental health impairments that seriously detrimentally affect their ability to practise as a teacher" (VIT 2021, para. 1) as part of registration processes. Within this act of disclosure, qualified teachers may be annually requested to declare an impairment as "a physical or mental health condition, disability of disorder" (VIT 2021, para. 3), and "whether the person may present a risk to the safety and wellbeing of children under their care, supervision, and authority, the current symptoms, or characteristics of the impairment and the impact, these may have on the person's ability to practise as a teacher" (VIT 2021, para. 3). When a health condition is declared, VIT requires a submitted "statement that outlines the condition" (VIT 2020, para. 6), to consider as to whether a teacher will receive registration annually. In some instances, a medicalised report (VIT 2020) may be requested from outside sources (such as an independent health assessment). It is of interest to this chapter that the physical health conditions and impairments of early childhood teachers are aligned with the conduct of teachers and suitability to teach following teacher registration processes.

The right of all children to be safe and well in educational contexts is not in dispute. What is under scrutiny is that the VIT hold powers to investigate teacher's "competence and fitness to teach" (VIT 2020, para. 4), at entry points into

teaching (and beyond each year), ultimately deciding who is in or out. Thus, questions are raised about the impacts upon early childhood teachers seeking teacher registration at entry points into teaching. *(As I question belonging and participating in the art gallery experience at entry points and during the experience)*. Early childhood teachers may be stopped at the entry gate and beyond—deemed to be in poor health and arguably incompetent—by virtue of living with a disability. One potential impact of the increased scrutiny by VIT through registration procedures might be the reticence of early childhood teachers living with disabilities to disclose impairments. With the competence of bodies under question, early childhood teachers experiencing disabilities may not pursue employment (*or pursue drawing in an art gallery*) in early childhood workplaces.

9.2.3 Discourses of Riskiness and Disclosure: The At-Risk Teacher

The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) refers to the Latin word *dis*, a prefix, meaning *not* and *the reverse of*. *Closure* is referred to in the OED (n.d, para 1) as a noun: "an act or process of closing something or of being closed", and as a verb: "applying the closure to". In this sense, by bringing *dis* and *closure* together, disclosure could be considered as an act of emancipation and safety; "*not* an act or process of closing something or of being closed [and] the reverse of applying the closure to" (OED n.d, para. 1).

In contrast, the act of disclosure may also be viewed as one of risk, danger, and potential exclusion: one which forces disclosure to others of how a body operates (*like telling gallery staff members I cannot fully see*). Seemingly, it is a space where discourses of disclosure and non-disclosure are complex and "a double-edged sword: disclose and possibly suffer stigma and discrimination, or do not disclose and lack access to accommodations" (Moloney et al. 2019, p. 943). Kumari Campbell (2009) contends that a deficit-based view of disability (*similar to not providing environmental accommodations for all users, such as in the gallery space*) fails to recognise the competency and knowledge of teachers (and all people) living with disabilities. Intersecting through these navigated spaces of deficit-based views of disabilities are the contingencies of risks and benefits of educators of self-disclosure (Valle et al. 2004).

Moreover, the complexities of the disclosure of impairments are further complicated if teachers have experienced discrimination through childhood (Slee 2001) and as to whether a disabling condition is apparent (*like my visual loss and long white cane*) or not (Valle et al. 2004). Yet, when discourses of disability are viewed through a socio-political and relational perspective of difference (Slee 2001), recognising a person living with disabilities as capable, competent, and knowledgeable (*as I came to view myself in the gallery space*), a context may be created where people are more likely and comfortable to disclose within a workplace setting (Valle et al. 2004). This is particularly evident if a person living with disabilities identifies a person in the workplace where they feel comfortable sharing confidences (Valle et al. 2004) (*such as my trusted daughter in the gallery space*).

9.2.3.1 Risking Employment

For early childhood teachers, living with disabilities entering employment is complex, and tensions exist within these interactions. Arguably, early childhood teachers identifying with a disability may choose not to disclose an impairment if they believe they will be excluded from a workplace. (*In a similar vein to the encounter of in(ex)clusion in the gallery space)*, (F)or teachers with a visible disability already in the act of disclosure, the stakes may seem much higher. Such teachers may perceive that they are not employable and may complicitly exclude themselves (*as I did at various points in the gallery space*) from applying for positions or encounter experiences where they are not considered suitable for a position. This may be the case in workplaces where medicalised discourses (deficit-based models) of disability operate. Disclosing disability as part of an entry point into

teaching may be the difference as to whether teachers living with disabilities are made employable in ECEC—or not. Whether an early childhood teacher experiencing disability discloses a medical condition when applying for a position in the first instance (*or risks drawing and including a completed drawing in a gallery*), perceiving that they may face discrimination (*or not produce an "ideal" gallery-space drawing*) by prospective employers is a fraught situation.

In this next section, the methodology of this chapter is expanded upon based on the theoretical approaches of Deleuze and Guattari (1987). Insights are offered of how the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1987) explores the tensions, challenges, and ambiguities experienced socially and politically to examine how these experiences may affect and marginalise people living with disabilities, including early childhood teachers seeking entry into the workforce. References are made through understandings of rhizomethodological approaches (Sellers 2013) in this next section. How this approach underpins and aligns with the autoethnographic methods and analysis to be utilised illuminates how early childhood teachers living with disabilities encounter entry into the workforce.

9.3 Methodology

9.3.1 Deleuze and Guattari—Mapping Assemblages, Lines, and Rhizomes

This chapter draws upon the post-structural theoretical approaches of Deleuze and Guattari (1987), particularly from the text *A Thousand Plateaus* (Deleuze and Guattari 1987). Mapping assemblages, rhizome, desire and affect resonate with and embody lived experiences of disability and (no) entrance points in the early childhood workforce. Understandings of desire and affect interconnect with notions of in(ex)clusion with/in an art space as part of the described assembled vignette, fluidly interplayed, and italicised throughout this chapter. Such notions of *becoming with* (Haraway 2008) are interrelated and assembled as demonstrations of how we come to know, name, and interpret personal and cultural experience (Adams et al. 2015). These conceptual ideas, which can be read differently and in any order (Sellers 2013), interconnect in-between and through the vignette and written passages with/in this chapter.

Assemblages can be understood as an intensive force as a "series of line and flows" (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, p. 25); how "things come together, the directions, speeds, and spaces of connections, and what the assembled relations enable to become or also block from becoming" (Ringrose and Renold 2014, p. 774). Sumsion and Grieshaber (2012) state that "in the process of connecting, these heterogeneous particles and intensities and forces and flows enter continually into different arrangements and relationships" (p. 233). Within such arrangements, assemblages comprise and encompass human and non-human components, and no part of an assemblage is more critical than others (Sumsion and Grieshaber 2012).

Mapping arrangements through lines allows relationships to be seen as intensities with/in assemblages (Cumming 2014). As a way to understand intensities contained with/in an assemblage, lines are used to trace out "basic components of things and events" (Deleuze 1995, p. 33). These lines can be described as rigid lines (which segment), supple lines (which act to unsettle segmentations) (Sumsion and Grieshaber 2012), and "lines of flight" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p. 2) which are disruptions to segmentations and binaries, moving and sweeping towards the unknown and unforeseeable destinations (Deleuze and Parnet 2006).

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) state that rhizomes are productive forces which continuously establish connections in every direction are non-linear, offer multiple entry points, and have no definitive "points or positions" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p. 10). As such, rhizomes are in a continual state of becoming—"not on a specific trajectory to a projected or predetermined end-point, but rather becoming other than what currently is" (Sumsion and Grieshaber 2012,

Fig. 9.1 Image of a person sitting on stool in a gallery, drawing sculpture on a stand

p. 233). Working rhizomatically involves working with/across various processes and ideas, creating possibilities for new thinking. Importantly, Honan (2007) suggests that working rhizomatic methods and analysis are not overly concerned with what is contained in an assemblage, but rather the interrelationalities, movements and a(e)ffects created within and through an assemblage.

Rhizomatic moments may arise that can "challenge the barriers within society that limit the participation of people with disabilities" (Whitburn 2015, p. 218). As a teacher living with disabilities, it is unknown what will occur when seeking employment in an early childhood setting. The depictions in Fig. 9.1, using imagery with technology in a gallery-space environment alongside an inside voice, may also be applied to scrutinise and counter how people with disabilities are marginalised when seeking entry into the early childhood workforce. The processes of re-territorialising and de-territorialising lines and segments (Deleuze and Guattari 1983) between the lived experiences of early childhood teachers seeking employment in a workplace and the discursive relations of power with/in such territories are brought into play. Attention is made to rhizomatic "connections and multiplicity, middles and ruptures, and forces that make and unmake territories" (Cumming 2014, p. 137).

By interweaving autoethnographic accounts of disability with the assembled texts, this chapter aims to deepen understandings of how tensions, challenges, and ambiguities are experienced socially and politically, and how these experiences are shaped upon entry into the workforce for early childhood teachers. Autoethnographic accounts are memoried events or storied experiences (Barraclough 2014). Such narratives of/about the (desired) self are told through culture analysis and socio-political interpretation (Chang 2008). Interplays act as an approach to de-territorialise how disabilities in the early childhood educational workplace are currently embodied, enacted, and understood at (no) entry points operating in play, as witnessed in the following storeyed account.

9.4 Visualising Broad Impacts of In(Ex)clusion: An Encounter

In this section, a storied storeyed account is used to illuminate the broad impacts of the experience of in(ex)clusion from the perspective of living with a disability. In this assembled vignette, I participate in this encounter and disclose my lived experiences of living with/in/through disability in intricate detail. It is a way of explaining the intensities of my visual condition and also the

effects on myself and those around me. However, as argued by Baker and Saari (2020), vision is more than visuality in the form of sightedness. Here, I depict my visual loss with the mundane of the everyday and the built and social environments which I encounter and am (un)able to access; both simultaneously held in tension, arranged, and interconnected in multiple ways. Voice, movements, and written descriptions of my perceptions and the affects from the images are depicted here; the not visible becoming visible. This section now moves to the images which thread and interweave together through an encounter I experienced.

In the above image (*Fig*. 9.1), *a space has been created in an art gallery for drawing. I enter the space, with my long white cane sweeping it across the carpet in motion to detect objects around me, alongside my daughter. Three clay sculptures are positioned in the middle of a large room on stands; one of which is prominent in this photograph. Chalk and black paper are provided to visitors; seeking each person entering to draw their perceptions of the centred objects. Multiple stools are lined along a wall, positioned approximately two metres from the objects which are immersed in bright lighting. There appear to be no written instructions (or instructions provided using technological devices), but it seems from the placing of the stools and the presented drawing materials that etchings are performed on a stool where the sculptures cannot be approached or touched. I sit on a stool without chalk and black paper in hand. Placed on this stool, I cannot see the object on which to base my drawing. My daughter sits on a stool in this image, engrossed in sketching the object, telling me what she is doing – conscious that I cannot visually see the detail of the sculpture from where I sit. She tells me that she is looking from sculpture to paper and moving the chalk back and forth, in sweeping-fading motions and in sharp-jagged geometrical arrangements too. In the background on the distant white wall hangs multiple interpretations of the sculptures on black paper with names and messages throughout. Seeming satisfied with the produced piece, my daughter finds a peg along the wall to hang her picture and returns to the stool.*

I want to draw my perceptions of the sculpture too. I desire to hang my interpretation amongst the hanging pictures with the others there on the wall. I wish to know more about these presented pieces – of their textures, shapes, material forms, and relationality to the gallery. I want to be involved and included. I feel excluded and pushed aside in this territory from this activity; by being unable to see the objects, by the distance of the stools, penetrating lighting, and by roving staff members in the gallery space. By the gallery, who did not offer me chalk and paper or an explanation of the experience upon entry to the room. By the already hung pictures of the sculpted finite completeness. By how things works and amongst whom (*Sellers and Chancellor* 2013).

From where my daughter now sits and I alongside her, I cannot clearly see each piece – though I know with my blurred vision that the sculptures are white pieces of varying sizes. I know from the verbal descriptions of my daughter that there are sharp lined edges and shadowed aspects with blurred areas. I sense from the room, the light, the many people present the importance of these pieces. I want to move my stool closer to the objects to use what central vision I have to see some detail. Placing my stool in this way will block others from drawing. Moving my cane on the floor might distract people from their concentration and purposeful drawing actions, so I sit on the stool in the defined space for some time. I think about how I see in new environments. How else might I learn and see what is happening (*Sellers and Chancellor* 2013), *so that I am included and worthy of inclusion in this space? I decide to move to a sculpture and use my phone to photograph a piece* (*Fig*. 9.2).

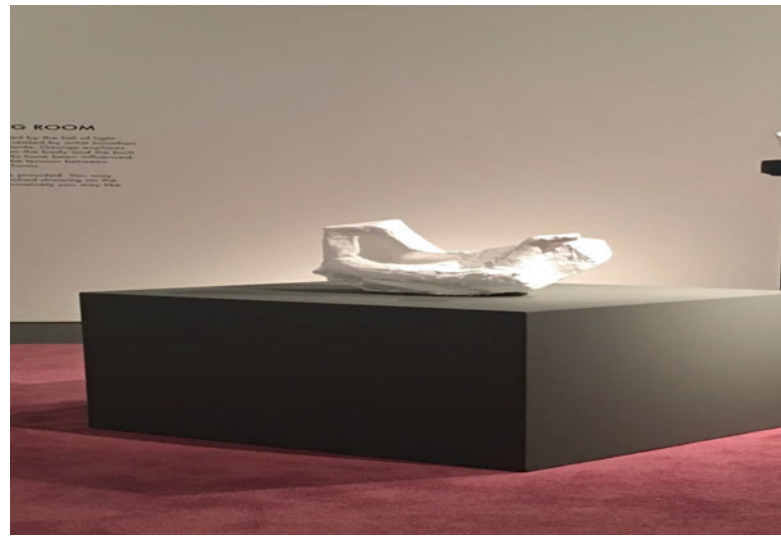

Fig. 9.2 Image of a white clay sculpture on a large black box stand

My long cane makes accidental contact with a stand, a large black box, that a sculpture sits on. A gallery staff member hurriedly approaches, with chalk and paper in hand, to ask if I would like help. I respond that I am taking a picture so that I can see the features of the piece in more detail. I tell the staff member that I do not need help, but I want to draw too and take a piece of paper and chalk from them. Perhaps the gallery staff member perception of the help I need is to sit on a stool, rather than to draw in this space. I ask the staff member about the dark writing on the wall, that I have now discovered becoming closer to the sculptured work. The staff member tells me it is the instructions for drawing the pieces offered to visitors. I explain that I too am a visitor, and this action excludes me as I cannot read the distant text on the wall. That I did not know this information. The staff member now tells me the sculptures are based on the work of Pablo Picasso and quickly moves away from me to give chalk and paper to other entering visitors. I wonder if they too can see or may find moments of exclusion. I return to my now distant stool.

I have permanent blurred vision in both eyes – alike looking through a mesh window screen. I enlarge the picture on my phone, using my central vision to scroll along the edges of the image of the sculpture. I lack depth perception, but I notice the shadows in play, the concaved cragged edges, plateaus, and detailed straight lines. I have limited colour vision in my right eye, but I am in awe of this luminous white piece with varying shades of light and dark against the black background. I cannot see at a distance, but I am aware that the piece in detail looks heavy and the shading allows for the piece to appear weightless in places. I wonder if the piece forms an abstract hand with a pointed thumb. This picture – with the aid of technology to increase the image to allow me to see – has become a moment of interconnected discovery of new assembled formations. I begin to resonate with other visitors taking the time to draw their interpretations of each sculpture carefully and attentively.

I belong in this space as I begin my etchings. I scan the perimeter of the sculpture in my mind. The defining lines and distinguishing shape and store this to my memory. I outline the shape and sharp lines onto the paper, placing my finger width on the edge of the paper so I can centre the image – like a photograph. I begin with sharp geometrical lines – is this how Pablo Picasso worked, I wonder? With concentration I work on the shape and multiple lines, some of which are curved. I extenuate the flexed "thumb-like" piece of the sculpture. I know from memory it is higher than the base. I begin to shade the drawing – in places softly to reflect light. In other areas, with some concentrated force, to purport the darker aspects of the sculpture. I etch a table-like stand to depict the sculpture's place. I write my name on the piece of paper. I refer back to my enlarged image but have trouble centring on the new details of my piece. I now photograph my finished work, so I can enlarge my new drawing to see each area in detail (Fig. 9.3). Smiling upon looking at my now-photographed-and-drawn picture, I feel satisfied with my work. Flexing my long white cane, I take my completed piece to a wall and hang it in spaces of (be)longing amongst and in-between the work of other visitors. This is how I see. How seeing works.

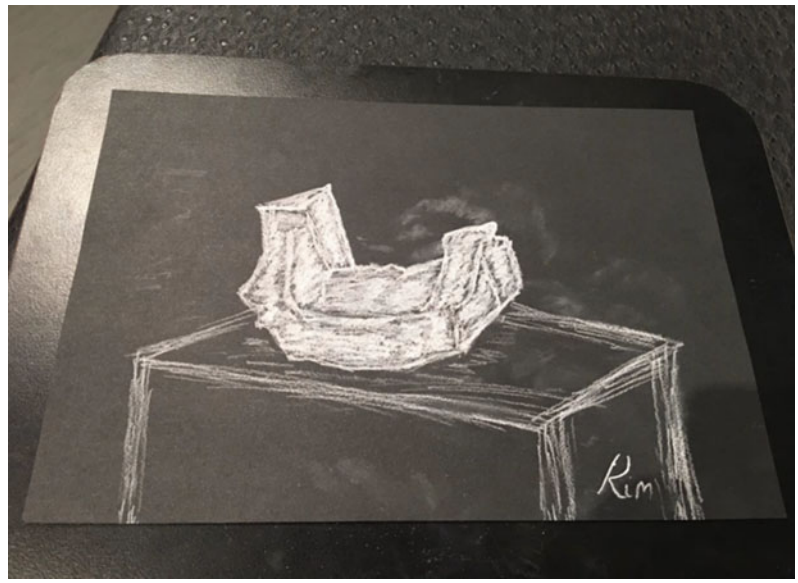

Fig. 9.3 Image of completed etching of a sculpture, interpreted from a sculpture in the gallery

9.4.1 Drawing with/in In(Ex)clusion in an Art Space: Analysis

The impacts and conveyed implicit messages of the arrangement of spaces on ensuring who can socialise, move within, and access environments concerning people living with impairments have been questioned (Burke 2015). Highlighted through this autoethnographic vignette is the complexities of the constructed environment upon living with and through disabilities. Impediments and limitations which may be imposed socially—implicitly and explicitly—in these spaces (Finkelstein 2004) are witnessed in this account. As such, imposed limitations can exclude, perpetuate, and normalise exclusionary agendas to people living with disabilities and those around them.

However, whilst the encounters with societal barriers could be described alone here, sharing an autoethnographic story and how I experienced impediments and limitations in connection with others and the environment is important. I am reminded of Whitburn's (2015) argument that personal stories are helpful in offering evidence through inside accounts of social and political struggles and to examine how people living with disabilities are "complicit in our own inclusion and exclusion" (p. 218). In the act of including myself, I counteracted the marginalising demands of the distanced and hushed setting. Such ordered settings desire concentrated, attentive, and quiet work (Olsson et al. 2016). Staying quiet and still would have rendered me on a stool at the back of the room. In a moment of affect, I moved and resisted such demands of exclusion, becoming lively with multiple actions as a way to participate and be involved in the act of drawing. Liveliness can be seen to break order, attention, concentration, and to cease what is communicated through direct instruction (Olsson et al. 2016). In this instance, desire and affect through the use of multiple senses—thoughts, movements, actions—made possible concentration and attentiveness (Olsson et al. 2016) to show what a body is capable of doing. Body and thought, as part of a whole being and space, are involved, capable, and felt in a process together towards movement (Massumi 2002). My disruptive stance, complicit in my own inclusion, expanded the boundaries of the built environment and made it possible for my body, as capable, to be participatory in the space.

9.5 Conclusion: Entangling the Impacts

Policy reform agendas within ECEC in Australia have wide-ranging impacts upon the sector, including the Victorian context. Of significance to this chapter is how dominant policy platforms operate in ECEC services concerning the employability of teachers living with disabilities. In addition, how discursive systems observed in key literature contribute and impact upon the embodied experiences of teachers living with disabilities have been entered into through this assembled literature. As identified in this chapter, registration requirements and how disabilities are constructed, negotiated, and transgressed within governing bodies are significant as a barometer of whether a teacher living with a disability may enter teaching and gain employment.

Identifying as living with a disability is currently risky in early childhood educational contexts, conditional to gaining (and maintaining registered) employment. However, broadening our understandings to define own identity and to influence own lives and futures matter (Marks 2007). An important aspect of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (DESA 2020b) and Sustainable Development Goals is the prominent role each person holds to implement each aim. We are called to contribute to the implementation of each goal, in particular, by "holding governments accountable for their actions or lack thereof" (DESA 2020b, p. 2), through providing input to policies or as early childhood organisations, to provide services. If we are to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and value the promotion of lifelong learning for all (SDG four), then we must assist to guard against a future where the exclusion of people living with disabilities is culturally reinforced and continually accepted (Slee 2001) (*including in art galleries and early childhood workplaces*). Instead, promoting openness to (re)conceive and (re)position the space of disability and education as diverse, different, democratic, and participatory (*and explicitly including oneself in experiences*) (Allan 2012), and one where all bodies may not only desire to be included, but to also encounter inclusion in the everyday.

Speaking up and creating new understandings through the voiced experience of both entering and maintaining and doing work and living with a disability within an early childhood community are important too. Similar to desiring ways to draw, (*by speaking up, changing directions, and actively including myself*), creating and immersing myself in a gallery becomes possible. Thus, opening and receiving entry into early childhood teaching for all bodies differently may be possible, creating a socially just, non-discriminatory, and sustainable (*gallery*) space—between international organisations, governing bodies, employers, (*artists*) and teachers themselves—where all are welcomed and belong.

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Kim Browne is a Ph.D. candidate at Deakin University. The focus of her Ph.D. research is to examine her lived experiences of teaching in early childhood education as a person who lives everyday with and through disability. Along with an assistance dog, Kim hopes to challenge current perceptions of disability and to reconceptualise understandings of work practices in early childhood education so that diversity—and all bodies and beings—are supported, belong and are welcomed as part of an early childhood workforce. As the Victorian Director of the Organisation Mondiale pour l'Education Préscolaire (OMEP) and Chair of the OMEP Australia Reconciliation Action Plan Group, Kim foregrounds high quality, inclusive and equitable educational experiences in early childhood communities. She has also held a role as a researcher as part of a longitudinal study of infants social and emotional experiences of transitions within early childhood communities. This research has been conducted through RMIT University and international tertiary institutions. Kim grew up on Wurundjeri Country in Melbourne. She is a proud descendant of Adnyamathanha and Nukunu Communities, with connections to Maralinga Tjarutja People, in South Australia. Kim values Indigenous ways of knowing; continuously and actively seeking to learn and create trustful and shared connections with Indigenous culture in her life and work with early childhood communities.

Parent–Teachers: Experiences of Supporting our Children with Dis/ability in Schools

10

Amy Claughton, Sara Weuffen, Deborah Robertson, and Kylie Nice

Abstract

An issue that every parent who teaches needs to consider is how they will be involved in their child's schooling. Parents who teach are parents of children with dis/ability who face greater tension, inhabiting a para-professional world of advocacy, expertise, and often, primary care, in ever interchanging combinations. Underpinned by an autoethnographic methodology, this chapter offers reflective vignettes from the authors to interrogate the inclusive nature of pedagogies used in regular school settings. This chapter builds upon the existing body of autoethnographic literature, yet offers unique insights into parent perceptions and representations of the experiences of children with dis/ability at school. It offers the opportunity for reflective awareness of inclusive education in regular schools from the perspective of parent–teachers with a particular focus on their own experiences. This chapter also examines cultural elements of language, interactions, and actions in schools through common threads including the construction of behaviour, the role of the mother, and inclusive strategies. The social construction of dis/ability and implementation of inclusion in regular schools is illuminated in the discussion of this chapter.

Keywords

Inclusive education · Parent-teachers · Disability studies · Autoethnography · Dis/ability

Author Positioning Statements

My name is **Amy,** and I am a mother, teacher, advocate, academic, and play enthusiast. I am interested in exploring the socially constructed views about disability and shifting individual and collective responses towards inclusion.

My name is **Sara**. As the mother of a teenager with a diagnosed additional learning need and a professional educator, I bring a social justice and strength-based approach to schooling. Over the years, I have gained personal and professional knowledge about diversity and inclusion from both a medical and social model and champion growth mindset as a means of acknowledging, supporting, and providing equitable learning experiences for all learners.

A. Claughton (✉) · S. Weuffen · D. Robertson · K. Nice
Institute of Education, Arts and Community, Federation University, Ballarat, Australia
e-mail: a.claughton@federation.edu.au

S. Weuffen
e-mail: sl.weuffen@federation.edu.au

D. Robertson
e-mail: d.robertson@federation.edu.au

K. Nice
e-mail: k.nice@federation.edu.au

S. Weuffen et al. (eds.), *Inclusion, Equity, Diversity, and Social Justice in Education*, Sustainable Development Goals Series, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-5008-7_10

My name is **Deborah**, the mother of a neurodivergent adolescent, a teacher, an academic, and an advocate for social justice. My professional and personal experiences intertwine as I seek to make sense of the numerous "realities" experienced in learning communities.

My name is **Kylie**, and I am the mother of a child with a diagnosis of Autism spectrum disorder. I am an early-career researcher, an early childhood teacher, and advocate for working and learning in the natural environment.

10.1 Introduction

This chapter will illuminate the journey of three of the authors as they navigate the school system with their children. All the authors are qualified teachers, mothers, and three of them have children with a diagnosed dis/ability. This chapter draws on autoethnography to explore the experiences of parents who teach [parent–teachers Sikes (1998)] as they advocate for inclusive education and fight systemic challenges faced in school settings. Disability studies is used as a theoretical perspective to help understand the challenges, recognised as systemic issues in education, faced by the authors and their children. This chapter presents the authors' stories with the aim of sharing experiences to examine school culture.

Autoethnography captures personal experiences and provides a platform to question perceived realities through stories that include the self or the researcher (Hamilton et al. 2008). A critical consideration of our use of autoethnography in this chapter has been to incorporate *the self* within the research (Hamilton et al. 2008). This chapter is both individual and collective in its approach. We, the authors, appear collectively to introduce and discuss our parenting experiences. Individually, our stories are shared through a series of vignettes; with three of the authors using pseudonyms (Anna, Chris, and Darcy) as an ethical choice to mask the identity of our children (see: an Ethical Pause). Ellis (2016) declares "[m]y goal … is to produce accessible and evocative literary and analytic texts that are the product of an ethnographer's eye, a social worker's heart, and a novelist's penchant for stirring up emotional response" (p. 14). Similarly, our goal is to produce reflections with a teacher's eye, a mother's heart, and a (qualitative) researcher's penchant for interrogating personal truths. To explore our experiences, three vignettes provide evocative revelations of navigating the systemic structures in schools, critically reflected on through the lens of disability studies to explore the wider insinuations of these personal experiences.

10.2 Access, Rights, Education, and Dis/ability

Inclusive education involves systemic reform that embodies changes and modifications to overcome barriers through content, teaching methods, structures, and strategies (United Nations [UN] 2016a). Inclusive education is concerned with equitable and participatory experiences in education settings (UN 2016a). Loreman et al. (2016) state inclusion is the "full involvement of all students in all aspects of schooling" (p. xvii) regardless of difference. In line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities [CRPD]) (United Nations 2008), Australia is committed to systematic reform within the education system (de Bruin 2020). International recognition on the importance of inclusive education has been further enshrined through the UN Sustainable Development Goals [SDG]; a call to action for global partnership in the quest for peace and prosperity. Pertinent to our chapter is UN Sustainable Development Goal 4 "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education" (UN 2016b). Specifically, in this chapter, we speak to SDG target 4.5 "ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities" (UN 2016b). Equal access of *vulnerable groups* such as persons with disabilities, to education in Australia, has been examined through the experiences of the participants.

Children with dis/ability ought to be afforded the right to access education on the same basis as others. Australia has committed to inclusive and accessible education obligations through the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Australian Government 2016), the *Disability Standards in Education 2005* (Australian Government 2005) and as a signatory to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Indeed, research has shown that inclusion in regular classrooms for children with dis/ability sees them "thrive socially, academically and experience long-term benefits post-school" (de Bruin 2020, p. 58), while at the same time being beneficial to all students (de Bruin 2020). While affirming a national commitment to inclusion, in this chapter we question the on-the-ground realities for children with dis/ability and the carers who support them emotionally and academically in Australian schooling systems.

Disability studies is a theoretical perspective that frames disability from a social, cultural, and political viewpoint. Linton (2005) describes it as using the perspective of disability to read and discuss a range of subject matters. Disability studies is underpinned by the social model of disability that shifts the conceptual focus of disability from the individual to society (Goodley 2017). Through the social model of disability, there is a clear distinction between disability and impairment. An impairment is a physiological or psycho-social difference that can affect the way a person looks, acts, or feels (Oliver 1990; Thomas 1999). Whereas disability is understood as a social construction that impedes the ability for individuals with impairments to actively participate and engage in society due to actions and responses embedded in wider society (Oliver 1990; Thomas 1999). Inclusive education aims to identify barriers to participation and engagement and challenge the notion of ableism. Graham et al. (2020) describe ableism as a way of thinking about experiences from an able-bodied perspective, where the identification and removal of barriers are conducted by well-meaning, albeit able-bodied, individuals, or systems. Due to the deficit language and focus on the individual (Graham et al. 2020), the current funding system that exists in Victorian schools is inherently ableist in its approach. Contemporary research shifts the focus from individuals to adjustments as one way to combat ableism in schools (de Bruin 2020; Graham 2020).

One of the major aims of disability studies within education is to identify and eliminate barriers that prevent access and participation (Baglieri and Knopf 2004). In order to situate the notion of disability as one centred in social constructions, the term dis/ability is deliberately used in this chapter to indicate the fundamental struggle between disability and ability. Defining nomenclature in this manner, Baglieri and Knopf (2004) highlight the active process of disablement through actions and attitudes that align with the medical model of disability. More recently, Goodley (2017) recognised the continued tension and opposition between ability and disability. Goodley (2017) surmises "we need to be ever mindful of dis/ability: disability's reliance upon discourses of ability" (p. 126). Dis/ability then, for us, signifies the tension between the agency and independence we see in our children, and the dis/ability challenge tackled by us as parent–teacher advocates as we have navigated the education system with our children.

10.3 Methodology and Methods

The vignettes in this chapter explore our experiences as we have negotiated educational supports and adjustments for our children. An intersection of autobiography and ethnography (Chiu 2004), autoethnography includes the other through critical engagement, social justice, and action (Ellis 2010). Hamilton et al. (2008) note "[a] broad description of 'culture' would include evidence of shared patterns of thought, symbol, and action typical of a particular group" (p. 23). Smith (2012) recognises that autoethnography crosses boundaries which are hard to see and hard to understand. It is in this unstable space between boundaries that we share the duality of our knowledge from connection to our children, information from specialists, and our cultural knowledge of schools.

Our stories, documented here as vignettes, resonate with the current research on mothers of children with dis/ability, in particular the individual and sometimes isolating nature of these journeys. Frequently, mothers of children with dis/ability are positioned as experts and advocates for their children, regularly drawn upon to support educational inclusion of their children (Goodley and Runswick-Cole 2015; Hodge and Runswick-Cole 2008; Ryan and Runswick-Cole 2008). The autoethnographic underpinnings of our vignettes mean interaction and discussion are the building blocks of this chapter. Our methods grew from initial informal conversations at an institutional research meeting. From these conversations, there emerged a commonality of our experiences around our children's schooling as parent–teachers and a sense of lessons learnt and shared. With a view to documenting our stories for sense making and debriefing, we initially agreed to record some conversations. Given the closeness—and sometimes connected nature of our personal lives and professional roles, we decided to document the stories of Anna, Chris, and Darcy in the form of anonymised written vignettes. We framed our vignettes loosely around our experiences as parent–teachers from our children's enrolment in formal education—Kindergarten[1]—through to their current years—Primary/Secondary. Despite this loose framework, what emerged were powerful stories in their own right, worthy of study, and consideration. Noting the powerfulness of connected experiences, we analysed the vignettes for common threads that crystallised the notion of ableism, dis/ability, and the culture of schools in connection to inclusive education. The culture of schools, described by Hamilton et al. (2008) as "language, actions and/or interaction" (p. 22), is used here to frame discussion of our experiences.

[1] In Australia, Kindergarten refers to pre-school education for children under five years of age. Primary school is for children aged between 5 and 12 years of age. Secondary schooling is for young people ages 13–18 and is compulsory until Year 10, though it runs into Year 12.

10.3.1 An Ethical Pause

This chapter is a reflection of our experiences form our perspective as parent–teachers. Given the biographical nature of our autoethnographic vignettes, no institutional ethics was required for this research. However, this does not mean there are no ethical dilemmas. Ellis (2007) identifies relational ethics as values, respect, and connections between researchers and participants. While our children's schooling experiences have been the catalyst for the vignettes, our experiences as mothers in caring, advocating, and supporting our children is of primary concern. Yet, we have needed to strike a balance between values, confidentiality, and trust (Christensen 2004). Each author had a conversation with their child so that they were informed that the chapter was being written. Informal assent was given for us to reflect on our personal journeys. In an effort to balance respect and connection, pseudonyms have been assigned for both the authors and children as a means of protecting confidentiality. Maintenance of confidentiality also affords our children the right to make their own choices when it comes to telling their stories in the future.

10.3.2 Vignettes

The following three vignettes outline the stories provided by the authors and their children.

10.3.2.1 Vignette 1: Anna and Alex

Alex is 13 years of age and is now enjoying the routines and challenges of their second year of high school. But, it has not always been like this. Alex's primary school years were a social, emotional, and physical drain for both of us. For years I found myself constantly fighting against institutional discrimination for Alex's right to equal access of education, providing informed-justifications for their participation in excursions, and managing the social-emotional trauma of bullying.

Their formal diagnosis of Autism in 2018 after project-managing specialist appointments over a period of 11 years was both a relief and an

additional burden. This period was very interesting—I do not have another word for it—because I both avoided a formal diagnosis—for fear of both of us being labelled as different, in deficit, or it seen as an excuse for poor behaviour—and sought it—for the validation and support that comes with the label. Ironically, both my fears and longings have transpired over their education journey so far. Feedback from an insider within my child's primary school showed that, despite being a qualified teacher and researcher of inclusion and cultural studies, I have been referred to as *that* single mother and making excuses for behaviours, with my child being labelled as *avoiding work* and *naughty* behind closed doors.

Growing up in a low-SES family, enjoying school while achieving average grades, university study was a later career choice for me. After four years of customer service-based jobs and low pay, intellectual stimulation and change was lacking. Enter undergraduate study in Victoria. Two years after their birth, I observed my child and thought, "something is not quite right compared to children of the same age"; such as enjoying repetitive movements, only speaking a few words, and having trouble completing simple tasks. This was when we got on the specialist merry-go-round; the diagnosis of language delay was given, and speech therapy began. This was all happening while I was working as a casual relief teacher and new to the sole parent life, and all that entails. It was exhausting but I could not give up.

Fast forward a couple of years, and at four years of age, my child was diagnosed with autism by a renowned specialist and several months later un-diagnosed by state-based medical care. The diagnosis of language delay was reinforced and sensory processing delay was suggested as the reasons for their behaviours and inability to complete tasks. At this time, I had begun studying a Ph.D. and working casually as a relief teacher while my child was asked to repeat four-year-old kindergarten due to the problems they were having. "Problems" such as fitting in with the social norms, following instructions, and obtaining the minimum academic standards. I found it easier to just study and be a sole parent with a child with additional needs than work full time.

During primary school was when school-based "challenges" started to become a daily lived-reality. I would receive almost daily calls about my child exiting the classroom, interrupting, engaging in non-typical play, not completing work, etc., the list kept going. All the while, I was taking my child to different specialist appointments and therapy sessions, and providing the school with reports, strategies, and offers to support my child in the classroom—to the detriment of my own career goals and progression. To say it was exhausting is an understatement.

Over my child's entire schooling experience, I have been more than a parent. I have been an advocate—standing up for the injustices and helping others to understand my child—and a support person. I have felt gutted that adults would think about my child as mean-spirited and/or punish them for non-typical behaviours. These **moments have been utterly heart-breaking**. What makes it worse, is that being a qualified teacher, I know what should be happening within schools and/or classrooms. Whether it is utopian, or not, education should be about understanding and inclusivity, not schooling focused on academic outputs solely within homogenised cohorts.

I have lost count of the times I have sat in meetings with principals, teachers, and aides to explain the nuances of my child's particular learning needs and strategies that help. Exponentially making the conditions worse are when I/my child were listened to, strategies and supports taken up, only to be removed very quickly—within a week or two at the most. They were removed because the strategies and supports did not work, or, ridiculously, because they did work and therefore my child was seen to no longer need the support.

Now, even though I have chosen actively to send my child to a private high school—which is an area of ongoing financial strain—it is because of the student-focused philosophies, wrap-around supports, and commitment to working with me as

their parent, that my child is finding more rapid and consistent academic and social success within their schooling life. Despite this, the additional pressures of the COVID-19 pandemic —organising timetables, writing out lists of due tasks, being interrupted in my paid work to check spelling, encouraging them to remain on task, providing prompts of which class to attend/books to use next, etc., and increasing extra-curricular social activities has been draining for me personally as a sole parent. Combined with my personal self-care practices, feeling tired has become such the norm that I no longer voice that I am exhausted; it just is.

10.3.2.2 Vignette 2: Chris and Quinn

Formal schooling, in the form of three-year-old kindergarten, confirmed my existing questions about Quinn's behaviour. Quinn was *busy,* and this had been recognised by myself, family, paediatricians, and the kinder teacher alike. But I also pushed back and pushed back hard. ADHD[2] was mentioned, and I did not want *that* child. I was a teacher. I dealt with *those types of kids* and did not want mine to be one. These kids had a poor home life and just needed more discipline. How wrong I was.

I stressed about choosing a primary school. We needed one that looked outside the box and thought we had found one. But the first meeting with the Assistant Principal came on the third day of school. From then on, I was regularly called into the school. Come and collect Quinn, their behaviour is not appropriate. I oscillated between being a parent, an educator, and a learner. I remember stressing for my child as they struggled to belong, to try, and meet expectations of so many. I remember empathising with the teachers as they struggled to both understand and meet Quinn's needs and also the other students in their class. And I also remember often feeling overwhelmed as I tried to navigate this new world, learning on the go, making mistakes and feeling expectations of knowing what to do, as both mother and as an educator myself.

The first year saw a massive increase in appointments with professionals to try and get answers and help. Paediatricians, psychologists, psychiatrists, occupational therapists, ear nose and throat specialists, sleep specialists, occupational therapists… I had to change my work from full time to part time to fit it all in. Finally in August that year a formal diagnosis was given. How did I feel? Scared. My child is formally *that child* now. What will other people think of them? Relieved. Now at least there is an explanation. Now we can try to access some assistance at school. Apprehensive. But will it make any difference? Will people believe this diagnosis of ADHD? Will anything really change? Pressure. What am I expected to know, do, provide, as not only the mother, but also the supposed expert as an educator, now so informed in this area? The strain on myself has meant that I have needed to have time off work to support my child, my family, and myself. Leave without pay was not supported and so, as a family we made the decision that I resign from my position.

Things seemed to settle a little and Quinn was making progress, slow, but it was progress. And then things just went downhill again. It took nearly a year to work out what went wrong and again I felt failure due to not being able to recognise the issues earlier. Me, the mother, and the educator should have seen it. But once success was being experienced the school decided to pull back Quinn's support. Yes, it was with good intentions, but they did not understand this and saw it as abandonment. Well, I had learnt something from that experience. So back to restricted schooling hours, constant calls to collect them and ongoing meetings with all types of specialists again!! At this point another set of initials were being thrown up for consideration. And two years after the ADHD diagnosis an ASD[3] diagnosis is formalised. I wondered how to negotiate this? What did it mean? How could I work out what is what? Again, I was expected to have a lot of the answers and again I was oscillating between parent, educator, and learner.

[2] Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder.

[3] Autism spectrum disorder.

Although this time I was more aware of what my child needed, what could be done for them and even how it could be done. After pondering these things, I was ready to offer suggestions.

Primary school finished okay, with a school and staff willing to step outside the square and consider all possibilities. A school that put the student first and identified different ways of getting to the end goal. With my educator hat firmly on I am worried about high school looming. From what I saw of the local high schools none of them appear to be ready to challenge the *norm* and we have already fought so hard.

And yes my fears were confirmed. On the surface attempts were made to provide for Quinn. Quinn even seemed to really be enjoying things, but also admitted to making sure that they were presenting the right image on the outside, while dealing internally with high anxiety. But it did not take long for the wheels to fall off. For the family to start getting the calls again and in the end for Quinn to be suspended from school due to behaviours directly linked to their dis/abilities. The one-size-fits-all approach reared its ugly head. No amount of advice from me as mother/advocate/educator (now specialising in this area) made a difference. All children had to be treated equally. So, again my work conditions underwent a change as we brought Quinn home for schooling. But the world had a different idea and COVID-19 became part of the landscape. Connection with other home-schooling children and parents was not possible and so complete isolation destroyed this experiment.

Ironically, I now make the decision (one I feel I have no real choice in) to send Quinn to an alternative schooling option. Not my ideal, but at the moment my only option. We are all nearly to the point of just wanting the *schooling* years to be over and for Quinn to hopefully find the niche that makes them happy and allows them to be themself.

10.3.2.3 Vignette 3: Darcy and Morgan

Morgan is a seven year-old child who enjoys jumping on their trampoline, swimming at the local pool, playing at the local park, watching Pixar movies, reading and being read to and having time alone to watch You Tube videos.

Morgan's introduction to formal learning was at three-year-old Kindergarten, and this was followed by four-year-old Kindergarten in which Morgan experienced both wonderful supportive teachers, educators, and learning support workers. Time spent at Kindergarten was enjoyable as all staff, children, and families were respectful and accepted all children as one of the group.

Being a qualified Early Childhood Teacher I expected that two years of four-year-old Kindergarten would be undertaken as my experience reflected this was usually the norm to best support children with an ASD diagnosis. However, the Kindergarten teacher felt that undertaking another year was not in the best interests of Morgan as they were able to follow instructions and met the academic standards to move into the school system.

The choice of Primary School was not taken lightly, and we set off attending information sessions at all the schools in our location, both independent and public, and spoke with many parents of school age children. The decision to attend an independent school was made and when accepted we were really pleased as it was not a large school and was close to where we lived.

In discussions with the school, it was decided that a transition process would be best undertaken so as to make a smooth transition into the first year of school in the following year. This seemed like a very supportive approach, and we really thought that our research into schools had paid off. However, it soon became apparent that the school and the system were not working in sync, there was a distinct difference in school policy and goals compared to individual learning strategies and requirements. After several exhausting meetings and sessions, we decided to look outside of our allocated school zone.

The result of this seemed very promising as we found three very proficient and professional school communities that spoke first hand of including children with diverse learning abilities and challenges into their school. On visiting the schools, it was clearly evident that these schools had the understanding and could accept that not all children learn in the same manner.

Morgan appeared to enjoy attending school, but this came from staff who took the time to understand them and listen to them. Morgan is non-verbal, but staff have learnt strategies with which they can have their voice heard and be included in the community of learners. Collaborating with staff takes time and is not always easy. We acknowledge that teachers are busy but by discussing and implementing strategies that are the norm for the child does assist the teacher to work with the child in a productive manner. There is an interesting balance; as a teacher I know that parents can inform me of strategies to assist the child learn, feel comfortable, and supported. As a mother I know that providing such information to teachers cuts down their time in observing my child to gain insight into learning strategies.

However, our approach changed after a discussion with a speech pathologist who tentatively brought up the topic of autism and was surprised when we supported her thinking. Morgan had babbled, had language and participated in social cues of speech but lost it all. Specialists did not see this as an issue at such a young age. As an Early Childhood Teacher, this was something that was noticeable, and I searched for the answers and assistance from many relevant professionals. After the discussion and with the support of the Speech Pathologist, it was evident that we would need to become advocates for Morgan. I spoke with a paediatrician and strongly requested the testing process be conducted. We were referred to a private neuropsychologist for testing, and the outcome was an ASD diagnosis.

We know that Morgan is extremely lucky to be included at a school where the teaching staff, learning support workers, and principal have been very supportive and open to suggestions on how best to meet Morgan's needs and requirements. As a qualified teacher, I know that all children have the right to education in a safe and supportive manner and believe that this should be the case. However, my disillusion is evident when I hear the stories from many parents of the disconnect that their children experience in educational environments and I think back to what could have been if we had stayed in the previous school.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, 2020 was a year that many found to be challenging, especially from a home learning perspective. With support from Morgan's classroom teacher and learning support worker, Morgan's learning was personalised. Online learning some days was enjoyable, and other days engagement from Morgan was difficult. However, it was not just school that was online, it was also paediatric appointments and speech pathology appointments. So many online sessions in the day to cope with.

However, with the frustration and enjoyment of learning at home along came the joy of the development of speech. Many would think that speech would make things easier; however, it has added a new set of hurdles as the expectations were raised overnight due to being able to speak.

10.4 Discussion

Drawing on our insider knowledge of processes in schools, we recognised that despite our different experiences there were common threads in the three vignettes. Our individual experiences varied on a spectrum of positive to negative; however, several themes arose that illuminated *what matters* in schools. First, the language described in the vignettes across the educational experiences was orientated often towards the performative or assumed behaviours of the children. Individuality was noted, but also there appeared to be a perception of a *naughty* child associated with a diagnosis as highlighted by Anna and Chris's vignettes. Second, interactions between parents and the school were often complex. The constant contact for support and intervention crystallised the importance of collaboration, while simultaneously the contradictory heavy reliance on mothers as experts for their knowledge of the child and their associated dis/ability fell along the lines of behavioural support. Third, the actions demonstrated by some teachers and the leadership within schools indicated a willingness to action inclusive education

and provide supports. However, there also emerged a preponderance to *reset the bar*, through the removal of supports after perceived achievements or progress were indicated. Perhaps not as clear, what emerged across the vignettes was a common thread of action that shows *when it works, it works*. This provides us with glimpses of inclusion and support that provide the foundation for hope of a change into the future.

10.4.1 The "Naughty" Child

Conceptualising dis/ability as a social construction means that language matters. Using deficit descriptors of students that align with behaviour or dis/ability can result in labelling the child. This can become problematic, as labels can become a defining factor of dis/ability for both the child and the teacher, and can also foster a stigmatising social experience (Baglieri and Shapiro 2017). The challenge of identifying students by their dis/ability, or resultant behaviour, is that it can impact the sense of self-worth of children and connect teaching strategies and actions with stereotypes, assumptions, and misunderstandings instead of aligning practice to student needs and wellbeing (Loreman et al. 2016). This can lead to self-fulfilling prophecies where children *live up* to the expectations of being *naughty*, *different,* or *dis/abled* (Lady Gowrie 2020).

The vignettes illustrated differing experiences through the school systems. It is worth noting that the most positive experience came from early childhood settings more than through primary school settings. In the primary settings, both Chris and Anna noted that they were regularly contacted to pick up their child or called in to attend discussions about their child's *behaviour*. These complex issues of the construction of behavioural disfunction and the role of parents as the responsible party is apparent in the status of Chris and Anna as the schools simultaneously considered them both experts on, and culpable for, their children. The language used by both Anna and Chris are that their child was viewed as the *naughty* or *problematic* child. When the social experience becomes stigmatising through such language (Baglieri and Shapiro 2017), it can seep into the parent's experience (Selman et al. 2017). Parents often feel blamed, responsible, and the direct cause, for their child's behaviour (Selman et al. 2017). The language repeated in the vignettes, with its focus on the deficits and issues, discarded any external factors and focused instead on more internal factors, a process which aligns with the medical rather than social model of disability. In these vignettes, in the recollections of our experiences, we see the systemic challenges of the rhetoric of inclusion and language used to frame children and their experiences in learning. The rhetoric of inclusion, with its attribute of acceptance for all, came through Darcy's story only—as a respectful and accepting environment where difference was recognised and embraced.

10.4.2 The Reliance on Mother: Caregiver and Problem Solver

Interactions between school and home are important as they create common understanding, can lead to increased academic and behavioural outcomes, and allow for a holistic overview of a student (Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment [AGDESE] 2014). Key elements of building relationships between home and school are communication, commitment, equality, skills, trust, and respect (AGDESE 2014). Beyond this, research shows that a mother of a child with dis/ability is often depicted as an expert and advocate for their child (Hodge and Runswick-Cole 2008; Ryan and Runswick-Cole 2008). The interactions with schools mean that some mothers feel the need to bring para-professional dialogue to discussions with professionals about their child (Hodge and Runswick-Cole 2008). To relieve the social-emotional burden on mothers, Ryan and Runswick-Cole (2008) call for the disruption of the stereotypical understanding of mothers and families of children with impairments.

The stories from our vignettes again demonstrated a contrast in experience between early childhood settings and primary schools. Darcy's experience was supportive and collaborative, though not necessarily an easy road. Chris and Anna both spent time at the school engaged in discussions for support. Both Chris and Anna experienced interruptions to their careers as they were required to be available for daily contact by the school and relied on as a behaviour management strategy to pick their child up from school. Selman et al. (2017) note that the contradictory space of being *blamed* for children's behaviour while also considering the diagnosis as an *excuse* for bad behaviour is a common transference of stigma for parents. In the vignettes of Chris and Anna, this complex interaction is crystallised. Yet, an intrinsic notion behind inclusive education—and the commitments to which Australia is a signatory—is the identification and removal of barriers that impede participation and engagement (Loreman et al. 2016). However, we do not observe this happening for Chris and Anna for a significant part of their experiences as parents. Rather, we observe the existence of systemic issues in schools connected to identifying and removing barriers. While there is both positive and negative experiences evident in the vignettes, all stories recognise the importance of meeting and supporting children's individual needs.

10.4.2.1 Hard Won Knowledge: The Struggle of Diagnosis

On average, it can take three and a half years for a child to obtain an official diagnosis (Crane et al. 2016). Many parents are dissatisfied with the process due to the length of time it takes, and it is noted to be a big stressor for parents (Crane et al. 2016). This protracted process can lead to many appointments and assessments. The accumulated knowledge and experience from these appointments could be one reason that mothers are often considered experts on their children—not just as their mother, but as quasi case managers who have collected and collated many reports.

Further to spending so long waiting for diagnoses, DosReis et al. (2010) suggest that the majority (77%) of parents who are exploring diagnosis have great concern about stigmatising children and a further 44% are concerned that their child will be labelled. This links back to cultural elements of language and interaction. As explored earlier, both language and interactions in schools tend to construct the notion of differences between children and the vital responsibility of parents. Our hard-won knowledge, resistance of stigmatisation and perception of our children's behaviours, as well as a desire to assist our children, are used by the school in different ways. Only Darcy recognises the ability to exploit an ableist system by successfully accessing the assistance they needed having received a diagnosis.

10.4.3 Resetting the Bar

Inclusive education has been recognised as systemic reform that embodies change to make learning more accessible (UN 2016a, b). Integration is the process of placing children with dis/ability in existing structures as long as the student is able to adjust to the requirements of the setting (UN 2016a, b). Graham (2020) simply describes integration as "business as usual with add-ons" (p. 14). Russell (2003) recognises that there can be a disconnect between parental and school understanding of disability and expectations. The vignettes show that despite success being experienced in the classroom through particular adjustments, these were *add-ons* in the classroom and liable to be withdrawn at different times.

In general, Darcy has had positive experiences working with teachers and accessing accommodations. However, upon the perceived evidence of gains, Anna, Chris, and Darcy all reflect on supports being withdrawn by the schools. That these adjustments were withdrawn when success was demonstrated resonates with integration. Approaches for teaching

underpinned by *content-task-deliver* prioritise a *one-size-fits-all* design over a universal approach that creates sustained pedagogical change (Cologon and Lassig 2020). This thinking aligns with the medical model of disability—adjustments are needed until the individual is *fixed* and adjusts to the *requirements of the setting*. The responses that demonstrated supportive adjustments give us hope for sustained systemic change, where those adjustments to the setting remain as an option not just for our children, but all children.

10.4.4 When It Works, It Works

Cologon and Lassig (2020) note that while "accessibility does not equate to inclusion" it is a pre-cursor to upholding the right to accessing education (p. 179). Quality differentiated teaching practice that underpins accessible and universal planning for learning and teaching enables more inclusive classrooms (Cologon and Lassig 2020). Concentrating on adjustments, rather than the individual, shifts the focus on to external factors that impede participation and engagement. This aligns more with the social model of disability and explores how changes can support all children to engage in learning. Balancing choices, drawing on pedagogies such as Universal Design for Learning (UDL), Differentiation and Quality Differentiated Teaching Practice (QDTP) are the core of effective planning (Cologon and Lassig 2020).

Beyond simple adjustments in the classroom, there were times, as shown through the vignettes, that our children were *seen*. Their abilities were recognised, their needs were met, and they were acknowledged as individuals. These moments of sustained inclusive practice showed increased development and periods of calm in our lives. These moments of inclusion in the classroom enabled our children by identifying potential barriers and addressing them to provide an accessible classroom.

10.5 A Message of Hope

As teachers, we thought we knew the culture of schools and that this knowledge might help guide our actions and interactions. In reality, it helped us to critically reflect on the systemic challenges we faced and still face as both parents and teachers. Although the SDG4 recognises the importance of inclusive education and we recognise Australia's commitment to that goal, the stories of our lived experiences show there is still a way to go. Existing pre-conceived ideas about education and development still permeate our schools and their expectations on students and their learning. Our stories are a small snapshot of the experiences of the authors and contribute to the existing body of knowledge about the experiences of mothers of children with dis/ability. Despite our qualifications, our recommendations are still met with resistance and our fight a continued battle. However, it is important to end on a message of hope, as the authors notice that over the years there has been a shift in attitudes towards inclusion.

We acknowledge the need for a balanced model that appreciates individuality and provides rigorous learning approaches. There is a willingness for schools to come to the conversation. There is a growing response of active listening being represented through our stories. It appears that both scholarship and education systems are attempting to be more focused on providing schooling experiences that recognise the importance of equity and children getting what they need to achieve and learn (SDG4, UN 2016a, b). While we recognise that there are still systemic challenges being faced, contemporary research is moving beyond the recognition of rights, with a focus on actions that enable equity in education (see: Swancutt et al. 2020). Despite the systemic challenges and the overarching theme of exhaustion from the mothers as discussed in this chapter, our concluding thoughts of hope are that teachers can learn from children and parents to think about the person first and work collaboratively to develop them as agentic individuals who contribute to their learning and learning communities.

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Dr. Amy Claughton's research is located in the field of Disability Studies in Education, with interests in the area of inclusion, inclusive education, play and disability. She explores the connections between disability studies and childhood studies to explore the social constructs around play, learning, disability and childhood. She has expertise in the field of play-based learning for children with impairments. Her research draws on critical ethnographic methodologies and incorporates the Mosaic Approach in developing inclusive methods to work for and with children. Building on her current research, Amy continues to explore and represent experiences of children with impairments.

Dr. Sara Weuffen is a teacher-researcher specialist with a Ph. D. in cross/inter-cultural education research between non-Indigenous people, Aboriginal peoples, and Torres Strait Islanders in Australia. She specializes in learning and content design for diverse cohorts across a broad range of platforms; online, blended, face-to-face. As a non-Indigenous woman born on Gundijtmara Country (Warrnambool) and living on Wadawurrung Country (Ballarat), Dr. Weuffen draws upon her formative grey methodological approach—where both Poststructural theory and Indigenous methodologies are bought together—and collaborations with Australia's First Nations Peoples, to critique dominant structures and ideologies, interrogate binary discourses, and push educational boundaries for emancipatory and success-orientated shared-learning outcomes and positive social progress.

Deborah Robertson is an experienced teacher and academic evidenced by her employment in a range of secondary schools and tertiary education settings over the past 28 years. Deborah has used mixed methodology to explore issues around diversity and inclusive education and this has resulted in national and international conference presentations and publications in teacher education based journals. Deborah is now applying this methodological approach to explore broader issues within teacher education.

Kylie Nice is an experienced Early Childhood academic with past experience as a teacher in TAFE, Kindergarten and the Early Childhood Education sector. Kylie is predominantly an early childhood lecturer working across a variety of curriculum areas. She has worked mostly in the area of early childhood and leadership with a specific interest into the phenomenon known as Education through Nature Play. Along with this, she has broad interests in other facets of education and students with diverse learning requirements. Her interest in inclusive approaches for learners specifically with Autism Spectrum Disorder in early childhood and school environments. Kylie has a strong commitment to understanding regional societies and communities and their needs and equity concerns around all facets of education. In relation to meeting diverse student needs, she has a strong commitment to exploring new teaching styles and delivery modes with consideration for equity across both the city and country. Kylie aims to continue working with Early Childhood students in regional communities around access issues and other important rural/regional issues in the Early Childhood Profession.

African Girls' Experiences of Gender in School Communities: Observations and Reflections from a Researcher

11

Catherine Oxworth

Abstract

Drawing upon observations, reflections and conversations with teachers, parents, children, and community members, this chapter aims to highlight African girls' experiences of gender in two different school communities in Kenya and Zambia. It presents some of the gendered encounters that occurred throughout a six-month research period, through the journal entries and recollections of the researcher, in the two communities. The journal entries are all considered with respect to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of SDG4 *Quality Education* and SDG5 *Gender Equality* (United Nations, Department of economic and social affairs—sustainable development. United Nations, 2021b). In order to develop an inclusive environment for African girls in mainstream primary school education, it is important to understand something of the experiences of gender within their school communities. The insights in the journal entries confirm the necessity of aiming for the 2030 SDG targets of eliminating gender disparity and discrimination, eliminating violence against women and girls, ensuring leadership positions for women, ensuring inclusive educational environments, and ensuring access to sexual and reproductive rights of girls.

Keywords

Africa · Girls · Gender · Sustainable development goals · Equality

Author Positioning Statement

I am a non-Indigenous Australian educator, researcher, and mother of two half-Kenyan adolescent girls. My mothering status allows me to be considered as a Luo by the Luo community in Kenya. I have spent extensive periods of time living and working in Kenya and Zambia, undertaking research that focusses on giving voice to girls in school communities.

11.1 Introduction

The experiences of many African girls negotiating the complexities of gender in their school communities are intricate, nuanced, and indicative of the influences of poverty and power that constantly shape their lives (Bent and Switzer 2016; Pincock 2018; Stromquist 1995, 1998; Switzer et al. 2016). These complexities have been exacerbated for many African girls by the

C. Oxworth (✉)
Institute of Education, Arts and Community, Federation University Australia, Ballarat, Australia
e-mail: c.oxworth@federation.edu.au

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COVID-19 pandemic, making it even more imperative for the world to shine a light on some of the most marginalised and excluded children on our planet (Agarwal 2021; John et al. 2021; United Nations 2021a). In this chapter, I draw upon personal journal entries from research that was carried out in a rural village primary school in Zambia, and an urban primary school in Nairobi, Kenya. The research presents some of the experiences of girls and gender in mainstream African schools and communities through the observations and reflections of myself, the researcher.

The research discussed here was developed in response to the lack of substantial qualitative research concerning girls' education at a grassroots level in these Kenyan and Zambian communities. In searching for a deeper understanding of how gender is considered, enacted, and negotiated in these two African communities, it is hoped that greater insight and awareness of girls' lives and educational experiences are developed. This in turn has the potential to inform other communities on how to better examine the disparities and inequities of gender in children's lives. To work towards a sustainable global future, aiming for a quality and inclusive education for all, it is imperative that African girls' educational experiences are acknowledged and included.

11.2 Background

More than 25 years ago, I had the good fortune to spend an extended period of time working as a volunteer teacher in a rural primary school on the shores of Lake Victoria, Kenya. From my personal experiences of the time, I witnessed many discrepancies with respect to gender. Every day, the morning tea at the school was always made by one of the older girls. There was no electricity at the school, so the girl that was rostered to make the morning tea for that day would make the fire, make the tea, lay out the cups, pour the tea, prepare warm water for the staff to wash their hands, pour water from the jug, cut slices of bread, and then clean up all of the cups when morning teatime was finished.

In the co-educational school environment, teachers generally ignored the girls in the classroom. The numbers of girls present in each class in the primary school decreased as the age levels increased. The region had a ratio of one girls' secondary school to nine boys' secondary schools and no co-educational secondary schools. These gendered disparities inspired me to investigate their causes which led me to pursue an ethnographic research project that investigated the lives of girls in African communities (Oxworth 2015). In this chapter, I draw upon vignettes from research that was carried out in Zambia and Kenya in order to paint a picture of some of the issues that girls experience in their school communities.

The research was undertaken over a period of six months. As the researcher, I was welcomed into each of these two African communities for periods of three months each. Although I was not born in Kenya or Zambia and do not have a family heritage from either of these nations, I was accepted and encouraged by both communities to undertake research within the respective school communities for two key reasons. Firstly, I have daughters that are Kenyan citizens, more specifically Luo, and therefore in the eyes of many Kenyans, particularly of the indigenous Luo tribe, I am also considered to be Kenyan. The Luo Principal encouraged me to undertake research in his school to help the school community better understand how to support girls' education. Secondly, on an initial visit to the rural village in Zambia, two female teachers from the local primary school came to speak with me about the concerns that they had regarding gender inequities within their community. They asked me to help them in any way that I could. It was with the blessings and acceptance of the people in both school communities that the research described here took place.

11.3 Quality Education and Gender Equality

Girls' education became a key focus for non-government organisations (NGOs) and international agencies in the 1990s. Empowering the lives of women and girls through education was often considered a panacea for improving the economies of poor African countries (Nyambura 2018; Okkolin et al. 2010; Unterhalter and North 2011). The United Nations recognised the importance of universal access to primary education and the promotion of gender equality as key aspects for development. In 2000, the United Nations (UN) devised a series of eight goals known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) (United Nations 2013). MDG 2 *Achieve Universal Primary Education* and MDG 3 *Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women* were the primary goals relevant to the development and promotion of education of girls in Africa.

When the MDG was reviewed in 2015, the total number was increased to include 17 goals, and they became known as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Whereas the MDG focussed on an aid and alleviation of poverty agenda, the SDGs were developed in a more consultative process and are broader in scope and potential (Esquivel 2016; Fukuda-Parr 2016). Education and gender are incorporated into the two key goals: SDG 4 *Quality Education* and SDG 5 *Gender Equality*. These goals are particularly pertinent to this research as "more than half of children that have not enrolled in school live in sub-Saharan Africa, and more than 85% of children in sub-Saharan Africa are not learning the minimum" (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) 2017). The following SDG targets are specifically relevant to this research:

> 4.5 By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, and children in vulnerable situations
>
> 4.7 By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development
>
> 4.A Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, nonviolent, inclusive, and effective learning environments for all
>
> 4.C By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing states
>
> 5.1 End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere
>
> 5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation
>
> 5.5 Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life
>
> 5.6 Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences (United Nations 2021b).

11.4 The Research Locations

Both schools in this research are home to some of the poorest people in Kenya and Zambia (Obasi-ike 2012; World Bank 2021). Both are co-educational primary school environments where the curriculum is largely a legacy of the British colonial influence of power (Chege and Sifuna 2006; Mungazi 1982). In recent years, major structural, policy, and curriculum changes have occurred within the respective educational systems. As both countries are former British colonies, many of the institutionalised practises of the British are inherit in their societies today which is evident through government and schooling systems and practices. Both countries have had

periods of instability in terms of leadership and ethnic rivalries and rely heavily on international aid to overcome issues of poverty, disease, lack of infrastructure, and high unemployment (Christley et al. 2021; Guest 2004; Meredith 2011).

11.4.1 Zambian Rural School Community

The population of the town is approximately 8000 people and services up to 30,000 people from the region. Most people rely on subsistence farming and fishing. Geographically, the region is very sandy as it is closely situated near the Kalahari Desert. Farmers rely on rainfall during the wet season from November through to April. Many families have been affected by Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency (HIV/AIDS) (Dixon-Thompson 2007). The region is home to descendants of the Lozi ethnic group. The town has a strong history of Christian missionaries from Europe. Today, the United Church of Zambia works in partnership with churches from Scotland, Australia, and the United States of America to support the community in mission work that includes the hospital, associated healthcare, the orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) project, the school, and local housing projects (Home for AIDS Orphans 2013).

11.4.2 Kenyan Urban School Community

The Kenyan school is located in Kibera, which is a sprawling part of the capital city of Nairobi. It was originally part of the forested outskirts of the city, until the British allocated the land to the Nubian soldiers that had fought with the British in the *Kings African Rifles* in the early 1900s (Elfversson and Höglund 2018; de Smedt 2009). It later became home to rural Kenyans that moved to the capital in search of work. For the past 100 years, it has been home to a diversity of cultures and ethnicities which at times has created tensions and violent outbursts (de Smedt 2009; Meredith 2011). The transient population of Kibera could be anywhere between 170,000 and 1,000,000 people (Christley et al. 2021; Elfversson and Höglund 2018; Robbins 2012). Kibera is urbanised, densely populated, congested with rubbish, lacking proper sanitation and electricity, housing a population where more than 50% of residents are under the age of 15, and life expectancy is 30 years (Elfversson and Höglund 2018: Kibera UK 2015; Robbins 2012).

11.5 Methods

In order to undertake research within the respective school communities in Kenya and Zambia, I obtained ethical approvals from the Ministries of Education in both countries, as well as the Nairobi City Council. When undertaking cross cultural research, it is important to spend time with the communities that are subject to the research to limit any bias (Irvine et al. 2008). I lived in close proximity to each school community, and this allowed me to spend considerable time observing the school environments. For part of each day, I observed the interactions of the students and teachers in the school classrooms and the larger school environment, and I kept a daily journal of my observations. Through these observations, I was particularly interested in how gender was negotiated and understood in the school environments. With the permission of the students' parents/guardians, I also spent some time interviewing students about their lives and the perceptions of gender in their world (Oxworth 2015). However, in this chapter, the focus is on the observations and reflections from my journal entries which show insights as to how issues of gender were viewed in these school communities. At times, I felt confronted by some of the observations and conversations that I experienced. In this chapter, I choose to present the journal entries word for word as an authentic experience of what I documented in the field. I am aware that my words are at times emotive, biased, and demonstrate a certain degree of power and privilege. In this research, I understand that I am both an insider and outsider. Although my mothering

status means that some people (namely Luo Kenyans) will allow me to identify as Kenyan, and therefore an insider, I am also aware that my name, birthplace, and citizenship will also mean that others will identify me as an outsider. Therefore, my observations and reflections are from both an outsider and an insider positioning (Collins 1990; Connell 2014; Fine 1994; hooks 2006; Kristeva 1991; Nnaemeka 2004).

11.6 Conversations, Observations, and Reflections

Informed by Stambach's (2000) study of gender and education in a Tanzanian school, and supported by Switzer's (2018) study of Masaai girls in Kenya, ethnography is the approach I use to research the experiences of girls' education in Kenya and Zambia. Using Wolcott's (1988) definition of ethnography as researching "a picture of the way of life of some identifiable group of people" (p. 188), my journal entries aim to depict something of the conversations, observations, and reflections experienced throughout the research period. Each of the journal entries expresses an aspect of gender that impacts on the lives that girls in these communities negotiate every day.

To understand the gendered negotiations that African girls experience, it is imperative to acknowledge that "the African sense of identity is located within the communal rather than individual space" (Fennell and Arnot 2008, p. 532). Nnaemeka (2004), through her theory of *nego-feminism*, provides an understanding of the positions that African girls negotiate every day from an African feminist framework. "First, *nego-feminism* is the feminism of negotiation; second, *nego-feminism* stands for *no ego* feminism" (Nnaemeka 2004, p. 378). Nego-feminism recognises the need to make compromises, where the intent is always for the greater good of the community. In this sense, nego-feminism is helpful in understanding the complexities of the worlds that the girls are constantly negotiating. Nego-feminism is embedded in the shared values of the collective, and this reflects the African identity. Through my journal entries, it is evident that the women and girls are trying to make sense of gender in their environments and the collective desires of community, albeit in a patriarchal post-colonial community which often takes precedence over any desires of the individual. Through observing, reflecting, and understanding some of the concerns with respect to gender, it is hoped that a deeper appreciation of the complexities of the African girls' lives will be developed. Each journal entry is also considered in the light of the specific targets of SDG 4 *Quality Education* and SDG 5 *Gender Equality* as the education of African girls is considered a key to ending poverty and institutionalised exclusion (Mokoena and Jegede 2017).

11.7 Journal Entries

11.7.1 Journal Entry 1—Conversation with Female Teachers—Zambia

> Last night, I met with two of the female teachers from the local primary school. They came when it was dark as they wanted to talk to me privately about their own experiences. They told me that from the age of 13, girls in town are sexually active and often find themselves pregnant. "Soldiers that were in the village in the 80's left single mothers and their children." The Ministry (of Education) stopped condom promotion as they believed that condom usage encouraged sexual promiscuity. "Church members are also against children using condoms." "The girls have sex for money in order to feed themselves and their families." For the teachers, "people promoted are always men." Promotion has to receive a recommendation from the principal which, in this case, is male. "Men in town drink beer to excess frequently." "The community do not value education." "There is much peer pressure." Loss of parents and leaders due to HIV/AIDS has an effect on positive role modelling. Both women felt that the situation for all children in the town was getting worse. There was a huge feeling of hopelessness. Both commented to me that they would prefer to leave the town. Conditions in the teachers' houses (provided by the Ministry of Education) were terrible. One of the teachers had no power and was trying to complete additional studies in the evenings by the light of the paraffin lamp. The other teacher only remained in town because she was concerned about her daughter still living there with one child.

The female teachers discussed in Journal entry one believed that discrimination against women and girls was prevalent in their rural school community, thus demonstrating the need to work towards SDG 5.1 to end these forms of discrimination. I was concerned to hear that some girls resorted to selling their bodies for sex in order to obtain money for themselves and their families to survive. The female teachers believed that girls in the town were being exploited and that the government and church had taken a stance towards contraception that did not protect the girls from unwanted pregnancies and HIV/AIDS. These observations correlate with SDG 5.2 and SDG 5.6 as SDG 5.2 aims to create an environment for women and girls free from violence (United Nations 2021b). In addition, my observations highlight the ongoing need to ensure reproductive and sexual rights of all women, as exemplified by SDG 5.6 (United Nations 2021b). It was apparent that the female teachers did not feel supported in their roles and despaired at the opportunities that lay ahead for women and girls in the town. This example justifies the importance of SDG 5.5 to ensure women's participation in leadership roles in their communities (United Nations 2021b). According to the narratives of the female teachers, the learning environment is unsafe, violent, and disempowering for the adolescent girls, thereby exemplifying the importance of SDG 4.A by creating an inclusive learning environment (United Nations 2021b).

11.7.2 Journal Entry 2—Observations of Independence Day—Zambia

There were no school classes at all today, however, a programme of celebratory activities was arranged at the school. There were poetry recitations, drama sketches, and dancing. The morning finished with a catwalk of seven contestants vying for the crown of Miss Independence (great irony in that). The catwalk was made up of school desks all lined up coming from the Resource Centre out into the open area. All other students (50/50 in uniform) surrounded in a circle. The seven contestants introduced themselves and then proceeded back to the room for changes for the four categories—school, casual, business (formal), African. It was limited to the senior students. After introductions, they came out strutting their stuff one at a time along the catwalk to the strains of American rap. The judges were the teaching staff (both male and female) sitting directly opposite. One female teacher was wearing a T-shirt, which read "supporting girls and women to acquire education for development." It had FAWEZA on the sleeve. It seemed like the entire school was watching, but the younger children lost interest quickly. They were more interested in their ice/frozen drink in plastic bags, boys were fighting, but the older boys were glued to the parade. Many of the children seemed to know the popular music that they strutted to in the casual dress category. The audience were singing along. Casual dress was jeans and tight t-shirts and handbags. More rap music was played for the suits/business section, again with handbags. Short skirts received wolf whistles from the audience. The contestant with an entire black outfit suit including miniskirt and heels was a crowd favourite. It seemed there was a female teacher organising the parade from the change room end as she was clapping each participant. At the end of this section, a (pressured) male teacher came out with a pile of work papers strutting his stuff to rapturous applause from the crowd. In the African, traditional section was a very tiny girl in high heel clog stilettos. It occurred to me that maybe the African outfit section was the closest they would come to a swimsuit category. One girl had a broom dancing in traditional manner. One girl dressed in pink and had a top that was not a top with shredded material barely covering her breasts. Much of the time her breasts were exposed, much to the delight of the adolescent boys in the crowd. She had a matching flywhisk obviously made for the event. She was also wearing face paint. Another two or three contestants had traditional baskets and face paint. The third with a basket had a traditional headscarf too. Boys and (presuming) local men were entranced and crowded around the change windows (again I presume) they were hoping for a closer peak. I met the pre-school teacher. When it finished, I felt there was a certain irony in calling the crowned girl "Miss Independence." Two runners up and the crowned were given a cardboard sash stapled diagonally across their bodies. This all finished about midday, and in the afternoon, there was a soccer game for the men/boys. I left the Miss Independence Parade feeling that "I wonder what the girls think of themselves? What does this do to self-esteem and the picture painted in the school community about the role of girls and women?"

Journal entry two shines a light on the Zambian school community on Independence Day. This powerful incident demonstrated the cultural and gendered complexities of the worlds of the children and their community. To my knowledge, catwalks, modelling, fashion shows, and rap music did not figure prominently in traditional Lozi culture. From my cultural lens, the Independence Day celebrations demonstrated a juxtaposition of Lozi and Western culture. In the late 1970s, Said (1978) pointed towards the influence that modern technology was having on the way that the colonised people were viewing themselves. Almost 50 years later, technology has become a significant coloniser of colonial culture and aspired standards of the *West* (Kwet 2019). The children were well aware of other cultures outside of Zambia, and throughout the time that I undertook the research, I became more aware of the dominance and influence of non-indigenous cultures within the community. Conditioning influences of Western, particularly American, culture exemplified in this journal extract are reflected in SDG 4.7 which targets an "appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development" (United Nations 2021b). The girls in this situation seem to be negotiating many worlds that cannot merely be represented as Western and African. On a day that is meant to celebrate the independence of Zambia, to me, it seems ironical to observe students and teachers participating in an event that typifies a Western world concept; fundamentally objectifying young women's bodies and reinforcing gendered stereotypes within the community (Akena 2020; Crawford et al. 2008).

11.7.3 Journal Entry 3—Conversations with the Primary School Leaders—Kenya

> It was interesting to note that the principal asked me "what can I do for the school?" whereas the Deputy Head related to the fact that I am a woman. She shared with me how her father had beaten her mother, and how she herself found it difficult to be a working mother. She also wished to pursue further studies and wanted to know how to go about this. Today, she explained how, since the advent of FPE (Free Primary Education), the school has faced difficulties. However, she was optimistic that things were improving for the better. The large class sizes will eventually come down in size she says, and more teachers will come. They also have interest from a Japanese group that are assisting with more toilets.

11.7.4 Journal Entry 4—Reflections of a Conversation with a Father—Kenya

> An interview with a parent upset me today. I felt that he really wanted to tell me his story and the conditions that he lived in. He told me how he lived in one room with his daughter, and that they shared one pit latrine toilet with 150 people. He said that people defecated in plastic bags, and these plastic bags were put in a heap, and then when it rained the bags came undone and filled with water and the excrement flowed out. He said the people just threw these bags of waste over the roof, and when it rained children were collecting rainwater from the roof—obviously rainwater that would be filled with excrement. He said the water levels when it rained in his room came up to just below his knees, and there were rats and frogs. He said that he went to "the Nation" news people to tell them to come and see what the situation was like, they came, but no story was done about the circumstances of the people. We also talked about the World Food Programme (WFP) at school. Every day, the children have the same food. Porridge in the morning and maize for lunch. Some children now refuse to eat it because they are sick of the same thing. We talked about the need for fresh fruit and vegetables in the diet of the children and how expensive they are in Nairobi. Some of his family have now returned to the countryside, his wife, and his asthmatic daughter. This man seemed despondent, upset, angry, and had tried to do things. He organised a community group to collect the rubbish, but they did not have enough funds to buy gloves and to keep the programme going.

In Journal entries three and four, the teachers and parent believed that I had the power to assist them in some way. This made me reflect on my role in the research with respect to the binaries of the coloniser and the colonised, and the privileged, and the oppressed. The principal wanted me to help the school. The Deputy Head wanted me to help her career. The parent wanted the

world to know of his living conditions and sense of hopelessness. They all wanted to be heard. The adults in the school community recognised that in my role as the researcher, I could voice their concerns through global forums such as this book chapter. Unequivocally, they all wanted the children in their care to have a better life, but they felt disempowered by the systems and discourses of Kenyan society (Spivak 1999). Power and poverty underpinned their capacity to improve their own worlds and that of the children in their care. The power relations and lack of power expressed in these journal entries highlight the ongoing work required to "eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all" and to consider "children in vulnerable situations" SDG4.5 (United Nations 2021b).

11.7.5 Journal Entry 5—Observations Concerning Health and Hygiene for Girls—Zambia

In an interview with a female teacher, she said: "With regards to girls' menstruation, the girls prefer to be at home. They have not got proper pads and use only cloth and tissues. The toilets at school have no water for them to wash, and there is no proper water system." I decided to investigate the availability and costs of sanitary towels in the town shops today and discovered that there is only one shop that sells them in town. A pack of 10 sanitary towels costs 6 kwacha (30c USD), at the Barotze Trading Shop. I also checked out the toilets at school, and there is no such thing as a "changing room" for the girls. The HIV/AIDS rate is also increasing, and according to the poster I saw at the school on Friday, it is now up to 28% for this region in Zambia.

11.7.6 Journal Entry 6—Conversations with the High School Teachers—Zambia

An English teacher showed me around the school. She told me that pregnancies are a big reason for girl students leaving school. In this term, there have been 8 pregnancies. There are an average of 30 pregnancies a year officially recorded (who knows about the unofficial figures). She said that in reality there could be between 8–10% of all girls in the high school leaving each year due to pregnancies. In answer to my question "why do the girls get pregnant?" the teacher said: "it is due to poverty. The boarding fees are too prohibitive, and some of the girls rent shacks nearby. They have no adult or parent supervision. Students from as far away as 100km come to the school. They are too poor to come and board so they go to the shacks. They are taken advantage of by the local men, and may turn to prostitution." The staff told me that single sex classes have not been effective. This idea was sponsored by the Netherlands Government, so the school felt compelled to give it a go but they think it did not work out. I have the feeling that they thought separation actually caused more sexual promiscuity. Abstinence is always supported by the church and the school. Condoms are not distributed, allowed, or condoned by the school. The Deputy Head told me that this was Government policy. They said that the church leaders occasionally spoke to the students about abstinence and HIV/AIDS, etc…

11.7.7 Journal Entry 7—Conversations with the Deputy Head Teacher—Zambia

He (the Deputy Head) said that condoms are not allowed to be handed out to the students in the school but that there is a box in his office (he showed me). It is not the preferred thing to do. He said, "it is like taking a shower with a raincoat on." He said that there are Grade 8 and 9 girls boarding here (just like the high school) that come from far away. They have no parents and/or guardians knowing what they are up to. They also lack funds and resort to prostitution, or they will have sex if a boy buys them something (like a drink or clothes). These students only come because the primary school where they are at, only goes to Grade 7, and they need to move to go to "upper primary level." The general day-to-day students travel a maximum distance of 8 km to school.

11.7.8 Journal Entry 8—Conversations with the Deputy Head Teacher—Kenya

The Deputy Head tells me how it is difficult for the girls at menstruating age. She even had a girl as young as 9 with menses come to her for sanitary

towels. They rely on donations to purchase the pads to always have a supply at school. There are bins provided at school but not enough. She estimates half of the girl population are menstruating. They have 12/13 year olds at Grade 4 level. She says that sanitary towels are as important as the exercise books, boxes of which stand in her office ready to be distributed.

11.7.9 Journal Entry 9—Observations of a Teacher—Kenya

A female head teacher of standard 7/8 is telling the students to not loiter in the corridors and gossip/talk. She says, "this is not the time to think about babies. When you are getting a kid in class 7 you are not really using your common sense. You are school children. You are not ready yet to be a mother. You people, you can take good care of yourself. Now, we are going to the holidays. Concentrate on your work. Sit in these classes and do some work." This head teacher was giving an address to all of the standard 7 and 8 students on parade, although the information was definitely directed at the girls. Nothing about boys learning to take responsibility!

Journal entries five, six, seven, eight, and nine demonstrate the daily difficulties and complexities that the African girls negotiated. Whilst NGOs such as the *Girl Child Network* may support the menstrual needs of Kenyan school girls (Girl Child Network 2021), menstruation for the Zambian girls could be educationally disabling. Most girls will menstruate. Many girls and women have the potential to have babies. Moving beyond these biological characteristics, the binary demarcations of male and female move towards the contested areas of experiencing gender through the social realm. For the girls in the researched communities, like girls in many African communities, the monthly menstrual cycle is often seen as a burden and not a celebration of adulthood (Chebii 2018; Jewitt and Ryley 2014). A girl may be forced to stay at home when she is menstruating when there are not the means to adequately provide sanitary hygiene (Chebii 2018; UNESCO 2014). Journal entry five showed that this is particularly true of the rural Zambian school girls as the costs of sanitary napkins are prohibitive for girls with little to no money. Journal entry eight showed that the situation is not as dire in the Kenyan school community, but this was due to the female Deputy Head Teacher being proactive in ensuring that the school always has a supply of sanitary products.

When considering these journal extracts with respect to SDG 5.6, it is notable that the indicators for elimination of sexual exploitation and decisions about sexual relations all pertain to girls that are 15 years and older (United Nations 2021b). As shown in Journal entry one, the female teachers believe that girls as young as 13 years are sexually active in the Zambian school community. This raises the question as to what and where are the SDG 5 targets that support girls sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights for girls that are under 15 years of age?

Unofficial statistics, obtained by the Zambian Deputy Head teacher, reported that there were seven pregnancies in each of the last two years. He believed that not all pregnancies were reported and that girls usually left school for one year to care for their infant. Zambian government policy entitles girls to return to school after a year, however, this is not the case if there are subsequent pregnancies. The girls usually chose to return to small evening classes which the school held to cater for the young mothers. The local church disapproves of this practice and recommends that the girls be transferred to other schools. In Journal entry six, it is evident that the situation for school-aged pregnancies is more dire in the high school community. Girls resorted to prostitution so they could stay in the high school environment as distance and boarding costs are prohibitive. In Journal entry seven, the Deputy Head ignores government policy, and the influence of the church, by having a box of condoms in his office. The reality for many girls in Zambia is that pregnancy may signal an end to their education and future possibilities and aspirations.

In the Kenyan school community, there were rumours of girls leaving school due to pregnancy, but there was no available data at the time of the research. From my recollections of the

female head teacher's words in Journal entry nine, it would not seem at all implausible that she had had known of a student that had a baby in standard seven, and this may be why she was imploring the girls not to think about being mothers now. The Kenyan female head teacher and the Zambian Deputy Head male teacher were both aiming to address the issues of young pregnancies through their actions.

11.7.10 Journal Entry 10—Observations of an Incident in Standard 1—Kenya

10:00 am. I enter the class to ask where the teacher is, the answer is that; "she has not come." Some of the children are still finishing off their ugi (porridge). There is a little boy hitting two large sticks together out the front. Most of the girls have their books open and are reading and/or looking at the pictures. Two bossy boys are ordering instructions to the girls in the class. One boy has forced a little girl to go down on her knees at the front of the class with her hands in the air. He has made another girl do this too. Why on earth do they do what this irritating little boy asks? He has a long stick of blue plastic that he taps on the desk as he walks around the room. Now, there are four girls and one boy with hands up in the air. One by one he whacks the girls on the hands with the blue stick. There are now seven children (six girls and one boy) intimidated by these boys (one gang leader—group of three) that are told to line up across the front of the blackboard. The little nasty pastie boy was about to whack heavily a little girl with the blue rod, and I quickly ran to the front of the room and pulled the stick from his hand. The children all then sat down and were asked to read through their books and write. Many of the students laughed at my outrage, but I think that they understood what I was saying when I said "no" severely to the use of the stick. 10:15 am. The teacher walked in, and she thanked the nasty pastie boy (that I had just told to sit down) because he had marked the other students' work. I explained what incident had just occurred and how I had stopped him from hitting the other children. She explained to me how this boy is very smart but is always getting into trouble with the bigger boys at school. She does not follow this incident up with the other teachers because she said that she does not want this little boy to run away from school. She is trying to handle him in a positive way by reinforcing his good behaviour. When I said that he was intimidating 6 girls, she said that it is not only the girls that have this problem. It is all of the class and the older boys too.

As the researcher, the other, the observer, in both of these African communities, I thought that I would be able to sink quietly into the background and simply record, observe, and reflect on the classroom interactions. The incident in Journal entry 10 was the first and only time that I *interfered* with the research in the field. At that moment, I felt a duty of care towards all of the children and could not be a by-stander to the violent acts of a young boy towards a group of mostly female students. In one sense, gender was not the issue here, but in another, it was. This incident disturbed me on many levels. The teacher did not believe that it warranted any disciplinary action because she wanted to protect the smart protagonist from what she felt was a worse fate—that of leaving school. However, by allowing this violent act to occur without punishment, in my opinion, she was condoning the actions and sending a message to the victims that they just needed to put up with bullying violent behaviour.

For a young child to act in such a violent manner, as depicted in Journal 10, I wondered what his home life was like, and why he treated others in such a degrading manner. I viewed my *interference* in the classroom as an explicit act of *feminism,* in the sense that there was a power imbalance at play in the classroom that largely oppressed the girls (Connell 2009). The *nasty pastie* boy in the classroom was *doing gender* and acting out in such a way that reflected the gendered social order that was his norm, without reflection or question (Lorber 2010; West and Zimmerman 2009). These observations highlight the importance of SDGs 4.7, 4.A, and 5.2 promoting cultures that espouse non-violence, and yet in Journal entry 10, it is evident that gendered violence is normalised by this young boy and validated by the teacher in this educational context. The boy's actions could be interpreted as a reflection of a colonial legacy that introduced new gender ideologies. In considering the abuse of girls and women in Africa "we must recognise that there have been pernicious continuities

between colonial, nationalist, and post-colonial systems" (Mama 1997, p. 61), as well as new masculinities, for both the colonised and the coloniser, at the time of colonisation and thereafter (Mama 1997, 2001; Nandy 1983). In order to address the gendered disparities observed here, there must be acknowledgement that the African girls in these communities are situated in a complex world where their identities have been partially formed by their post-colonial heritage, as well as multiple influences that are negotiated through time, place, tradition, and experience (Connell 2007).

11.8 Conclusion

The ambitions of SDG 4 *Quality Education* and SDG 5 *Gender Equality* are specifically relevant to the research presented in this chapter. Through the journal entries, a picture has been painted of issues that need to be considered to achieve gender parity and inclusive education practices in African schools, as seen through the insider–outsider position of the researcher. To improve the experiences of African girls' lives and education, parents, carers, and the wider community, alongside their teachers, must all be included in the efforts to support the goals and targets of the UN SDGs (UNICEF 2021). Although SDG 4.C aims to increase the supply of qualified teachers in developing countries, there are no specific goals and targets to support teachers currently working in school communities. Through the journal entries, it is noticeable that the teachers and school leaders are seeking assistance to improve the lives of their students and their own careers. The African girls that inhabit these communities are negotiating complex worlds where power and poverty often define their limited choices. An inclusive educational environment needs to be aware of these complexities and support the communities that in turn support the wellbeing of African girls all working towards a sustainable global future.

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Dr. Catherine Oxworth works in the Institute of Education, Arts and Community at Federation University Australia. She has had extensive experience working as a teacher, trainer and mentor in the field of education for more than 25 years. Catherine is a classically trained musician (clarinet), and an advocate of education in, and through, the arts. She has taught in primary and secondary schools, as well as universities, in Australia, China, Pakistan and Kenya. Through qualitative research approaches Catherine investigates issues of social justice that consider the themes and complexities of identity, gender and feminism, post-colonialism, storytelling, culture and creativity. Catherine teaches initial teacher education courses; her expertise lies in the areas of Arts education, Diversity and Inclusion, as well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teaching and learning. Catherine is an advocate for embedding the knowledge, culture, history and perspectives of Indigenous peoples into all aspects of the curriculum and schooling. Catherine is particularly interested in research and education that focuses on those that are marginalised in our world and through her research, teaching, work and life, her intent is to make the world a better place for having lived in it.

12 Social and Cultural Capitals of Parents from Indian Immigrant Background: A Case for Developing Children's STEM Learning

Sarika Kewalramani and Gillian Kidman

Abstract

This chapter explores Indian immigrant parents' cultural beliefs, educational practices, and aspirations for their children's STEM education in Australia. Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) children's educational achievements regardless of bias, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status (SES) are a current international debate resulting in calls for social change (United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Together 2030 agenda in Realizing the SDGs for all: ensuring inclusiveness and equality for every person, everywhere, 2019). There is little empirical research exploring CALD parents' sociocultural beliefs, practices, and aspirations for their child's STEM education; hence, this chapter contributes new knowledge in this area. The study adopts (Shonkoff in Proc Natl Acad Sci 109:17,302–17,307, 2012) systemic theory of change approach, postulating that early experiences are carried over to adulthood, highlighting the supporting of those who are the most disadvantaged. Six semi-structured interviews were conducted with six Indian families (both parents; $n = 12$). Findings report on the drivers that shape the families social and cultural capitals, and the expectations and aspirations they have for their children's STEM learning. Parents' sociocultural and educational experiences can provide deeper insights for policy makers and school stakeholders to build an all-inclusive STEM learning and engagement approach for nurturing children's STEM capital.

Keywords

Immigrant parents' sociocultural beliefs · STEM capital · Social capital · Cultural capital · Inclusive STEM learning in early childhood education

Author Positioning Statements

Dr. Sarika Kewalramani: Sarika is an early career researcher with academic and lived experiences rooted in equity and diversity-related debates around access to quality science education. Coming from an Indian descent and living in Australia past 16 years, my own educational experiences were vastly different from other colleagues and students I encountered in the Australian education system. Within the educational discourses of my home country, right from early childhood, science was a core subject. Science subjects were mandatory, and no electives offered until Grade 10 or matriculation. My

S. Kewalramani (✉)
Department of Education, Swinburne University of Technology, Melbourne, Australia
e-mail: skewalramani@swin.edu.au

G. Kidman
School of Curriculum Teaching and Inclusive Education, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia
e-mail: Gillian.Kidman@monash.edu

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research passion and interest involve using a social justice lens to make visible the voices of immigrants into Australia and their perceived bicultural identities and acculturation experiences. With ongoing research related to immigrant children's social determinants of health via access to quality science, now so called as STEM education, my research unfolds the status quo dilemmas faced by Indian immigrant parents living in Australia.

Associate Professor Gillian Kidman: I am Dutch Australian. I recall a sense of difference throughout my childhood both here in Australia and in The Netherlands. In Australia my family enjoyed different cultural celebrations, we did things a little differently. In The Netherlands I had an accent, so again I was different. But common to both countries and to my education throughout was my passion for science and more recently STEM and STEAM. Science was my go-to comfort place, and it gave me a universal language and a future to work toward. I am privileged to have shared my passion with many indigenous children and youth in Community throughout Queensland in a series of "Closing the Gap" projects.

12.1 Introduction

This chapter explores Indian immigrant parents' cultural beliefs, educational practices, and aspirations for their children's Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education in Australia. Early childhood (birth-8 years old) is a critical time when young children are forming beliefs about themselves as learners, along with establishing subject-based learning interests (Murcia et al. 2020). STEM educational outcomes for *all* culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) children regardless of bias, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status (SES) is a current international debate resulting with calls for social change being made (Francis 2015; Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] 2013; United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Together 2030 agenda 2019). Senior school enrollment within STEM education subjects varies by ethnicity, gender, and familial socioeconomic background (Archer et al. 2015). Although STEM research has historically focused on older children (Archer et al. 2014; Corrigan and Aikens 2020), studies demonstrate that preschool-age and younger children can also develop persistent and individualized interests in these activities and topics (Early Childhood STEM Working Group 2017; Fleer 2020). Such early and equitable STEM opportunities (both in formal and informal learning settings) are reported as important for children's ongoing learning and development (Archer et al. 2015). Commentators raise concerns about marginalized groups, such as CALD children, missing out on the powerful forms of knowledge and learning opportunities that STEM can foster (Cipollone et al. 2020; Corrigan and Aikens 2020). Although, considerable progress has been made on access and participation in STEM learning, CALD families and children's participation and learning opportunities are not often reported in the literature. For example, Habig et al. (2018) report that for some immigrant families and children, the foreign learning environment presents challenges not experienced by non-CALD families and children. The English-speaking environment is reported to limit the capacities of parents to develop STEM-based attitudes, beliefs, and aspirations. Refocused efforts are needed to improve STEM learning outcomes for all children, but especially for CALD families and children from immigrant backgrounds who are already marginalized (Corrigan and Aikens 2020). CALD parents are often first-generation migrants and do not have the support of extended families for child raising assistance, and thus have to tend to the needs of the children themselves while working full time. This has been exasperated during times of social and economic disruption. The SDG 4.2 target (United Nations n.d.) of access to quality early childhood development, care, and pre-primary education as a preparation for primary education is not being realized for many children (Ferguson

et al. 2019), but COVID-19 may be a global explanation for this reality. However, putting COVID-19 to the side, access to out of school experiences is difficult for immigrant families as they only have themselves and perhaps other similar families as support. For a CALD student to experience additional education opportunities, it is harder financially than for non-migrant first-generation families (Daly 2011).

This chapter builds on the premise that all children should have access to equitable STEM educational opportunities (Achren et al. 2012; Archer et al. 2015; Gilmour et al. 2018)—as a matter of social justice, and in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 of *Ensure equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all* (United Nations n.d.). In particular, this chapter aligns with the SDG Target 4.2 that states: b*y 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care, and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education* (United Nations n.d.). Within STEM education and professions, there is concern that the progression for equitable STEM education is slow, and that an uneven participation rate exists (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization [UNESCO] 2020). In an Australian study, Cooper et al. (2018) found that CALD families experience language, parental agency, and SES barriers to STEM enrichment activities. In further studies, Cooper and Berry (2020) report a "mismatch STEM labor market demand and domestic supply" (p. 152), and attribute association with color, low-socioeconomic status, and gender as characteristics of underrepresentation. In order to provide equitable opportunities for CALD children, research exploring how parent's social and cultural capitals influence their understanding, and participation is important. There is also a need for research into the sociocultural practices and STEM educational resources that parents from low SES and CALD backgrounds can provide during the early years of schooling. Hence, this chapter contributes new knowledge to understanding parents' cultural beliefs, educational practices, and aspirations for their children's STEM education. In this study, we particularly focus on immigrant parents and children of Indian descent.

Cooper et al. (2018) call for research into CALD parental strengths and the difficulties they face, in particular, the provision of sociocultural practices that govern their children's engagement and interests in STEM subjects. Depending upon their social status and cultural capital, parents seek to create opportunities and resources that afford, and consequently nurture, a child's STEM capital (Archer et al. 2015). Hence, understanding families' sociocultural beliefs and practices, and the subsequent barriers families face is significant in bridging the inequitable cycle of children's engagement and participation (Cooper et al. 2018). In this study, we explore the following research question: *What are the drivers (inputs and activities) of parents from immigrant backgrounds in relation to their sociocultural beliefs and practices for their child's STEM engagement?*

12.2 STEM Capital and Social Change

Archer et al. (2014) coined the term *science capital* as the formation and production of children's science aspirations, which emanates from sociocultural influencers (e.g., parents, peers, and teachers). They further explained that science-related knowledge, resources, behaviors, dispositions, and social contacts can also frame an individual's science capital (Archer et al. 2015). A range of factors that shape the likelihood of a young person expressing science aspirations develops from their science capital and has been an area of research and political debate in light of declining enrollments of students up taking science-based careers (Moote et al. 2019a, b). For example, children (aged 10–15) with high levels of science capital are significantly more likely to adopt a scientific identity, aspire to continue with science-related studies and career aspirations (Archer et al. 2015; DeWitt et al. 2016). Moote et al. (2020) showed links between children's cultural and SES backgrounds such as

middle-class, White, and South Asian, boys are the most likely young people to record high levels of science capital. As such, levels of science capital can be influenced by gender, ethnicity, and cultural capital (Moote et al. 2019b).

Adapting Archer et al.'s (2014) concept of science capital, we define *STEM capital* as the root of a child's ability to learn and/or engage in STEM, to cope or become whatever they may choose to be in their future, based on their social and cultural capitals and consequent relationship building with STEM. However, children may only be able to form the necessary capital and subsequent relationships, if they are exposed to such opportunities. Moote et al. (2020) suggest the concept of STEM capital can help explain why some children are more likely than others. Science capital can be used as a conceptual tool for understanding inequalities (e.g., of gender, social class, and ethnicity), and inform efforts that seek to increase aspirations and participation across all STEM disciplines.

12.3 Theoretical Framework

Our work adopts Shonkoff's (2012) systemic theory of change approach, postulating that early experiences carry over into adulthood, thus highlighting the need for support of those who are the most disadvantaged. The conceptual approach is based on the Actiotope model (Richards et al. 2019; Ziegler and Phillipson 2012) where interactions between social and cultural capitals are key in the development of STEM capital.

In line with Shonkoff's (2012) theory of change, social capital is defined as the interactions between the individual (children in the case of current study) and the environment (e.g., parents, teachers, peers, siblings, availability of educational resources). For example, the support children receive from their parents, and subsequent interactions can be influenced by the familial socioeconomic background and social values (Richards et al. 2019; Tay et al. 2018). In other words, the initiatives parents take in engaging with their children are driven by their own cultural beliefs about the value of education and the aspirations they have for their children (Siraj-Blatchford 2010). Another contributing element that can be considered to influence the ways parents may interact with their children are parents' cultural beliefs and life experiences including educational experiences (Tekin 2016). Taking up the notion that social and cultural capitals can be passed on, through families, to help children engage in STEM learning, a family's ability to transform their existing sociocultural practices toward children's evolving STEM capital and subsequent engagement practices is critical to fostering science-based aspirations and interest (Stoeger et al. 2017).

12.4 Understanding Equitable Opportunities for Children's STEM Engagement

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS 2020) data reports that the proportion of Australians born overseas continues to reach new heights. Over 30% of Australia's population have immigrated from their origin of birth with those of Indian descent being the second largest group (ABS 2020). As such, the Australian population is characterized by immigrants, particularly Indian children and families, and is highly selective of particular cultural backgrounds and ethnicities. While STEM capital can be related to an individual's sociocultural values and belief systems, it can also be seen as a core element of a child's or family's STEM identity (Moote et al. 2019b). The significant proportion of Indian immigrants within Australia emphasizes how pressing it is to attend to children's quality, equitable, and inclusive educational outcomes, in line with SDG Target 4.2 (United Nations n.d).

Studies have shown that not all children have equitable opportunities to participate in STEM learning (Kusurkar 2014; Tekin 2016). This often varies within and across ethnic groups

(Kewalramani et al. 2020; Phillipson et al. 2018). Jones et al. (2020) report on the gap in the research literature concerning the understanding of the process of developing a familial STEM capital as a socially-just practice in Australia's multicultural society and educational systems. Additionally, there is an absence of literature that explores ways to support girls of color in forming their sense of STEM identities early on in the primary stage of schooling (Kang et al. 2019). Increasingly, research debates around strategically expanding girls' experiences with science across out of school settings during early childhood, primary and middle school articular the benefits to their self-perception with STEM at an early age (Corrigan and Aikens 2020).

Fraser (2008) indicated that the implementation of a socially-just practice for developing children's STEM engagement should relate to two elements: a sense of distributive justice (relating to allocation of resources), and cultural justice (recognizing the need to reflect on multiple identities). In terms of the present study, these equate to the allocation of STEM resources and participation opportunities, as well as the parental sociocultural beliefs and practices. According to Fraser (2008), these two themes support each other and are intertwined. It is over a decade since the Fraser (2008) study, yet we find social change studies that incorporate the voices of marginalized societies such as CALD populations are scant especially in relation to STEM capital. Not all children have early childhood STEM experiences, thus indicating that there is still work to be done in relation to SDG Target 4.2 (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific [ESCAP] 2021) of ensuring that all children have access to quality early childhood development, care, and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education. Children are also often found at a disadvantage for a multitude of social, cultural, and psychological reasons (Gilmour et al. 2018; Habig et al. 2018). There is a need to understand parents' drivers in relation to their sociocultural beliefs and values and how these inform the formation of child's STEM capital.

12.5 Research Design and Methods

This qualitative study was undertaken in a socioeconomically disadvantaged area of southeastern Melbourne, Victoria, Australia. This area has a significant CALD population with 15.3% of the community having a language background other than English, and a "self-reported" non-proficiency in English (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS] 2016). Further, 19.4% families in this area of southeastern Melbourne had arrived in Australia within the past five years, and 18.7% between past five to 10 years. Families were recruited through a multicultural community festival event (held in February 2020), where parents from diverse SES and cultural backgrounds participated in a STEM education exhibit conducted by the researchers. The project was also advertised by a not-for-profit organization who promotes STEM education opportunities for families from diverse SES and cultural backgrounds. Parents were invited to leave their contact details if they wished to receive further information regarding STEM education, and also if they were willing to take part in our study. Through purposeful sampling, only families from immigrant Indian backgrounds were contacted to participate in this study.

This project was conducted abiding to the Monash University Human Ethics Committee guidelines (project ID 17,979), and our reporting requires the de-identification of participants' data. The purpose of the project was explained, both verbally and in writing, to each participant by the first author. Interpreters were also offered; however, none were requested. The consent form was sent to them prior to the interview. After receiving the returned consent forms via email, individual interviews with parents were arranged.

Six semi-structured interviews were conducted with six immigrant families (both parents with at least one child of age between four to eight years old; $n = 12$) (see Table 12.1 for participant profiles). Participation in the study was voluntary. Participants were free to withdraw their consent at any time without prejudice. All participants consented to be interviewed.

Table 12.1 Participant families profile summary

Parents		Ethnicity	Years in Australia
Mother's name	Father's name		
Mira	Chander	North Indian	7
Dana	Kunal	South Indian	9
Vidya	Sid	South Indian	6
Sanika	Mithun	South Indian	13
Krithika	Mahesh	South Indian	8
Waidehi	Raaja	South Indian	9

Participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity and informed that information would deidentified and pseudonyms (although the pseudonyms may imply names of individuals from an Indian descent) would be used as per the ethical procedures.

Although the parent participants were from low-SES areas of south eastern Melbourne, they were mostly from STEM professional fields and gained qualifications in India prior to emigrating to Australia. Their children attend educational settings that are in both high- and low-socioeconomic status schools. Hence, our study findings should be cautiously generalized.

12.5.1 Reliability and Validity

Interviews were semi-structured, open-ended and used a guiding interview protocol, (see Table 12.2 for interview protocol). The ethnicity of the parents has been mentioned to shed more light on the parental stories, which reflects their sociocultural beliefs, together with past educational and professional experiences. These profiles are discussed in relation to the findings. No judgements regarding culturally sensitive conversations are made. The interviews were not meant to be complex in nature, bearing in mind that the parental group was homogeneous. Recruitment ceased when data saturation was achieved, and the first author had identified, by the sixth family interview, the repetitive patterns in the interviewees' experiences based on the research questions (Guest et al. 2006). During the interview, the first author played the role of a moderator, keeping the respondents focused on the particular topic. This allowed the authors to establish the consistency of measuring and elucidating the roots of the parents' strengths and difficulties/inputs and activities in relation to their sociocultural beliefs and practices for their children's STEM engagement (Guest et al. 2006). In addition, the researchers attempted to minimize bias by cross-checking the data transcripts and emerging themes. We believe interpretation of the interview comments was enhanced as the first author had a CALD capital similar to the participants. Because the sociocultural capitals of the two researchers were from different backgrounds (first author from a CALD background that the second author lacked), this was perceived to enhance reliability and validity of our study and enhanced the rapport between the researchers and the parents.

12.5.2 Data Analysis

Using thematic analysis, the transcribed interview data was scrutinized for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) (Bryman 2012). The themes and sub-themes are the product of reading and re-reading of the transcripts keeping in mind the study's theoretical framework of social and cultural capitals informing familial STEM capital (Ziegler and Phillipson 2012). For example, parental *cultural capital* drivers include the strengths of high-quality aspirations despite the difficulties of not understanding the Australian education system, and hence being unable to access their desired STEM

Table 12.2 Parent interview protocol

Guiding interview questions
1. Can you please give some insights about your own schooling experiences?
2. How do you perceive that your own past educational contexts/experiences might have shaped your children's interests and engagement with STEM?
3. What kinds of STEM expectations/aspirations you have for your children?
4. Has COVID changed your understanding of required skill sets for your children or for yourself?
5. What kind of learning would you now like to see for your children moving forward now that they are back in classroom?
6. What expectations you have for your child's teachers/schools regarding STEM education?
7. Can you give some examples of what you think about the STEM education your child might be engaging at school/preschool?
8. How do you think/not that STEM learning could benefit your child's learning/skills both at home and school?
9. How would you like to see STEM education to go further in Australian education?
10. How do you compare Australian STEM education from your own home country or your own past schooling experiences? Anything better you would like to see happen in Australian classrooms early on to engage children STEM experiences?
11. How do you engage with your children at home with STEM experiences? Do you have any planned goals for them to achieve?
12. How do you see the use of technology in engaging young children in learning science/STEM within their everyday contexts—both at home and school?
13. What barriers do you think there are that might hinder your involvement/engaging your children in STEM education? (e.g., ESL, knowing the education system…)
14. What kinds of resources are available in your home environment that you could use for engaging your child in STEM learning?

learning resources (lack of social capital). The data was then organized into core themes, while also comparing the emerging themes to ensure consistency in interpretation between each family's interview data within and across each family case.

12.6 Findings

The findings are presented as three themes:

1. Embodying mixed beliefs about STEM engagement (cultural capital)
2. Embodying high-quality aspirations to engage children in STEM learning (cultural capital)
3. Parental difficulties of the know-hows of accessing STEM education and resources (social capital).

Considering the richness of the parents' responses, we present the data in the form of narrative passages (Clandinin 2007). These narratives unveil parents' thoughts, feelings, and experiences as stories. The interpretation of their stories is both explicit and implicit, and we make meaning from what was spoken, but also the meaning behind their words, or what remained unspoken (Clandinin 2007).

12.6.1 Embodying Mixed Beliefs About STEM Engagement (Cultural Capital)

All the parents reported they wanted to *give* their children quality and nurturing educational experiences. They believed that STEM was the pathway for cultivating a niche for curiosity and

passion for learning within their children. Waidehi, a parent who had moved to Australia nine years ago, believed in the following opportunities:

> I think we as parents provide as many opportunities as possible to the kids. I think we have to just grab on that opportunity of having those exploring minds with kids. If we give them that and feed that brain with lots and lots of stuff, whatever they want to, I think you set the base right and they will just take on from there. I think STEM, all of these are crucial disciplines of life, and they become part of their life and that is what I think the parents should look at inculcating in their kids' life.

Kunal, another father who had moved to Australia nine years ago, had similar viewpoints regarding children's STEM engagement. For Kunal, learning should be seen as interlinked rather than the traditional ways of seeing Science and Mathematics as separate subjects, which was his schooling experience in India. Similarly, Kunal's wife, Dana, also concurred with her husband's cultural viewpoint of STEM being seen as separate disciplines and consequently limiting their children's future learning prospects and eventual career choices. According to Kunal,

> At least the past generations did not look at it like that. So, I think that is the major difference I see with STEM education and education before, or the previous generations' education, is that it is good to see that now teachers and everybody is starting to look at STEM as a holistic thing where it is important that we look into all the subjects are interlinked instead of, you know, science is a different subject, science is only for someone who likes doing medicine, or some sort of medicine field and all of that, and Maths is for someone who wants to get into finance, or technology, engineering is someone who wants to be an architect or an engineer of some sort, or a computer engineer.

It is evident that although parents embodied traditional beliefs that the separate disciplines of Science, Mathematics, and Technologies learning can lead to lucrative prospects for their children, they did not wish to move forward with those beliefs when it came to their children's STEM education in the Australian context. All parents believed that the Indian form of education never exposed them to interdisciplinary thinking skills due to the traditional disciplinary nature of Science and Mathematics education in India. For these parents, STEM is much more interesting as children can visualize and form connections with their thinking. When the child finishes school, they can use such knowledge and skills for future careers.

In relation to the SDG Target 4.2, inclusivity, educational equality, and importantly, lifelong learning opportunities (Ferguson et al. 2019) ought to be provided to child via access to quality early childhood development and pre-primary education as a preparation for primary education. These parents feel STEM education is a necessary preparation for life, and that it is a responsibility of both the parents and the schools to enable access to multidisciplinary learning. The societal benefits abound where there is quality education—maternal health is improved as is infant health, the importance of nutrition is understood, and overall, a more capable workforce improves the socioeconomic growth (Ferguson et al. 2019).

12.6.2 Embodying High-Quality Aspirations to Engage Children in STEM Learning (Cultural Capital)

Vidya, another mother, echoed the sentiments of Kunal and Waidehi about the Indian education system and future aspirations for their children. For Vidya, her hopes were to provide education to her children in order to harness their lifelong learning skills that can be enabled by engaging in STEM learning:

> I never liked the Indian system so when I came to Australia it was like sort of a dream come true where I really loved that you have the full control of what you are learning and you can take it to any level. STEM will sort of engage children, and they will naturally learn it. You will naturally become a problem solver. You will naturally become, an innovator because you keep trying different things. That inquisition in my son like to explore this world, like what happens if I do this, what happens

> if I do that. Kids have a lot of that exploring in their heads and I think the first five years of any kids' life is extremely important, which I feel I did not get being born in India because Indian education is very different.

Dana, another mother, had the views that STEM is the responsibility of schools and should be provided within the formal schooling education. Because the parents did not see a lot of direct STEM learning and thinking happening in their child's classroom, they were conducting their own learning at home and in extracurricular activities. While this is an interesting aspect of participation, it was beyond the scope of this study to explore the specific curriculum offered in the schools attended by these children. However, Dana's outsourcing of activities reflects the capital she was able to draw upon to support her daughter's learning. While a school might be offering a quality education to its students—and thus progressing toward meeting the SDG Target 4.2—it may well be that the school is not progressing in terms of a quality and inclusive STEM education. Where this is the case, and the parental aspirations are strong, the parents call on their cultural repertoire to build their own community of learners at home.

> My daughter does use Scratch with the coding classes, it is been good, they have been teaching the kids to do activities on Scratch, so create your story, so create your own imagination. And it is good, it makes the kids do a lot of thinking, which is what I am really liking. I do have certain things that I want my kids to grow up on. Like things like developing self-confidence and trying to express their creativity. Actually, we have to give the opportunity for them to bring out their creativity. When teachers do inquiry-based learning activities they have more STEM experiences, this is great for children thinking. I believe my child to continue to learn about STEM at school and university if interested.

For Dana and her family, learning was seen as a pathway for their children to participate fully and actively in the society and enhance their thinking capacities and creativity for future education and career. As such, parents aspired to see more STEM learning and creative thinking occurring in their child's classrooms. Dana had enrolled her seven-year-old daughter in coding classes to expose her to creative learning with a long-term hope of studying at university. The CALD parents in this study seemed to be looking beyond the SDG 4.2 target and embrace experiences to enable STEM educational opportunities they themselves did not have when they were growing up. It is about having the opportunity to participate, to learn and develop as a child so that Dana's daughter had the STEM study options later in life.

12.6.3 Parental Difficulties of the Know-Hows of Accessing STEM Education and Resources (Social Capital)

The parents raised concerns about the structures of formal education, and the limited provision of STEM opportunities in their children's classroom learning. Maya indicated that she felt more opportunities for such learning are needed in Australian classrooms:

> When children reach secondary school, we may not know the content and be able to support what they are learning. We would like the younger children to experience STEM more too. There are more STEM opportunities and technology experiences in Australia. We would like to see more STEM in the classroom at a young age. Not sure as we are unfamiliar with what is done at and what is happening for children at primary school.

Similarly, Kunal described the barrier of not understanding the Australian education system and the learning that was happening in his daughter's classroom. The COVID-19 home-based learning provided Kunal insights into his daughter's classroom learning:

> Because until they go to school, we do not really know what they teach. And when they come home, I ask "what did you learn today?" "Nothing. I have been playing." "How so?" "Nothing much." I try a different way of questioning them, I never know what they learnt. COVID was such a surprise for me and I am really very thankful that this opportunity came for me to understand what kind of activities they are in. And I could see my little one

> is really doing good when she can understand things better. So, it is kind of like a mind opener for me, to expose my daughter into different areas to see her interests.

Another issue that the parents reported was in relation to the constraints of finding help and the need to rely on volunteers—if they could find them—to support the children's STEM learning. Jay explained:

> They do all their extra-curricular activities on the weekend. Even the community STEM session is normally on a week day. So, we run the activities on the Tuesday. So, it will be great if we get experienced volunteers too. Because at the moment, we all are parents, we are trying to find volunteers, most of the time all are working parents, and they are really finding it hard to get the time for the volunteers. It would be great if we get more support for the group. So as of now, it is very small but we are trying to manage it ourselves.

Being new migrants often means parents are busy struggling to settle themselves financially, thus missing out on the opportunities to build their familial social capitals that could aid in child's STEM engagement. Mira expressed her concerns in relation to the extended and repeated COVID-19 lockdown periods that Melbourne experienced in 2020:

> I really feel working full time, with a child and attending to all their learning, is a bit hard because the job is a full time involvement as well. So that is kind of a barrier but of course, with the migrants, with us being migrants and the first migrants you really have to set your foot over here in the country to excel and go to the next level and create a platform for your kid. So - of course, we are currently working full time so that is a bit of a barrier - time is our biggest constraint for us. But then we did home schooling - we got to know how this whole education works out, it is very interactive.

Home schooling for these parents was an eye opener when it came to their nuanced realizations of the learning happens in Australian classrooms. Parents liked the fact that the learning was more interactive than traditional Indian ways. However, they struggled to meet their educational desires as they settle themselves and their families in a new country, work full time, as well as support their children's STEM learning trajectories.

12.7 Discussion

The current study explored immigrant (from Indian background) parents' cultural beliefs, educational practices, and aspirations for their children's STEM education in Australia. We found there were three clear drivers, one of which was a barrier that parents were motivated to overcome. The parents are driven by the belief that a STEM education is a necessary preparation for a better life, and all children should have access to such education from the early childhood years and throughout their schooling. Parents were driven to provide access to STEM opportunities they themselves did not experience in India, often in addition to what is provided in their child's classroom. There were barriers to providing this access that the parents are driven to overcome, such as the costs involved, the lack of volunteers, lack of extended family, and the lack of knowledge of the Australian educational system.

This study highlighted that immigrant parents view STEM education experiences as advantageous to their children's future and that they consider access to such quality early childhood learnings as a preparation for primary education and beyond. This view is similar to the SDG 4.2 target of quality early childhood education for all to ensure the lifelong well-being of the individual, the family, and society (United Nations n.d.). Quality is not to be seen as a *one size fits all* measure as we have seen in this study. Some families consider a need to co-deliver an education alongside their child's school. Yet, the parents in this study are struggling to provide these additional experiences for their children. They exhibited a sociocultural belief that STEM is the future of Australian society and aspirations for their children to be a part of that future—to have a STEM capital. The parents immigrated from India for this potential, but due to the lack of knowledge of the Australian education system, work commitments and time constraints, find it difficult to provide their children with access to such activities. They feel the added responsibility of providing access to extra-curricular activities

due to the perception that STEM learning is limited in the classroom.

While the Australian government is committed to supporting families from disadvantaged CALD backgrounds and to improving education for all children, further research is needed to understand the social and cultural capitals that these families bring into Australian classrooms (Australian Academy of Science 2019). An understanding of parents' sociocultural and educational experiences can provide deeper insights for policy makers, thus building children's socially-just learning, engagement, and equitable STEM career prospects. Interestingly, COVID-19 was empowering for the parents in this study as the associated online teaching offered new learnings to the parents, bringing hope that STEM futures are possible for their children. Nevertheless, parents appeared to be lacking knowledge capital of understanding the Australian education system and the possibilities of education for their children. This is a hinderance —and something that non-CALD families may not share—when it comes to the provision of learning opportunities for their children.

Given the few studies in the area of socially-just STEM education opportunities for immigrant families and their children, the current findings are particularly important. Efforts to improve children's engagement in STEM can be complicated and difficult, usually characterized by the unparalleled challenges of shifting societal priorities, the changing needs of families (Kewalramani et al. 2020), and the ongoing political and government influences (Corrigan and Aikens 2020). Creating equitable opportunities for children to engage in STEM learning opportunities at an early age can inspire children to actively participate in experiences beyond their childhood years (Fleer 2020) and can be predictive of their future educational pursuits in STEM-related career choices (Archer et al. 2014; Cooper et al. 2018). This study provides a strong foundation toward understanding Indian parents' social and cultural capitals, and related beliefs and practices that can be employed in future research with CALD communities. This future research needs to develop our understanding of how children's interests in STEM can be nurtured from a teacher's and school's perspective.

12.8 Conclusion

The findings of this study suggest a need for further research into the provision of equitable opportunities of embedding STEM education in social, cultural, and political contexts and through more collaborative and team-based approaches such as school-parent and parent-teacher partnerships (Richards et al. 2019). Parents' beliefs and education experiences at home and in the local community, together with the school's provision of engagement opportunities, are the cornerstone for mediating and nurturing children's STEM capital. The use of resources, the presence of an equitable and socially-just learning and curriculum policy plan, and the factors that mediate parental and teacher practices, is unreported in the existing research. From the child's perspective, the development of competency and aptitude in STEM learning is also under researched.

This study is unique as it reported Indian parents' STEM beliefs and their views underpinning their social and cultural capitals. The parents expressed their positive beliefs toward the potential of their children to engage with, and learn about, STEM in the early years. From the stories shared in this research, it is recommended that policymakers and stakeholders should make sincere efforts to foster parent–school partnerships that support both the role of teachers and that of parents in enhancing children's lifelong STEM capital.

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Sarika Kewalramani is a Senior Lecturer in Education at Swinburne University of Technology. Her research strives to explore inclusive STEM teaching and learning strategies by understanding the needs/barriers faced by teachers while working with students who have additional needs (e.g., EAL, language delays, Autism, ADHD) and how they can improve students' learning outcomes. Sarika's specialist expertise is in STEM education and pedagogical practices which is a pathway for cultivating children's quality educational opportunities. Her research expertise also resides in conceptualising teachers' understandings of the nexus between creative STEM-based play and using technologies in their teaching and leadership practices and curate educational programs in ways that promote students learning and development. Through her research, she provides exemplars of evidence-based teaching practices to meaningfully integrate technologies (e.g., robotics, the internet of toys and artificially intelligent toys, game-based learning) in developmentally appropriate ways to progress for example disadvantaged students' language, numeracy, computational thinking and problem-solving skills. Her work is recognised internationally; she is the founder of the "All Inclusive Robotics" (AIR) teacher professional learning program funded by the Victorian Department of Training, School Readiness Funding unit. Sarika works very closely with teachers, early learning centre directors/principals, community stakeholders, and policymakers (such as OECD, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia MOE, Vietnam MOET) in understanding the future needs and pedagogical ways for integrating technologies in STEM education. She has a comprehensive understanding of best practice evidence-based initiatives for curriculum development—right from conception to implementation within the PreK-12 private and public schooling sectors.

Associate Professor Gillian Kidman is from Monash University, Australia. She is a Science Educator, has research and teaching interests in the science and mathematics disciplines. Gillian is particularly interested in inquiry-based processes, and the potential inquiry has for the integration of science and mathematics with other disciplines. She is currently working on the transdisciplinary nature of STEM inquiry with those who work in STEM careers as well as STEM teachers. Gillian's work is transcultural and she regularly works with Indigenous teachers and students, as well as with the ASEAN countries Ministries of Education in the field of STEM education. Gillian's research, teaching and curriculum design is award winning at both the State and National levels, and she was a Writer and Senior Advisor of the Australian Curriculum: Science, and Australian Curriculum: Biology. Her specific contributions are in the Science Inquiry Skills strand of the curriculum.

13 Identity and Intersectional Responsive Pedagogy in Higher Education: Insights from Two Locations in Regional and Urban Australia

Anitra Goriss-Hunter, Verity Archer, and James Arvanitakis

Abstract

In this chapter, we investigate the ways in which academics' identity factors can impact their work experiences and pedagogies in two Australian tertiary institutions. While there is a body of literature that interrogates the concept of diversity in higher education, most of the research focuses on diverse student populations rather than examining academic diversity. Current research does not explore in depth the ways in which intersections of identity factors such as gender, race, class, and able-bodiedness might impact academics' experiences in the chiefly middle-class-institutions that comprise the Australian Higher Education landscape. The authors employed a mixed methods approach. To collect data for the project, we constructed an anonymous online Qualtrics survey and invited participation from academics working at one regional and one urban university. The survey consisted of a mixture of open and closed questions concerning the relationship between identity and teaching approaches within universities. Responses were coded, and common themes were examined by the researchers using an intersectional approach. The survey findings reveal that academics who identify as equity group members see these identities as a strength in teaching and interactions with students, however, these identities sometimes give rise to tensions with colleagues and can be seen as a barrier to career progression.

Keywords

Diversity · Higher education · Intersectional responsive pedagogy

Author Positioning Statements

Anitra: My varied experiences as a first in family, working-class woman of color in chiefly middle-class education settings led to a desire to seek out and promote opportunities for inclusion, equity, and social justice for students and colleagues. The study reported in this chapter is part of my ongoing attempt to promote further understanding of diversity in higher education and ways in which academics can move beyond deficit discourse in our teaching and research.

A. Goriss-Hunter (✉) · V. Archer
Institute of Education, Arts and Community, Federation University Australia, Ballarat, Australia
e-mail: a.goriss-hunter@federation.edu.au

V. Archer
e-mail: v.archer@federation.edu.au

J. Arvanitakis
Institute for Culture and Society, Western Sydney University, Parramatta, Australia
e-mail: J.Arvanitakis@westernsydney.edu.au

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Verity: I grew up in a working-class family, in a de-industrialized regional community, with high rates of unemployment, on the North-West Coast of Tasmania. My experiences and ongoing connections with my home community have fueled my passion for equity in education and my ability to connect with students from similar backgrounds. In my teaching, I encourage students to draw on lived experience and to challenge academic constructs that neglect the suppressed knowledges of disadvantaged people.

James: As a first in family, working-class academic from migrant parents, I have attempted to leverage my experiences as a way of understanding and connecting with students from diverse backgrounds. With many colleagues, however, I have often felt that such a background is something to hide and feed my imposter syndrome. Working with this research team as part of writing for this volume, it has confirmed the importance of learning from each other and ensuring such experiences are viewed as strengths across the sector.

13.1 Introduction

There is a significant history of discussion around the concept of diversity in the higher education sector (Coates et al. 2009; Edwards and McMillan 2015) and a consensus among government, education institutions, and community stakeholders that diversity is advantageous to universities and other institutions (Edwards and McMillan 2015; Nieuwenhuis et al. 2019). However, as Binns (2019) argues, the focus of these discussions tends to center on diverse student populations, leaving notions of diversity among academics largely unexamined. Existing research does not examine in any depth, the ways in which a range of academics' identity factors might intersect and what impact these intersections might have on an academic's concept of identity personally and professionally. This chapter explores academic diversity at two Australian universities—one regional and one urban—and examines the relationship between United Nations (2015) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and tertiary educators' identity and their workplace experiences and practices. While it is a small-scale study with 55 respondents, strong commonalities emerged from the data as participants in both universities identified with a number of equity factors. From their identification with a range of identity factors, all participants registered a keen interest in working toward reducing inequality at domestic and international levels (SDG10) as well as promoting equitable and quality education within and beyond the university (SDG4). Gender equality (SDG5) was also a factor in each of the themes analyzed—career trajectory, interactions with colleagues, and teaching approaches.

In this chapter, we investigate diversity among academics and the ways in which intersectional identity factors might interact with workplace experiences and teaching approaches in different contexts. To achieve this, the researchers used a framework of qualitative research as well as socio-cultural theory (Binns 2019; Bourdieu 1977) and what we are calling an intersectional responsive pedagogy that identifies intersections of identity factors and responds with a considered blend of constructivist and inclusive teaching approaches.

To collect data for the project, we constructed an online Qualtrics survey and invited participation from academics working at one regional and one urban university. Ethics approval was received from the university human research ethics committee (approval number B18-026). Participants were able to withdraw from the survey at any time if they did not feel comfortable with the questions asked. The survey consisted of a mixture of open and closed questions concerning academics' self-identification and also the relationship between identity and teaching approaches within universities. Responses were coded, and common themes were examined by the researchers using an intersectional approach.

This chapter will interrogate the findings of the survey. From this investigation, the authors explore intersections of academics' identity factors and how these impact experiences within the

workplace, including relationships with colleagues, managers, and students. It also investigates how these might inform academics' pedagogies and resulting commonalities among these teaching practices. We contend that non-typical identities still give rise to tensions within university settings which tend to be experienced at the level of workplace interactions and relationships with management. Our research shows that greater emphasis needs to be placed on pursuing SDGs 4, 5, and 10 in higher education workplaces. However, the study findings demonstrate that diversity, and in particular, identification with equity groups, is ultimately a strength when it comes to university teaching.

13.2 Literature Review

In both current literature and practice, SDGs 4 and 5 are highlighted in the globally mandated practices of inclusion and inclusive teaching pedagogies to capture students who are increasingly from a variety of social, educational, and cultural backgrounds. However, higher education institutions remain predominantly middle-class mainstream learning environments (Binns 2019; Scandone 2021). Literature in this field concerning the experiences of academics who identify as outside the middle-class mainstream is increasing in number and has historically been autobiographically based (Brook and Michell 2012; Michell et al. 2015; Mazurek 2009; Ryan and Sackrey 1996). Our work seeks to engage with intersectional disadvantages in academia present in notable works such as those of bell Hooks (1994, 2003) and in autobiographical collections *Bread and Roses* (Michell et al. 2015) and *This Fine Place* (Dews 1995). In both of these collections, autobiographical chapters reveal the ways in which identities combine to produce unique experiences, advantages, and disadvantages.

Current research (Binns 2019; Crew 2020; Walkerdine 2021; Waterfield et al. 2019) identifies discrepancies between increasingly diverse academic staff and middle-class workplace milieu as producing a mismatch, at times, between student and academic and also between academic and institutional expectations. Crew (2020) argues that as the academy is predominantly a middle-class institution, scholars who come from social, educational, and cultural backgrounds outside this class sometimes feel as though they have to negotiate obstacles and challenges in their professional life that their middle-class counterparts do not encounter. Binns (2019) identified three main responses to working in the academy demonstrated by academics depending on the level to which they were able to reconcile their self-identified working-class origins with their current middle-class occupation. The first group relinquished their original working-class identity to adopt a middle-class one. In the second group, their identification lays between working-class and middle-class orientations. The third group perceived themselves to be working class and stated that they "found the process of social mobility to be painful" (Binns 2019, p. 106).

Drawing on Bourdieu's (1977) concept of capital/s as collections of elements or resources that are acquired through one's membership of a social class, Binns (2019) states that academics in the second and third groups developed a "cleft habitus" and were haunted by "ghosts of habitus" (p. 107). For these academics, the process of social mobility created a division between their working-class habitus and middle-class habitus. Although these academics described advantages concerning increases in economic and cultural capital upon moving from working-class origins to middle-class career, at the same time, they felt uncertain and self-conscious about their social mobility.

Although the three groups experienced social mobility in different ways, some experiences were common to the majority of academics interviewed. Most of the academics in Binns' (2019) study commented that they felt uncomfortable when attempting to network due to what was perceived as the contrived and calculated nature of the activities. Similarly, the academics in that study were generally unwilling to move to an "elite" university as they considered that this would assist with career advancement but would not necessarily promote their personal welfare. In addition, the academics stated that they could

immediately identify students from working-class backgrounds and develop connections with these students to assist them with their university studies. Binns (2019) clearly states that it is not only academics from working-class backgrounds who can identify and work with a range of students from non-traditional backgrounds. Alongside academics Walkerdine (2021) and Waterfield (2019), Binns (2019) advocates for increased diversification of academia, opening up space for further research into diversity within higher education.

This is in keeping with a knowledge democracy approach to education (Hall 2014) which values experiential knowledge held by equity groups and aims to develop new knowledges incorporating marginalized voices. As noted by Katsarou and Sipitanos (2019), universities have been central to the dispossession of knowledge throughout history. Knowledges gained from the experience of marginalization are particularly prone to "reworking" as educators have historically attempted to "build student capacity" to engage with middle class, white Western, heteronormative, and other dominant ways of seeing the world. Alternatively, a *Knowledge Democracy* approach would entail teaching approaches "that try to capture multiple and polyvocal perspectives, turning students into ethnographers of their own communities' cultures and producers of local knowledge" (Katsarou and Sipitanos 2019, pp. 113–114). In this chapter, it is argued that many educators, themselves, are in possession of undervalued polyvocal perspectives drawn from marginalization, and these identities are a neglected element in the pursuit of Knowledge Democracy in education. We therefore seek to make a contribution to this emerging field of research by removing the somewhat artificial barrier between the educator and non-traditional forms of knowledge.

We also note the need for an expansion of research on diversity in higher education, particularly incorporating the migrant experience of academia present in autobiographical works such as Tsolidids (2015) and Ngo (2015). There is a significant body of literature focusing on the work conditions and career progressions of academic women in Australia (see for example, Lipton 2017; Ovseiko et al. 2017; White 2013), including analysis of why initiatives designed as equity measures have limited impact and sometimes unintended consequences. However, apart from the work of Wallace (2006), Thomas et al. (2019), and Goriss-Hunter and White (2021), there has been little research on the careers of professional women and female academics working in the growth area of regional Australian universities. Sorely needed is further investigation of the Indigenous experience building upon work such as Moreton-Robinson's (2000) *Talkin' up to the white woman*; Kevin Lowe's writing on Aboriginal education (see for example Lowe 2021); Bin-Sallik's (2000) *Aboriginal women by degrees*; and publications from the Indigenist research reform movement that has been active particularly in the area of Indigenous health and welfare in Australia and globally (Rigney 2006).

13.3 Methodology

The data gathered and used for this chapter represents the first stage of a multi-phase project which involves a mixed methods approach.

13.3.1 Participants

The participants in this study were academics employed at two Australian universities: a regional and an urban tertiary institution. One of the universities is located in one of the most disadvantaged, low-socioeconomic (SES) regions in Australia. The other university is a multicultural institution with campuses also situated in low-SES areas. Both universities have extremely diverse student populations with higher than average percentages of First in Family (FiF), low SES, and international students.

Participants were recruited via emails sent to staff and advertisements in university daily newsletters. Administrative staff sent the recruitment emails to all staff who were employed in a full-time, part-time, fixed contract, or casual/sessional capacity at both universities on behalf

of the researchers. Respondents were a mix of early career researchers through to senior leadership. They had varying degrees of experience with administration and leadership duties. The participants taught across a range of discipline areas including English literature, humanities, politics, and philosophy. As this group of academics had a variety of work experiences regarding leadership and teaching, the researchers were able to draw on a broad representation of academics' thoughts and feelings concerning their identity factors and how they might influence their work in the academy.

To ensure anonymity while also providing some identity factor detail, some acronyms have been used after quotes from participants. These acronyms are as follows: WCB—working-class background, MCB—middle-class background, LMCB—lower middle-class background, UMCB—upper middle-class background, FiF—First in Family, W—identifies as a woman, M—identifies as a man, G—identifies as genderfluid. In addition, the following acronyms are used in the chapter: CALD—culturally and linguistically diverse—and LGBTQIA+-lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual, and the + represents sexual identities outside heteronormative identifications.

This research collected qualitative data to answer the following research questions:

1. What role does the self-identified social class, gender, racial, and ethnic identity of academics play within university settings?
2. Does an academic's self-reported background affect their pedagogical approaches?
3. How might the findings of the project be transferred to other discipline areas in the higher education sector?

13.3.2 Procedure

Academics participated in an anonymous online Qualtrics survey consisting of 34 questions. The survey was broken into three sections: the first relating to identity, the second to workplace experiences, and the third to pedagogical approaches. The questions were designed to elicit information about participants' identification with a range of identity factors and comprised closed questions and open questions inviting a written response.

Our survey elicited 55 valid responses. As the survey-enabled respondents to skip questions, the response rate for each question varied slightly; with one or two responders choosing not to answer a question. Future research may explore differences between the regional and urban institutions, but this is beyond the scope of the current analysis reported in this chapter.

The researchers analyzed the online survey data and coded responses by theme, with common themes examined using an intersectional approach. Crenshaw's (1989) notion of intersectionality is used in three ways in this chapter. First, it is employed to recognize academics' multiple overlapping identity characteristics. Second, it is used to analyze these intersections in terms of power relations, discrimination, and privilege to investigate the complexities of the issues that may be encountered by academics who identify with non-typical identity categorizations. Third, intersectionality forms part of the framework of the academics' teaching approaches that draws on their own experience of non-typical identifications as well as constructivist and inclusive teaching approaches to engage diverse learners who may have similar identifications. The authors call these teaching approaches the Intersectional Responsive Pedagogy.

From the survey responses, data was generated from which the researchers could draw a number of initial findings concerning the research questions and identified themes. Direct quotes from respondents were used to support reported findings on academics' discussion of their own identity factors and pedagogies.

The key thematic areas for discussion—interactions with colleagues, career pathways, and pedagogies—are outlined later in the chapter.

13.4 Findings/Discussion

Due to their location in disadvantaged areas of Australia, the two universities involved in this research may have more diverse academics than

some of the Group of Eight (GO8) universities—currently, the leading Australian research-intensive tertiary institutions. Both universities are located in low-socioeconomic areas—one in a regional location and the other in an urban area. The demographics of both institutions demonstrate student and staff diversity. Staff demographics show a diversity concerning cultural background but support national and international trends regarding gender and employment. Anecdotally, academic staff have indicated that they identify as having a range of cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Also, anecdotally, a significant proportion of staff identify as First in Family (FiF). However, female employees are concentrated in the lower tiers of academic employment with only a few women joining senior management. Consequently, there are proportionally more male than female staff in senior leadership positions. With this kind of diversity in student and staff demographics, the universities have built reputations on meeting the needs of diverse learners. Given the institutions' locations, student cohorts, and the institutional orientation, it is likely that these kinds of universities will attract staff from a range of equity groups.

An intersectional approach to examining the data was important as respondents often focused on one or two identity factors including race, gender, class, able-bodiedness, and disability that they felt had impacted on their experience of working within a university. Within the three major theme areas, the SDGs of quality education (4), gender equality (5), and reduced inequalities (10) all intersect in different ways. Although intersections of the three SDGs are present in each theme area, one of the SDGs has usually emerged as prevalent in the analysis. This speaks to the complexities of identification with multiple identity factors, and how one factor may predominate in different contexts.

13.4.1 Career Trajectory

Our study extended Binns' (2019) research findings that working-class academics were drawn to work in universities where there was a significant percentage of working-class students. We found that academics with a number of interconnected equity identity factors accepted positions in universities where there was a significant percentage of students who had similar interconnections of identity characteristics. In addition, the study supported research about women's careers in higher education (Goriss-Hunter and White 2021; Lipton 2017), where it was clear that gender equity factors were impeding their career trajectory. The findings emphasize the importance of working to fulfill SDG5—"achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls" and SDG10—"reduce inequality in and among countries" (UN 2015). This adds to the call for the further investigation and development of equity measures as stated in SDGs that produce genuine change.

We asked our respondents to identify the number of years they had been employed as an academic and their current level of employment with the intention of cross referencing this with the information we had about other identity factors, such as class background, FiF identity, as well as ethnic identity, carer status, and gender and sexuality identity. We wanted to determine whether there was any relationship between career trajectory and identity. Of our 12 level D (Associate Professor) and E (Professor) respondents, five indicated they were from a working-class background (WCB), five from a middle-class background (MCB), one did not answer the question, and one indicated that they did not relate to the concept. In addition, four indicated that they were FiF, seven indicated that they were not, and one did not provide an answer. When considering employment at levels A (Associate Lecturer) and B (Lecturer), class identification was evenly spread across WCB and MCB identifying academics, but when we examined the levels at which most WCB respondents were employed, there was a stronger likelihood of these participants being employed at level A or B rather than at C (Senior Lecturer), D or E levels. Of our working-class participants, including those who identified as variations of working class such as "working middle class", six were employed at level A, nine at level B (including

one respondent identifying as working middle class), four at level C (including one identifying as working middle class), three at level D (including one identifying as lower class, which we have included in the working-class category), and two at level E. Two WCB participants did not identify their academic level and indicated that their employment was sessional. We then investigated the number of years our respondents had spent as academics, cross referencing this with academic level and identified class background. For our participants who had been employed as academics for 10+ years, we found that it was more likely for those identifying as WCB to be still situated in the early career levels A and B, then it was for academics of 10+ years identifying as MCB. Ten of our level A and B respondents had been in academic roles for 10+ years, three identified as MCB, six as WCB, and one indicated that she did not relate to the concept.

Eight of our 12 level D and E respondents listed at least one parent/caregiver with an occupation requiring university education. When considering responses to our question "Do you identify as a carer"? and our follow-on question "if you answered yes to this question, for whom do you provide care"? it emerged that our level D and E respondents were generally not carers. Ten of our 12 respondents answered "no, not a carer", while two answered "yes, primary carer" and indicated that they cared for a child/children. Primary carers were more likely to be situated at level B than at any other level, with eight of our 18 primary carers situated at this level. Four primary carers were situated at level A, four at level C, one at level D, and one at level E.

Overall, 41 participants identified as being women, 13 as being men, and 1 as genderfluid. Eight of our 12 level D and E respondents identified as "woman" and four as "man" reflecting our higher response rate from those identifying as "woman". Nine of 12 level A respondents identified as "woman" and three as "man". Of 22 level B participants one identified as "genderfluid", 17 identified as "woman", and four identified as "man". Five of seven level C respondents identified as "woman" and two as "man". As mentioned previously, two sessional participants did not identify their academic employment level. Both identified as "woman". Ten of our 55 respondents identified with an ethnic background other than white-Anglo-Saxon. We cross referenced ethnic identity with employment level and found that the number of participants indicating a non-Anglo-Saxon/white European identity were represented at level D and E at roughly the same rate. Two out of 12 level D and E respondents indicated an identity other than Anglo-Saxon/white-European. One participant identifying with an ethnicity other than white-Anglo-Saxon was employed at level A, three at level B, and three at level C. One did not indicate a level of employment.

13.4.2 Identity and Interactions with Colleagues

In a similar vein to the first of the themes that emerged from the data, the second theme concerning the ways in which academics interacted with colleagues emphasized the importance of SDG10, whereby inequalities need to be reduced and in particular, SDG5 that refers to the empowerment of women and the promotion of gender equality. Through intersectional analysis of the data, it was revealed that some academics generally felt a lack of fit in the predominantly middle-class institution of the university due to a range of identity factors including class, race, gender, and disability. However, a closer intersectional analysis of the findings created a nuanced understanding of the different ways in which gender can figure in academics' narratives of caring duties, health, and disability.

After answering questions related to identity, we asked respondents to indicate whether any of these identity factors played a role in their interactions with colleagues. We received 55 responses to this question. Forty-one answered "yes", and 14 answered "no". WCB status did not appear to be a catalyst for a "yes" response. Of our WCB respondents, 17 answered that their identity played a role in interactions with colleagues while nine answered that it had not.

Among MCB participants, the proportion of "yes" respondents was much higher, with 23 of the 27 MCB participants responding "yes".

Supporting the literature, we found significant levels of cleft habitus and "imposter syndrome" among WCB identifying academics, which impacted their interactions with colleagues. This is evident in the following comments: "Academic culture is very middle/ruling class culture, and often colleagues talk of those people as if their colleagues come from the same backgrounds" (WCB, woman). "I seek out and feel most comfortable with colleagues of similar background. I tend to aspire to roles that are within my "scope" of expectation" (WCB, woman). "I am aware that some of my colleagues had a different path to university than me. Do I fit in?" (WCB, man). "I always feel like an imposter and am intimidated by those *real* academics" (WCB, man). "As a person from the country, and from a working-class background, sometimes I feel inadequate and a bit of a fraud as an academic because I have chosen not to move to another university in my job, have never worked in the city, and have deliberately chosen to stay in a regional university" (WCB, woman).

Some of the middle-class background (MCB) identifying respondents experienced a cleft habitus or imposter syndrome within the university environment. However, these MCB participants also identified as FiF to attend university suggesting that this, rather than class identity, was the source of the discomfort. One respondent stated: "I feel more in common with other colleagues who have similar backgrounds (grew up poor, in rural areas, first in family to go to university, particularly those who are from NZ)" (LMCB, woman). Another commented: "I identify with my students who are often from a similar background to me. Other staff look down on me because of my status" (MCB, woman).

Although class identification varied, a commonality throughout this theme was that all the respondents who identified cleft habitus or imposter syndrome also claimed FiF status.

Gender discrimination was also a theme within the responses. Six of the respondents who identified as "woman" mentioned gender. Five of the six participants who highlighted gender were primary carers, and all of those who highlighted gender exclusively were primary carers. In the following cases, gender was foregrounded exclusively by the participants, in spite of the respondents possessing other atypical identities within academia such as non-Anglo-Saxon identity or working-class background:

> Gender – the leadership in my school is male. In my four years at [my university], I have observed the same males holding onto positions of power (decision-making, including gatekeeping of school funding), despite restructuring that could have opened leadership opportunities for women. I have observed male colleagues moving into governance positions that they do not have expertise or track record of performance in while females have been passed over. (no class background listed, woman)

When respondents were asked to describe the disadvantages of their identity in an academic setting, the same respondent elaborated on their previous response:

> Gender again — have to work more strategically than many of my male counterparts, i.e., competency is often underestimated. An example is a key international university partner contacted me to communicate an important matter, and the males asked, "why would they contact you...?" — an absurd question when I had been working with the partners for four years and had established a strong relationship of trust! (no class background listed, woman)

Another respondent provided a very similar response, and in spite of possessing a number of atypical identity factors for an academic, named these other factors as positives and focused exclusively on gender as the only disadvantage of her identity in an academic setting:

> I'm very aware of myself as a female academic member of staff and the systemic gender inequities of many of the higher education institutions that I have worked for. My career has been impacted by gender bias on a number of levels, and the attitudes of (more often than not) male members of staff exhibits this bias… There are a lot of gender biases in higher education, and this has had an impact on my career, as well as my everyday experiences. (WCB, woman)

When asked, "how do these identity factors play a role in your day-to-day interactions with

colleagues"? one participant simply stated: "Sexism" (MCB, woman).

For other respondents, gender featured in the response to this question but was not represented as impacting negatively on their interactions with colleagues. Rather, it appeared to be observed as a feature of their approach to others or simply as something they were aware of: "Gender, age, level of education, and employment history impact the level and type of communication I have day to day" (WCB, woman). Another participant commented: "As an older woman, I am interested in fair play, discussions with staff when they come with problems, being referee—and similar activities" (MCB, woman). Yet another response to the question was: "Being a woman and being aware that [I] am living in a predominantly white, English-speaking, heteronormative society" (WCB, woman).

For others, caring responsibilities were highlighted exclusively and detached from gender. In one case, a respondent who identified as a "carer other than a primary carer" stated: "having a child with a disability impacts significantly on my ability to be available and work longer hours (which is an expectation at universities)" (MCB, man).

In spite of there being no pre-set question related to illness and disability in the survey, participants were given the opportunity to add anything else they felt had shaped their identity, and many highlighted illness and disability in their responses to this question. These respondents all foregrounded ableism within academia. Responses included the following: "My disability means I cannot come to campus as often as I would like and that I need accommodations for teaching" (MCB, woman); "I am always aware that I cannot engage at the same level because of my illness" (MCB, woman); and "academia is also incredibly ableist, and I am often forced to highlight the ableism I experience in everyday encounters" (WCB, woman).

Mental health also impacted on collegial relationships. Two of our participants indicated that social anxiety had been a major part of their interactions with colleagues and in the case of one respondent, prevented them from resolving conflicts with other staff members.

Of the ten academic respondents who identified as having ethnic heritage other than white/Anglo-Saxon, none specifically mentioned race or ethnicity as a factor in their interactions with colleagues. However, one participant who identified as Aboriginal stated: "I suspect that my colleagues feel my appointment is tokenistic and not won on merit… I have to work twice as hard to prove I am worthy to my colleagues despite my scholarly outputs and qualifications surpass theirs" (WCB, woman). It is reasonable to assume that this participant was referring to her Aboriginal heritage here, but the respondent also possessed other characteristics that can be described as atypical for an academic: identity as a woman, FiF, and working-class background.

One other participant indicated that they had negative interactions with colleagues because of their ethnic identity. This respondent was of white-European-identity and felt that their non-Australian identity was a barrier to career progression: "Some people are privileged in their academic trajectory in terms of citations and awards. Being White Australian also helped them go further in their career" (MCB, man).

When race and/or ethnicity were mentioned as impacting interactions with colleagues, this was not always negative, but their identity could cause confusion for typical white Australian academics. One academic who identified as *Hong Konger* stated:

> My overseas background gives me social networks outside Australia, so I have more overseas collaborative research than my colleagues. Thus, whenever there is anything related to *international*, ranged from teaching to admin or research, I would be invited. My "Asian" identity also gave me opportunities to review papers about Asian and Chinese crimes… I regard myself as "Hong Konger" rather than "Chinese", as we are different from Mainlanders. However, sometimes others see me as Chinese and expected that I would know everything about China. Sometimes, I feel very embarrassed when I was invited to apply for Chinese research funding cos Hong Konger was excluded. (WCB, woman)

13.5 Intersectional Responsive Pedagogy

Despite policies and practices that are implemented to reduce inequalities (SDG10), achieve gender equality (SDG5), and enable inclusive and equitable quality education for all (SDG4), a range of identity factors including low-socioeconomic status (SES), cultural background, ethnicity, and gender remain as determinants for academic achievement at university (Meinck and Brese 2019; Nieuwenhuis et al. 2019; OECD 2020; Stephens et al. 2012). To effectively teach students with a variety of intersecting identity factors and to ensure access to learning for diverse student cohorts, the academics in this study drew on their own lived experiences, and their teaching philosophies were based on blended approaches that combined constructivist and inclusive pedagogies.

Constructivist learning theory conceptualizes learning as an active and social process where the learner draws on their own experiences to create new knowledge and understanding (Bada and Olusegun 2015; Bruner 1961; Vygotsky 1962). A number of constructivist teaching approaches have developed that focus on the importance of designing curriculum and learning experiences that are social, authentic, purposeful, relevant, and active or "hands on" (Bada and Olusegun 2015).

Inclusive education has been a contested term that once referred solely to students with a disability but now encompasses a range of equity factors (Messiou 2017). Opertti et al. (2014) argue that inclusive education encompasses four main elements that demonstrate how thinking about inclusion has evolved over time: human rights (1948–); special needs (1990–); equity groups (2000–); and changing education systems (2005–). While an emphasis on special needs, and disability has traditionally been considered to be the focus of inclusive education, Opertti et al.'s (2014) typology demonstrates that inclusion can be thought about in different terms by a range of theorists, practitioners, and stakeholders. The fundamental principle of inclusive education and teaching is that it is focused on all learners and their "presence, participation, and achievement" (Ainscow et al. 2006, p. 25). To ensure that all of their diverse student cohorts engage with their university studies, the academics in this research project have recognized different combinations of student identity factors and brought together constructivist and inclusive principles of learning and teaching into what the authors call Intersectional Responsive Pedagogy.

Examination of the data demonstrated a strong reliance on constructivist pedagogies including experiential learning, discursive teaching, and scaffolding as ways of ensuring student-centered teaching approaches that encouraged all students to draw on prior knowledge and make their own connections with unit topics and content. The authors argue that constructivist pedagogies are relevant and appropriate when educators are planning their teaching and considering their students in a variety of contexts including cultural, racial, gender, and socioeconomic diversity as well as disability. The construction of new knowledges from diverse student cohorts fits with the notion of knowledge democracy, whereby different types of knowledge are valued and disseminated as well as employed as a vehicle for promoting social justice.

The findings identified significant cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity combined with high proportions of students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, FiF domestic, and international students. For example, one participant wrote:

> My student cohort is culturally and linguistically diverse. Each year is slightly different in regard to numbers from various backgrounds, but over a third of students are international, and domestic students were either born overseas or first generation Australians, with only a handful not in those categories. This year I have many Arabic speaking students with Lebanese heritage (both muslim and non muslim), international students from India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Hong Kong, South America (Brazil, Chile), Africa (Kenya, Zimbabwe), and other Middle Eastern heritage, and white Australians (small percentage). Gender is predominately female, with only about 5 out of 100 students being male. (MCB, woman)

Although the majority of participants in the study stated that the student cohorts they taught were diverse, the extent of this diversity varied over the year and often depended on the subject matter: "I think my students are a mix of origins because the units I teach cut across several courses which tend to attract different groups" (LMCB, woman). Conventional gender enrollment patterns were also identified in several discipline areas including Information Technology and nursing. One participant observed that "it varies between classes. IT obviously has a strong gender bias among students, so many classes might be 80–90% male, but not always—some of the masters levels courses are much closer to 50:50. A lot of my courses have a very substantial international cohort, particularly Indian, for whom English is not their first language" (WCB, woman).

Commenting on the ways in which this diversity can impact personal lives and university careers, one participant stated that their students were "mostly first and second generation migrants of CALD [culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds]. Most are working class and work almost as many hours as they spend studying. Poverty impacts on particular individuals' low achievement …. We have very few Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, but some Pasifika. Pasifika students seem to work to support their families and this affects their achievement" (WCB, woman).

Most comments focused on ethnic, class, and cultural and linguistic diversity. However, it was noted that while more students identified as LGBTQIA+, relatively few were open about this identity factor. One academic stated: "This year, I have noticed more students being more open about having a LGBTQIA+ identity, but it does seem like something they must be brave about. I am not sure about how supported and safe they feel" (WCB, woman).

To meet the learning needs of these diverse student cohorts, academics drew on their knowledge of their students' intersecting identity factors and employed combinations of constructivist and inclusive teaching approaches. These pedagogies were not directly named as constructivist approaches, but they upheld principles of constructivism as the teachers facilitated learning by actively engaging learners in the construction of their own knowledge. Others brought to the fore the principles of knowledge democracy. An important aspect of respondents' teaching practices was the tendency to frame the experiential knowledge of both teachers and students as integral to the process of knowledge production and learning. Teachers and learners from diverse backgrounds worked collaboratively together to develop learning experiences and new knowledge.

13.6 Teaching Philosophy and What to Teach

Overall, academics drew on their understanding of their students' intersecting identity factors, acknowledging diversity, and used blends of constructivist and inclusive teaching principles to underpin their philosophy of teaching. Respondents wrote about the importance of "embracing diversity and teaching a passion for learning. It is not about the qualification it is about lifelong learning" (WCB, woman). In combination with constructivist and inclusive principles, teaching diverse learners emerged as a key theme with one typical statement from academics being that their teaching approaches could be described as "social constructive, we learn from experience, with peers, based on our own past experiences" (WCB, woman). Generally, it was considered important to assist students to draw on prior knowledge and maintain collaborative and cooperative learning experiences so students could work together to construct their own meanings and understandings of program material. There was a reliance on dialogic and discursive learning opportunities as learning was considered to be social, interactive, experiential, and a democratic process. Strong links to equity and social justice were found in an emphasis on inclusive teaching practices to ensure that every learner had access to learning as every learner mattered.

Most participants stated that they acted as a facilitator, drawing on their knowledge of their students' background and identity factors to tailor

course material to specific student groups and using examples that students would find relevant and relatable. Participants summed up these ideas with the following comments: "Teaching is about facilitating (and) sense-making for each individual. We learn from life and from each other" (UMCB, woman) and "combining theory with practical application. I have been involved mainly in experiential learning groups" (WCB, woman). Another respondent commented that "I am passionate about inclusive learning and experiential learning" (MCB, G).

Participants stated the importance of getting to know students, their backgrounds, and characteristics as their teaching philosophy foregrounded "relating to students and their work/life experiences—moving away from theory emphasis" (WCB, man). The study findings demonstrated that generally academics thought it important to "meet students where they are at—adjust according to their learning needs and the unit learning outcomes. I teach by workshop, which means that my classes are much more interactive than the tradition(al) lecture/tutorial model" (WCB, woman). Students' prior knowledge was deemed a vital resource to be drawn upon: "Students are here to be challenged and to learn but also bring their own experiences and knowledge. These need to be integrated for a complete and valuable university experience and career" (LMCB, woman). Student engagement and developing intrinsic motivation were two elements that were prevalent in the findings. For instance, one respondent commented:

> Students need to *want* to learn - encouraged by teacher enthusiasm - but also need non-stressful motivators to facilitate them to do the work that needs to be done. To me this means good content structure, the minimisation of deadlines, and the use of assessment tasks as hurdle tools to assist in learning. I would like my students to *want to do well* at assessments rather than *not want to do poorly.* (UMCB, man)

Other pivotal constructivist and student-centered approaches emerged from the data. Participants wrote about "scaffolding concepts so that students can understand and use them creatively in their own work" (MCB, woman). Academics also stated that they aimed to teach students through "dialogic process" (WCB, man) and "in a manner that promotes thought, lateral thinking and application" (WCB, man).

Some respondents wrote about employing a critical pedagogy that challenged students to interrogate their thinking on topics and linked theory with real-world examples. For instance:

> I approach teaching in methodological terms as a way to initiate a close reading practice through which students can challenge assumptions and open up critical possibilities within the texts, topics, debates, and examples they engage. The tenor of my lectures, tutorials, and seminars is exploratory rather than a priori explanatory… I work with ideas about identity and difference in the context of current events. These could be in the EU and/or in Australia. I tend to use material from both regions in my courses whether I am teaching in Europe or Australia. I think it's good for students to get this exposure to issues that are relevant to certain places. (MCB, woman)

One participant summed up their teaching approach as "ngurra nguru (I teach you, you teach me)" (UMCB, woman). Academics also incorporated elements of feminisms, social justice, and internationalization combined with a lens of critical thinking into their teaching philosophies. One respondent wrote that their teaching philosophy was "feminist—personal experience to the political facilitator of learning not deliverer of content" (no class background indicated, woman). Pedagogies that were underpinned by social justice and inclusive principles were evident in the following examples. One participant wrote that their teaching philosophy was "Freirian … I take a partnership approach to L&T—more a mentor" (WMCB, man). Another respondent emphasized their commitment to social justice and inclusive teaching in the comment:

> Every person has a right to an education. It is the role of the educator to aim to provide avenues to pursue that right. Education should not be a *one size fits all approach but* should explore and provide ways to peak a student's interest, which in turn will hopefully support them on their journey of discovery and growth. (WCB, woman)

Yet another participant wrote that: "I regard internationalization as an important aspect of

teaching; therefore, I always use overseas examples in teaching rather than just focus on Australian issues. I prefer a critical approach in teaching and encouraging students to think critically" (WCB, woman). Differentiating teaching approaches were acknowledged in the comment: "Each of us have unique ways of understanding and learning, and it is important as a facilitator of learning to find ways to cater" (MCB, woman).

In general, inclusive practices were linked with some form of constructivist "hands on" learning, the development of critical thinking, and a positive learning environment. For example, one respondent described their teaching philosophy as:

> Inclusive and supportive peer environment, Accessible knowledge, Contextualisation of theories, methodologies, current trends as much as possible, Creative practice methodologies, Non-conventional research outcomes, Hands-on Labs, active learning, Encouraging personal and professional development, Lots of individual assessments, System processes for ideation, creative development, production and review [sic]. (MCB, woman)

Another participant stated that "I want to develop the best ways to communicate concepts that are complicated and challenging, not just to the high-performing students, but to the bulk of students that I teach" (UMCB, woman). Another academic wrote: "I attempt to engage all students, regardless of individual differences, with the learning material in a way that has real-life applicability" (UMCB, woman).

The establishment of positive learning environments was considered important to lecturers so that they could effectively employ their blended constructivist and inclusive pedagogies. As one respondent stated: "having a sense of safe place to learn through being approachable and creating an environment where it is okay to not have the answers, make mistakes, disagree with concepts, me and classmates, and present ideas freely is also vital" (MCB, woman). Another participant commented:

> I like to create collaborative learning spaces as emphasised through student-centred teaching, which encourages student contributions, small group work, and promotes discourse with one another which maintains a focus on process - where personal experiences serve as legitimate sites of knowledge and consciousness raising. This in turn encourages personal reflection and self-awareness. (WCB, woman)

What was actually taught was often chiefly reliant on inheriting material from course descriptions, existing curriculum, and/or the decisions of unit coordinators and for a few academics, accrediting bodies. Even though a significant proportion of respondents derived their teaching material from existing sources, participants tended to employ an intersectional analysis of students' identity factors to ensure the unit content was relevant and meaningful to students as well as giving "real-life" examples. For instance, one academic wrote: "I am allocated specific agendas to teach and I tailor my teaching around those agendas. I also try to incorporate practical examples of how the material does and will affect them (students) in their endeavors and work life once they graduate" (WCB, man). Another academic stated that "I teach according to the lesson plan but also pick up on points that students may not understand. This can vary from group to group, and thus, this tends to direct the conversation" (LMCB, woman). A third academic commented that they would "follow tutorial plans developed by senior lecturer and amend according to class background and experience" (WCB, man).

Furthermore, participants contended that their decisions concerning what to teach and their teaching approaches were often grounded in the knowledge that their students often preferred experiential learning and focused on gaining skills to enable them to achieve their aspirations concerning work. For instance, one respondent wrote that:

> I know that my students are mostly interested in learning practical knowledge and skills that they can take to the workplace. We tend to push them to learn the theory, but their interest is in its application. They want to improve their own financial circumstances by using university as a stepping stone towards higher-paid and professional work. I therefore focus a lot on trying to embed the theoretical understandings within a framework of application in professional work contexts. (WCB, woman)

13.7 Conclusion

From our study, nuanced understandings emerged of the ways in which the UN Sustainable Development Goals of quality education (4), gender equality (5), and reducing inequalities (10) are critically important for contemporary global cultures. These understandings are supported by current literature. For, in spite of measures in place that attempt to reduce inequalities, attain gender equality, and enable quality education for all, research reveals that certain identity factors—low-socioeconomic status (SES), cultural background, ethnicity, and gender—are still predictors of academic university achievement (Meinck and Brese 2019; Nieuwenhuis et al. 2019; OECD 2020; Stephens et al. 2012). Expanding on Binns' (2019) research, the authors argued that academics with non-typical identity factors are more likely to choose to work with university students with similar identifications.

To pursue the goals of quality education, gender equality, and the reduction of inequalities, academics in our study employed what we have called Intersectional Responsive Pedagogies to teach students with a number of intersecting identity factors and to ensure learning for all. In doing so, they drew upon a wealth of knowledge and understanding of a diverse range of experiences outside the traditional middle-class university environment to connect with their students along similar experiential lines. Drawing on these skills and knowledge bases, the academics employed Intersectional Responsive Pedagogies, combining constructivist and inclusive teaching approaches, to engage diverse student cohorts in learning. The findings of our study demonstrate that these academics carry out important and timely work in pursuing the UN Sustainable Development Goals of ensuring equity, equality, and high-quality teaching and learning. Academics' thoughtful and innovative blends of constructivist and inclusive teaching approaches fueled by understandings of intersecting non-typical identifications demonstrated that diversity is important for university educators and students. Ultimately, difference was perceived to be at the base of some tensions concerning academics' interactions with colleagues and career trajectories, but in terms of teaching and learning, it was extremely beneficial for both educators and students.

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Anitra Goriss-Hunter is the Director, Learning and Teaching and a Senior Lecturer at Federation University Australia. Her research and teaching focuses on gender and education, inclusion, and pre-service teacher (PSTs) education. Anitra was awarded the prestigious Australian Women's and Gender Studies Association award for most outstanding Ph.D. thesis. Anitra's research investigates women's careers in Higher Education; ways to improve female participation in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education; and, the development of inclusive teaching approaches that offer authentic learning experiences for PSTs. Anitra's contribution in the last field was recognized when she was awarded the Federation University Vice-Chancellor's Award—Citation for Outstanding Contribution to Student Learning 2020.

Verity Archer is a Lecturer in Community and Human Services at Federation University. She has a Ph.D. in History from the Australian National University. She writes about the history of welfare, class and poverty in Australia and has authored peer-reviewed articles for Australian and international journals in the fields of History, Politics, Cultural Studies and Sociology. She is a past winner of the Bob Gollan Award for Labour History, The University of Melbourne Williamson Fellowship and the Australian Political Science Association (APSA) Ph.D. Award for her work on the Australian dole bludger.

Professor James Arvanitakis is Executive Director of the Australian American Fulbright Commission and Adjunct Professor at the Institute for Culture and Society at Western Sydney University. Previously he held the position of Pro Vice Chancellor (Research and Graduate Studies) at Western Sydney University. James was also the founding Head of The Academy at Western Sydney University that received an Australian Financial Review higher education excellence award (2016) and the Western Sydney Leadership Dialogue Excellence in Education Award (2017). James is internationally recognised for his innovative teaching style and was the recipient of the Prime Minister's University Teacher of the Year Award in 2012 and an Eminent Researcher Award from the Australia India Education Council in 2015. In 2017 he was appointed a Research Fellow of the Australian India Institute and sits on the Australian Indian Education Working Party. His research areas include citizenship, resilience, piracy and the future of universities. James has authored over 100 articles in his latest book is an edited collection titled Teaching and Learning in Higher Education in India and Australia (2019) published by Routledge.

Part III

Disrupting Mainstream Education Through Capacity Building

Implementing Inclusive Pedagogies: What Regular Primary Classroom Teachers Know and Do

14

Moya Elvey and Jenene Burke

Abstract

Ensuring that all students have access to learning in an inclusive classroom requires the application of complex and highly skilled craft knowledge by the classroom teacher. Teacher skills and attitudes, the pedagogical strategies they adopt, and the curriculum they teach are critical factors in ensuring inclusive and equitable practices are embedded in education systems. This chapter is concerned with teacher craft knowledge in relation to teaching students with impairments in inclusive classrooms. In this chapter, the teaching practices and craft knowledge of a selected group of eight practicing primary school teachers in the state of Victoria, Australia, will be examined against eight strands of inclusive teaching practice identified by the authors to interrogate the actions, beliefs, and practices that assisted the teachers in implementing inclusive education in their classrooms. When the strands are entwined, they represent a teacher's holistic praxis. The strategies that the research participants used to support students with diverse needs, particularly strategies that had the potential to enhance the learning of all students, will be explored. Rather than focus on a lack of action regarding the implementation of inclusive education, the chapter will develop understanding about *what works* and identify and interrogate how inclusive practices are enacted by classroom teachers.

Keywords

Inclusive education · Teacher craft knowledge · Inclusion · Pedagogy · Diverse learners · Differentiated instruction

Author Positioning Statements

I am **Moya**, a registered primary teacher. I have over 30 years' experience working in public primary schools, many of them located in small rural communities. I am passionate about inclusive education, about access, equity, and the provision of quality teaching and learning for all students. My classroom experiences, observations, interactions, and efforts to cater for diverse student needs provided the motivation for my further studies (firstly, a Master of Special Education and subsequently a Doctor of Philosophy).

My name is **Jenene**. After I started teaching more than 40 years ago, I became acutely aware that a one-size-fits-all approach to teaching did not cater for student diversity in my classroom.

M. Elvey · J. Burke (✉)
Institute of Education, Arts and Community, Federation University Australia, Ballarat, Australia
e-mail: js.burke@federation.edu.au

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I experimented with pedagogies that capitalised on the strengths of my students and allowed them to experience success. Later I identified the concept of inclusive education which provided a frame of reference for my work as an academic in education.

14.1 Introduction

Regular classroom teachers fundamentally and routinely encounter student diversity. To ensure that all students have access to learning in an inclusive classroom the application of complex and highly skilled craft knowledge by the classroom teacher is essential (Florian and Black-Hawkins 2011). Inclusive education is entrenched in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) *Quality Education* which seeks to "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" (UNESCO 2019). Access to effective inclusive education within the regular education system falls within this goal, which highlights that the principle of inclusion is far-reaching and applies to all students.

According to Ainscow, "scrutiny of the practice of what we sometimes call ordinary teachers provides the best starting point for understanding how classrooms can be made more inclusive" (Ainscow 1999, p. 5). While a school or system might adopt a policy of inclusion, the quality of teaching practice is dependent on the skill of individual teachers (Florian and Rouse 2009). This chapter will investigate how the craft knowledge of regular primary classroom teachers leads them to implement inclusive education for students with diverse needs. Regular primary classroom teachers are those working in a general education school setting with children typically aged between 5 and 12 years and who do not necessarily have a specific special education qualification. Qualitative data were captured through classroom observations and conversational interviews with the teachers. The chapter draws on a doctoral study (Elvey 2020) that investigated the craft knowledge of a small, selected group of primary teachers in the state of Victoria, Australia. The study was mainly concerned with teaching students with impairments and identified elements of inclusive practice that provided an overview of teacher knowledge and actions. Examples of strategies that the teachers used to support students with diverse needs, particularly strategies that had the potential to enhance the learning of all students in the classroom, were mapped against the identified elements of inclusive practice.

14.1.1 Disability Studies in Education

Theoretically, this work is positioned within Disability Studies in Education (DSE) in which the power structures that exclude people with impairments from and within education are challenged (Slee 2018)—in this chapter by "recognising and responding to individual needs while building institutional capacity to educate" learners (Slee 2018, p. 29). In a DSE perspective, conceptualisations of disability and impairment resist the individual deficit and defectiveness explanations. Consistent with the Social Model of Disability (Oliver 1990), disability is a social construction rather than an individual pathology, and therefore, the authors prefer to use the term *impairment* to refer to a person's functional limitation and the term *disability* to refer to the social imposition of restrictions of activity on people with impairments (Thomas 1999).

In Australia, the Disability Standards for Education 2005 (DSE) (Australian Government 2005) are designed to ensure participation and access in education and training for students with impairment and apply to all education providers. The standards explain the responsibilities of Australian education providers to avoid discrimination against those with an impairment under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA). In a recent review of the standards, four areas needing change were recognised. One of these, "strengthening the knowledge and capacity of educators and providers" (Australian

Government 2005) identified that many educators were not aware or were uninformed of their responsibilities under the DDA and that the educational experiences of students with impairments were enhanced when education providers had a good understanding of the standards and knew how to follow them.

As well as a general lack of awareness of responsibilities for inclusive education, some sources cast doubt over the capacity of the regular classroom teacher to effectively teach children with diagnosed impairments. Exclusion from (or within) school is more likely for these children (Slee 2018, p. 2). A dominant belief that students with impairments require segregated settings or educators with recognised knowledge (de Bruin 2020; UNESCO 2017) sits alongside the conviction that regular teachers do not have the skills, training, or expertise to cater for students with additional learning needs in mainstream classrooms (Ainscow 1999; Poed et al. 2020). This chapter attempts to challenge this view by examining the craft knowledge of practicing primary classroom teachers who work with diverse cohorts of children in regular classrooms.

Historically in Australia, teaching students with disabilities was considered to require specialist teaching knowledge, imparted in discrete special education teacher preparation courses and rarely in conventional teacher education degrees. Inclusive education is now considered a "core element" (Slee 2018, p. 3) of initial teacher education, as a requirement in all degrees through implementation of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (AITSL 2018), yet there is scant empirical evidence of the impact of this requirement on teacher practice. It is thought that teachers develop some of their craft knowledge through university coursework, but more specifically through applied classroom practice and interactions within school communities (Booth et al. 2003). For this reason, in the absence of evidence, the authors of this chapter have reservations about the quality and efficacy of practices being used in regular schools under the guise of inclusive education and subsequently modelled to pre-service teachers. This chapter relates to what the authors perceive as a need for ongoing investigation into teacher's knowledge, understanding, and practices that authentically support the implementation of inclusive education.

14.1.2 Inclusive Education

Prior to 2016, there was no definitive meaning for the term inclusive education; it was described as a "contentious term that lacks a tight conceptual focus" (Forlin et al. 2013, p. 5). Tirri and Lane (2017) distinguish between broad and narrow definitions. Broad definitions of inclusive education focus on "non-discriminatory, quality education for all" (p. 763). Narrow definitions tend to encompass specific groups, such as students with impairment, and have been associated more exclusively with special education and disability (Tirri and Laine 2017). SDG4 adopts a broad definition, as does the UNESCO Salamanca Statement (UNESCO 1994). Forlin et al. (2013) point out that in Australia inclusion has been considered a disability issue, evidenced by the fact that separate education for students with impairments is common across the country. The authors of this chapter agree that inclusion is broadly defined, yet the discussion of the data is focused predominantly on including disabled children in regular classrooms while embracing the notion that inclusive education involves all children, regardless of ability, gender, or cultural origin, being valued, respected, and provided with authentic and equal opportunities at school (Elvey 2020; Thomas and Loxley 2001). Adopting a broad definition, Slee (2018) describes inclusive education as both a "political aspiration and a methodology" (p. 9). Slee also notes that exclusion from education is more likely for "specific population cohorts" (p. 19), a matter that is core business for inclusive education:

> Inclusive education responds to educational underachievement and diminished social opportunities of vulnerable student identities—Indigenous and First Nations children, the girl child, children displaced by conflict or natural disasters, children

> from minority ethnic, religious or tribal groups, children living in poverty, traveller children, and children with disabilities. (Slee 2018, p. 6)

Forlin et al. (2013) recognise that the measurement or comparison of inclusion is a "complex equity issue" (p. 5). Inclusive education is closely interrelated with social justice (Baglieri et al. 2011; Slee 2018), equity, access, opportunity and rights (Forlin et al. 2013), and "seeks to increase access, presence, participation and success for all students in education" (Booth and Ainscow 2016, in Slee 2018, p. 6). Baglieri et al. (2011) describe three fundamental principles of inclusive education. First, inclusive education applies to all learners, rather than being confined to identified minority groups such as children with impairments. Second, learning experiences in schools need to be participatory and inclusive and are not just concerned about the physical location in which learners are placed, and third, democratic and social justice ideals are sought by probing the cultural practices of education. Inclusive education is a means to achieving an inclusive society (Baglieri and Shapiro 2017), or as simply put by Slee, "we want an inclusive world, so we must teach inclusively" (2018, p. 17).

14.1.3 Teacher Craft Knowledge

The development of inclusive classrooms requires "teachers who are knowledgeable, and who are able to employ a range of effective pedagogies that meet the needs of diverse student populations" (Carrington et al. 2012, p. 11). The skills and strategies that effective teachers use, their ability to respond to a range of abilities, interests, and backgrounds to maximise the learning and achievement of all their students are the same strategies that support inclusive classrooms (UNESCO 2009, 2017). Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011) use the term *teacher craft knowledge*, to refer to what teachers know and do that comprises their teaching practice. Rather than focus on lack of action regarding the implementation of inclusive education, the study by Elvey (2020), reported in this paper, sought to develop understanding about *what works*, to identify and interrogate how inclusive practices were enacted by classroom teachers. The practices used by each of the research participants in this study, that allowed them to know about and respond to the academic and social needs of all their students and embed classroom management strategies to support the development of an inclusive classroom culture, will be described in the chapter.

Inclusive education as a desirable and articulated goal is supported by legislation and policy, in multiple sources at international, national, state, and local level, such as the UN sustainable goals. Despite the growing recognition of inclusive education as a fundamental education principle, there is "little guidance about how an inclusive pedagogy should be enacted in a classroom setting" (Florian and Spratt 2013, p. 120).

14.2 A Framework for Inclusive Education: Identifying and Unravelling the Strands

The inclusive education literature reveals key frameworks that provide indicators and descriptors of inclusive pedagogies. Seeking guidance and support to identify and understand what constitutes inclusive teaching practice, Elvey (2020) extracted eight principles from three seminal references, Booth and Ainscow's (2002, 2011) *The Index for Inclusion*, Florian's (2014) *The Inclusive Pedagogical Approach in Action Framework,* and Tomlinson's (2014) descriptors of differentiated classrooms. An overview of each of these frameworks is as follows.

14.2.1 The Index for Inclusion (Booth and Ainscow 2002, 2011)

Developed by Booth and Ainscow in consultation with a group of colleagues (Ainscow 1999), *The Index for Inclusion* promoted student diversity as a rich resource for learning communities in Government schools in the United Kingdom

(UK) (Booth and Ainscow 2002, 2011). As Elvey (2020) points out:

> While *The Index for Inclusion* identifies evolving inclusive practice (what teachers do) as a critical component in the process of change and improvement to support the development of inclusive schools, Booth and Ainscow (2002, 2011) advocate that teaching practice needs be developed in conjunction with planned and sustained improvements in: the school culture; the development of shared inclusive beliefs, attitudes and values; and the development of policies that support and encourage the participation and learning of all students. (p. 24)

14.2.2 The Inclusive Pedagogical Approach in Action Framework (Florian 2014)

Acknowledging the challenges that researchers encounter in identifying and analysing the implementation of inclusive pedagogy, Florian and Black-Hawkins have worked independently and collaboratively to develop frameworks that provide guidance and support for researchers to inquire into inclusive education practices. The *Framework for Participation in Classrooms* (Florian and Black-Hawkins 2011) is evidence-based and guides observations of inclusive pedagogy, so that researchers can document and interrogate "what teachers 'do', 'know' and 'believe', in terms of their inclusive classroom practices" (Florian and Black Hawkins 2011, p. 816). In building and refining this research tool, Florian subsequently developed the *Inclusive Pedagogical Approach in Action* (IPAA) framework (Florian 2014). The IPAA outlines the assumptions, actions, challenges, and evidence (teaching practices) that support the enactment of inclusive pedagogy. This framework relates to key principles of inclusive pedagogy in "an approach to teaching and learning that supports teachers to respond to individual differences between learners, but avoids the marginalization that can occur when some students are treated differently" (Florian 2014, p. 289).

14.2.3 Descriptors of Differentiated Classrooms (Tomlinson 2014)

Tomlinson (2014) emphasises the importance of respectfully responding to student diversity, to provide a "meaningful and empowering education for all individuals" (p. 181). Promoting differentiation as a philosophy, a set of principles and pivotal instructional strategies, educators are guided and supported to move towards teaching that nurtures individuals and meets them at their points of readiness and considers their interests and learning profile. Tomlinson (2014) explains:

> The logical flow of thought in a differentiated classroom is this: a nurturing environment encourages learning. Quality curriculum requires clear and compelling learning goals used in ways that engage students' minds and lead to understanding. Persistent formative assessment guides both teacher and students toward essential goals. Instruction works best when it's carefully aligned with content goals and fashioned to address the needs indicated by both formal and informal formative assessment. Classroom management must allow for both predictability and flexibility in order for a range of students to achieve essential goals. (pp. 4–5)

On closer inspection, these three sources cover similar concepts which Elvey (2020) compiled into a table for comparison (see Table 14.1).

Elvey (2020) revealed eight consistent elements from this process. The authors of this paper advance the notion that the elements can serve as *strands* of inclusive teaching practice and that in adopting inclusive practices teachers draw separately or simultaneously from some or all the identified strands, which are entwined and interconnected in their theoretically grounded teacher actions—often referred to as praxis. In this chapter, the strands are briefly disentangled (see Fig. 14.1 Strands of inclusive teaching practice) and each one used to provide an example of pedagogical evidence (Florian 2014) from the research data, before being entwined again to provide a broad overview of the teacher's craft knowledge. The eight strands are: Strand 1 Classroom planning; Strand 2 Student engagement; Strand 3 Valuing diversity; Strand 4

Table 14.1 Inclusive classroom practices

	The index for inclusion: indicators of evolving inclusive practice (Booth and Ainscow 2002)	Differentiated classrooms (Tomlinson 2014)	IPAA framework (Florian 2014)
(i)	Teaching is planned with the learning of all students in mind (p. 41)	Teachers "modify the curriculum and instruction so that each learner comes away with knowledge, understanding, and skills necessary to take on the next important phase of learning" (p. 5)	Teachers differentiate the curriculum by providing choice of activity (for everyone) Ability grouping is rejected as the main or sole organisation of working groups (p. 290)
(ii)	Lessons encourage the participation of all students (p. 41)	Teachers in differentiated classrooms accept and act on the premise that they must be ready to engage students in instruction through different approaches to learning, by appealing to a range of interests and by using varied rates of instruction along with varied degrees of complexity and differing support systems (pp. 4–5)	Teachers create learning environments that provide sufficient opportunities for everyone (all learners) to be able to participate in classroom life (p. 290) They use flexible approaches that are driven by the needs of the learner, rather than "coverage" of material They implement strategic reflective responses to support difficulties which children encounter in their learning
(iii)	Lessons develop an understanding of difference (p. 41)	The teacher remembers to teach the whole child. The teacher understands that children have intellect, emotions, changing physical needs, cultures, languages, and family contexts (p. 54)	Teachers accept that difference is an essential part of human development. They focus on knowing what children can do rather than what they cannot They use language to express the value of all children They provide "opportunities for children to choose the level at which they engage with lessons" (p. 290)
(iv)	Students are actively involved in their own learning (p. 41)	The teacher helps the student make their own sense of ideas: healthy classrooms are characterized by thought, wondering, and discovery (p. 57)	Teachers use social constructivist approaches. They provide opportunities for all children to construct knowledge and learn through active participation
(v)	Students learn collaboratively (p. 41)	Teachers ensure that students have opportunities to teach and learn from one another effectively (p. 57)	(As for iv). Teachers use social constructivist approaches. They provide opportunities for all children to construct knowledge and learn through active participation
(vi)	Assessment contributes to the achievement of all students (p. 41)	Teachers are "diagnosticians, prescribing the best possible instruction based on both their content knowledge and their emerging understanding of students' progress in mastering critical content" (p. 4)	Teachers use formative assessment to support the learning of all students

(continued)

Table 14.1 (continued)

	The index for inclusion: indicators of evolving inclusive practice (Booth and Ainscow 2002)	Differentiated classrooms (Tomlinson 2014)	IPAA framework (Florian 2014)
(vii)	Classroom discipline is based on mutual respect (p. 41)	In healthy classrooms, there is a clear expectation that everyone will deal respectfully and kindly with everyone else (p. 58) Teachers "engage students in conversations about class rules, schedules, and procedures, evaluating with students the effectiveness of processes and routines" (p. 57)	Teachers develop quality relationships with all their students Teachers respect the dignity of learners as full members of the community of the classroom
(viii)	Teachers plan, teach, and review in partnership (p. 41)	Teams of teachers "work together, share ideas and materials, troubleshoot with one another, co-teach, or observe one another and provide feedback. Collegiality, not isolation, is far more nourishing to new ideas" (p. 173)	Teachers form partnerships with other adults who work alongside them and other teachers and professionals outside the classroom. Together they discuss and model creative "new ways of working to support the learning of all children" (p. 291)

Adapted from Booth and Ainscow (2002), Florian (2014), Tomlinson (2014) and Elvey (2020, pp. 56–57)

Empowering learners; Strand 5 Learner interaction; Strand 6 Formative assessment; Strand 7 Respectful relationships; and Strand 8 Supportive partnerships.

14.3 Methodology

The research is underpinned by a social constructivist epistemology that recognises meaning as emerging through conscious engagement (Crotty 1998). Using an ethnographic methodology, the research draws on qualitative data derived from interactions, observations, and conversations with each of the teacher participants. Qualitative methodologies allow researchers to probe into meanings, structures, and thoughts associated with human interactions (Greene and Hogan 2005). The data for this study consist of *thick descriptions* to facilitate deep understanding about the participants' professional life-worlds, their craft knowledge, experiences, challenges, and supports. Existing frameworks that relate to inclusive pedagogies assist in identifying the teacher actions that constitute inclusive education (Elvey 2020).

The data for this study were collected by Elvey during weekly visits (of approximately one hour) to each participant's classroom over a four-week period. There, in a naturalistic teaching setting, Elvey observed the teacher's strategies, along with the classroom interactions that took place. Observations were recorded in a research journal. These field notes provided rich descriptions of the techniques, procedures, and resources that each of the teacher participants employed as part of their everyday practice, particularly in their endeavours to implement inclusive pedagogies. Each observation was followed by an informal, conversational interview of 15–20 min duration with the teacher, to seek elaboration about inclusive approaches and strategies that had been observed in their classroom. From the interviews, the insights and responses of each participant were recorded, transcribed, and combined with the written observations and reflections to provide the data source for the study.

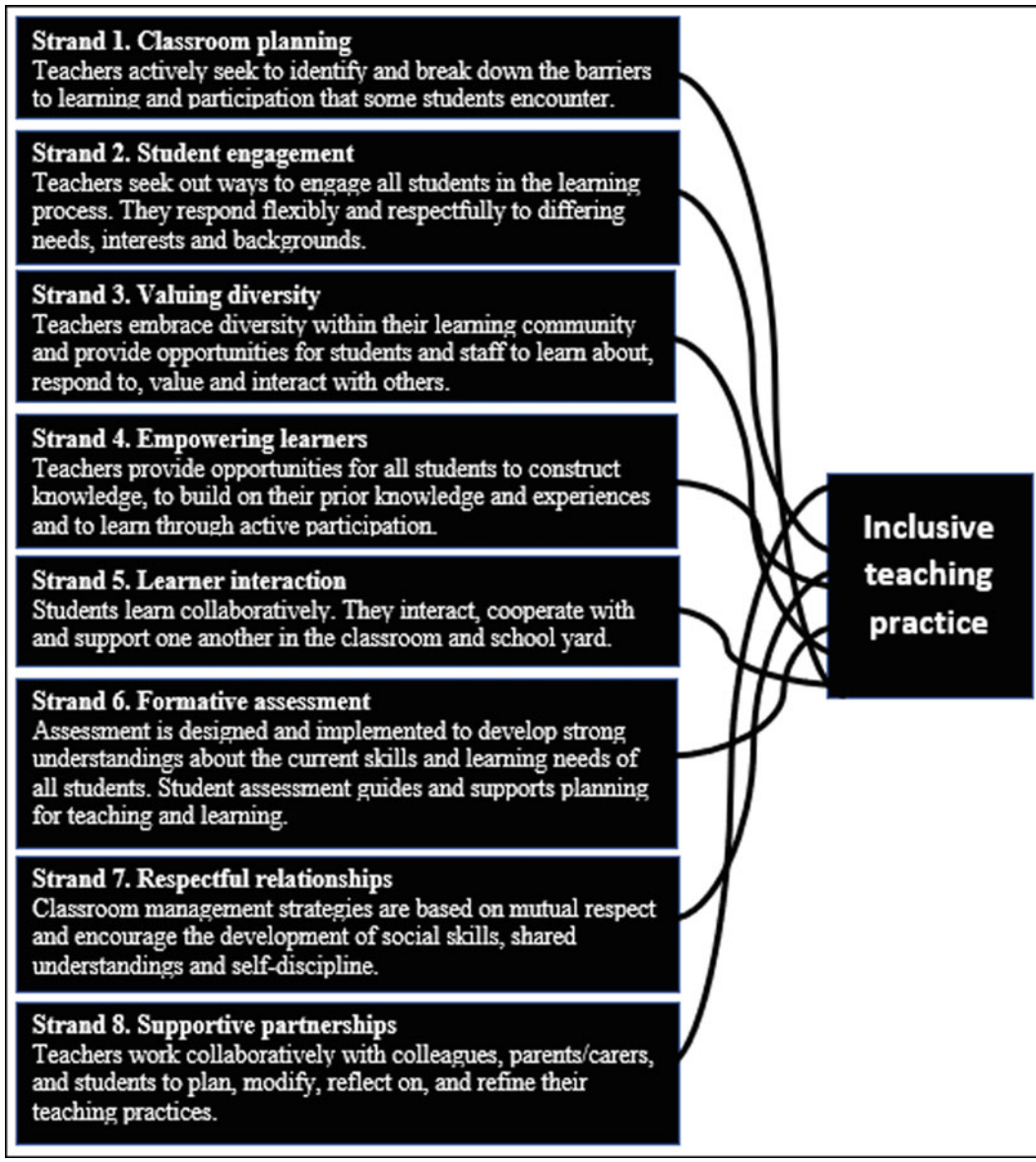

Fig. 14.1 Strands of inclusive teaching practice

14.3.1 Teacher Participants

In this chapter, the teaching practices and craft knowledge of a selected group of eight practicing primary school teachers sourced from four mainstream schools in the state of Victoria, Australia, have been captured and examined to interrogate the actions, beliefs, and practices that assisted them in implementing inclusive education in regular classrooms. Elvey identified several Government and non-Government education schools that had a reputation for employing inclusive educational practices. The Principals at each school recommended teachers who were in turn invited to participate in the study. Each of the participants was working with diverse student cohorts in regular classrooms, and in many cases, their class groups included

students that were eligible to attend a special school. In Victoria, specialist settings restrict enrolment to students with specific diagnosed impairments. Consistent with the diversity between schools and teachers, there were variations in the sample of teacher participants in relation to the grade levels they taught, the learning needs of their students, the sizes of their schools and school structures, their sex, and their years of teaching experience. Table 14.2 provides data about the eight teacher participants; the grades they taught (five taught at Foundation to year 3; three at years 4–6), whether they were teaching single or multi-level classes, the number of years of teaching experience (four had less than 3 years; four had more than 3 years), and the number of students enrolled in the school (four had fewer than 200 students; four had more than 200 students). Each teacher was allocated a pseudonym, and in addition, the actual names of the schools or any other identifying features have been concealed. In this chapter, the practices of all eight research participants will be examined, and from this point on, they will be referred to by their pseudonym—Anna, Ellen, Matt, Jane, Kate, Rob, Debbie, and Grace—or as *the teacher*. The data in Table 14.2 are aggregated to preserve the anonymity of individual participants given the small sample size and potential for identification.

This table is aggregated to preserve participant anonymity.

Ethics approval for the study was granted by the University of Ballarat Human Research Ethics Committee (Application A13-013), the Victorian Department of Childhood Development (2013_001941), and the Catholic Education Office (GE13/0009, Project#1891).

14.4 Results and Discussion

As discussed, Elvey (2020) identified eight elements of inclusive practice, which the authors of this paper describe as *strands*, that guide the data analysis. The strands are unravelled for the data analysis. A vignette developed from the data provides an example of each strand in practice. The results provide insight into what the eight classroom teachers know, do, and believe, and how these teacher knowledge and actions impact on their capacity to implement inclusive practices in their schools and classrooms.

14.4.1 Strand 1 Classroom Planning

Teachers actively seek to identify and break down the barriers to learning and participation that some students encounter.

Vignette 1 Rob and Kate taught the same grades at their school. Together they established learning intentions and curriculum. They agreed that the individual personalities and the learning needs of their students required differentiated teaching practices. Rob and Kate used a variety of team-teaching strategies. For example:

They organised their students into small collaborative groups, and one or both teachers worked with specific groups of students while the rest of the class worked independently. One teacher conducted individualised student conferences, while the other teacher roamed the room supporting individuals or groups as required.

At the end of each session Kate and Rob brought their students together…. Student input and free flowing discussions for the sharing of understandings, ideas and opinions was actively sought by both teachers.

(Adapted from Elvey 2020, pp. 93–94).

The teachers implemented a variety of approaches and strategies, based on their school's curriculum, but that also reflected the differences in the attitudes, understandings and experiences of the teachers themselves. More commonly they responded to the diversity of the particular student cohort. Learning tasks in each classroom were predominately planned with flexibility to enable all students to engage in

Table 14.2 Variations in class structure, grade level, teaching experience, and school size amongst teacher research participants

Class structure		Grade levels taught by the teachers		Years of teaching experience per teacher		Student population for each teacher's school	
Straight Class[1]	2	Foundation to grade three (students aging from four to nine years)	5	Less than five years	4	Less than 200 students	4
Multi-level class[2]	6	Grade four to grade six (students aging from eight to twelve years)	3	More than five years	4	200 or more students	4

Adapted from Elvey (2017)

learning and to experience success. Differentiated strategies were typically applied by modifying learning goals, providing opportunities for students to access supportive resources, or to allowing them to work collaboratively.

14.4.2 Strand 2 Student Engagement

Teachers seek out ways to engage all students in the learning process. They respond flexibly and respectfully to differing needs, interests, and backgrounds.

Vignette 2 Ellen and Matt were two teachers in the sample who used inquiry-learning. Each explained the impact student choice-making had on student participation and learning in their classrooms:

It has really improved our attendance. We find that kids want to come to school on time because they know that's what they are going to be doing most mornings. They are always engaged in something out there, whether it's making or [working] in the home corner… It is opening them up to things they haven't seen before. (Ellen)

Using the kids as the vehicle to drive what their passions are, … is allowing the group to be so settled … They're directing their learning. They're the ones who want to do the activity, so they will actually do it, and they will do a good job. (Matt)

She's in her comfort zone and she's achieving. (Matt)

Although they ran their inquiry-learning programs differently, both Ellen and Matt said that they valued the high levels of student engagement that they observed during the sessions…. A range of experiences and activities were made available, providing learning options that catered for diverse abilities and interests.

(Adapted from Elvey 2020, pp. 84–85).

Inquiry learning provided numerous opportunities for students to engage with and direct their own learning, to make choices about what they did and where they worked. Student engagement was valued and sought by all teachers, who stated they endeavoured to build on their students' interests and skills, encourage classroom collaboration, and create a welcoming, supportive learning environment.

14.4.3 Strand 3 Valuing Diversity

Teachers embrace diversity within their learning community and provide opportunities for students and staff to learn about, respond to, value, and interact with others.

[1] Straight Class: A class group that contains students of a similar age and they are placed in the same grade level, for example, when all students in the class are in Grade Two.

[2] Multi-level Class: A class group that contains students from a broader range of age groups and consists of two or more grade levels.

Vignette 3 Anna proudly recounted her previous conversation with the mother of one of her students, Karla,[3] a child diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Karla's mother had "expressed amazement at how quickly Anna had come to understand her daughter's needs, how Anna was able to keep her calm when it had taken her mother years to achieve this". When asked about how she managed this, Anna explained, "*That's just [about] giving her space, as opposed to making her do what the rest of the kids are doing*".

An example of *giving her space* was observed when Karla become visibly frustrated and unwilling to cooperate during a writing activity. Karla moved herself away from everyone and sought refuge in a quiet area of the classroom. Anna acknowledged Karla's presence there but gave her time and space alone to settle herself. The rest of the children in the class continued, either unaware or accepting of Karla's needs. A short time later a much calmer and more cooperative Karla returned to where she had been working, Anna moved closer to her, ready to provide additional support if it was needed.

Jane emphasised the value of creating a welcoming participatory learning environment in her classroom by "*showing them that they are a valued class member*". (Jane)

(Adapted from Elvey 2020, p. 77).

None of the teachers argued against the inclusion of a student within their classroom or suggested that a particular child would be better catered for in a specialist setting.

[1] Straight Class: A class group that contains students of a similar age and they are placed in the same grade level, for example, when all students in the class are in Grade Two.

[2] Multi-level Class: A class group that contains students from a broader range of age groups and consists of two or more grade levels.

[3] Pseudonym.

14.4.4 Strand 4 Empowering Learners

Teachers provide opportunities for all students to construct knowledge, to build on their prior knowledge and experiences and to learn through active participation.

Vignette 4a Anna implemented focus lessons to her entire class, provided guided instruction to individuals and small groups, and encouraged student collaboration. When they were engaged in group work, students were encouraged to share their skills and understandings with each other and cooperatively problem solve, rather than always seek direction from Anna. Anna still provided explicit instruction to individuals and groups, but utilised strategies that also allowed her students to assume greater responsibility for their learning, and to become less dependent on teacher direction. She sought to develop collaborative skills, particularly shared problem solving, as part of the process of gradually increasing her students' independence. Anna explained one of the collaborative strategies that she called *buddy work*:

When you have a class that wants to learn and they are all at different levels, you can establish those rules and you can just leave them to it …. I'm not saying leave them to their own devices but let them have the time to be independent and be responsible and you just go around making sure they are on track or that they are that they are, you know, challenging themselves …. We always talk about that, always continually talking about being responsible for your own learning. (Anna)

(Adapted from Elvey 2020, p. 153).

Vignette 4b Ellen implemented a strategy that not only supported the diverse

learning needs of her students, but also encouraged the students to make choices and determine for themselves who they worked with and the level of support that they received.

For example, while Ellen worked on the floor with those students who had selected a red card, a Learning Support Officer roamed and assisted those with an orange card, the students that needed "a little help". Once the group on the floor was confident and understood the task, they moved to their tables and both Ellen and the teaching assistant monitored and assisted students with red or orange cards. … Students were able to change cards if they found they needed more or less assistance during the session.

(Adapted from Elvey 2020, p. 96).

Rather than make assumptions about which students needed help and where they should work, Ellen's students were able to choose the level of support they received. Teacher groups were flexible and based on self-identified student needs. The classroom organisation and furniture arrangement encouraged group work and student interaction.

14.4.5 Strand 5 Learner Interaction

Students learn collaboratively. They interact, cooperate, and support one another in the classroom and school yard.

Vignette 5 Debbie explained a teaching approach, literature circles, that supported her efforts to cater for and engage students with diverse abilities, learning needs and interests:

It's like a book club where the children come together over the two grades, and they select a book that they would like to read, and then they find like members that would also like to read that book. Working in groups of no less than four, there's four to six in a group. (Debbie)

The groups discussed their chosen text, and each member took on a specific role such as summariser, investigator, illustrator, discussion director, connector and character educator and vocabulary extender. All members were actively involved and had autonomy in managing the operation of their group within an agreed framework.

(Adapted from Elvey 2020, p. 111).

Student-conducted literature circles provided opportunities for reciprocal teaching (Tompkins et al. 2015) and the development of shared understandings. Debbie's students had opportunities to make choices about what they read, who they worked with, what role they took in the group, and how they responded to their chosen text. The task varied according to the complexity of the text and student comprehension levels (Elvey 2020, p. 111).

Collaborative approaches involved student interaction and opportunities to investigate, explore, create, and direct their own learning. Some of these were specific school-based programs, while other approaches were unique to the class or group of classes to meet an identified student learning need.

14.4.6 Strand 6 Formative Assessment

Assessment is designed and implemented to develop strong understandings about the current skills and learning needs of all students. Student assessments guide and support planning for teaching and learning.

Vignette 6a Debbie stressed, "*you need to have really good assessment; assessment that tells you information about how the children learn*". Debbie sometimes used student conferencing, during these

individualised assessments to identify current skills and understandings. She then used the information to set goals with the student.

(Adapted from Elvey 2020, p.79).

Vignette 6b Grace outlined how she used student conferencing, collection of work samples and ongoing monitoring to differentiate teaching and learning. Grace endeavoured to develop flexible skill-based groups that were responsive to learner needs, rather than ability groups. For example, during a guided reading session focusing on comprehension, mixed-ability students worked on particular skills using different texts. Grace used assessment to identify her students' current learning needs and to inform her classroom teaching.

(Adapted from Elvey 2020, pp. 30–31).

Teachers explained the importance of knowing their students and shared strategies they used, including examples of formative assessment, such as student conferences, focused observations, portfolios, and work samples. They also shared the knowledge and understanding developed through daily interactions with students and their families/carers.

14.4.7 Strand 7 Respectful Relationships

Classroom management strategies are based on mutual respect and encourage the development of social skills, shared understandings, and self-discipline.

Vignette 7 Four of the teachers implemented values-based, social skills programs within their classrooms. Matt used *Tribes* (Gibbs 2006), a social skills program that "focuses on cooperative learning and the implementation of classroom agreements and expectations based on mutual respect" Matt explained how implementing this program impacted on his teaching:

It made me more aware of how you can give the children strategies and ways to actually think about other people, people other than themselves. … The big one for them was to be able to have a mutual respect for each other. That they could say good things about their friends and not feel embarrassed. (Matt)

Matt explained that the *Tribes* values—the agreements that were on display in his classroom—were not part of an occasional program but were embedded in everyday interactions. Adoption of *Tribes* agreements, particularly mutual respect, was expected and modelled by staff and students in Matt's classroom and more widely in the school.

(Adapted from Elvey 2020, p. 136).

The approaches the teachers used to develop a cohesive and welcoming learning community differed between individuals and schools. However, each teacher endeavoured to create a positive learning environment that nurtured and valued all students.

14.4.8 Strand 8 Supportive Partnerships

Teachers work collaboratively with colleagues, parents/carers, and students to plan, modify, reflect on, and refine their teaching practices.

Vignette 8a In Kate and Rob's school, teachers frequently taught in partnership. Kate, a less experienced teacher, described Rob as "*an amazing mentor*". She explained:

In the early days I looked to Rob a lot for how he was teaching, his teaching style and his teaching strategies, but now I really look to Rob for how he manages students, how he manages behaviour, how

he talks to kids, how he treats them … I'm not thankful enough. (Kate)

Kate explained her use of positive language in the classroom: "*It's language I've taken from him [Rob*]. By team-teaching with Kate, Rob was able to share his knowledge and understanding, model teaching strategies and support and guide Kate during shared classroom planning.

The team approach that Rob and Kate created in their shared learning environment was particularly conducive to the presence of a teaching assistant (ESS).

(Adapted from Elvey 2020, p. 187).

Vignette 8b The teaching assistant in this class roamed and interacted with numerous students. Rob explained "*that's part of her job that we were really interested in, because everyone at some stage will need that little extra assistance from somebody.*" He elaborated and added that some students occasionally needed support *"a bit more intensely"*. Because the teaching assistant roams and responds to varying students' needs, both he and Kate had more time available to support and provide explicit instruction to groups and individuals, knowing that all their students had ready access to assistance.

(Adapted from Elvey 2020, p. 196).

The team approach and the frequent movement of students and staff in Rob and Kate's shared learning environment allowed the teachers and teaching assistant to work together to monitor, respond to, and support the needs of individual students. All three, Rob, Kate, and the teaching assistant, endeavoured to develop supportive, interdependent relationships with their students.

The availability of collegial support and guidance in the implementation of new and inclusive approaches and strategies differed between individual teachers and schools, but all of the teachers spoke about valuing opportunities to plan, review, and refine their programs and with others. For three of the participants, team or co-teaching was entrenched in their daily practice. Others described positively the support and guidance they received from members of the school leadership, the provision of teacher mentors, and whole school approaches to professional learning.

14.5 Effective Teaching, Inclusive Teaching: Entwining the Strands

In sect. 14.4.1 to sect. 14.4.8, the authors have attempted to provide examples of inclusive practice from the craft knowledge of the participant teachers in Elvey's study. In order to do so, guiding principles for inclusive practice have been identified and unravelled into separate strands for the mapping of evidence from the research data. Inclusive practice, however, is more complex and holistic than this technique suggests, and while data can be described as an illustration of a particular strand, two or more strands are likely to be implicated because of their intertwined character. It is important to stress that there is no simple checklist for inclusive practice; practices often have multiple purposes and potential benefits for learners and need to be contextualised for the particular classroom and the learning needs of the students within that classroom.

The evidence from the study demonstrates the specific craft knowledge of the teacher participants and the emphasis they placed on using inclusive strategies. While teacher efficacy differed between the eight research participants, these variations can be attributed to the development of inclusive pedagogy as a process (Booth and Ainscow 2002) and that the teachers were at different stages of growth as inclusive educators. Half the teachers in the study were relatively inexperienced, having been teaching for less than five years; however, the researchers

cannot be certain that those with lower efficacy were the less experienced teachers.

Differentiated instruction was an important aspect of the craft knowledge of the teachers. This included differentiation by outcome and adjustments to task requirements and learning goals to ensure that all students had authentic opportunities to learn (Tomlinson 2014). By providing choices and encouraging learner input into decision-making and goal setting, the teachers endeavoured to provide all their students with access to a learning environment that catered for their needs and interests.

In designing learning experiences to cater for classroom diversity, effective practice and inclusive practice are strongly connected. Tomlinson and McTighe (2006) highlight the links between the knowledge and skills, the craft knowledge of *effective* teachers, and the implementation of inclusive practices. As these authors explain, "simply put, quality classrooms evolve around powerful knowledge that works for each student. That is, they require quality curriculum and quality instruction" (Tomlinson and McTighe 2006, p. 3). This notion is also widely supported by proponents of inclusive pedagogies. For example, Loreman et al. (2011) align inclusive teaching with effective teaching:

> The perception that significantly different, more effective strategies exist for teaching a diverse range of learners is essentially false. Importantly, a good inclusive teacher is an engaged one, who can respond to the needs of all learners in the class, and who plans in advance for this. (p. 150)

While the teachers occasionally made reference to an individual student's specific needs, their focus was predominantly directed towards effective classroom teaching strategies to support student learning. They discussed class programs and strategies that personalised learning and differentiated instruction for *all* students, rather than individualised *special needs* approaches. In addition, approaches that were participatory, flexible, and provided opportunities for *all* students to make choices and be actively engaged were frequently implemented by the teachers, both in their individual classrooms and in larger team-teaching environments. The teachers used their prior experiences, attitudes, concerns, and successes in relation to student diversity, again indicating that their focus was effective practice for *all* rather than the implementation of a standard strategy that only suited the learning needs of *some* students. Teacher craft knowledge included teaching and learning strategies. However, these are not the specialised, intervention strategies that medicalised and traditional behaviourist approaches advocate. Instead, they are strategies that incorporate and build upon teachers' knowledge of their students' particular social and academic strengths and learning needs.

When teachers adopt an inclusive pedagogical approach and assume responsibility for teaching everyone (Florian and Spratt 2013), they are also embracing effective practices that align with quality teaching and learning for all members of the classroom community (UNESCO 2009, 2017). Also, the practices of providing access to learning for all students enable the realisation of SDG4 Quality Education to ensure inclusive and quality education for all and set learners on the path to lifelong learning.

14.6 Conclusion

This study, into the inclusive practices of eight primary school teachers, includes no revelations about previously unrecognised teacher actions and craft knowledge nor particular specialised procedures for developing inclusive classrooms. Instead, it demonstrates that inclusive teaching is not *secret business* that can only be achieved by trained specialist teachers. The enactment of theoretically-grounded teacher actions and quality teaching and learning for all, consistent with SDG4, by informed and well-supported educators, directly supports inclusion.

The conclusion that can be drawn from this chapter is that by focusing on one or more strands of inclusive practice, certain aspects of

teacher craft knowledge, that may not be otherwise apparent, can be noticed or developed. Rather than a separate set of special needs practices, the skills and strategies that support inclusion in regular classrooms relate to effective teaching and learning, and to what informed and responsive educators seek to do (UNESCO 2009, 2017). The intertwining of these strands can create a holistic praxis for inclusion.

As researcher observations and discussions with the teachers demonstrated, reflection, ongoing professional learning, and guidance and support from colleagues and school leaders, combined with knowledge and understanding about the social constructivist strategies that underpin effective teaching and learning, provide the foundation for *everyday* teachers to develop and maintain inclusive classrooms. It is these foundations that support the development of both the pedagogical efficacy and professional confidence that lead to positive teacher attitudes in regard to catering for student diversity and the creation of the student-centred inclusive learning environments that are sought in UN SDG4 *Quality education.*

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Dr. Moya Elvey has had an extensive career as a primary school teacher, predominantly in small rural schools. Her experience working with diverse cohorts of students was fundamental in the development of her interest in inclusive education, particularly issues relating to social justice and the provision of quality education for all students. Her research utilises ethnographic methodologies to inquire into the implementation of inclusive pedagogies in regular schools and classrooms. In recent years Moya has been employed as a sessional lecturer, working in teacher education at Federation University Australia.

Professor Jenene Burke is the Director Academic Operations in the Institute of Education, Arts and Community at Federation University Australia. Jenene convenes the Social Justice, Inclusion and Diversity in Education (SJIDE) research focus area in the Institute. She is the President of the World Federation of Associations for Teacher Education (WFATE) and leads the WFATE Inclusion and Social Justice in Teacher Education in Global Contexts research development group. As a researcher, Jenene is best known for her world-class research into play spaces as inclusive environments for children and their families. She is particularly interested in research that privileges the voices of participants, especially children and young people. Jenene has a secondary teaching background and 20 years of experience in Higher Education as a teacher educator. Her learning and teaching interests centre on educational responses to student diversity, with respect to inclusive education and disability studies in education.

Bridges and Barriers: Building an Innovative Model of Support for Teachers of Students with ASD

15

Wendy Holcombe and Margaret Plunkett

Abstract

This chapter outlines the development of a planning tool for teachers who find themselves challenged by mainstream narratives associated with meeting the diverse needs of their students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The United Nation's Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 requires *equitable quality education for all*, yet research indicates that for many learners with additional educational needs, a significant gap exists between legislative intent and practical implementation. Many students with ASD are very adept learners, but their educational experience and outcomes are not always commensurate with their capabilities. New conceptions of challenges, needs, strengths and support can promote improved understanding and offer meaningful guidance to inform inclusive planning. The Bridges and Barriers Model of Support (BBMS) (Holcombe and Plunkett in Aust J Teach Educ 41:27–47, 2016), which emerged from research into the perspectives of educators working with students with ASD, uses a strength-based approach to target identified barriers through bridging supports and strategies. The structure of the profiling system captures consistent and evolving data that can empower student, staff and school success leading to ongoing and *lifelong learning opportunities*.

Keywords

Autism spectrum disorder · Bridges and barriers model of support · ASD profiles

Author Positioning Statements

I am Wendy and proudly autistic. My insight into autism spectrum disorder (ASD) has evolved over the past 25 years through an ongoing merging of my parental, professional and personal perspectives. My diagnosis late in life has empowered a deeper understanding of the complexities and diversity within the ASD experience and the need for personalised planning for educational success.

I am Margaret and I have a particular interest in students who learn in ways that are often described as being "outside the norm". I have been fortunate to work with my co-author Wendy over the last decade developing courses, working on research projects and supervising her postgraduate research. Through her, I have learnt so much about the lived experience of someone who has connections with ASD on a number of

W. Holcombe (✉) · M. Plunkett
Institute of Education, Arts and Community, Federation University Australia, Churchill, Australia
e-mail: w.holcombe@federation.edu.au

M. Plunkett
e-mail: margaret.plunkett@federation.edu.au

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levels, which has enabled me to move my understandings beyond the superficial and hopefully is evident in the discussion within this chapter.

15.1 Introduction

For too long, Australia, like many other developed nations, has remained silent about the compromised lived experience of sections of society. Governments advocate for systemic change and look to education as a means of carving pathways to more equitable and inclusive communities. Yet at an individual level, many teachers are challenged in their role to manage the complexities of diversity and provide meaningful experiences for everyone. Additional guidance is needed for schools and teaching practitioners to empower them to effectively fulfil their obligation to enact the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, which aims to *Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all* (United Nations 2015).

This chapter outlines the results of research into the perspectives of educators in Victoria Australia, who were actively involved in provision for students with both a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and an average to above average intelligence quotient (IQ). The aim of the research was to enhance current understandings about the educational experiences of students with ASD considered to have higher academic potential and therefore deemed ineligible for funding to enable additional support through the Program for Students with Disabilities (PSD), which operates in Victorian government schools (Department of Education and Training 2021). Generating opportunities *for inclusive and equitable quality education* (SDG4) requires responsive teaching guided by insight into the circumstances, characteristics and qualities of unique individuals.

The Bridges and Barriers Model of Support (BBMS) (Holcombe and Plunkett 2016) was developed as a planning tool to assist teachers who find themselves challenged by mainstream narratives associated with meeting the complex needs of students with ASD. What is often not clearly understood is that many students with ASD are very adept learners, but their educational experience and outcomes are not always commensurate with their capabilities.

The Disability Standards for Education (DSE) 2005 (Commonwealth of Australia 2005) require teachers to make reasonable adjustments to ensure *all* learners have equitable access to a quality education. The reality is that a significant gap exists between legislative intent and practical implementation. Students with ASD have been shown to experience significantly lower outcomes in educational attainment, tertiary enrolment and post-school employment when compared to their peers without ASD (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS] 2020). SDG Target 4.1 calls for *equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.* However, this is not the general experience of many students with ASD. In fact, more than half of the students between the ages of 5–20 attending schools in Australia in 2018, reported experiencing difficulties relating to communication, learning and fitting in socially (ABS 2020). As these are all characteristics associated with ASD, it is plausible that accommodations and supports are not yet aligning well with student needs.

Similarly, in relation to SDG Target 4.3, which aims for *equitable access to quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university,* students with ASD are approximately four times less likely to continue into university following completion of year 12 (ABS 2020). These issues expose students with ASD as a vulnerable group and therefore deserving of support to address disparities within the education sector. It is anticipated that tools such as the BBMS, which uses a strength-based approach to target identified barriers through bridging supports that empower student, staff and school success, can help in this target being reached.

15.2 ASD in Education

The role of the classroom teacher presents complicated and complex challenges, particularly in relation to the equitable delivery of meaningful and inclusive education for all learners. To enact this role with confidence and competence, educators need to be guided by current, reliable and trustworthy information. The complexity of ASD is such that understanding the associated characteristics of the condition does not equate to understanding how it manifests in the unique profile of individual needs and abilities. Each student with ASD tends to present differently, requiring a nuanced approach for every individual. Despite this challenge, effective student profiling can provide educators with a starting point for purposeful planning, positive interaction and ongoing and targeted support, while also facilitating smooth transitions from one educational context to the next.

ASD is challenging to understand. It is a lifelong neurodevelopmental condition, but no clear cause has ever been identified, and experts continue to debate the nature of contributing factors. Children with ASD have a profile of needs and abilities that can involve impaired or enhanced functionality in the areas of sensory processing, communication, social interaction and particular patterns of behaviour and thought (American Psychiatric Association 2013). As a result, when compared to their peers without ASD, they experience life through different ways of thinking, doing, being and becoming.

Understanding the unique characteristics of each child underpins successful approaches to their education, growth and development (Baglieri and Shapiro 2017). However, in schools, supports for children with ASD often focus on addressing difference from a deficit perspective where the aim is to fill in gaps, catch up on knowledge and skills or reinforce foundational learning tasks. Less attention has been focused on developing children's passionate interests or building upon their strengths.

National statistics indicate that students with ASD experience higher levels of social and academic difficulty, and lower levels of educational attainment when compared with both their peers without ASD, and peers with other medical conditions, diagnoses or impairments (ABS 2020). This would suggest that current adjustments for students with ASD, and particularly those with the potential to achieve highly in an academic context are not yet sufficiently reasonable.

15.3 Exploring the Context

ASD is known to result in asynchronous development during childhood which results in an uneven profile or a misalignment of what may be perceived as typical milestone accomplishment (Baron-Cohen 2008). Developmental delays do not necessarily mean developmental deficits, so attempts to *fix* what appears to be missing may simply represent a failure to recognise a child's stages of development, readiness to learn or engagement with a task. The alternative approach of building on existing strengths and interests can empower students to perceive themselves as capable learners (Black and Sheehy 2020) and enable teachers to identify reasonable developmental targets, appropriate supportive strategies and opportunities for relevant skill-building.

Difficulties with communication and interaction have been commonly associated with ASD (Wing 1997), thus establishing rapport and connections with students can present additional challenges for teachers. Having a process for transferring meaningful and relevant personalised information from educator to educator is a necessary factor in smooth transitions and continuity of educational experience (Fabian 2013). This is particularly important for students with specific educational needs, such as those relating to ASD, where one of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, which requires the teacher to "know students and how they learn" (AITSL 2011, p. 1), can be a more complicated challenge.

Without personalised information, educators may rely on text-book evidence-based practice as a starting point for support. The difficulty in this arises because the nature of support may not align with the needs, interests and abilities of the child (Dockrell et al. 2019). For example, visual supports have a strong evidence base of success (Hume et al. 2021), however, to be effective, some knowledge of the child's visual interests and abilities is required to capture attention and ensure engagement. What is the child's visual key? Is it colour, shape, image, words, size, media, location or a combination of factors that will act as a supporting bridge? The wrong combination of factors could become a barrier to interest and engagement rather than a support and therefore disrupt the pathway to learning success.

15.4 What the Literature Tells Us

While there has been a research focus on ASD over the last few decades, much is still unknown about why it is increasing in prevalence and even what characterises ASD, since it can differ substantially between diagnosed individuals. This is particularly pertinent in the school environment, especially when students who are academically capable also fall on the autism spectrum. In such cases, many of the remediation focused strategies are inappropriate, but teachers are often not aware of how to meet the specific and emotional learning needs of such students. The knowledge and understandings gained from the following bodies of literature have helped to inform the development of the BBMS.

15.4.1 Prevalence of ASD is Increasing

ASD prevalence rates vary significantly across the globe (CDC 2020) with recent estimates suggesting that as many as one in 70 individuals are on the autism spectrum (Autism Spectrum Australia 2021; Kim et al. 2011). More importantly for education, global trends indicate increasing numbers (CDC 2020), suggesting that the reality of providing support for students with ASD will be an ongoing concern for schools. Reasons for the upward trend in prevalence rates have been attributed to greater awareness of the condition (Kočovská et al. 2012); more complex survey methodology (Fombonne 2018); environmental changes (Landrigan et al. 2012); better understanding of nutrition and gut health (Vasquez 2017); as well as factors such as nomenclature, changing diagnostic criteria, age and socio-cultural influences (Leonard et al. 2010). Importantly, the lack of consensus within the field highlights the challenge in interpreting the nature of ASD and the urgency of understanding how it impacts students who live with the condition.

15.4.2 Understanding ASD is Complicated

ASD is acknowledged as a lifelong condition resulting from varying degrees of neurological difference or dysfunction (Hendrickx 2010; Just and Pelphrey 2013) and characterised by an uneven developmental profile (Baron-Cohen 2008). It is typically described as a condition that causes difficulties with social communication and interaction, cognition and brain functions, rigid or repetitive behaviours and sensory anomalies. There are no known medical or psychological tests that can confirm the presence of ASD, so it is recognised through observable patterns and combinations of characteristics, responses and habits of behaviour (American Psychiatric Association 2013).

Research has identified commonalities between individuals that lead to deeper insight into elements of the condition; however, the diversity of impacts and presentations of ASD continue to challenge universal understanding (Amaral 2011). The variety of differences relating to cognitive and sensory processing, language use and development, social awareness

and interaction, reliance on routine habits, behaviours and interests complicate insight into an individual's unique abilities, strengths, challenges and needs.

Strength-based approaches have been linked with higher performance and greater wellbeing outcomes (Linley et al. 2010). However, when experts in medicine, psychology and social sciences cannot agree on a clear understanding of ASD, it is not surprising that educators find it challenging to recognise the strengths, abilities and needs of their students with this condition. Without clear insight into these attributes, designing and implementing appropriate and reasonable adjustments for individuals presents a real challenge.

15.4.3 A Dilemma for Teachers of High-Functioning Learners with ASD

One cohort who appear to be particularly underserviced within education are students with ASD who also possess average to above average intelligence (Ronksley-Pavia 2020), including those termed twice-exceptional (experiencing both disability and giftedness). Within Victoria, schools only receive additional funding to support students with ASD if they have also been identified as having very low adaptive and communication skills. Criteria such as this fails to consider the challenges of fluctuating functionality and concomitant high anxiety often experienced because of changes in context, relationships and intrapersonal factors. Students with higher academic, social and coping skills are not immune to the challenges of ASD (Wu et al. 2019).

With or without additional funding, school culture, policies, structures and systems can support an inclusive experience as required by SDG4. The classroom teacher is likely to have a significant effect on their students' experience (Blazar and Kraft 2017; Heck 2009), and will be more effective when they know these individual students well, and understand their learning needs and preferences (AITSL 2011).

15.4.4 Mental Health, Well-Being and Learning

The connection between student well-being and learning outcomes is drawing attention in educational circles (Seligman et al. 2009; Spratt 2016) and has become a central feature of the Framework for Improving Student Outcomes (FISO) in Victorian government schools (Department of Education and Training 2020). Educational outcomes for students with ASD are also influenced by peer relationships (Adams et al. 2016) and the sense of safety and engagement in classroom activity (Danker et al. 2019). These factors impact student well-being and can be a source of anxiety and depression if not addressed (Bitsika et al. 2020).

A meta-analysis conducted by van Steensel and Heeman (2017) found that not only did students with ASD have higher anxiety levels than students without ASD, but the difference increased with age and with higher intellectual capacity. The transition into adolescence was flagged as an important time for monitoring (van Steensel and Heeman 2017); however, the roots of anxiety and educational disruption have been shown to commence from adverse experiences at a much earlier age (Blodgett and Lanigan 2018).

The literature demonstrates that students with ASD are more likely to experience additional challenges within school environments, that appropriate supports can make a difference to educational trajectories, and that teacher understanding of individual students can enhance the provision of appropriate support and quality educational experiences.

15.5 Background to the Study

The Bridges and Barriers Model of Support (BBMS) emerged from analysis of data in a larger research project that investigated perspectives of educators of students with ASD in Victorian government schools. Insight was sought from educators in a range of roles and a variety of school settings. Each participant was asked to

provide information relating to a particular student with ASD, who was also considered to be "high functioning" in terms of their academic potential. Participants were required to have worked closely with this student within the twelve-month period prior to the survey.

Data from participants' responses relating to abilities, positive and negative catalysts and markers of success were used to inform the creation of a model of support. The BBMS features targeted strategies designed to build on identified strengths and minimise, reduce or remove barriers along the pathway to successful outcomes. The nature of the design of the BBMS means it is suitable for use with any learner, providing school communities with a framework for personalised planning and the development of a shared understanding of student strengths, needs, support options and targets for success as outlined in Fig. 15.1.

During the coding and analytic process, the importance of knowing the child, working with strengths, identifying needs and barriers and applying appropriate supports with clear and purposeful intention became apparent. These concepts therefore underpin the structure and design of the BBMS. It is important to note that the same categories were used intentionally within both the bridges and the barriers components of the model. This was deemed important in terms of acknowledging the possibility that any aspect of a child's experience could be a bridge or a barrier depending on how it was perceived and/or managed within planning and implementation strategies.

15.6 How the Study Was Conducted

This study was considered to be low risk for participants and was approved by the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC) and the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD), Research and Analysis Division.

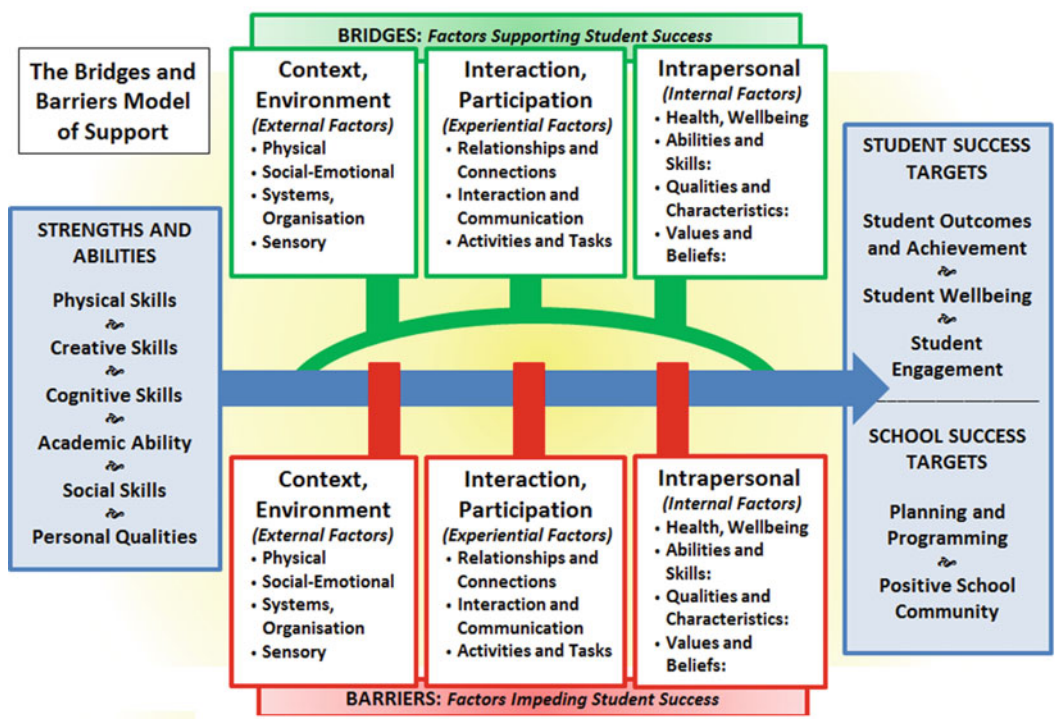

Fig. 15.1 Components of the bridges and barriers model of support

Educator voice was deemed to be more appropriate for this project than student voice due to the focus on planning and provision.

Creation of knowledge was viewed to emerge through the experience of the knower, as opposed to existing apart from the knower, inspiring an inductive rather than a deductive approach to data collection and analysis (Dahlberg and McCaig 2010). The focus on human experience aligned with case study methodology, which is validated by Flyvbjerg (2006) as "necessary to allow people to develop from rule-based beginners to virtuoso experts" (p. 221). Interpretation of case study data has the potential to assist the progression to expertise through verisimilitude, supporting practitioners to connect their personal, context-dependent experiences with the skills and knowledge examined in the study (Bruner 1986).

An online survey and individual interviews were employed to collect information about perceptions of educational challenge and success (pertaining to student, staff and school), the nature of support provided for focus students and factors considered essential in meeting the needs of students with ASD in general. Although technically a quantitative measure, the online survey in this study utilised open-ended questions requiring narrative responses to elicit data that was rich in concepts and ideas. Additional data elaborating on these responses were gathered from eleven volunteer participants via semi-structured interviews. The key research question underpinning the study was *How can support for students with ASD be more effectively understood, implemented and experienced in mainstream schools?*

Fifty-six educators in a variety of roles (classroom teachers, school leadership, school-based and regional education support staff) provided detailed information about a focus student with ASD who was not eligible for additional funding support. The focus on educator perspectives rather than student perspectives provided a broader overview of strategies and other contributing factors and linked educator voice to the practical application of the findings.

All 56 participants were employed in the public education sector and had been involved in working with at least one student with ASD, who was also academically capable, during the previous 12 months. The group contained 15 Classroom Teachers, 11 Coordinators or Team Leaders, 6 Network or Regional Support Specialists (Psychologists, ASD Coaches and Speech Pathologists), 9 Education Support Officers, 8 Assistant Principals and 7 Principals. Different school sectors were represented: 28 participants working in primary schools, 19 in secondary schools, 4 in specialist schools and 5 working across all three sectors.

The survey was distributed widely across Victoria and contained questions relating to demographics, experience, student observations, personal insights and perceptions of challenge and success. Of the 56 participants, 11 volunteers were purposefully selected across factors such as role, gender and sector to ensure representativeness and a variety of perspectives. The survey data was converted into small and individual case studies then combined with data from the interview transcripts. This provided rich cross-comparison opportunities. Data was managed through the NVivo software application where responses were coded, analysed for patterns, categorised for themes and interrogated for insights.

The inherent truth of a qualitative study becomes apparent through establishing the integrity of the analysis in terms of the credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability of the data (Lincoln and Guba 1985). The number and variety of participants and multiple sources of data which supported triangulation helped establish trustworthiness and authenticity. Credibility and transferability were enhanced through the diversity of educator perspectives in terms of role, location, sector and experience, ensuring multiple points of connection, while coherency of interpretation and stability of content were supported through the use of technology to manage the databank.

15.7 What the Study Found

A significant issue illuminated by the data was the focus of responsibility for the challenges the educators were experiencing. Table 15.1 provides an overview of the challenge categories, associated sub-themes and the frequency of mentions of each area of challenge. It is interesting to note that the four highest categories related to factors external to the individual educator; the students, the department, other staff and the role they were given to fill. Categories of personal responsibility such as planning and programming, relationships with families, personal well-being and finding balance received fewer than 10 mentions each from 56 people. This suggests that although the participants appeared confident in their own contribution (minimal personal challenges), they did not feel as empowered to influence change within their teaching/learning context.

Another key finding of the study relates to what was considered as essential factors in achieving positive outcomes for students with ASD. The results, as displayed in Table 15.2, identify six major themes: knowledge, well-being/engagement, organisation, curriculum, relationships and environments. Codes within each theme were further categorised according to whether they were associated with:

(a) the *WHY* of teaching and learning, (revealing attitudes, intentions and principles)
(b) the *HOW* of teaching and learning, (revealing methods, processes and procedures)
(c) or the *WHAT* of teaching and learning, (revealing strategies, elements and practices).

The results outlined in Tables 15.1 and 15.2 raised concerns that although teachers might have considerable knowledge of the condition of ASD, as well as an awareness of evidence-based practice relating to teaching students with ASD, there appeared to be less cognisance of aspects such as how to implement strategies successfully or why some were more effective than others. The breadth and depth of factors considered essential in the support of students with ASD appeared to be almost as unique as the students themselves. This prompted a closer examination

Table 15.1 Challenges faced by educators in fulfilling their role

Educator challenges	Sub-themes	No. of times mentioned
Students	Apathy and disengagement, challenging behaviour, achieving outcomes, establishing relationships, peer negativity and lack of confidence	29
Department	Expectations and demands, model for funding and student support and lack of support	24
Staff	Lack of ASD knowledge and understanding, inconsistency, teacher capacity, shifting negative mindset, low aspirations and expectations	24
Work role	Lack of time and resources, high workload, having to work in non-preferred ways, maintaining consistency and work expectations	23
Planning and programming	Coordinating complexities, catering for diversity, establishing an autism friendly environment, whole school change, identifying learning needs and making reasonable adjustments	9
Parent and community	Home school relationships and communication, family conflict and lack of support	8
Finding balance	Administration tasks and student needs, immediate and long-term goals, outcomes and positive learning experiences, engagement and structure	8
Leadership	Building capacity in staff and lack of ASD knowledge and understanding	4
Personal well-being	Work-life balance, mental health and job satisfaction	1

Table 15.2 Educational considerations for the support of students with ASD in schools

Essential factors in ASD support—themes and sub-themes		*n* = number of contributing educators
T = Classroom Teachers *S = Specialist Services*	*C = Coordinators/Team Leaders* *P = Principals/Assistant Principals*	*E = Education Support Officers*
1. *Knowledge*		
Why: (*n* = 13) *T* = 5 *E* = 1 *P* = 3 *C* = 2 *S* = 2	How: (*n* = 5) *T* = 2 *E* = 0 *P* = 0 *C* = 1 *S* = 2	What: (*n* = 34) *T* = 11 *E* = 4 *P* = 10 *C* = 7 *S* = 2
• Raise awareness • Enables a proactive approach • Informs fall-back plans • To determine what is likely to work most effectively for students • Inspires an understanding teacher • Leads to understanding why certain behaviours exist • Why tasks can be difficult and what might trigger challenges • Students with ASD are not just kids with a condition • Leads to understanding individual differences and how to be inclusive • Yelling long and loud will not change the student • Identifying and understanding behaviours help teachers to respond calmly • Enables an understanding of the student's perspective	• Identify their core deficits to understand behaviour • Have access to consultative expertise • Provide training and professional development for Education Support Officers and Teaching staff	• Understanding individual characteristics; strengths, weaknesses, needs, triggers, interests, challenges, likes, dislikes • What works and what doesn't • History of success and challenge • Range of strategies and skills to draw upon • How to differentiate, be inclusive and meet the needs of learners with ASD • Awareness, knowledge and understanding of ASD and how it presents in individuals • Awareness of how the student learns • Social challenges, sensory, communication and behavioural needs • The diversity within the cohort of students with ASD • Reasonable expectations vary • The use of visuals, *timetables* and other supports • Understanding the function of behaviour • Knowledge and understanding of evidence-based practices and how to teach students with ASD • Peer group understanding of ASD
2. *Well-being and engagement*		
Why: (*n* = l) *T* = 1 *E* = 0 *P* = 0 *C* = 0 *S* = 0	How: (*n* = 16) *T* = 7 *E* = 2 *P* = 1 *C* = 5 *S* = 1	What: (*n* = 23) *T* = 6 *E* = 4 *P* = 4 *C* = 6 *S* = 3
• Everyone is valued in the school community	• Appreciate difference • Identify core deficits • Have patience understand behaviour • Develop safety and security through routines • Maintain calm • Use strengths to build skills • Prepare students for change • Limit language use • Differentiate consequences • Reduce anxiety • Plan for success	• Consistent proactive approach • Mental health and resilience • Staff support from leadership • Positive reinforcement • Awareness of sensory needs • Planned breaks • Correct diagnosis • Time for self • Transition support • Positive reinforcement • Empathy, tolerance and support • Participation • Genuine and unconditional engagement • Theory of mind/executive functioning/weak central coherence

(continued)

Table 15.2 (continued)

Essential factors in ASD support—themes and sub-themes		*n* = number of contributing educators
3. *Organisation*		
Why: (*n* = 5) *T* = 1 *E* = 1 *P* = 1 *C* = 2 *S* = 0	How: (*n* = 7) *T* = 1 *E* = 1 *P* = 5 *C* = 0 *S* = 0	What: (*n* = 29) *T* = 8 *E* = 2 *P* = 12 *C* = 4 *S* = 3
• Organisation provides support • Discipline is not a one-size fits all • Meeting needs and developing programs requires flexible organisation • Organisation reduces anxiety	• Clear expectations • Plan for success • Flexible approach with negotiation and buy-in from the student • Be flexible within a firm framework of consistency	• Structure • Flexibility • Routine • Alternative timetable • School funding • Policies and protocol • School and classroom systems • Visual supports • Collegiate support • Individual learning plans • Time management • Coordinated and consistent interventions • School-wide and unified approach
4. *Curriculum*		
Why: (*n* = 5) *T* = 2 *E* = 0 *P* = 2 *C* = 1 *S* = 0	How: (*n* = 14) *T* = 3 *E* = 3 *P* = 2 *C* = 4 *S* = 2	What: (*n* = 16) *T* = 2 *E* = 4 *P* = 4 *C* = 3 *S* = 3
• Students have a right to know themselves as able learners • Modifications make learning tasks • More simple and straightforward • Curriculum supports are necessary' because teachers do not have tune to work 1:1 all the time • Social stories and resources help student • All students deserve a well-rounded education	• Have clear success criteria • Use models, examples of *end product* • Motivate students with reward games, challenges and positive reinforcement • Provide visuals to accompany instructions • Make reasonable adjustments to content, quantity of work, group size and assessment • Follow the individual learning plan • Focus on developing strengths • Provide additional support during the early years • Address the impacts of theory of mind, executive *functioning* and weak central coherence • Establish and maintain consistent expectations • Create supportive resources and the time to make them • Make learning, *routines* and organisational structures explicit and constant	• Incidental and formal social skills training • Achievable SMART goals • Modified curriculum where necessary • Communication strategies • Differentiation and flexible expectations • Additional support; personnel and materials • Clear expectations • Pass each year level • Personal best not benchmarks
5. *Relationships*		
Why: (*n* = 5) *T* = 0 *E* = 1 *P* = 2 *C* = 2 *S* = 0	How: (*n* = 10) *T* = 5 *E* = 1 *P* = 3 *C* = 1 *S* = 0	What: (*n* = 15) *T* = 3 *E* = 5 *P* = 4 *C* = 3 *S* = 0
• Support and advocacy for students	• Engage students through their interests • Share humour	• Positive connections between staff, *student* and family • Classroom relationships

(continued)

Table 15.2 (continued)

Essential factors in ASD support—themes and sub-themes		*n* = number of contributing educators
• A consistent relationship is a priority in the learning journey • Need parent support • Trust in others enables concentration on learning	• Develop effective communication • Active listening • Work together • Build trust by reducing anxiety • Support peers to understand ASD • Explicit teaching of skills to support social connections	• Peer and school community connections • Trust relationship • Communication strategies • Peer understanding and friendship
6. *Environment* (*Physical and Sensory*)		
Why: (n = l) $T = 0$ $E = 0$ $P = 0$ $C = 0$ $S = 1$	How: (n = 0) $T = 0$ $E = 0$ $P = 0$ $C = 0$ $S = 0$	What: (n = 5) $T = 0$ $E = 1$ $P = 0$ $C = 3$ $S = 1$
• Students may need a "downtime" space when overstimulated	Nil response	• Break out areas • Quiet environment • Safe and supportive environment • Sensory room

of the alignment between each student's identified strengths, interests, needs and abilities and the nature of the strategies put in place to support them.

One of the students discussed by a participant was Noah, seven years old, identified as having barriers described as *the classroom context—confined areas and structured activities that required persistence—and a core need for freedom and spontaneity*. The main supports provided for Noah were listed as *the use of a timer—a 'First/Then' chart—prompting with assistance—choices—schedules—own time and space—and free choice*. It is possible that many of the structured supports implemented for Noah may be supporting classroom harmony but could be creating internal conflict by limiting his natural impulses. Further information on how and why the strategies worked would be required to identify appropriate ways of implementing them with success for everyone.

A more natural alignment of support was evident in the experience of Courtney, five years old. Her barriers were described in more detail as *outside with less boundaries in terms of environment and play structure—when she is pressured to finish a task or hurry up but doesn't like to have things incomplete—she really struggles to be flexible in her thinking and does not take on board ideas when she is challenged about her thinking and its flaws.* Consideration of these elements is more readily visible in the planned supports provided for her, described as *extra time—modified quantity—video modelling—learning from experiences and discussion of those—having structure in the classroom and routine—allowing her to feel somewhat in control—shorter time outside so some time in social skills in the library—repetition of rules—pairing her with more competent students outside to keep an eye on her and lead her away from dangerous spots.*

The BBMS structure illustrates the impact of combined strategies in overcoming potential barriers in the student's learning pathway. Appropriate supports implemented with purposeful intent bridge the identified challenges that could prevent equitable learning outcomes. It was recognised that appropriate alignment of needs and supports also depended upon an understanding of the student's full spectrum of abilities and strengths. Table 15.3 presents the categorised responses from participants in relation to what they perceived to be the strengths of their focus student.

The study highlighted a tendency to focus on social skills, personal qualities and interests as strengths rather than recognising these as typical and age-appropriate characteristics, e.g. as

Table 15.3 Student strengths and abilities

Strengths	Sub-themes	No. of mentions $n = 56$
Physical skills	*Sport, practical activities, organised, neat and tidy*	6
Creative skills	*Art and drawing, creative thinking, drama and music*	11
Cognitive skills	*Focus and concentration, intelligence, memory for facts/trivia, thinking skills, reasoning skills, curiosity and unique perspective*	22
Academic ability	*General knowledge/ability, literacy, maths-science and technology*	20
Social skills	*Communication, imitation, manners, etiquette and relations/connections*	29
Personal qualities	*Charisma, sense of humour, likeable, driven, committed, motivated, passionate, emotional stability, helpful, caring, kind, cooperative, open, willing, honest, true and positive attitude*	72
Average number of strengths mentioned per student		2.9

portrayed in the description of one student's strengths as, *very likeable—always smiling—needs to be social with his peers—able to take advice on board, wants to learn*. Other areas of strength that could more effectively inform the selection of teaching and learning strategies did not receive the same frequency of mentions. This prompted the inclusion of all categories in the model to encourage teachers to think more broadly about the strengths and abilities of the profiled student. There appeared to be a need to disrupt the focus on skills and qualities that simply supported classroom harmony and prompt for a broader profile of strengths more closely associated with personal learning success.

Analysis of the data revealed three significant themes relating to both barriers impacting the learning experience and the bridging strategies provided to minimise their impact (see Table 15.4). Contextual factors created within the environment, external to the student, can be managed and planned for independently by the educator. Experiential factors occur at the point of intersection between student, others and activities. Support in this realm requires collaboration and communication between staff and students to ensure effective outcomes. The third category is the intrapersonal factors which require the greatest level of input and effort from the student to generate change or growth; factors which may also be the most difficult for an educator to influence.

It is interesting to note the dominance of support strategies associated with organisation, tasks and activities. Within an inclusive school approach, pedagogies such as Universal Design for Learning, differentiation and personalised learning approaches would see task and activity supports built into organisational design and planning. In contrast, the number of supports offered through attention to social-emotional and sensory environments and intrapersonal characteristics, qualities, values and beliefs is minimal. Creating opportunities for greater support through the facilities, climate and culture of the school and classroom would align with SDG Target 4.a, which addresses the need for *education facilities that are disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all.*

The final component of the BBMS model is the section that identifies the targets for educational success (see Table 15.5). The diversity within the participant roles ensured a school-wide view of the influential elements. When perspectives were combined, the importance of planning simultaneously for student, staff, school and community success became apparent.

The BBMS provides a profiling framework that captures essential understandings about a student's strengths and abilities, factors which may disrupt the learning pathway, ways to avoid or minimise the challenges and a focus for targeting outcomes. The intention is to provide a

Table 15.4 Bridges and Barriers experienced by students with ASD

Themes	Sub-themes	Barriers No. of mentions $n = 56$	Bridges No. of mentions $n = 56$
Contextual factors	*Physical environment*	11	44
	Organisation	30	101
	Social-emotional environment	20	12
	Sensory environment	12	5
Experiential factors	*Relationships and connections*	23	58
	Interaction and communication	35	53
	Tasks and activities	48	93
Intrapersonal factors	*Health, physiology, wellbeing*	19	20
	Abilities and skills	5	25
	Qualities and characteristics	6	9
	Values and beliefs	18	6

Table 15.5 Markers of educational success as described by the participant group

Markers of success	Sub-themes	No. of mentions $n = 56$
Student outcomes and achievements	*Development, progress, growth, standards, high expectations, celebration, pride, acknowledgement, literacy, numeracy and oracy*	22
Student well-being	*Connected, valued, appreciated, happy, positive, safe, supported, secure, relaxed, independent, confident and resilient*	37
Student engagement	*Attendance, cooperation, teamwork, enthusiasm for learning, enjoyment of school life, ownership, responsibility, resolution and participation*	45
Planning and programming	*Differentiated activities/instruction, support, systems, structure, organisation, clear expectations /intentions /criteria, motivation, reinforcement, feedback, knowledge of ASD/students/teaching, regular monitoring and assessment*	26
Positive school community	*Quality staff: dedicated-successful-innovative-willing to learn, consistency, cohesion, collaboration, supportive peers, school-wide values, involved positive parents, student-centred, focus on learning and achievement*	37
Total markers of success		167

profile of information that can guide teacher understanding during the initial days of transition into a new teaching/learning context. Although designed through the data provided in relation to students with ASD, the universal nature of the themes and concepts used within the planning tool make it suitable for gathering profile data for any student. Figure 15.2 provides an example of how the information provided in the survey and interview data of one participant was collated within the BBMS framework. It is anticipated that when data is collected and collated from multiple sources, including the student, even richer information could be captured and shared between stakeholders.

15.8 Lessons Learned

Lessons from this study may be valuable in supporting teachers to improve educational provision for students with ASD, empowering

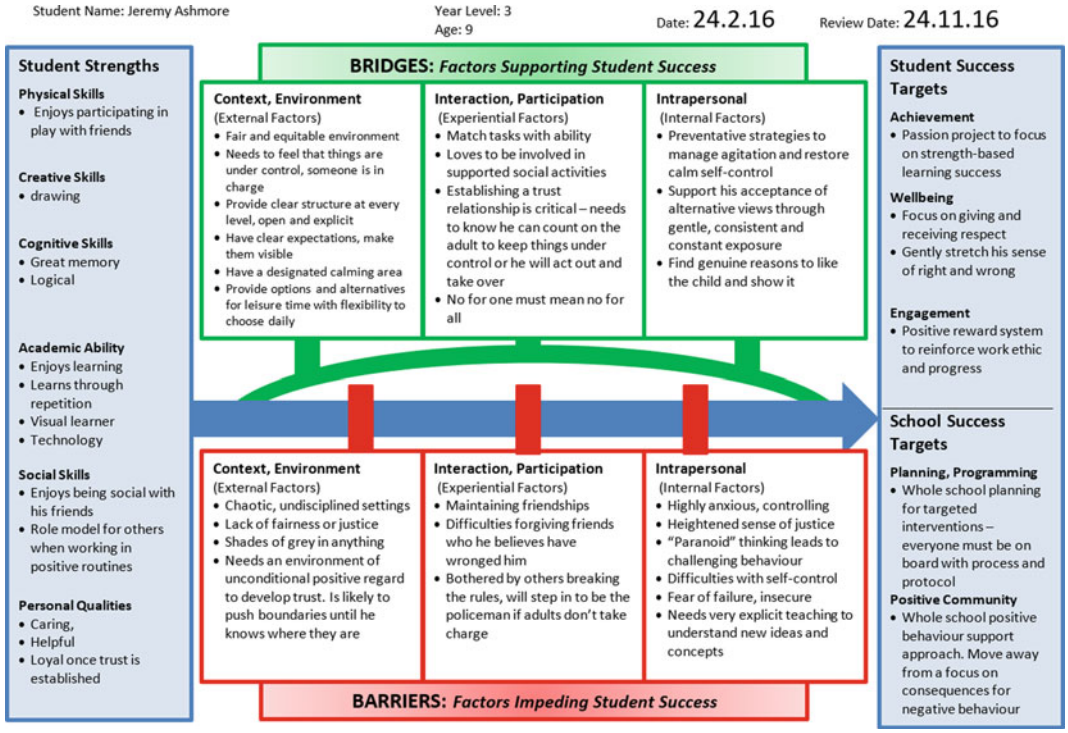

Fig. 15.2 Example of a completed BBMS profile

teachers to develop deeper insights into individual children so their planning can be more inclusive from the outset. Ideas that can inform future practice when teaching students with ASD include the following:

- Knowledge of ASD does not equate to knowledge of individual students with ASD. Understand the learner before the supportive strategies are selected.
- Perceptions of challenge appear to be externalized by many educators, resulting in fewer opportunities for self-empowerment of students. It is important to consider shifting the focus from the problem to the solution to identify what can be done within an informed understanding of the student's strengths, interests and abilities and the barriers threatening their success.
- Descriptions of strengths indicate a tendency towards low expectations of students with ASD. Consider more than their personality when seeking building blocks for growth.
- Having an evidence base does not guarantee that strategies will be successful. Strategies are more likely to be successful when they are:

  (a) aligned with individual needs, interests and abilities
  (b) implemented with a purposeful process and
  (c) understood from a perspective of clear and informed intention.

15.9 A Final Word

Current circumstances in Australian schools are not yet providing safe, inclusive and equitable learning environments for many students with ASD, often despite the best of intentions from their educators. However, with improved understanding of individual students, greater alignment between student needs and the strategic supports provided for them, and clear targeted goals, change is within reach. To *ensure inclusive and*

equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (SDG4) planning and provision for students with ASD does need to change.

Teachers and educational planners need to be empowered with tools and knowledge that supports not only individual student success, but to be truly inclusive, success for the whole school community. When informed by meaningful, authentic and responsive information, educators are more likely to build the confidence and competence required to embrace the Sustainable Development Goals. The BBMS can provide valuable guidance for educators by collating a range of bridging supports that build on identified strengths to rise above, reduce or remove barriers along the pathway to educational success for all.

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Wendy Holcombe is a lecturer in the fields of disability studies, inclusive education, gifted education, and social and emotional wellbeing/learning. Her research focus is in bridging the theory–practice gap to generate practical, evidence-based solutions for educational problems. She is currently completing a Ph.D. investigating processes for planning, preparing and managing inclusive classrooms. Wendy has extensive experience in education, having worked in early childhood, primary, secondary, tertiary and specialist settings, as well as conducting professional learning programs in hospitality and employment industries. Wendy has held past roles of classroom teacher, mentor teacher, specialist teacher, principal, regional behaviour consultant, regional autism teacher coach and Statewide ASD project officer. This variety of roles in a wide range of educational workplaces, has provided opportunities to develop rich insight into the needs and challenges experienced by staff, students and other school community members in the pursuit of educational success. She has published work in the Australian Journal of Teacher Education, presented in local and statewide conferences and has recently been appointed to the Education Teaching Quality and Student Retention Committee at Federation University.

Margaret Plunkett is an Adjunct Associate Professor in the Institute of Education, Arts and Community at Federation University Australia. She has been a teacher educator and researcher for more than three decades, specialising in the fields of rural and regional education, teacher professional learning and gifted education. She has extensive research expertise in both qualitative and quantitative methodologies and across all educational sectors, particularly in relation to diverse student populations in rural and regional areas, with much of the work focusing on the intersection between aspirations, rurality and achievement. Margaret has conducted research with schools in the Gippsland region, focusing on how educational environments can help develop knowledge, skills and competencies that assist in building meaningful and sustainable relationships and emotional competence within communities. Margaret is Associate Editor of the Australasian Journal of Gifted Education, and a member of a range of national and international education associations.

Digital Technology for Inclusive Education: Reflecting on the Role of Teachers

16

Helen Coker and Duncan Mercieca

Abstract

This chapter focuses on the role of teachers and their experiences of digital technology as a key social justice issue for the twenty-first century, where the role of the teacher is constructed as critical if schools are to provide inclusive and equitable education for all pupils. The factors which impact on teachers' use of digital technologies are critically examined through a theoretical framework of Nancy Fraser's writing about social justice, where Fraser focuses on the social structures and institutions which enable equitable participation and inclusion in society. This chapter draws examples from two research studies which explored the experiences of teachers in Scotland and their engagement with digital technology.

Keywords

Teachers · Digital technology · Nancy fraser · Social justice and inclusion · Rural · COVID-19

H. Coker (✉) · D. Mercieca
Division of Education and Society, University of Dundee, Dundee, Scotland, UK
e-mail: HCoker001@dundee.ac.uk

D. Mercieca
e-mail: DMercieca002@dundee.ac.uk

Author Positioning Statements

Helen lives in the Scottish Highlands in a small village. Her children attended small rural Primary and Secondary schools. Her research focuses on the potential of digital technology for collaboration in education, with a specific focus on teachers in rural settings. As a professional based in a rural location she has first hand experience, personally and professionally, of education in rural settings.

Duncan is a senior lecturer in the Division of Education and Society, at the University of Dundee. His research draws upon French post-structuralist philosophers to think about educational issues, in particular those related to diversity and otherness; inclusion and disability and critiquing education research and its methods.

16.1 Introduction

In the twenty-first century, it is common to engage with digital technology regularly, at home and at work. Children begin to use digital devices from a very early age (Burnett 2016). Digital skills and competences are important for employment, but increasingly they are also the means with which people engage in society. Politics, social relationships and access to services all involve digital participation. Reflective

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of this, the development of digital competence is included in many countries national curriculum and education policy documents. Teaching and learning in schools though, arguably, has not yet been transformed by the digital revolution (Caena and Redecker 2019). In this chapter, we focus on the role of teachers and their experiences of digital technology. In Europe, two thirds of countries include digital skills and competencies in their teacher competency frameworks (European Commission 2019), but research suggests that not all teachers are adequately prepared for a digital classroom (Instefjord and Munthe 2017; Gudmundsdottir and Hatlevik 2018; Ottestad et al. 2014; Roulston et al. 2019).

Our reflection on the role of teachers, and digital technology, is framed by Fraser's (2008) theoretical framework for social justice. Fraser focuses on the social structures and institutions which enable equitable participation and inclusion in society (Fraser 2008). From this perspective, we critically examine the factors which impact on teachers' use of digital technologies. Historically, the teacher's role as *gatekeeper to the classroom* has been overlooked by policymakers (Jandrić 2017). Drawing on Fraser's (2008) framework we bring into focus the social, cultural and institutional structures which influence teachers' engagement with digital technology. In doing so we highlight the importance of considering teachers' experiences with digital technology. Digital participation is a key social justice issue for the twenty-first century (White 2016) reflected by digital skills and competencies being key elements of twenty-first century schooling (European Commission 2019). The role of the teacher is critical if schools are to provide inclusive and equitable education for all pupils (SDG4, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs n.d.).

We begin with an overview of the role of digital technology in mainstream education, before introducing the work of Nancy Fraser. Two research studies which explored the experiences of teachers in Scotland and their engagement with digital technology for different purposes are then introduced. Drawing on these studies we use Fraser's theoretical framework (Fraser 2008) to critically examine teachers' experiences with digital technology.

16.2 Digital Technology in Education

Teachers have historically resisted the introduction of new technology into their classrooms (Bean 2009). While policymakers have introduced new technologies with enthusiastic claims about their potential to transform education, they have often been followed by small-scale implementation or unimaginative use of that technology in the classroom (Jandrić 2017; Kosnik et al. 2016). While individual teachers may have embraced new technology, the education system has sought conformity, continuing traditional classroom practices and absorbing new technologies into these. Digital technology has some noticeable differences to previous classroom technologies though because it does more than support teaching and learning within the physical boundaries of the classroom. It enables live, real-time connection to a global store of information and dialogues beyond the classroom. The physical and temporal boundaries of the traditional classroom become porous.

The growth of the internet has resulted in a shift from print-based media to digital media (Wegerif 2019). This shift in the way information is accessed and communicated foregrounds dialogue (García Carrión 2012). Where paper-based media enabled communication from one-to-many, digital media enables many-to-many communication (Wegerif 2019). This enables collaboration and extends discussion, creating new types of multi-modal dialogues (Jandrić et al. 2018). These dialogues are increasingly key elements of everyday life, connecting people on social media, providing access to news online and enabling people to search the Internet when they need information. The centrality of dialogue changes the way people engage with information and with the world (García Carrión 2012), impacting the ways in which understanding is constructed and meaning is negotiated. Digital media changes the way that pupils and teachers

can access information in and out of the classroom, giving both access to a wide and diverse range of information. This challenges the traditional dynamics of classroom roles as when information was stored in physical artefacts, such as books or videos, the teacher was in control of knowledge in the classroom (Kosnik et al. 2016). Digital media potentially challenges traditional power dynamics and opens the possibility of redefining the roles of pupil and teacher.

New literacy skills become important as pupils engage with digital texts (Lankshear and Knobel 2011). Developing a discerning approach to information found online, staying safe and developing confidence in the digital space become key capacities for education to develop (Burnett et al. 2019). The implications for children and young people go beyond accessing information; digital spaces are intertwined with the physical spaces in which people interact (Jandrić et al. 2018). Children and young people develop their identities and interact with peers through digital as well as physical spaces (Arndt et al. 2019). Digital connectivity mediates interactions with others, enabling interactions which are not constrained by physical distance. The Internet is becoming part of everyday life; children and young people are using digital devices from an early age, inside and outside of the classroom (Burnett et al. 2019).

For teachers these three considerations impact their experiences in the classroom: Digital technology enables greater access to information and knowledge beyond the boundaries of the traditional classroom. It challenges traditional power relationships. Digital technologies are intertwined with everyday life influencing children and young people's identity formation and life experiences.

16.3 Social Justice and Nancy Fraser

Fraser's work needs to be situated within a larger social justice discourse. Two interrelated points are worth reminding the reader: First, the concept of social justice has a long historical development. Over the last 180 years, since the Italian Jesuit Thomist Luigi Taparelli (1840–1843) used the term social justice for the first time, several key thinkers contributed significantly to the development of the concept. Rawls 1971, Rawls and Kelly 2001, Marion Iris Young (Young 1990) and Martha Nussbaum (2011) are only a few of the well know thinkers whose ideas have shaped the concept of social justice. The close link of the Catholic Church to the concept of social justice has also been an influential mark, with the Papal encyclical Rerum Novarum of Leo XIII issued in 1891 being the first of many documents (see Social Justice Resources Center). Yet, it is interesting to point out that while social justice historically is often seen as radically opposite at times, even an enemy to classical liberalism and neo-liberalism, we "now have a version of social justice that fits with free enterprise and a limited state" (Thrift and Sugarman 2019, p. 3). For example, according to Ryan Anderson (2017a, b), social justice depends on state actions that "make markets work better and work for more people by empowering more people to be market actors - empower more people to take control of their own lives and flourish" (para. 26). This leads us to our second point that there is a *problem* (Thrift and Sugarman 2019), p.3) with the multiple and often conflicting definitions, interpretations and understanding of social justice. According to Thrift and Sugarman (2019), "this is partly due to a tendency to use the term in vague and opaque ways" (p. 3). What often happens is that systems, services and provisions are constructed in response to injustices with the aim of developing more just societies, but there is no consensus regarding the definition of social justice driving these systems and services. The risk is that social justice becomes a performative endeavour rather one that liberates oppression (Freire 1970).

For Fraser, a theory of social justice "should not, provide a comprehensive account of the overall goodness or badness of society" (Dahl et al. 2004, p.378). Instead, Fraser argues that social justice asks:

> How fair or unfair are the terms of interaction that are institutionalized in the society? Does the society's structural–institutional framework, which sets the ground rules for social interaction, permit all to participate as peers in social interaction? Or does it institutionalize patterns of advantage and disadvantage that systematically prevent some people from participating on terms of parity? Do the society's institutionalized patterns of cultural value create status hierarchies, which impede parity of participation? Does its economic structure create class stratification, which also forecloses the possibility of parity? (Dahl et al. 2004, p. 378)

The above long quote taken from an interview by Fraser captures the essence of her social justice philosophy. It is not about the individual per se. Instead, the focus is on the systemic cause of injustices perpetuated by social institutions and social structures. In this light we think Fraser's work is particularly important in thinking about issues of inclusion and digital technology, where the focus is not on the individual but on how social institutions and social structures acknowledge and distribute digital technologies.

In the influential work *Scales of Justice: Reimagining Political Space in A Globalizing World*, Fraser (2008) offers a critique of the concept of justice through an investigation of the associated iconography, that being the scales of justice and a map, the image of a (single) scales of justice managed by an impartial judge. But fundamental questions arise when it is assumed that there are multiple scales: if multiple scales are used to measure justice, then how do these converge together? Are there moments when they converge? If they do not converge, how can we have a collective understanding of social justice? These questions need to be seen within the rise of identity politics and free-market neoliberalism in the last thirty years or so. Over many years of writing, Fraser's work has been rotating around three main ideas: the politics of recognition, the politics of distribution and the politics of representation. While these are interrelated, for a quick overview we start with the politics of recognition.

The complexity with the politics of recognition is that often it focuses on a group's specific identity. Fraser argues for "the demand for recognition of people's standing as full partners in social interaction, able to participate as peers with others in social life." (Dahl et al. 2004, p. 377). There is a shift from reading people's lives from a deficit perspective to a more participatory perspective. Within this perspective the politics of distribution is not about giving to substitute or compensate for that deficit but is about bringing about participation. If the focus of recognition is based on a deficit perspective, then it becomes a question of *fixing* the imbalance through redistribution to groups of people. The politics of redistribution tries to lessen the obstacles caused by socio-economic inequalities through either eliminating economic barriers or reallocating resources to redress the deficit. If the focus is on participation, then it is a political issue and locates the injustice within institutionalized hierarchies of cultural and economic value that prevent some members of society from participating as peers in social interaction. This results in involving strategies of affirmation. Together with economic and cultural injustices, Fraser adds another dimension, that of political injustices. Political injustices reside in "the nature of the state's jurisdiction and the decision rules by which it structures contestation" (Fraser 2008, p. 278). They contribute to marginalization and misrepresentation (whereby political decision rules wrongly deny some the right to participate in decision-making) and misframing (where some members and groups are deemed outside the legitimate political community). Political injustice, for Kevin Olsen (2008), is the politics of inclusion. It is when people are marginalized from equal citizenship. For Olsen, the remedy for this is the development of more inclusive societies.

We draw on two recent research studies to examine digital technologies for education through this social justice lens. Foregrounding the experiences of teachers and head teachers, we examine the way social structures acknowledge and distribute digital technologies and the impact of this on equity of participation.

16.4 Research Studies

The research studies we will draw on were carried out in Scotland by the authors of this chapter. Both studies were qualitative and involved interviewing Scottish teachers. In Scotland, digital development is a key policy driver, and the Scottish government aims to connect all households in Scotland to the internet, ensuring superfast broadband for all (Scottish Government 2020). Scotland has a population of five and a half million people (ONS 2020). Most of the population is based in the central belt, a low-lying area of the country in which the two largest cities—Glasgow and Edinburgh—are situated. The areas out with the central belt are predominantly rural, with dispersed populations. In the north and west of the country mountainous regions and islands provide a challenging landscape to install broadband. The roll-out of rural broadband has been largely successful though. In the highland region 80% of homes are now connected to superfast broadband (HIE 2020). With increased connectivity (access to the internet), Scotland aims to become "a vibrant, inclusive, open and outward looking digital nation" (Scottish Government 2017).

16.4.1 Rural Teachers and Professional Learning

The first research study focused on professional learning opportunities for rural teachers (Coker 2019). It was carried out as the roll-out of rural broadband increased connectivity across rural areas of Scotland. It formed part of a larger study in which other rural professionals were also interviewed (Coker 2021). Interviews with teachers explored their experiences of professional learning and their related use of digital technology. Structural, cultural and attitudinal factors were found to influence their experiences with digital technology for professional learning. While digital technology provided access to information and interactions with others, the use of digital technology for effective professional learning was discussed in terms of potential, rather than actuality.

16.4.2 Teaching During Lockdown

The second study was conducted during the first COVID-19 lockdown in Scotland (see McLennan et al. 2020; Ferguson et al. 2021; Brown et al. 2021). One of the authors of this chapter worked with a larger group of researchers from the School of Education and Social Work at the University of Dundee, all of whom were keen to capture the impact of this unprecedented event on the lives of children, their families and educators. The research group was *curious* about what teachers made of their current experiences of work and the contribution of this to their thinking about what is valued in their work as a teacher or head teacher as they supported children's and families' learning during the lockdown, a time when digital technologies were the prevalent mode of education. The wider project was led by the following research question: What are primary school educators' experiences of teaching from home/in hub during the COVID-19 lockdown in Scotland?

16.5 Teachers Use of Digital Technology

In this section, we examine the experiences of teachers, as captured in the two studies introduced above, as they engage with digital technology in their daily practice. Teachers in the rural professional learning study had experienced the urban–rural digital divide, which has been observed internationally (Odero and Chinapah 2016; Phillip et al. 2017). Rural areas across the globe are likely to have poorer access to the internet due to the geographical challenges of providing connectivity. At the time the research study was carried out, the roll-out of rural broadband had recently improved connectivity in the rural areas in which the teachers worked. SDG4 Education, in Target 4a includes "(b) the Internet for pedagogical purposes" and "(c)

computers for pedagogical purposes" in their list of facilities that will provide "inclusive and effective learning environments for all" (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, n.d.). In line with the government's aims that digital technology enables inclusion (Scottish Government 2016), the development of digital infrastructure provided teachers and schools with increased access to digital technology. This attended to the distributive aspect of social justice (Fraser 2008) by providing rural teachers (and pupils) access to the Internet and the provision of the tools required to access it. The research study highlighted the inconsistency of connectivity provision across rural areas at the time, even though the roll-out of broadband had been largely successful: some teachers had good connectivity at school but not at home, others had good connectivity at home but not at school. However, the findings suggested that the distribution of digital technology was only one of the factors which influenced teacher's engagement with digital technology for professional learning.

The institutional structures of education position rural teachers in a particular way. In America, education policy and development arguably overlook the rural (Howley and Howley 2014) and in Australia educational research is dominated by metropolitan methodologies (Corbett and White 2014; Green and Reid 2014). In Scotland, the rural professional learning study observed structures which positioned rural teachers on the periphery of the professional community. Before the introduction of digital technology, geographical location meant that challenges of distance, time and cost inhibited participation in professional learning activities:

> We're at the bottom of the valley so you just don't go to certain things. (teacher participant)
> Being in a rural School the opportunities are often so far away that its travel expenses as well as the time and potentially accommodation. (teacher participant)

With many professional learning opportunities being provided in urban areas and as twilights (early evening sessions) distance, time and cost often prohibited rural teachers from attending.

With the introduction of digital technology, geographic distance was removed as a factor which excluded rural teachers, but other structural and cultural factors still influence their participation. For teachers working in primary settings (with pupils aged 3–11 years), the smaller and distributed nature of the school teams were problematic. An example of this is engagement with professional learning networks: Professional learning networks are organized around subjects such as Literacy or Numeracy, and representatives are invited to participate from every school. In schools with small staff teams (typical of rural primary schools) there are not enough members to attend all the networks, teachers either need to attend more than one, or schools are not linked to all the networks. This impacts on participation; rural teachers are restricting from participating equitably even when digital technology enables attendance at events, and interactions with peers, in the network (Coker 2019).

The smaller staff teams mean that rural teachers and schools are not provided with equitable opportunities to represented because of the organizational structures for professional learning. The small staff teams also impact participation in terms of accessing professional learning opportunities online (webinars or courses), as they are tasked with filtering the information and opportunities available on the Internet. This requires more of teachers working in small schools as there are less of them to share the load (Coker 2019). The distribution of digital technology in this case did not attend to the representative aspects of social justice. The professional learning opportunities which rural teachers discussed are embedded in structures which have previously placed rural teachers on the periphery because of their geographic location. Digital technology being distributed has not automatically provided rural teachers with equity of participation as the organizational structures have not changed.

Attitudes towards digital technology were varied across the cohort of teachers interviewed in the professional learning study. A factor which influenced this was their previous experiences

when engaging with professional learning using digital technology. For example, facilitation of online professional learning activities was inconsistent, where facilitation was poor it did not provide an equitable opportunity to participate:

> The delivery is a bit sloppy, sometimes the sound link is poor, sometimes there's lots of background noise, they put the microphone by the coffee cups. (teacher participant)

Experiences of poorly facilitated sessions influence teachers' attitudes towards this delivery format. Attitudes towards digital technology were identified as a key influence in relation to rural teachers' engagement with digital technology (Coker 2021). This factor is wider than just rural teachers though. Scottish education has a recent history which has influenced a tacit resistance to digital technology in the professional community. As Feenberg posits, technology is situated in history (Feenberg 2010). In Scotland, teachers have a recent history connected with the development of a national intranet for education called GLOW (Conlon 2008). As one teacher in the rural professional learning study recounted, the original roll-out of GLOW had been problematic:

> GLOW, fraught with difficulty because you put your password in and you can't remember it, it locks you out, you can't get in, it's just like a nightmare right … It's all right for me, I'm quite happy about using technology, so it works, but I have just known so many teachers … who are just not friendly around technology. (teacher participant)

A new version of GLOW had been released by the time this research study was carried out, but experiences of the original version were recounted and remembered. This has posed a challenge to engagement with digital technology in some schools. Over the past few years, schools in Scotland have nominated *champions* to take forward the use of digital technology in schools. As observed in the second research study, the COVID-19 lockdown had a profound influence on the engagement of the wider school staff with digital technology. One teacher, a technology champion in her school, had, prior to lockdown, been offering weekly support to her colleagues with their digital technology issues. She reported that over three years she had only had a handful of people going to her for support. She had felt that her colleagues did not value digital technology and did not put in enough effort to familiarize themselves with it more:

> This is my third year in this current school, and I spent those three years up until the last week before school closure having those colleagues tell me that they are not interested in digital literacy, they hate it. I provided a drop-in session every week and in three years, I had three people come, so every Wednesday after school I spent time in ICT suite offering to help them train them because they all said that they were being deskilled. I was demotivated by that whole kind of scene in my setting. So that's completely changed with the schools' closure. And, uh, my days I can hear my phone and my iPad, my school laptop, my own laptop, and it literally starts about 7:30 in the morning. Ding Ding, Ding, Ding and I can be sorting out problems until 11:00 o'clock at night… I've been so busy in this lockdown. (teacher participant)

The experience of this teacher is reflected in accounts from those taking part in the professional learning study, who shared their experiences of digital technology in schools:

> I mean technology isn't my area of expertise … and that perhaps reflects the kind of state that we're in when we're using it because the fact that I'm not as fluent when I'm talking about the technology… (teacher participant)
>
> There's a lot of teachers who have never needed to use technology and then suddenly it's there. (teacher participant)

Before the pandemic and school lockdowns, teachers' competence and confidence with technology was inconsistent, influenced by an historic lack of physical infrastructure (attended to in recent years) and poor experiences when using digital technology. During lockdown, technology became the sole medium through which teaching and engaging with pupils and families took place. One could argue that prior to COVID-19, teachers not valuing technology were not seen as creating injustices. But following the unexpected change in the political scenario, recognition and redistribution changed rapidly, exacerbating the issue of in/exclusions. Many teachers were

experiencing a rather steep learning curve with this medium and many were struggling.

Scottish teachers' engagement with digital technologies is situated within a history of participation (internationally) which reflects these patterns of engagement. Technology has been seen as an addition or enhancement to the human interactions of the classroom where the *real work* happens (Knox 2019). This is reflected in the comments of the teachers above. In all four of the previous comments there is mention of some teachers' lack of confidence or competence with technology. Digital technology (to which the teachers are referring) is positioned out with the core work of teacher, with an unspoken assumption that it was not (until the pandemic) a pre-requisite for all teachers. The pandemic challenged this positioning of digital technology. The need to use digital technology to teach highlighted the digital skills and competences (or lack of) of teachers' and challenged the status-quo.

One Head Teacher, in teaching during lockdown study, reported becoming aware that their teachers were now being gauged by parents differently:

> What's been interesting to me as the Head Teacher and what I've learnt is the members of the staff team who are very good practitioners on the ground aren't necessarily coming across like that in the digital world. So, I've had lots of wonderful messages from parents saying, "Mr X is amazing", or "Miss X is like this, she's brilliant", and I'm actually like, do you know what, in the classroom, their practice isn't matching the level of praise that they're receiving now publicly. Whereas I have some really good classroom practitioners who are very experienced, who know the curriculum inside out, and who will do their very, very best by their children, but in terms of their ability to be able to cope and operate with Teams and upload work, isn't matched, and so I have parents emailing in saying, 'I'm not getting this from that teacher, I'm not getting that. (Head teacher participant)

Such comparative thinking was also reflected in the teachers' interviews as they constantly compared face-to-face to online teaching. One teacher described that she no longer benefits from the instant reaction of her students and feels that she engages in more explanatory teaching because of this lack. We need to point out that, in the first lockdown, many schools in Scotland were following regulations which did not allow live online interaction to take place.

> I think it made me realize how much I assume that the children know without it being explained, I think you get to know your class so well that they know what you mean in a way that parents don't. So, I think, okay, well, that explanation would have totally sufficed in the classroom, and it's not at all, you know, I've had to really think about how I explain things and how I word things. I realize how much I rely on instant feedback from the children. Because you get feedback, you know, a hundred times a minute in the classroom and by their faces and you don't have that at all when you're saying, "Work this out on MS Teams," and then you're just left... (head teacher participant)

This comparison with face-to-face experiences was also observed in the rural professional learning study when teachers were discussing their own experiences of learning. It highlights the relational nature of teacher practice:

> It's actually really, really difficult because you can't beat the professional connection that you get with people when you physically sit in the same room as them and have a conversation (teacher participant)

Several issues can be raised here, but certainly, there is a need to question not only how digital technology was being used, but also teachers' understanding of digital technology. This is important as this provides the *framework* (Fraser 2008) from which teachers can refer to digital technology. Teachers' own experience and understanding of digital technology provides the frame of reference for their constructions of teaching and learning for their students. Mainstream schooling has happened in a classroom for many years, and the relational nature of practice is reflected in the value given to face-to-face interactions reflected in the comparisons drawn above. The move online disrupted the patterns of cultural value which have placed face-to-face interactions and experiences as central to the mainstream classroom.

Teachers' use of digital technology and their related experiences highlight the need to go beyond distributive social justice and socio-

economic factors when considering digital technology in terms of inclusion. To provide equity of participation, digital technology needs to be considered in relation to the inherent challenges and potential disruption it poses to education. While the political context positions digital technology to be inclusive and equitable (see section above), the experiences of teachers do not suggest that they are all participating equitably when using digital technology, this is likely to have implications for pupils. Political decisions and education policy which promote digital technology are meeting the cultural narratives and structures of a teaching profession which has historically resisted technology (Jandrić 2017) or positioned it as an enhancement or addition to classroom practice (Knox 2019). Considering redistribution, recognition and representation (Fraser 2008) engages with the complexity of educational practice. In engaging with digital technologies teachers may be required to rethink their role and identity (Virmani and Williamson 2016). The structures in which they work may hamper their engagement with digital technology. To develop spaces in which all teachers can participate equitably when using digital technology, the situated and relational nature of teaching are key considerations.

16.6 Conclusion

Nancy Fraser's work has helped us to understand the role of digital technology by enabling us to think about the political and cultural dimensions, in relation to recognition and redistribution. Her call to see the systemic cause of injustices perpetuated by social institutions and social structures has challenged us to think about inclusion differently. We propose that to understand the role of digital technology for inclusion in mainstream classrooms, we need to consider the ways in which it enables participation. In this chapter, we have focused on teachers, examining their experiences with digital technology. Large variances have been observed in teachers' participation in the digital domain for teaching and learning. Future work could explore the experiences of families, pupils, and those involved in the wider education system. We propose that in focusing on the participation of teachers (or other stakeholders in the education system) we can find ways to open democratic dialogues where digital technology supports participation but is also challenged by it.

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Dr. Helen Coker is a lecturer, teaching and research, in the division of Education and Society at the University of Dundee in Scotland. She began her career as a Primary school teacher teaching in England, Australia and Scotland. Since moving into Higher Education Helen has taught on a range of undergraduate and postgraduate education programmes. Her research focuses on digital learning.

17 Moving Towards a Sustainable Future for Women in Afghanistan Through Increased Tertiary Education Participation: Challenges and Possibilities

Parwaiz Najibi and Claire McLachlan

Abstract

As the title of this chapter suggests, our objective is to highlight challenges faced by Afghan women with regard to access to tertiary education. More than four decades of sustained conflict have devastated Afghanistan's education system (UNICEF 2019). For many children, even completing primary school remains a distant dream, especially in rural areas and particularly for females. According to UNICEF (2019), one of the key challenges for Afghanistan is the estimated two-thirds of the female population who key not currently attend school. While security in the country is deteriorating, the progress towards female enrolment in schools is also declining. As a result of the ongoing unrest, many Afghan families have fled their villages and are concentrated in cities where they live in poverty (Baiza 2013) and with little access to educational services. Yet, according to (UNESCO 2009), education is the most powerful weapon for bringing about positive change in the world. Moreover, increased participation of women in tertiary education is anticipated to lead to improved economic growth and stability (McLean 2020; UNICEF 2011). This chapter examines problems and potential solutions to Afghanistan's current issues in relation to women's access to tertiary education.

Keywords

Women · Afghanistan · Tertiary education

Author Positioning Statements

Parwaiz: My interest in Afghan female education has developed over many years. In December 2019, I travelled to Afghanistan to visit family; quickly, I realised that the only way for Afghanistan to move forward is to have a better education system for women and increase their enrolment in tertiary education.

Claire: I come from Aotearoa New Zealand and am descended from Scottish, Irish, English and German immigrants. My primary field of research is early childhood education, in which I have examined issues of early literacy, physical activity, teachers' beliefs and practices and assessment and evaluation. I was a member of the writing team for the revised bicultural early childhood curriculum, Te Whariki (Ministry of

P. Najibi (✉) · C. McLachlan
Institute of Education, Arts and Community, Federation University, Mount Helen, Australia
e-mail: parwaiznajibi@students.federation.edu.au

C. McLachlan
e-mail: c.mclachlan@federation.edu.au

S. Weuffen et al. (eds.), *Inclusion, Equity, Diversity, and Social Justice in Education*, Sustainable Development Goals Series, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-5008-7_17

Education 2017) and am passionate about creating equitable opportunities for learning in young children.

17.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to identify key issues and possible solutions associated with access to tertiary education for women in Afghanistan. Sustained periods of conflict have negatively impacted Afghanistan's education system resulting in many children not completing primary school, and an estimated two-thirds of the female population not even attending school (UNICEF 2019). Yet education is an important building block for future development of any nation, particularly where ongoing conflict has impacted access to the extent that it has in Afghanistan. As such, the focus of this chapter has pertinent links with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) relating to inclusion and equity, which seeks to:

> ensure all people, irrespective of sex, age, race, colour, ethnicity, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, or birth, as well as persons with disabilities, migrants, indigenous peoples, and children and youth, especially those in vulnerable situations or other status, should have access to inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities. (UNESCO 2019, p. 2)

There is also a link with another of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals SDG5 relating to gender equity, which seeks to achieve "gender equality and empower all women and girls" (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs n.d.). This goal asserts that ending discrimination against women and girls is a basic human right and crucial for a sustainable future, as empowering women can assist economic growth and development. Thus, it is important that reasons for participation of women in tertiary education are explored. Therefore, a brief overview of the history and current focus of Afghanistan's education system and an analysis of its probable effects on female participation and outcomes for women are provided. The influences of individual, social and cultural belief systems on individual decision-making in relation to pursuing tertiary education are explored and suggestions for increasing participation in tertiary education for women presented.

17.2 The Context for Education in Afghanistan

The context for women's education in Afghanistan involves several factors. It is determined by the geography, history, religion, ethnicity, and socioeconomic factors of the country. The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan is located in the heart of south-central Asia and is an important geographic location for trade, connecting southern and eastern Asia to Europe and the Middle East. The country has extensive cross-border ties with neighbouring countries (Saikal 2012). Due to its strategic location, it has been a land of interest for many empire builders. However, for the last four decades, a civil war has resulted in many Afghan people dying or migrating to neighbouring countries (Petrov et al. 2016). Countrymeters.info (n.d.) estimated the total population of Afghanistan to be 40.2 million, of which 48.3% are women. Of the 5.6 million women who are employed, 64.8% are in the agriculture sector, with the other 35.2% in manufacturing (Trading Economics 2021). The population is composed of various ethnic groups, reflected in the various languages found in the population. The ethnic groups are Pashtuns, Hazars, Tajiks, Uzbeks, Baloch, Turkman, Nuristani, Pamiri, Arab, Gujar, Brahui, Qizilbash, Aimaq, Pashai and Kyrghzy (Mazhar et al. 2012). There are many recognised and unrecognised languages in Afghanistan, but the two main languages are Dari and Pashtu. Most of the country understand both languages (Central Intelligence Agency 2015). In terms of religion, most Afghan people practice the Islamic religion, although there are also people from other faiths, such as Hindus and Sikhs.

Afghanistan is a poor country, listed as the 13th most impoverished country in the world (Hakimi et al. 2020). Life expectancy is 49.1 years for both genders (World Bank 2013). However, things were not always this way; the social and economic downfall is due to four decades of war and conflict (Mehtarkhan 2016). It is difficult to access current statistical data on many aspects relating to life in Afghanistan due to the ongoing conflict, but some older statistics present a fairly dire picture, which is unlikely to have changed much in recent times, although it is possible, they could be worse. The National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (NRVA) 2011–2012 suggested that more than a third (36.5%) of the population live under the poverty line, which is defined as an average income of 1255 Afs (US $22) per month, per supported person. Employment is generally insecure with jobs offering low salaries, which are often below the poverty line and opportunities for female employment are low (Ministry of Education, (MoE) 2014). These factors have a significant impact on female participation in education at all levels.

The Afghanistan education structure consists of grades 1–12, with options for vocational education and higher education above grade 13. Religious institutes are run by clerics at the mosques, funded and regulated by the Department of Islamic Education in the Ministry of Education (Karlsson and Mansory 2007). The government provides free education at state schools with primary schools starting from age seven (UNESCO 2015), with three further years of secondary education. The modern primary education system was established between 1868 to 1878 when the first two formal schools were built. One school was established for the public, and the other one was the military institute (Andishmand 2011). Between 1901 and 1919, two additional schools were built, with the first two schools modernised to become similar to the current education system (Khwajamir 2016). During the rule of King Amanullah Khan (1919–1929), primary schooling was made compulsory, and the first females were enrolled in university (Khwajamir 2016). Schools were also opened in other cities, and the number of primary schools increased to 322. Many students received scholarships to study in Turkey, Germany, Italy, and Russia. In 1921, female only schools were opened, and many women were sent on scholarship to Turkey for study purposes (Ghosh 2003).

Women's participation in Afghanistan's higher education system has been highly influenced by its political context. When the Taliban came to power (1996–2001), all female tertiary education facilities were closed, except for the medical faculty in Kabul (Equality for Peace and Democracy 2011), because female doctors were needed. The only permitted employment for women was medical professions; all other options for employment were banned (Rasmi 2001). After the fall of the Taliban government in 2001, the universities were reopened, and female enrolment was once again allowed. With the help of international aid, the government focused on education and opened new universities, such as the Bamiyan University and the Badakhshan University (Equality for Peace and Democracy 2011). Barr (2017) reported considerable progress in the previous decade in relation to accessing primary and secondary education, with enrolments increasing from one to nine million children, including 39% females. However, the education system remains the poorest in the world (Dastan et al. 2021). Statistics from 2014 reported only 7% of men and 3% of women possessing any level of formal education, although primary and secondary completion had improved, especially for girls (Central Statistics Organisation 2014). At that time, it was reported that approximately 3.3 million children were not attending school (Central Statistics Organisation 2014).

Today, politics continues to play a significant role in access to higher education in Afghanistan. Yet Article 34 of the current Constitution states that the "Government of Afghanistan is responsible for providing free higher education to the Afghan citizen" (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Ministry of Higher Education 2009, p. 12). According to A. B. Sabawoon (personal communication, May 1, 2020), who is a senior lecturer at Alfalah University and government advisor for higher education, there are limited places available in public universities in

Afghanistan, so sending a child to university involves an economic barrier. Parents have the option of sending their children overseas (mainly to India) or to privately funded universities, which receive no government support. In addition, any form of university education incurs related costs, such as lost domestic services, transportation, stationery, clothing, and communication costs. Privately funded universities cost between 20,000 and 100,000 Afghani per annum (approximately $250–1250 USD per annum), beyond the reach of most families as the annual family income is well below the cost of annual university tuition (Equality for Peace and Democracy 2011). The next section addresses the current challenges for education within this system, focusing on the greater challenges for females.

17.2.1 Key Challenges Associated with the Afghanistan Education System

There are many issues preventing women from attending universities in Afghanistan beyond that of finances. These include concerns about safety, sanitation, poor educational quality, and cultural and religious practices (UNICEF 2016). At present, less than 2% of the female population enrol in tertiary education (AfghanAid 2019), creating problems for the economic and social growth of the society. In many developing nations, a high percentage of women receive little or no education (Krzyzanowsk, 2018) despite the acknowledged benefits, including improved health outcomes, economic development, personal agency, and empowerment (Global Partnership for Education 2014; Mirzada 2019).

Another barrier to gaining an education, and in particular tertiary education, is how women are positioned within society. Afghanistan is a patriarchal society where men hold primary power in political leadership roles, control of property, social privilege, and moral authority (Kandiyoti 1988). This form of patriarchy is unlike other Islamic countries, in that Afghanistan is more tribal than Islamic (Abirafeh 2009). Tribal practices typically overshadow Islamic laws, especially in relation to gender issues. For example, in Islam, women choose whom to marry, whereas in tribal practices, the family chooses the husband (Walby 1990). It can be argued then that both religious and tribal practices support the patriarchal system in operation in Afghanistan. According to Schmeidl (2009), Afghanistan's male-centred society has a significant impact on women's lives: in the tribal system, particularly in rural areas, elder male members such as a woman's father, brother, elder son, and husband make all decisions on her behalf (Azarbaijani & Schmeidl, 2002; Schmeidl, 2009). As Nijat (2014) argues, Afghan society is "elitist at its core, populist in its aura, and misogynist in its heart, where women are secondary citizens, always one of four: someone's daughter, sister, wife or mother" (p. 1). Those who do not accept these propositions are deemed to have less dignity. Men and women have specific roles, where women are submissive to the needs of men. Their main role is to ensure the happiness of men and to compliment men's superior role in public (Manganaro and Alozie 2011). Men are expected to protect the family, make decisions, and provide the family income (Moghadam 2002), which entitles them to play an active role in the public domain.

In contrast, a women's designated role isolates them and precludes many opportunities, including education and professional career (A. B Sabawoon, personal communication, July 17, 2021). Women are the family's backbone, and their role includes cooking, cleaning, caring for the elderly, and for children. There is a common saying in Afghanistan: "Women [are] either at home or in the grave" (Kehoe 2008, p. 39). Children's roles are also divided along gender lines (Karlsson and Mansory 2007). There are further restrictions when girls reach puberty, including unaccompanied travel and limiting socialisation to other females. In public, women are expected to behave in certain ways to protect the family's honour (Moghadam, 1992). In addition, women *elders* also exercise power over younger women. Kandiyoti (1988) argues this is because women enter into a *patriarchal bargain*,

where "subordination to men is offset by the control older women attain over younger women and also over their sons" (p. 279). According to Afzali (2017), older women play an active role in discouraging women from attending education by saying, "their mother and grandmother [had] never starved to death just because they couldn't read and write" (p. 46).

Another significant barrier to female participation in higher education is Purdah. This term means curtain and is another excuse to prevent women from obtaining an education (Emadi 2002). Purdah is the system used by men to seclude women and enforce female modesty (Papanek 1971). Purdah prescribes that Afghan women must dress in a certain way when they leave home; they must be covered with a burqa, particularly in rural areas; and in the cities, a headscarf is required (Papanek 1971). In the current social and religious climate, Afghan culture and customs force women to live in extreme Purdah (seclusion), limiting their opportunities for education, decision-making, involvement in politics, social affairs, or work (Khan et al. 2021; Karlsson and Mansory 2007). This system of Purdah enables men to exercise control over women. While women are labelled as important and responsible units in the family, they are vulnerable to condemnation when in the public space (Ramírez 2015).

Religion also plays an important role in shaping women's opportunities for education in Afghanistan. Islam came to Afghanistan in the early seventh century (Jones 2007), and now approximately 99% of the population follow this religion, which is validated in Afghanistan's first constitution. There are many sayings and practices of the Prophet Muhammad that specify the importance of education for women. There are also verses in the Quran which state that all men and women should acquire knowledge (Azizi 2008). These verses make it evident that Islam promotes education regardless of class or gender. The first verses of the Quran begin with the words:

> Read. Read in the name of thy Lord who created; [He] created the human being from blood clot. Read in the name of the Lord who taught by the pen: [He] taught the human being what he did not know. (96: 1-5)

Emadi (2002) states that Afghan men should stop promoting the belief that Islam does not allow women to study. This is the responsibility of men, because many women are illiterate and therefore not aware of their educational rights under Islam.

In recent years, however, the women of Afghanistan have moved from political isolation, which was imposed during the time of the Taliban (Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan) and Mujahedeen (religious soldiers), to being able to participate in social, economic, education, employment, and decision-making activities, as part of the reconstruction of Afghanistan (Mirzada 2019). Additionally, women were given an opportunity to participate in the Upper House in Parliament (Wolesi Jirga), with 64 of 249 seats reserved for women in accordance with the constitution, providing significant cultural capital (Larson 2016). The willingness to contribute to society has guaranteed the women of Afghanistan at least 22 of 102 seats in the Lower House (Meshrano Jirga), in accordance with Article 83 of The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (2004).

Despite this visible involvement of women in civil society, some traditional and customary practices persist that are harmful to women and limit their opportunities to exercise civil rights. Many Afghan women are limited to the boundaries of their homes (Bamik 2018). In areas that are controlled by the Taliban, women are not allowed to leave home without a husband, brother, or father (Myatt 2015). Lack of employment can lead to an increase in abuse, and it is estimated that 90% of Afghan females suffer from some sort of abuse, including physical or emotional (AfghanAid 2019). In addition, 70–80% of women are forced to marry before the age of 16, and are rarely included in important decision-making regarding marriage, family planning, and their well-being (AfghanAid 2019). While Afghanistan's fertility rate is one of the highest in the world (6 births/woman), it also has the highest maternal mortality rates (460 per

100,000) and infant mortality rates (122 deaths per 1,000 live births) in the world (Najafizada et al. 2017). Many Afghan children suffer from mental or physical underdevelopment (59%) due to malnutrition that occurred before the age of two (United Nations Development Plan 2013). Research shows that in countries with high levels of female education, fertility rates are lower (Urdal and Che 2013), with corresponding increases in maternal and child health (Bbaale and Mpuga 2011). Thus, education is imperative for women.

17.2.2 Women's Participation in Education

A major issue is the low participation of women in tertiary education (A.B Sabawoon, personal communication, May 1, 2020). With higher female participation in tertiary education, there would be more mentors and role models for younger female students, including demonstrated pathways to employment and more female teachers as outlined in the National Education Strategic Plan, 2017–2021 (Ministry of Education, 2014). In part, tertiary enrolments are driven by the number of high school graduates. The percentage of girls who enrol in secondary education is approximately 38% of those who are known to have completed primary education. Of those who complete secondary education, just over 4% enrol in tertiary education (Shayan 2015). When considered over the entire population of young women of the appropriate age, a survey by AfganAid (2019) suggests that less than 2% enrol in tertiary education. The decline in relative female enrolment is shown in Fig. 17.10.

In a study by Haqmal (2011) in which 500 women were interviewed, 34.6% reported that families would not allow them to attend school, with lack of security the primary concern for 25.3%, lack of access to girls' schools was 22.3%, and the family's weak financial situation accounted for 18%. Another study conducted by the Afghanistan Government's Human Rights Commission (Zoy 2009) involving 311 girls, found that just over half (160) indicated they could not access education due to distance from school, family customs, and a shortage of female teachers.

It can be argued that of all the aspects of Afghan culture that have a negative effect on women's rights and lack of access to education is the most important. The revised constitution of Afghanistan (2004), and previous versions, all state that every Afghan citizen is equal and has the right to obtain an education. This constitutional right aligns with UN SDG 4, which requires inclusive and equitable quality education and promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for all. Despite this enshrined right, cultural barriers do not allow women to pursue this goal (Vorgetts 2002). Men who support female education are vulnerable to extremist groups (Morat and Seddiqi 2008), although it is less dangerous for women to attend education in some provinces if they are covered with a scarf or burqa, reflecting cultural and tribal differences (Emadi 2002). This situation is not confined to Afghanistan. A study conducted in South Asian countries found that it is not possible for women to attend tertiary education without family support (Bagguley and Hussain 2007). According to Moghadam (2002), woman will only be able to obtain tertiary education when cultural change enables men to support women. As previously stated, decisions about women are made by men, who are influenced by social norms and customs (Haqmal 2011; Manganaro and Alozie 2011). Families may also be concerned about women's safety travelling to university or employment (Abdulbaqi 2009), as studies report women being harassed verbally, physically, and sexually. Some of the potential issues preventing women from attending university include threats and harassment, as well as the cost of getting safely to university. A combination of safety and financial cost makes travelling to university an issue for most female students (Equality for Peace and Democracy 2011; Mashriqi 2013). The next section examines how women's rights to education could be achieved, building on evidence from other developing Islamic nations.

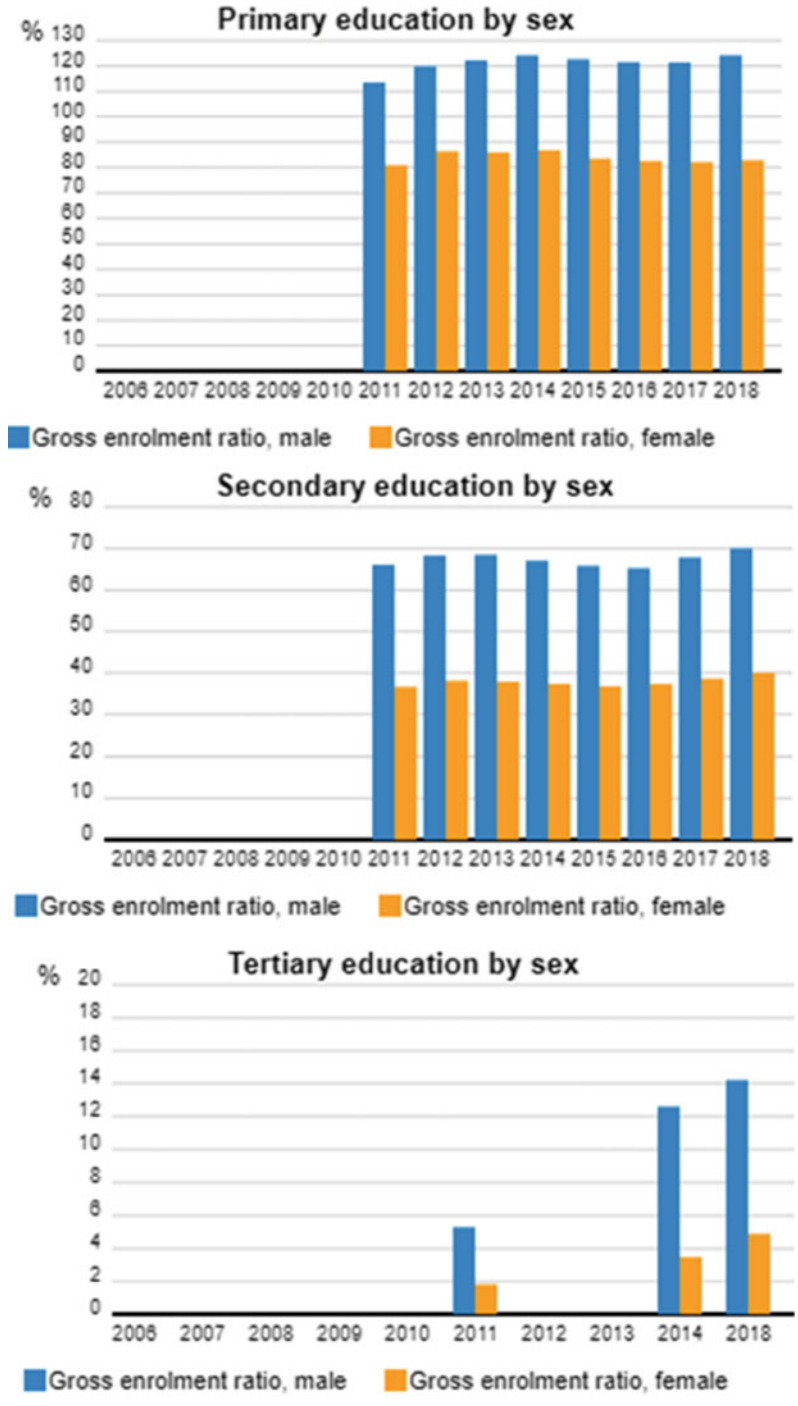

Fig. 17.10 Education participation by gender Reproduced from UNESCO Institute of Statistics (2020)

17.2.3 Education: Rights and Benefits

Tertiary education for women is an internationally agreed universal human right, which ultimately assists gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls. This sentiment is embodied within both SDG4 and SDG5 (UNESCO 2019). Of particular importance for

Afghanistan is working towards the achievement of a number of the 2030 targets within the SDGs. For example, Target 4.3, which requires "equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university" and Target 4.4, which requires "a substantial increase in the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship" (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, n.d.). Similarly, important for Afghanistan is Target 4.a, which covers the provision of suitable educational facilities that are "child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all" (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, n.d.). Within SDG5, there are also a number of very important targets that are particularly pertinent to Afghanistan, including Target 5.1, which calls for ending all forms of discrimination against all women and girls, and Target 5.C which involves adopting and strengthening "sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels" (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, n.d.). These goals may not seem to be out of reach to much of the developed world where education is already an entrenched right, yet for many developing countries such as Afghanistan, they represent lofty goals.

According to Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (The United Nations (UN), 1948), everyone has the right to education. At a tertiary level, this should be made generally available and "shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit" (UN 1948, p. 54). Section Two of Article 26 (UN 1948, p. 1). states that:

> Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance, and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

Education, as a basic human right, is seen as a bridge to achieving other sustainable development (Willems et al. 2018). Education provides a person with knowledge and skills to take advantage of economic and lifelong learning opportunities (Sen 2003) and is a key factor in increasing human capital (Wantchekon et al. 2015). Human capital is an asset that is important for the society and the individual and can be classified as having the knowledge, habits, personality, and social attributes embodied in the ability to accomplish tasks that produce economic value (Govdell 2016).

Education is the main contributor in increasing human capital. There is evidence that developed countries tend to have 30–60% tertiary educational achievement among their 25–34-year-old population (OCED 2019). In Afghanistan, this type of data on tertiary participation is not available; however, current educational achievement levels are expected to be a lot lower than in developed countries (A.B Sabawoon, personal communication, May 1, 2020). To achieve the same levels of tertiary educational achievement and growth of human capital as developed countries, it is expected that a higher level of female education is required (OECD 2019). The completion of compulsory education and participation in tertiary education by women also plays a role in the reduction of poverty, economic growth, achieving gender equality, health improvement, and social development (Klasen 2004; Mirzada 2001; Sen 2003).

Social recognition associated with education is another issue for women. While education plays an important role in women's lives in developing countries, Bourdieu (1991) theorised that education reinforces society's classes and privileges. Bourdieu (1986) defined cultural capital as providing an individual with the framework to be empowered, achieve goals, and become successful. Cultural capital can exist in three different forms or states, including embodied, objectified, and institutionalised. Of these, the embodied state is the most influential in relation to women and their education, although institutionalised capital is often a result

of participation in education. According to Bourdieu (1991), the embodied state is what the individual has learned by their experience and can be increased by the investment of time into self-improvement, including formal education (Von Rueden et al. 2015). Objectified cultural capital refers to material objects that have cultural meaning, for example, books, paintings, and pottery. Institutionalised cultural capital enables social recognition of skills, increases credibility and trustworthiness, and increases social status (Claussen and Osborne 2013).

The link between tertiary education and economic growth has been well documented since the start of the twentieth century (Schofer and Meyer 2005). According to Easterlin (1981), a high level of education is critical to achieving economic growth, giving as an example the expansion of education programmes in north-western European countries that resulted in economic development; a finding that has been confirmed in many countries (Van Leeuwen and Foldvari 2008). Economists have developed different theoretical frameworks to explain the link between education and economy, and these can be divided into two main foci: individual economic returns from education and national economic growth. According to Stevens and Weale (2004), the benefits flow both ways: education brings economic benefit to individuals and the work of those individuals benefits the national economy. Psacharopoulos (1994) compared individual returns from education in 78 countries, with the highest return of 24% for every year of study in Yemen. A study by Acemoglu and Angrist (1999) in the USA also found that one additional year of education could increase income by seven per cent. Dockey's (2005) study in Australia also showed that education offers greater economic returns to students who complete tertiary or vocational education.

According to Stevens and Weale (2004), if a nation increases the average number of years of education for each student, an increase in production will result. For instance, Mercan and Sezer (2014), found that education had a positive impact on economic growth in Turkey from 1970 to 2012, which is relevant as Turkey is predominantly Islamic, facing similar issues for women in education to Afghanistan. Although progress is relatively slow, the Turkish government's push to achieve the UN 2030 "Agenda for Sustainable development" and in particular, SDG5 of achieving gender equality provides the policy and financial support required to achieve change (Carvajalino 2019). This can also provide some lessons for Afghanistan to follow.

In most cultures, social status is determined by the level of education, with a well-known inverse correlation between years of education and poverty (Mihai et al., 2015). Through increasing levels of education, there are likely to be higher incomes, less unemployment, less poverty, and fewer demands on social security (Benos and Zotou 2014). Research shows an individual's level of education is correlated with their likelihood of being above or below the poverty line (Benos and Zotou 2014; Vasile et al. 2015). The Heckman Equation demonstrates the importance of investing in education, and Heckman and Mosso's (2014) study demonstrating that investing in female education can yield a 7–10% return on investment through reduced social spending and higher workforce productivity and a consequential reduction in spending on health. Education and poverty can become a self-reinforcing cycle across generations (Mihai et al. 2015). As previously explained, Afghanistan is a poor country in which most families cannot afford to pay for tertiary education (Tarabini, 2010). In many developing countries, education involves fees (Mihai et al. 2015) due to limited or non-existent state-provided education systems. Poverty is one of the factors which limits or prevents a person or community from gaining an education (Tarabini 2010).

However, the number of women enrolling worldwide has grown enormously in recent years (Sanger and Gleason 2020). Despite such progress, gender inequality in higher education remains a serious problem, which is incongruent with the United Nations' SDG4 and SDG5. Within developing countries, tertiary education is viewed as the primary path to economic achievement (Dela Peña Bandalaria 2018), and

most people view education as the key to improving their lives. According to the Coleman report (1966) and, later, Björklund and Salvanes (2011), family background is a more important determinant of educational outcomes in the United States than school quality. In developing countries, it has been found that this effect is often the opposite. In most Asian countries, families prioritise education so that education quality can have a more significant influence than one's parents' educational attainment (Buchmann and Hannum 2001).

In addition to social and cultural barriers, women may face individual barriers to participation in tertiary education. Women are likely to construct meaning in numerous ways and as argued, different cultural contexts influence their decision-making. The social construction of gender has been widely researched (Berkowitz et al. 2010) and social constructionists view reality as socially constructed by those experiencing it (Lodico et al. 2010). It can be argued that Afghan female students may construct their understandings of tertiary education through interactions with their family, friends, other students, teachers, and lecturers. Aminnuddin's (2020) study confirms this. His study examined perceptions of the importance of education for men and women in four countries with Islamic populations: Singapore, Malaysia, India, and Pakistan. The findings revealed that more than half of both men and women agreed that university education was more important for men, and that these perceptions stemmed from social, cultural, and Islamic religious beliefs (Aminnuddin 2020). The gender situation has changed in education in some Islamic countries though, wherein more females than males enrol in universities in countries such as Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, and Saudi Arabia (Roudi-Fahimi and Moghadam 2015). The same is observed in Southeast Asia in countries such as Brunei Darussalam (Aminnuddin 2020). The reason argued is that women in these countries perceive the necessary entry-level to the labour force is through graduating at the higher education level. These countries were also supported by changes in government policies concerning women and education. Aminnuddin (2020) proposes girls need to be exposed to possibilities of education and notions such as the *world of work* from primary school, so that their self-perceptions are shaped at an early age. Positive role models and intrinsic motivation are therefore imperative in helping to shape women's perceptions of the viability of pursuing a tertiary education (Abdulbaqi 2009).

In addition to the importance of personal motivation and positive role models for gaining a tertiary qualification, it can be argued that a personal belief in abilities to undertake such studies or self-efficacy is required (Bandura 1997; Dugan et al. 2013). Self-efficacy can be understood as an individual's belief in their capability to handle life's challenges and remain resilient. Bandura (1997, p. 3) suggests that self-efficacy is "beliefs in one's capabilities to organise and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" and suggests that an individual with high self-efficacy accepts tasks as challenges and sets goals to accomplish them. He further argues that an individual's self-efficacy impacts the choices and decisions they make at key points in their lives. Low self-efficacy has negative outcomes, such as affecting one's thought processes, behaviours, beliefs, leadership performance, and leadership motivation (Denzine, 1999). Someone with low self-efficacy may attribute difficulties to personal deficiencies and focus on obstacles and adverse outcomes as well as avoiding activities (Bandura 1997). The concept of self-efficacy is important, as research shows that women who are successful in gaining a tertiary education in developing countries are more likely to have a strong sense of self-efficacy (Isaac et al. 2012). Recent research suggests that academic self-efficacy refers to a person believing in their ability to perform certain tasks, for example, studying to complete their education on time (Vantieghem and Houtte 2015). A strong sense of personal belief in the right to study and the ability to complete tertiary studies is of obvious importance to women in developing nations.

17.3 Summary and Conclusion

As this chapter shows, there are significant barriers to access and participation of women in tertiary education in Afghanistan. Although education for women is a universal human right, it is a right that many women in the developing world in particular are denied. Although the education policies are in place for women to gain an education in Afghanistan, and women have civil rights for participation in the society, the opportunities are limited by family, social, cultural, religious, and tribal beliefs which shape how the nation perceives women and education. However, the rights of all girls and women to obtain an appropriate education are enshrined in the United Nations SDG4 and SDG5 and should be a priority for developing nations, including Afghanistan. Specific targets have been set of 2030, which need to be worked towards as research shows that investing in women's education, particularly at the tertiary level can transform local communities and nations. Women with an education are less likely to marry young and more likely to lead healthy and productive lives. They earn higher incomes, participate in the decisions that most affect them, and build better futures for themselves and their families, ultimately strengthening economies and reducing inequality. This helps lift households, communities, and countries out of poverty. The specific barriers and enablers to women's access to and participation in tertiary education in Afghanistan requires further research, but as this chapter has argued, it is likely that changes could be achieved by changing family expectations of how education benefits the family, improving access to schools, school conditions and safety of girls, increasing the number of female teachers, incorporating a *world of work* focus into primary curriculum and encouraging the government to work harder towards the UN 2030 agenda for sustainable development.

While the future that is hoped for Afghanistan via movement towards achievement of the SDGs, it is important to acknowledge that the uncertainty associated with the recent withdrawal of peacekeeping troops and the associated return of control to the Taliban may have an impact on the education of girls and women in ways that we had hoped were never to return. Only time will tell.

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Parwaiz Najibi was born in Afghanistan but was only one month old when his family migrated to Pakistan in 1980. The family later migrated to Australia in 1993. Parwaiz has strong professional credentials with a double Master of Environmental Management and Sustainability, a Master of Construction Management, a Bachelor of Applied Science and Built Environment, and a Bachelor of Construction Management and Economics. He is a doctoral candidate at Federation University Australia. His research focuses on enablers and potential barriers of female participation in tertiary education in Afghanistan and associated contemporary issues.

Professor Claire McLachlan is the Executive Dean of the Institute of Education, Arts and Community., having joined Federation University Australia in 2018. She is also currently an Honorary Professor in the Wilf Malcolm Institute for Educational Research at the University of Waikato, New Zealand. Previously Claire was the Head of School, Te Hononga, School of Curriculum and Pedagogy in the Faculty of Education at the University of Waikato. She was also formerly Professor of Childhood Education at Massey University. Claire has published 10 books and has over 200 academic outputs. She has edited the practitioner journal, Early Education, since 2006 and is a regular reviewer for many journals and academic publishers. Claire is an invited member of the UNESCO-International Bureau of Education (IBE) Early Reading Panel and an elected member of the Royal Society of New Zealand. Claire researches in the fields of early literacy, physical activity, children's experiences of curriculum and parent education and professional learning programmes for teachers. The overarching research aims of Claire's research are to strengthen teachers' domain (subject content) knowledge through collaborative professional learning and enhance pedagogies and practice and to promote learning outcomes for young children in low socio-economic communities.

The Role of International Study Tours in Cultivating Ethnocultural Empathy: Preservice Teacher Standpoints

18

Marcelle Cacciattolo and Greg Aronson

Abstract

In this chapter the authors report on a study tour to China in 2017 that involved 12 preservice teachers and two academic staff members. Research was undertaken to identify whether participating in a short-term mobility programme assisted preservice teachers to cultivate ethnocultural and intercultural skills and knowledge. The theoretical and conceptual framework adopted in the chapter is underpinned by Milton (Bennett 2017) intercultural competency continuum. Findings suggest that ethnocultural empathy is unattainable for preservice teachers when there is an inability to see the world from multiple lenses, thus it is important to provide opportunities for developing ethnocultural empathy through constructive dialogue with a guided other that involves reflection in and on action. As such, it is important for academics, preservice teachers and government/policy delegates to be aware of pedagogical and curriculum practices that foster ethnocultural empathetic mindsets. In turn, such mindsets underpin what is required when working towards the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 4 of ensuring globally equitable quality education.

Keywords

Ethnocultural empathy · Social justice · Intercultural competency · Preservice teachers · Ethnocentrism · Ethnorelativism · International experience · Overseas study tours

Author Positioning Statements

My name is **Marcelle**. I am an Associate Professor in Teacher Education with expertise in schooling matters tied to social justice. I have led several research projects. Some of these have focused on trauma informed teaching and learning pedagogies and intercultural competency in educational settings. My philosophical stance is aligned with a critical worldview that seeks to question, critique, and make public actions and beliefs that silence others. My Ph.D. investigated the lives of 20 women who were living with breast cancer. This study allowed me to understand the importance of compassion, kindness, and empathy during uncertain times.

My name is **Greg**. My early childhood was spent in Ballarat with my single mum, a nurse, who struggled to meet the demands of full time

M. Cacciattolo (✉) · G. Aronson
College of Education, Victoria University, Footscray, Australia
e-mail: Marcelle.Cacciattolo@vu.edu.au

G. Aronson
e-mail: Greg.aronson@vu.edu.au

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work and childcare. She died when I was twelve but had remarried by that time, and I was fortunate then to be raised by my step father, who instilled in me a deep understanding of the importance of fairness and justice in his job as a worker's compensation lawyer and a deeply committed member of the Socialist Party. He never saw me become a teacher, but I reckon he'd be very pleased to see the practice I have developed as an educator of tertiary music and education students in the heart of the West of Melbourne. Together, our students and teachers have created a community based on respect, inclusion and fairness. These principles underpin our approaches to learning and teaching. I now look forward to exploring these and other stories of social justice and humanness in my emerging research opportunities, such as in the contribution to this book.

18.1 Introduction

If you are a teacher in Victoria, Australia it is highly likely that you will work with school students from a range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds. In the Western suburbs of Melbourne, areas like St Albans, Caroline Springs and Braybrook attract a high proportion of migrant and refugee families (Flatau et al. 2015). With this in mind, teachers, school leaders and community stakeholders have a duty of care to ensure that cultural diversity is celebrated and respected. Understanding those teaching and learning approaches that best facilitate successful academic and social success is important here. Being able to stand in the shoes of a learner, whose life-world is complex and culturally diverse, is the first step to teaching well. Moreover, teaching well embodies an innovator's gaze that inspires creativity, awe and wonderment about the world, oneself and one's relationship to others (Couros 2015). Through this lens, teachers can help to create learning opportunities that seek to redress ethnocentric stereotypes and assumptions that position one cultural group above another (Aslantas 2019). In this space, intercultural tensions can be interrogated, disarmed and pried open with a view to asking questions such as, *what could be otherwise? Whose voices are being silenced here?* and *What dominant power games are at play?* Challenging representations of constructed cultural truths, that are inherently ethnocentric and damaging to one's sense of identity and belonging, is an important step to breaking down microaggressions that fuel racism.

Since 2014, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) has supported 40,000 young Australian undergraduate students to engage in travel, work experience and studies in the Indo-Pacific region. This international experience, funded under the New Colombo Programme (NCP), has afforded participants with opportunities in which to deepen their understanding of Asian cultures. For preservice teachers (PSTs) who have participated in these kinds of programmes, an immersive cultural encounter can help foster an appreciation of other ways of seeing and reading the world (Beutel and Tangen 2018; Rodriguez 2003; Santoro and Major 2012). Encountering different cultural ideologies and worldviews can orientate PSTs to a deeper understanding of those human qualities that contribute to inclusive standpoints (Bennett 2013; Shiveley and Misco 2015). This insight is also important when working with Indigenous learners and young people from migrant or refugee backgrounds.

Learning environments that cultivate in young people a desire to be respectful of and empathetic to diverse worldviews is a necessary feature of cohesive global communities. Moreover, learning environments built on *peace and prosperity* are core values that make up the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (Wynn 2020). The United Nations (UN) has developed 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that focus on improving people's livelihood in the world they live in. The SDGs incite a call to action whereby individuals and global leaders work collaboratively to end

poverty and human suffering. Opening up possibilities for higher flourishing for all human beings begins with a global commitment to addressing oppressive social forces. Goal 4 of the UN agenda focuses specifically on building learning communities that support "inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs n.d.).

Preservice teachers (PSTs) who participate in overseas study programmes can enhance their understanding of culturally inclusive pedagogies when working in diverse cultural classrooms. An immersive overseas experience can help to broaden and build teaching and learning practices that are respectful of foreign cultures, values, customs and histories (Cacciattolo et al. 2020). Through their involvement in study abroad programmes, PSTs can also begin to interrogate how their own actions and thoughts can perpetuate notions of ethnocentricity. Equipped with this insight, they are better positioned to refine and build pedagogical practices that give voice to, nurture and acknowledge the needs of multicultural learners. This chapter extends on this theme. It does so by drawing on PST perceptions of intercultural learning experiences during a short-term study tour to China in 2017. SDG 4 is also examined through an ethnocultural empathetic lens and linked to more inclusive teaching and learning approaches in multicultural classrooms.

18.2 Literature Review

Meanings associated with intercultural competency can vary across groups of people and cultures. Political identities and worldviews also contribute to nuanced interpretations of what effective intercultural communication looks like. Theorists like Gardner (1962) coined the term *universal communicators* to represent individuals who were effective communicators in diverse cultural situations. According to Gardner (1962), effective intercultural communicators have a unique set of qualities that allow them to interact with people from diverse cultures in meaningful ways. Other traits include the ability to be *intuitive* and *sensitive* to the needs of individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. Human connections that validate multicultural identities and viewpoints is central to the crafting of a universal communicative mindset (Rathje 2007). Intercultural worldliness, therefore, requires a particular way of seeing and reading the world; it entails a moral and political commitment to advocating on behalf of marginalised groups of people. Intercultural worldliness also underpins SDG4. We can only eradicate oppressive educational forces through naming, shaming, critiquing and eliminating those teaching practices that position one cultural group as being superior to others. Inclusive and learning environments *for all*, a key factor underpinning this goal, is more likely to emerge when school teachers and school leaders take a unified stance on zero tolerance in response to racism, xenophobia and ethnocentric beliefs.

Intercultural worldliness is synonymous with agency and metacognition; it is a choice of being, an act of compassion, an agentic aurora of selfhood. Intercultural efficacy involves an ability to be self-reflective in the midst of cultural uncertainty and paradox. Bandura (2001) attests to the power of self-reflectiveness when it is situated in a space of internal examination:

> Agency thus involves not only the deliberative ability to make choices and action plans but the ability to give shape to appropriate courses of action and to motivate and regulate their execution. This multifaceted self-directedness operates through self-regulatory processes that link thought to action. The self-regulation of motivation, affect and action is governed by a set of self-referent subfunctions. These include self-monitoring, performance self-guidance via personal standards and corrective self-reactions (p. 8).

Understanding specific triggers that lead us to behave in ethnocentric ways is an important step to addressing unconscious bias (Chakraborty 2017; Maslow 2013). Being aware of default thought patterns that arise in the midst of intercultural tension and uncertainty can help to confront and recognise racist perspectives. Agentic individuals, therefore, have the capacity to self-regulate their emotions and their reactions

when encountering discomforting cultural spaces (Maslow 2013). They are flexible, open-minded and understand the necessity to agitate and rattle their own cage. Agency is an inherent quality in multicultural worldliness, which involves an ability and a desire to critique and dissect taken-for-granted views that position some cultural groups as being inferior and of less importance to others (Williams 2009). There are also links between *worldliness* and *intercultural sensitivity*. A lived experience of global livelihoods and an appreciation for other ways of being and existing in the world is more likely to lead to intercultural sensitivity.

Milton Bennett's (2017) developmental model of intercultural sensitivity (DMIS) is made up of six progressive stages. Known as the stages of denial, deference and minimisation, this first phase is described as the ethnocentric attitude or belief. Ethnocentric bias is typically identified as seeing one's cultural values and beliefs as being the only form of reality. Ethnocentric attitudes place one's own cultural group as superior to others where there is a tendency to "prefer the known over the unknown" (Hinner 2020, p. 44). The last three DMIS stages involve acceptance, adaptation and integration. In this phase, individuals are able to acknowledge and appreciate intercultural differences in respectful ways (Bennett 2017). Reaching an ethnorelative orientation involves the ability to suspend one's personal judgements. There is also a willingness and a commitment to deepening one's understanding of other cultural practices. Increasing one's knowledge of other cultures is important to developing effective intercultural sensitivity (Bennett 1998).

Ethnocultural empathy is a term that is linked to intercultural sensitivity (Bennett, 2017; Zhu 2011). Personal qualities associated with this realm involve "feeling in oneself the feeling of others" (Eisenberg and Strayer 1987, p. 391). According to Rasoal et al. (2011) ethnocultural empathy involves "feeling, understanding and caring about what someone from another culture feels, understands and cares about" (p. 13). Individuals who embody this space have an internal locus of awareness and self-control. They refrain from using ethnocentric terms that cause others to feel less valued or less important because their cultural beliefs are different to one's own. Individuals who have a heightened sense of intercultural empathy also recognise when people are feeling happy, hurt or angry during intercultural interactions. Care about the emotions of individuals from different ethnic backgrounds takes centre stage and what evolves is the suspension of fixed beliefs that fuel discriminatory behaviours, practices and actions. Simply put, being empathetic, in the face of intercultural values that are complex and challenging to one's worldview, requires an inclusionary and visionary mindset.

Zhu (2011) makes the distinction between intercultural awareness and intercultural empathy. He affirms that intercultural awareness is based on an ability "of standing back from our own point of view and becoming aware of not only our own cultural values, beliefs and perceptions, but also those of other cultures" (p. 116). A strong sense of intercultural awareness is indeed necessary in the establishment of positive communicative approaches because, "people see, interpret and evaluate things in different ways, what is considered as appropriate in one culture is likely to be inappropriate in another" (Zhu 2011, p. 116). Where there is limited scope for intercultural awareness there is a greater likelihood for cultural misunderstandings between people or groups of people from diverse cultural backgrounds. Intercultural empathy, in contrast, evolves when an individual has the capacity to put oneself in another's place, space and worldview. When we are empathetic during intercultural interactions we can feel and see world events from different lenses and in doing so, come to better understand ourselves. In addition, intercultural empathy can allow us to recognise triggers or barriers that can offend individuals when their cultural standpoints are dismissed or silenced. Intercultural empathy is therefore a necessary quality of intercultural competence and culturally inclusive mindsets (Bennett 2017). It is also a central feature of socially cohesive and sustainable communities.

Goal 4 of the UN agenda for sustainable development affirms the need for socially cohesive communities. In their study, Dempsey et al. (2011, p. 294) dissect the meaning of socially cohesive communities into five key dimensions:

- Social interaction/social networks in the community
- Participation in collective groups and networks in the community
- Community Stability
- Pride/sense of place
- Safety and security

Where there is an absence of one or several dimensions, there is a likelihood of feelings of disempowerment, alienation and anomie amongst individuals or collective groups of people. Durkheim's (1992) notion of *collective consciousness* links here. Individuals who feel connected to family members and friends and who have access to strong supportive networks are more likely to encounter a strong sense of identity and belonging. The same can be said for multicultural communities and higher flourishing. Healthy vibrant multiethnic Australian communities are those that celebrate and affirm linguistic and cultural diversity; there is a shared understanding of the need to recognise, tolerate and acknowledge other cultures without holding judgement (Jupp et al. 2007). Healthy vibrant multicultural communities are also committed to tackling ethnocentric values and behaviours in proactive ways. They invest in communicative strategies that centre on "mutual respect amongst diverse knowledge systems" that foster "intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding, which in turn contribute to empowerment and self-development and a renewal of strategies for the enhancement of our ability to live together with difference" (UNESCO 2009, p. 113).

18.2.1 PSTs and Intercultural Empathy

The value of participating in international study abroad programmes has been well documented in teacher education research. Researchers such as Beutel and Tangen (2018) draw attention to the personal and professional gains that often accompany PSTs when they immerse themselves in a foreign context. Shiveley and Misco (2015) make the point that, "opportunities to teach in other countries expose students to different ideas and procedures challenging their ideas that certain teaching strategies or administrative practices are universal" (p. 108). Working alongside foreign mentor teachers and school leaders can assist in the cultivation of a revised teaching philosophy that is more intuitive to cultural learning needs.

International study tours can also be a time of disorientation and discombobulation (Lang et al. 2016; Sharma et al. 2012). These emotions often arise for a variety of reasons. Triggers can include feeling like a cultural outsider (Beckman and Christenson 2016), acts of racism (Trilokekar and Kukar 2011) and living in unfamiliar surroundings (Arthur et al. 2020). Cultural norms that privilege one gender above another can result in increased levels of distress (Sharma et al. 2012). Being out of one's comfort zone and not feeling in control of one's emotions can generate heightened levels of anxiety. Shadowen et al. (2015) refer to a need for individuals to have a "tolerance for ambiguity" when "navigating unfamiliar or confusing circumstances" (p. 232). Entering this state requires considerable effort and metacognition. When we are aware of our default response to culturally uncomfortable occurrences, we are in a better position to manage our outbursts. We can also come to understand how our actions have a direct and indirect impact on others. The ability to wonder about how our actions and thought processes can perpetuate racist and ethnocentric thoughts is a matter of social justice (Cacciattolo et al. 2020). Establishing engaging and meaningful learning environments is also central to Goal 4 in the UN charter for sustainable development. Target 4.7 in particular asserts that by 2030, all learners must have the ability to discern and acquire skills and knowledge that promotes, "a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity…" (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (n.d.).

18.3 Research Context

Over the past 20 years, Victoria University (Melbourne, Australia) has been involved in a range of overseas study tours. These study tours have been largely funded by DFAT through the Asia Bound Programme, The Endeavour Programme and the New Colombo Plan (NCP). This research project reports on an NCP-funded programme to China that took place in 2017 for a two-week period. The study tour was built on a long-standing partnership between a science and technology university and a local primary school in Beijing. PSTs undertook a teaching placement at the local primary school and were paired up with a Chinese mentor teacher. In collaboration with their mentor teachers, PSTs developed English as a Foreign Language (EFL) curriculum materials on negotiated topics that covered a broad range of key learning areas.

PSTs also engaged in debriefing sessions with their lecturers and their peers at the conclusion of each teaching day. This assisted in unpacking key incidents that had occurred in a supportive and structured way. The debriefing sessions were also a time for planning for the next day and for checking in with peers as to the teaching activities that could be tailored to suit their classroom needs. Large classroom sizes, disobedient students and inexperience in teaching English as a Foreign language (EFL) were common topics that were discussed.

In addition to their school placement, PSTs attended Chinese language classes each day. These classes covered a range of topics tied to China's history, traditions, values and beliefs. Some PSTs took great delight in learning words and phrases that could be embedded into their lesson plans. Others struggled with learning a new language and this played out in different ways. This theme is discussed in more detail in the discussion of data findings sections. The study tour programme also involved trips to cultural sites such as the Great Wall, Summer Palace, the Forbidden City, the Silk Market, Tiananmen Square and Wangfujing. PSTs valued the opportunity to connect what they had learnt in their Chinese language class to the sights and sounds of the local streets and the local people.

18.3.1 Student Cohort

Twelve PSTs were invited to participate in the study tour. The ten female and two male participants were in different year levels in their Bachelor of Education degrees. They ranged in age from 20 to 33 years, with the majority under the age of 28 because NCP will only fund 3% of students who are over this age range. The two accompanying academics were both TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) trained. The student cohort participated in three pre-departure sessions and one post-departure session. Each of the pre-departure sessions included a range of topics tied to safety and wellbeing whilst abroad. In addition, EFL teaching and learning approaches were modelled and discussed with the group. The academics continued to provide EFL support throughout the duration of the study tour. A post-departure session was also held for the PSTs once they arrived back home, with each providing an oral presentation based on key learnings discovered whilst on the study tour. This session also served as a debriefing exercise where students were encouraged to discuss key issues that may have emerged since arriving home. Overall, the post-departure sessions were received positively. This was because the PSTs had formed strong bonds whilst abroad and valued the chance to physically reconnect with their peers.

18.3.2 Research Method

A qualitative research design was favoured in this research project. More particularly, a constructivist/Interpretive worldview was seen to provide a lens into subjective states of being in the world. It was important that PST perceptions of their China study tour were captured including how each of the participants interpreted various incidents on the tour (Creswell and Creswell

2018). Linked to this was a desire to ensure that the various interpretations and multiple realities of social phenomena were accurately recorded and reflected upon. Social and cultural factors that impacted on how these perceptions were shaped, dissected, questioned and reframed were of interest to this study. Ethics approval was gained from the university to conduct the study. For the purpose of this book chapter, pseudonyms have been used to protect the identity of each of the participants.

18.3.3 Data Collection Tools

Journal writing was used as a data collection tool in this project. PSTs were required to complete a series of four reflective journals during their time abroad. The reflective journal used a praxis inquiry protocol approach developed by Kruger and Cherednichenko (2009). The practice or key incident recorded in the journal entry is described, explained, theorised and changed. Figure 18.1 captures the thinking process PSTs were encouraged to engage in during the reflective writing process:

Having a praxis inquiry protocol meant that PSTs were required to move beyond a simple *recount* of a key incident. The ideological framework recognised the importance of practice-based questions as a basis for refining one's professional teaching skills. Following on from this there was a consideration of the various tools and professional resources that could help support greater clarity of practice. A reframing and strengthening of one's professional teacher identity was an important concluding phase in this praxis inquiry cycle (Arnold and Mundy 2020).

Reflection in and on action is a crucial step to making sense of intercultural tension. Schön's (1991) seminal work on "the reflective practitioner" links here. Teacher educators are best placed to create opportunities for PSTs to critically reflect on instances abroad using systematic approaches (Cruickshank and Westbrook 2013; Ufuk TÖ and Sabiha 2014). More particularly, academics can offer an approach to turning the gaze inwards. This can assist PSTs to unravel and make public hidden assumptions and prejudices about the world and its people (Brookfield 2017). Day (1999) highlights the need for teachers to partake in reflection on their daily activities, stating:

> Without routinely engaging in reflective practice, it is unlikely that we will be unable to understand the effects of our motivations, prejudices and aspirations upon the ways in which we create, manage, receive, sift and evaluate knowledge and as importantly, the ways in which we are influencing the lives, directions and achievements of those whom we nurture and teach (p. 229).

Dissecting and inquiring into the various social, political and structural factors that influence how we behave and think at any point in time is an essential part of fostering a critically

PRACTICE DESCRIBED PSTs describe practice (cases, artefacts, anecdotes) and identify questions (what do I wonder about when I think about this event?)	PRACTICE EXPLAINED PSTs seek to discover professional explanations for their practice (literature, research, mentors & colleagues, teacher education) (how can I understand this practice?)
PRACTICE THEORIZED PSTs consider the overriding question: who am I becoming as an educator as I integrate these understandings and beliefs into my practice (who am I becoming as a teacher?)	PRACTICE CHANGED PSTs plan action (how can I act to improve learning for students and improve my capacity as an educator? and of course what are my new questions?)

Fig. 18.1 Praxis Inquiry Protocol (modified from Gudjonsdottir et al. 2007, p. 168)

reflective stance; embodying a sociological imagination is key to unearthing powerful forces that sit beyond the surface of visibility (Arnold and Mundy 2020; Mills and Gitlin 2000).

18.3.4 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis, which is commonly used to code qualitative data (Braun and Clarke 2006; Fereday and Muir-Cochrane 2006; Nowell et al. 2017), was adopted in this research project. This analysis approach allowed for the emergence of key patterns and universal codes. The initial stages of interpreting the data involved an *open coding process*. Transcripts were dissected data line by line to ascertain categories that were of significance to the study. The researchers read through each of the reflective journals and made notes of themes that could later be interrogated and discussed. These codes were revisited on several occasions to ensure they accurately represented the *voice* and *sentiments* of the PST's journal entries. Following on from this phase, *focused coding* was used to merge some of themes that had common attributes. Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of thematic analysis, which include "familiarisation with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and producing the report" (p. 87) also helped to guide this process.

Thematic analysis also allowed for an *inductive* approach to synthesising the data. Inductive analysis involves using the data as a basis for the creation of universal concepts and themes. The metaphor *taking a bottom-up approach* is often used to describe inductive coding which differs from *deductive* coding that adopts *a top-down* approach. This form of coding, "sets out to test whether data are consistent with prior assumptions, theories, or hypotheses identified or constructed by an investigator" (Thomas 2006, p. 238). There is limited flexibility in the construction of a wide range of data themes as these are often pre-determined for testing (Thomas 2006). The next section provides a snapshot of the data themes that emerged from this study. These themes are linked to Bennett's (2017) intercultural competence continuum and connected to discussions tied to ethnocultural empathy.

18.4 Findings and Discussion

This section provides an overview of key findings that emerged from the data analysis phase. Three data themes are presented and tied to qualities and standpoints that fuel and cultivate ethnocultural empathy. The themes are:

- Ethnocultural empathy is unattainable for PSTS when there is an inability to see the world from multiple lenses
- Ethnocultural empathy is enriched through constructive dialogue with a guided other that involves reflection in and on action
- An immersive intercultural experience helps foster ethnocultural empathetic standpoints.

The discussion of each theme highlights those factors that encouraged or hindered intercultural competency, empathy and sensitivity. What is evident from the findings is that not all PSTs attained a sense of comfort, tolerance or respect for cultural differences. In contrast, those who did understood the importance of intercultural discomfort. These PSTs seemed to be able to confront their fears and anxiety in a proactive way; they did not shy away or try to blame others for the discomfort they felt. Rather, they faced cultural tension and insecurity head-on and reframed thought patterns and behaviours that embodied a more culturally inclusive mindset.

18.4.1 Ethnocultural Empathy is Unattainable for PSTs When There is an Inability to See the World from Multiple Lenses

The data findings indicated that of the 12 PSTs who participated in the China study abroad programme, some found it difficult to see the world

through other people's cultural lenses. There were many reasons for this, but the predominant reason was an inability to move through feelings of discontent when the *familiar* was replaced with the *unfamiliar*. Travelling to foreign countries tends to raise challenges for people who are unfamiliar with local customs, food and other cultural norms. What is second nature in one's home environment such as stepping out for a bite to eat, shopping for daily necessities or catching a bus downtown can become considerable hurdles to negotiate in a strange and new place. In such instances, an inability to move beyond feelings of cultural and social *norms* can set off and fuel ethnocentric standpoints. We see this in an entry from Caroline's journal where there is an overemphasis on difference and what is missing as opposed to new cultural understandings that can be learnt:

> Trying to adjust to various living standards in a short period of time can become quite difficult due to the extremely high standards we must uphold as university students that we must present. For example, the mattresses in China are quite thin and hard, compared to back home the beds are thick and are more have consisted of comfortable. By having poor bedding, this can affect the need of sleep, which is a necessary component for our physical survival. (Caroline)
>
> I felt the basic needs for most individuals would not be met within China's living conditions...One example that is viewed as challenging when travelling to China is their water conditions. Individuals are required to purchase bottles of imported eater, as the water in China is unhygienic to consume, therefore this can be difficult for a person to consume any or recommended amounts of water. Therefore, this personal incident connects to me as an individual, as I am finding it difficult to consume my regular amounts of water, this has resulted in headaches throughout the day. (Caroline)

The extract above draws our attention to the thinking patterns that can occur when an ethnocentric mindset preoccupies one's vision. An ethnocentric mindset according to Bennett (2017) includes stages of denial, defence and minimisation. In Caroline's case, not having the right kind of mattress and having to purchase bottles of water led to a belief that her most basic human needs were not being met. Assumptions were also made on the quality of life for anyone living in China. Judging others in terms of one's cultural standards is another form of ethnocentrism (Bizumic and Duckitt 2012). For Caroline, it is difficult for her to embrace an ethnocultural empathetic state. This is because she tended to focus on what was lacking in her trip as opposed to new cultural insights that could have been gained from the experience.

Santoro (2014) research makes reference to the tourist gaze. She explores notions of *Whiteness* and *Whiteness in action* as well as the sense of privilege and power that can emerge for many tourists. This often occurs when "the tourist not only assumes the right to enter communities for the purpose of satisfying their curiosity but also assumes the right to pass judgement on what it is he/she has come to see" (Santoro 2014, p. 434). Caroline submitted another journal entry with the following commentary:

> This trip has opened my eyes to different standards of living and has given me the opportunity to realise how wealthy we are back home...I have realised, that for this short amount of time I can put away all the little living adjustments I was facing and focus on the real reason I was here. To educate and give children the knowledge about the country I live on that I am proud to call home.

Whilst it is important to acknowledge this kind of realisation about relative levels of privilege, it is also notable that Caroline was still firmly rooted in the traditional *first person* experience of the world, her (known) world. Moreover, Caroline seems to imply that her known world (Australia—*proud to call home*) is somehow better than the less privileged and strange land she has come to visit. There is also the belief that *the main reason* for her trip is to educate Chinese school students about her country of origin. This mindset suggests that Caroline views her culture as somehow superior to the Chinese cultural space she is inhabiting. This perception is aligned with Bennett's ethnocentric stage in his intercultural competence continuum.

If we are to pave the way for ending inequitable schooling and oppressive teaching approaches, there is a role to be played by initial teacher

education programmes. SDG4 clearly articulates a need to ensure that education is inclusive, equitable and lifelong. International study tours provide the perfect landscape for addressing ethnocentric mindsets that seek to perpetuate cultural disadvantage and oppressive forces even further. In the case of PSTs like Caroline, teacher educators can initiate constructive debriefing sessions that explore cultural tensions as they arise. The two academics leading the study tour did just this. They provided structured debriefing meetings at the conclusion of each class and worked alongside PSTs as they prepared their lessons for their next EFL session.

18.4.2 Ethnocultural Empathy is Enriched Through Constructive Dialogue with a Guided Other that Involves Reflection in and on Action

The importance of establishing caring relationships with *a more knowledgeable other* is central to the development of intercultural sensitivity. In their journals, PSTs commented on the importance of working collaboratively with their Chinese mentor teachers, university lecturers and their peers. Having a trusted individual who they could debrief with and work alongside was an important element to developing effective intercultural communication skills. This was especially important when designing teaching materials for their English lessons. PSTs shared their resources and reflected on activities that led to successful or unsuccessful learning outcomes. What resulted was a heightened level of confidence and self-efficacy in their perceptions of effective language teaching. Several PSTs discussed the benefit of having effective language teaching practices modelled to them in their Chinese language class. This was linked to their role as English language teachers in a foreign teaching context. Embodying a shared role of the language learner and the language teacher during their study tour led to significant transformation shifts in their personal and professional selves. We see this in the PSTs' reflections:

> My first classroom experience in China was as a student learning basic simplified Mandarin. This was very exciting being in China but nerve-wracking as it was my first experience learning a second language from a native speaker. Consequently, upon entering the class I felt a pressure to pronounce words correctly; these feelings were enhanced by the perception that this is what the native teacher would want. Initially, I did not trust in my abilities to learn enough Mandarin to advance my future experience as a preservice teacher during my time in China. After reflecting on the Chinese lesson, I noticed the impact of using a few words in my own Chinese classroom. I also realised how much the structure of the Chinese lesson resonated with me. I effectively learnt from the teacher the importance of verbally *modelling* the vocabulary that was being taught and afterwards repeating the words out-loud. Being allowed to engage in a process of trial and error was also important for my Chinese language learning. (Sandra)
>
> This experience has allowed me to better understand the challenges that ESL/EAL students face when they arrive in Australia, not speaking any English and are expected to fit into a classroom. I have experienced this through standing in the shoes of *the other*. I felt that I myself was *the other* in our Chinese classes, where I was intimidated and worried that I wasn't doing anything right...I will be able to use this experience in my future teaching to better understand students from a non-English speaking background and thus will be able to provide a more inclusive and relevant experience. This has been a challenging process that has forced me to critically reflect on my teaching style and to develop new and diverse pedagogies and methods of communication, including the use of non-verbal methods. (Jasmine)

Sandra and Jasmine encountered a mixture of emotions during their Chinese language classes. Both articulated a sense of anxiety and vulnerability in learning Mandarin. There was also a level of self-doubt in their abilities to do what is asked of them by their teacher. Jasmine is overwhelmed with thoughts of inadequacy that evolve from occupying a space of *the other*. This is because learning a new language involved inhabiting a place and space that was unfamiliar and at times unsettling. Hashemi (2011) makes the point when learning a new language in a new cultural or social setting that, "there is a

predisposition among some people to experience such anxiety because of their own concerns about ethnicity, foreigners and the like" (p. 1813). This nervous tension was exacerbated for Sandra who questioned her proficiency in speaking Mandarin to her Chinese students.

Metacognition and the engagement of a *questioning spirit* are teaching qualities that frame culturally inclusive classrooms (Deardorff 2020; Yue and Ning 2015). The capacity to deconstruct and alter one's approach to teaching so that all students can achieve academic success requires considered thought. It involves careful observation and reflection in and on action (Schön 1991). Noteworthy are the careful observations that Sandra and Jasmine made of their language teacher, *a knowledgeable other*. There is a recognition of their teacher's skill in creating a supportive learning environment. Sandra commented on *being allowed* to make mistakes. There is the realisation that making mistakes was a necessary part of developing her Mandarin oracy skills. What's important here is that Sandra and Jasmine's teacher has provided a safe space to fail.

Effective and practical EFL teaching pedagogies are also role modelled to them. They will use these strategies when teaching English to their Chinese students in Beijing. These strategies and an understanding, a deep knowing of what it feels like to grapple with learning a foreign language, will inform their teaching in multicultural Australian classrooms. Ethnocultural empathy entails a desire to understand how individuals from other cultural groups feel and see the world (Rasoal et al. 2011). This awareness also underpins Goal 4 of the UN sustainable development agenda. School teachers are best placed to examine the notion of ethnocultural empathy and how this is sustained and embedded in classroom practice. For Jasmine and Sandra, this period marked the beginning of a learning journey about ethnocultural empathy. This journey is enhanced through a positive encounter with a language teacher who enacted and modelled cultural sensitivity and cultural empathy in her classroom.

18.4.3 An Immersive Intercultural Experience Helps Foster Ethnocultural Empathetic Standpoints

A strong theme to emerge from the journal entries was that travelling to a foreign land assisted in widening one's view of seeing and reading the world. Living abroad meant that PSTs had a truly immersive experience of Chinese culture. They participated in language classes, established friendships with local and foreign university students and visited a range of historical and cultural sites. PSTs were also able to observe other ways of teaching and learning that were modelled by their mentor teachers and senior teachers at the school. There was an extension of their skill set in teaching English as an additional language. This meant a re-thinking of pedagogical approaches that would assist students from linguistically diverse backgrounds to want to learn English. PSTs also understood the importance of intercultural sensitivity as a framework for effective intercultural communication. Some, more than others, were able to enact this understanding through a modification of their actions and responses to host community members. In the case of Amanda, it was her first time overseas and the experience brought with it a number of key awakenings. We see this in her narrative:

> Before this study trip to China the furthest I had travelled was to Canberra on a school camp in grade six. I can now say I have travelled to China. I had preconceptions on how China was going to be; I had a generalised view of China being a country where everyone lived in temple-like houses and ate rice for every meal. I was in the ethnocentrism stage of minimisation (Bennett 1998). I believe this is largely due to my lack of overseas travel and where I have lived. I have spent a majority of my life living in a rural town in Tasmania where there is very little multiculturalism. Throughout my schooling the only student who came from another country was a girl who came to Australia in grade two and originated from Ethiopia. Due to this lack of cultural immersion, I realise that I had an ethnocentric view. I did not consider myself racist and believed I was open to other cultures however I had formed stereotypes of

> many countries and cultures based on movies, books, television and other people's opinions. In addition, I had not bothered to analyse and rethink these generalisations or to consider what might be other ways of knowing or being in the world.

Participating in a study abroad programme changed Amanda's perceptions of China. She recognised the limitations of having a truly authentic understanding of a different culture when it is based on media and secondary sources. Of importance is Amanda's ability to question and interrogate assumptions and generalisations that she had about Chinese people. Amanda acknowledged having an *ethnocentric* lens and a need to alter this. This is important. Bennett (2013) identifies key human qualities that assist with movement from an ethnocentric to an ethnorelative mindset. Some of these qualities involve keeping an *open-mind* and remaining *flexible* when faced with different cultural viewpoints. Increasing one's knowledge of other cultures is important to developing effective intercultural empathy. Target 4A of the UN sustainable development agenda aligns here as it affirms the need to ensure that all educational sites "provide safe, nonviolent and effective learning environments for all" (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs n.d.). Being receptive to and respectful of other cultural viewpoints is the first step to cultivating an inclusive multicultural learning environment.

Corporal punishment, overcrowded classrooms and alternative approaches to inclusive education were key challenges that many of the PSTs wrote about. There were others. Some wrote about the culture shock of not being able to source Western food and the implications this had for their nutritional intake. Bed bugs, tiny living quarters and having to share a room with another peer was also seen as problematic. One PST commented on her discomfort in the following way:

> The roads were chaotic with cars and bikes disobeying road rules, people spat on the ground and the only toilets I saw were squat toilets which were dirty and had no toilet paper in them! I could not comprehend what I was experiencing and thought the way of living in Australia was a lot better. Reflecting on this now, I think I was experiencing cultural shock because after roughly a week something inside me changed. The kindness from the students, teachers and people on the street eased my discomfort.

The ability to bounce back varied according to the severity of discomfort encountered by the PST. Some coped better than others. Peer support, Skype sessions with family and loved ones and the ability to find positives (such as being creative when there was no toilet paper) helped fuel a resilient spirit. What was noticeable were those PSTs who understood that growth and discomfort were a necessary precursor to transformation. The common thread for PSTs who found meaning out of their discomfort was a desire to learn from the study tour experience and to be better teachers. What ensued was a deep knowingness that it was not their job to find answers to cultural tensions straight away. They waited until the answers arose through checking in with their peers, their lecturers. There was also a desire to understand the cultural viewpoint of host community members they interacted with. These actions underpin Target 4.7 of SDG4, which affirms the need for all learners to respect and appreciate cultural diversity (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs n.d.).

18.5 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a snapshot of PST perceptions of their experiences on a study tour to China. It also examined key terms and literature tied to intercultural competency, intercultural sensitivity and intercultural empathy. Milton Bennett's (2017) intercultural competence continuum was used to frame and make sense of PSTs' encounters with cultural differences. Data findings indicated that participating in an immersive intercultural experience precipitated epiphanic moments and transformative mind shifts. Teaching English in a Chinese primary school and working alongside their peers and mentor teachers helped to broaden PSTs' understandings of inclusive EFL pedagogical practices. There was also a sense from many of

the PSTs that they would be more aware of some of the complex challenges that students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds face. This *inner knowing* was based on the various challenges and tension points that they themselves had experienced during their Chinese language classes.

Dislocation from family and friends, feelings of *otherness* and an inability to effectively communicate with host community members were also key elements that PSTs wrote about. Personal qualities such as resilience, being flexible with change, curiosity and keeping an open mind were seen to assist in one's dealing with culture shock. The more prominent these character traits were, the greater the likelihood that an individual could move closer to an ethnorelative space of being. Other personality traits such as metacognition and reflexivity helped individuals respond to uncertain cultural situations in a more thoughtful way. Understanding the importance of being a reflective practitioner was central to reframing unconscious cultural bias. The act of holding the mirror up so as to revert the gaze inwards allowed for a closer inspection of actions or inactions that contributed to effective/ineffective intercultural communication. Being aware of ethnocentric standpoints and working with a *knowledgeable other* who role modelled inclusive teaching and learning practices was of benefit to PSTs.

This chapter also examined the role of study tours in fuelling an ethnocultural empathetic stance. Many PSTs reported on the value of being out of one's comfort zone, although immersion in an unfamiliar cultural context resulted in mixed emotions. Proactive responses drew on uneasy emotions as a pathway to enlightenment to how minority groups might feel when their lived experiences and cultural beliefs are silenced or ignored. Reactive responses had the opposite effect and limited a PST's ability to engage in effective intercultural sensitivity. Some chose to dwell on an absence of home comforts and surrounded themselves in an ethnocentric bubble. This prevented the cross-fertilisation of cultural awakenings. An ethnocentric state of being was also aligned to PSTs who believed that the main reason for participating in the study tour was to educate Chinese children on the Australian way of life. In these instances, there was no recognition for working alongside young people or individuals from another cultural background so as to construct shared meanings about cultural identity and respectful intercultural encounters.

The role of the teacher educator is imperative in international study abroad programmes. Their attention to all phases of the study tour is fundamental to achieving successful outcomes. Whilst academics cannot be responsible for how PSTs choose to think and act whilst participating in these programmes, their planning must embed opportunities for interrogating and dismantling ethnocentric standpoints. This can be done through carefully constructed dialogue where students feel safe to disclose and unpack their thoughts on intercultural matters. This can also increase inner conversations about what it means to be an inclusive educator in a globalised world. An immersive cultural experience also offers the study team with authentic cultural incidents that they can refer to and theorise.

Pre-departure sessions play an integral part in enlightening students to the kinds of tensions and anxieties that they are likely to face whilst abroad. Follow-up sessions through student presentations on key learning moments are also a good way to celebrate cultural mind shifts that have arisen from the experience. This chapter also recognised the role that teacher educators and PSTs can play in acknowledging and working towards achievement of Goal 4 of the UN charter for sustainable global development.

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Marcelle Cacciattolo is a sociologist and an Associate Professor in the College of Arts and Education at Victoria University. She received her PhD from Monash University in 2002. Over the last twenty years her research has been cross-disciplinary involving health sciences and education-based research. Other research projects that Marcelle has been involved in include young people and their wellbeing, refugee relocation, social justice and innovative teaching and learning pedagogies within tertiary settings. Marcelle works closely with preservice teachers and schools to examine how inclusive pedagogies can support children and families who are the least advantaged. Marcelle is currently the Course Chair of the Master of Teaching (Secondary Program).

Dr. Greg Aronson is a Senior Lecturer in music, in the College of Arts and Education, and co-chairs the Bachelor of Music at Victoria University. He specialises in musicology and music pedagogy and curriculum. He is a practising musician, with over 30 years of professional experience across a range of music contexts. Dr Aronson's PhD explored the backgrounds and experiences of students in tertiary music education settings and he has teaching and research expertise in musicology, music education, and creative arts based projects. Greg has a strong interest in internationalising tertiary music education and has worked over the last ten years on projects in China, India and Indonesia to foster intercultural awareness for students through music and creative based arts projects.

Working Towards a Sustainable, Responsive, Inclusive, and Diverse Global Education Future

19

Sara Weuffen, Jenene Burke, Anitra Goriss-Hunter, Margaret Plunkett, and Susan Emmett

Abstract

In this chapter, we synthesise the interwoven narrative presented in this edited collection that interrogates discourses and policies of inclusive education, foregrounds the lived realities of diverse cohorts, and offers new ways of thinking and acting through a process of capacity building. Through thematic analysis, we analyse emergent themes pertaining to diversity and inclusion to illuminate the divergence between rhetoric and practice where the provision of quality education is concerned. Ultimately, we question whether the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 of quality education for all is being actualised in the twenty-first century and offer provocations on the possibilities of actualising a sustainable, responsive, inclusive, and diverse education future globally.

Keywords

Inclusive education · Diversity and inclusion · Sustainable education · Responsive education · Capacity building · Lived realities

Author Positioning Statements

Sara: As an educator for over 10 years and early-career researcher with considerable academic and life experiences with equity, inclusion, and social justice matters, I am driven to champion change for a responsive, diverse, and inclusive educational future for all. My personal experiences with intersectional marginalisation based on gender, sex, body image, education, and socio-economic status throughout my life heavily influences my understanding, choices, and ideation of transformative education processes for sustainable futures.

Jenene: As an educator for over 40 years, I have been actively involved in teaching across a broad range of education settings. My interest in disability as a socially constructed concept emerged from my doctoral studies into children's experiences of play in purpose-built inclusive play spaces.

S. Weuffen (✉) · J. Burke · A. Goriss-Hunter · M. Plunkett · S. Emmett
Institute of Education, Arts and Community, Federation University Australia, Ballarat, VIC, Australia
e-mail: sl.weuffen@federation.edu.au

J. Burke
e-mail: js.burke@federation.edu.au

A. Goriss-Hunter
e-mail: a.goriss-hunter@federation.edu.au

M. Plunkett
e-mail: margaret.plunkett@federation.edu.au

S. Emmett
e-mail: s.emmett@federation.edu.au

S. Weuffen et al. (eds.), *Inclusion, Equity, Diversity, and Social Justice in Education*, Sustainable Development Goals Series, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-5008-7_19

Anitra: I constantly draw on my experiences as a FiF, working-class woman of colour in predominantly middle-class education settings to inform my teaching and research. Working collaboratively on this collected edition, I have come to renew my commitment to teaching and researching in equitable and inclusive ways.

Margaret: My interest in diversity and equality of opportunity stemmed from three decades of teaching and researching in Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programs in a regional university. My extensive involvement with rural and regional students, who although highly academically capable often did not achieve to a level commensurate with their potential, fuelled my passion for providing guidance and resources to help pre-service and practicing teachers and school students understand the important relationship between aspirational outcomes and opportunity.

Susan: My teaching and research experience over 40 years in diverse communities including inner city kindergartens with many refugee families, rural early childhood centres and remote Northern Territory Indigenous communities has enriched my understanding of diversity, inclusivity and social justice. I have learned that to transform education so that all children and families have opportunities to thrive requires a curriculum which integrates pedagogies that advance emotional, social, and moral development and learning as well as critical reflection.

19.1 The State of Quality Inclusive and Diverse Education in the Twenty-First Century

When the United Nations (UN), as a governmentally-neutral organisation dedicated to promoting peace and security through harmonised international cooperation, finalised the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, 193 countries across the world became responsible for working towards a future where disadvantage and inequality was reduced (United Nations (UN) n.d.). The main avenues through which this was envisioned included targeted and specific strategies tied to improving health, education, and climate outcomes. SDG 4: *Quality Education*, was put forward as a meta-goal to advance success and equality through the provision of "inclusive and equitable quality education and promot[ion of] lifelong learning opportunities for all" (UN n.d.). Providing a framework for achieving this goal by 2030, ten targets were specified, aimed at bridging divides between sexes, abilities, academic success, and occupational outcomes; increasing the supply of qualified teachers; and ensuring more sensitive, responsive, and safer spaces for human rights-based education (UN n.d.).

While the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted rates of progression towards meeting the SDGs, in the six years since their release, there have been substantial improvements made globally towards achieving them. Gains in areas linked with Goal 4: *Quality education*, including Goal 3: *Good health and wellbeing*, Goal 5: *Gender equality*, Goal 10: *Reduced inequality*, and Goal 16: *Peace, justice and strong institutions* explored within this edited collection, were announced in the 2020 annual UN report (UN 2020a). However, the release emphasised that more investment and targeted strategies were required to ensure that people "in vulnerable and disadvantaged communities [were not] at risk of educational exclusion", and that the pandemic would not continue to "deepen the education crisis and widen existing education inequalities" (UN 2020a, p. 34). While successive UN reports over the past six years communicate gains on a global scale, the content presented in this edited collection offers richness and nuance about the current realities of quality education for all, across a range of nation states, including Afghanistan, Australia, China, India, Kenya, Scotland, Sweden, and Zambia.

In this chapter, we synthesise the interwoven narratives about diversity and inclusion presented in this edited collection as they pertain to the UN SGDs (UN n.d.). Through thematic analysis, we interrogate discourses and policies of inclusive education and foreground the lived experiences of

diverse cohorts. We explore also how processes of capacity building offer new ways of thinking and acting about diversity and inclusion for those marginalised by education practices. While analysis of emergent themes offers glimpses into the divergence between rhetoric and practice, and issues still concerning the provision of quality education in the twenty-first century, we raise the question about whether the UN SDGs are a utopian ideal, or a practical and achievable "shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future" (UN 2020a).

19.1.1 Discourses and Policies

An invariable interplay of discourses, policies, and practices exist where inclusion and diversity in education are concerned, regardless of political or social contexts. Taking up Foucault's (1972) argument that language is contextualised and functions to evoke meaning and social cohesion about the worlds in which people operate, Burke et al. (2022) highlight that educational endeavours are often conflated with processes of learning and teaching. While perhaps being considered a reductive and side avenue of inquiry, understanding how nomenclature is used to mobilise different educational agendas is critical to forming a nuanced comprehension of the ways in which diversity and inclusion function in mainstream education communities. The cyclical process of learning, unlearning, and relearning is, as Klein (2008) articulates, a significant component to managing the "tension between insider and outsider expertise" (p. 91) and therefore possibilities for transformative change. With greater understanding of the language used in education spaces, awareness for the conditions of inclusion and exclusion emerge, and perhaps, insights into the practices that require change in order to provide quality education for all.

In the twenty-first century, it is an established human right that everyone has access to education, regardless of their sexual orientation, socio-economic status (SES), cognitive capacity, or any other perceived difference (Ballard 1999). This is because, education is considered the primary avenue through which one may develop relational understandings in context to others, different environments, and the connected global world (Donati and Archer 2015). For education that is inclusive to become a realistic possibility in the future, learners, their educators, and the schooling environments in which they are situated must be open to (re)creating new ways of thinking and being through critical reflection on existing discourses. This is crucial given the increasing use of technology in mainstream education communities has become an integral component of knowledge collation and transfer in contemporary times, let alone the exponential rise of technology-mediated learning as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. As Rana and Daniel (2022) argue, the existing inequalities concerning access to resources have been exacerbated as a result of technologically-focused education endeavours. Challenges to the collective beliefs —what everyone knows—formed within social power/knowledge relations, forms the basis for understanding and defining what is *normal*, and therefore, what is different or *other*. In the case of mainstream education communities, a *normal* learner is one who speaks the primary language of communication in the nation, adheres to the socially-accepted ways of being, has resources and skills to access and use technology, and performs academically, socially, emotionally, and physically in alignment with set markers of progression and success. Students possessing capabilities or ideologies different to the norm are considered different or deficient (Larsen and Frost-Camilleri 2022).

While many nations seek to make education an attainable endeavour for their citizens, in reality, this is operationalised through a systematic process of acquisition versus deficit. Through these discourses, learners identified as different are *included* into the mainstream education machine which aims to produce a nationalised citizen through a homogenised set of intellectual, social, and economic standards (Weuffen and Willis 2022). Despite a focus on inclusive education gaining traction in the 1980s, the contemporary reality of creating more diverse

and inclusive learning spaces cognisant, accepting, and responsive to the needs and aspirations of all students has failed to endure (Burke et al. 2022). Because of the perceived complexities of moving towards a more sustainable, responsive, inclusive, and diverse education space globally, and perhaps the challenging process of (un/re) learning that thrusts individuals to be immersed in "unknown worlds" (Klein 2008, p. 95), Larsen and Emmett (2022) argue that inclusive education has been pushed to the margins; inclusivity is still visible but not really a key agenda.

Presented as a "wicked problem" (Larsen and Emmett 2022), the deficit positioning of othered students emerges in relation to a series of dominant discourses considered to underpin education communities globally. Students perceived to be lacking the required skills for success are caught up in meritocracy inequities underpinned by neoliberal discourses that define value based on economic investment (Larsen and Emmett 2022). Yet, in an attempt to be inclusive, nation states espouse social justice discourses that posit transformational possibilities emerge from the rhetoric of all citizens being offered *a fair go*. While appearing to be inclusive, such discourses continue to reinforce the adversarial positioning of those who can versus those who cannot, all the while creating superficial educational policies focused on bridging gaps (Weuffen and Willis 2022). To move beyond deficit discourses formed on the basis of race and/or culture, Marsh et al. (2022) suggest that there is an urgent need to readdress and implement counter-hegemonic and disruptive understandings within education spaces. Chapters within this edited collection, along with internationally-renowned scholarship (Freire 1970; Smith 2012), argue that one way in which this may be achieved is through the (re)-centering of *othered* perspectives, knowledges, voices, languages, etc., through processes of (un/re) learning. While the nomenclature and practices around inclusivity have shifted over the decades, a remaining, pervasive deficit discourse continues to impact the lived realities of othered groups.

19.1.2 Lived Experience

Generally, education evokes images of classroom-based practices; children sitting, reading, and writing, or perhaps, participating in carefully structured and monitored outdoor activities. Yet, from the chapters presented in this edited collection, and from the wealth of existing literature, in reality, education reaches beyond the bounds of that which is formalised. Education is a lived experience—often one that spans a lifetime—for many people, regardless of sexual orientation, intellectual or physical capacity, socio-economic status (SES), and/or academic, cultural, linguistic background, or any other characteristic that is categorised as *different*. It is from these wide-ranging experiences that a picture about the current state of quality inclusive education in the twenty-first century begins to crystallise.

The deficit discourses and adversarial positionings that have been argued to permeate education communities is a lived reality for many learners. For young people in regional locations, for example, Glowrey et al. (2022) highlight the challenges of aligning career aspirations to situational realities. While career guidance has become a standard feature of many Westernised mainstream education communities, Glowrey et al. (2022) argue that the reality of such guidance is often orientated towards higher education studies and exclusionary towards occupational careers. As another example, in Kenya and Zambia, the situational factors of economics, sex, and culture intersect to shape how girls participate in schooling; that is, once again, marginalised and in deficit to the privileged (Oxworth 2022). Oxworth (2022) highlights that the tensions between African girls' aspirations for schooling compete with their lived realities. While school communities make concerted efforts to overcome these barriers, the SES conditions faced by individuals, families, and the wider society result in African girls needing to choose between education and work for survival; a choice that socioeconomically privileged cohorts do not have to make (Oxworth 2022).

The stories presented by a diverse authorship across these chapters emphasises that quality and inclusive education cognisant and responsive to diverse student cohorts, and their associated needs, are not always being realised across the globe currently.

While individual schools, teachers, and educational settings have been reported as trying to do better, engage in lifelong professional development to address deficit discourses, and move towards more inclusive and diverse practices, overcoming the systematic barriers constructed by education systems globally seems to be preventing real and sustainable change. Despite policy and practices being developed as equity measures to enable quality education for all learners, certain identity factors such as cultural background, gender, and low-SES are still key indicators of academic achievement, especially at university level (Meinck and Brese 2019; Nieuwenhuis et al. 2019; OECD 2020). Goriss-Hunter et al. (2022) contend that when teachers and students with similar identity markers work together to (un/re)learn knowledges and processes that have been ingrained in normative everyday education practices, inclusivity based on lived experiences emerges and pivots success outcomes towards the relevant, purposeful, and practical. At the same time, however, the intersectional diversity connections between particular cohorts of students and teachers can lead to tensions with their privileged peers and to neoliberalist organisational agendas (Goriss-Hunter et al. 2022). While the chapters in this edited collection emphasise the advantages of diversity and inclusion for learning and teaching, the deficit positioning of the *other* is reinforced and legitimised and privileges those considered *normal.* In doing so, the responsibility for addressing deficits is shouldered subtly as a burden on the they are superfluous *othered.* By way of example, Browne (2022) highlights that despite inclusive rhetoric in education policy, teachers living with a dis/ability navigate a range of barriers as they attempt to operate equitably with their able-bodied peers. Because of the systematic but subtle discrimination focused on the capacity of teachers living with a dis/ability to perform their roles adequately and safely, many teachers choose not to disclose forms of difference if they can hide it (Browne 2022). So, while there is a global focus on increasing the number of qualified teachers to promote valuable outcomes for all learners, it is evident that a systematic breakdown of policy and practice exists across all countries, and not just those in developing countries targeted by the SDGs, that encompass holistic and multi-dimensional processes of inclusion.

Missing from discussion about equitable and diverse learning communities is the role of parents in supporting, advocating, and contributing to quality education outcomes. Interestingly, Claughton et al. (2022) identified that when parents possess knowledge of both the educational system and the situational intricacies of students with a diagnosed dis/ability, they are bought into the educational process as para-professionals. While teachers and schooling professionals appear to undergo a (un/re)learning process as a result of these discussions, despite this degree of inclusion, students with a dis/ability continue to be *othered* and treated through deficit discourses, evidenced through the language and practices used to define and manage them (Claughton et al. 2022). Outside the formal education environments, parents have been identified as a significant influential factor in developing children's sense of social justice, inclusion, and diversity (Davis et al. 2014). Yet, in order for parents to support their children developing academically, Kewalramani and Kidman (2022) uncovered the importance of intersecting social and cultural capital, particularly for those outside the dominant group, being acknowledged and woven into the fabric of education as a key factor in the provision of quality education.

19.1.3 Capacity Building

As a means of moving beyond the disassociation of inclusive policy and practice to the lived reality of *othering* experienced by some learners in diverse cohorts, increasing attention is being

paid to capacity building processes and subsequently the impact for real and sustainable change. Interestingly, there appears to be an acknowledgement that the systematic procedural changes required of education globally to pivot towards more quality and inclusive outcomes for all learners are beyond achievable targets in the short-term (McGreal 2017; Webb et al. 2017). However, the critical question needs to be asked about whether sustainable and transformative change can ever be achieved if the system itself is not challenged, over focusing on practitioners as change agents. This is of particular interest given Klein's (2008) comments nearly 14 years ago that "teachers continue to find that the strains on them to increase equity in the classroom and lay bare their practice is too great to be managed on their own" (p. 95). The lack of emphasis on changing the system could be one explanation for the focus of capacity building projects orientated towards individual teachers' pedagogy. Elvey and Burke (2022) demonstrate that curriculum approaches possessed and demonstrated by teachers are critical to guaranteeing learning contexts that are equitable and inclusive. To overcome the systematic barriers associated with *othering* occurring paradoxically within an inclusive framework, teachers are seen as the points at which real change may occur in the lived realities of diverse cohorts.

The degree of knowledge about one's own positionality, epistemic foundations, and relational behaviours seem to be considered the threshold concepts to working within interpersonal contexts, particularly where differences between individuals and groups exist (Camicia 2015; Sawyer and Liggett 2012). Elvey and Burke (2022) argue that the development of an inclusive mindset applied to teaching knowledge through professional development within the schooling environment, may be one way for holistic practices aligned to inclusivity to emerge and/or become visible. To ensure these practices are sustained over a period of time, Holcombe and Plunkett (2022) tout the benefits of a strength-based model to supporting success among diverse student cohorts. Understanding the intersectionality of diversity—in that a person associating with a particular group (i.e. dis/abled, female, and non-Indigenous) may not identify with the commonly understood characteristics connected with the group (i.e. loss of cognitive functioning, physically inferior, or inherently racist)—ought to be of primary importance in the capacity building among the teaching workforce for the development and operationalisation of inclusive and quality education for all (Holcombe and Plunkett 2022). Through professional learning activities orientated towards strength-based practices, Cacciattolo and Aronson (2022) argue that more effective interpersonal communication is facilitated through the development of nuanced and empathetic standpoints. They argue that intercultural learning opportunities where educators are encouraged and supported to develop deeper understandings of themselves first before drawing connections to, and facilitating more responsive environments with, the cohorts they teach, is a central tenet to inclusion (Cacciattolo and Aronson 2022).

Within the past two years, the intersectionality of diversity and multitude of factors impacting all learners, let alone those *othered* within society, have been crystallised through the lenses of the COVID-19 pandemic and international relations. Since 2020, there has been an exponential wealth of experiences and scholarship available around the impact of the pandemic on quality educational outcomes across the globe (e.g. Banerjee 2020; Burke 2021; Chaturvedi et al. 2021; Couch et al. 2021; Herrenkohl et al. 2021; Kumar et al. 2020) Depending on the SES and intellectual capital available, the rapid transition to remote learning, as a result of the pandemic, has set back projected targets on the provision of quality education for all (UN 2020a). Coker and Mercieca (2022) argue that the traditional power relations between teachers and learners have been challenged by the mass introduction of digital technology to schooling activities. Yet, the integration of digital technology within mainstream education communities has resulted in an inequitable foundation for learning and a more inclusive education environment being created (Coker and Mercieca 2022). At the same time, depending on the learners' geographic location, access to education

is variable and unstable. Most recently, the withdrawal of peacekeeping troops in Afghanistan has created worldwide concern for the human rights of women to access education (Najibi and McLachlan 2022). The *othering* and lesser positioning of women in a religiously-patriarchal society prevents the development of the human and intellectual capital required for inclusive and diverse education communities to thrive (Najibi and McLachlan 2022).

While this edited collection has opened up the space for a more nuanced understanding of the barriers and enablers that are needed for ensuring quality education is experienced by all, the lived reality recollections from a diversity of perspectives make clear that further progress is required. Furthermore, despite the capacity building processes orientated towards individual teachers and education contexts, the systematic processes at the foundation of education systems across the globe have stunted the possibility for the provision of quality education for all learners free of discrimination based on sexual orientation, intellectual or physical capacity, SES, and/or academic, cultural, or linguistic background, etc. It becomes apparent that although there has been reported gains and developments in the processes of inclusion throughout education endeavours globally, in the twenty-first century, limited space exists for further progression while deficit discourse and *othering* are the foundations upon which diverse and inclusive practices are operationalised.

19.2 Is a Sustainable, Responsive, Inclusive, and Diverse Global Education Future Possible?

The holistic picture provided by the interwoven narrative in this edited collection offers a glimpse into the state of education in the twenty-first century, across a number of countries, globally. While the voices of *othered* peoples provide insights into the less visible components of inclusive and equitable quality education, that is, those in the margins, the question remains as to whether it is possible to achieve a sustainable, responsive, inclusive, and diverse global education future for all. One of the foundational problems to creating a more sustainable, responsive, inclusive, and diverse educational future, as identified by Burke et al. (2022), is the conceptualisation and processes of learning, around *normal* as it pertains to human rights and access to education.

Of the nearly 8 billion people on earth in 2021, while there is a parity generally between males and females globally, nearly 60% of the world's population lives on the Asian continent (UN 2020b), 55% reside in urbanised settings (UN 2020b), 15% function with a dis/ability (World Health Organisation 2021), the median average years of schooling attainment sits at 8.4 years (United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) 2021), and the global average income is just over $15,745 GDP per year (UNSD 2021). Over the next thirty years, the world's population is expected to increase by two billion people, children will be outnumbered by the elderly, migration due to violence, oppression, and climate change will increase, and two-thirds of the population will reside in an urbanised setting (UN 2020b). Waiving any forecasted statistics around the diversity of peoples and contexts discussed in this edited collection, the evidence indicates that diversity will become the norm, not the exception as it is currently presented in mainstream education communities.

Even though it may appear that mainstream education communities globally are failing to provide safer and more equitable access to education for all learners, there are clear messages of what does work. To achieve the UN SDG of quality education for all, this edited collection provocates the following attributes as keys to bridging the divergence between the rhetoric of inclusive learning environments and the lived realities of diverse cohorts:

- Respecting the human rights and intersectional identities, capacities, and aspirations of individuals and their contribution to collective success and wellbeing,
- Working to understand and respond more empathetically to the differentiated provisions required to experience success,

- Reorientating deficit discourses of *othering* to strength-based practices ensuring individual needs are supported,
- Reimaging the dimensions of quality teacher education and practice, and
- Restructuring the ideological and physical structures of education systems.

The glimpses around processes of inclusion, diversity, and responsiveness provided in this edited collection provide clear indicators of *when it works, it works*. It is from a social justice standpoint that the foundational hope for a transformed future where quality education is an accessible and realistic target is realised for all learners globally.

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Dr. Sara Weuffen is a teacher-researcher specialist with a Ph. D. in cross/inter-cultural education research between non-Indigenous people, Aboriginal peoples, and Torres Strait Islanders in Australia. She specializes in learning and content design for diverse cohorts across a broad range of platforms; online, blended, face-to-face. As a non-Indigenous woman born on Gundijtmara Country (Warrnambool) and living on Wadawurrung Country (Ballarat), Dr Weuffen draws upon her formative grey methodological approach—where both Poststructural theory and Indigenous methodologies are bought together—and collaborations with Australia's First Nations Peoples, to critique dominant structures and ideologies, interrogate binary discourses, and push educational boundaries for emancipatory and success-orientated shared-learning outcomes and positive social progress.

Professor Jenene Burke is the Director, Academic Operations in the Institute of Education, Arts and Community at Federation University Australia. Jenene convenes the Social Justice, Inclusion and Diversity in Education (SJIDE) research focus area in the Institute. She is the President of the World Federation of Associations for Teacher Education (WFATE) and leads the WFATE Inclusion and Social Justice in Teacher Education in Global Contexts research development group. As a researcher, Jenene is best known for her world-class research into play spaces as inclusive environments for children and their families. She is particularly interested in research that privileges the voices of participants, especially children and young people. Jenene has a secondary teaching background and 20 years of experience in Higher Education as a teacher educator. Her learning and teaching interests centre on educational responses to student diversity, with respect to inclusive education and disability studies in education.

Dr. Anitra Goriss-Hunter is the Director, Learning and Teaching and a Senior Lecturer at Federation University Australia. Her research and teaching focuses on gender and education, inclusion, and pre-service teacher (PSTs) education. Anitra was awarded the prestigious Australian Women's and Gender Studies Association award for most outstanding PhD thesis. Anitra's research investigates women's careers in Higher Education; ways to improve female participation in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education; and, the development of inclusive teaching approaches that offer authentic learning experiences for PSTs. Anitra's contribution in the last field was recognized when she was awarded the Federation University Vice-Chancellor's Award—Citation for Outstanding Contribution to Student Learning 2020.

Dr. Margaret Plunkett is an Adjunct Associate Professor in the Institute of Education, Arts and Community at Federation University Australia. She has been a teacher educator and researcher for more than three decades, specialising in the fields of rural and regional education, teacher professional learning and gifted education. She has extensive research expertise in both qualitative and quantitative methodologies and across all educational sectors, particularly in relation to diverse student populations in rural and regional areas, with much of the work focusing on the intersection between aspirations, rurality and achievement. Margaret has conducted research with schools in the Gippsland region, focusing on how educational environments can help develop knowledge, skills and competencies that assist in building meaningful and sustainable relationships and emotional competence within communities. Margaret is Associate Editor of the Australasian Journal of Gifted Education, and a member of a range of national and international education associations.

Dr. Susan Emmett has been extensively involved in early childhood education and the translation of research into the practical environment for over thirty-five years. Her professional experience includes early childhood teaching in a range of settings, work as an early childhood educational consultant and teaching and researching within TAFE and Higher Education sectors. Susan is a Senior Lecturer in Education at Federation University Australia where she coordinates and teaches in Early Childhood and manages partnerships with external organisations both domestic and international. Prior to this, Susan worked as a Research Fellow within the School of Social and Policy Research at Charles Darwin University where early childhood literacy was central to her research, particularly in relation to rural and remote Indigenous education. Her research interests also include the wellbeing and resilience of children and educators including trauma informed, inclusive pedagogy and relationship-focused practice in early childhood contexts. Susan's expertise is in the use of qualitative methodologies, including grounded theory. She has recently published journal articles, reports, and book chapters in these areas. She also applies and works with mixed methods research processes including designing and conducting randomised control trials. In 2016 Susan won the Federation University Vice-Chancellor's Award for Contributions to Student Learning and *Teaching Excellence*, and in 2015 she was a recipient of *The Deans Award for dedication to partnership work and consequent provision of enriched learning experiences for education students from a diverse range of backgrounds.*

Author Index

A
Archer, Verity, 181
Aronson, Greg, 261
Arvanitakis, James, 181

B
Browne, Kim, 125
Burke, Jenene, 1, 13, 199, 277

C
Cacciattolo, Marcelle, 261
Claughton, Amy, 139
Coker, Helen, 233

D
Daniel, Rachel, 77
Daniels-Mayes, Sheelagh, 57

E
Elvey, Moya, 199
Emmett, Susan, 1, 13, 29, 277

F
Fletcher, Anna, 109
Frost-Camilleri, Liam, 43

G
Glowrey, Cheryl, 109
Goriss-Hunter, Anitra, 1, 13, 181, 277
Green, Monica, 109

H
Holcombe, Wendy, 217

K
Kewalramani, Sarika, 167
Kidman, Gillian, 167

L
Larsen, Ana, 29, 43
Levy, Stuart, 109

M
MacNeil, Kristina Sehlin, 57
Marsh, Jillian K, 57
McLachlan, Claire, 245
Mercieca, Duncan, 233

N
Najibi, Parwaiz, 245
Nice, Kylie, 139
Nursey-Bray, Melissa, 57

O
Oxworth, Catherine, 153

P
Plunkett, Margaret, 1, 109, 217, 277

R
Rana, Anjali, 77
Robertson, Deborah, 139

W
Weuffen, Sara, 1, 91, 139, 277
Willis, Kym, 91

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