Developing and using a framework for gauging the use of invlusive pedagogy by new and experienced teachers

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Introduction

As schools are required to support the learning of increasingly diverse populations of pupils, concerns have been voiced about the education of teachers for inclusion at national and supranational levels (e.g. European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education. 2011, Acedo 2011). Forlin (2010) argues that teacher education has not kept pace with the changes taking place in schools, suggesting that most courses on 'inclusion' and 'diversity' are taught as segregated units for specialist teachers, thereby sending a message that this is not part of the normal work of teachers. This chapter reports on work undertaken in the University of Aberdeen, Scotland which sought to address this issue, by designing a core course for pre-service teachers and a master's level course for experienced teachers which were predicated on the notion of inclusive pedagogy as developed by Florian and Black Hawkins (2011).

Inclusive pedagogy is an approach to teaching and learning that seeks to address the dilemma of difference, originally articulated by Minow (1985) whereby responses to difficulties in learning often involve targeting support in ways that highlight and exacerbate the very difference that they aiming to address. Instead, inclusive pedagogy argues for extending the options that are ordinarily available to everybody instead of differentiating activities only for some (Florian 2010). However, whilst inclusive pedagogy is based on a set of clear underlying principles to inform the choices teachers make, it does not dictate any particular actions. Questions arose, for us, as teacher educators and researchers, about how teachers committed to inclusive pedagogy would enact these principles and how we would recognise inclusive pedagogy if we saw it in action.

In this chapter we describe how we developed and used a framework, to allow us to make robust judgements about the practice of newly qualified teachers, who had graduated from the University of Aberdeen's Professional Graduate Diploma in Education course. More recently we have introduced a Master's level course entitled 'Inclusive Pedagogy' for

experienced teachers, and later in the chapter we describe how teachers themselves have used the framework to make judgements about their own work.

Using the concept of inclusive pedagogy to inform initial teacher education

The one-year Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) at the University of Aberdeen was designed in the context of a Scottish Government funded research and development project, the Inclusive Practice Project (IPP). It aimed to ensure that beginning teachers had an awareness and understanding of the educational and social issues that can affect children's learning, and that they develop strategies to respond to such difficulties (University of Aberdeen 2011). Rather than offering inclusion and diversity as optional specialist modules, this course used the concept of inclusive pedagogy as the underpinning theoretical framework for the course reform (for an extended discussion, see Rouse & Florian, 2102; Florian, 2012) and an analytical framework was designed to study the practical enactment of inclusive pedagogy by teachers who had newly graduated from this course (Florian & Spratt, 2013).

The concept of inclusive pedagogy emerged from a study of the craft knowledge of teachers committed to inclusion (Florian, Black-Hawkins 2011). It is clear from Florian and Black-Hawkin's work that the inclusive actions that a teacher makes in any specific situation cannot be pre-determined, in a technocratic way, since the very purpose of inclusion is to recognise, value and respond to the uniqueness of everyone in the classroom. However, the analysis of the actions of teachers led to the identification of an interrelated set of theoretical assumptions that underpinned the choices teachers made in varied settings and situations. Hence the word 'pedagogy' is used in this context to mean the knowledge and the skills required by teachers to inform the decisions they make about their practice (Alexander 2004).

The concept of inclusive pedagogy is predicated on an expectation of difference in the way that children learn and a commitment to teaching approaches that account for those differences. Traditional notions of 'intelligence' as a fixed and normally distributed entity, are seen as particularly problematic, owing to the lowering of expectations associated with those children deemed to be 'low ability' or to have 'additional support needs' (Hart 1998).

Instead, inclusive pedagogy recognises that the capacity of children to learn is transformable, if conditions are right (Hart et al. 2004). This view is supported by recent work examining the psychological basis of intelligence, which reconceptualises intelligence as 'new kinds of smart' involving a broad range of flexible skills, which are fostered by attitudes of curiosity, resourcefulness, reflectiveness, determination and sociability (Lucas, Claxton 2010). These attributes are clearly not fixed, but can be affected by the experiences that children have in school.

This recognition of the transformability of children's capacity to learn has implications for the way that teachers work in their classrooms. In particular, attention must be paid to the unspoken messages associated with the ways in which children are supported when they face difficulties in learning. Inclusive pedagogy suggests that instead of offering one learning opportunity to *most* children with something different for *some* children, teachers extend the choices ordinarily available to everybody in their classrooms. Thus, when planning, teachers consider the individuality of each child in the class to ensure that there are options available for all, but they are offered in ways which do not limit progress for any learner by pre-judging what they might, or might not, do. Kershner (2009) suggests that inclusive pedagogy should adopt strategies based on current psychological understandings of collective learning such as situated cognition, distributed intelligence, dialogic teaching and multimodal learning, thereby encouraging a flexible approach to teaching and learning in which children are encouraged to learn together.

While it is commonly reported that classroom teachers often claim that they do not have the skills required to teach certain groups of children, who they deem to be the remit of 'specialists', it also argued that this position is a barrier to the development of inclusive education. Inclusive pedagogy demands that classroom teachers take responsibility for all children and seek support when needed rather than adopt the view that there are some children who they cannot, or should not be required to teach. Findings from a large international study (Rix, Sheehy 2014) have confirmed the lack of evidence for any 'special' pedagogy being used when teaching children deemed to have learning difficulties. As Rix and Sheehy (ibid) have argued, effective pedagogy for inclusion is based on the skills that are already available to all teachers. Hence, class teachers need to be disabused of the idea that they are not qualified to teach all learners.

The inclusive pedagogical approach invites teachers to re-think the traditional silos of professional responsibility, and to work with specialists in order to find new ways of providing meaningful learning experiences for all children within the classroom community. As Norwich (2009) points out, categorising children into sub-groups according to their perceived deficiencies may stigmatize children, but not offering support to those experiencing difficulty is discriminatory. Inclusive pedagogy does not reject the support that specialists can provide but encourages new ways of collaborative working that avoid the unintended negative outcomes associated with the dilemma of difference.

The brief account above describes the three key theoretical principles which were foundational to the IPP approach to initial teacher education: (1) differences are to be expected, (2) class teachers can teach all learners but (3) doing so requires new ways of working with specialists. In establishing these principles as the 'spine' of the course reforms at Aberdeen, we also identified the actions that would need to be taken to implement the principles, and the key challenges associated with doing so (Florian 2012). Table 1 shows how the principles and actions associated with inclusive pedagogy were linked to the course themes. In the final column, the potential 'outcomes' refer to the attributes we hoped that the PGDE course would foster in its graduates. In the following section we will show how these principles and concepts were used to develop the analytical framework for studying the practice of new teachers.

Developing and using a framework for gauging inclusive pedagogy of beginning teachers

Whilst the conceptual ideas of inclusive pedagogy provide a firm theoretical framework to support new teachers in making choices about their practice, it does not offer a prescriptive guide to practice. In designing a follow-up study of graduates from the PGDE course we were interested in examining how the ideas of inclusive pedagogy were enacted in practice. Our interest was not in an intensive study of the pedagogy of a sample of teachers rather than course evaluation. The study had two dimensions: firstly to develop a robust approach to gauging the inclusive practice of teachers, and secondly to understand how these teachers were using the principles of inclusive pedagogy they learnt in the course (further details are provided in Florian & Spratt, 2013).

Making judgements about inclusion as an observer in a classroom is difficult, since inclusion is a process, not a one-off event (Booth, Ainscow 2011). The observer cannot see the rationale behind the decisions made, the planning involved nor is the observer aware of the history of the relationships in the classroom, nor of the unique characters of each of the children. For example, the same action in a classroom, such as directing a child to use a computer, could be either inclusive or exclusive depending on the context. Hence the approach to data collection necessarily involves observation followed by semi-structured interviews, inviting the participant to discuss the actions observed during the lesson. Observation notes and data analysis used an extended version of the framework as outlined in table 1, above where each of the three principles of inclusive pedagogy are linked to possible actions that would manifest in practice. By grounding the development of the framework in these findings, the practical knowledge of experienced teachers in inclusive classrooms and the theoretical concepts taught on the course were dialectically linked. Additionally, as the project progressed additional suggestions were added to the framework, some deriving from colleagues, some emerging from findings of the follow up study, and some suggested by the participants of the study themselves. Hence the development of this part of the framework was an iterative process emerging from the synergy between practice, research and teacher education which lie at the heart of this project.

We sought, within this study, to examine in detail how the principles of inclusive pedagogy can be used to inform learning and teaching. Hence we were purposively seeking examples that fulfilled the criteria of the framework. In choosing to selectively report on practice that was deemed to exemplify inclusive pedagogy, we are not claiming that the practice of the new teachers was universally inclusive, we are simply providing two examples of how this concept can be brought to life in the classroom. What is important here is that in using the framework as a research tool, we have been able to demonstrate how the principles of inclusive pedagogy *can be* applied in practice. In the sections below we provide two examples to illustrate. While they are not exhaustive, we hope they may stimulate others to consider the practical applications of inclusive pedagogy.

The first example of inclusive pedagogy is drawn from the work of a Primary 5[1] teacher who, for the purposes of this study we have called 'Mary'. Mary worked in an inner city school in an area of deprivation, and was keenly aware of issues of social justice as they

[1] At start of school year children are aged between 8.5 and 9.5 years old

applied to her class. She was concerned about the difficulties that some of her children were experiencing when undertaking creative writing tasks, particularly as some of those children had fertile imaginations when asked to be creative in other ways. Her approach to this dilemma was stimulated by ideas generated by a discussion with a professional from a creative arts organisation who was running a development event which she attended, and with whom she maintained contact as she developed her approach to creative writing. As a consequence Mary began using different stimuli for creative writing. In the first instance she introduced a topic on 'aliens' by asking the children to make models of aliens, and then reported that the stories written about these models were 'amazing'. Following this, she used a piece of music as a stimulus to writing, and made the following observations about one pupil:

[She] wrote a fantastic story and can't even write very well, she came out with this amazing story about what she heard from the tune, that she thought it was a little girl running away from lightening, because at one point when the cymbals crash she thought that was like the lightening and this girl running and things like that, and this was all in her head.

However, whilst the music proved to be a fantastic stimulus for one pupil Mary noted it was less successful for others. Interestingly, the girl who was normally the 'best writer' in the class drew little stimulus from the music. From these experiences Mary developed the practice of providing a range of stimuli for creative writing, to widen the opportunities for all pupils to be inspired to write.

Mary's work clearly met the main principles of inclusive pedagogy, outlined on table 1 as she based her work on an assumption of diversity in the way that children would learn, and viewed it as her responsibility to support all learners in their creative writing. She rejected a unidimensional approach to intelligence and instead sought multiple ways of inviting all children to participate in the classroom learning. This example also showed how she developed her pedagogy by working creatively with another professional. Within the example given we can see how no ceilings were placed on the learning of children, but instead there were opportunities for transformability, where some children's work was much improved through the range of options available.

A second example of inclusive pedagogy in action is drawn from the practice of 'Dianne', a secondary teacher of French. She discussed at length how she was developing ways of differentiating work, acknowledging the difficult balance between ensuring each child had

opportunities that were appropriate, whilst at the same time avoiding coded messages about expected outcomes. She had begun by using what she called 'differentiation by outcome' meaning giving all children the same, open ended, task which allowed each child to approach it differently. However, in the context of the secondary French curriculum, she was dissatisfied with this as her main means of differentiation, so instead was introducing systems whereby various cues were available for all children (for example colour coding of key words, or reminders made visible on the walls) so that help was available for those who needed it, but the teacher did not make any pre-judgements about who might make use of the additional supports. This was coupled with an element of choice in the work activities, whereby several activities were made available to the whole class, and the differences between them were explained to the pupils, but the choice of who did which task, and in what order was negotiated between the child and the teacher. At all times Dianne avoided grouping by ability, but she purposefully selected groups in which she felt children would support each other in their work. In this way, developing a positive learning community was an important aspect of her pedagogy.

Thus Dianne was responding to the diversity of existing knowledge and skills of the children, by ensuring that all children had access to tasks and support that they required to make progress in her subject, but she was careful to avoid doing this in ways that communicated messages about what any child was expected to achieve. This approach shows how her understanding of learning was intertwined with her commitment to social justice, demonstrating how the key themes of inclusive pedagogy are not discrete issues to be addressed independently, but how they are synergistically intertwined.

Whilst the actual practice of Dianne and Mary that is described in these examples is quite different, it can be shown that they are underpinned by the shared principles of inclusive pedagogy. Both teachers took responsibility for all learners, and acted on a belief that all children will learn if the conditions are right. Neither used 'ability' as a main organiser for grouping or allocation of work. Both avoided the situation where they provided one activity for most of the class, with something additional or different for some, but instead they ensured that the range of opportunities were available to everybody. Ultimately, both created opportunities whereby learning capacity could be improved for the better.

The exemplification of the principles of inclusive pedagogy, as outlined here show how the choices made by classroom teachers about the organisation of teaching and learning are vital

aspects of inclusion. As Hart et al (2004) point out everything that a teacher chooses to do, or not to do, can have implications for the learning of children. Inclusion is not seen as the responsibility of additional support staff, or other specialists. It is notable that the actual practices that the teachers used in these examples, and across our study data as a whole, were approaches that are widely known within the repertoire of the teaching profession, echoing Rix and Sheey's (2014) observation that there is no special set of methods for children who are having difficulties with learning. The skill lies in knowing when and how it is appropriate or helpful to use a particular approach, and the theoretical framework of inclusive pedagogy can inform those choices.

However, these beginning teachers worked in schools which, as is commonly the case, operated a range of policies and practices, some of which ran counter to inclusion. For example, primary teachers sometimes struggled with the school expectation that reading or maths should be taught in ability groups. Secondary teachers found that some children were 'extracted' from their class to attend sessions in the additional support 'base'. Following Ball et al (2012) the policy environment could often be seen as a 'discursive archive' in which understandings of inclusion might include outdated notions of ability grouping or setting alongside more contemporary ideas of participation and pupils voice. Whilst newly qualified teachers had some freedom to make choices about their own practice, they were relatively powerless to make changes in the wider school (McIntyre 2009).

Using the Inclusive Pedagogy framework in continuing professional development for teachers

There are compelling arguments for extending teacher education for inclusion beyond the initial phase of education, to ongoing professional development of practicing teachers. It is difficult to change the system through initial teacher education, since, as described above, new teachers have little influence in the wider school, and may be swayed by existing systems and practices which may not always support the development of inclusion (McIntyre 2009). Hence, Rouse (2010) suggested that initial teacher education was a 'necessary but insufficient' condition for enhancing inclusion in contemporary schools. Pugach and Blanton (2014) argue that moving inclusive education forward requires the continuing professional development of practicing teachers for two main reasons. Firstly, this would have a direct impact on the experience of marginalised children who are currently in school. Secondly, this would affect the world of practice to which new teachers are inducted, and

thereby have long term effects on the future of educational practice. However, Pugach and Blanton (ibid) also take the view that professional development for inclusion has been inconsistent, and where it does occur that practice is only loosely coupled with theory.

For this reason, following the implementation of the PGDE course, and the development of a robust framework for gauging inclusive pedagogy we were very keen to extend the work of the IPP project to include an education programme for experienced teachers. The following section describes the introduction of a Master's level course entitled 'Inclusive Pedagogy' aimed at practicing teachers. This course can be taken as a stand-alone option, or together with other modules it can contribute to the qualification of Certificate in Inclusive Practice, Diploma in Inclusive Practice or Master's Degree in Inclusive Practice. The course has a number of innovative features which are described below. Currently this course has run twice, and as yet no formal follow-up research has been undertaken with participating teachers. Hence this part of the chapter is based upon early reflections by the teaching team based on discussions with teachers, assessment of assignments and teacher feedback.

In most schools there is a deep cultural and structural divide between those teachers who are considered to be 'mainstream' class teachers and those who have responsibilities towards children deemed to have additional support needs (or special educational needs) and this may impede progress towards inclusion even where this is the stated aim of the school (Pugach, Blanton 2014). In Scotland, all teachers initially qualify as classroom teachers, and only after a period of time as a classroom teacher do some elect to become additional support staff. Notably, however, it is rare for teachers to make the opposite move, to change from being additional support back to becoming classroom teachers. Hence any new insights on inclusion gained through experience in additional support are not readily transferred back into the main classroom. For this reason, the Inclusive Pedagogy course is aimed at both classroom teachers and additional support needs teachers, in order to provide opportunities for them to gain new perspectives by working together. During the course there are multiple opportunities for discussions between the teachers. In particular, when preparing their assignments the teachers support each other in small groups of 'critical learning buddies', made up of teachers with contrasting experiences, so that they may discuss their projects in detail together. This aspect of the course design resonates with one of the key principles of inclusive pedagogy, to develop new ways of working with and through others.

The Inclusive Pedagogy course is delivered entirely online, which extends its potential reach beyond those who can travel to Aberdeen regularly. Its participants include Scottish and international teachers. Weekly readings and activities are provided for students whose responses take the form of contributions to the class discussion board. Additionally there are four online workshops taking place in a virtual classroom, in 'real time'. In this virtual space we meet together to consider and discuss key issues of the course. The online classroom provides many of the facilities of a real classroom such as facilities to split into small discussion groups, interactive white board, possibilities for Powerpoint presentations or access to online materials. Coupled with the regular discussion board conversations this allows the development of a sense of community between the participants, within the online environment, which is an important feature of the course.

The course builds up to the concept of inclusive pedagogy by considering, in turn a number of underlying issues. These include: studying the changes in the treatment of difference, from segregation, to integration to inclusion (e.g. Thomas, Vaughan 2004); building an understanding of inclusion as participation (e.g. Booth, Ainscow 2011, Black-Hawkins, Florian & Rouse 2007); a critique of ability labelling (Hart et al. 2004); implication of learning theories for inclusion (Kershner 2009, e.g. Daniels 2009) and; active professionalism (e.g. Sachs 2000). These form the basis for the introduction of the concept of inclusive pedagogy (Florian, Black-Hawkins 2011) and the inclusive pedagogy framework. The assignment for the course requires the participants to critique an aspect of their own practice, and to introduce a small change that can be justified by inclusive pedagogy. Thus, the teachers are using the Framework to interrogate their own practice. This approach aligns with the suggestions of McIntyre (2005) and Pugach and Blanton (2014) that meaningful teacher professional development should involve an aspect of practitioner enquiry.

Early observations highlight some important differences between our work with PGDE students during their initial teacher education, and our work with experienced practitioners. The pre-service students had little, if any, experience of working in schools and were open to a wide range of new ideas, whereas the experienced teachers were deeply embedded in the ongoing culture and practices of their schools. Hence, for the experienced practitioners development of inclusive pedagogy involved challenging existing ways of thinking and doing. Much of the discussion focussed on the four key challenges identified on table 1: 'Bell-curve thinking' and notions of fixed ability still underpin the structure of schooling; The identification of difficulties in learning and the associated focus on what the learner

cannot do often puts a ceiling on learning and achievement; Teachers must be disabused of the notion that some children are not their responsibility and; Changing the way we think about inclusion (from 'most' and 'some' to everybody). Course participants could find it unsettling to be confronted with literature suggesting that some of their habitual practices, carried out in the belief that they supported inclusion, could be construed as reinforcing difference.

Furthermore, the PGDE students were all preparing to be classroom teachers, and therefore the challenge of inclusive pedagogy was to ensure participation of all children in the learning community of the classroom, and to prevent marginalisation and exclusion, whereas some of the experienced teachers were constrained by working in environments which were structured for segregation rather than inclusion. In particular, those teachers whose responsibilities lay with educating children who were already stigmatised and whose school lives had consisted of a history of repeated exclusions found it difficult to know how to begin to enact inclusive pedagogy. This was, in some cases, exacerbated by a sense that they themselves, as professionals, were conceptually outside the main body of the school, having little influence on the staff as a whole. Therefore, when looking at the choices that the experienced teachers made, in order to enact inclusive pedagogy, much of the focus lay with working with and through others to build better relationships between additional support staff and classroom teachers.

The following are some examples of projects that the teachers undertook as a result of the course. Across all of these projects it is possible to see how the teachers were finding ways to make more opportunities available to everybody instead of making different provision for some children. As this has not been subject to formal research processes, these suggestions should be seen as indicative of the kinds of ideas that may emerge from teachers who have engaged with the inclusive pedagogy framework, rather than as research data. For this reason, these are simply outlines rather than detailed descriptions or analyses of the projects.

- An support teacher replaced the practice of taking a small group out of class for 'emotional literacy' sessions, but instead took the whole class for a series of sessions, arguing that this was beneficial to all.
- A classroom teacher disbanded ability grouping for mathematics for the first time in her career, and instead offered a series of choices available to everybody.

- An additional support teacher and classroom teacher swapped roles so that the additional support teacher led the class whilst the classroom teacher spent more time getting to know the children experiencing difficulties
- A classroom teacher worked closely with her additional support colleagues to find ways of supporting a non-English speaking pupil in the classroom, instead of sending her out of the class for specialist support
- The transition to secondary school for a girl with complex learning difficulties had been planned as an individual, extended process, with visits taking place over the final term of primary school. Instead, the whole class spent more time concentrating on transition, and where the pupil made extra visits this was organised along with a group of peers, to avoid isolation.
- A teacher of a small group of children with behavioural difficulties invited a wider group of mainstream staff to visit the group and supported them to contribute to the education programme, thereby enhancing the skills of teachers in the wider school to understand and respond appropriately to challenging behaviour
- A primary special school teacher of children with severe and complex disabilities organised shared play sessions with a nearby primary school.

This range of projects demonstrates how commitment to common themes of inclusive pedagogy such as enhancing participation, avoiding stigmatising practices and a belief in a transformable capacity to learn gave rise to different specific actions in response to the particular dilemmas that the teachers encountered in their own settings.

It is salient to note how the probationary teachers and the experienced teachers found the theoretical framework of inclusive pedagogy to be very helpful in making sense of inclusion within the school setting, yet university-based teacher education courses are increasingly under threat in developed countries, and school-based apprenticeships are the norm in many developing countries (Opertti, Brady 2011). This raises important questions about how teachers of the future will be supported to understand and respond to diversity.

Conclusion

This chapter has described how our approach to developing and applying a tool that can be used to make systematic judgements about inclusive pedagogy. The framework has been used by researchers seeking to examine the practice of teachers and by teachers interrogating

their own work. It foregrounds some important principles that can inform the choices made by teachers, whilst leaving the decisions of how to enact those principles to be made by the practitioners themselves. We hope the framework will be used by others in a variety of contexts, within and outwith universities. There is a complex intersection between teacher education, practice, school culture and policy (Pugach, Blanton 2014) and we hope that the framework will be useful in supporting the development of inclusive education in the many different organisational levels and contexts in which it occurs.

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Table 1 The relationship between the principles of inclusive pedagogy and the Professional Studies core themes

Principles/ Underlying Assumptions	**Associated Concepts/Actions**	**Key Challenges***	**PGDE Professional Studies Course Themes**	**Outcome (programme graduates)**
1. Difference must be accounted for as an essential aspect of human development in any conceptualisation of learning	Replacing deterministic views of ability with a concept of transformability	'Bell-curve thinking and notions of fixed ability still underpin the structure of schooling	Understanding Learning	Reject deterministic views of ability Accept that differences are part of human condition Reject idea that the presence of some will hold back the progress of others Believe that all children can make progress *(if conditions are right)*
2. Teachers must believe (can be convinced) they are qualified/capable of teaching all children	Demonstrating how the difficulties students experience in learning can be considered dilemmas for teaching rather than problems within students	The identification of difficulties in learning and the associated focus on what the learner *cannot* do often puts a ceiling on learning and achievement. Teachers must be disabused of the notion that some children are not their responsibility	Understanding Social Justice	Commitment to the support of all learners. Belief in own capacity to promote learning for all children
3. The profession must continually develop creative new ways of working with others	Modelling (creative new) ways of working with and through others	Changing the way we think about inclusion (from 'most' and 'some' to everybody)	Becoming an Active Professional	Willingness to work (creatively) with and through others

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