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International Representations of Inclusive Education: How is inclusive practice reflected in the professional teaching standards of China and Australia?

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Inclusive education focuses on addressing marginalisation, segregation and exclusion within policy and practice. The purpose of this article is to use critical discourse analysis to examine how inclusion is represented in the education policy and professional documents of two countries, Australia and China. In particular, teacher professional standards from each country are examined to determine how an expectation of inclusive educational practice is promoted to teachers. The strengthening of international partnerships to further support the implementation of inclusive practices within both countries is also justified.

Keywords: Australia; China; inclusion; inclusive education; inclusive practices; policy; professional teaching standards

Introduction

Inclusion is a response to global concerns for all children and young people to have the right to access and complete a free and compulsory education that supports their needs and is relevant to their lives (UNESCO, 2000). Those involved in inclusive education strive to improve student learning and ensure participation for all students in their local school community. There is a focus on addressing marginalisation, segregation and exclusion at all levels, from policy through to classroom practice (Ainscow, 2008).

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The purpose of this article is to examine how inclusion is represented in the education policy and professional documents of two countries, Australia and China. In particular, teacher professional standards from each country are examined to determine how an expectation of inclusive educational practice is promoted to teachers. The article starts by positioning the values of inclusive education as distinct from those that underpin special education. Following is a discussion of the pedagogical discourse of inclusion. The development of professional standards within both countries and the promotion of inclusion within these documents are then analysed. We conclude this article with a recommendation that inclusive practices across countries can be supported through the development of international partnerships.

The Values of Inclusive Education

Inclusion is underpinned by values, particularly values of social justice and citizenship that promote equity, participation, respect for diversity, compassion, care and entitlement (Ainscow, Booth, & Dyson, 2006). Inclusive education is informed by a social model of disability and acknowledges that disability and difference are socially constructed and influenced by cultural values (Armstrong, Armstrong, & Spandagou, 2010). While there is an understanding that culturally informed views about difference in society exist in different countries, an inclusive approach would expect that teachers listen to their students and their families and build a curriculum that is appropriate and respectful for those needs.

The term “inclusive education” is frequently used to discuss special education which creates confusion in understanding these terms. Special education has been influenced by the medical model of disability. This model emphasises inability and deficit and contributes to a dependency model of disability (Carrington, 2000). Labels such as “invalid”, “handicapped”, and “slow learner” have sanctioned individual medical and negative views of disability. There continues to be a tendency to reinforce an individual deficit view of special educational

needs and disability in education today. Teachers' past experiences and their perceptions and definitions of difference and disability in society influence their pedagogic practice and how they relate to teaching students with disabilities. Personal definitions and beliefs are crucial because they may legitimate certain assumptions about disability and associated discriminatory practices (Barton, 1996). These assumptions influence education policy and teaching practice although the underlying beliefs about disability and difference are usually not made clear in much of the discourse surrounding education. The articulation of inclusion as apparent in the professional standards of teachers in Australia and China present a range of discourses that enable analysis and this is the focus of this paper.

An inclusive approach to education requires teachers to teach in ways that are respectful of various abilities and backgrounds. Teachers' values and beliefs about diversity and expectations of success and belonging for all students in their class guide classroom pedagogy. Classroom discourses which are the language of teaching and learning (Cazden, 2001) provide an insight into the underlying beliefs that inform teaching. These beliefs, while couched in historical understandings and practices, are also influenced as new knowledge is acquired. The professional standards for teachers in both Australia and in China are a relatively new discourse that has the potential to influence teachers' thinking about inclusion and their practice. The next section of this article will explore two bodies of work about pedagogies of inclusion that are informed by a discourse of inclusive beliefs and values (Boud & Solomon, 2003). We use these bodies of work to inform our analysis of the professional standards of teachers in Australia and China.

Pedagogical Discourse of Inclusion

To describe a pedagogical discourse of inclusion we have taken Skidmore's (2002) ideas about a "discourse of inclusion" (p. 120) and aligned these with Alton-Lee's (2003)

suggested pedagogical ideas about inclusive knowledge and skills. Skidmore (2002) described a discourse of inclusion as:

not only the vocabulary that teachers use to describe their work, but more fundamentally the underlying grammar of reasoning which can be inferred from their comments on the current organisation of provision in the school ... It is a means of accounting for institutional policy and practice from a definitive evaluative standpoint, of defining its present state against a normative conception of what it might be or ought to be (p. 120).

This discourse of inclusion, as Skidmore (2002) suggested, penetrates pedagogical practice (e.g. teachers' inclusive "vocabulary") and institutional policy (e.g. the "underlying grammar" and the "current organization" of inclusive provision in schools). In line with this inclusive discourse, Alton-Lee (2003) considers the notion of diversity central to the dialogue amongst policy makers, educators and researchers. She rejects the dichotomy of "normality" and "otherness", and provides an evidence-base for policy making that addresses quality teaching and pedagogical practice and embraces classroom endeavour. Drawing insights from Skidmore's dimensions of a "discourse of inclusion" and Alton-Lee's evidence-based pedagogical ideas, we formulate a comparative approach to analysing the professional teaching standards from Australia and China (see Table 1).

The dimensions of the discourse of inclusion (Skidmore, 2002) selected for consideration in this article were developed in case study research at two English high schools. We recognise the different context for Skidmore's research in contrast to education policy and practice in Australia and China; however, we believe that the dimensions can be applied to our respective countries. The dimensions of educability of students, explanation of educational failure, school/institution response, theory of teaching expertise, and curriculum model provide an inclusive perspective on the goals, purposes and practice of education. In addition, Alton-Lee (2003) suggested pedagogical ideas about inclusive knowledge and skills

that align with Skidmore's pedagogical discourse of inclusion. She stated that teachers need to demonstrate knowledge and skills in pedagogy that reflect principles of inclusion. Examples of inclusive pedagogical ideas from Skidmore and Alton-Lee are provided in Table 1.

Inclusive values are clearly evident in both Skidmore's and Alton-Lee's models of pedagogy. For example, inclusive education presumes that curriculum should be curriculum for all students (i.e. able to accommodate the diversity of learners in classrooms) (Skidmore, 2002) and that quality teaching facilitates high standards of student outcomes for heterogeneous groups of students (Alton-Lee, 2003).

[t] Insert Table 1 near here/[t]

Inclusive education in Australia and China: Policy and practice

Education policy and practice in Australia and China have been influenced by a range of international and domestic initiatives. The signing of the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) was a significant international event that progressed inclusive education. In 1994, representatives of 92 governments (including China and Australia) and 25 international organisations formed the World Conference on Special Needs Education held in Salamanca, Spain, and signed the Salamanca Statement. The framework in this document stipulates that children who have disabilities should attend their local neighbourhood school and this endorsed a commitment to "Education for All". Governments from the participating countries were called upon to prioritise the inclusion of all children and to adopt the policy of inclusive education. These priorities were endorsed by UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank.

The United Nations' *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989) highlights the rights of children and young people to non-discrimination, equal opportunity, and full participation in community settings, including schools (Bray & Gates, 2000). The "best interests of the

child” are put forward as a primary consideration and is a reminder that educational decisions should be made with full consideration given to children’s rights to receive a high quality education in their local community. The United Nations’ *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (2006) sets out the rights of people with disabilities and provides governments with a code for implementation. The government of China and the government of Australia participated in the formulation of these agreements.

In China, a programme of economic reform and opening-up to foreign investment in 1978, have had an influence on education policy. China’s special education policy has been influenced by the trend of international special education development and domestic educational reform. For example, prior to the 1980s, very few regular schools in China supported students with special education needs. During the 1980s the “Learning in Regular Class” programme (LRC programme) was formally proposed and supported teaching children with disabilities in regular education settings. This meant segregated special education schools were not the only placement option for children with disabilities. Some children with disabilities were placed in regular schools or special classes in regular schools.

The LRC programme is the integration of the western concept of inclusive education and the special education practice in China, and is currently the main form of compulsory education for children with disabilities in China. The *Compulsory Education Law of the People’s Republic of China* (The Central People’s Government of the People’s Republic of China, 1986, 2006) required that regular schools enrol children with disabilities who were considered psychologically, physically, and educationally able to participate in general education. Furthermore, schools were required to provide teacher aides to assist with the learning and rehabilitation of students with disabilities in the regular classroom. By 2007, approximately 63.19% of school-aged children with disabilities in China received

compulsory education in regular schools (China Disabled Persons' Federation (CDPF), 2007) and thousands of special classes in regular schools were established.

In Australia, each state and territory has its own policies in regard to the education of students who have disabilities. Since the signing of the Salamanca statement, Australian education systems have been moving towards a more inclusive approach to schooling. Segregated special schools and mainstream primary and secondary schools offer a range of programmes to support children with disabilities. In some of the larger cities, parents may have a choice of what type of school their child can attend. However, in many smaller towns, all children would enrol in their local school (Forlin, 2006).

Domestic and international initiatives in both Australia and China are evident in the recognition of all children as worthy of a quality education. Evidence of this commitment is found in the policy and practices of both countries. Following is a discussion of how this recognition has led to the development of professional standards for teachers in each of these countries.

The Development of Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST)

In Australia, the educational goals of the Melbourne Declaration (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA), 2008) and the resulting focus on professional learning of educators has led to the development of several official nationwide documents to embrace and support the professional learning of school leaders and teachers. Fundamental to these documents is the *Australian Charter for the Professional Learning of Teachers and School Leaders* (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), 2012a), which sets the scene for professional learning and teacher quality in Australia. It was developed after wide international and national consultation and endorsed by state and territory education ministers in August, 2012. The charter “describes the importance and characteristics of high quality professional learning in improving teacher

and school leader practice” (AITSL). There are three key aspects to professional learning reinforced by the charter: (a) the importance of professional learning in improving student outcomes; (b) an expectation that teachers and school leaders actively engage in professional learning; and (c) characteristics of a high quality professional learning culture and of effective professional learning (AITSL).

Working in parallel with this charter is the *Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework* (AITSL, 2012b). The aim of this document is to provide a framework for a national, consistent approach to teacher performance and development. The framework focuses on the interrelationships and interwoven and cyclic nature of key factors and elements identified as essential to an effective approach. These include:

- a focus on student outcomes
- a clear understanding of effective teaching
- leadership
- coherence and flexibility (AITSL, 2012b).

Fundamental to the goals of the MCEETYA (2008), and the effective implementation of the Australian Charter and Performance and Development Framework, is the need for these documents to be strongly aligned with other policies and processes that underpin and support the career progression of educators and teacher effectiveness (AITSL, 2012b). As a result, they need to be implemented in association with the Australian professional standards that have been developed for both principals and teachers. As part of the essential reform of MCEETYA, recommendations focussed on improving teacher effectiveness. The professional standards for principals and teachers were developed with the intent of supporting this reform by describing key elements of quality teaching and school leadership to “guide professional learning, practice and engagement” (AITSL, 2011b, p. 1). These were endorsed by all the Australian state and territory Ministers for Education.

The *Australian Professional Standards for Principals* (AITSL, 2011a) is the first nationally agreed standards for principals in Australia and was endorsed in 2011. These standards allow for a national description of the professional practice of effective school principals and make 'explicit that quality school leadership is important to student learning, the teaching profession and the broader community' (AITSL, p. 1). It outlines what principals are expected to know, understand and do to achieve excellence in their work within the context of a learning community (AITSL).

A separate set of Australian standards for teachers has also been developed. The *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (APST) (AITSL, 2011b) is made up of seven interconnecting standards which outline what a teacher should know and be able to do at four different career progressions of graduate, proficient, highly accomplished and lead (AITSL). These Australian standards are grouped across three domains of teaching: professional knowledge, professional practice and professional engagement.

The Development of Chinese teaching standards

From the establishment of The People's Republic of China till the early 1980s, the teacher's role in the development of education was not well defined. From the late 1980s the government of China has taken consistent steps to shape teachers' professional standards through strengthening teachers' specialisation levels; improving the quality of teachers and teaching, and teacher education; and enhancing teachers' social status. Following these government initiatives, normal universities (universities for teacher preparation) began setting higher standards for their students.

The government's recognition of the salience of teacher education has led to the development of several laws and official nationwide documents to embrace and support the improvement of teacher quality. Fundamental to these documents includes the *Compulsory Education Law* enacted in 1986 and revised in 2006 which regulates the responsibilities of

teachers (The Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China, 1986, 2006), and the *Pedagogic Law of the People's Republic of China* (The Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China, 1993) which sets the rights and obligations of teachers in China. The *Pedagogic Law* was developed after wide national consultation and endorsed by the Standing Committee of the eighth National People's Congress in October, 1993, and was enforced on January 1st, 1994. The *Pedagogic Law* describes the rights and obligations of the teacher as:

Teacher is a professional whose duty is to fulfil education and teaching responsibilities. (Article 2, Chapter 1) ... Teacher has the rights of conducting educational activities, engaging with educational research, developing academic exchanges, directing and supporting student learning, and participating in decision making of schools (Article 7, Chapter 2).

The law goes on further to state that teachers should be obliged to “abide by the constitution, laws and professional ethics; be a model of virtue; love and care for all students; respect student's personality; promote the all-around development of students; and constantly enhance moral and political awareness” (Article 8, Chapter 2).

On the basis of the *Pedagogic Law*, the *Chinese Teachers' Qualification Regulations* (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 1995) was developed in December, 1995 after wide national consultation. In order to implement the *Chinese Teachers' Qualification Regulations*, the *Implementing Rules of Chinese Teachers' Qualification Regulations* (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2000) was enacted with creative breakthroughs in the maintenance and development of the professional standards of teachers and the teachers' qualifications admittance system. In 2001, the teacher qualification was comprehensively developed nationwide, providing standards for external control and promoting the development of teacher professionalism.

In 2010, the Chinese *National Mid and Long-Term Education Reform and Development Plan (2010-2020)* (the *Plan* for short) (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2010) was developed, with an explicit emphasis on strengthening and improving teacher quality. The *Plan* highlights “the further institutionalisation of teacher management, the establishment and implementation of teacher admittance system, the development of national teacher professional standards, as well as the enhancement of teachers’ academic qualifications and professional ethical levels” (Article 55, Chapter 17).

The successful implementation of the laws and documents, such as the *Pedagogic Law* and the *Chinese Teachers’ Qualification Regulations*, calls for the development of standards of teacher education. As a result, the *Educational Technology Competency Standards for Elementary and Middle-School Teacher (trial implementation)* (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2004) were established in 2004 with descriptions of key requirements of quality teachers (e.g. educational technology competency). In 2008, the *Occupation Moral Standards for Elementary and Middle-School Teachers* (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2008) was revised to guide teachers’ moral behaviours.

However, a national professional standard for teachers has long been absent until the Chinese *National Professional Standards for Teachers (trial implementation)* (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2012a) were endorsed in 2012. The standards define teachers at three levels: kindergarten, primary school and middle school. These standards allow for a national description of the professional requirements of teachers. These standards were built on four conceptual bases:

- student-orientation
- teachers’ ethics first
- abilities as the most important

- life-long learning.

These standards are grouped across three dimensions of teaching: professional knowledge, professional code of ethics, and professional skills.

Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical discourse analysis has been used to explore how the discourses of the pedagogies of inclusion (Alton-Lee, 2003; Skidmore, 2002) are represented in the suite of documents informing and declaring the professional standards for teachers in Australia and China. The focus of analysis is on discourse as an element of social practice, and thus how the choice of words and phrases and the positioning of text can mediate actions and perhaps change how societies view and respond to particular phenomena such as inclusive educational practices. Fairclough (2005) claims that through the use of particular interdiscursive, linguistic and semiotic strategies employed in discourses, those accessing the discourses can be persuaded to behave in particular ways. Interdiscursivity can be seen in the intertwining of different discourses. Semiosis is identified in the way that different actions, representations and identities are evoked through the linguistic and textual features. In the professional standards documents of both countries, language has been used in a particular way to represent inclusion and to represent historically marginalised groups in education. Inclusion is being considered as a discourse in the sense that it is one way of representing and responding to an aspect of social life.

Discourses of the Pedagogies of Inclusion: Australia and China

Australia

The beliefs and values of inclusion are evident in the Melbourne Declaration (MCEETYA, 2008) with the use of words such as equity, diversity and respect scattered throughout the document and linked to words or phrases such as excellence, every/all students, full potential and high expectations. Indeed in the opening preamble, education is charged with the central

role of “building a democratic, equitable and just society” (p. 4) and this is linked to the development of prosperity, cohesiveness and cultural diversity with Indigenous culture being integral to these practices. Of interest here and throughout the document is the linking of equality, diversity and prosperity. We can see the intersection of democratic, humanistic and economic rationalisms, where each is dependent on the other. To be democratic and to be prosperous, Australians need to embrace the diversity of their society with education as the place to instil these values. Yet there are improvements to make in the Australian education system if equity and excellence are to be reached and these are specifically identified as the areas of improving outcomes for Indigenous Australians and for those from low-socioeconomic backgrounds, particularly in terms of Year 12 completions.

Throughout the Melbourne Declaration we are repeatedly told that these educational goals are for all young Australians. For example, Goal 2 states that “All young Australians become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens” (p. 8). The phrase “all young Australians” is note-worthy for its clarity and reference to inclusion. “All young Australians” must reach high standards of active involvement and achievement, not “some young Australians”, and not “all Australians including those from diverse backgrounds”. This section of the document simply applies these goals to “all” and then makes suggestions for different pathways to, and support for, success.

The theme of inclusion can be tracked to the Australian Professional Standards for Principals and Teachers. For example, the *Australian Professional Standards for Principals* (AITSL, 2011a) refers to “Inclusive Australia” and states that “All students in all communities ... have the right to education which ensures they become creative, confident, active, informed learners and citizens” (p. 3). This statement specifically includes Indigenous, multi-cultural, multi-faith, all locations, and “to students at risk and those of differing needs

and abilities” (p. 3). Principals must “set high standards for every learner” (p. 6), “secure equity of educational outcomes” (p. 9) and implement “strategies in order that all students can achieve to the best of their ability and become engaged in their own learning” (p. 9). Similar words and phrases appear throughout this document and link diversity to respect for all students and ‘richness’ of a community.

In the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (APST) (AITSL, 2011b), notions of high expectations and full potential found in the Melbourne Declaration are now discussed in terms of strategies for implementation and performance measures with the more frequent use of words and phrases related to making adjustments/modifications, improving opportunities to learn and learning outcomes for all students within inclusive learning environments. These expectations of inclusive pedagogies reflect the Skidmore and Alton-Lee pedagogical discourses of inclusion. For example, inclusive education presumes that curriculum should be curriculum for all students, i.e., able to accommodate the diversity of learners in classrooms (Skidmore, 2002); is focused on student achievement (including social outcomes) and facilitates high standards of student outcomes for heterogeneous groups of students; is responsive to student learning processes; and creates effective links between school and other cultural contexts in which students are socialised, to facilitate learning (Alton-Lee, 2003).

Within their professional knowledge, teachers must be aware of the diverse backgrounds of their students and know how to structure their lessons to meet the needs of their students. Within their pedagogical practice, teachers will “create and maintain safe, inclusive and challenging learning environments” (p. 4) and they will “regularly evaluate all aspects of their teaching practice to ensure they are meeting the learning needs of their students” (p. 4). Principles of inclusion and strategies for differentiating teaching are discussed in terms of differing degrees of proficiency across each of the four identified career

stages. Within all of these documents, inclusive beliefs and values are positioned alongside pedagogies of inclusion as described by Skidmore (2002) and Alton-Lee (2003).

China

The message of inclusion is evident in all of the Chinese Professional Standards for Teachers with words such as respect, equity, and diversity repeatedly used throughout the documents and linked to words or phrases such as every/all students, appropriate education, and holistic development of the child. The *Professional Standards of Teachers in Elementary Schools* (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2012b) require all students with special needs to be included in elementary schools. It is the first time children with special needs are recognised in national educational documents. For example, the first aspect of the second dimension of professional knowledge documented in the Chinese *Professional Standards of Teachers in Elementary Schools* (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China) states that teachers should “learn the characteristics and patterns of the intellectual and physical development of students in different age groups or with special needs” (Article 8). In addition, one of the requirements in the first dimension of professional values and code of ethics is that teachers “respect elementary school students’ personalities, protect their legal rights, and treat every student equally” (Paragraph 1). Terms such as “all”, “every”, and “equally”, explicitly denote the recognition of inclusion in corresponding policies. The discourse here connotes the rejection of exclusion to break the traditional conceptual and actual boundary between the mainstream “in-group” and the marginalised “out-group”.

The educational values which are the foundation of developing the Chinese professional standards reflect the theme of inclusion. For example, the first educational value, “student-orientation”, embodies the core ideology of inclusion by stating that:

Every student's rights and interests should be respected. In line with student-oriented teaching, teachers should fully mobilize and give full play to students' initiative. Teachers should abide by the developmental characteristics of elementary school students' minds and bodies and the education laws, and provide appropriate education in order to promote student learning in a lively way and facilitate the happy and healthy development of students (p. 2).

Similarly, the second educational value, "teachers' ethics first", emphasises that teachers should "love students and respect students' personalities, and teachers should be full of love, responsibilities, patience and carefulness ..." (p. 1). The third educational value considers "abilities" to be "the most important" (p. 3) and mainly concerns the teacher's practical abilities of teaching to better address the special needs of all students. Teachers should not only learn professional subject knowledge, but also understand students' individual educational needs and abide by the variations in children's development patterns. Concerning the fourth educational value, "lifelong learning", it is the first time that the *National Professional Standards for Teachers* (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2012a) exhorted teachers to "master the advanced pedagogies and develop with the times for the sake of every student" (p. 4). Throughout the documents of teachers' professional standards, it is also emphasised that teachers must be able to effectively communicate and cooperate with parents and other professionals (e.g. special education teachers, psychologists, speech therapists) to ensure the development of all students. The above snapshot of the policy documents clearly indicates that students and their needs are placed at the centre of teachers' pedagogical practices. It is through teachers' regular and routine behaviours, values, skills and pursuits that the discourse of inclusion is embedded, embodied, and empowered.

Moreover, the respect for, and recognition of, students' individual differences as a core ideology of inclusive education are also documented in the Professional Standards for

Teachers at various levels. For example, the Chinese *Professional Standards of Teachers in Kindergarten* (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2012c) states that “trusting and respecting young children's individual difference, and actively learning and addressing diverse needs will benefit young children's psychological and physical development” (Article 7). “Learning young children's difference in various forms and at different levels, and their development trend and areas of strength, as well as mastering related strategies and methods” (Article 23) are the core contents of professional knowledge required of teachers. The Chinese *Professional Standards of Teachers in Elementary Schools* (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2012b) require teachers to “trust pupils, respect their individual differences, and learn and address pupils' diverse needs in order to benefit their psychological and physical development” (Article 11). Similar words and phrases appear throughout the Chinese *Professional Standards of Teachers in Middle Schools* (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2012d). The educational value of considering students' individual differences was emphasised and reaffirmed in the national standards for teachers, which embodies the important position of the core ideology of inclusive education in the professional standards for teachers.

In the *National Professional Standards for Teachers* (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2012a), notions of individualised education for every student are highlighted with a particular focus on the implementation of appropriate education through frequent use of words and phrases related to making adjustments and improving teaching according to the results of assessment. Within their professional values and code of ethics, teachers must “provide appropriate education for every student”. Drawing upon their professional skills, teachers should “make a rational individual teaching plan” and “improve teaching according to the evaluation results”. In this vein, the dynamic and developmental evaluation of students is embedded in the discourse of the *National Professional Standards*

for Teachers. Teachers need to master multiple approaches to assessment and assess students from different perspectives. Principles of inclusion and strategies for dynamic and developmental evaluation are discussed in the professional standards for teachers in different schools. This ensures students with special needs benefit by the greatest degree from inclusive learning environments.

Apart from the language used in the teachers professional standards at the kindergarten level, elementary school level, middle school level and national level, we notice similar use of inclusive wording upon a revisit to legal documents. The *Pedagogic Law of the People's Republic of China* (The Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China, 1993) states that teachers "must promote the development of students in an all-around way" (Article 8, Chapter 2). Similar words and phrases also appear in the *Compulsory Education Law of the People's Republic of China* (The Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China, 1986). For example, within their professional values and code of ethics, teachers "must set up aggressive and ambitious objectives for education and promote students' knowledge obtainment, capacity building, and morality growth, and pay special attention to students' all-round development" (Article 36, Chapter 5). The repeated use of the word "must" warrants some analysis here. The connotation of "must" intimates a legitimate discourse of inclusion. It is a discourse that is imperial, compulsory, and non-negotiable.

Similar to the Australian policy documents, the Chinese policies strongly align with Skidmore's (2002) discourse of inclusion and Alton-Lee's (2003) inclusive pedagogical ideas. Throughout the policy documents, themes of "education for all" and pedagogies of inclusion emerge. These themes suggest that teachers' professional standards expect, support, require, and enable teachers' professional development for the sake of the better schooling of every student.

Discussion

In the analysis of the documents from both countries, the core values of equity, diversity and respect were identified throughout: equity in that “all” students be treated equally; diversity in that teachers need to be aware of the background of their students and of their individual learning needs; and respect in that teachers acknowledge, value, and allow for these individual differences. Inclusive knowledge and skills that align with Alton-Lee’s (2003) and Skidmore’s models (2002) were also recurring themes in the documents from both countries. The ability to adjust and modify pedagogical practices and strategies was considered to be vital for positive student outcomes in inclusive environments. However, while the Australian documents had more of a focus on inclusion in a societal sense, the Chinese documents were concentrated more on inclusion of the individual student. While neither of these would be considered a negative characteristic in any way, it does indicate that the two countries may be at different places in their journey to inclusive education. International collaboration between researchers, teacher training institutions and Ministries of Education demonstrate the power of sharing ideas and moving towards more inclusive policy and practice (Carrington & Duke, 2014) so it is valuable to analyse and compare the policies and practices across countries.

Despite support for inclusive education within the rhetoric of policy and related documents in Australia and China, both countries still face many challenges in developing adequate implementation of teaching standards that support this notion. Identified challenges in both countries include insufficient professional development programs to support leadership of inclusive policy and practice, gaps in pre-service and in-service training that support inclusive pedagogical practice, regional differences in the quality and quantity of teachers, teacher preparation courses overemphasising theory with not enough practical application, gaps in policy and practice, and difficulties in getting accreditation in China specifically (Wang & Mu, 2014).

In order to work towards improving inclusive practices not only in China and Australia but in other parts of the world as well, the authors of this article recommend the development and strengthening of international partnerships. The strength of these partnerships lies in the collaborative interrogation of the underlying assumptions informing the policy and practice of inclusive education. Continued discussion, collaboration and communication from educators around the world is required to enact inclusive practices and pedagogies for “all” children. This article itself was the result of a shared professional development experience between academics from China and Australia: a small step forward in the move towards global inclusive education.

Conclusion

The professional standards for teachers in both Australia and in China are a relatively new discourse that has the potential to influence teachers’ thinking about inclusion and their practice. Our review of the professional standards of teaching and the key policy documents informing the professional standards for Australia and China using critical discourse analysis provides evidence of an emergent inclusive education discourse that is underpinned by inclusive beliefs and values. The pedagogical discourses about inclusive practice reflect an expectation of curriculum for all and respect for a diversity of learners that are evident in the discourses of the Skidmore and Alton-Lee pedagogies of inclusion that we have explored in this article. The challenges of implementing an inclusive approach in classrooms in Australia and in China continue and we see an ongoing presence of the deficit based model of special education perpetuated in teacher beliefs and practice. It is pleasing that both countries have a focus on inclusion in the supporting documents and the professional standards for teaching that provide a basis for professional learning. Teacher training and in-service priorities need to refer to these strong pedagogical frameworks of inclusion such as the Skidmore and Alton-Lee models that have been discussed in this article. International collaboration in inclusive

education research and teacher education will ensure that there is sustained development for more inclusive schools in both Australia and China.

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Table 1. Comparing Skidmore's (2002) Dimensions of the Discourse of Inclusion with Pedagogical Ideas from Alton-Lee (2003, p. vi-x).

Dimensions of the Discourse of Inclusion (Skidmore, 2002)		Alton-Lee's (2003) Pedagogical Ideas	
Educability of students	An educational organisation can influence curriculum, pedagogy and teacher/student relationships that may in turn influence student success or student failure and disaffection.	Quality teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is focused on student achievement (including social outcomes) and facilitates high standards of student outcomes for heterogeneous groups of students • is responsive to student learning processes • effective links are created between school and other cultural contexts in which students are socialised, to facilitate learning • opportunity to learn is effective and sufficient • curriculum goals, resources, including ICT usage, task design, teaching and school practices are effectively aligned • teachers and students engage constructively in goal-oriented assessment
Explanation of educational failure	An inclusive approach is needed for teachers to be encouraged to creatively attend to student diversity in learning. Models of curriculum endorsed by policy can define a fixed view about what is taught in content knowledge, which does not acknowledge the professionalism of teachers to respond to students as learners.	Pedagogical practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enable classes and other learning groups to work as caring, inclusive, and cohesive learning communities • scaffolds and provides appropriate feedback on students' task engagement • promotes learning orientations, student self-regulation, metacognitive strategies and thoughtful student discourse • multiple task contexts support learning cycles
School/Institution response	An inclusive approach is not aligned with year progressions dependent on achievement in examinations. Students who fail to move up a year may be pathologised as deficit and described in special education terms as 'slow learners'.		
Theory of teaching expertise	Teachers are professionals who engage with and enact the curriculum for a group of learners to meet their needs. Teaching approaches that require an active participation and enquiry approach to knowledge production are encouraged.		
Curriculum model	Inclusive education presumes that curriculum should be curriculum for all students, i.e., able to accommodate the diversity of learners in classrooms. An alternative curriculum for lower ability students has never been favoured by special educators.		