All means all! - OpenTextbook for diversity in education

ALL MEANS ALL! - OPENTEXTBOOK FOR DIVERSITY IN EDUCATION

An OpenTextbook for an inclusive and intersectional, multi-dimensional approach in teacher education

A community project from all-means-all.education

Abdellatif Atif; Aga M. Buckley; Akangshya Bordoloi; Akshita Rawat; Alessandra Galletti; Alessandra Imperio; Alessio Di Paolo; Alexandra Anton; Alison Stapleton; Andreas Hinz; Andrew Campbell; Angele Deguara; Angeline Aow; Ann-Kathrin Arndt; Anna Frizzarin; Anne Piezunka; Assimina Tsibidaki; Ayana Pathak; Baran Yousefi; Beausetha Juhetha Bruwer; Becky Ward; Bhuvan Israni; Bodine Romijn; Brian Lynam; Büşra Gündeş Orman; Carlos Moreno-Romero; Catherine Reid; Cennet Engin; Victor Tan Chee Shien; Chloë Keegan; Chris Carstens; Claire O'Neill; Clíona O'Keeffe; Cynthy K. Haihambo; Damini Sharma; Danielle Farrel; Dean Vaughan; Declan Markey; Deirdre Forde; Dror Simri; Dua Jabr Dajani; Eileen Schwarzenberg; Emer Byrden; Emma Pearson; Eva Kleinlein; Evrim Çetinkaya Yıldız; Fatma Kurker; Federica Festa; Fetiye Erbil; Francesca Mara Santangelo; Frank J. Müller; Georga Dowling; Graham Maher; Grit Alter; Günalp Turan; Halil Han Aktaş; Hannah Solley; Heidrun Demo; Hermione Xin Miao; Hazar Chaouni; Ines Boban; Ira Schumann; Irati Sagardia-Iturria; Jane O'Toole; Janneke Eising; Jean Karl Grech; Jessica Lament; Josefine Wagner; Jules Buendgens-Kosten; Julia Bialek; Julia Schlam Salman; Karen Buttigieg; Katarina Rončević; Kavyta Raghunandan; Kerstin Merz-Atalik; Konstantin Korn; Kristina Pennell-Götze; Laura Torres Zúñiga; Lea Bussas; Leah O'Toole; Leslie-Ann Webster; Lina Render de Barros; Linjie Zhang; Lisa Johansson; Lisa Marie Rosen; Ludovica Rizzo; Lydia Murphy;

Madhusudhan Ramesh; Mahvand Sahranavard Espily; Mai Trang Vu; Margaret Flood; Maria Moscato; María Pilar Gray Carlos; Marie McLoughlin; Maryam Mohammadi; Melanie Eilert; Melike Özüdoğru; Merja Kauppinen; Merve Ayvalli Karagoz; Miriam Cuccu; Miriam Sonntag; Mridula Muralidharan; Nariko Hashida; Nico Leonhardt; Nicola Ryan; Nika Maglaperidze; Nina Goretzko; Nysha Chantel Givans; Outi Kyrö-Ämmälä; Özge Özdemir; Pamela February; Patricia Kennon; Paty Paliokosta; Penny H.C. Dinh; Petra Auer; Petra Elftorp; Ramona Thümmler; Rhianna Murphy; Rosa Anna Ferdigg; Rose Ryan; Sam Blanckensee; Sandra Fietkau; Sara Baroni; Sarah Volknant; Seán Gleasure; Sebastian Nemeth; Seun Adebayo; Sevcan Karataş; Shichong Li; Silver Cappello; Silvia Dell'Anna; Simon Klippert; Sofia Ahlberg; Suzanne O'Keeffe; Tamara van Woezik; Thomas Joseph O Shaughnessy; Tommaso Santilli; Tracy Fletcher; Tracy McElheron; Ulla Sivunen; Valentina Zambito; Valeria Occelli; Valerio Ferrero; Valerio Rigo; Vana Chiou; Veronica Punzo; Wurud Jayusi; Yasemin Acar Ciftci; Yuko Uesugi; Yuzhen Xu; Zeynep Karaosman; and Zhicheng Huang

CONTENTS

Part I. Section 1: Developing Inclusive Educators

Part II. Section 2: Supporting Inclusion in the Classroom and Beyond

Part III. Section 3: Creating Inclusive Learning Environments and Participation

Part IV. Section 4: Fostering Student Well-Being and Emotional Health

Part V. Section 5: Inclusive Teaching Methods and Assessment

Part VI. Section 6: Building Inclusive School Cultures and Policies

Part VII. Conclusion: Looking Ahead—Inspiring Ideas for Schools of Tomorrow

ALL MEANS ALL: A COLLECTIVE VISION FOR INCLUSIVE TEACHER EDUCATION - AN INTRODUCTION

Frank J. Müller; Deirdre Forde; Lea Bussas; Leah O'Toole; Heidrun Demo; and Silver Cappello

1 What is the OpenTextbook and How Did We Get Here?

The "All Means All!" OpenTextbook represents a groundbreaking step in fostering inclusive, equitable, and intersectional approaches to teacher education. This interactive, modular, multimedia resource was created to address the complex needs of diverse learners and support educators in overcoming structural barriers in education. Conceived and developed over three years, this OpenTextbook brings together perspectives from 144 self-advocates/researchers from 28 countries, blending theory and lived experience to create a tool that empowers educators to better understand and navigate the multidimensional aspects of inclusivity.

This ambitious project would not have been possible without the contributions of its numerous participants, whose insights, lived experiences, and dedication enriched every aspect of this resource. We extend our deepest gratitude to all involved. Additionally, we would like to acknowledge the extensive funding provided by Erasmus+, which laid the foundation for bringing together diverse voices and enabling an inclusive dialogue. The collaborative spirit of this initiative underscores its mission to create meaningful change in education.

2 The Goal: Inclusive and Intersectional Education

The primary goal of the "All Means All!" project is to provide educators, especially students in initial teacher education (K-12), with a comprehensive, practical resource to promote equity and inclusivity in their classrooms. This OpenTextbook seeks to address and dismantle structural disadvantages based on gender, sexual orientation, dis/ability, socio-economic background, race, language, health, age, pregnancy and maternity, and belief systems. By integrating these dimensions into a cohesive and interconnected narrative, the project fosters a holistic approach that helps educators build empathy, dismantle systemic barriers, and empower all learners to reach their full potential.

3 The Process: Collaboration, Review, and Open Resources

The journey to create the "All Means All!" OpenTextbook was rooted in collaboration and inclusivity. Over the course of three years, the project unfolded through engagement with a wide network of advocates and researchers. Important aspects were:

- Open Review and Participatory Development: The development process was open and participatory, involving extensive collaboration with self-advocates and researchers. This ensured that lived experiences shaped the content, resulting in a resource that is both authentic and relevant to diverse educational contexts.
- Workshops in Brixen (2022), Maynooth (2023), and Göttingen (2024): Three two-week workshops served as key touchpoints for dialogue, co-creation, and exploration. Participants worked together to explore theoretical frameworks, share practical strategies, and weave their personal narratives into the content.
- Pressbooks Platform: Utilising the Pressbooks platform, the OpenTextbook was developed with accessibility and adaptability in mind. This modular format allows for easy integration into local contexts and promotes flexible, user-driven engagement.

You will find a more detailed description of the open process in the meta chapter.

4 Learnings from the Journey

Throughout the project, several key insights emerged:

- Value of Multi-Perspectives: Bringing together a wide range of voices and experiences highlighted the strength of the collective input and underscored the importance of multi-perspective content in educational resources.
- Complexity of Structural Barriers: The intersectional dimensions of diversity and structural disadvantage require nuanced understanding and context-specific strategies to enable them to be addressed effectively.
- Power of Collaboration: The collaborative model demonstrated the transformative potential of engaging both academic experts and self-advocates, resulting in a resource that bridges theoretical knowledge with lived realities.

5 Overview of Topics Covered

To provide a comprehensive resource for educators, the "All Means All!" OpenTextbook is organised into six primary sections, each addressing a key aspect of inclusive and

intersectional education. Below is an outline of the major topics explored within each section:

Section 1: Developing Inclusive Educators

Developing Empathy for Diversity through a Narrative of Activism

The opening chapter, Developing Empathy for Diversity through a Narrative of Activism (by Paty Paliokosta and Nicola Ryan—with special acknowledgments to Elizabeth Morrow, Theresa Nash-Patel, Kingston Centre for Independent Living, Bern O'Donoghue, and Eli Anderson), invites readers to discover the transformative power of empathy in education. Drawing on compelling narratives (for example, the experiences of disability rights advocate Ali Kashmiri), the chapter illustrates how storytelling dissolves barriers and cultivates inclusive learning environments. Educators are encouraged to reflect on real-world cases, challenge systemic injustices, and build a pedagogy founded on empathy and social justice. This chapter lays the groundwork for engaging with stories of resilience and advocacy while inspiring tangible change in classrooms.

The Role of Values in Inclusive Education

The Role of Values in Inclusive Education (by Petra Auer, Lydia Murphy, Tommaso Santilli, and Mahvand Sahranavard Espily) investigates the critical connection between core values and the development of inclusive settings. Using diverse examples, theoretical models, and practical applications, this chapter reveals how values shape individual behaviors and overall school culture. Through relatable narratives and case studies—such as educators rethinking conflicting priorities—it emphasizes the significance of values in guiding decision-making and influencing educational practices. Readers are prompted to reconsider their own beliefs and collaborate in fostering environments where every student is respected.

Relationships in Inclusive Education

Authored by Lina Render de Barros, Leah O'Toole, and Simon Klippert, the chapter Relationships in Inclusive Education underscores the importance of interpersonal connections in nurturing inclusive settings. By linking individual developmental needs with broader societal contexts, the chapter demonstrates how these relationships influence human growth and classroom dynamics. It offers both theoretical perspectives and practical strategies for educators to build nurturing, equitable, and responsive student-teacher interactions.

Dialogic Mentoring

Dialogic Mentoring (by Dror Simri, Ines Boban, and Linjie Zhang) focuses on the mentor–mentee dynamic, emphasizing how trust, empathy, and mutual respect foster transformative learning. Drawing from historical and philosophical insights—and using vivid metaphors such as anthropologists and photographers—the chapter illustrates the multifaceted nature of mentorship. It interweaves practical strategies that stress authenticity, emotional support, and collaborative dialogue, inviting educators and mentors to reframe their practices in ways that honor individuality while promoting inclusive, dialogic learning environments.

Continuous Professional Development for Diversity Sensitivity

In Continuous Professional Development for Staff for Diversity Sensitivity (by Fetiye Erbil, Bodine Romijn, and Valeria Occelli), the focus is on the vital role of ongoing professional development in cultivating diversity-sensitive practices. Using a detailed hypothetical case involving Alex—a middle school student facing intersecting challenges—the chapter challenges educators to critically reflect on their own approaches. It argues for prioritizing equity over equality and advocates for professional growth that is tailored, collaborative, and reflective, offering actionable strategies for creating supportive, inclusive classrooms.

Understanding Yourself as an Inclusive Teacher – Teacher Professional Identity Development

Understanding Yourself as an Inclusive Teacher – Teacher Professional Identity Development (by Ann-Kathrin Arndt, Beausetha J. Bruwer, Zhicheng Huang, and Sarah Volknant) explores the intricate journey of forming a teacher's professional identity. Examining Teacher Professional Identity Development (TPID) as a dynamic process shaped by personal experiences, educational settings, and societal shifts, the chapter combines theoretical insights with reflective exercises. It encourages educators to align their values and practices in pursuit of inclusivity and to adapt to evolving educational and technological landscapes.

Reflecting on Teacher Habitus – The Potential to Support Inclusion in the Classroom

In Reflecting on Teacher Habitus – The Potential to Support Inclusion in the Classroom (by Nico Leonhardt, Rosario Ryan, and Valerio Ferrero), the concept of teacher habitus—rooted in Bourdieu's sociological framework—is discussed as a key influence on teaching practices. Drawing on examples from Ireland, Italy, and Germany, the chapter highlights how ingrained norms and socialization can either reinforce inequalities or promote inclusion.

It emphasizes reflective practices that empower teachers to confront biases and redefine their professional approaches to better support every student.

Becoming an Inclusive Teacher

Becoming an Inclusive Teacher (by Graham Maher, Kavyta Raghunandan, Wurud Jayusi, and Declan Markey) examines the transformative journey toward embracing diversity in education. The authors argue that every teacher—regardless of background—can serve as a role model and change agent. Through real-life narratives and practical strategies (including self-reflection on privilege and culturally responsive practices), the chapter outlines how educators can actively challenge systemic inequities and view inclusivity as an ongoing process of self-discovery.

Teacher Agency and Inclusion

Authored by Sara Baroni, Tamara van Woezik, Rhianna Murphy, Madhusudhan Ramesh, and Günalp Turan, the chapter Teacher Agency and Inclusion emphasizes the role of educators as proactive change agents. Adopting an ecological perspective, it dissects the interplay between individual, contextual, and systemic factors that shape teacher agency. Through theoretical insights and concrete examples, the authors empower educators to identify disparities and actively contribute to creating equitable, inclusive learning spaces.

Anti-Bias Education

The chapter Anti-Bias Education (by Ira Schumann, Mai Trang Vu, Hazar Chaouni, and Seun Adebayo) stresses the importance of addressing biases to build inclusive, equitable classrooms. It illustrates how celebrating diversity and challenging discrimination—both at the personal and institutional levels—can empower both teachers and students. By promoting critical thinking, empathy, and family collaboration, the chapter provides practical guidance for integrating anti-bias strategies into everyday teaching practices.

Section 2: Supporting Inclusion in the Classroom and Beyond

Neuroinclusion: A School Community Approach

In Neuroinclusion: A School Community Approach (by Deirdre Forde, Alison Stapleton, Nicola Ryan, and Paty Paliokosta), the authors discuss how to design educational environments that honor neurodiversity. Using real-life accounts of a neurodivergent student's experience, the chapter illustrates how various contextual factors influence learning and well-being. Grounded in frameworks such as Bronfenbrenner's Ecological

Systems Theory, it advocates for systemic, adaptive practices that foster understanding and optimise person–environment fit.

Teamwork in the Classroom

Teamwork in the Classroom (by Silver Cappello, Outi Kyrö-Ämmälä, and Becky Ward) emphasizes the importance of collaborative practices in education. Drawing on examples such as the Erasmus+ project THRIECE, the chapter demonstrates how dismantling traditional role boundaries among teachers, assistants, and administrative staff enriches the learning experience and builds collective expertise. It outlines essential competencies, shared goals, and respectful practices that promote student success through cohesive teamwork.

"Please, Don't Sit on My Shoulder" – Shifting Perspectives on Assistant Roles

In "Please, Don't Sit on My Shoulder" – From Neo-liberal to Emancipatory Perspectives (by Marie Mc Loughlin, Eileen Schwarzenberg, Danielle Farrel—in collaboration with Melanie Eilert), the authors analyze the evolving roles and challenges faced by teaching and personal assistants. Contrasting historical and current practices under neo-liberal influences with emancipatory approaches rooted in empowerment, the chapter calls for innovative support models that balance independence with assistance while fostering cooperative, inclusive practices.

Working in Multidisciplinary Teams

Working in Multidisciplinary Teams (by Ann-Kathrin Arndt, Miriam Sonntag, Alexandra Anton, Beausetha Bruwer, Miriam Cuccu, and Lydia Murphy) focuses on the dynamics of collaboration across diverse professional roles. Transitioning from an individual "I"-perspective to a collective "We"-perspective essential for teamwork, the chapter uses case studies from Finnish early childhood education to Austrian primary schools to illustrate practical strategies for negotiating roles and integrating multidisciplinary expertise in teacher education.

To Build up a Community – Collaboration with Parents

In To Build up a Community – Collaboration with Parents (by Assimina Tsibidaki, Linjie Zhang, and Nico Leonhardt), the authors discuss the critical importance of forging authentic partnerships between schools and families. The chapter addresses challenges and benefits of connecting with parents from diverse cultural backgrounds, offering principles and practical examples for establishing meaningful, collaborative relationships.

Navigating Horizontal Transitions: Building Participation and Support

Navigating Horizontal Transitions: Building Participation and Support for Young Learners and Families in Educational and Community Settings (by Francesca Mara Santangelo, Chris Carstens, and Nariko Hashida) focuses on the challenges students face when moving between similar educational settings. The chapter emphasises the need for a strong support network—including educators, families, and community stakeholders—and offers strategies for tailored assistance, clear communication, and cooperative frameworks that bolster academic, social, and emotional well-being.

Navigating Educational Transitions for All

Navigating Educational Transitions for All (by Silver Cappello, Danielle Farrel, Paty Paliokosta, and Irati Sagardia-Iturria) addresses the profound impact of educational transitions, from shifting between home and school to progressing through various educational stages and into employment. Combining theoretical insights with practical strategies and lived experiences, the chapter underscores the value of person-centered planning and inclusive practices in empowering marginalized individuals while fostering resilience and equity.

An Introduction to Person Centred Planning – and Its Potential for Schools

An Introduction to Person Centred Planning – and Its Potential for Schools (by Petra Elftorp, Sandra Fietkau, Andreas Hinz, and Yuzhen Xu) discusses how Person Centred Planning (PCP) can be applied in educational contexts to empower individuals and enhance inclusion. Emphasising a participatory approach where stakeholders collaboratively envision a future built on individual strengths, the chapter highlights dialogue, creative problem solving, and systemic change as core components of effective PCP.

Section 3: Creating Inclusive Learning Environments and Participation

Creating a Framework for Inclusive Learning Environments

In Creating a Framework for Inclusive Learning Environments (by Deirdre Forde, Claire O'Neill, Ulla Sivunen, Chris Carstens, Cynthy K. Haihambo and Alessandra Galletti), the authors discuss what is needed to design truly inclusive educational spaces. Written in a co-participatory manner with a neurodivergent and deaf researcher/ self-advocate, they identify physical, cultural, sensory, relational, and communicative components essential for

supporting all learners and propose a multidimensional, collaborative model for planning, assessing, and refining inclusive pedagogies.

Participation of Children and Youth in Learning and Community Development

Participation of Children and Youth in Learning and Community Development (by Ines Boban, Silvia Dell'Anna, Charlie Moreno, Shichong Li, and Maryam Mohammadi) considers how involving young people as active contributors can transform both education and community life. Through examples such as creating Zen gardens, improving community nutrition, and fostering restorative justice among peers, the chapter demonstrates how participatory approaches empower youth, build leadership skills, and drive societal change.

Self-Determination in Learning

In Self-Determination in Learning (by Karen Buttigieg, Zeynep Karaosman, and Ludovica Rizzo), the focus is on the empowering effects of self-directed learning environments. By highlighting the psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, the chapter makes the case for giving learners an active role in shaping their educational experiences. Practical strategies for offering meaningful choices, cultivating supportive classroom communities, and providing motivating feedback are outlined to help educators promote self-determination.

Democratic Schools: How They Work and Why They Are Cool

Democratic Schools: How They Work and Why They Are Cool (by Halil Han Aktaş, Abdelatif Atif, Andreas Hinz, and Konstantin Korn) outlines the core principles of democratic schooling. The authors contrast these models with traditional systems, emphasizing student agency, dialogic interactions, and community-centered learning. Through case studies and reflective insights, the chapter discusses both the challenges and transformative potential of democratic education for creating personalized, inclusive learning experiences.

Social Space Orientation

Authored by Chloe Keegan, Cynthy K. Haihambo, and Victor Tan Chee Shien, Social Space Orientation emphasises the significance of social spaces in promoting inclusion and overall well-being. By redefining social spaces as dynamic hubs of interaction, the chapter encourages readers to reconsider social encounters through the lenses of lifespan development, agency, and power dynamics while also addressing potential exclusions.

Inclusive Play: Norm Creative Approaches to Transform Integrative Play to Inclusive Play

Inclusive Play: Norm Creative Approaches to Transform Integrative Play to Inclusive Play (by Deirdre Forde, Sebastian Nemeth, Dean Vaughan, and Georga Dowling) discusses how play, an essential part of childhood development, can be reconceptualised as a fully inclusive experience. Using a case study from a Danish school, the chapter details frameworks and strategies (including dialogical methods and the capabilities approach) that encourage educators to listen to children's voices and actively contribute to creating supportive play environments.

Inclusivity in Outdoor Education

In Inclusivity in Outdoor Education (by Beausetha J. Bruwer, Maria Moscato, and Victor Tan Chee Shien with input from Ellen Beate Hansen Sandseter), the authors reflect on the transformative benefits of outdoor education. Combining personal narratives with scholarly research, the chapter demonstrates how engaging with nature promotes social-emotional growth, environmental awareness, and active participation. It also considers challenges such as risk management and parental involvement, stressing the importance of deliberate program design and teacher preparation.

The Magic of Inclusion: Transformative Action for Sustainability Education

The Magic of Inclusion: Transformative Action for Sustainability Education (by Sofia Ahlberg, Patricia Kennon, and Katarina Rončević) delves into the intersection of sustainability and inclusive education. The chapter advocates for integrative, participatory methods that dismantle systemic barriers and empower learners. Using innovative pedagogical tools, the authors demonstrate how inclusive practices can strengthen community bonds, stimulate creativity and foster critical thinking which are all essential for a sustainable future.

Section 4: Fostering Student Well-Being and Emotional Health

Understanding Social and Emotional Development and Behavioural Difficulties

In Understanding Social and Emotional Development and Behavioural Difficulties (by Julia Bialek, Francesca Mara Santangelo, Chris Carstens, and Cynthy K. Haihambo), the authors delve into the complex nature of children's social-emotional and behavioral challenges. Drawing on diverse global perspectives and real-life case studies (such as Maria's account

from Southern Africa), the chapter explains how these issues are shaped by broader societal and environmental factors. It emphasises trauma-sensitive approaches, peer engagement, co-regulation techniques, and collaborative partnerships among educators, families, and communities to promote resilience.

Children's Well-Being in Inclusive Education

Children's Well-Being in Inclusive Education (by Deirdre Forde, Anne Piezunka, Tracy McElheron, Büşra Gündeş Orman and Mahvand Sahranavard Espily) explores the multifaceted aspects of well-being within school settings. Drawing on theoretical models like Jaana Minkkinen's Structural Model of Child Well-being and practical examples (such as Fatima's experience), the chapter underscores the interconnectedness of physical, mental, social, and material well-being, and provides strategies for creating environments that honor each child's unique needs and cultural background.

Sticks and Stones: Bullying and Microaggression at School

In Sticks and Stones: Bullying and Microaggression at School (by Pamela February, Evrim Çetinkaya Yıldız, Clíona O'Keeffe, and Fatma Kürker), the authors confront the pervasive issue of bullying through case studies that reveal its enduring and far-reaching impacts. By documenting the experiences of individuals like Sam, Andrew, and Yuko, the chapter offers both theoretical perspectives and practical interventions designed to prevent bullying and nurture respectful, inclusive classroom climates.

Marginalised Students in Classrooms

Marginalised Students in Classrooms (by Silver Cappello, Tracy Fletcher, and Nysha Chantel Givans) investigates how marginalization manifests in educational settings—through unequal access, cultural and socio-economic biases, and systemic obstacles. Featuring a real-life example from Berlin-Neukölln, the chapter illustrates the positive impact of nurturing teacher-student relationships and culturally responsive teaching. It offers actionable strategies to transform classrooms into spaces where marginalized students are empowered via adaptive curricula and supportive pedagogies.

Breaking the Silence: Empowering Schools in the Practice of Trauma-Informed Education

Breaking the Silence: Empowering Schools in the Practice of Trauma-Informed Education (by Julia Bialek, Evrim Çetinkaya Yıldız, Cynthy Kaliinasho Haihambo Ya-Otto, and Ramona Thümmler) provides a comprehensive overview of trauma and its effects on children's well-being. The chapter stresses the crucial role of educators in recognizing and mitigating

trauma's impact, offering practical, community-based strategies to create trauma-sensitive, inclusive learning environments.

Being Afraid of "The Other" – Phobias in Education

Being Afraid of "The Other" – Phobias in Education (by Valerio Ferrero, Anna Frizzarin, Damini Sharma, and Jean Karl Grech) addresses the dynamics of othering within school contexts. Through illustrative case studies, the chapter demonstrates how language and social constructs contribute to marginalization. It discusses historical roots of xenophobia and transphobia and provides both theoretical insights and practical strategies for deconstructing exclusionary narratives, thus fostering culturally responsive educational spaces.

Identity Politics and Labelling in Education

In Identity Politics and Labelling in Education (by Sam Blanckensee, Özge Özdemir, Lina Render de Barros, and Josefine Wagner), the authors analyze the interplay between identity politics and labeling, and their effects on students' learning experiences. Through a combination of theoretical analysis, practical examples, and case studies, the chapter critiques the dual role of labels—as both tools for resource allocation and potential sources of stigma—and challenges educators to create spaces where all students feel recognized and valued.

Enhancing Minority Languages for Inclusion

Enhancing Minority Languages for Inclusion (by Petra Auer, Beausetha Juhetha Bruwer, Pamela February, and Federica Festa) addresses the challenges faced by learners encountering linguistic barriers. The chapter discusses how educational policies, teacher attitudes, and classroom practices can either marginalise or support multilingual learners. It advocates for strategies ranging from critical reflection on multilingualism to fostering community collaboration, emphasizing the essential role of linguistic diversity in building inclusive environments.

Section 5: Inclusive Teaching Methods and Assessment

Universal Design for Learning

Universal Design for Learning (by Margaret Flood, María Pilar Gray Carlos, and Anna Frizzarini) presents the UDL framework as a proactive approach to crafting inclusive educational environments. Focusing on the principles of Engagement, Representation, and

Action & Expression, the chapter explains how UDL addresses learner variability and neurodiversity through flexible teaching strategies that dismantle barriers and empower every student.

Cooperative Learning

Cooperative Learning (by Heidrun Demo, Vana Chiou, Miriam Cuccu, and Özge Özdemir) differentiates between traditional group work and cooperative learning, where small groups collaborate to optimize learning outcomes. The chapter emphasises positive interdependence, individual accountability, and the development of interpersonal skills, demonstrating how such approaches foster inclusive, democratic classroom dynamics.

(Digital) Media & Materials for Learning

In (Digital) Media & Materials for Learning (by Pamela February, Alessio Di Paolo, Grit Alter, Jules Buendgens-Kosten, and Frank J. Müller), the authors discuss the essential role of both digital and analogue media in creating accessible educational spaces. Drawing on theoretical foundations like Mayer's Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning and UDL, the chapter outlines strategies for selecting and adapting diverse media to support differentiated learning and bridge gaps in digital literacy.

Inclusive Books and Learning Materials

Inclusive Books and Learning Materials (by Tracy Fletcher, Laura Torres Zúñiga, and Lisa Johansson) analyzes how educational resources can perpetuate or challenge exclusion. Using a case study from a Swedish upper secondary school that critiqued gender representation in a history textbook, the chapter underscores the need for critical evaluation and diversification of learning materials to ensure every student feels represented and engaged.

Accessibility of Media and Materials

Accessibility of Media and Materials (by Thomas J. O'Shaughnessy, Pamela February, and Sam Blanckensee) illustrates the transformative impact of accessible media on classroom engagement. Through the example of Mx May adapting content for a visually impaired student, the chapter argues that accessible materials benefit all learners—especially those using assistive technologies—by promoting equity and fostering an inclusive school culture.

Bridging Learning and Teaching: Some Pathways to Inclusive Education

Bridging Learning and Teaching: Some Pathways to Inclusive Education (by Hermione Xin Miao, Akshita Rawat, and Brian Lynam) outlines innovative pedagogical approaches

that merge diverse perspectives. Emphasising inquiry-based learning, critical pedagogy, and feminist methods, the chapter advocates for a collaborative teaching process that empowers both teachers and students to confront societal inequities.

Differentiation

Differentiation (by Silvia Dell'Anna, Frank J. Müller, Jessica Lament, and Yasemin Acar Ciftci) explains how educators can tailor instruction to address the diverse needs of their students. Using the example of Mrs. Smith, who transitioned from a "one size fits all" approach, the chapter details strategies such as flexible groupings and adaptive objectives that create a dynamic, inclusive classroom environment.

Formative Assessment for/as Learning

Formative Assessment for/as Learning (by Eva Kleinlein, Valerio Rigo, and Alessandra Imperio) examines the dual role of formative assessment in guiding and integrating learning processes. Through practical examples, the chapter illustrates how embedded assessment techniques empower students to assume ownership of their learning journeys.

Formative Assessment Put into Practice

Formative Assessment Put into Practice (by Pamela February, Janneke Eising, Melike Özüdoğru, and Vana Chiou) provides a practical guide to implementing formative assessment strategies in diverse classroom settings. Using the case of Leah, a novice teacher managing a large class, the chapter outlines key practices—such as setting clear objectives and encouraging peer feedback—that gradually transform assessment methods into more inclusive and engaging processes.

Language Learning for All

In Language Learning for All (by Silver Cappello, Julia Schlam Salman, and Merja Kauppinen), the authors discuss approaches to making language learning accessible in multilingual classrooms. Using examples like a teacher employing translanguaging with immigrant students in Sweden, the chapter underscores the importance of integrating learners' linguistic repertoires, inclusive methodologies, and multimodal resources to create equitable language education.

Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) and the Potential to Transform Young Lives

Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) and the Potential to Transform Young Lives (by Zeynep Karaosman, Sevcan Karataş, Suzanne O'Keeffe, and Cynthy K. Haihambo) explores

a holistic framework for sexuality education. The chapter traces the evolution of CSE, outlining its goals to empower youth with the knowledge, attitudes, and values essential for health and respectful relationships. It critiques traditional models and advocates for inclusive, rights-based, and culturally responsive curricula that extend beyond biological instruction to foster a more equitable society.

Section 6: Building Inclusive School Cultures and Policies

Inclusive School Culture

Inclusive School Culture (by Angele Deguara, Jessica Lament, Thomas Joseph O'Shaughnessy, and Leah O'Toole) investigates strategies for fostering school environments that actively counter discrimination and prejudice. Highlighting a Human Library initiative at Westfield Primary School as a case study, the chapter demonstrates how direct engagement and dialogue can dismantle stereotypes and build a culture of empathy, collaboration, and shared leadership.

Restorative Practice in Schools

Restorative Practice in Schools (by Andrew Campbell, Leah O'Toole, Emer Byrden, and Seán Gleasure) explores the adoption of restorative approaches as alternatives to punitive measures. The chapter emphasizes how practices like restorative circles and shared value-building can resolve conflicts, foster accountability, and transform school communities into safer, more inclusive environments.

Inclusive Curriculum Development

In Inclusive Curriculum Development (by Cynthy K. Haihambo, Lisa M. Rosen, Penny H. C. Dinh, Nika Maglaperidze, and Jane O'Toole), the authors discuss the challenges and transformative potential of co-constructing curricula that reflect the lived experiences of all learners. The chapter critiques centralized curriculum models and advocates for participatory practices that disrupt traditional power imbalances and prioritise equity.

Why Are You Teaching What You Are Teaching (Policy Development and Implementation)

Why Are You Teaching What You Are Teaching (by Jean Karl Grech, Nika Maglaperidze, and Akangshya Bordoloi) discusses the crucial role of educators in shaping inclusive education policies. Using case studies—such as Malala Yousafzai's activism—the chapter highlights the need for participatory, flexible curriculum development that empowers teachers to address systemic inequities both inside and outside the classroom.

School Administration

School Administration (by Seun Adebayo, Tracy Fletcher, and Nina Goretzko) employs a case study from an inner-city secondary school in Dublin to illustrate how innovative administrative practices—such as the "student passport"—can support inclusion. The chapter stresses the value of collaborative decision-making, relationship building, and active stakeholder participation in creating tailored, supportive educational environments.

Leadership for Inclusion

Leadership for Inclusion (by Angeline Aow, Bhuvan Israni, Emma Pearson, and Heidrun Demo) examines how leadership extends beyond formal titles to encompass every member of the school community. The chapter outlines pathways for building shared understandings of inclusion, formulating inclusive policies, nurturing diverse school cultures, and cultivating robust partnerships to empower both students and educators.

School Assessment in an Inclusive Education System

School Assessment in an Inclusive Education System – Do We Measure What We Value or Do We Value What We Can Measure? (by Merve Ayvalli Karagöz, Vana Chiou, Catherine Reid, and Leslie-Ann Webster) explores how to design assessment frameworks that reflect the core values of inclusivity. Using a case study from a school striving for equity, the chapter discusses challenges in aligning assessment methods with diverse needs and offers strategies for developing evaluations that promote social justice.

Quality Development for Inclusive Schools/Institutions

Quality Development of Inclusive and Equitable Education on School Level (by Heidrun Demo, Rosa Anna Ferdigg, Valerio Ferrero, and Veronica Punzo) focuses on strategies to enhance inclusivity within educational institutions. Through a vocational school case study, the chapter identifies challenges such as high dropout rates and teacher turnover, advocating for systemic, participatory processes that continually refine school practices in support of equitable education.

Gender and School Policy

Gender and School Policy (by Hannah Solley, Cennet Engin, Ayana Pathak, and Sam Blanckensee) analyzes how gender dynamics manifest in school settings. Using the example of Bella, a transgender student navigating secondary school, the chapter discusses issues like uniform policies, restroom access, and social acceptance, and calls for gender-sensitive policies that support trans, gender-diverse, and non-binary students.

Teaching and Learning During Crisis and Unrest

Teaching and Learning During Crisis and Unrest: Strategies for Sustaining Education for All (by Pamela J. February, Julia Schlam Salman, Mridula Muralidharan, and Dua Jabr Dajani) examines adaptive strategies employed by educators during periods of disruption. Drawing on case studies from Italy, Turkey, and Iran, the chapter emphasizes rapid, flexible, teacher-driven responses (including trauma-informed practices and community resilience), to maintain safe, inclusive learning environments amid crisis.

Inclusive Education in Diverse Contexts

Inclusive Education in Diverse Contexts (by Baran Yousefi, Brian Lynam, and Yuko Uesugi) extends the conversation beyond traditional schools by addressing inclusive practices in settings such as prisons, hospitals, traveling families, and online schools. Through global examples and case studies, the chapter offers strategies to engage marginalised communities and ensures education remains a fundamental right irrespective of circumstances.

International Schools: Fostering or Hindering Equal Educational Opportunities

International Schools: Fostering or Hindering Equal Educational Opportunities (by Kristina Pennell-Götze, Baran Yousefi, and Linjie Zhang) explores the dual role of international schools as both promoters and potential inhibitors of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Using the case study of "The Peace School," the chapter critiques the socio-cultural and structural challenges within these institutions and outlines pathways to empower students as global change agents.

Conclusion: Looking Ahead; Inspiring Ideas for Schools of Tomorrow

Utopias: Where Do We Go from Here? Inspiring Ideas for 'Schools of Tomorrow'

In Utopias: Where Do We Go from Here? Inspiring Ideas for 'Schools of Tomorrow' (by Aga M. Buckley, Georga Dowling, Kerstin Merz-Atalik, and Maryam Mohammadi), the authors present transformative visions for inclusive and innovative education through the lens of utopian thought. Rather than fixed endpoints, utopias are envisioned as evolving processes that embody collective values and shared aspirations. The chapter offers a framework for creating inclusive spaces, addressing barriers, and inspiring systemic change, illustrated

by examples such as the Participatory School in Tehran, and invites readers to engage in reflective and practical co-creation.

6 A Community Effort: Why There Are No Editor Names on the Cover

The "All Means All!" OpenTextbook is a true community project. While organised and facilitated by members of three universities, its success rests on the collective contributions of all participants. The content was shaped through the dedication, insights, and lived experiences of 144 self-advocates and researchers who engaged in open processes and workshops. By choosing not to feature editor names on the cover, we recognise that the strength of this resource lies in its collaborative spirit and shared vision for equitable education. This decision reflects our commitment to inclusivity and mutual respect as the driving forces behind meaningful educational change.

7 Key Decisions and Dimensions

In shaping the content, the project drew inspiration from frameworks such as Lutz and Leiprecht, which emphasise the interconnectedness of different dimensions of social inequality. This intersectional approach was chosen to provide a holistic view of diversity, enabling educators to understand and address systemic barriers across multiple axes. The dimensions selected—including gender, dis/ability, socio-economic status, and more—reflect the project's commitment to fostering an inclusive and equity-driven educational landscape.

8 Embracing Imperfection: "If You See Something, Say Something!"

While the "All Means All!" project has made significant strides, it remains a living document open to improvement. We invite all users of this OpenTextbook to provide feedback, share perspectives, and suggest new additions. Together, we can continue to refine and enhance this resource, ensuring it evolves to meet the changing needs of educators and learners alike.

9 Where Do We Go From Here?

Moving forward, the focus will be on expanding and enriching the OpenTextbook through:

- Addressing Limitations: Adding new perspectives, examples, and local contexts to reflect diverse educational realities across regions.

- Integrating Additional Voices: Engaging more voices from marginalized and underrepresented communities to further deepen the resource's inclusivity.
- Translating it to other languages: Starting with Italian and German, we are planning to add more and morelanguages.
- Enhancing Accessibility: Leveraging technological innovations to ensure the OpenTextbook remains accessible and adaptable for all learners.
- Integrating Materials into University-Level Teaching: We will explore possibilities to integrate the OpenTextbook materials into university teaching processes, enhancing engagement and learning outcomes.

Let us know, if you want to be part of the journey.

10 Leveraging Support through Erasmus+

Over the course of three years, the "All Means All!" project fostered connections with countless individuals dedicated to promoting equity in education. Although the structured exchange has ended (for now), we encourage continued collaboration through programs like Erasmus+, which offers funding for both university-affiliated and non-university participants. By leveraging these opportunities, educators can sustain and expand the community-driven spirit that made this project possible, fostering new dialogues and building inclusive educational practices across diverse contexts.

Thank you: Lea Bussas, Anna Zimmermann, Cara Brumund, Luca Döninghaus, Gesa Richter, Sebahat Bicici, Siobhan Kelly, Virginia Professione, Verwaltung Brixen, Chris Carstens, Andrea Sanchez-Duran, Linjie Zhang, Dirk Vaihinger, Sara Cattoni, Janine Biermann, Barbara Hasenmüller and team from the International Office of the University of Bremen and all our proofreading heroines: Georga Dowling, Chloe Keegan, Yvonne Leckey, Leslie-Ann Webster, Emer Byrden and Caitriona Kearns.

About the authors

Frank J. Müller
UNIVERSITY OF BREMEN
https://www.uni-bremen.de/en/
fb12/arbeitsbereiche/abteilung-
c-inklusive-paedagogik/sekundarstufe/team/
prof-dr-frank-j-mueller

Prof. Dr. Frank J. Müller is a professor for "Inclusive Education for Learning and Intellectual

Development Impairments in Secondary Schools" following his work as a special ed teacher at the Grünauer Gemeinschaftsschule in Berlin.

He works on support structures for teachers in heterogeneous learning groups through inclusive open educational resources, research-based study programs to make the history of inclusive education accessible to future generations, and questions of including more dimensions of diversity.

Deirdre Forde

Dr. Deirdre Forde is a distinguished lecturer in Inclusive Education at Maynooth University. With a background as a qualified primary teacher and a chartered child and educational psychologist, she brings extensive experience from various educational settings and psychological services to her role. Deirdre's research and teaching interests are diverse and encompass areas such as disability and the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion within educational and societal contexts. She is particularly passionate about amplifying children's voices, advancing relational education, and shaping policies related to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI). Her work is dedicated to fostering inclusive environments that acknowledge and celebrate diversity.

Lea Bussas

Lea Bussas studied a bachelor's degree in history and Spanish with the option to become a teacher in Berlin and a master's degree in history at the University of Bremen. She then studied inclusive pedagogy for primary schools in Bremen.

Leah O'Toole

Dr Leah O'Toole is Associate Professor of Early Childhood Education in the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education in Maynooth University, Ireland. With an academic background in Psychology, her research interests include early childhood education, particularly accessing the voices of the youngest children from birth, relational pedagogy, bioecological theory and working with parents and communities. Inclusion across multiple dimensions is central to all elements of this work.

Heidrun Demo

Her work centers on equity in education, with a particular focus on supporting diverse learners, fostering inclusive teaching practices, and

driving inclusive school development. She is deeply involved in research and teacher training, dedicated to creating and sustaining inclusive learning environments.

Silver Cappello

Silver Cappello has accomplished a PhD in General Education, General and Social Pedagogy at the Free University of Bolzano-Bozen (Italy). He is qualified as primary school teacher with a specialisation as support teacher and he has worked as primary school teacher (mainly teaching second language), as assistant for people with disabilities, and as research assistant on different research projects at the Competence Centre for School Inclusion of the Free University of Bolzano-Bozen.

PART I
SECTION 1: DEVELOPING INCLUSIVE EDUCATORS

DEVELOPING EMPATHY FOR DIVERSITY THROUGH A NARRATIVE OF ACTIVISM

Paty Paliokosta and Nicola Ryan

📧 *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=375#oembed-1*

Example Case

Becoming an activist as a result of teacher empowerment

"I got involved in the disability movement, not because I wanted to or because I felt it was all I wanted to do, but because I thought, hang on, why have we got all these barriers, what's going on?"

This is an extract from the oral history interview (national archive- Fighting for our Rights) with Ali Kashmiri (Kashmiri, 2017) who has been a campaigner and advocate for independent living from a young age. Having joined Kingston Association of Disabled People aged just 18, Ali has worked for a number of London Boroughs as an accessibility advisor. Ali has fought hard for his rights to own a home and have a successful career, despite the challenges of living with spinal muscular atrophy. His early experiences in school were described as limiting and presenting various barriers to pursuing his dreams due to the prejudice at the time against his physical disability. In the extract below we can see the difficulties experienced because of a placement in a special school, but also the parental struggle in working with various services, especially at the early stages of identifying Ali's condition and needs. Ali's story illuminates how school and an engaging teacher can change a person's story throughout their lifespan by being empowering and having high expectations for individuals, supporting them to reach their own full potential.

"I went to Bedelsford in Kingston, a special school. So I was there from 1981 until 1989.

Q: So you started there once you'd moved to the borough?

A: Yeah. Q: What was your time there like? A: Mixed really, I think I was at the end of the special school era, so the mentality of lots of protection, it wasn't really about–, the focus wasn't really on education, it was more on welfare, so certainly I wasn't stretched, I felt left out in lots of ways, left behind. I felt that I had more but exactly what more meant at that time I don't know, what exactly what direction I wanted to go in or what I was going to do, and there was certainly a vibe that I probably wouldn't live beyond my school years, so therefore I wasn't a child that they wanted to invest in.

Q: If that's okay, 'cause can you explain the nature of your condition?

A: So I have spinal muscular atrophy which is a neurological impairment, that affects the central nervous system, and ultimately muscle development and maintenance, so it's quite–, it's a progressive impairment, but it's slow. And to the naked eye it's unnoticeable, the change, but it's so slow, and obviously it evolves over time, so that's the crux of it.

Q: How old were you when you were first diagnosed?

A: 18 months.

Q: Oh right, okay, and how was it sort of presenting itself, do you know when you were first diagnosed?

A: Well it was my mother actually that had a hunch, and but that hunch wasn't quite good enough for the medical profession, so she had quite a hard time, but then from my diagnosis took place when I was 18 months old, after a long fight, long drawn out battle, and in fact my mum was almost sectioned because of it, 'cause she was insisting that something wasn't quite right, and she was disbelieved and, yeah, and obviously in those days. I mean I say those days, I think it still happens now, in lots of–, perhaps it's a variation on the behaviour and the attitudes, but obviously it boils down to the same kind of challenge that people have, to get the right sort of treatment, or acknowledgement or support even. So yeah, so she had a bit of a tough time, but yeah, that's it.

Q: And once you received that formal diagnosis, I assume that then support was offered, in terms of sort of medical treatment?

A: Yeah, I mean I think, yeah, advances in–, I think it's all relative to the time, I mean obviously the treatment I got would have been better than a child that was born in the '50s say, and a child that's born in today's era would be–, would receive better treatment than I had. But I think a lot of it is about attitudes, it's about a lot of the challenges we face are because of preconceived sort of ideas and value judgements and is that what–, is that life worth keeping, and having, is that person going to be of any value to society, or are they just going to be a drain on society. So whatever the clinician is, whoever they are, I mean their energy, the vigour that they put into their work, ultimately depends on their attitude.

Q: Yeah, absolutely. And so in terms of your education at Bedelsford, what age were you when you finished there? A: I was 16 and three quarters.

Q: And what qualifications had you achieved?

A: Well I was quite fortunate in the sense that in the last two years I was at school the school appointed a new deputy head, and who happened to be the English teacher as well, and she was from a mainstream school, mainstream school background, and she was definitely a no nonsense type character, and if you like she raised the bar and she pushed those kids who were capable to a different level. And I think I was one of them, so I came out with some low grade GCSEs.

Q: And did you–, what did you then go onto do, did you go into employment? A: Well the options that I was given was residential college, or working on a TV production line, television, assembling TVs. Neither of which I wanted to do, and so I rejected every single suggestion that came my way and I spent a year after school just finding out about the world, and that meant, you know, often loitering in Kingston town centre and meeting up with friends and watching films and just generally having a chilled out time. And I went to Pakistan for four months, and then did a bit more finding out about what I wanted to do, and that's when I started to hit problems 'cause I actually wanted to go into electronic engineering, and I didn't quite understand what that meant, but I knew that's what I wanted to do, I wanted to do something technical, where I could use my brain and I could make my own little inventions, perhaps you know, I suppose I–, yeah, I was an ideas person, so I wanted to actually bring some of those ideas alive. But then I started to hit barriers with colleges not wanting to take me on and people started coming out with statements like, well you know, we can't accommodate you here and who's going to help you go to the loo and it was all very basic stuff and or you won't be able to reach the workbenches, we haven't got a low down desk, we haven't got a lift, or you'll be a fire hazard, there were a whole host of barriers that actually stifled my career. I mean maybe I wouldn't have done anything with it, maybe it wouldn't have happened, but the very fact that I hit all those barriers to a young person that's really quite deflating.

Initial questions

- How can we start conversations with our pupils about discourses surrounding disability and difference in a diverse classroom?
- How can we support social justice in the curriculum?
- What could be the impact of such materials on certain age or particular cognitive stages?
- How can teachers enable children to understand and develop a narrative of activism?
- What are the strategies that promote a pedagogy where narratives towards disability (visible and hidden) support empathy while promoting strengths
- Can storytelling support empathy and the development of socially just curricula?

Introduction to Topic

In the context of this chapter, we will be approaching ways of inviting student teachers to develop empathy towards diversity and supporting their pupils in a similar journey. We will be drawing on previous interprofessional work in a faculty of Health, Social Care and Education at an English university. Our rationale is that educational environments can present established learning spaces to challenge assumptions and develop an appreciation of human diversity. In these terms, the intention behind the work presented here and this chapter, is to create conditions to enable both teachers and students to explore, in their own world views, the meaning and value of diversity. In section 1, we will engage with aspects of diversity in relation to disability and different approaches towards it over time to develop a relational understanding of difference (What is) and in section 2 we will present several types of opportunities, experiences and resources to support teachers in creating opportunities for inclusivity in the classroom (What can we do). And more specifically, we are heavily drawing on, but not exclusively, on Fighting for Our Rights project (FFR), which was co-produced by students in nursing and education, teacher educators and nursing educators in collaboration with a local charity for independent living. In section 3 we will present relevant multi-modal pedagogies for promoting empathy to hopefully further inspire and engage teachers to create their own resources.

This project helped make the disability rights movement (DRM) known to the local community and beyond by creating a national archive, exhibitions and other resources that followed. The full information about the project can be found on the relevant website https://kcil.org.uk/FFOR/ as well as all the resources and lesson plans that stemmed from working in this way can be found on 'Schools' Resource Pack – Fighting for Our Rights (https://kcil.org.uk/FFOR/school-resources/) (Paliokosta, 2017). It created a permanent historical record using oral history methodology and an education resource that related to the period of political and cultural change between the 1960s and the 1990s in London. The

information that was gathered by the participating nursing students who used oral history, was then collated and used by student teachers to develop 13 cross-curricular lesson plans (FFR1-13) addressed to primary school children in order to enhance their learning and understanding about a disability. This was called a Disability Awareness Resource (DAR) Package and it was award winning. It received the 2019 Commendation Award from the Teacher Education Advancement Network (TEAN) in the UK for effective practice in teacher education. The table below (Figure 1) gives an overview of the lesson plans that were originally developed for primary school children near their transition to secondary education. It was soon found that they can be applicable for different contexts.

Table 1: Fighting for Our Rights Disability Awareness Resource (DAR) lessons

Lesson number [subject] title	Learning objectives
FFR 1 [Personal Health & Social Education]: Understanding Disability	· To understand different types of disabilities through experiential learning and create ways to include all disabilities.
FFR 2 [English]: Developing Empathy Skills	· Developing empathy skills, by a diary entry from the perspective of disabled activist Ann Mcfarlane.
FFR 3 [Drama]: In the Shoes of…	· To be able to understand Patricia Pages' feelings through role play, and present ideas on resolving the problems.
FFR 4 [Information Computing Technology]: Researching Disability & Inclusion Campaigns using the Internet	· We are learning about the campaigning for the rights of disabled people. We are learning to research about different disability campaigns using the internet.
FFR 5 [English] Writing a Speech	· The groups will be planning a speech for their own campaign to argue what needs to be implemented to make a place accessible.
FFR6 [Drama] Enacting a Campaign	· Based on the campaigns the children have completed in their English lesson, they will create a short drama piece to present to the class in small groups of 5. Each group will need to demonstrate the hardships and solutions that were outlined in the campaign.
FFR7 [Drama] Disability in the Community	· To understand the barriers families with disability face in everyday life.
FFR8 [History] Independent Living Scheme and its Importance in the Community	· To explore how disability was seen in a selected era in local community. To know about independent living scheme (KCIL) and its importance to local community (Kingston). To show an understanding of connections over time.
FFR9 [English] Writing a Superhero Story with a Disabled Character	· Through sharing different characters, problems and resolutions with my group I will begin to create a superhero story with a physically disabled character.
FFR10 (English) Exploring the Ethos of Viewing Mental Health	· To explore the ethos of viewing society's view of mental health. Explore appropriate ways of responding to someone's life narrative with mental health difficulties.
FFR11 [History] Comparing Approaches to Mental Health – Present & Past	· Comparing approaches to mental health from 18th century to now.
FFR12 [Art] Demonstrating Inclusion Awareness through and Accessible School Blueprint	· To demonstrate my awareness of inclusive approaches by creating a blueprint of the school, which is accessible to individuals with disabilities.

FFR13 [PSHE] Building Resilience	· To explore the similarities and differences between people and discuss social and moral dilemmas they will face when dealing with challenging situations and accommodate diversity in all its forms.

This and other similar resources are viewed as a tool that teachers could be using in approaching those sensitive issues around disability. We aim in the context of this discussion to raise awareness and support the development of empathy and inclusive discourses in relation to a socially just relational education approach. Background on certain perspectives and approaches on disability over time and a series of reflection points, resources and recommendations will support this exploration.

Key aspects

Starting conversations with pupils about discourses surrounding disability and difference in a diverse classroom. Some background.

What do teachers know about disability? It is important that teachers are confident to raise their pupils' awareness of disability and difference so they can in turn become advocates of inclusive environments for them and their peers. In order to do that, teachers might benefit from some understanding of the historical and current perspectives that have attempted to explain disability and difference. We recognise there is a wide range of disabilities and differences that we cannot cover adequately in this chapter. Conversely, we are taking a broad view of the word that encompasses diverse physical, cognitive and learning disabilities (visible and hidden) but also refers to the disabling nature of historical stigmatising discourses, societal inequalities and continued injustices in society. We acknowledge the limitation of the term 'disabled', as not all people who are described as disabled choose to describe themselves this way, and there is complexity within disability identities and communities.

It is important to consider how scientific and political discourses of disability shape current global understandings of disability and how disability is conceptualised in educational contexts. One example is the International Classification Framework (ICF) that is World Health Organisation's (WHO) framework for health and disability and constitutes the conceptual basis for the definition, measurement and policy formulations for health and disability. There are various applications of this framework, but the most important one is as a planning and policy tool; ICF puts the notions of 'health' and 'disability' in a new light. It acknowledges that disability is part of human nature universally and not something that happens to only a minority. 'ICF thus 'mainstreams' the experience of disability and recognises it as a universal human experience' (WHO, 2002, p3; 2018).

When having these conversations, educators need to consider that some of our students will identify with some of the examples that we have discussed so far, but may also

have disabilities themselves, which may be learning, physical, mental health or neurodevelopmental conditions that intersect with race, culture, gender and sexual orientation. Children or young people may have a family member that identifies with some of the topics being discussed. It is important to think about how all of these intersect and contribute to our understanding of the complexity of disability. In every interaction about disability, we are consciously or subconsciously subscribing or operating at least, under perceptions of disability. This means we are not operating in a vacuum, but we are affected by several parameters and sociocultural perspectives. Perspectives and models of disability have also stemmed from various religious, cultural, medical and social perspectives that will be discussed further in the chapter.

Some theoretical perspectives around disability

A discussion around the models of disability would be a useful one, not in an in-depth way but as an invitation to further research the understanding that we are not operating in a vacuum. We are briefly presenting here some key approaches that have contributed to our understanding of disability, in an attempt to situate your own thinking and developing understanding:

- Erving Goffman's (1963) work focused on the social stigma associated with disability and how mainstream society often stigmatised and excluded from mainstream society people with disabilities rather than their impairment itself.
- Mike Oliver (1983) was a well-known disability rights activist who developed the social model of disability, which posits that disability is a result of the social and environmental barriers that prevent full participation in society. Shakespeare continued developing the social model of disability in relation to the intersection of disability and social policy suggesting that it is society which disables people with impairments, and therefore any meaningful solution must be directed at societal change rather than individual adjustment and rehabilitation' (Barnes, Mercer & Shakespeare 2010:163).
- Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecosystemic theory, conversely considered the various systems that impact a person's life in understanding disability.
- The identity model of disability (Mairs, 1986) emphasised the importance of valuing diversity and recognizing disability as an integral part of an individual's identity while Titchkosky (2006) has focused on how our understanding of disability is shaped by dominant cultural narratives and power structures.
- Hunt was a disability rights activist who contributed to the development of the human rights model of disability, which emphasises the importance of equal rights and opportunities for people with disabilities. In a famous letter to the Guardian newspaper (1972), he maintained that disabled people with high needs were isolated in unsuitable institutions without a voice and subject to authoritarian and often cruel regimes" (Hunt, 2019).

- The medical model, that has been dominant for decades, attempts to explain disability in relation to a deficit-led approach. The medical model sees the disabled person as the problem and the solution can be found in them too. '*We are to be adapted to fit into the world as it is. If this is not possible, then we are shut away in some specialised institution or isolated at home, where only our most basic needs are met.*' Such perspectives stem from much older approaches; in the mid 1800s, for example, it was suggested that disability was a 'result of a defect or failure of a body system and was often associated with a negative view of the person' (Retief and Letsosa, 2018). Although terminology such as 'handicap' was abolished as result of the 1981 Education Act, negative terminology is still occasionally used either in ignorance or in a derogatory way and it may be that some of your pupils are exposed to such unacceptable terms through parents or through social media. At the same time the medical model can be connected to the tragedy/charity model that sees disabled people as objects of pity. The critique of the medical model and its negative impact on disabled people by Richard Reiser has been significant for years in the development of resources and activism towards a social model of disability. Relevant resources on the 'Disability History Month' approach can be found in the reflection point below.

Thinking about language and discourse used to describe those with disabilities is hence important as well as available theoretical perspectives, in order to gain a better understanding of the historical context and origins of different ways to talk about disability.

'The Disabled People's Movement supports that the 'cure' to the problem of disability lies in the restructuring of society. Unlike medically based 'cures', which focus on the individual and their impairment, this is an achievable goal and to the benefit of everyone (https://ukdhm.org/what-is-ukdhm/the-social-model/, accessed on 28.11.22, NP)

What about hidden disabilities?

It is important to consider how the above perspectives apply to hidden disabilities. Hidden disabilities may not be immediately apparent or visible to others. 'Hidden' can mean undisclosed, undiagnosed or misunderstood, not just the physical appearance of disability. They can be physical, cognitive, or neurological difficulties that can impact a person's ability to navigate daily life and can be observed by a difference in behaviour. This can also apply to those with mental health or neurodevelopmental conditions. All types of disability and mental health needs might interact and affect the individual's health and wellbeing.

Some explanations of hidden disabilities such as mental health disorders originate from the medical model of disability and suggest that mental health symptoms are attributed to a disease, a chemical imbalance attributed to physiochemical factors that needs to be fixed, and therefore the person with a disability would assume a sick role needing the help or treatment of professionals (Engel, 1977, Brown 2003). This supported medication treatment or more invasive treatments that are nowadays debatable and that run several

dangers in relation to the person's functioning and personality traits, e.g., being physically expressive or preferring to use non-verbal communications. Medication is certainly still used today particularly when there is risk to self and others, or to support children focus and learn, however there are also other psychologically oriented options for those children and young people who need to develop coping strategies in the absence of medication, or in parallel.

To combine these approaches the Biopsychosocial model (Engel 1977) addresses not only the biomedical explanation but also psychological and social factors to explain mental illness, as it was previously called, acknowledging that each person has their own thoughts, feelings and behaviours. This brings more choice and options for treatment for emotional and behavioural difficulties that can be adapted for a range of disabilities, for example a range of talking therapies such as cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), family psychotherapy and child psychotherapy. Although more information and knowledge is available, there still exists stigma around having mental health difficulties. The Lancet Commission (2022) was recently published as a result of experts' call for radical global action to end stigma and discrimination against people with mental health conditions, and stated that this is often 'worse than the condition itself'. The double stigma of having a mental health difficulty and disability can also prevent those affected sharing their thoughts and feelings or experiences.

Although the models of disability discussed above would be applicable for hidden disabilities, cognitive load theory (Sweller, 1988) can also be very relevant and helpful; this is a theory based on the understanding that people have a limited number of cognitive resources that they can use at any given time. Hidden disabilities can increase a person's cognitive load, making it more difficult for them to complete tasks that require attention and focus, something that is common for people who are neurodiverse. If we perceive neurodiversity as a natural and valuable part of human diversity, we appreciate people with autism, ADHD, and dyslexia, not necessarily as having a disorder, but a variation in human neurology. There is no "fix" or cure for these conditions, but a need to understand and bridge the differences. Understanding these theories can help us approach hidden disabilities with more empathy and sensitivity, and work towards creating a more inclusive and accessible society. The development of empathy has been acknowledged as paramount 'for a greater educational experience for students and teachers – including wellbeing, happiness and academic excellence' (Demetriou and Khalid, 2022). Reflecting on teachers' own experiences of mental health difficulties may help support children and young people to do the same so this is normalised within the classroom setting. Children with mental health difficulties may then feel safer to share their experiences in a non-stigmatizing environment. This could also enable their peers to have some understanding of the challenges that those with lived experience face.

Hidden disabilities now and in the past

In this section we look more closely at hidden disabilities such as autism and ADHD and the way they were aligned to particular beliefs of certain times and how understandings and discourses have evolved over time; in the early 1900s autism was aligned with the idea that a person was suffering from schizophrenia and experiencing hallucinations and fantasising. Bleuler (1950) and psychologists including Piaget (1923 as cited in Evans 2023) used this meaning up until the 1950s and it was not until the 1960s and 1970s that it was challenged to mean the opposite, a description of someone who fantasised excessively to one who did not fantasise at all (Piaget 1972). Changes in diagnostic methods from the 1960s to the 1980s meant that autism came to be wrongly associated with 'profound mental retardation and other developmental or physical disorders' thereby increasing the number of children who were considered to display autistic traits (Wing and Potter 2002, as cited in Evans 2013). Parent advocacy was the driver of new ways of thinking about disability and posed a direct challenge to established practice of institutionalisation and led to the closing of institutions. Psychiatrist Michael Rutter's pioneering work on understanding autism in diagnostic terms along with Lorna Wing helped us further understand the three main features of autism as child psychology and psychiatry progressed by redefining the diagnostic criteria into areas of social communication, social interaction and restricted and repetitive behaviours and interests, the first two categories where late combined as part of the Diagnostic Statistical Manual (DSM).

Autism is more commonly referred to in mainstream school settings as autistic spectrum disorder (ASD). If the condition is not acknowledged, children can often be labelled as 'odd' or 'naughty'. If there is a hidden disability such as emotional or behavioural difficulties or ADHD and the child is seen as having the same needs as their neurotypical peers, teachers' expectations and reactions are affected by this. Where there is stigma or lack of knowledge about hidden disabilities and where something cannot be seen, children and young people that lack understanding of these difficulties can also have similar expectations which can prevent them from knowing how to respond, approach or support their neurodiverse peers. Children may often face double stigma in the context of mental health and neurodiversity.

Looking at another example of a hidden disability, ADHD, that had been described as early as the 1700s and its journey began with Sir George Frederic Still in 1902 when some of the behaviours that we recognise today were identified. Some examples of subcategories of ADHD were identified such as inattentive and hyperactive impulsive (Lange et al 2010). There are higher referral rates for assessment for boys than for girls who tend to be diagnosed with inattentive subtype. It is also recognised that children can have a range of co-occurring conditions that interact with each other (Steer 2021). However, similarly to autism spectrum disorder, due to lack of professional understanding or existing diagnosis, children can be labelled as naughty or challenging due to impulsive behaviour and their struggle to keep still or focus in the same way as their peers. As this can distract others

in the classroom it may promote a sense of irritation and intolerance by their peers, a better understanding of why these behaviours occur can reduce blame and can lead to better relationships. One strategy to counteract this, is to use successful role models with either neurodiverse or mental health conditions when teaching to promote strengths over deficits so that children and young people are aware of the successes and not focusing on limitations; this will hopefully further breakdown barriers and stereotypes and reduce stigmatisation.

What are some different cultural perspectives of disability?

There are different perspectives of disability according to different religions and western and non-western cultures. There exist various different explanations i.e. disability as a divine punishment or test of faith, a sign of spiritual enlightenment or a closer connection to the divine, being possessed by evil spirits. In the global South Disability is referred to as missing parts of the body and the inability to take part in activities in the household and community. There are no definitions for neurodevelopmental conditions and family structure and culturally relevant support are seen as an important part of care, something known as the family model of disability (Bannink et al, 2022). Therefore, children from different and non-western-centric cultural backgrounds would develop their understanding of disability differently to how it is perceived in western society and this will mean that their understanding of disability or beliefs held may be different to their peers in the classroom. Various authors have highlighted the importance of taking into account local culture context, economic and political factors when studying disability in the global South (Bannink 2021). Teachers also need to consider that there is a variety of explanations and beliefs held about disability within their classroom, asking questions about this may help develop a shared understanding of these variances.

Intersectional approaches and identity

Another important parameter is the way different aspects of the individual multiple identities and social categories intersect and overlap in the way a person experiences life and is positioned socially. This is known as intersectionality (Crenshaw, 2020; Collins, 2021, Hooks, 1994). In the context of disability, intersectionality recognises that people with disabilities may belong at the same time to other marginalised groups, adding to their challenges and contributing to the possibility of inequalities, marginalisation and discrimination. Examples of such intersections might be race and disability, gender and disability, socioeconomic status and disability, sexual orientation and disability. Pickens (2021) argues that this approach 'relies on the interrelated nature of identity as formation and lived experience' and looked at how a disabled individual is defined by historical and cultural concepts such as how disability is viewed in this context, what role the individual has in the family and community is this a role that contributes to society, and how poverty

and neo-colonialism are closely linked to the lived experiences. Pickens found that these are all key to our understanding of disability in the global South. When we refer to Global South we mean countries classified as low or middle income such as Asia, Africa, Oceana , Latin America and the Caribbean. Price et al (2019) looked at the relationship between identity-based victimisation and poor mental health and academic outcomes in adolescents in the USA through an intersectional lens. They highlighted the importance of how those who identify with multiple identities for example race, gender and sexual orientation are more oppressed and the impact that this can have on mental health and academic outcomes.

One might assume that a diagnosis of a neurodevelopmental condition such as autism or ADHD should include supportive actions relevant to the child's setting, but health promotion and awareness should also be made culturally relevant, in order to be understood. For example, definitions of disability may not relate to other countries within the African subcontinent as understanding of disability may differ. In the context of intersectionality in the UK there are also examples of different experiences of mental health services as a black male living with psychosis as described by David Harwood (2022) in his book Maybe I Don't Belong Here. Bisi Alimi, a Nigerian Gay rights activist also talks about his experiences of being black and gay in Nigeria and the issue of non-acceptance and criminalisation https://www.bisialimifoundation.org/ . Developing empathy for human diversity, greater cultural awareness and understanding should be part of the picture of learning.

Listening to diverse voices in the context of intersectionality

We need to reflect on the teaching and learning experiences of children who identify with a disability, or are perceived as having multiple identities in the classroom, multiple diagnoses or conditions or disabilities – as well as a unique and developing personal sense of identity. Promoting self-advocacy, getting children engaged by using arts-based approaches (Cologon et al,2019) which draws on critical pedagogy as an approach to enable children to express their experiences of disability could be a way forward. Listening to children has been shown to support upholding children's rights and deepen adult understandings of children's experiences, but also to enhance educational approaches and experiences and support greater child agency (Nutbrown and Clough, 2009; Paige-Smith and Rix, 2011). Children have a right to continue to communicate using diverse tools beyond the early years, where methods such as the MOSAIC approach (Clark and Moss, 2005) have been successfully used. Tuffrey-Wijne and Butler (2010) take voice to another level, claiming and proving the value and feasibility of co-researching with disabled people, as it would be unethical to exclude people who experience disability from research that may otherwise provide invaluable insight and facilitate understanding of lived experience (Lam et al (2021).

It is therefore   important to develop the discourse around disability early on to then follow

this up with more age-appropriate conversations as children develop. When thinking about how this translates to delivering a teaching session, it is important to find out what pupils already know and compare this to our understanding from literature and research as well as lived experience. Cologon et al (2019) explored how the perspectives of children can be facilitated through the use of arts-based approaches in research and found that creating a safe and supportive space for children to make meaning is a useful approach to share their feelings and thoughts about inclusion, exclusion, or any other life experience they choose to convey. Another way of managing provision before discussing sensitive subjects could be to use pre-teaching sessions or coaching to handle potentially sensitive topics that they feel are quite personal to them. Such topic discussion may trigger uncomfortable emotions that may be difficult to manage within the classroom and having a plan in place may reassure or reduce associated anxiety. This is something that will be further explored through education approaches presented below.

How to raise awareness of disability

Keeping all the above in mind, it would be worthwhile presenting some examples of how we work with different groups in terms of enabling this kind of awareness building. There are different responses to diversity by different age groups; younger children tend to be more accepting and responsive to difference and the longer they are in education and in institutionally constrained environments they begin to develop negative attitudes. As it has been mentioned several times in this chapter, in line with social constructivism, social phenomena, such as disability are not universal realities, but defined by societal attitudes, policies and practices (Blumer, 1969). And this is what we have to sometimes undo, as educators, as the children grow older.

As educators, we need to appreciate for ourselves and also make children aware that there are different contexts and themes in relation to learning environments, and particular limitations that actually make certain differences perform and look like what we call 'disability'. The socially constructed element of disability and institutional and contextual parameters that affect the way nuances around disability are communicated need to be taken into consideration in relation to the way we approach these issues with children and young people of different ages and developmental stages. This term is in many ways problematic as it can carry negative connotations and stigmatisation. Terms like diverse abilities, access needs and person-first language are key at challenging existing stereotypes and putting the person before their difference or disability. All the above needs to be considered within an intersectional lens, acknowledging that people who come from all walks of life, have different experiences and perceptions of their own identity and the identity of others.

How to promote social justice in the curriculum

'*Social justice describes a belief, action, or movement, that aims to address social inequalities by re-distribution or creation of resources, policies, opportunities, or privileges, to achieve fairer societies. This is because individual people and some groups may suffer systemic, attitudinal, and physical barriers to equality because of their personal circumstances and visible characteristics. In educational contexts, social justice could mean designing, developing, or delivering education so that teaching and learning has a positive impact on students, communities, and societies by reducing inequalities or disadvantage, or by improving outcomes for groups that have traditionally been excluded or undervalued*' (Paliokosta et al, 2022: p.14).

Although it is well-received that educational institutions nowadays tend to have a more inclusive agenda and make more explicit references to the reasonable adjustments duty (Equality Act, 2010) and the Convention for the rights of disabled children (2006), there are still gaps in the curriculum in terms of how we address particular issues connecting to the awareness of social issues, and particularly those related to disability. In line with Paulo Freire's (1993) stance, content, pedagogy and resources that address issues of equity, diversity and inclusion can counteract the aforementioned dominant, socially constructed narratives and power structures that can marginalise and oppress those who are more vulnerable and generate social change.

DAR lesson plans are based on the principle of connecting learning to real life issues and engaging with narratives coming from the community in relation to disability.

Several 'hands on' lesson plans are included in the resource, as shown on table one (p.3). For example, children are asked to define disability and to talk about what it means to be disabled and the impact, as a baseline to understanding. They then experience this in the lesson using a creative and sensory approach; this can be an effective way to engage learners in understanding the different contexts and themes in relation to learning environment limitations, while incorporating diverse perspectives. Another lesson plan is guiding children in enacting a campaign, helping them develop criticality, challenge dominant narratives and engage in debates. Another one is comparing approaches to mental health over time and asking children to understand what is happening now in relation to well-being and mental health? What were institutions of the past and of today and what kind of systemic inequalities existed and persist today? In another lesson plan, children are encouraged to create an accessible school blueprint, rather than having a specialist doing it, taking ownership of a real-world project that affects them and their peers.

So, opening all these discussions really practically is encouraging a good rapport, positive and trusting relationships and self-awareness because the children would bring their own narrative in, but also using this as a starting point, because we know how difficult it can be to talk about these things and have the appropriate language repertoire to do this. One way

to address this difficulty is by starting with the narratives of the others, those activists that are talking about their lives as a tool to open these discussions and approach the topics in a deeper way. And then this sharing of stories develops some knowledge and readiness for those in the receiving end to relate, enabling in turn an empathetic relational approach ref to be added. Children, young people, and teachers can reflect on how much things have moved on or see that at times some of the things remain the same, although you would have expected more progress.

How to capture the impact of such materials on different groups

It is important to consider the age group that teachers are working with for example, children or adolescents and within that group the developmental level they are operating under. Children and young people have access to information from various sources, and increasingly so through the internet and may access discriminatory material that includes hate-discourse towards vulnerable groups. Therefore, providing valid and accurate information and resources is important for achieving the learning outcomes that we have developed, for example using oral histories mentioned previously in this chapter will enable children and young people to hear first-hand about people's struggles, how they have experienced discrimination and how they have fought for their rights is invaluable. It is also important to help young people have some understanding of what they are hearing and interact with the resources. Using a co-production approach, we can enable children to deconstruct the narratives in an appropriate and relevant level to their age and development. This can be achieved by asking questions like 'what was your understanding of X's story, what difficulties do they have and what challenges did they face, what helped them overcome those challenges.' We also need to consider as mentioned earlier that some of these children and young people may identify with some of the challenges that are being discussed; it is therefore useful to think about how the child can be supported beforehand and following the lesson by suggesting some reasonable adjustments that can be put in place. An adaptation of the resources for children with severe and profound learning disabilities have been created and more material are under development.

The role of empathy in relational learning

Co-production operates successfully and meaningfully when you know who you're working with; in its context we are adapting a relational conceptualization of empathy that is essentially an other-oriented experience, rather than self-referential. 'It is through empathy that people connect with the other's experiential world and experience foreign consciousness' (Stein, 1964 in Van Dijke et al., 2020). Although empathy can be looked at through so many different lenses, here it refers to the understanding of the other person's positionality, the co-creation of some kind of collective narrative in the context of relational pedagogy. This links to Paolo Freire's (1998) development of critical awareness of social

reality through reflection and action. So, it is about understanding of where we stand, what are the subconscious processes operating, especially in younger groups. But it's important as a teacher to know why you're making certain choices. And again, aligned with Paolo Frere it is about this co-creation of knowledge by learners and teachers together in the context of their own lives and then in the context of the curriculum, and reflecting on other people's lives at different spaces and different times. It is pertinent to draw on social, political, gender and other personal perspectives that people develop while accessing those narratives. Exposure to activities that promote empathy has been found to help increase emotional awareness, while demonstrating signs of increased self-compassion and self-esteem. Children were more likely to find commonality with others and displayed a desire to care for and connect with others.' Resources can be found here during annual empathy week Empathy Week 2024 | Build the #EmpathyGeneration (empathy-week.com) NP, 2023). And then we are trying to use storytelling to connect the views with a learning process, in the context of critical pedagogy (Giroux, 2011). So there is a range of theories that teachers can be engaging in their journeys. Feminist pedagogy (Crawley, Lewis, & Mayberry, 2008; Shrewsbury, 1997) also represents the struggle, the people who did not traditionally have voice within certain environments and within institutions, or within schools. According to Althusser (1971**), s**chools are institutions of coercion and control and one needs to unpick these and see how they can become something more collective, more inclusive and encouraging via this interaction, promoting transformative learning experiences (Mezirow, Taylor & Associates, 2009) in the context of relational learning (Doane, Hartrick-Doane and Varcoe, 2020).

How can teachers enable children to understand and develop a narrative of activism?

Following on from the reference to a transformational dimension of educational experiences, it is important to frame and understand activism in the context of education.

Activism means the use of direct and public methods to try to bring about changes that a person or group wants, especially social and political changes. Different definitions and perspectives of activism exist, but in general it refers to: recognising a felt need or desire for change, or reversal or prevention of a change made by others, such as a change in the law, which motivates a person or group to take action; putting what people need or want into words and action; formulating ideas or a vision for change about how such change might be achieved; and taking action or engaging in activities to raise awareness and make change happen (Paliokosta et al, 2022).

In teaching and learning, it means that educators and learners engage with lived experiences or life stories from local people, or experienced communities, to understand social justice in action. Their engagement creates a shared or collective understanding about a particular story of activism in a particular context and can help teachers to become

activist professionals (Sachs, 2000 in Paliokosta et al, 2022). Through the development of teaching resources and learning spaces, a narrative of activism brings historical, political, theoretical, and personal experiences into education and training. Children can be supported to understand the concept by identifying issues they care about and reflect on the impact on individuals and communities. This engagement brings agency and motives into educational spaces so that teachers and pupils might activate change (Giddens, 2009 in Paliokosta et al, 2022). This is something that can expand beyond the walls of the school, into the family and community.

The resource discussed above tried to make social history relevant to now using transformational ideology for education in the context of these resources that refer to transformative events of the past, but people may not be aware of or may not choose to discuss. In that context, by using those narratives we hopefully create an emancipatory approach to disability and inclusion. Teachers and children are learning together about activism and can engage in various forms of peaceful activism. We acknowledge that the thought of causing disruption may be uncomfortable or seem inappropriate for someone who is in education. What needs to be explained in this context is that peaceful disruption may be necessary for challenging assumptions, questioning practices, questioning the status quo. Through other people's activism (found in the resource) one can gradually and safely engage with this approach and start reflecting on other possibilities and small things we can do to challenge the status quo, maybe in the school, in the class, in order to improve inclusivity for all.

At the same time, it is about looking at the person within their own social structures, but also beyond that and trying to create an environment that is going to perceive ways of change and apply them, taking into consideration intersectional perspectives of age, ethnicity, culture, because if you look at disability in its own right, it is just a characteristic that can feature in many people. In the context of this work, it is anticipated that the participant teacher is engaging with the resources, takes an abstract notion of concepts and co-creates resources for their children, and then they can modify them with them. And the outcome is to promote social change.

Promoting empathy through a multi-modal pedagogy

When we are thinking of an 'All means All' approach, multi-modality, namely using multiple modes of communication, is key in promoting a welcoming environment for all.

Storytelling and story making

Storytelling and story-making is an acknowledged tool used with children who have English as an additional language, where children are trying to make sense of the self. Storytelling can address social inclusion, cultural intelligence, and intersectionality in education

(Sinkfield-Morey, 2018) as it supports self-expression, creation, and imagination beyond institutions to engage traditionally excluded groups and communities in education (Paliokosta and Kostidakis, 2019). Storytelling and story making with children (co-production) really supports getting to an intersectional understanding of self and identity.

It is important to note that storytelling is looked at from a relational perspective in this context. A relational framework (Doane and Varcoe, 2007) can be used to approach the different types of such learning found in stories and the way we have been using them with children. There are three dimensions of relatedness: the story and characters; the processes of storytelling; other people participating in the storytelling.

So every child can look at a story from a different level and make connections with aspects of it, whether it is disability, ethnicity, other aspects of their identity they may be discovering and exploring. Some may be connecting to the process of storytelling, and they may be connecting with other participants in its context; this demonstrates the need for certain skills that are enabled for the child when they are becoming part of the story and then relating to the other people that are in this storytelling process and engage to their own level. There is no expectation, right or wrong, but it is a rather engaging process that hopefully enables children and their teachers to develop some empathy together within this relational process.

Story-telling and drama

Using storytelling and drama is a way to promote empathetic and relational pedagogies. It can be a powerful educational tool to promote diversity and foster inclusivity. 'Through storytelling you are able to open up and facilitate a space for navigating uncertainty' (Nash-Patel. 2022:4). However, storytelling remains a hidden part of the curriculum (Attenborough and Abbott, 2020) and there is a need to equip teachers and other professionals (like nurses) who meet children with effective techniques (Haigh and Hardy, 2011) that are relevant to their specific learning goals, but also enable better rapport with children (Eraut, 1994; 2004). Narrative enhanced pedagogy uses storytelling to motivate thinking, interpretation and learning (Diekelmann and Diekelmann, 2009 in Nash-Patel et al, 2022) and it is in line with Freire's (1988) critical pedagogy that intended to empower those who were marginalised. Narrative pedagogy focuses on sharing personal stories in the context of the learning process and seeks to co-create knowledge through a combination of voices in a collaborative learning environment (Daniels and Downes, 2016).

One such example is the inter-professional Heritage2Health pilot Virtual Arts and Drama Programme that addressed gaps in the curriculum for teaching and practice around disability of other professionals (nursing) who come into contact with children and is linked to barriers to healthcare for those with learning disabilities and student nurses' anxiety and fears of working with this client group. Students worked with young people with intellectual disabilities, parents and teachers using a 'Story Aid' approach which helped them self-

reflect as people and their social reality, examining their attitudes and belief systems while learning skills to work with those who have intellectual disabilities. *The storytelling space gives a place for active witnessing of self-identity formation of both the teacher and the child* (McAdams, 2008). Using a story called Ubuntu the Lion with the long, long mane (Nash-Patel, 2021), the Zulu Ubuntu philosophy comes to life, promoting an idea of humanity coming together. Using visual arts and sensory approaches to get the student nurses to work with the teachers, the young people and parents self-reflect on issues of identity; for example who am I as a human, the professional self and how that relates to me being a professional when working with those who have disabilities. (Nash-Patel et al 2022). 'I am because we are' is an underpinning concept in the Ubuntu philosophy.

Examples of visual communication in an accessible way

Journaling

The online and face-to-face drama sessions mentioned above were co-facilitated by a socially engaged artist; a socially engaged artist produces community and group representation through participatory activities with groups whose voice may not be heard (Cleveland, 2011) aiming at affecting the public sphere meaningfully (Helguera, 2011). They used visual representation through a journaling approach to depict learners' participation in the online sessions. In the context of the journaling process, both teacher educators, nursing educators and children and their parents would write notes about the experience, about the story, about the process, about the character or about each other. This was then represented visually in what looked like a powerful interactive piece of art. There are a lot of benefits in the journaling process, such as increased self-awareness, enhanced creativity and improvement of communication skills. In this context processing of difficult feelings towards the story were approached and attempted to be made sense of.

Visual Installation

This artist is also known for another type of visual representation entitled 'Refugees Crossing' http://www.bernodonoghue.com/refugees-crossing. Refugees Crossing is an interactive art project which invites members of the public to raise awareness of the real issues refugees face by placing fact filled paper boats in public places. It was started in August 2015. The messages have been translated into six languages and over 9,000 boats have been posted across the world. Since September 2015, the project has developed collaborative work with schools and colleges to encourage children and young adults to consider the plight of refugees and engage in an open discussion about migration.

Children have been engaged by creating a boat that they labelled with names or roles of people that had passed, such as son, daughter, sister, brother; such kinaesthetic methods can be applied to all sorts of different scenarios and ways of working with children to

make sense of topics that might otherwise be difficult to approach. The effect of saying 50,000 people died during crossing and actually visualising 50,000 boats representing them, is very different; there is an activism element in this process, as people who make them empathise with the dead during the process and then communicated this cognitively and emotionally by putting the boats on public spaces, such as the tube, a school door, on the pavement, etc. The children would do the same, put them in all sorts of different spaces so that people were becoming aware of this tragic and unacceptable issue that they may have otherwise heard without focusing on it. Similarly, this method can be used for a local issue, for example the exclusion of a friend because they are different or the bullying they may have been receiving by other children due to their difference. So hopefully that empathetic approach creates the ability to think through the other person's shoes and actually understand the story, understand their narrative and relate it to themselves.

Final words

We hope that this chapter gives trainee teachers and any teacher access to some historical representations around disabilities (visible and hidden) in the attempt to be informed when deconstructing old and new discourses. We have provided material and resources to support empathy development and a narrative of activism in the context of social justice that will hopefully support positive change in schools for those with disabilities and beyond. There is a wide range of opportunities for learning from FFR DAR to be used to enhance culturally-responsive learning and place-based learning through incorporating local voices and life experience narratives into curricula. If you are a teacher that would wish to develop these further, we would love to work together. In the meantime please find some reflection points and questions below with some resources to help you engage with the relevant sections of the chapter.

Local contexts

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=375#h5p-21

Closing questions to discuss or tasks

- **Reflection Point: Section Starting conversations with pupils about discourses surrounding disability and difference in a diverse classroom. Some background.**

  A definition of disability is useful here. Have you attempted to discuss this with your pupils? Is there a common understanding and language in relation to this?

  Resource: FFR1 Understanding Disability

  https://kcil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/FFR1_PSHE_Understanding-Disability-1.pdf

  invites children to understand different types of disabilities through experiential learning and create ways to include all disabilities.

- **Reflection point: Starting conversations with pupils about discourses surrounding disability and difference in a diverse classroom. Some background.**

  1. It is important as a teacher to not only use reflective practice but to support children and young people to do the same, therefore how do we:

  -reflect on our understanding of disability and how this impacts on our own perspectives and attitudes.

  -support children and young people to reflect on their own viewpoints of disability to engage in discussions that are inclusive and respectful of others.

  Resource:

  Look at the Gibbs Reflection Model (1988) as a framework to gain an understanding of your own experiences and attitudes towards disability in order to help children do the same. Here you can find models of reflection including the Gibbs Reflection Model. Reflective Writing – Models of Reflection and Reflective Practice | London (hee.nhs.uk

  2. What about children with lived experience of disabilities or being a carer for a family member with disabilities. How do we support them to offer valuable insights to their experience?

  Resource:

  FFR2 Developing Empathy Skills https://kcil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/FFR2_English_Developing-Empathy.pdf

  invites teachers and children to develop and demonstrate empathy skills, by creating a diary entry from the perspective of a pioneering disabled activist.

- **Reflection point: Some theoretical perspectives around disability.**Thinking about support for disabilities that currently exists could encourage a discussion about which

model this originates from. For example, is the school accessible for everyone with diverse physical abilities? Are there ramps etc in the building or lift access for those who can't easily access buildings of different floors?Resource:FFR 12 Demonstrating inclusion awareness through an accessible school blueprinthttps://kcil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/FFR12_Art_Demonstrating-Inclusion-Awareness.pdf invites children to demonstrate their awareness of inclusive approaches by creating a blueprint (e.g., a map drawing that shows an ideal layout) of the school, which is accessible to individuals with disabilities.2.Teachers can familiarise themselves with some background material on the social versus medical model of disability here: https://ukdhm.org/what-is-ukdhm/the-social-model/ in the Disability History Month resource:https://ukdhm.org/.

- **Reflection point: What about hidden disabilities?**Thinking about your own teaching environment, how do you as a teacher view those with hidden disabilities? What models of disability do you operate under?Resources:1.FFR11_History_Approaches-past-and-present.pdf invites children to compare approaches to mental health from the 18th century to now.2.Animation and teacher toolkit to start conversations about mental health in primary schools:Teacher resource for mental health Teacher resource for mental health .Here you can also find a mental health jargon buster approved by young people using this link jargon-buster to further understand terminology used in child and adolescent mental health.

- **Reflection point: Hidden disabilities now and in the past.** Do disabilities that are hidden (e.g., undisclosed, undiagnosed, not-visible) affect how you respond to behaviours when compared to those who have physical disabilities? Are your expectations different?Neurodiversity may have physical expressions but it may be categorised as 'hidden' if teachers lack the understanding to pick up on them e.g., subtle changes in behavioural responses or communication such as repetitive speech.Would this also apply to other children in the class in relation to how they respond to their peers?Resource:FFR10 Exploring the ethos of viewing mental healthhttps://kcil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/FFR10_English_Exploring-mental-health.pdf invites children to explore the ethos of viewing society's view of mental health and appropriate ways of responding to someone's life narrative with mental health difficulties.

- **Reflection point: Hidden disabilities now and in the past.** We need to consider who we have in the classroom in terms of diversity and the impact of discussing this subject matter.What is the preferred terminology around disabilities and what may be considered offensive to those with disabilities?Resource:FFR7 Disability in the Communityhttps://kcil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/FFR7_PSHE_Disability-in-the-Community.pdf invites children to understand the barriers families with disabilities face in everyday life.

- **Reflection Point: Story-telling and drama.** Resources: You can find more about the StoryAid project here: https://journals.healio.com/doi/epdf/10.3928/01484834-20220912-12 You can engage with ways of using the Ubuntu story here: https://kingstonuniversity.padlet.org/KU43435/ubuntu-the-lion-with-the-long-long-mane-by-theresa-nash-pate-maj1v9pcfl023yru

Literature

Althusser, Louis. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses." In *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, 121–73. London: Verso, 1971.

Attenborough, Julie, and Stephen Abbott. "Using Storytelling in Nurse Education: The Experiences and Views of Lecturers in a Higher Education Institution in the United Kingdom." *Nurse Education in Practice* 44 (2020): 102762. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nepr.2020.102762.

Babik, Iryna, and Elena S. Gardner. "Factors Affecting the Perception of Disability: A Developmental Perspective." *Frontiers in Psychology* 12 (2021): 702166. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.70216.

Bannink Mbazzi, Femke, and Elizabeth S. Kawesa. "'Impairments of the Brain': Global South Perspectives on Childhood Neurodevelopmental Disability." *Developmental Medicine & Child Neurology* 64 (2022): 1193–1201.

Barnes, Colin, Geof Mercer, and Tom Shakespeare. "The Social Model of Disability." In *Sociology: Introductory Readings*, edited by Anthony Giddens and Philip W. Sutton, 3rd ed., 161–66. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010.

Bleuler, Eugen. *Dementia Praecox or the Group of Schizophrenias*. New York: International Universities, 1950.

Blumer, Herbert. *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Methods*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1969.

Bronfenbrenner, Urie. *The Ecology of Human Development*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979.

Brown, Thomas M. "George Engel and Rochester's Biopsychosocial Tradition: Historical and Developmental Perspectives." In *The Biopsychosocial Approach: Past, Present, and Future*, edited by Richard M. Frankel, Timothy E. Quill, and Susan H. McDaniel. Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2003.

Clark, Alison, and Peter Moss. *Spaces to Play: More Listening to Young Children Using the Mosaic Approach*. London: National Children's Bureau, 2005.

Cleveland, William. *Arts-Based Community Development: Mapping the Terrain*. Washington, DC: Americans for the Arts, 2011. https://www.lacountyarts.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/

civic_engagment_arts_based_community_develop_bcleveland_paper1_key.pdf.

Collins, Patricia Hill, Elaini Cristina Gonzaga da Silva, Emek Ergun, Inger Furseth, Kanisha D. Bond, and Jone Martínez-Palacios. "Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory." *Contemporary Political Theory* 20 (2021): 690–725. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41296-021-00490-0.

Cologon, Kathy, Timothy Cologon, Zinnia Mevawalla, and Amanda Niland. "Generative Listening: Using Arts-Based Inquiry to Investigate Young Children's Perspectives of Inclusion, Exclusion, and Disability." *Journal of Early Childhood Research* 17, no. 1 (2018): 54–69.

Crawley, Sarah L., Jocelyn E. Lewis, and Mary M. Mayberry. "Introduction—Feminist Pedagogies in Action: Teaching Beyond Disciplines." *Feminist Teacher* 19, no. 1 (2008): 1–12. https://doi.org/10.1353/ftr.0.0021.

Crenshaw, Kimberlé. "Under the Black Light: The Intersectional Vulnerabilities That COVID Lays Bare, Episode 1." African American Policy Forum, 2020. https://www.aapf.org/aapfcovid.

Daniels, Harry, and Emma Downes. "Identity and Creativity: The Transformative Potential of Drama." In *Dramatic Interactions in Education: Vygotskian and Sociocultural Approaches to Drama, Education and Research*, edited by Susan Davis, Beth Ferholt, Hannah Grainger Clemson, Satu-Mari Jansson, and Ana Marjanovic-Shane, 97–114. Bloomsbury Academic, 2015.

Demetriou, Helen, and Amna Khalid. "Does the Empathy Week Programme Have a Direct Impact on Students' Behavior and Increase the Skill of Empathy?" University of Cambridge, 2022. https://www.empathy-week.com/_files/ugd/4bd9d5_776d7cb3d65f449ea7b438ee6d029d7f.pdf.

Doane, Gweneth Hatrick, and Colleen Varcoe. *How to Nurse: Relational Inquiry in Action*. 2nd ed. Wolters Kluwer, 2020.

Engel, George L. "The Need for a New Medical Model: A Challenge for Biomedicine." *Science* 196 (1977): 129–36.

"Equality Act 2010." Lodon: HMSO, n.d.

Evans, Bonnie. "How Autism Became Autism: The Radical Transformation of a Central Concept of Child Development in Britain." *History of the Human Sciences* 26, no. 3 (2013): 3–31. https://doi.org/10.1177/0952695113484320.

Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of Freedom: Ethics, Democracy and Civic Courage*. Rowman & Littlefield, 1998.

———. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Continuum International Publishing Group, 2001.

Gibbs, Graham. *Learning by Doing: A Guide to Teaching and Learning Methods*. Oxford: Oxford Brookes University, 1998.

Gibson, Susanne. "When Rights Are Not Enough: What Is? Moving Towards a New Pedagogy for Inclusive Education within UK Universities." *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 19, no. 8 (2015): 875–86.

Giroux, Henry. *On Critical Pedagogy*. Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011.

Goffman, Erving. *Stigma: Notes on the Management of a Spoiled Identity*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1963.

Harwood, David. *Maybe I Don't Belong Here: A Memoir of Race, Identity, Breakdown, and Recovery*, 2022.

Helguera, Pablo. *Education for Socially Engaged Art: A Materials and Techniques Handbook*. New York, NY: Jorge Pinto Books, 2011.

Hooks, Bell. *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2000.

———. *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. London: Routledge, 1994.

Hunt, Judy. *No Limits: The Disabled People's Movement – A Radical History*. Great Britain by TBR Imprint, 2019.

Knight, 2011.

Lam, Claire Kar Kei, Jane Bernal, Janet Finlayson, Stuart Todd, Laurence Taggart, Annette Boaz, and Irene Tuffrey-Wijne. "Maximizing Engagement and Participation of Intellectual Disability Staff in Research: Insights from Conducting a UK-Wide Survey." *Journal of Intellectual Disabilities* 25, no. 4 (2021): 554–66. https://doi.org/10.1177/1744629520924141.

Lange, Klaus W., Susanne Reichl, Klaus W. Lange, Lara Tucha, Oliver Tucha, Susanne Reichl, and Katharina M. Lange. "The History of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder." *Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorders* 2, no. 4 (2010): 241–55. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12402-010-0045-8.

Mairs, Nancy. *Plaintext: Essays*. Tucson: University of Arizona, 1986.

McAdams, Dan P. "Personal Narratives and the Life Story." In *Handbook of Personality: Theory and Research*, edited by Oliver P. John, Richard W. Robins, and Lawrence A. Pervin, 3rd ed., 242–62. Guilford Press, 2008.

Mezirow, Jack. "An Overview of Transformative Learning." In *Contemporary Theories of Learning: Learning Theorists…in Their Own Words*, edited by Knud Illeris. London: Routledge, 2009.

Nash-Patel, T. *Ubuntu the Lion with the Long, Long Mane*. Research Edition., 2021.

Nash-Patel, Theresa, Elizabeth Morrow, Panagiota Paliokosta, Jane Dundas, Bern O'Donoghue, and Elizabeth Anderson. "Co-Design and Delivery of a Relational Learning Program for Nursing Students and Young People with Severe and Complex Learning Disabilities." *Nurse Education Today* 119 (2022): 105548. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2022.105548.

Nutbrown, Cathy, and Peter Clough. "Citizenship and Inclusion in the Early Years: Understanding and Responding to Children's Perspectives on 'Belonging.'" *International Journal of Early Years Education* 17, no. 3 (2009): 191–206. https://doi.org/10.1080/09669760903424523.

Oliver, Michael. *Social Work with Disabled People*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1983.

Paige-Smith, Alice, and Jonathan Rix. "Researching Early Intervention and Young Children's Perspectives: Developing and Using a 'Listening to Children' Approach." *British Journal of Special Education* 38, no. 1 (2011): 28–36.

Paliokosta, Panagiota. *Fighting for Our Rights: Resource Pack for Schools*, 2017.

Paliokosta, Panagiota, and Theodoros Kostidakis. "Drama, Process and Story-Making: Multi-Lingual Children's Self Expression, Creation, and Imagination." In *LATE Spring Conference: We Are Our Stories*. London, U.K., 2019.

Paliokosta, Panagiota, and Theresa Nash-Patel. "Fighting for Our Rights: Perceived Gains from Transforming the Curriculum Through a Narrative of Activism." *International Journal for Cross-Disciplinary Subjects in Education* 10, no. 2 (2019): 4041–47.

Paliokosta, Panagiota, Theresa Nash-Patel, Elizabeth Morrow, A. Ooms, Bern O'Donoghue, Name Bassett, and Joanna Miller. "Transforming the Curriculum Through a Narrative of Activism: A Constructive Evaluation of the Fighting For Our Rights Educational Resources." Kingston upon Thames, U.K.: Kingston University & Kingston Centre for Independent Living, 2022.

Paliokosta, Panagiota, and Michelle Proyer. "'Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties' Im Kontext Inklusiver Bildung in England – Eine Komplexe Kategorie Im Wandel." In *Inklusive Pädagogik in Der Sekundarstufe*, edited by Gottfried Biewer, Eva Böhm, and Sandra Schütz. Kohlhammer, 2015.

Pickens, Theri A. *Black Madness: Mad Blackness*. 1st ed. Duke University Press, 2019.

Price, Maggi, Whitney Polk, Nancy Hill, Belle Liang, and John Perella. "The Intersectionality of Identity-Based Victimization in Adolescence: A Person-Centered Examination of Mental Health and Academic Achievement in a U.S. High School." *Journal of Adolescence* 76 (2019): 185–96.

Retief, Marno, and Rantoa Letšosa. "Models of Disability: A Brief Overview." *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 74, no. 1 (2018). https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v74i1.4738.

Sachs, Judyth. "The Activist Professional." *Journal of Educational Change* 1 (2000): 77–94.

Shakespeare, T. "The Social Model of Disability." In *The Disability Studies Reader*, edited by Lennard J. Davis, 266–73. New York: Routledge, 2010.

Shrewsbury, Carolyn M. "What Is Feminist Pedagogy?" *Women's Studies Quarterly (Looking Back, Moving Forward: 25 Years of Women's Studies History, Anniversary Issue)* 25, no. 1–2 (1997): 166–73.

Steer, Joanne. *Understanding ADHD in Girls and Women*. Great Britain: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2021.

Stein, Edith. *On the Problem of Empathy*. The Hague, the Netherlands: Martinus, 1964.

Sweller, John. "Cognitive Load During Problem Solving: Effects on Learning." *Cognitive Science* 12 (1988): 257–85.

Thornicroft, Graham, Charlene Sunkel, Akmal Alikhon Aliev, Sue Baker, Elaine Brohan, Rabih El Chammay, Kelly Davis, et al. "The Lancet Commission on Ending Stigma and

Discrimination in Mental Health." *The Lancet* 400, no. 10361 (2022): 1438–80. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(22)01470-2.

Titchkosky, Tanya. *Disability, Self and Society*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006.

Tuffrey-Wijne, Irene, and Gary Butler. "Co-Researching with People with Learning Disabilities: An Experience of Involvement Qualitative Data Analysis." *Health Expectations* 13 (2009): 174–84.

UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC). "Convention for the Rights of Children with Disabilities," 2006. https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx.

Van Dijke, Jolanda, Inge van Nistelrooij, and Joachim Duyndam. "Towards a Relational Conceptualization of Empathy." *Nursing Philosophy* 21, no. 3 (2020).

Vygotsky, Lev Semenovich, Michael Cole, Vera Jolm-Steiner, Sylvia Scribner, and Souberman. *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*. Harvard University Press, 1978.

World Health Organization. "Towards a Common Language for Functioning, Disability, and Health (ICF)," 2002. https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/classification/icf/icfbeginnersguide.pdf?sfvrsn=eead63d3_4&download=true.

About the authors

Paty Paliokosta

Paty Paliokosta is an Associate Professor in Inclusive Education at Kingston University and a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. With over two decades of experience in the field of special and inclusive education, my journey has been dedicated to promoting social justice and empowering diverse learners, particularly those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEN/D). As an educator, inclusion manager, local authority advisor, researcher, and advocate she has actively contributed to shaping inclusive policies, leading innovative participatory research projects, and championing social justice within schools, local authority, higher education and the community. She leads the 'Inclusion and Social Justice' SIG and the 'Inclusivity, Anti-oppression and Underserved Communities' bidding network. Her full profile can be found here: https://www.kingston.ac.uk/staff/profile/dr-paty-paliokosta-730/

Nicola Ryan

Nicola Ryan, clinical nurse specialist in child & adolescent mental health, cognitive behavioural therapist, senior lecturer at Kingston University in the UK. Areas of interest and research include intersectionality, child and adolescent mental

health, neurodiversity, psychological and behavioural therapies, education of autism and ADHD for students and educators.

THE ROLE OF VALUES IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Lydia Murphy; Mahvand Sahranavard Espily; Petra Auer; and Tommaso Santilli

---

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=659#oembed-1

Example Case

"Now I know that it is very important to me to make friends and to care for nature. Having friends is what counts in life. It is not important to me at all to be rich and powerful or to be like the others. If we are all equal, what kind of life would that be?" I stand about three metres in front of him trying to suppress the reflex to rub my eyes as well as the urgent need to ask the person next to me for a quick pinch. Instead, I just stand there, grinning from ear to ear and cannot believe it. The person next to me is an experienced middle-aged primary school teacher, also smiling broadly, perhaps not quite as exaggeratedly broadly as I do. Him – that is a nine-year-old fourth grader talking about what is important to him in life (cf. Auer, 2021, p. 1). And when we talk or think about what is important to us in life, we talk and think about values."

cf. Schwarz, 2012

Initial questions

In this chapter you will find the answers to the following questions:

1. What are values?
2. Why do values play a role in inclusion/inclusive education?
3. Where do I find values in the school context?
4. How can I work with values to foster inclusion?

Introduction to Topic

As the example case above illustrates, values reflect what matters to us, what we find important, and can also help answer the question of who we are. In this case, the fourth grader seems to place high value on friendship, caring for nature, and appreciating diversity. Based on this information, and drawing from a broad definition, (Ainscow, 1991; 1997; Ainscow et al., 2013; UNESCO, 1990, 1994) we could argue that inclusion is his cup of tea[1]. When it comes to inclusion and, more precisely, inclusive education, scholars have written more specifically about the concept of inclusive values (e.g., Ainscow et al., 2006; EADSNE, 2012; Booth & Ainscow, 2016; Väyrynen & Paksuniemi, 2018; Ianes et al., 2024). These scholars contend that values provide the foundation for developing inclusive education systems, and for successfully implementing inclusion from theory to practice. However, it is evident that, despite discussing values, these scholars often refer to different interpretations of the term. Therefore, in this chapter, we will explore in more detail why and how values play (and should play) a role in inclusive education, where they appear, and how we can work with them on a practical level. We will initially define what values are and propose a theoretical model, currently the most frequently cited across different research disciplines, but having its origin in social psychology. So, make yourself a cup of tea (or coffee) and let us venture into this topic …

Key aspects

What are values?

Values, as a central concept of social science, play an important role in many different

---

1. The idiom "(not) my cup of tea" means something that a person likes or dislikes. In its positive form it is often used to describe personal preferences, especially for activities, hobbies, or topics someone finds appealing. In its negative form it is a casual way to say something isn't to one's liking or interest, often used to politely show a lack of enthusiasm or to decline.

disciplines (e.g., sociology, psychology, anthropology) (Schwartz, 2006). However, since different academic fields have employed the concept of values, numerous understandings of the construct have co-existed over the last few decades. An agreement on what these values are, what constitutes them, what they contain and how they are structured, has been absent for some time (Schwartz, 2012). What do we mean when we talk about values? What do we refer to?

The Basic Human Values Theory

In 1992, the sociopsychologist and cross-cultural researcher Shalom H. Schwartz published an article introducing a theory of basic human values by identifying the common features from previous definitions and approaches (Davidov et al., 2008). In addition to other scholars, his theory was predominately based on the work of Milton Rokeach, whose work has mostly been shaped by the understanding of values in empirical science (Frey, 2016). Within his theory Schwartz (1992, 1994) defines values as "[…] trans-situational criteria or goals […], ordered by importance as guiding principles in life" (Schwartz, 1999, p. 25). To put it more simply, values give an answer to the questions "What is important to me? What goals do I strive for? What are the guiding principles of my life?" (Döring & Cieciuch, 2018, p. 17). As such, values are therefore part of the self-concept (Hitlin, 2003; Vecchione et al., 2016), in response to? who I am (Döring & Cieciuch, 2018).

Part of Schwartz's work consisted of the categorisation of values. But what did he do exactly? He collected countless words that people around the world, and in different languages, that were used to refer to values (i.e., specific values) and summarised them into 10 types of values based on their underlying motivational goals (see Table 1). These 10 value types are common to every human being all over the world, in other words, they are universal. Nevertheless, persons or groups of persons (i.e., cultures, societal groups, school classes) can prioritise them differently, which leads to contrasting value priorities or hierarchies (Schwartz, 2012). Hence, individuals share the same set of values within? a universal structure, but individuals or groups differ according to which values are more important to them and which ones are not.

Table 1: Value types, their underlying motivational goal and examples of specific values

Value type	Motivational goal	Specific value
Power (PO)	Social status and prestige, control or dominance over people and resources	Social power, authority, wealth
Achievement (AC)	Personal success through demonstrating competence according to social standards	Successful, capable, ambitious
Hedonism (HE)	Pleasure and sensuous gratification for oneself	Pleasure, enjoying life
Stimulation (ST)	Excitement, novelty, and challenge in life	Daring, varied life, exciting life
Self-direction (SD)	Independent thought and action—choosing, creating, exploring	Creativity, curious, freedom
Universalism (UN)	Understanding, appreciation, tolerance, and protection for the welfare of all people and for nature	Broad-minded, social justice, equality, protecting the environment
Benevolence (BE)	Preservation and enhancement of the welfare of people with whom one is in frequent personal contact	Helpful, honest, forgiving
Tradition (TR)	Respect, commitment, and acceptance of the customs and ideas that traditional culture or religion provide for the self	Humble, devout, accepting my portion in life
Conformity (CO)	Restraint of actions, inclinations, and impulses likely to upset or harm others and violate social expectations or norms	Politeness, obedient, honoring parents and elders
Security (SE)	Safety, harmony, and stability of society, of relationships, and, of the self	National security, social order, clean

Source: Adapted from Schwartz, 1994, p. 22

Brief digression: Short digression: Power? Really? Power over others? Some readers may question the use of certain terms or feel that the perspectives presented seem one-sided. For example, in the chapter Participation of children and youth in learning and community development, alternative forms of power are discussed, one of which is "power with." This form of power is elsewhere defined as "having to do with finding common ground among different interests and building collective strength. Based on mutual support, solidarity, and collaboration, power with multiplies individual talents and knowledge. Power with can help build bridges across different interests to transform or reduce social conflict and promote equitable relations" (VeneKlasen & Miller, 2002, p. 45). According to Schwartz's systematisation of values – categorised by their underlying motivational goals – this concept of "power with" aligns more closely with the value type of universalism. This variation in the interpretation of "power" reflects how the meaning of certain terms can differ based on the theoretical framework in use. In their foundational work, Schwartz and Bilsky (1987), both psychologists, identified universal demands that all individuals and societies face: biological needs, requirements for social interaction, and group necessities for survival and welfare. They proposed that values are "cognitive representations" of these universal demands (Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987, p. 551). In contrast, VeneKlasen and Miller (2002) examine power from a political perspective, identifying various forms or expressions of power. Thus, while both groups discuss power, the concept differs depending on the underlying framework. This distinction can arise not only from disciplinary differences but also from the use of English as a lingua franca in research. In cross-cultural or international studies, terms translated into English can sometimes lose their original nuance, as D'Alessio and Cowan (2013) noted in their work on inclusion and special needs. So, if you find yourself wondering, "Power?" or perhaps even "Universalism?" or "Hedonism?" it may be because these terms have varying definitions. However, within Schwartz's framework, each value type is defined by its underlying motivational goal and the examples of specific values associated with it.

The Circular Structure of Values

The ten value types are related to one another in that they can harmonise or conflict with each other (Davidov et al., 2008). That is, the value of benevolence, for example, conflicts with the achievement of power values like social power, however, it is incompatible with universalism values like social justice. The dynamic relationships between all of the value types are portrayed graphically in the circular structure of Schwartz's value system (Schmidt et al., 2007) as shown in Figure 1. Values lying next to each other are in harmony, e.g., actions motivated by them are compatible with each other, whereas those on the opposite side are in conflict, e.g., actions based on these values are rarely combined.

Figure 1: Theoretical circular model of dynamic relations among the 10 value types
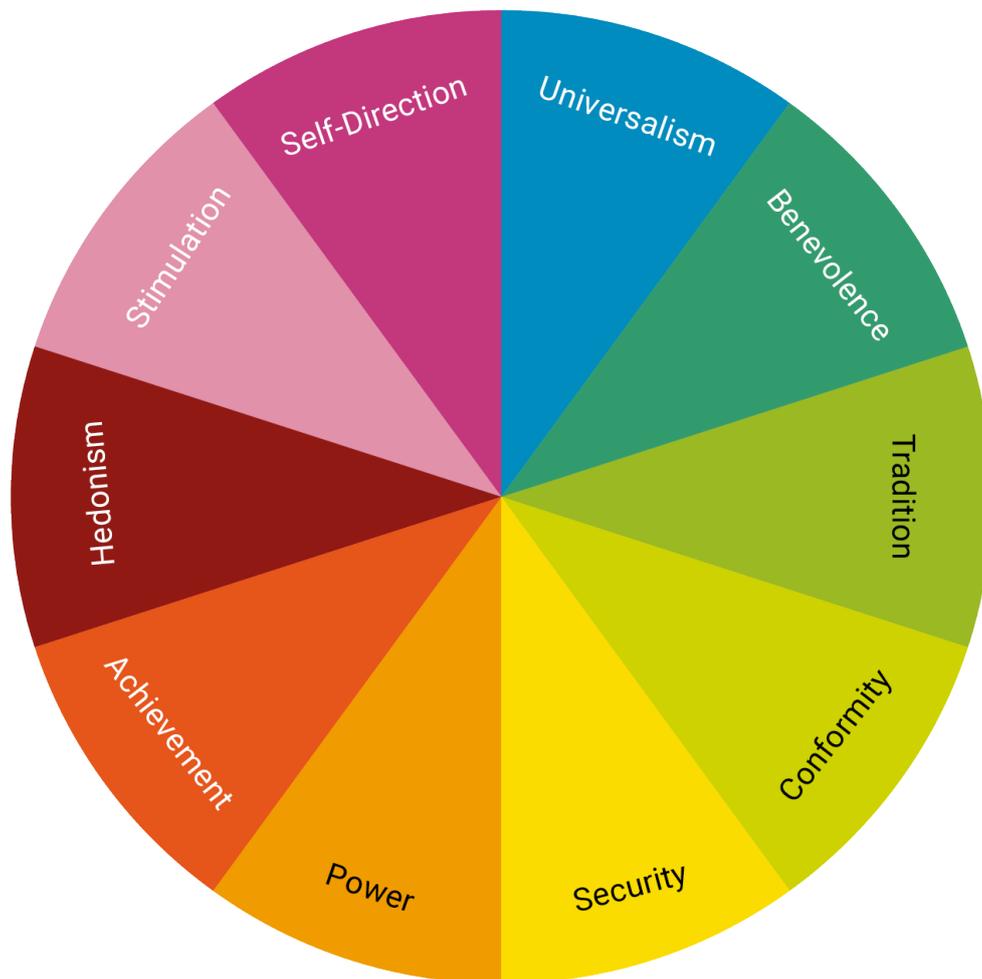
Source: Adapted from Döring & Knafo-Noam, 2019 and according to Schwartz, 1992, 1994

> **Example:** Let us try to make this more concrete. Imagine you are in a group hiking up a mountain together. You are walking uphill. One group member struggles, others are fine, and a small group almost runs up the hill. If it is important to you to take care of the people close to you, you will probably stay with the struggling person and try to help them get to the top of the mountain. This benevolence value would be compatible with universalism values, highlighting the importance of reaching the summit where no one is left behind. However, this conflicts with achievement values which may be important to you, and which showcase your capabilities. In this case, you would probably try to catch up with those who run up the hill, in order to demonstrate your ability to reach the top of the mountain. If you are a person who gives importance to both values, you might become aware of the competing nature and struggle to decide which action to take. Is it more important to me to stay with the slower group member or try to catch up with the others?

This situation is one of the rare occasions when the impact of values on decision taking

becomes conscious: in other words, there is a need to decide between two cherished, but equally, conflicting, values (Schwartz, 2012). For many, values unconsciously direct our everyday decisions and actions. The example above also reveals the importance of conflicting values. For instance, I can value benevolence, and at the same time, I can cherish achievement, i.e., being successful and ambitious. Furthermore, within a group, people may prioritise differing values, as the case above represents. Nevertheless, having different value priorities that guide us can be fruitful, and must not be a cause for conflict. A group can be more successful when there are explorers (self-direction), those who help others (benevolence) and also leaders (power) and those who take care of nature (universalism; cf. Döring & Noam-Knafo, 2019). As Schwartz (2012) argues, the pursuit of certain values can have negative consequences, such as when power values may be important for some, or when social relationships are harmed or someone is taken advantage of. On the other hand, inherent in power values is the motivation to work for the interest of a group. Consequently, values alone cannot be defined as "good" or "bad", but their meaning and value is crucial for the functioning of societies (cf. Döring & Noam-Knafo, 2019).

Adding complexity: Figure 1 shows a simplified version of the circular model. According to Schwartz (2012), values form a continuum of related motivations which gives rise to a circular structure. The ten value types (according to their competing nature) can be combined to four higher order values by organising them into two bipolar dimensions (see Figure 2). The value type hedonism cannot be related explicitly to one higher order value, but is attributed to two of them. The value types can further be classified based on the interest of attaining values (i.e., some value types focus on personal interests while others focus on social interests) or are dependent on the role of anxiety (i.e., some values are based on anxiety and others are free of anxiety) opening up a further two bipolar dimensions. All of these possible classifications are dynamic principles leading to the dynamic structure of value relations.

Figure 2. Dynamic principles of the structure of values
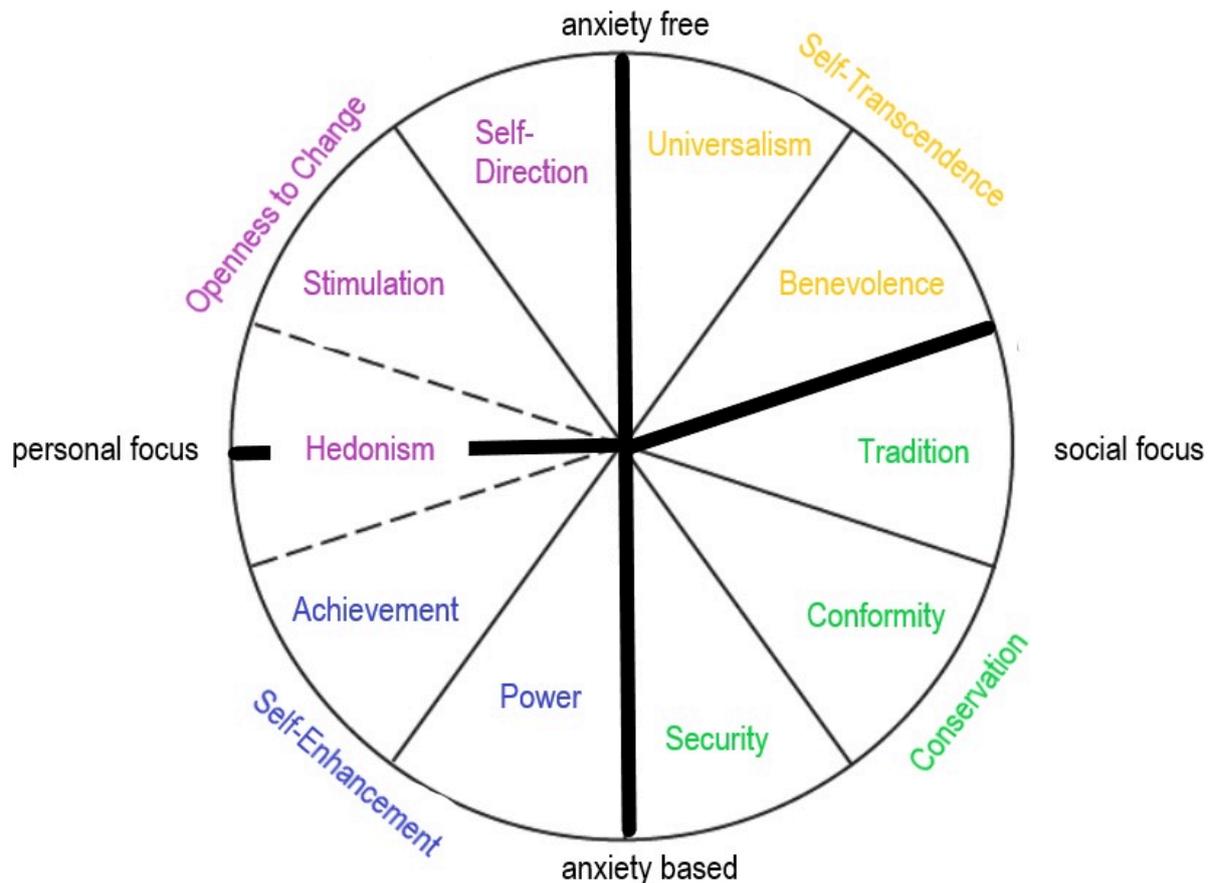
Source: Adapted from Schwartz, 2012, p. 13; Döring & Cieciuch, 2018, p. 27

The motivational continuum not only creates the circular structure but it also turns the value system into an integrated one, where all the values can be considered in relation to other concepts, such as behaviour or attitudes (Capanna et al., 2005). This organisation of values in a circular continuum highlights how a change in the importance of one value impacts the importance of both adjacent values and those lying next to the value in question (Bardi & Goodwin, 2011; Maio et al., 2009). The greater importance attributed to universalism values, the more important benevolence and self-direction values will be, and the least important the power value will be. Furthermore, what is important to me can vary considerably across groups and context?. In a study by Daniel et al., (2012), individuals were found to differ in their value differentiation ability whereby the latter (differentiation??) relies on the ability to compare contexts and the embodied values. Hence, the interplay of different factors in the importance of values and unimportance of others as well as the dynamic structure of the value system is as complex as real-life situations.

In summary, values play an important role in our lives and motivate our actions. Depending

on their underlying motivation, values can be summarised into value types which interrelate dynamically with each other either through harmony or conflict. In light of this value theory, the importance of values in everyday life seems almost logical. But how can this be used in inclusive education …

Why are values important when it comes to inclusion?

According to Booth and Ainscow (2016) values play a key role in the inclusive development of schools. In the Index of Inclusion, a resource for developing schools and society through participation towards inclusion, the authors argue that aligning actions with inclusive values can be a concrete step towards development. In line with Schwartz's (1992, 1994) definition, values are understood as action guiding principles, which guide cultures and define goals. Adapting? inclusive cultures next to inclusive policies and practices are positive steps towards achieving inclusive educational institutions and societies. Further, it can be assumed that values within the concept of cultures built the foundation. This arises also from their position on the basement within the triangle (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Three dimensions of inclusive school development

Evolving inclusive cultures

Source: Booth & Ainscow, 2016, p.49

Even though all three dimensions highlighted in Figure 3 are essential for an institution

or society to become inclusive, if there is a lack of shared values it might be that changes in the other two dimensions risk a mere formal action (Demo, 2013). It is only through the activities of individuals that effective change can be sustained? Indeed, Booth and Ainscow (2016) also propose a set of inclusive values that schools can work with in a variety of ways (i.e., the Index for Inclusion is an instrument that can be used to work on the community level, the school level, the class level, or on the individual level). On the other hand, they also present a set of exclusive values, which might hinder schools in developing towards inclusion.

Brief digression: This might also lead to an understanding of "good" and "bad" values and, as argued above, such a categorisation does not do justice to the importance of the interplay of all values in a society (Döring & Noam-Knafo, 2019). Therefore, the definition of inclusive and exclusive values needs also to be understood from a critical perspective. Hinz and Boban (2013) propose combing them through a more dialectic approach like the so-called "value square". The foundational concept of the latter originates from Aristotle, was expanded upon by the German philosopher Nicolai Hartmann in 1926, adapted for psychology by Paul Helwig in 1936, for communication psychology by Schulz von Thun in 1989 (Schulz von Thun, 2015) and introduced into the inclusion discourse by Hans Wocken (2013; cf. Hinz & Boban, 2013). The key premise of the value square is that virtues, which are guided by underlying values, in their exaggerated form risk falling into something negative. Therefore, it is about finding an appropriate balance within one virtue to keep it compatible with its counterpart (Schulz von Thun, 2008). Relying on the concept of the value square could facilitate a shift from a values-recommending to a values-reflecting perspective (Hinz & Boban, 2013). In such an approach, the focus is not on what is right or wrong but rather on what is important to you, what is important to me, and what is important within the given situation or context. This allows for the discovery of a solution on a higher level – even, or especially, in cases of opposing or conflicting values – through the synthesis of both perspectives. In addition to the dynamic principle of values, the process of value reflection should also be dynamic, flexible and continuous.

Example: Bell is a 31-year-old primary school teacher working for the last two years in a new school along with a team of four other teachers. She cares about making educational contexts and the learning environment inclusive. For Bell, it is important to include all children in the learning, encourage collaboration, discuss different points of views and understand the perspectives of others and ensure that all children are content in school – though this sometimes can be time consuming. Unfortunately, she often has the feeling that her colleagues do not apply the same work principles, and there have been a number of conflicting situations recently. Bell realised that most of her colleagues did not recognise the benefits of the inclusive values. Rather they consider it more important that children learn all the content and topics, respect the rules, and ensure safety in the classroom. Bell understood that fostering more inclusion with her team could start a conversation on underlying values. Finding common ground could then facilitate a unifying objective that could guide daily classroom activities.

From this, a further aspect concerning "Why are values important when it comes to inclusive education?" arises. Bell initially used the Index and the indicated values individually, that is, she read through and reflected on the inclusive values. Following this, she will use this approach with her team colleagues. The Index for Inclusion can be used to work across many different levels: on the community level, the school level, the class level, or on the individual level (Booth & Ainscow, 2016) and values are inherent in each level? Let us dive into the next question, which, leaning on another theoretical model, will try to give an answer to the third initial question.

Where do I find values for Inclusive Education?

Considering how values can be defined in terms of content and features, it is important to understand the dimensions in which values lie (i.e., where) in order to work with them, and orient them, towards the promotion of inclusion across educational contexts. In this sense, values operate within multiple levels of human life particularly as they are maintained, negotiated or transformed across contexts and social groups. When it comes to education, learning environments constitute one of the most impactful dimensions in which values can be transmitted (Ristevska et al., 2019), as schooling encompasses socialisation and personal development.

The 'Where' section moves through deeply reflective and nuanced practical applications of case studies from both a national and international perspective. Other chapters have highlighted Bronfenbrenner's first edition of the Ecological Model (1979, see chapter Neuroinclusion: A school community approach). However, this chapter on inclusive educational contexts is discussed using an adaption of the Ecological Model, which describes movement within the Microsystem as linkage through the Mesosystem (Hayes et al., 2023; Sheldon, 2019). This movement brings with it possible conforming and conflicting values. Young children and adults are viewed as active participants with individual values, wants, needs and desires in their world (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). This occurs in an inclusive bi-directional way within families (Microsystem) and within communities (Exo- and Macro- Systems). Finally, this section points to the difficulties and successful application of individuals living close to their values in education and society.

The Process-Person-Context-Time Model

The next sections will frame the importance of values in education using Bronfenbrenner's and Morris' (2005) most up to date model Process, Person, Context over Time (PPCT) which highlights the potency of values in inclusive communities. Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) provided a detailed description of bi-directional actions using the PPCT model, which they defined as proximal processes. This model illustrates the relational engagement with others (including inanimate objects and symbols) in context over time. Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) called these engagements the engines of development. A person's engagement with their environment becomes more complex, causing the development to progress in a particular direction. Merçon-Vargas et al. (2020) considered Bronfenbrenner's perspective on the engines of development as slightly narrow as it only theorised child development from a positive perspective. Instead, they suggested that inverse proximal processes also produced dysfunction (either positive or negative), which are constantly evolving over time.

Figure 4: Urie Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model

TIME

Macrosystem (Culture)

Microsystem

P

symbols   people

objects

Microsystem

Mesosystem   P   Exosystem
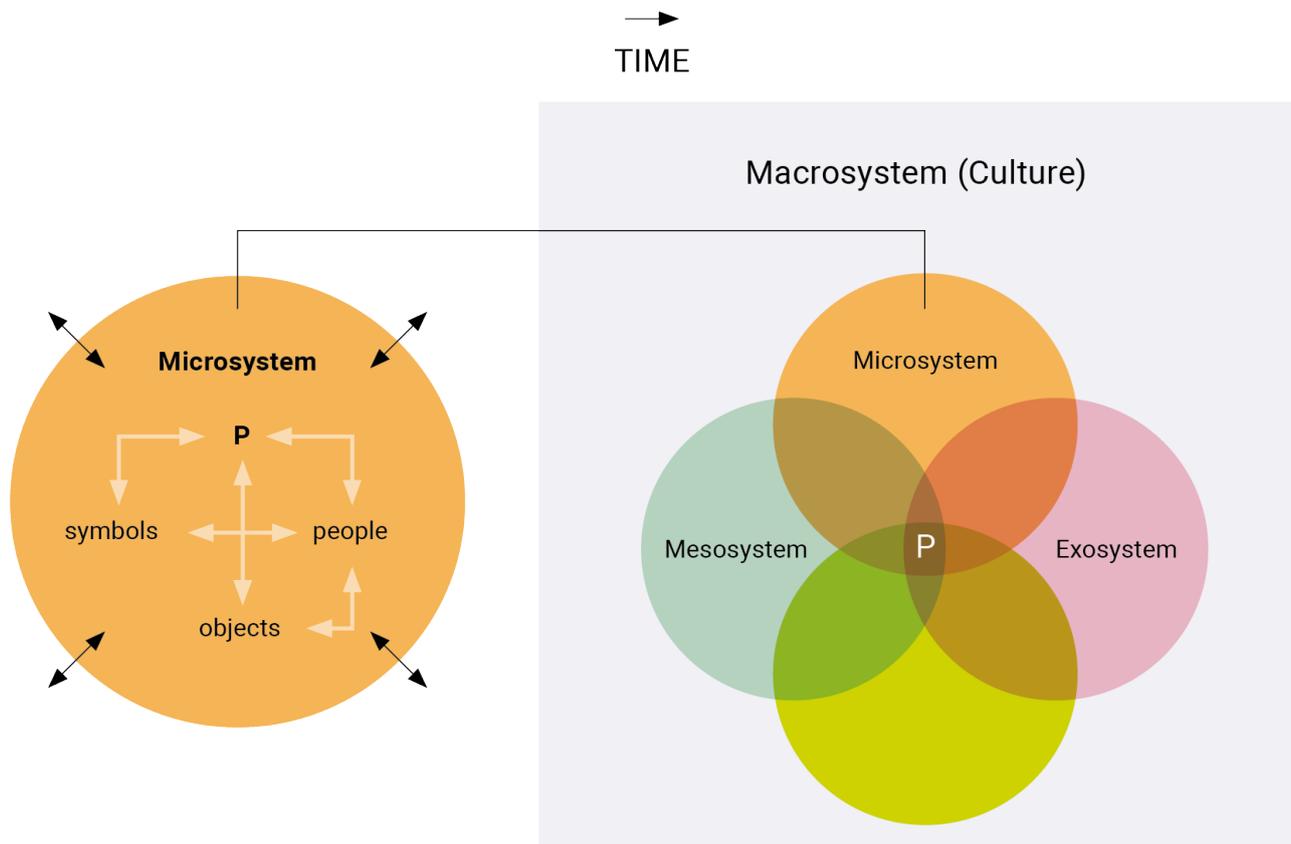
Source: Adapted from Bronfenbrenne, 2006

The active Person (P) is engaging in Proximal Processes with people, symbols and objects within a microsystem, interacting with other contexts, and involving both continuity and change over time (Tudge, 2008, p. 69). Bronfenbrenner maintained that the person is the active participant in their worlds; and includes a person's values and beliefs (Hayes et al., 2023). Relocating human development internally in relations and externally with the environment. Values and beliefs lay the foundation on which education is occurring. Bronfenbrenner's thoughts progressed from the previous dichotomous focus on the body separate from the mind or what had become nature versus nurture debate of attachment, to a more harmonious inclusive perspective of child development. Subsequently, Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2005) stressed the importance of reciprocal relationships within the social context on the development of the body? rather than just the brain (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Osher et al., 2018). Nestled in these inclusive relational processes are the significance of both conscious and unconscious values, beliefs, traditions and cultures. Bronfenbrenner relied on the work of Kurt Lewin to position his thoughts on values. He viewed values as fundamental in the processes of human behaviour (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Cartright, 1951). Lewin (1951) highlighted that the values among groups were likely to drive group engagements in both positive and possibly negative ways. Crucially, values, tradition and norms are culturally and contextually loaded.

Processes of Values

To begin applying the PPCT model, we will start by focusing on the first P for processes of inclusive relationships in education. A process is at the core of human engagement. Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2005) called these Proximal Processes, relations that are dynamic, active and consistent engagements with the environment. Previously, values were not prioritised as positive or negative but rather as beliefs driving behaviour. However, Wilkowski (2022) suggests that vices also need a voice within this framework. Vices can be understood as the counterpart of virtues, which, as stated earlier (see brief digression above), are guided by underlying values, as are vices. The vignette below highlights how an educator strives to uphold her values while addressing the contrasting values of the educational system.

The Processes of Values in Educational Inequity

Chris was a teacher in a German school. She was fascinated by how every classroom she walked into would have a list of the classroom rules supported by their teacher training. These sets of rules included her own classroom. The children all have rules to follow, still, she wondered about the inability of the rules to be followed. Chris taught her students to always question everything they were told, no matter how powerful or experienced the person they seemed with the information. Nonetheless, Chris began to reflect on this nested paradox from her teacher training instilling conformity whilst also trying to instil the children's wonder and curiosity. Upon reflection Chris thought 'how are these rules developing my children into flourishing human beings?' Chris brought her reflections to her class and after a discussion she realised the disparity between rules with intent to conform and values of universalism and social justice.

   Shortly after this reflection one of her children notified her of their deportation. Against the advice of the school Chris explained to the children what was happening. However, she prompted the idea there was nothing they could do to help their friend; this was German law and could not be changed. Chris then set an instruction and said, 'Rules cannot be changed we have to continue on with our work'. Yet the children's values of benevolence and universalism floated in the air. Chris heard the children whispering how they could get their friend back. Upon hearing this Chris reflected on her unconscious values. I am asking the children to question power but instilling conformity. I have emphasised the importance of these values I have to follow through. Chris enlisted the advice of a lawyer to see if the child and family could come back to Germany. She fought hard for the children's values to be upheld. Chris followed the lawyer's advice and made a plan against the school's wishes. Before proceeding, was there anything he wanted from Germany? The boy replied, 'my friend'. There were more hurdles for Chris to overcome but she did, and the teacher and the boy's friend travelled together to the child's hometown. On this 10hr journey Chris nurtured the children in Germany's sense of security and broadened the children's learning geographically, demographically, socially and culturally by bringing with them a little toy fox to tell the story of their trip. Chris brought their worlds closer together with letters from the children back in Germany awaiting his return. On return with the family a presentation was held for the family. Politicians were asked to join the celebration. Chris taught the children about the value of conformity from a different perspective of the community, noting if they tried to deport the family again everyone would know the family and they would have the backing of the community.
   Vignette from Chris Carstens (All means All participant)

Throughout this journey, Chris navigated the fear of losing her job while striving to improve her school system. From a values perspective, it is evident close connections between values, vices, rules and laws as well as emotions exist. Whilst both rule-led and values-led pedagogies are underpinned by values, perspective is often nuanced. This real-life complex scenario started with the children's values becoming more visible and Chris advocating

against her own teacher training, forcing her to question her own limitations regardless of a person's or system's status or power.

Next, we move from the process to the individual, the second P (Person) of Bronfenbrenner's and Morris's (2006) PPCT model. There is continuous overlap in the model, linkages are consistently made between P, P, C, T between the individuals and the processes over time.

Where are individual values framed inclusive educational practice?

Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2005) stressed the power of the individual acting? within a bi-directional education system (both young children and adults). Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) also viewed? individual traits as personal and resource characteristics which drive personal behaviour to either positive or negative interactions (Hayes et al., 2023). Crucially, we need to critically reflect upon the implications for labelling positive and negative characteristics, particularly as all behaviour is values-laden? Bronfenbrenner and Morris theorised how an individual perspective (or behaviour) had an effect on relational engagements, habits and norms. Simply stated, values can be guiding principles for individual or educational settings. In addition, habits also reinforce values, possibly by developing an evolving disposition that influences the acceptance or rejection of certain ethos. All values have their value (Sheldon, 2019), yet within these overarching categories, they are often driven by individual processes and complex relational values.

Explicitly stated, espoused values are claims of actions. The implications of individual behaviour patterns could result in? people seeking espoused values and values in use. Practices and norms that are possibly hierarchical and are prioritised to be upheld. Experiential work may result in an imbalance between the values-in-use narrative compared to the applied? practice to the espoused values and missions of the educational setting? These disparities can occur for several reasons. The case study below emphasises an individual's espoused values to the behaviour of the values-in-use. The actions, practices and virtues can include or exclude a person. Values can be viewed from the perspective of? conflicting or espoused values within the educational setting.

What's my Cup of Tea?

My own individual values lie heavily in relational pedagogy; they are focused on personalised care and education. I support the need for relational agency from birth. As educators we are a safe person the babies could trust and be free to explore also in times of need, they could seek comfort and responsive caregiving. Babies have the opportunity to make decisions about their learning and development to instil in them the right to decide and problem-solve. This did not come without challenges when we had to slow down and move at the baby's pace rather than outcome led agendas. Trying to enact my values in my day-to-day practice could be a real struggle. My values are conflicting with apparent inclusive child-led policies and regulations. Depending on the educator's temperament, values and dispositions, trying to work relationally in the presence of outcome-led processes can essentially de-skill the professional graduates' practices.
    Vignette from authors practice: Lydia Murphy

This vignette highlights the importance of instilling an ethical balance between espoused

values and the values in use in individual student teacher training. It is crucial to manage the balance of social power for voices which are often overlooked and unheard. Values can be a fruitful conversation, which can be linked with individual identity (Espedal, 2022). Bronfenbrenner (1979) advocated that all the human and nonhuman objects and symbols have agency in reciprocal relationships. From here it is fitting to transition to the third section of the PPCT model: the context.

Values in Context

Bronfenbrenner (1979) stated that social strengths and social struggles are not created in a vacuum. Indeed, humans do not evolve in isolation (O'Toole & Hayes, 2019). Bronfenbrenner (1979) advocated for the importance of context in neighbourhoods and communities, and how the environment shapes individuals' learning and development. This next section focuses on the additional influences of context adding to the analysis in the PPCT model (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2005). The chapter Neuroinclusion: A school community approach displays the full impact of the Ecological Model in communities. This chapter will use the mesosystem to highlight the importance of linking, relating, or unravelling of values that shape contexts in communities. To ensure clarity of the mesosystem, Figure 5 below has adapted Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System.

The Mesosystem is defined as the communications or interactions in contexts that happen between the microsystems (Hayes et al., 2023). This section focuses holistically on the child as an active participant moving forward and back through the Mesosystem. The orange triangle below represents the child connecting and relating within their home and community over time. The child's direct and indirect engagements, connections and influences with different community contexts are also said to impact and shape learning and development. Bronfenbrenner developed the term "linkages" for this process of movement.

Figure 5: Bronfenbrenner's model of ecological system

Bronfenbrenner's adapted Mesosystem

← Past   Present   Future →

Mesosystem

C

Child   Family Friends

Values and Norms in Microsystem

C

F + F Community

Child   C

Family Friends

Values and Norms in the Microsystems, Exosystem and Macrosystem
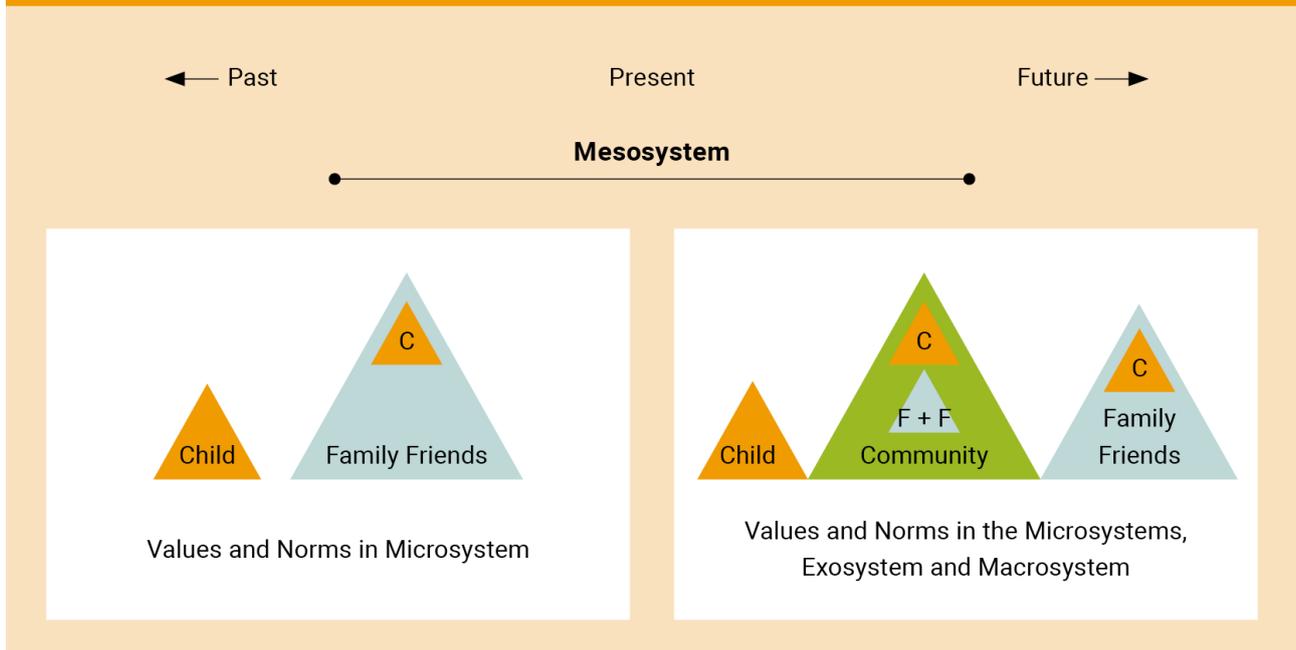
Source: Adapted from Shelton, 2019, p. 11

The flourishing of the child is more likely to occur when the adults in the environment value the voices of the children, and communicate effectively with the linkages across microsystems in the form of a whole community approach (Hayes et al., 2023). An effective communication approach is to prioritise the child's? voice as a way of being in our relationships. Both arrows represent reciprocal relationships over time between the systems. When we support the plurality of values, this can be viewed as the beginning stages of love and care (Kaur, 2020). The vignette below represents Lilly' community context. Lilly is a capable, competent little learner. At one and a half years old, she carries her learning across context into a different environment. However, the difficulty arises when Lilly's competencies at home are valued but her knowledge is questioned within her community context, and viewed through the lens of a whole systems approach..

Learning across Contexts

Lilly is a one-and-a-half-year-old toddler, and values traditions possibly influenced by her family. The tradition she knows well is birthday parties that include having a cake and lighting candles on top of it. Lilly is competent that she knows that when candles are lighting, they usually get blown out. However, when Lilly and her family go to another traditional ceremony the customs change. Lilly is being christened in a church and during the ceremony the priest lights a candle. Lilly brings her learning and competencies across the Microsystem into a different context. However, in this environment candles do not get blown out. The behaviour that stems from the same value can sometimes vary depending on the context. Behaviour associated with the value type tradition, as shown in Table 1, is motivated by the commitment and the customs and ideas that traditional culture or religion provide for the self. However, in the microsystem of her family, Lilly had learned behaviour that did not align with the customs of the new context of the church.

Vignette from research relationship

These diverse value linkages between contexts possibly reshaped Lilly's self-assurance. Yet, Lilly did not do anything wrong because the candle will be eventually blown out. If customs and rules were prioritised over values in this situation, one could argue that she did not show the right behaviour. However, seeing it from a value perspective, at both times Lilly valued tradition. Finally, the chapter moves to the last section of the PPCT model: the influence of values, patterns and norms over Time.

Values over time

This section is the final in Bronfenbrenner's and Morris's Model (2006) which explores Time; past, present, and future. The important addition of time was later added to the ecological system and named the Chronosystem. Bronfenbrenner noted the significance of time and over time on all the layers of the ecological system micro-time, meso-time, exo-time and marco-time. Our values, actions and norms are ever evolving in the present time. Value research suggests that even though values are relatively stable, they often change over the life span, and during periods of transitions and major live events (Bardi & Goodwin, 2011; Döring et al., 2016). For instance, during COVID-19 in 2020, security was a value given high importance. People engaged with family and friends very differently to what we do now. However, some practices and learning could persist from this time. The lifespan can also prioritise different values (Döring et al., 2016). Individual value change over time can be and particularly at an organisational level?

This section develops a political agenda espousing values of universalism and security in organisational agendas over time at a macro level. However, espoused political values in practice highlight values of power and conformity. For example, Equal Start is a government funding model that supports early years services over time to support disadvantaged children's learning and development.

Strand 2 of Equal Start will provide child-targeted measures – measures that are available in all settings and that will focus additional supports on children from disadvantaged backgrounds and priority groups, including: Children living in a small area assigned as deprived under the Pobal HP Deprivation Index. Children from a Traveller or Roma ethnic background. Children availing of the National Childcare Scheme through a sponsor referral, children living in homeless accommodation, and children living in an International Protection Accommodation Centre or Emergency Orientation and Reception Centre' (DCEDIY, 2024).

Early start is premised on the United Nations Convention for the Rights of the Child (1989) which states that every child has a right to an education. Despite this, the gap in education for children in the most vulnerable areas is widening due to lack of funding and resources. In Ireland, early childhood care and education settings in deprived areas have been running at a loss for over half a decade (ref?), leading to carers and families filling the gap. Consequently, many children are unable to attend the setting for required number of hours, as families could not afford the fees. This situation threatens inclusive education, as

children are denied access if their family cannot afford the fees. In 2024, early childhood settings continue to see many children experiencing inequality as babies, toddlers and young children remain under-served in their communities. Bronfenbrenner's and Morris (2006) PPCT model supports the idea of the complex threading of shaping environments and human behaviour. This section presented Bronfenbrenner and Morris's (2006) PPCT model which emphasised the importance of values where reciprocal relationships are being created in environments and communities. We will now focus on physical environments ?

When designing values …

When investigating the different embodiments of values, we can distinguish many dimensions within which they are regularly shared, negotiated, reproduced or transformed. In educational systems, for instance, we can assess the presence of values within the international and national educational policies, institutional levels and the micro dimension of each teacher's professionalism (Prichard et al., 2018). As a consequence, values within educational systems could be viewed as the result of complex interactions between multiple agents of different natures and at different levels. This is particularly the case if we consider education as an "open system in which elements are interacting with themselves and their environment in emergent, adaptive, and self-reflexive ways" (Schuelka & Engsig, 2020, p. 6).

However, identifying the dynamics underlying this multitude of spaces in which values dwell, and are exchanged, can be complicated. On closer inspection, we might see how we can consider those levels as specific (but interconnected) contexts. The common thread that links? different contexts would be represented by human agency, which plays a primary role in defining them. In other words, people, through their actions and interactions, in their roles and positions, contribute to the shaping of the environments they inhabit. This act of defining or shaping could be considered – quite interestingly – as an act of design.

We can interpret designing as an activity of reflective and creative thinking that leads one to imagine what does not yet exist, whether we are talking about tools and products, services and processes, symbols or whole systems (Nelson & Stolterman, 2003). As we define design as an activity of envisioning and ideating something for a specific purpose (Redström, 2017), it also inevitably represents a device through which values are communicated and spread between people (Buchanan, 1985). Indeed, design could not unfold in a totally neutral way (Van Gorp & Adams, 2012; Norman, 2004), as "people engage in design in order to devise and implement a new system, based on their vision of what that system should be" (Banathy, 1992, p.41). In this sense, design represents a powerful channel through which we can communicate and spread specific values. We might notice how design does not only refer to domains such as architecture or engineering, as "almost everyone is designing most of the time – whether they are conscious of it, or not" (Nelson & Stolterman, 2003, p.1).

When establishing the rules of a community, sketching the layout of a physical space and planning how to conduct a lesson we are designing, and we are infusing our personal values into concrete actions and fixed structures, offering them for other people to experience in a variety of ways. Design, as an art of thought, would involve the vivid expression of values and ideas about social life (Buchanan, 1985).

Consequently, our actions as professionals of education can potentially contribute to the maintenance (or revolution) of a specific educational system, through the promotion of values and visions. In this regard, if education is crucial for social continuity and the transmission of ideals, hopes and standards for social life (Dewey, 1916), designing education means offering contexts in which knowledge, skills and experiences can be negotiated, renewed and co-created with learners for our future society. This is especially significant when considering that, in specific contexts, promoting inclusion requires contrasting social injustice through transformative processes. In these cases, designing education means co-creating opportunities for liberation and social change (Freire, 1970).

Given that humans can shape contexts through design, how can such designs communicate values that promote inclusion? Understanding design principles and practices is crucial to identify the relationship between each individual's values and the promotion of inclusion within the different contexts which we take part in, including the educational ones.

Design, values and frameworks

On a broader level, values can be found within the structural frameworks and policies that regulate specific systems. Indeed, values and laws are reciprocally connected, especially as juridical norms descend and draw inspiration from social norms and social values. Such values would be shared between members of a community, constituting their heritage of ideal references and orienting their behaviour. Consequently, social values, which are culture-related, determine social norms and, lastly, juridical norms (Pocar, 2010; Gulotta, 2002). The frameworks that regulate educational systems vary across societies, and are strictly connected to students? rights, designing how education is functional and to be promoted, and carried out, within each specific context and embodying values of different nature.

Enshrining the right to education in international laws and normative tools ensures the adoption of a shared vision on values that are functional, as a means to orient educational policies and practices across communities. From an international perspective, inclusion in education has been interpreted through a human rights-based approach, which is centred around the need to ensure basic human rights and fundamental freedoms to all people (Gordon, 2013). Article 26 of the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) outlines a number of primary values that should underline educational practices, such as equality in access, and promoting each student's personal development and potential. UNESCO's Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960) was designed to guide

the right to education, whilst also identifying standard-setting instruments in education (Gros-Espiell, 2005). Similarly, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UN, 2015) aims at removing barriers to participation, ensuring quality education and learning opportunities for all people. The Index for Inclusion itself (Booth & Ainscow, 2016), as outlined earlier in this chapter, also proposes a set of values to support the promotion of inclusive processes within schools.

The aforementioned sources are just a few examples of how values, rights and regulations are intertwined and describe specific lines of action for the achievement of inclusion within educational contexts. However, it is important to note that, beyond universal and international values, countries and communities adopt specific norms, oriented towards the protection of individual and collective rights, and reflecting a specific set of values which are considered important. Accordingly, the idea of inclusion itself can be interpreted through specific rights and values, leading to a variety of ways which societies can advocate for. As educators, it is crucial to navigate the diversity of these scenarios and understand how intercultural dialogue is needed to reach a deeper understanding of inclusive values. In this way, international cooperation can foster empowerment, dignity and reciprocity among actors, identifying shared languages and envisioning shared advancements with the sensitivity of ensuring a true dialogue and not a subtle continuation of western dominance (Taddei, 2017).

Bigger picture frameworks act as boundaries within which smaller agents act. Accordingly, identifying the values which an educational system intends to promote, allows it to strengthen its cohesion through the contribution of all those concerned (for instance, aligning the actions of teachers and families). Conversely, it can also give space to change, and in doing so, overcome structural injustices and renew the societal purpose and meaning of its lines of action. These possibilities become feasible only when the values at the heart of system are recognised. What are these values and do they protect diversity and promote inclusion?

Such actions assume paramount importance when assessing the presence of multiple agents that, intentionally or unintentionally, communicate and spread a multitude of values based on specific interests and reasons. When considering contemporary scenarios, the plurality of non-formal educational agents and contexts (i.e., social media) may result in communities being exposed to conflicting or discriminative messages (Frabboni & Minerva, 2001). To ensure the development of more inclusive societies, formal educational agents should take part in a shared design based on an integrated educational system both on at an institutional and cultural level, thereby forming a "pedagogical alliance (…) practising neutral, ideal and democratic educational models" (Frabboni & Minerva, 2001, pp. 508–509). It is important to note that such actions, interpreted as "north stars" perspectives, might not be fully realisable, but do act as guidance for the promotion of virtuous processes. Once again, the definition and sharing of values lies at the core of the maintenance or transformation of educational systems, through the design of policies and

practices that should regularly be interrogated in order to assess their contribution to the promotion of inclusive education. As outlined at the beginning of this chapter, a dynamic, flexible, and continuous reflection on values is essential.

Design, values and practices

If educators' agency is guided by the trajectories drawn by bigger frameworks of values and regulations, individual responsibility in promoting values is still prominent at the school or classroom level. The creation of more inclusive learning environments emphasises the role of design as a practice that intervenes in the everyday life of people as an experiential mediator (Norman, 2013; Verbeek, 2008). If design is a reflective process of analysing a situation and defining solutions through continuous improvements and iterations (Schön, 1983), the profession of teaching cannot exclude it from its approach and everyday practices.

Design in learning means setting, defining or transforming the educational context, and influencing (but not determining) how learners will learn by providing opportunities, facilitators and barriers. At this level, design means structuring the learning environment and setting a variety of environmental factors that can facilitate or hinder learning, and embodying and conveying values. As the focus is centred around the role of educators in designing inclusive contexts, it is important to acknowledge how values within contexts are negotiated by all actors involved. In this sense, learners' values will be dynamically interacting among each other and also with the values promoted (consciously and unconsciously) by educators and institutions. Figure 6 illustrates the dynamic intersections that emerge when considering values in learning environments, highlighting the role of design in mediating learning experiences.

Fig. 6. Relationship between design practices, values and learning
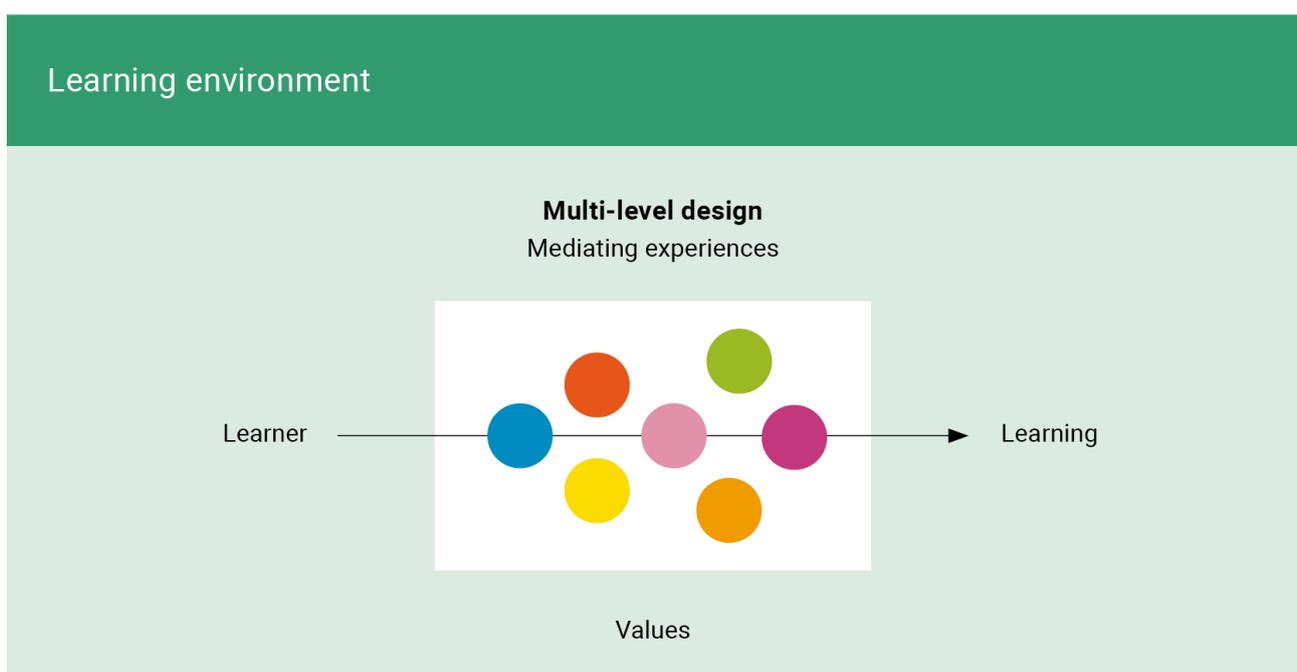
When recognising the power of design in shaping contexts and potentially increasing or decreasing their level of inclusivity, it is essential that any approaches incorporate inclusive values, and embrace inclusive learning environments. In this sense, Universal Design (UD) represents a framework of action that aims to extend the inclusivity of products, services and contexts to all people beyond differences based on personal characteristics (with an intersectional understanding of inclusion) (Maisel & Steinfeld, 2012; Connell et al., 1997; Mace, 1985). As an extension of such an approach in the educational dimension, Universal Design for Learning (UDL) will be later presented as a context-specific approach. To further show the connection between design and values, UD itself is based on a set of principles that aims at ensuring its operability across multiple contexts, such as equity and flexibility in use, or simplicity and intuitiveness in use (Connell et al., 1997). Such principles can guide educators in promoting inclusion from the design of didactic materials or settings to the choice of which activities to be carried out can be offered during a lesson.

As contexts play a primary role in influencing our functioning (WHO, 2007, 2001), defining values as contextual factors is crucial in determining the Quality of Life of learners and their level of participation (Del Bianco, 2019; Giaconi, 2015; Schalock & Verdugo Alonso, 2012, 2002) and the meaningfulness of their experience in education (Ghirotto, 2018). Additionally, Universal Design approaches can play a significant role in contrasting discrimination and exclusion phenomena (Sanford, 2012; Imrie, 2000; Connell & Sanford, 1999). The dynamic relationship between design and values is even more central in learning when considering school as a multi-faceted place combining the provision of opportunities for learning transmission of knowledge as well as the provision of opportunities for social interaction, self-expression and growth (Corona & De Giuseppe, 2015) (see chapter "Participation of children and youth). Designing the learning environment requires an understanding of the multitude of variables that can contribute to inclusion (Cottini, 2019; Sibilio & Aiello, 2015).

Managing values in the design of educational contexts necessitates that equal opportunities and the protection of rights within the framework of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), embodies UD in education in order to support such actions (Rose et al., 2014; Izzo, 2012; Rose & Meyer, 2002). As the construct of inclusive education includes the affirmation of core principles as well as the organisation of contexts and procedures to promote inclusion, (Cottini, 2017), UDL can constitute a theoretical reference to orient such activities. As a construct, Universal Design for Learning encompasses three main trajectories (CAST, 2011):

- Offering multiple means of representation;
- Offering multiple means of expression;
- Offering multiple means of engagement.

When considering the design of multiple means of representation, educators should

recognise how the knowledge that is shared and co-created with learners can also be communicated through different sensory channels as a means to promote accessibility, personal significance and understanding. In the design of multiple means of expression, students can decide how to share what they learned and the knowledge they built, following their preferred approach. Lastly, the design of multiple means of engagement can increase learner's motivation (Cottini, 2019). Indeed, such strategies can embrace learners' diversity in participating in the learning environment (Meyer et al., 2014).

The design of the learning environment is further embedded in values which have a direct influence on active participation and protection of rights. In this sense, design principles and practices can represent key resources to implement inclusion-oriented values, which are essential to ensure meaningful learning and participation opportunities for all. Such a renewed sensitivity to values, agencies and contexts constitutes a conceptual and practical way to foster the promotion and renewal of inclusion.

In other words, if "we were created by the world we live in" (Gibson, 1979/1986, p.130), we may as well reflect upon what kind of world created us, and what kind of worlds we wish to co-create with our learners. The next section delves into the practical applications of such perspectives for our present and future worlds.

How can I work with values to foster inclusion?

Inclusive education means creating equitable opportunities for all students (DEI, 2016). The role of values is at the heart of this process (Espedal et al., 2022). Values as guiding principles underlying inclusive cultures (Booth & Ainscow, 2016) can ensure that the progress of this path is sustainable and ensures inclusive education is empowered and expanded at various levels. A recent study by Döring and her colleagues (2024) highlighted how teachers and educators instilled values using diverse methods across different aspects of the school environment. They further argued that the role of teachers extends beyond education to fostering democratic values, attitudes, and beliefs, contributing to a more inclusive and sustainable society. Values education is increasingly emphasised globally in Europe. For instance, some Teaching Standards focus on promoting respect, honesty and trust in children, aligning with professional ethics and integrity. Even without formal guidelines, schools are never devoid of values, and spaces exist where learning and experiences are shaped by a clear mandate, with every teacher, consciously or unconsciously, representing certain values (Schubarth, 2019).

Educating children is not just about values or teaching them values, but it also concerns our own values and how teaching and learning embodies values? as has been stated above (Schulz von Thun, 2015; Wocken, 2013). How can we, as teachers, work with and on values in our classrooms on a daily basis? Within the following section we argue that four trajectories might be key value-based ways to foster inclusive education; reflection, resolution, negotiation and reinvention. These separate components are divided into

individual threads for knowledge application. However, in practice these trajectories are completely embedded in and braided through each other.

Reflection

One of the fundamental trajectories to supporting values is reflection, as this enables us as teachers and educators to continuously examine our own professional work and experiences, and to discern which perspectives are central, and which are peripheral, as well as clarifying and identifying the core values (Brookfield, 2018). By being more aware of our personal values and beliefs, and what is important to us, we can understand how values can help us to achieve reflection? (Schön,1983). Regular reflection can reveal how well we align with our values, but can also identify where potential conflict arises. We must also consider the extent to which these values are influenced by our experiences, background, and cultural context. As outlined at the beginning of this chapter, values are mostly unconscious but guide our behaviour (Schwartz, 2012). Therefore, it is crucial to reflect on what is important to us as part of our profession, both separately and when combining educational and political agendas (O'Toole & Hayes, 2019). The challenge lies in how we align our personal values with the values of the educational environment. We should review our reflections as messy, unorderly and if necessary, adjust again. Throughout this process, it is essential to seek feedback from our colleagues as critical friends, and assess how they observe us and our values in actions. The key point is that contemplation becomes constant practice (Brookfield, 2018).

In the early 1980s, teachers and educators recognised the difficulties arising between theory and practice, and reflection was identified as the missing link. Fred Korthagen (1985), a researcher in professional development of teachers and the pedagogy of teacher education, and the promotion of reflection in teacher education, defines reflection as "the mental process of structuring or restructuring an experience, a problem or existing knowledge or insights" (Korthagen, 1999). He elaborated a model, which describes the process of reflection which he described as ALACT (elaborated in Figure 7 below) (Korthagen, 2001).

Fig. 7. The ALACT model of reflection
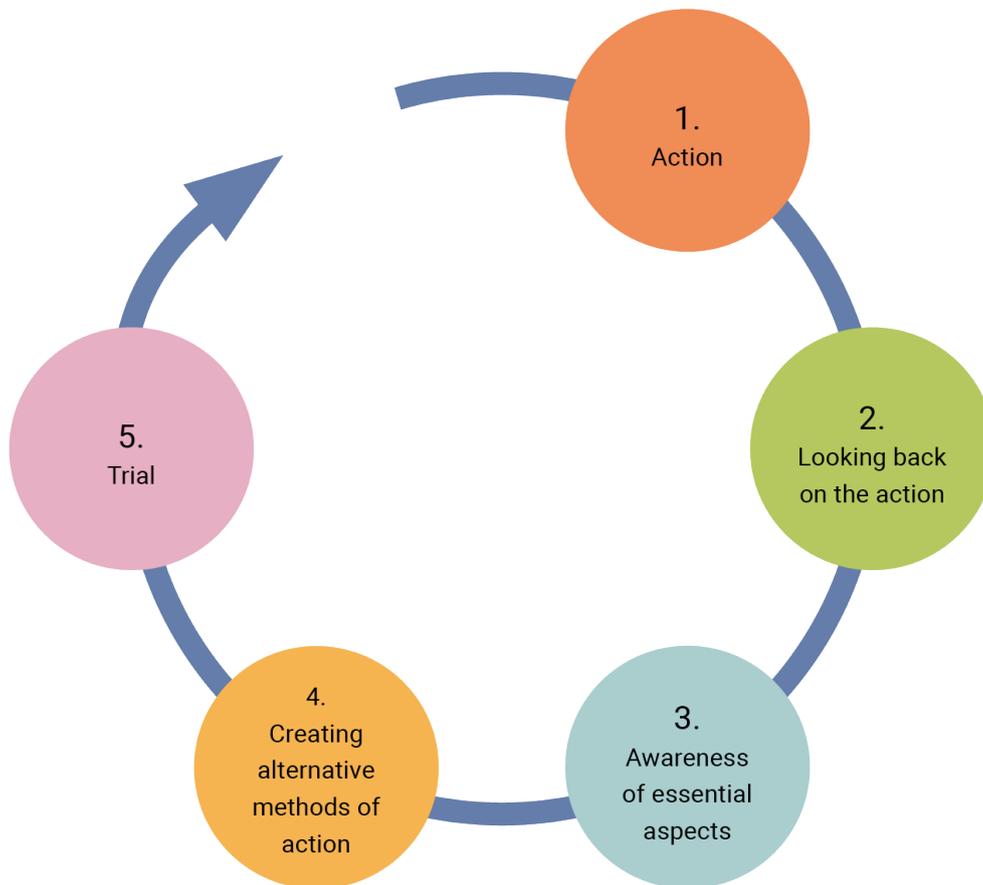
Source: Adapted from Korthagen et al., 2001

ALACT is still regarded as lacking in profound knowledge and missing empirical evidence. A second model exists which suggests that different levels of reflection, the so-called Onion-model Korthagen, 2004; see Figure 8), provides content related information to ALACT. According to Korthagen & Nuijten (2022), this model differentiates various layers of an individual's identity resulting in (student) teachers engaging in deeper reflective processes. The process makes it possible to develop a more conscious understanding of personal qualities, and further involves identifying and addressing internal obstacles. The use of this onion model for critical reflection can help to uncover, and challenge, any personal biases related to different aspects of diversity. Therefore, as the authors argue, the approach can be a step towards reducing inequality, combating discrimination, and promoting social justice. Additionally, it may also become a more inclusive method when the student's voice is captured in the reflection process, Why not also reflecting together with the students (see also the chapter Person Centred Planning)? Both the ALACT model and the onion model can be a starting point for the reflection of values in the classroom.

Figure 8: The onion model

Core qualities

Environment: What do I encounter? (What am I dealing with?)

Mission: What inspires me? What is my ideal?

Behaviour: What do I do?

Identity: Who am I (in my work)?

Competencies: What am I competent in?

Beliefs: What do I believe in the situation?
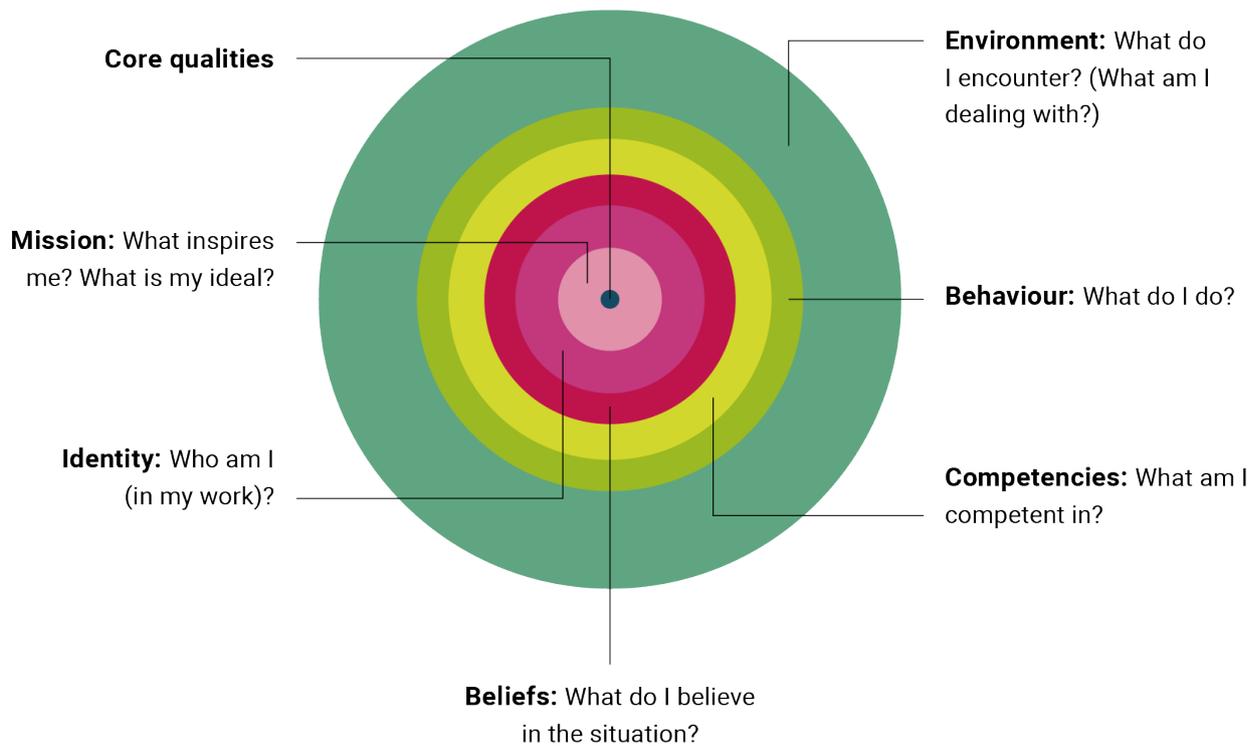
Source: Korthagen et al., 2001

Some other practical suggestions are also recommended. Holding regular and ongoing teacher meetings are valuable for ensuring the sustainability of the process. These meetings should address the challenges in applying values, practice and feedback from colleagues, parents and children to improve the implementation of values, and, if necessary, to review them. When we reflect on the vignette of Chris' experience, the critical reflection approach in addition to the dialogue and dialectical method, could assist in finding a solution. How values are incorporated into student interactions, teaching methods, and curricula should be also discussed. New and more effective ways of applying values in inclusive education should also be explored (Palmer, 2017).

Teachers should also provide opportunities with students to discuss perspectives, values, experiences and needs. The classroom environment should be one where students feel secure and confident and where they will be heard without judgement. Giving voice, and influence, to students is vital as participatory action research with children has shown previously (Jörgensdóttir Rauterberg & Hinz, 2024). In this study, children collaborated with teachers? and spoke of their experiences of school and future development school services? Using such a democratic approach would be similarly beneficial for the values approach? (see also the chapter Democratic schools). Such an environment would also create a space for interaction for students who are introverted, ensuring they feel comfortable and have the courage to express their opinions. When students feel that their voice is heard and that they are valued, the reflective process becomes more meaningful. Students express their values, identity, assumptions, and experiences, and share their perspectives, not only as a standalone activity but also as part of? the curriculum. As

a result, we find that the active role of students leads to the creation and invention of new activities (Brookfield, 2018; Noddings, 2003). By instilling values, teachers create a more inclusive learning environment and foster the flourishing of students. Such a transformation, and approach, requires commitment, trust, creativity, and continuity, and lead to the fulfilment of the diverse needs of students.

Resolution

As you read at the very beginning of this chapter, values sometimes can also conflict with each other, in other words, you cannot combine actions motivated by two specific values such as benevolence and power (Schwartz, 2006). However, you can become aware of this competing nature when decisions must be made between both values which are equally important to you. It can also be the case that your values, and the values in the school system, come into conflict as illustrated in the vignette with Chris. Additionally, there may be students who value different values in daily situations of learning in your classroom. Common to all of these situations is the need to find a solution that involves both the teacher and students working together, often in the face of conflict. Resolution involves resolving disputes, achieving consensus, or solving challenges and problems in personal, social, or professional settings (Esptien, 2014). As outlined at the beginning of the Chapter, when it comes to values and inclusion, a dialectic approach such as that proposed by Wocken (2013), could do justice to the complexity of values and their dynamic relationships and help to find a solution on a higher level.

Problem-solving also involves translating ideas into actions. There are numerous ways to achieve a resolution in relation to values. Firstly, identifying core values by reflecting on the topic is a crucial first step. Focusing on our own values is more beneficial rather than expecting others to meet our standards of values, where the latter can result in a more dissatisfactory achievement. Instead of concentrating only on solving problems, teachers can make decisions to set some goals which improve some aspects of their students' lives (Kennelly & Oke, 2024). Teachers need to be aware that values are not easily changed. Hence teachers should concentrate on the long-term relationships in parallel with possible short-term goals. By focusing on resolution, they make a meaningful approach for growth and change (Kennelly & Oke, 2024).

Problem-solving also requires a commitment and responsibility to equity. This process involves placing values at the forefront of all partnerships. Through the process of persistence, respect and continuity, it can strengthen relationships and the determination of the teachers and students (Epstein, 2014). This process also involves identifying the conflict between personal values and the values of others, and finding possible solutions to these dilemmas. Recognising and understanding different perspectives and exploring common ground are among the solutions. Listening is a basic but profound way to direct

those to alternative and creative solutions, whilst also respecting individual's core values and paying attention to different perspectives.

Negotiation

Since dialogue and negotiation are important pillars of a participatory process in inclusive education, the existence of a dialogue space between students, teachers, administrators, and families is vital. Dialogues that are focused on finding a solution, listening to different perspectives and values of others and clarifying their opinions and experiences, leads to dialectical and peaceful negotiations and helps to identify alternative solutions for possible value conflict situations on a higher level. Strengthening dialogue requires the teacher to be open and receptive to creative ideas in expressing values, avoiding a win-lose approach, and seeking solutions that consider the diversity within classrooms and schools. The necessary skill of active and empathetic listening is useful and accelerates the path to finding a common ground (Espedal, 2022). In a safe environment, dialogue fosters and strengthens self-confidence in the educational environment and increases the transparency of perspectives and values (O'Toole & Hayes, 2019)

Reinvention

Maintaining an innovative spirit in the educational system is a key foundation for inclusive education. Teacher professional development is an ongoing process that benefits from remaining informed about current research findings and techniques on inclusive education. It also involves continuously adapting teaching methods to support students' development and recognising the diversity present in the classroom. An innovative mindset leads to the elimination of approaches that are no longer effective, which drives growth and improvement in the educational environment, thereby discarding perspectives which are no longer practical and do not advance the educational system (Palmer, 2017). The same approach applies to values. Although this approach may seem challenging and complex at times, it is ultimately an ethical and timely educational imperative that empowers teachers to develop inclusive learning environments. It is crucial to remain open to a changing environment, and to re-examine and re-construct teachers' responsibilities in inclusive education (Espedal et al., 2019). Consequently, the evolution of knowledge necessitates evolution and innovation. It is important to keep in mind that working with values is a constant process that requires self-awareness, flexibility, discussion skills, active listening, and innovation. An innovative mindset encourages a more flexible approach towards children and adolescents' diverse life stories, experiences and values, and opens up new perspectives for them.

This approach involving the four trajectories of reflection, resolution, negotiation and reinvention, can facilitate an engagement with values in a continuous and adaptable manner, ultimately promoting inclusive education.

Local contexts

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=659#h5p-38

Closing questions to discuss or tasks

1. What is your cup of tea? What is important to you?
2. What is important to you as a (future) teacher or professional?
3. Does the educational setting reflect its stated values, mission, or ethical practices?
4. Do you recall a specific situation where values played a significant role?
5. How do values, or how might they, influence your (future) classroom?
6. What tools do you have to design the educational environment you work in and how do you use them?
7. Are values in your (future) classroom discussed, negotiated, or reviewed over time?
8. Imagine a concrete way to reflect on values together with your students.
9. How might your practice adapt to accommodate diverse values?
10. Could you apply what you've learned in this chapter to a university context?

Literature

Ainscow, Mel. *Effective Schools for All*. Fulton, 1991.

———. "Towards Inclusive Schooling." *British Journal of Special Education* 24, no. 1 (1997): 3–6.

Ainscow, Mel, Tony Booth, Alan Dyson, Peter Farrell, Jo Frankham, Frances Gallannaugh, Andy Howes, and Rob Smith. *Improving Schools, Developing Inclusion*. Routledge, 2006. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203967157.

Ainscow, Mel, Alan Dyson, and Sara Weiner. *From Exclusion to Inclusion: Ways of Responding in Schools to Students with Special Educational Needs*. CfBT Education Trust, 2013.

Banathy, Bela Heinrich. "Designing Educational Systems: Creating Our Future in a Changing World." *Educational Technology* 32, no. 11 (1992): 41−46.

Bardi, Anat, and Robin Goodwin. "The Dual Route to Value Change: Individual Processes and Cultural Moderators." *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 42, no. 2 (2011): 271−87.

Booth, Tony, and Mel Ainscow. *The Index for Inclusion*. Index for Inclusion Network, 2016.

Bronfenbrenner, Urie. *Making Human Beings Human: Bioecological Perspectives on Human Development*. London: Sage, 2005.

———. *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979.

Brookfield, Stephen. *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher*. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons, 2018.

Buchanan, Richard. "Declaration by Design: Rhetoric, Argument, and Demonstration in Design Practice." *Design Issues* 2, no. 1 (1985): 4−22.

Capanna, Ch., M. Vecchione, and Shalom H. Schwartz. "La Misura Dei Valori: Un Contributo Alla Validazione Del Portrait Values Questionnaire Su Un Campione Italiano." *Bollettino Di Psicologia Applicata* 246 (2005): 29−41.

CAST. *Universal Design for Learning Guidelines Version 2.0*. Wakefield, MA: CAST, 2011.

Connell, Bettye Rose, Mike Jones, Ron Mace, Jim Mueller, Abir Mullick, Elaine Ostroff, Jon Sanford, Ed Steinfeld, Molly Story, and Gregg Vanderheiden. "The Principles of Universal Design." NC State University, The Center for Universal Design, 1997.

Connell, Bettye Rose, and Jon Sanford. "Research Implications of Universal Design." In *Enabling Environments*, edited by Ed Steinfeld and Scott Danford, 35−57. Plenum Series in Rehabilitation and Health. Dordrecht: Springer, 1999.

Corona, Felice, and Tonia De Giuseppe. "Dai Complessi Scenari Dell'apprendere Ai Decostruibili Contesti Didattici Inclusivi." *Italian Journal of Special Education for Inclusion* 3, no. 2 (2015): 81−92.

Cottini, Lucio. *Didattica Speciale e Inclusione Scolastica*. Roma: Carocci, 2017.

———. *Universal Design for Learning e Currícolo Inclusivo*. Firenze: Giunti EDU, 2019.

D'Alessio, Simona, and Sarah Cowan. "Cross-Cultural Approaches to the Study of 'Inclusive' and 'Special Needs' Education." *Annual Review of Comparative and International Education* 2013 (2013): 227−61.

Daniel, E., D. Schiefer, A. Möllering, M. Benish-Weisman, K. Boehnke, and A. Knafo. "Value Differentiation in Adolescence: The Role of Age and Cultural Complexity." *Child Development* 83 (2012): 322−36.

Davidov, Eldad, Peter Schmidt, and Shalom H. Schwartz. "Bringing Values Back in: The Adequacy of the European Social Survey to Measure Values in 20 Countries." *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 72, no. 3 (2008): 420−45.

Del Bianco, Noemi. *Autodeterminazione Nelle Persone Con Disabilità Intellettive. Studi, Ricerche e Questioni Di Pedagogia Speciale*. Milano: FrancoAngeli, 2019.

Demo, Heidrun. "L'Index per l'Inclusione: Analisi Del Suo Potenziale Innovativo Nel Contesto

Italiano." *L'integrazione Scolastica e Sociale* 12, no. 1 (2013): 41–52.

Dewey, John. *Democracy and Education*. New York, NY: Macmillan, 1916.

Döring, Anna K., and Jan Cieciuch. "Die Theorie Menschlicher Werte Nach Shalom H. Schwartz Und Ihre Relevanz Für Die Erforschung Der Werteentwicklung Im Kindes- Und Jugendalter." In *Werteentwicklung Im Kindes- Und Jugendalter*, edited by Anna K. Döring and Jan Cieciuch, 21–27. Warschau: Liberi Libri, 2018.

Döring, Anna K., E. Daniel, and A. Knafo-Noam. "Introduction to the Special Section Value Development from Middle Childhood to Early Adulthood – New Insights from Longitudinal and Genetically Informed Research." *Social Development* 25, no. 3 (2016): 471–81.

Döring, Anna K., Emma Jones, Thomas P. Oeschger, and Elena Makarova. "Giving Voice to Educators: Primary School Teachers Explain How They Promote Values to Their Pupils." *European Journal of Psychology in Education*, 2024. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10212-024-00885-8.

Döring, Anna K., and Ariel Knafo-Noam. "How Do Our Values Guide Us in Life?" *Frontiers in Young Minds* 7 (2019): 115. https://doi.org/10.3389/frym.2019.00115.

Epstein, A. S. *Essentials of Active Learning in Preschool: Getting to Know the High/Scope Curriculum*. Ypsilanti: High/Scope Educational Research Foundation, 2014.

Espedal, G., B. J. Løvaas, S. Sirris, and A. Wæraas. *Researching Values: Methodological Approaches for Understanding Values Work in Organisations and Leadership*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022.

European Agency for the Development of Special Needs Education. "Profile of Inclusive Teachers." Odense: EADSNE, 2012.

Frabboni, Franco, and Franca Pinto Minerva. *Manuale Di Pedagogia Generale*. Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2001.

Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York, NY: Continuum, 1970.

Frey, Dieter. *Psychologie Der Werte: Von Achtsamkeit Bis Zivilcourage – Basiswissen Aus Psychologie Und Philosophie*. Berlin Heidelberg: Springer, 2016.

Ghirotto, Luca. "Dall'integrazione Scolastica All'inclusione Sociale: Riflessioni, Criticità e Prospettive." In *In Azione. Prove Di Inclusione*, edited by Catia Giaconi and Noemi Del Bianco, 234–43. Milano: FrancoAngeli, 2018.

Giaconi, Catia. *Qualità Della Vita e Adulti Con Disabilità*. Milano: FrancoAngeli, 2015.

Gibson, James Jerome. *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*. London: Psychology Press, 1986.

Gordon, John-Stewart. "Is Inclusive Education a Human Right?" *The Journal of Law, Medicine and Ethics* 41, no. 4 (2013): 754–67.

Government of Ireland. *Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion Charter and Guidelines for Early Childhood Care and Education*. Dublin: Department of Children, Equality, Diversity, Integration and Youth, 2016.

———. *Equal Start for Children Experiencing Disadvantage*. Dublin: Department of Children, Equality, Diversity, Integration and Youth, 2024.

Gros-Espiell, Héctor. "Signification de La Convention Concernant La Lutte Contre La Discrimination Dans Le Domaine de l'enseignement (1960)." *International Review of Education*, 2005.

Gulotta, Guglielmo. *Elementi Di Psicologia Giuridica e Diritto Psicologico*. Milano: Giuffrè, 2002.

Hayes, A., N., O'Toole, L., Halpenny. *Introducing Bronfenbrenner: A Guide for Practitioners and Students in Early Years Education*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2023.

Hinz, A., and I. Boban. "Der Neue Index Für Inklusion – Eine Weiterentwicklung Der Deutschsprachigen Ausgabe." *Zeitschrift Für Inklusion* 2 (2013).

Hitlin, Steven. "Values as the Core of Personal Identity: Drawing Links between Two Theories of Self." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 66, no. 2 (2003): 118–37.

Ianes, Dario, Benedetta Zagni, Francesca Zambotti, Sofia Cramerotti, and Sara Franch. "Inclusione Scolastica e Sociale: Un Valore Irrinunciabile? Quanto è Fattibile, Efficace e Condivisa Nei Suoi Valori?" *L'integrazione Scolastica e Sociale* 23, no. 1 (2024): 33–54. https://doi.org/10.14605/ISS2312402.

Imrie, Rob. "Responding to the Design Needs of Disabled People." *Journal of Urban Design* 5, no. 2 (2000): 199–219.

Izzo, Margaretha Vreeburg. "Universal Design for Learning: Enhancing Achievement of Students with Disabilities." *Procedia Computer Science* 14 (2012): 343–50.

Jörgensdóttir Rauterberg, Ruth, and Andreas Hinz. "Inclusion and Democracy – Two Sides of the Same Coin? Experiences of Participatory Action Research with Children in Iceland (English Version)." In *Inklusive Bildung in Island. Grundlagen, Praktiken Und Reflexionen*, edited by Andreas Hinz, Ruth Jörgensdóttir Rauterberg, R. Kruschel, and N. Leonhardt, 151–67. Beltz Juventa, 2024.

Kaur, Valarie. *See No Stranger: A Memoir and Manifesto of Revolutionary Love*. Octopus Publishing Group, 2020.

Kennelly, I., and M. Oke. *Academic Skills in Early Childhood Education and Care: Self-Inquiry, Learning and Writing for Students and Practitioners*. Springer, 2024.

Korthagen, F. A. J., J. Kessels, B. Koster, B. Lagerwerf, and T. Wubbels. *Linking Practice and Theory: The Pedagogy of Realistic Teacher Education*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2001.

Korthagen, F., and E. Nuijten. *The Power of Reflection in Teacher Education and Professional Development: Strategies for In-Depth Teacher Learning*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2022. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003221470.

Korthagen, Fred. "Linking Reflection and Technical Competence: The Logbook as an Instrument in Teacher Education." *European Journal of Teacher Education* 22, no. 2–3 (1999): 191–207.

Lewin, Kurt. *Field Theory in Social Science: Selected Theoretical Papers*. Harper and Row, 1951.

Mace, Ronald Lawrence. "Universal Design: Barrier-Free Environments for Everyone."

Designers West 33, no. 1 (1985): 147–52.

Maio, G. R., A. Pakizeh, W.-Y. Cheung, and K. J. Rees. "Changing, Priming, and Acting on Values: Effects via Motivational Relations in a Circular Model." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 97, no. 4 (2009): 699–715.

Maisel, Jordana L., and Edward Steinfeld. *Universal Design: Creating Inclusive Environments*. Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.

Nations, United. "2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals," 2015. https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda.

———. "Convention on the Rights of the Child." Geneva, 1989.

———. "Universal Declaration of Human Rights," 1948.

Noddings, Nel. *Caring: A Relational Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*. California: University of California Press, 2003.

Norman, Donald Arthur. *Emotional Design: Why We Love (or Hate) Everyday Things*. New York: Basic Books, 2004.

———. *The Design of Everyday Things*. Revised and Expanded Edition. New York: Basic Books, 2013.

Organization, World Health. "International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health: Children and Young Version." Geneva, 2007.

———. "International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health (ICF)." Geneva, 2001.

Osher, D., P. Cantor, J. Berg, L. Steyer, and T. Rose. "Drivers of Human Development: How Relationships and Context Shape Learning and Development." *Applied Developmental Science*, 2018. https://doi.org/10.1080/10888691.2017.1398650.

O'Toole, L., and H. Hayes. *Supporting Positive Behaviour in Early Childhood Settings and Primary Schools: Relationships, Reciprocity, and Reflection*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2020.

Palmer, Parker. *The Courage to Teach: Guide for Reflection and Renewal*. 2nd ed. San Francisco: John Wiley and Sons, 2017.

Pocar, Valerio. *Norme Giuridiche e Norme Sociali: Lezioni Di Sociologia Del Diritto*. Milano: Giuffrè, 2010.

Redström, Johan. *Making Design Theory*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2017.

Ristevska, Marija, Jasminka Kochoska, Biljana Gramatkovski, and Dance Sivakova-Neshkovski. "The Students' Values Acquired at School." *Junior Scientific Researcher* 5 (2019): 24–40.

Rose, David H., Jenna Gravel, and David Gordon. "Universal Design for Learning." In *The SAGE Handbook of Special Education*, edited by Lani Florian, 2nd ed., 475–91. London: SAGE, 2014.

Rose, David H., and Anne Meyer. *Teaching Every Student in the Digital Age: Universal Design for Learning*. Alexandria: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2002.

Sanford, Jon A. *Universal Design as a Rehabilitation Strategy: Design for the Ages*. New York: Springer, 2012.

Schalock, Robert L., and Miguel A. Verdugo Alonso. *Handbook on Quality of Life for Human Service Practitioners*. Washington DC: AAMR American Association on Mental Retardation, 2002.

———. *Manuale Di Qualità Della Vita: Modelli e Pratiche Di Intervento*. Brescia: Vannini Editoria Scientifica, 2012.

Schmidt, Peter, Sebastian Bamberg, Eldad Davidov, Johannes Hermann, and Shalom H. Schwartz. "Die Messung von Werten Mit Dem „Portraits Value Questionnaire"." *Zeitschrift Für Sozialpsychologie* 38, no. 4 (2007): 261–75.

Schön, Donald A. *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*. New York: Basic Books, 1983.

Schubarth, Wilfried. "Wertebildung in Der Schule." In *Werte Und Wertebildung Aus Interdisziplinärer Perspektive*, edited by Roland Verwiebe, 79–96. Springer, 2019.

Schuelka, Matthew J., and Thomas Thyrring Engsig. "On the Question of Educational Purpose: Complex Educational Systems Analysis for Inclusion." *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 2020.

Schulz von Thun, F. *Miteinander Reden 2: Stile, Werte Und Persönlichkeitsentwicklung – Differentielle Psychologie Der Kommunikation*. Rowohlt, 2008.

Schulz von Thun, F. S. "Von Wem Stammt Das Werte-Und Entwicklungsquadrat?" *SyStemischer–Die Zeitschrift Für Systemische Strukturaufstellungen*, no. 7 (2015): 88–98.

Schwartz, Shalom H. "A Theory of Cultural Values and Some Implications for Work." *Applied Psychology: An International Review* 48, no. 1 (1999): 23–47.

———. "An Overview of the Schwartz Theory of Basic Values." *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture* 2, no. 1 (2012). https://doi.org/10.9707/2307-0919.1116.

———. "Are There Universal Aspects in the Structure and Contents of Human Values?" *Journal of Social Issues* 50, no. 4 (1994): 19–45.

———. "Les Valeurs de Base de La Personne: Théorie, Mesures et Applications." *Revue Française de Sociologie* 47, no. 4 (2006): 929–68.

———. "Universals in the Content and Structure of Values: Theory and Empirical Tests in 20 Countries." *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* 25 (1992): 1–65.

Schwartz, Shalom H., and W. Bilsky. "Toward a Universal Psychological Structure of Human Values." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 53, no. 3 (1987): 550–62.

Sibilio, Maurizio, and Paola Aiello. *Formazione e Ricerca per Una Didattica Inclusiva*. Milano: FrancoAngeli, 2015.

Taddei, Arianna. *Educazione Inclusiva e Cooperazione Internazionale: Un Intervento in El Salvador*. Milano: FrancoAngeli, 2017.

UNESCO. "Convention Against Discrimination in Education," 1960.

———. "World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and Quality." Paris: UNESCO, 1994.

———. "World Declaration on Education for All." Paris: UNESCO, 1990.

Van Gorp, Trevor, and Edie Adams. *Design for Emotion*. Burlington: Morgan Kaufmann, 2012.

Väyrynen, Sai, and Merja Paksuniemi. "Translating Inclusive Values into Pedagogical Actions." *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 2018. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2018.1452989.

Vecchione, Michele, Anna K. Döring, Guido Alessandri, Gilda Marsicano, and Anat Bardi. "Reciprocal Relations Across Time Between Basic Values and Value-Expressive Behaviors: A Longitudinal Study Among Children." *Social Development* 25, no. 3 (2016): 528–47.

VeneKlasen, Lisa, and Valerie Miller. *A New Wave of Power, People, and Politics: The Action Guide for Advocacy and Citizen Participation*. Bourton on Dunsmore, 2002.

Verbeek, Peter P. C. C. "Morality in Design: Design Ethics and the Morality of Technological Artifacts." In *Philosophy and Design: From Engineering to Architecture*, edited by Peter Kroes Pieter E. Vermaas, Andrew Light and Steven A. Moore, 91–103. Dordrecht: Springer, 2008.

About the authors

Lydia Murphy

Lydia Murphy is a trained educator in Early Childhood Care and Education. Her special interests include relational pedagogy, love in education, empowering voices, and reflective practice. As an early years researcher she studies the role of the early years professionals supporting reciprocal relationships with themselves, babies /toddlers/children, their carers and educational environments/communities. Within this she explores potential deficit narratives that trickle into communities particularly those experiencing disadvantage.

Mahvand Sahranavard Espily

Mahvand is educated in English Literature. She is educated kids music teacher at Adamak institute (orff schulwerk association) in Iran. She is a vocal coach and kids music teacher around 21 years. She is teaching in an alternative school in Iran (kodakan Donya) from 2013 until now, also has experiences in working with kids 3-5 years old, Working with autistic children , low concentration children and hyperactive children. Managing many different kids event such as Pinocchio, Little black fish, Alice in wonderland, manage play week, nations celebration, manage many internal and external travels for kids, manage different visit for kids and invite many different musicians, manage many workshops for parents in different fields, member of literature work group,music work group, child friendly work group and report writer work group. She's got many certifications about vocal pedagogy, education and kids music in Iran and outside of Iran.

Petra Auer

Petra Auer is a trained primary school teacher qualified to teach children with special educational needs. She holds a PhD in General Pedagogy, Social Pedagogy, General Didactics and Disciplinary Didactics. Her main research interests are diversity and inclusion in education settings, children's values, value transmission, and socialization and acculturation in the school context.

Tommaso Santilli

Tommaso Santilli conducts research in the area of Didactic and Special Pedagogy and holds a Master's Degree in Communication and Digital Cultures. He is a trained WOSM educator and a visual designer. His main research interests concern inclusive processes in educational and recreational settings, educational technologies, inclusive design practices and accessibility of cultural contexts.

RELATIONSHIPS IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Lina Render de Barros; Leah O'Toole; and Simon Klippert

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=371#oembed-1

Example Case

"One of the best experiences I had as a teacher was during the first days of the COVID-19-pandemic. As most of the students had to stay at home, I could use the time I normally spent with 25 people in one class to have long walks outside with individual students that seemed especially lost. These talks, this time dedicated to individuals, was not only helpful in the very special situation of a lockdown, but also paid off afterwards when lessons started once again in classrooms: deeper understanding, fitting settings, growing confidence led to a more relaxed atmosphere in class and provided better grounds for learning. Use the power in uncertain times to find new ways of communication."

Simon Klippert, Combined Primary and Secondary School on the Rütli Campus, Berlin, Germany

Initial questions

In this chapter you will find the answers to the following questions:

1. Why are relationships important in education?
2. What is a relationship?
3. What is special about a relationship in a pedagogical context?
4. What are the consequences of conceptualising the student-teacher relationship as structured by power?
5. How can critical self-reflection inform relational practice? What to do with the power?
6. What are the challenges and barriers to putting relationships at the centre of educational practice?

Introduction to Topic

Why do we have to talk about it?

A relational approach is central to inclusive education. One aspect of inclusive education is the focus on the individual and the individual's developmental needs. Another aspect is a focus on society and the social environment. How can the social environment be shaped in a form that is welcoming and hospitable for individuals? And how can each individual contribute to such an environment? A relational approach is the practical answer; the attempt to translate inclusive theory into relational practice.

This chapter starts by briefly summarising research showing the importance of relationships in human development and learning environments. It asks the question 'What is a relationship?' and investigates how power structures impact on relationships, particularly educational relationships. We then offer concrete ideas of how to apply this knowledge about relationships within the inclusive classroom. Depending on your individual questions and interests you might start your reading of the text in any of the subchapters. Start with the introduction if you want to get an impression of the current state of theory. If you prefer a more narrative introduction to the topic you might choose to start with 'Relationships as a dance between you and me'. If you are aware of the theory and its ethical implications, but are looking for ways to apply this in a classroom setting you can directly go to the section on 'Practical Application'.

Why are relationships important in education?

Often the social aspect of educational relationships is seen as an add-on; the role of the teacher might seem reduced to the organisation and delivery of content, while the relationship might seem less important. In fact, the reverse is true. There is increasing

evidence that a safe, trusting, caring and respectful relationship is a prerequisite for an atmosphere of well-being that in turn creates good conditions for profound learning and inclusive practice (O'Toole and Hayes, 2020).

The Centre for the Developing Child at Harvard University presents evidence that brains are built up over time through the power of interactions and relationships. The work of Patricia Kuhl (e. g. 2010) is particularly illustrative in this regard. She investigated the development of language and found that babies and toddlers who were presented with a second language by looking at video of people speaking it on screens did not develop the structures of that language in the same way as those who were engaging in direct interactions with human beings. In short, as human beings our brains are made to develop through social interactions, and this is just as true in educational settings as anywhere else.

The student-teacher relationship is shown to be of crucial importance for learning in a variety of theoretical models and empirical studies (Hattie 2015 / Cornelius-White 2007). Bronfenbrenner's work also foregrounds the importance of relationships that he sees as the culmination of a series of interactions occurring over time "with persons with whom [the child] has established a mutual and enduring emotional attachment" (Bronfenbrenner, 1973, p. 119; 1988; 2005). "In short, somebody has to be crazy about that kid" (ibid). Bronfenbrenner's theoretical model as well as these empirical studies show that a focus on intellectual approaches to learning and more emotional or relational approaches are not mutually exclusive. Lives are lived interdependently through a network of shared relationships, or 'linked lives' and the power of such relationships is so strong that they are referred to as the 'engines' of learning and development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Hayes, O'Toole and Halpenny, 2023; O'Toole, Hayes and Halpenny, 2020).

Equally, the central argument of Attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969) is that the bond or attachment formed by an infant with the primary care-giver forms the basis of all future relationships, and of psychological well-being for the rest of the individual's life. The theory states that this bond also has a highly significant influence on a child's current and future behaviour and ability to learn. A phrase that is often used in Attachment Theory is that secure attachment with a trustworthy adult who holds the child in mind, provides a secure base from which to explore the world. In research and practice in education, the teacher is increasingly being seen through this lens (Harlow, 2021). This is explored in more detail later in the chapter.

Relationships are also important in education because a child's academic self-image very much stems from the image that a teacher has of them (among other influences). For example, research based on the work of Albert Bandura on self-efficacy shows that if the adult puts forward to the child that they are capable and their learning is important, this trust becomes internalised into the child's self-image. This impacts learning because work on self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1994) shows that if the child believes they can achieve a goal, they tend to work hard towards it, and through that hard work they are more likely to achieve the goal in reality. This achievement feeds back into the belief that they are capable

learners, further influencing future learning in a positive feedback cycle. In contrast, if the adult conveys the impression that a child is incapable of achieving an academic goal, either overtly or covertly, this also becomes internalised into self-efficacy beliefs. The internalised fear of failure might then become a self-fulfilling prophecy and lead to a lack of effort that in turn leads to the failure to achieve a goal – after all, why would I try if I know I will fail? These are just some of a multitude of theoretical perspectives that foreground the creation of supportive student-teacher relationships, and 'relational pedagogy' as a theoretical and philosophical underpinning to educational practice is increasingly gaining support (Sidorkin, 2023).

Research reinforces the fact that children learn through good relationships and this can lead to better academic outcomes. Hence, a focus on relationships and a focus on grades are not mutually exclusive (Bingham and Sidorkin, 2004; Reich 2014, 2018). Relationships are the basis for working in an educational environment as it is easier to access a topic when there is a positive relationship between the people involved. Connections between teachers and students are going to develop, no matter what. Teachers can influence their own approaches to students and how they create quality relationships. A relationship of some sort always exists and the only question is what will the quality of those connections be, and will they be nurturing or destructive for the people involved.

A child can learn in an environment where a teacher does not create a nurturing, relational atmosphere. Most people can give examples of things they have learned although they were afraid of or indifferent to a teacher. However, it is very, very difficult to learn deeply in an environment in which the child is afraid or the child is disengaged. As Siegel (2020) notes, "Experiences that involve little emotional intensity seem to do little to arouse focal attention, and have a higher likelihood of being registered as 'unimportant' and therefore of not being easily recalled later on. Events experienced with a moderate to high degree of emotional intensity seem to get labelled as 'important' and are more easily remembered in the future. If events are overwhelming and filled with fear, a number of factors may inhibit the hippocampal processing of explicit memory, and therefore may block explicit encoding and subsequent retrieval" (pp. 71-72). The most up-to-date understandings of the neuropsychological bases for learning show the impact of the stress hormone cortisol and the anti-stress hormones opioids and oxytocin on brain structures (Conkbayir, 2022; O'Connor, 2013); in other words, children's brains develop, and learning happens, in the context of relationships (Siegel, 2020). Explicitly and mindfully centering relationships in the classroom is a crucial aspect of the teachers job, since the teacher sets the emotional and relational tone of the classroom as a role model, as well as as an authority figure.

Attachment theorists have identified different 'attachment styles' that we develop based on our experiences of relationships in early childhood. These include secure, insecure-ambivalent, insecure-avoidant and disorganised (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Main and Solomon, 1986). Decades of research (see O'Toole and Hayes, 2020 for an overview) has shown that securely attached children expect the world to be comforting and supportive, and so

approach new relationships with this expectation. Therefore, securely attached children tend to behave prosocially in educational settings and invite future supportive relationships. On the other hand, insecurely attached children and those with disorganised attachment expect the world to be dangerous and unsupportive, and equally approach new relationships with this in mind. Their approach to interactions may therefore reduce the chances of forming positive relationships in educational settings the future. So we see that all students need positive relationships with their teachers. However, for students who are in insecure living situations or who only have loose relationships in their lives, relationships are especially important if we want them to have a successful learning experience at school. In more recent years we have come to understand that while early attachment experiences are highly influential, attachment style can be fluid across the life-course, depending on the availability of emotionally corrective experiences (Taylor, Rietschel, Danquah and Berry, 2015). Attachment theory assumes four different adult attachment styles: Anxious (or preoccupied), avoidant (or dismissive), disorganized (or fearful-avoidant) and Secure. The attachment styles are a result of early childhood experiences with primary caregivers, resilience and relational experiences in a life. Such experiences are those in which a person with an insecure or disorganised attachment is given the opportunity to discover that the world can in fact be comforting and supportive.They can thereby rewrite the expectations underpinning how they behave in the world – and so how the world responds to them. This gives hope to educators working with children who have experienced a less than ideal start in life that there is a lot of potential. Promising research avenues on children's resilience have developed in recent decades and the effect that one caring adult such as a warm, attuned, responsive educator can have on children's trajectories and life chances (e. g. Brohl, 2007). Teachers are well advised to reflect on their own upbringing and attachment styles in order to create a professional relationship and reactions towards students with a variety of different attachment styles.

Another strong argument for positioning relationships at the centre of educational processes might be that relationships continuously develop, whether we acknowledge their importance or not. Therefore, it is good advice to invest in these relationships and try to ensure that the student-teacher relationship is the most positive it can be.

Next to these insights from research and academia, there are also legal arguments which underline the importance of relationships: The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has been ratified by 185 countries so far. This means that the states have the responsibility to ensure inclusion, accept diversity as the norm and adhere to individual's different needs in order to ensure equal opportunities for participation. Relational education can be one way to put this political, legal and ethical goal into practice. In order to ensure participation, we need to get to know the participants and their individual needs. We need to build relationships in order to get to know them.

The German word 'Beziehungsarbeit' means the work and effort involved in developing and sustaining a relationship. This does not have a direct translation in English, but it is

a powerful concept because it helps educators understand that while relationships are crucial to learning, they are not likely to develop to their full potential without significant and mindful effort. This means that the relational element of the profession needs to be valued to the same extent as other elements, such as the delivery of content. There needs to be an allocation of resources such as time, personnel, equipment, space and money for the creation of an accommodating atmosphere.

What is a relationship?

Having established that relationships are crucial for inclusive education, we now must ask what is actually meant by 'relationship'. The definition of 'relationship' in an educational context is a very complex task. There are very different related fields such as Psychology, Sociology, Philosophy, Education, Linguistics, Neuroscience, Political Sciences, activism and empirical everyday experiences of educators, teachers and students that shed light on different aspects of relationships. The challenge lies within combining very different systems of knowledge production and translating into a more holistic understanding of relationships.

There are many variables influencing "relationships" such as time, the number of parties involved, the social contexts, belief systems or experiences in early childhood and later, to name just a few. A relationship between two individuals is never isolated from the social environment (Nowak-Łojewska et al., 2019). It is influenced by the relationship one has to oneself, the primary caregivers, the environment and different social groups. It is influenced by belief systems of the group(s) an individual belongs to. It is also influenced by the beliefs an individual holds over what the counterpart in a relationship thinks of them and their actions; as well as what they believe others outside of this specific relationship think of them and their actions (Ryle and Kerr, 2022).

Although it is impossible to reduce a relationship to the actions, thoughts and beliefs of two people, we can benefit from looking at relationships from this perspective to better understand some of the dynamics underlying the process. The metaphor of a dance can help us to reduce the phenomenon of relationships to an understandable size (Ryle and Kerr, 2022). In the following paragraphs you can see some of the dance moves that would characterise our relationship. While reading, keep in mind that our dance will always also be influenced by the music, rhythm, our clothes, bodies, shoes, the floor, lighting, environment and so on. It is important that we both can more or less predict the other's moves so that we don't step on each others' feet; rituals help us with these predictions. We should both know whether we are dancing Halay, Waltz, Rock'n'Roll, Dabke, Step Dance or in Musical,… but we will come back to that later.

Relationship as a dance between you and me

In the following paragraphs you will find some dance moves in the way they might be carried

out in your classroom. You can put yourself in the position of student or teacher while reading. Enjoy.

Our relationship is influenced by what I think you think of me and by what you think I think of you. It is also influenced by what we think about what others think of us individually and of our relationship.

Our relationship is established over time.

Based on the roles ascribed to us and our accumulated experiences with other people in these roles, I make assumptions to predict how you will interact with me. I might assume that you as my teacher are on my side or that you are looking for a reason to catch me out.

Our relationship is a dynamic process, our attitudes and rituals are subject to change.

My previous relationships have shaped how I expect you to be with me, and thus how I react to you. Early in life, we learn how to "be" and what is expected of us in our relationships with our primary caregivers. These relationships form templates for my future relationships and influence how I interact with and react to you.

The way I see myself will influence the ways in which I can relate to you.

The culture of an organisation such as our school will influence how I am in our relationship. So if I feel that I am part of our school and my voice and behaviours are recognised and that they count, I will be more confident in our relationship.

The history of an institution will influence how I am in our relationship. For example, the fact that Roma children were deported directly out of classrooms in Nazi-Germany, has an effect on how families of survivors can be in relationships with schools and teachers.

I might try to form a relationship with you that mirrors the social templates ascribed to our roles and the expectations that come along with them. Relationships are structured by norms, conventions and (role) expectations that in turn are structured by narratives or societies' stories (Harari, 2018). As persons we never play just one role, our identities are complex, fluid and dynamic, and they entail a variety of different reference points, points for identification and might more often than not include aspects of contradictory beliefs and values.

Having experienced humiliation and degradation, I might react with fear, hurt, shame, anger, silence or violence if your behaviour reminds me of my past experience. I will see your behaviour and communication, not your intention. If you seem to repeat or reaffirm a stereotype other people hold against me or members of groups I identify with, I will protect myself and my group. If I trust you, because I have seen you deconstructing rather than reinforcing stereotypes, we might be able to criticise aspects of groups you and I identify with together.

My sense of self is as important to me as my sense of community and belonging. If you offer possibilities for identification and provide an atmosphere where I can develop a sense of belonging, I will be stronger and more relaxed.

To return to the metaphor of the dance, the movements in our relational dance can also

be understood in more general terms of symmetry and asymmetry as we can see in the following paragraphs.

Symmetrical and asymmetrical relationships

Drawing on communication theory (Watzlawick, 2000) we can distinguish between symmetrical and asymmetrical communication. We might as well distinguish relationships for analytical purposes in these terms of symmetry and asymmetry. A symmetrical relationship is characterised by the even distribution of the power to continue or discontinue the relationship. An asymmetrical relationship is defined by the unequal distribution of power. One party has more resources, more economic, cultural, social or identity capital available than the other. In other words: while, for economic or structural reasons, one party depends on the continuity of a relationship, the other party does not, or at least not to the same extent.

The role of power in relationships

The fact that we cannot think of a relationship outside of (social) roles and how these roles are ascribed to positions of power or the loss thereof leads us to reflect further on how power structures outside the classroom filter in. Therefore, it is important to notice that while we distinguished between symmetrical and asymmetrical relationships for analytical purposes, an asymmetry is seldom or never complete. Intersectionality studies (Crenshaw 1989) have shown that some aspects of one's identity might be associated with positions of power, while others are historically and presently marginalised. We need to realise that resources are unevenly distributed.

We have been talking about power in a rather simplifying way that helps us understand relationships. For the purpose of this chapter, we conceptualise power as the degree to which you can influence yourself and your environment. This in turn depends to a high degree on your different forms of capital (Bourdieu 1997). Relationships are structured by conventions and expectations that in turn are structured by a society's narratives on power. Capitalism, Colonialism, Patriarchy, Cis-Heteronormativity, Genderbinary, Ableism, Social-Darwinism, Nationalism are some of the narratives or stories that structure our belief systems and our access to resources.

Earlier on, we looked at symmetrical and asymmetrical relationships in terms of the power to continue or discontinue the relationship. Now we see that this is not the only power that structures our interactions.

Example Case 2 – Being Angela Merkel

This is one of my first experiences as a teacher, where the tension of social power relationships is almost tangible: After the terror attacks on the French newspaper "Charlie Hebdo", solidarity was wide all over Europe and also in Germany, as the famous slogan "Je suis Charlie" shows. So, I decided to have a special class with my students on this sensible topic. I thought about a decent way to address it, asking mostly questions: What do you know about what happened? How do you feel about it? How can we as a class react to it?

As most media and the Senate of Berlin were in mourning and shock and even initiated a minute of silence I expected to have a quite similar discussion in the classroom. To my surprise, in the class I was working with, most students had completely different emotions about it: A majority of my students identified as Muslim. They were angry, angry about the media representation and about the top-down decision of German politics to give this attack so much attention – while another terror attack in Lebanon only some days later didn't get any media coverage. That led to a discussion where I suddenly started to be seen mostly as a representative of the state and thereby became the target of my student's anger. Why do we talk about this and not about other terror attacks? Why do you ask us to hold a minute of silence?

That made me feel very uncomfortable and made me think. What could I – as the responsible person for this lesson – have done better? Which underlying needs were not sufficiently addressed? We had long discussions amongst colleagues – with the result that we now give more space and talking time to the students and the political events they are concerned about. We now define the classroom as a shared space where power structures become more visible, not only in times of crises.

Simon Klippert, Combined Primary and Secondary School on the Rütli Campus, Berlin, Germany

What is special about a relationship in a pedagogical context?

Similar to the relationship between a primary caregiver and a child, the relationship between teacher and student is always asymmetrical. This is mostly due to the social roles, age, developmental factors and the functions of school that include the socialisation and qualification of students as well as the allocation to social positions and job opportunities – the process of distribution of social positions and job opportunities (Fend 1980). However, there are some democratic schools that try to establish fundamentally different

distributions of roles and power. An example of this is the Sudbury Valley schools, where the learners have a say, for example, in the employment of the pedagogical staff, even though the realities on the ground may be more traditional than it seems (Filion Wilson, 2015).

The student-teacher relationship is characterised by the roles and the normative expectations attached to the roles of student and teacher. While these are changing over time and also differ in cultural contexts, we can identify some commonalities. Also individual interpretations of how a teacher should be, behave like and think might differ greatly across school forms, regions, legal frames and time, there is a common factor. In public and private education, a teacher is an adult who gets paid for what they are doing. Looking at teaching under the lens of paid labour offers the opportunity for the public, who ultimately pays teachers, to expect professionalisation and in turn it allows teachers and educators to limit the influence of these expectations to the sphere of work. Other than the relationship with primary caregivers, the educational relationship aims at its own abolition. So, the teacher's job includes supporting the student to become more and more independent and in the end not need them anymore.

To define a good pedagogical relationship, one lens is not enough. However, in a capitalist society, where a great deal of recognition is distributed monetarily, this cannot be ignored. In other words, where money and the flow of capital structure relationships, we need to look at their influence.

What are the consequences of conceptualising the student-teacher relationship as structured by power?

Recognising this is the first step to a better understanding of relationships and a possibility to deepen them. If we acknowledge that our relationships are not only influenced by good-will, intentions and personal (dis-)abilities, but rather a result of complex belief systems and narratives, we can start analysing our own position and positionality. Many activists and academics (Bourdieu 1997, Kilomba et al. 2005, Kilomba 2008, Essed 1990, Gomolla & Radtke 2000 / Ha 2007 / Palzkill, Pohl & Scheffel 2020, Mecheril 1997 u.a.) have analysed how these systems work in privileging some people while keeping others systematically away from power, or even the most basic resources (e.g., clean water, shelter). Drawing on these findings we can become aware of our own positionings within the social web. We can limit the influence dehumanising narratives and structures have on our relationships. We can get to know and become aware of our own and also our students' positionalities and traumas that might be associated with these. We can then in turn understand where a relationship is asymmetrical due to one narrative (e.g., racism, gender binary) that positions one person at the receiving end of discrimination and the other at the receiving end of privileges (e.g., one cis-gendered and one trans* person). Teachers and educators are professionals with a public responsibility. They also often have structural advantages as shown above. The structural advantage in a partially asymmetrical relationship should be used to increase the well-being of all. 'With great power comes great responsibility' or rather

with great privileges in a professional educational environment comes great responsibility. In the following paragraphs we will show how this might look like and summarise the practical applications with a brief overview on what to do with this power.

A relational classroom as part of a democratic school culture

The work of Biesta (2012; 2013; Biesta and Säfström, 2023) highlights the potential for education to become a location for democratic negotiation of a plurality of identities (Keupp, 2008). Within the classroom setting, a relationship that is based solely on the needs, wishes, power or dominance of one person (either teacher or student) in neglect of those of the other is unlikely to work positively; rather, educational environments offering both structure and support are most successful (O'Toole and Hayes, 2020). Traditional teaching approaches based on authoritarian ideas only focused on the teachers' and the schools' needs l to the neglect of those of the children and we are increasingly coming to recognise that this at best limits learning (Gregory et al., 2010) and at worst can create significant trauma and 'symbolic violence' for many people, particularly those who for whatever reason (ableism, racism, etc) struggle to fit the mold prescribed by the teacher or school (Bourdieu, 1990). Furthermore, children's learning is equally limited by chaotic settings where rules are unclear or non-existent, and no expectations are identified (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006).

Ideally an educational relationship should be a democratic space where multiple identities, needs and strengths are negotiated (Biesta, 2012; 2013). In practice this can include sharing responsibilities for the shared spaces like cleaning together (Okihara 2006). Individual needs within the classroom will not always be in agreement with each other, and a good educational relationship does not mean that everyone is always happy. Sometimes it will mean negotiating conflict and the teacher will of course sometimes need to prod a student out of their comfort zone to promote the next stage of learning (Hayes et al., 2023) or reprimand students if their behaviour limits the development of themselves or others. In a truly democratic approach to education, conflict is negotiated not avoided (O'Toole, Dowling and McElheron, 2023). According to Biesta (2012; 2013), common action in education is not reliant on total agreement, total consensus, or total sameness since that would destroy the very plurality that is necessary for democracy. Relational inclusive education therefore must focus on the shared good of all in the classroom and not just the pursuit of individual agendas. However, a relational approach is also located within the potentially paradoxical position that individual needs do still matter, and meeting children's needs to facilitate inclusion is not only important but an ethical imperative.

Practical Application

You might be asking yourself "what now?" I understand what a relationship is, I understand

that relationships are crucial for inclusive education, I understand that I've got the power, now what should I do with it? In the following paragraphs you can find ideas on how the theory on relationships can be applied to a relational approach in the classroom in order to ensure inclusion.

Back to the dance:

Very often I am with you as you are with me, so the notion of a dance is a useful one because it helps us see that the steps I take impact on how you move in return. We hope that by now you have realised that this cannot be understood in an action-reaction pattern. You might think of societies' narratives as the music to our dance that does not determine our movements but seduces us to move with the rhythm and makes it harder to move smoothly in a different rhythm. The shoes, the wheelchair, the floor can be thought of as the economical frame-work. Ask yourself, do we both have equal means to engage in this dance? What can we do to get there?

Here our co-author Simon, a practising teacher in Germany, shares some experience, linking the theoretical background to his daily routine as a teacher:

See yourself & your role as a teacher

As a professional the starting point of professional acting always is oneself. Start thinking of how you've been raised and what you stand for. Also, consider the power structures (see above) that influence your role as a teacher in school: You have the power to support individuals if you use your power wisely. Or you have the power to deeply destroy somebody's self-esteem.

So, talking about myself – I am a white middle-class male – I was deeply shocked at first by just how different I was from most of my students and how much struggle this caused. To be clear: Not mainly to me, but to my students: I was someone fitting in the design – school settings are designed as white and middle class. But, for sure, I also have to admit, as a teacher, I am the one who has to work with the challenges my students might have.

Even if as a single person, impact is always limited, as a teacher you have an opportunity in your hands: the opportunity to make the lives of your students harder or to empower them. If you do not consider yourself as someone with power in the relationship – even if you do not want it – you will automatically reproduce injustice. So, define your role as a teacher and define establishing relationships with your students as part of your role as a teacher to use your power wisely.

Be humble & listen

If you want to listen to your students, you need to give space to their stories. These stories can be part of your German or Science class, or they can take room in informal situations such as breaks. They can be spread in the whole group or trustfully shared in a direct conversation between teacher and student.

As teachers, being the ones in a powerful position, we are used to people listening to what we say. If you want to create a constructive relationship, it is necessary to listen to your students, aiming at a better understanding of their living situations. Listen especially to their social environment – their families and friends – and recognise their daily challenges. If you know more about your students' lives, you will have many more opportunities to link your lesson to them. And you will have the chance to create a deeper understanding of what they need, both as a learner and a personality.

This, for sure, should impact not only the individual level, but also requires systemic change: Create new school subjects meeting your students' needs, establish supportive structures (e. g. anti-racist) in your schools.

Example Case – Talking about my son

On one of the first days I came back after my paternity leave, one of my colleagues asked if I had already heard one of my students talking about my new born son. My colleague told me the student was using a strong and hurtful swear word to refer to my son. That hurt me and I started doubting the quality of the relationship I had built with my students. So how to react? First, I took time to calm my nerves and made a plan to use the discussion about the word as a class subject. Later, as I entered the classroom, the students were not anticipating that I was about to write the swear word on the whiteboard in big letters. It felt somehow offensive, but I just let the students comment on what this word caused in them. We talked about their feelings and the origin of the word and of the impact it has been having. I did not mention that I knew that one of my students used the word for my son, but he knew that I knew. At the end of our common reflection, I told my class that I heard students at school calling my new born son in this way: many of the students felt sorry for me and voiced their aversion to this behaviour.

That same night, I got a message from the student: They deeply regretted their words and apologised for their behaviour. The next day we had a really good talk about it: The abstract use of an insulting word had become meaningful through our relationship. And this relationship made it possible for them to change the future use of this problematic term.

Simon Klippert, Combined Primary and Secondary School on the Rütli Campus, Berlin, Germany

Teacher as secure base: supporting positive behaviour in a relational

classroom

In order to avoid incoherence and chaos, classrooms must have a grounding point, and we argue that this should be rooted in a student-teacher relationship that offers some sense of stability in an otherwise seemingly very unstable world. Attachment theory (Bowlby, 1973) identifies the adult as the "secure base from which to explore the world", and in the educational setting this positions the teacher as providing the foundational relationship that helps 'contain' children's anxieties (Harlow, 2021; Riley, 2011), providing them with 'freedom to learn' (Rogers, 1969). As the adult and the professional in the relationship, this leaves the teacher with responsibilities that come with inherent tensions and contradictions; acknowledging the students' individuality and at the same time not being dissolved by different students' individualities; maintaining and developing one's own individuality but ensuring to uphold and stand up for others' individualities, pluralism and a sense of community; and respectful negotiation of the tensions that arise when any diverse group of people comes together (Treibel 2015).

Therefore, within educational approaches that centre on relationships, the teacher not only can but must establish clear boundaries for what is okay and not okay in the classroom. In relational classrooms, teachers hold children responsible for their own behaviour, and support them to make choices that foster a warm, empathetic relational environment (Gatongi, 2007). While rules can certainly be negotiated and agreed with the children, it is the teacher's responsibility to hold the line, call out behaviours that damage the relational environment of the classroom as a whole, and implement a clear, transparent system of consequences. In Simon's example above, addressing inappropriate behaviour in the context of the relationship allowed for the behaviour to be addressed without damaging the relationship – in fact the relationship may have even been strengthened by this experience. Ideas for holding the line in challenging situations can also be found in the concept of confrontational pedagogy (e.g., Weidner). The negotiation of rules is of similar importance. Boyer (2016) recommends a group or class mission statement, renegotiated regularly. In this regard, it is important, however, to keep in mind the differences between consequences and punishment. Consequences are about preservation of the relationship through restorative practice and reparations; punishment is about re-establishing power and dominance. Within a relational frame, intervention strategies should have a triple focus: 1) on the person that is being harmed by a behaviour, 2) on the person showing disruptive behaviour, and 3) on the group and the classroom discourse influencing the group. Approaches that focus on communication and support the relational classroom can be found in systemic pedagogy (e. g. "Authority without violence" Omer et al. 2002 or Lemme et al. 2019).

Stability is of central importance in a relational approach, but it is worth repeating that this does not mean avoiding conflict. In the attachment-based concept of 'rupture and repair', 'rupture' to a relationship can be both overt (i.e., direct hostility, sarcasm) and covert

(i.e., disengaged silences, eye rolling, physical withdrawal) (Maramosh, 2015). While rupture is likely to occur in settings where spaces and norms are negotiated (Treibel 2015), it does not have to be feared. Combined with 'repair' as an integral part, the concept of rupture and repair offers an orientation for the negotiation of needs and wishes in the classroom. Repair can happen in many different ways (Maramosh, 2015), and restorative practice is one of the practical tools to integrate this in an educational context. Concrete ideas can be found on the Website of the Department of Education Minnesota, e. g., the "Restorative Practices Trainer's Guide Training Activities" and the "Practices of a Restorative School" (ideas for German speakers can be found in Grabe 2014). The key point in a relational approach is that children need to know that even if a teacher needs to impose consequences for behaviour, this does not mean the end of the relationship, it can be repaired. Considering the power dynamics in the student-teacher relationship and the asymmetry, the responsibility for initiating the process of repair lies with the teacher.

Example Case – "By far the best teacher!"

One afternoon, a teacher sees a fight between two students in a school corridor, one threatening the other verbally and physically. The teacher tries to stop them with words, but doesn't seem to have an impact. He decides to intervene by shouting harshly at the aggressor to stop him, and this works. After the teacher had banned the aggressor from the school by sending him home for the day, he tries to help the student who got hurt. The next day, the teacher is out walking in the neighbourhood with a friend, when all of a sudden, he meets the aggressor in the street, also walking around with one of his friends. The student waves and shouts friendly from a distance: Hey teacher, how are you? Then proudly and unironically says, turning to his friend: "He really is by far the best teacher!"

Simon Klippert, Combined Primary and Secondary School on the Rütli Campus, Berlin, Germany

---

The concept of rupture and repair is also echoed in the person-centred concept of "unconditional positive regard" (Rogers, 1995). Regard for the person is non-negotiable. Therefore, awareness for condemning acts and never a person is central to the relationship. A teacher with a relation-centred approach should never threaten the loss of the relationship as this is recognised as an existential crisis for the child. Again, acceptance and unconditional regard for the child in an educational setting does not mean that all

behaviours are to be accepted – it is possible to identify behaviour as inappropriate or damaging while still retaining respect and regard for the child as a fellow human being with needs and feelings, strengths and challenges, just like adults (Gatongi, 2007; O'Toole and Hayes, 2020). Boyer (2016) reiterates this point: "We accept all students unconditionally, but not all behaviour is safe, kind, forgiving, or loving. The [teacher] must consider the mental health and physical safety of all students and set appropriate limits" (p. 344).

In the context of a book on inclusion, it is important to note that children with experiences of trauma and high-risk situations are particularly dependent on continuous and grounding relationships with their professional educators and other adults (Harlow, 2021). We stand in need of a critical debate on manipulative, exclusionary and labelling educational methods that appear to provide short-term success but attribute the reason for classroom disruptions to children and adolescents alone, while neglecting the role of adults and the broader social power structures in it. For example, O'Toole (2019) notes that current approaches to 'wellbeing' can lead to 'toxic positivity' when students are continually told to be happy, or when we demand resilience in the face of genuine challenges, rather than supporting students with the resources needed. Feeling anxious, upset, disengaged or even aggressive may be a meaningful or even life preserving response to the child's life circumstances and should not be pathologised but rather met with compassion within a boundaried and stable relationship.

Relational systems

Throughout this chapter we have touched on the idea that relationships in a school setting will be impacted by other relationships the participants have within and outside the school setting, but it is worth explicitly exploring this idea. There is a chain of activity that individuals drag with them across settings (Slesnick et al., 2007), and children in the modern world have an increasingly complex range of settings full of fluidities and disruptions to negotiate (Jackson and Barnett 2019; Bauman 2000). Different settings may operate under different religious, moral, ethical, and social norms and expectations so that a multitude of narratives is continually negotiated by learners. These are negotiations regarding who they are and who they are becoming within potentially contrasting roles, relationships, expectations and experiences (O'Toole et al. 2019; Keupp et al. 2008). Teachers are never only teachers, they are sisters, friends, football players, queers, are being (dis-)abled, migrantised, awarded privileges and discriminated against. In the same way as students are never only students, people's identities are complex processes in continuous (re-)construction. Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) maintain that learning and development is enhanced when there are linkages across the various settings in which children live their lives so that they can recognise and predict the behaviours of others, and their own strengths, skills, identities and understandings are transferable. In contrast, they proceed with caution, if movement between such settings (e. g. home and school) involves an

intolerable level of disjuncture; then their learning and development can be disrupted. For example, when there are differences between home culture and expected school culture in terms of beliefs and practices, such as the use of body language, clothing, greeting rituals, kisses, hugs, or waving hands or the use of derogatory language, there is a potential for misunderstanding. A child might be seen as misbehaving in one context, when her behaviour would be acceptable in a different context. Since culture is in many ways invisible when we are immersed within it, educators' attempts to support children to behave positively are often guided by biases and assumptions of which the educator is unconscious (O'Toole and Hayes, 2020).

Therefore, it is crucial to understand the student-teacher relationship within the context of systems of relationships. To clarify, the direct student-teacher relationship is highly influenced by all the other relationships in the lives of both the teacher and the child, particularly the relationships that can be observed, that is the other relationships occurring within the school. According to Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006), one of the most crucial relationships from the child's perspective in this regard is that between the parent/guardian and the teacher as this provides a linkage and point of reference across the transitional boundary between home and school. The psychological concept of social referencing shows that children take their cues from adults on how they should feel and behave in uncertain situations (Berk, 2018). If parents and teachers seem to get on well and have mutual respect, this supports children to transition from home to school and feel safe.

In terms of inclusion, links and relationships between home and school are equally important for linguistic and cultural identity. Support structures for families are sometimes based on 'socialisation' (Hornby and Lafaele, 2011; O'Toole et al., 2019) whereby schools attempt to shape parental attitudes and practices so that they facilitate and meet the needs of the educational setting or of the broader society. This can create a jarring sense of disjuncture for children. As Derrington (2007) points out, the most successful inclusive schools do not force children to choose between multiple identities (e. g. the culture or language of the home and the dominant culture) but rather allow the child to be both or more. Relationships between children and teachers are rooted in the relationships both have with family and community. Sometimes values a school tries to convey might be opposed to the values a child is asked to adopt at home or in a particular community. We suggest to extend the distinction between the act and the person drawn before to a distinction between the values of a person and the person, when it comes to children in the formative years. Their values are still in development. As teacher: Try to say 'that is not okay' rather than 'you are not okay'. And even more importantly, try to amplify students' options for identification rather than limiting them, by creating positive frames for identification and providing possibilities for stable relationships with and amongst students (Render 2014); providing relationships in which conflict and disagreements don't threaten the continuation of the relationship (Treibel 2015). Behavioural norms have to be a negotiation between students and teachers and change with time and age. Upholding core

values such as equality and dignity is the teachers responsibility throughout and beyond these negotiations.

How can critical self-reflection inform relational practice?

In order to ensure that the relational culture within the classroom is not solely dominated by the personal and cultural background of the teacher, it is crucial for teachers to engage in regular critical self-reflection, studying their own positionality and what 'steps' they bring to the 'dance'. In doing so, we may realise that while we cannot control the steps danced by our students, we do have influence on our own steps and so in turn, within a dynamic relationship, we influence others. In engaging in critical self-reflection as a relational practice, it is important to realise that we are never outside of society, nor of power. Therefore, critical self-reflection is necessary for egalitarian inclusive education (Messerschmidt 2011). For some teachers, this could mean the need to relearn everything about the centrality of their own identity, and active, mindful work to ensure they are listening to the children not only in the classroom but also incorporating their background and their communities. Consideration of power differentials will need to be revisited and relearned repeatedly. As a teacher you must be open to listening to challenges the children are facing, and you must also be humble and recognise when things are strange to you and you are strange to them. Thinking about privilege is a starting point to thinking about establishing relationships that are supportive of learning, and it is important to mindfully move beyond simple reproduction of our own school experiences. Identities are more fluid than they once were – many traditional guiding structures of society (patriarchy, colonialism, nationalism) are increasingly being deconstructed, and a teacher is no longer supposed to tell a child what to be – 'be like this or you'll get in trouble'. Rather there are more negotiated spaces than ever before, and critical self-reflection allows the teacher to make explicit and break down the assumptions they bring to the relationship, as in example case 2. We also need to avoid thinking in terms of overgeneralised groups and genuinely get to know the individual child – a real relationship does not mean making a homogenous group out of your students but rather seeking the story of the individual person, their aspirations, thoughts, identities.

Another important stance to facilitate critical self-reflection is the understanding that I as the teacher may have needs of my own that I am seeking (attention, recognition, friendship…), perhaps inappropriately, to meet through the relationship with my students. Critically self-reflective teachers must ask themselves: Am I seeking a student's approval or proximity to satisfy my ego or strengthen my student's independence? Am I introducing myself as an irreplaceable part of the student's life and if so, reflecting on asymmetries, do I have the resources and am I willing to maintain the relationship, even when the student does not meet my expectations and confronts me with extreme violence or emotional needs? Do I or does my behaviour suggest a relationship (e. g. the relationship to a friend or

a primary caregiver) that I am not able or willing to follow up on? Will it be easier for me to distance myself from the relationship, because in the end I go on holidays with my friends or family and the child is left with theirs? The power of relationships means that we must be mindful of the boundaries of these relationships. It is never the responsibility of the child to manage the emotions of the adult teacher, and equally, there may be areas of the child's life in which the teacher does not have a central role to play.

The Principles of the Reckahn Reflections might be of use to support critical self-reflection. "1. Children and youth are addressed and treated with appreciation 2. Teachers and educational professionals listen to children and adolescents. […] 5. Teachers and educational specialists are aware of the interests, joys, needs, difficulties, pains and sorrows of children and adolescents. They consider their concerns and the subjective meaning of their behaviour."

What to do with the power?

Here are some ideas, feel free to add, change, comment and compliment!

- Become aware of our strengths and power and (re-)appropriate it for social change.
- Be an amplifier: make others' voices heard

- Be a filter on the way to an equal society without discrimination: help discriminatory language become a background noise rather than the dominant tone (classroom as discourse)
- Distinguish between intervention and prevention. The first aiming at protecting somebody or something during acts of violence, the second aiming at educating kids and reducing violent, harmful, discriminatory behaviour altogether.
- Don't use the discontinuity of a relationship as a threat
- Condone the act not the person
- Be a good example, use restorative practice as a form to restore relationships and rebuild trust. In comparison to forgiveness, restorative practice offers a way to keep the self-respect instead of instilling shame or guilt in a party
- Apologise, if you have harmed somebody
- Don't apologise for upholding pluralism and mutual respect as values
- Establish and maintain the relationship. It's your duty as teacher
- Keep in mind to be humble, you don't know everything
- Create appropriate and accessible communication channels with your students and their families
- Always see the individual person and treat different people differently
- Take into account the power structures in your wording and decision-making
- Be clear and transparent and have high expectations
- Care for your students, their stories and their development

• Believe in your students and show them that you want them to reach their goals

What are the challenges and barriers to putting relationships at the centre of educational practice?

While relationships are crucial to good inclusive practice in education, they are not always easy to put first, in part because of the inappropriate narrative, addressed above, that relationships exist somehow outside of the 'real' work of the teacher which is sometimes framed as content-delivery. Initial Teacher Education (ITE) at university (in Germany, Ireland, Italy and many other countries) often focuses on content: theories on literature or on science, theories on didactics or development. There is often one crucial missing point: student teachers in many jurisdictions are often not trained in how to interact on a personal level with a group of students. They do not learn how to create relationships as a basis for successful learning at schools. So, many teachers indicate that when they first start working at schools, they have to learn this while already on the job. And – for some teachers who may have been born and raised so differently from most of their students this can feel like an exhausting job. Because relationships are always individual, teacher education must provide general skills, and placement activities should focus on relationship building as well as specific instructional activities. Otherwise, early-career teachers can emerge from ITE with little sense of relationship-building as central to their role, and / or with inadequate skills to do the actual work of relationship-building.

These issues can become exacerbated as teachers progress through their careers. In many jurisdictions, teachers are under increasing pressure to meet academic outcomes and sometimes to disregard more holistic understandings of children's learning. Teacher working time often does not include time to invest in relationships. For example, in spite of the evidence in favour of home visits to support learning (Soule and Curtis, 2021; Soule, 2020) in many cases if a teacher visits a student's family at home to better understand their living situation and to provide appropriated learning settings at school, the teacher does this in their free time. We argue that relational work should be considered as part of the job description of teachers. Establishing a constructive relationship demands effort and time, and teachers must factor in the time to do the "Beziehungsarbeit" (work of building relationships) – to foster the students' reflections and to tutor them in the process as well as time to reflect on themselves as teachers and a professional self-concept, privileges and power-sharing. Of course, this has implications for policy, too, because teachers cannot simply manufacture more time, and workplace roles do not happen in a vacuum outside of considerations of pay and working conditions. For teachers, school leaders and policy-makers, it is vital to centralise relationships in education, and to see building relationships as a key role within the profession of being a teacher. The European Unions for Education

and Teachers play a vital role in shaping policies towards humane working conditions for teachers and educators that in turn make relational approaches an integral part of education.

Lastly, one of the biggest barriers to a relational approach in the classroom is the emotional labour involved for teachers and the potential for burnout. A teacher who invests in relationships can run the risk of caring so much for students, often with little structural support, that their self-care is neglected. This is unlikely to have positive outcomes for anyone involved and in order to be able to meet the needs of students, the needs of teachers must also be met: "Teachers are best able to serve students when they themselves have been adequately served" (Sergiovanni, 2005, p. 101). Therefore, we must emphasise that drawing personal boundaries is not in opposition to a relational approach; in fact, setting boundaries is a necessary pre-condition to being able to appropriately engage in relationships with students. There is no such thing as the 'perfect' teacher, and we draw on Winnicott's (1953) idea of the 'good enough' parent to advocate for the 'good enough teacher'; teachers who reflect on the impact of power structures within the classroom, who recognise the importance of relationships and do the work to build them, who understand their own needs and boundaries, who practice self-care and who perhaps do not always get things right, but are willing to work through 'rupture and repair'.

Conclusion: Making use of key concepts of relational approaches for developing inclusive educational practices

1. Often the social aspect is seen as an add-on in classroom-situation, while many studies show the opposite is true: the state of well-being is the basis for successful learning.

2. Relationships create a link between different people to create an atmosphere of well-being over many years. If I create opportunities to get to know each other that are grounded in the lifeworld of students, I create references that might be helpful to support them in their learning processes. When I know about the interests of a child, I can try to implement topics. That also applies to group dynamics. Just keep in mind not to appropriate their identities that also need protection. Learn something about their views, listen to them and invite local representatives of these (sub-)cultures to your classes.

3. Each relationship is part of a constellation of other relationships. The student-teacher relationship takes place in the context of the relationships between children and their family and community, teachers' relationships with the child's family and community, and teacher's relationships with their own family and community. Relationships are interactive, dynamic and multi-directional.

4. All students need to feel recognised as individuals, but the cultivation of good

pedagogical relations is especially important for students with unsecure living situations and looser relationships. They are particularly dependent on continuous and grounding relationships with their professional educators.

5. Creating relationships with your students does not only make you more knowledgable about their interests; knowing something about their lives means also knowing about their negative experiences, fears and trigger points. In crisis situations, you can rely on the relational bound to lift students up again to prevent conflicts.

6. Relationships are structured by power, and it is crucial for teachers to engage in critical self-reflection on their own role in the asymmetry of the student-teacher relationship.

7. Teachers establish the secure base from which students explore their learning. Behavioural norms in the classroom must be set by teachers, with clear boundaries and expectations, and consequences that address the behaviour but never threaten the removal of the relationship.

Local contexts

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=371#h5p-19

Closing questions to discuss or tasks

- Consider the approaches you currently use to leverage the power of relationships in your teaching. What can you actively do to more successfully build relationships with your students?
- Have you considered the impact of power on relationships in your classroom? Reflect on your own positionality and privilege / lack of privilege and think about what impact that might have on the relationships in your classroom.

Literature

Ainsworth, M. D. S., Blehar, M. C., Waters, E., & Wall, S. (1978). Patterns of Attachment: A Psychological Study of the Strange Situation. Erlbaum.

Bandura, A. (1994). Self-Efficacy. In V. S. Ramachaudran (Ed.), Encyclopedia of Human Behavior (Vol. 4, pp. 71–81). Academic Press.

Bauman, Z. (2000). Liquid Modernity. Polity Press.

Bauman, Z., & Vecchi, B. (2010). Identity: Conversations with Zygmunt Bauman. Polity Press.

Biesta, G. (2012). Giving Teaching Back to Education: Responding to the Disappearance of the Teacher. Phenomenology & Practice, 6(2), 35–49.

Biesta, G. (2013). The Beautiful Risk of Education. Routledge.

Biesta, G., & Säfström, C. A. (2023).The New Publicness of Education: Democratic Possibilities after the Critique of Neoliberalism. London: Routledge.

Bingham, C., & Sidorkin, A. (2004). No Education Without Relation. Peter Lang.

Bourdieu, P. (1990). The Logic of Practice. Stanford University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1997). Die verborgenen Mechanismen der Macht. In F. Baumgart (Ed.), Theorien der Sozialisation (pp. 49–57). Klinkhardt.

Bowlby, J. (1969). Attachment and Loss: Vol. 1. Attachment. Basic Books.

Bowlby, J. (1973). Separation: Anxiety and Anger. Basic Books.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1973). The Ecology of Human Development. Harvard University Press.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1988). Ecological Systems Theory. In R. Vasta (Ed.), Annals of Child Development (Vol. 6, pp. 187–249). JAI Press.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (2005). Making Human Beings Human: Bioecological Perspectives on Human Development. SAGE.

Bronfenbrenner, U., & Morris, P. A. (2006). The Bioecological Model of Human Development. In R. M. Lerner (Ed.), Handbook of Child Psychology (6th ed., Vol. 1). Wiley.

Brohl, K. (2007). Working with Traumatized Children: A Handbook for Healing. Child Welfare League of America.

Conkbayir, M. (2022). Early Childhood and Neuroscience: Theory, Research, and Implications for Practice. Bloomsbury.

Cornelius-White, J. (2007). Learner-Centered Teacher-Student Relationships Are Effective: A Meta-Analysis. Review of Educational Research, 77(1), 113–143.

Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine. The University of Chicago Legal Forum, 1989(1), 139–167.

Derrington, C. (2007). Different Horizons: An Ethnographic Study of Young Gypsy Travellers. Trentham Books.

Fend, H. (1980). Theorie der Schule. Urban und Schwarzenberg.

Filion Wilson, M. A. (2015). Radical Democratic Schooling on the Ground: Pedagogical Ideals and Realities in a Sudbury School. Ethnography and Education, 10(2), 121–136.

Gatongi, F. (2007). Person-Centered Therapy: A Culture-Sensitive Approach. Counselling Psychology Quarterly, 20(3), 205–217.

Gomolla, M., & Radtke, F. O. (2000). Mechanismen institutionalisierter Diskriminierung in der Schule. In I. Gogolin & B. Nauck (Eds.), Migration, gesellschaftliche Differenzierung und Bildung. Opladen.

Grabe, A., & Dosch, E. (2014). Wiedergutmachungskartei. Sich entschuldigen und bedanken – 85 Anregungen für Kinder. Verlag an der Ruhr.

Gregory, A., Skiba, R. J., & Noguera, P. A. (2010). The Achievement Gap and the Discipline Gap: Two Sides of the Same Coin? Educational Researcher, 39(1), 59–68.

Harari, Y. N. (2018). Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind. Harper Perennial.

Harlow, H. F. (2021). The Nature of Love: Classic and Contemporary Perspectives. APA Press.

Hattie, J. (2015). Visible Learning: A Synthesis of Over 800 Meta-Analyses Relating to Achievement. Routledge.

Hayes, N., O'Toole, L., & Halpenny, A. M. (2023).Introducing Bronfenbrenner: A guide for practitioners and students in early years education (2nd edition). London: Routledge.

Hornby, G., & Lafaele, R. (2011). Barriers to Parental Involvement in Education. Educational Review, 63(1), 37–52.

Jackson, L., & Barnett, J. (2019). Young People in an Age of Complexity. Journal of Youth Studies, 22(3), 287–303.

Keupp, H., & Abhe, T. (2008). Identitätskonstruktionen: Das Patchwork der Identitäten in der Spätmoderne. Rowohlt.

Kilomba, G. (2008). Plantation Memories: Episodes of Everyday Racism. Unrast Verlag.

Lemme, M. (2019). Neue Autorität in Haltung und Handlung: Ein Leitfaden für Pädagogik und Beratung. Carl-Auer.

Main, M., & Solomon, J. (1986). Discovery of an Insecure-Disorganized/Disoriented Attachment Pattern. In T. B. Brazelton & M. Yogman (Eds.), Affective Development in Infancy. Ablex.

Maramosh, A. (2015). Rupture and Repair in Relationships: A Psychoanalytic Perspective. Psychoanalytic Review, 102(4), 571–586.

Messerschmidt, A. (2011). Beziehungen in geteilten Welten. In J. Bilstein, J. Ecarius, & E. Keiner (Eds.), Kulturelle Differenzen und Globalisierung. VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

O'Connor, T. (2013). Understanding Attachment and Attachment Disorders: Theory, Evidence and Practice. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

O'Toole, L., Dowling, G. and McElheron, T. (2023) 'A New Publicness for Early Childhood Education and Care in Ireland' In: G. Biesta and C. A. Säfström (eds). The New Publicness of Education: Democratic Possibilities after the Critique of Neoliberalism. London: Routledge.

O'Toole, L., Hayes, N. and Halpenny, A. (2019) 'Animating systems: The ecological value of considering Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model of development' In: Barnett, R. and Jackson, N (eds). Ecologies for Learning and Practice: Emerging Ideas, Sightings and Possibilities. London: Routledge.

Prengel, A. (1993). Pädagogik der Vielfalt: Verschiedenheit und Gleichberechtigung in Interkultureller, Feministischer und Integrativer Pädagogik. Beltz.

Render, Lina (2014): Identity as a reflexive category and its importance in student-teacher interaction https://www.academia.edu/11237521/ Identity_as_a_Reflexive_Category_and_its_Importance_in_Teacher_Student_Interaction

Rogers, C. (1969). Freedom to Learn. Merrill.

Sidorkin, A. M. (2023). Pedagogy of Relation: Education after Reform. Routledge.

Soule, H., & Curtis, R. (2021). Home Visits and Their Impact on Student Learning. Springer.

Treibel, A. (2015). Integriert euch! Plädoyer für ein selbstbewusstes Einwanderungsland. Campus.

Watzlawick, P. (2000). Menschliche Kommunikation: Formen, Störungen, Paradoxien. Huber.

Winnicott, D. W. (1953). Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena. International Journal of Psycho-Analysis, 34, 89–97.

About the authors

Lina Render de Barros

Lina Render de Barros is a queer of color activist from Pernambuco and Münsterland. She completed her first state examination (teaching degree) and her master's degree in bilingual European education at the University of Education in Karlsruhe and her master's degree in sociology at the Goethe University Frankfurt. She researches, lives and works in Cologne, always with the aim of taking a stand against group focused enmity and contributing to a more peaceful coexistence.

Leah O'Toole

Dr Leah O'Toole is Associate Professor of Early Childhood Education in the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education in Maynooth University, Ireland. With an academic background in Psychology, her research interests include early childhood education, particularly accessing the voices of the youngest children from birth, relational pedagogy, bioecological theory and working with parents and communities. Inclusion across multiple dimensions is central to all elements of this work.

Simon Klippert

Simon Klippert is a Berlin-based teacher and teacher trainer. He has been working in various educational contexts: coordinating youth exchange

programs in France, teaching students at university in Colombia, giving classes for newcomer-students in Berlin. For the last 10 years, he has been working as a class teacher at a secondary school in Berlin-Neukölln, with a focus on language and political education, trying to empower less privileged students. Furthermore, he shares his experience as a teacher trainer in Berlin-Kreuzberg. Simon is a founding member of related (www.related-bildung.de), an initiative fighting injustices within the German school system.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND THE CHALLENGE OF MENTORING THROUGH DIALOGUE - REACHING OUT TO ONE ANOTHER

Ines Boban; Dror Simri; and Linjie Zhang

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=434#oembed-1

Example Case

"Once when Dror was working with teachers who were trying to adopt dialogic mentoring as part of the school's educational work plan, a 43-year-old teacher asked him: "On what exactly do you expect me to talk to a 13-year-old girl about? What do we have in common besides the lessons? We have nothing in common." Dror asked her: "Were you once 13 years old? Are you both part of a family? Are you also a daughter? Do you also have relationships with your parents and siblings? Do you both experience fears, hopes, dreams, failures, successes? Are you both human? Dror also added: "Would you have been glad at the age of 13, that someone would be interested in all of these beyond being busy with classes and exams? There was a short silence and then the teacher said, "I never felt seen when I was 13 and for many years after. It caused me much pain and it left deep scars."

Dror Simri, education counsellor and family and couples therapist, Israel

In this chapter you will find the answers to the following questions:

- What is Dialogic Mentoring?
- In which way is Dialogic Mentoring a humanistic existential challenge?
- Why is mentoring important for schools and especially a key-element for inclusive settings?
- How does Dialogic Mentoring work?
- What are the benefits of Dialogic Mentoring?

There are also many more questions, connected to Dialogic Mentoring, that will be uncovered during this chapter.

Introduction to Topic

"Be yourself. No matter what they say" (Sting). When focused on inclusive education Stings words sound so right and obvious, but often they are very hard to fulfil. Especially in parts of a lifetime spent in institutions with rigid policies like many of the educational systems we know. Policies that lead to the phenomenon that teachers are driven to pay more attention to teaching subjects and inflicting discipline than to acknowledging children as whole and unique human beings. A situation that stacks obstacles that makes it hard to realise the inclusive goal.

Children and teenagers are busy in their everyday life with countless existential questions. Questions related to identity, values, morality, meaning. Addressing these questions means acknowledging children as whole human beings. Who addresses these issues in schools today? Who supports the students while they are engaged in the process of building their identity, consolidating values, dealing with moral dilemmas, and defining personal goals? This is where mentoring comes in. It is impossible to think that students can make the most of learning and developmental processes when such essential questions remain unnoticed and unanswered.

The idea that we can teach and educate children without being interested in their unique world, without paying attention to their mental, emotional, and social situation, without paying attention to relations, sounds impossible. At the heart of this chapter is the assumption that paying attention to relations is a critical aspect in achieving educational aims especially when dealing with inclusive education. Making room for attention to

relations is the way to focus on our students as whole human beings. We are suggesting that via professional mentoring this absence can be restored.

This chapter deals with mentoring; a term used in many fields but without a clear definition. You might have come across mentors in the education system in many forms. Students who volunteer to be mentors to younger ones in order to support them to settle in and adjust to school. Something like riding a tandem instead of riding the difficult "singles" of the school world alone. Sometimes mentors will be staff members who help students plan careers that are appropriate to the school's standards and expected by the institution. However, none of these focus on the student as a subject. Would it be nice, as a student, to be in a professional relationship with a staff member who is dedicated to helping you find and define yourself no matter where your dreams, ideas or goals may go? This could be a game changing role for adults in schools that intend to be inclusive places.

We chose to define mentoring as a collaborative relationship that is reciprocal and is aimed at supporting personal development and growth. In the chapter we introduce a mentoring model that follows this definition and was developed in Israel in the Hadera Democratic School (H.D.S.) – called "dialogic mentoring." Apart from being democratic, the H.D.S. is also inclusive. It has, among its students and staff, those with special educational needs, new immigrants and religious students and teachers Jewish and Muslim. We are introducing Dialogic Mentoring because it is a well-established model and has proven itself. The model was adopted in full or in part in many schools in Israel.

Dialogic Mentoring is a call for change in the relations between teachers and students as a new pedagogical approach. It focuses on relations because of the understanding that relations are the base for any kind of mutual learning process and the base for applying efficient and beneficial support processes. In order to do so, Dialogic Mentoring acknowledges the negative effect on school life and school culture of existing power relations between children and teachers and challenges them. It sees children of all ages as whole human beings and tries to put down the cultural "age barrier" that divides children and grownups. We introduce Dialogic Mentoring as a humanistic existential challenge, a new educational support role and a unique way to put human rights into action.

Key aspects

What is behind Dialogic Mentoring?

Dialogic Mentoring is structured on three levels. It is essential to understand and acknowledge them as a starting point.

- **A:** Recognition of **children as unique whole human beings.** That means accepting them as **unique, independent, autonomous, sovereign** beings that have a rich mental world, have views and understandings about life, have values, commitments, goals, fears, hopes and many unresolved questions.

- **B: Dialog** as a means of building relations. Dialog in the sense of an interpersonal engagement that encompasses the whole dimensions of human experience. That is driven by curiosity, humbleness and empathy, that acknowledges and accepts the otherness of every person. This involves not seeing the otherness as an obstacle, but rather as an advantage. Doing our best to engage each other with the whole of our being.
- **C:** The importance of allowing every person to **exercise their freedom** so they can fulfil and enjoy their full human potential.

If we take into account, the normative experience of most school lives this **ABC** of Dialogic Mentoring may seem like a big challenge. Nevertheless, as we go on with the details of the model it's necessity and its benefits will be clear. Figure 1 below shows that D.M. is at the heart of inclusive education and is part of reaching out to one another.

Dialogic Mentoring – A humanistic existential challenge?

To describe this challenge, imagine these 'simple' actions and attitudes in contexts of schools – they make clear what Dialogic Mentoring is about (see also Fig. 2) (Simri， 2020):

- Dialogic Mentoring is about **the will to see.** To see the people around us. To have the courage to see the whole of their existence.
- Dialogic Mentoring is about **the will to hear**. Hearing the words and hearing what is behind them, around them, hearing what is not said, but is implicit.
- Dialogic Mentoring is about **agreeing to be a witness** to what our students feel, experience and do. Witnessing without judgement or criticism.
- Dialogic Mentoring is about wanting, a real **deep wanting, to connect** to each other. To put into action our natural tendency for affinity, even though we understand that each one of us is different, completely unique and that we will never be able to experience and fully understand their way of seeing, understanding and experiencing the world.
- Dialogic Mentoring is about **accepting the complexity** of things. Understanding and knowing that behind what we see and hear there is always something more waiting to be seen, to be found, to be heard. Something waiting to be understood, to be recognised.

Figure 1: What Dialogic Mentoring is about (own figure)

Seeing

Listening

EXIST →

Witnessing

Searching

Dialogic Mentoring
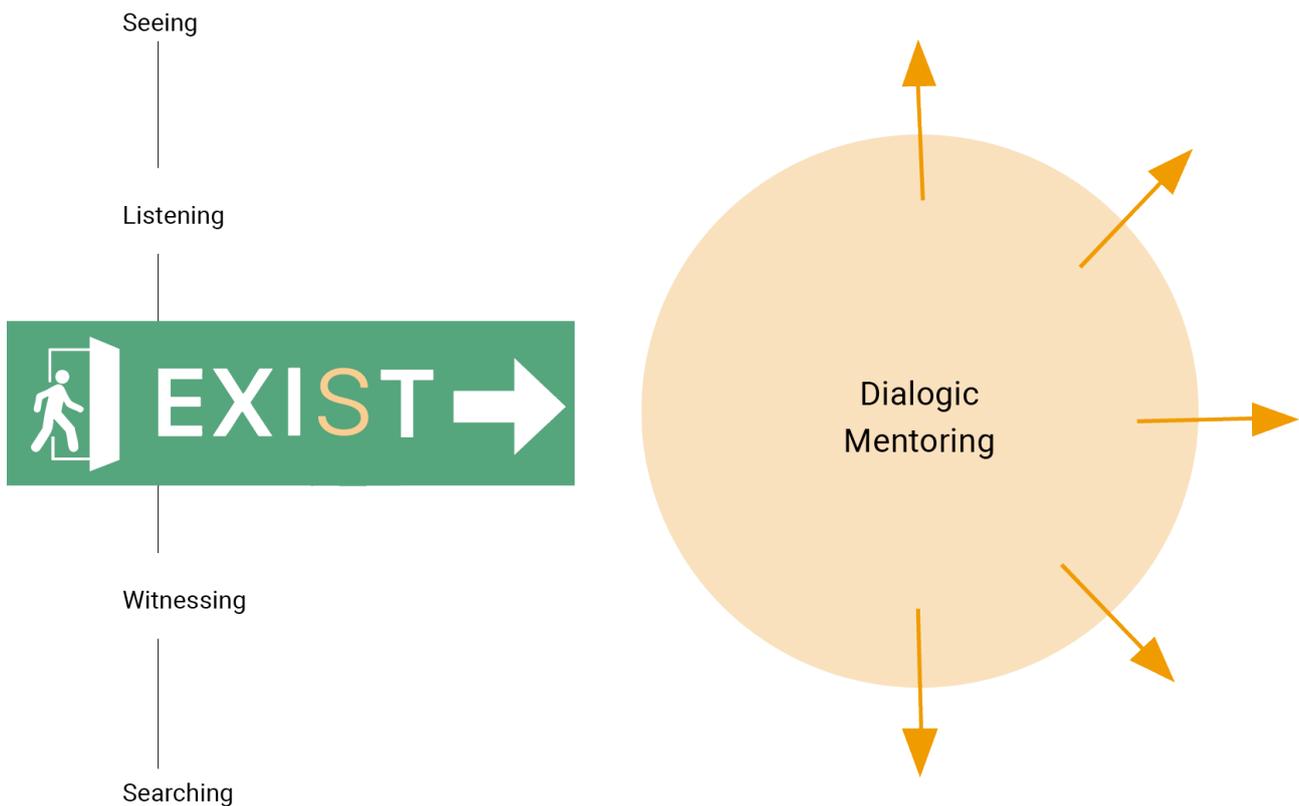
Dialogic Mentoring is the understanding that it is our duty as grownups, who made the choice to work with children, to stand up to these challenges and try to see and hear what hides inside the inner world of students. What is hiding there that is important to them, whatever their age may be? Understanding that it is important to the student to be acknowledged and appreciated not only as a student but as a whole human being. Understanding that each person has a gift to give the world, but it will only be given if we make the effort to find it, if we assure them, they are safe.

This is why our curriculum, at least part of it, even a small part of it, should be dedicated to making the effort to find out what is there that our students want us to see, want us to hear. We should remember that what is hidden in their inner world is not all about pain, confusion and sorrow; it is also about new ideas, creations, special and unique points of view. It holds information, wonders, and knowledge that are important to be recognised not only for the benefit of the student but also for the benefit of all.

When we concentrate on seeing and hearing each other as whole human beings, as subjects that hold information that are very important to be heard, what usually emerges are **acceptance, closeness, empathy, altruism and love**. This is the important piece, the magic of dialogic mentoring.

When this kind of relationship exists, normally creativity appears, the ability to learn new things, find new interests and a greater understanding. We feel seen and safe. We build confidence in the possibility to shape our reality. We find that we can clearly determine what is important for us, and we find it is easier to achieve. In this state of being we

most commonly feel moments of joy, connection and **a deep and meaningful feeling of existence.**

The main tool that enables us to achieve such relations is the dialog as it is presented in the philosophy of Martin Buber. In his view, dialog is understood as a space of existence formed by the relations between the "I" and the world around it. From this point of view the "I" does not exist as a separate entity. His existence is the outcome of the affiliation between him and what surrounds him. The way we perceive and relate to whatever is around us defines our state of being. It will determine what kind of "I" will be present at that moment. An "I" that encompasses our whole being or just a part of it.

If we relate to a person in front of us in a superficial way, the "I" that we shall experience at that moment will also be a partial and superficial one. On the other hand, if we relate to it as a whole human being, the "I" we will experience will be a whole one. For example, if a teacher is trying to teach a young student addition, the teacher will see her/him just to that extent – a young student to teach addition to. The teacher will perceive the student in a shallow way and be partially aware of her/his whole existence as noted above. In this case the teacher will also experience herself/himself in a very shallow way. She/he will experience her/his being partially – she/he reduces her/his being only to a teacher that wants to teach a student addition. However, if she/he perceives the student as a whole human being, she/he will pay attention to how she/he behaves and reacts. She/he will pay attention to her/his words, expressions, and body language. She/he will really care about what is going on inside her/him. What are her/his thoughts? Is she/he happy? Is she/he afraid? Is she/he open to learning or bothered about something? If she/he will remember that she/he is a unique miracle of nature – one of her/his kind, she/he will experience the student for the whole of her/his existence and so she/he will experience her/his own whole being. All of her/his mental, emotional, physical abilities will awaken and be present.

When this happens a very **special experience of existence** appears. An experience that brings forth what was described above. This is the experience we are looking for when we talk about Dialogic Mentoring. This state of being is not easy to achieve and is hard to maintain for a long time. In order to create it we have to make an effort. We need to be focused on remembering our aim and to be aware of our mental and emotional state during the interaction. When we succeed in creating and maintaining these moments, they will yield what was described above.

If in our school, all through the day, all the mentors and teachers aspire to create such moments the whole school becomes a **dialogic sphere.** It will become a space of existence that will allow deep listening, an experience of connection and an awakening of creativity, involvement, and responsibility.

Figure 2: What influences a mentee? (own figure)
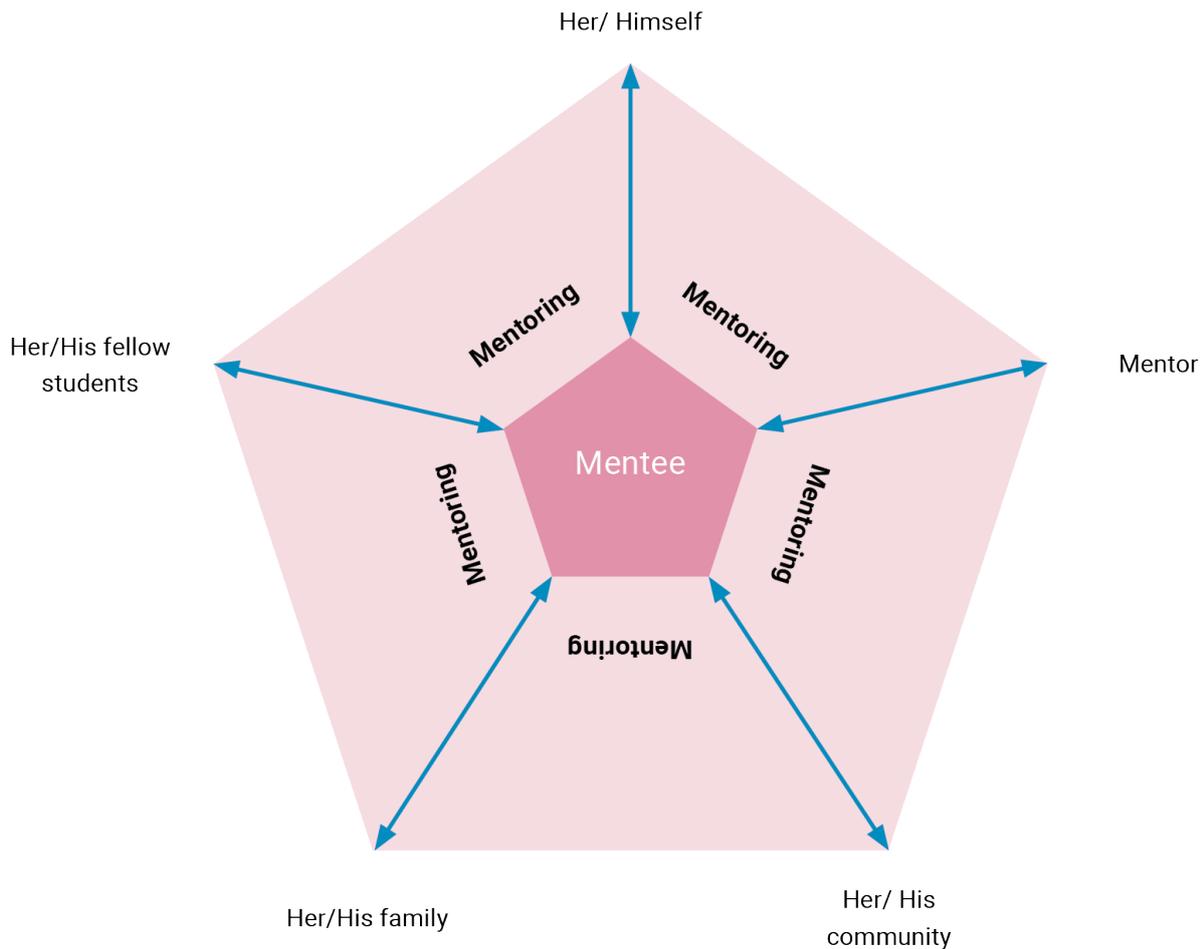
What does this new educational support role look like?

Dialogic Mentoring compiled parts of existing support roles and put them together to form a new educational support role that is based on the three principles **ABC** described above.

The mentor creates for the mentee and herself/himself an **intimate and safe space.** She/he is there to help in any situation. These components are found in parenthood and friendship. The mentor creates relations based on **equality and mutuality** like in a friendship. She/he has **experience and maturity** like their parents. She/he acts from an **empathic standpoint**, uses **mentalisation,** and frequently **reflects** like therapists would do. She/he supports **self-realisation** and **inner growth** processes, **goal setting** and finding a way to fulfil them – in a way therapists and coaches do.

However a Dialogic Mentor is not the parent of the mentee, or a friend. She/he is not a therapist or a coach. She/he does not hold the responsibility of parents and does not substitute them. She/he is not entangled emotionally with the mentee like very often family relations are. She/he is not in competition with the mentee like friends often are and she/he does not take part in the mentees adventures of growing up. She/he does not diagnose the mentee, or meet her/him in a strict setting detached from life, but is a witness helping the mentee reflect and act in everyday life. A Dialogic Mentor helps the mentee determine

their own goals and acquire tools to fulfil them – and she/he concentrates on the process and not the potential results as Figure 3 clusters:

Figure 3: Aspects of Dialogic Mentoring (own figure)
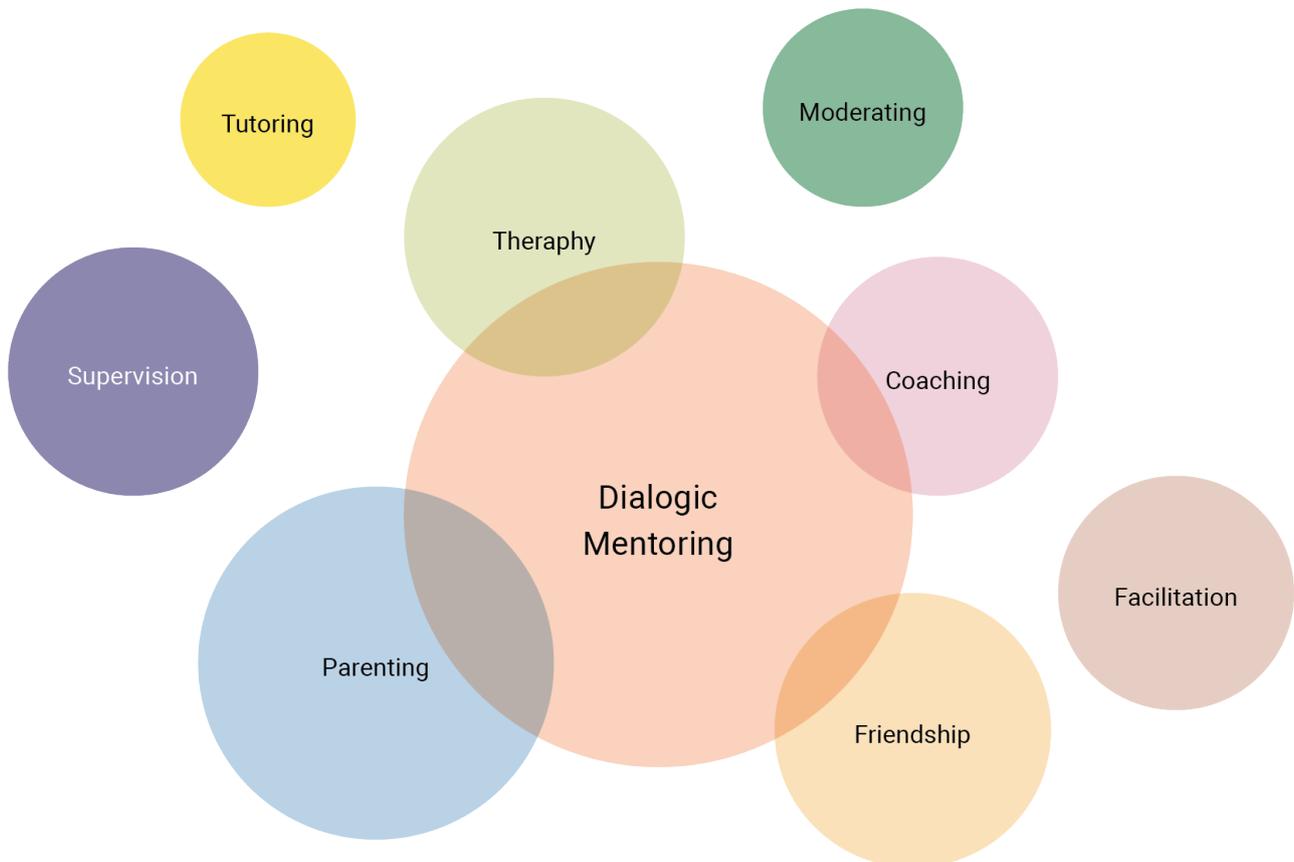
How is Dialogic Mentoring connected to Human Rights?

When the relations between all that attend school are open and equal (but not symmetric), when personal freedom is guarded, when everybody is acknowledged and can feel safe, dignity is being realised to its full extent and human rights are put into action.

Figure 4: Human Rights – a frame for Dialogic Mentoring (own figure)
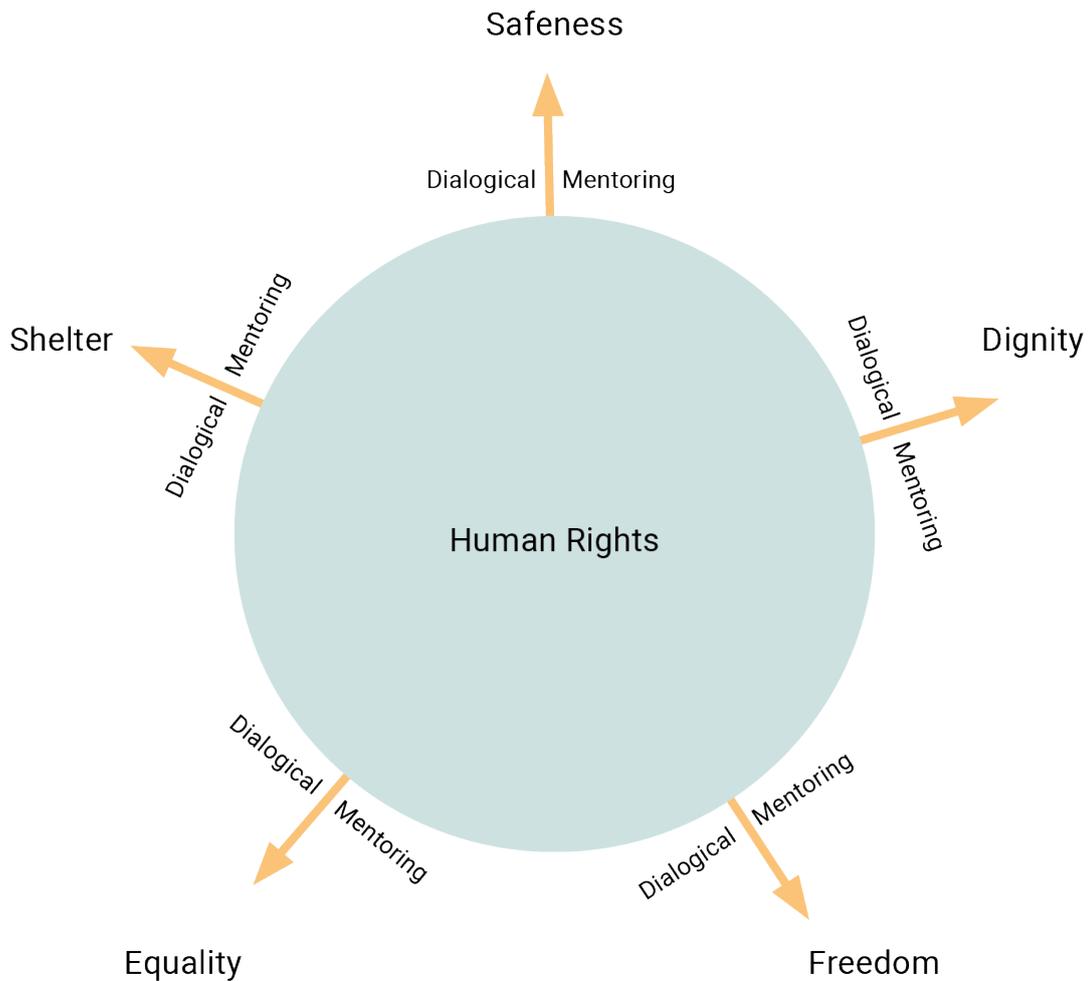
Human rights, constantly evolving, serve has been an enduring guiding principle. From time to time, this statement is specifically updated and made more concrete by various agreements and treaties, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990).The goals of Dialogic Mentoring are shaped by the children's rights framework.

Why is Dialogic Mentoring important for a democratic transformation of schools?

Most societies are following a pyramidal logic as if there were always levels to reach, higher steps to long for and linear climbing to get somewhere in a top position. Riane Eisler (Eisler, 2015, 2017; Eisler & Fry, 2019) calls this the ideology of a "domination culture." Figure 5 presents this logic on the left side and shows some elements it consists off – all serving structural violence:

Figure 5: The transforming shape of Dialogic Mentoring from pyramids to circles (own figure)
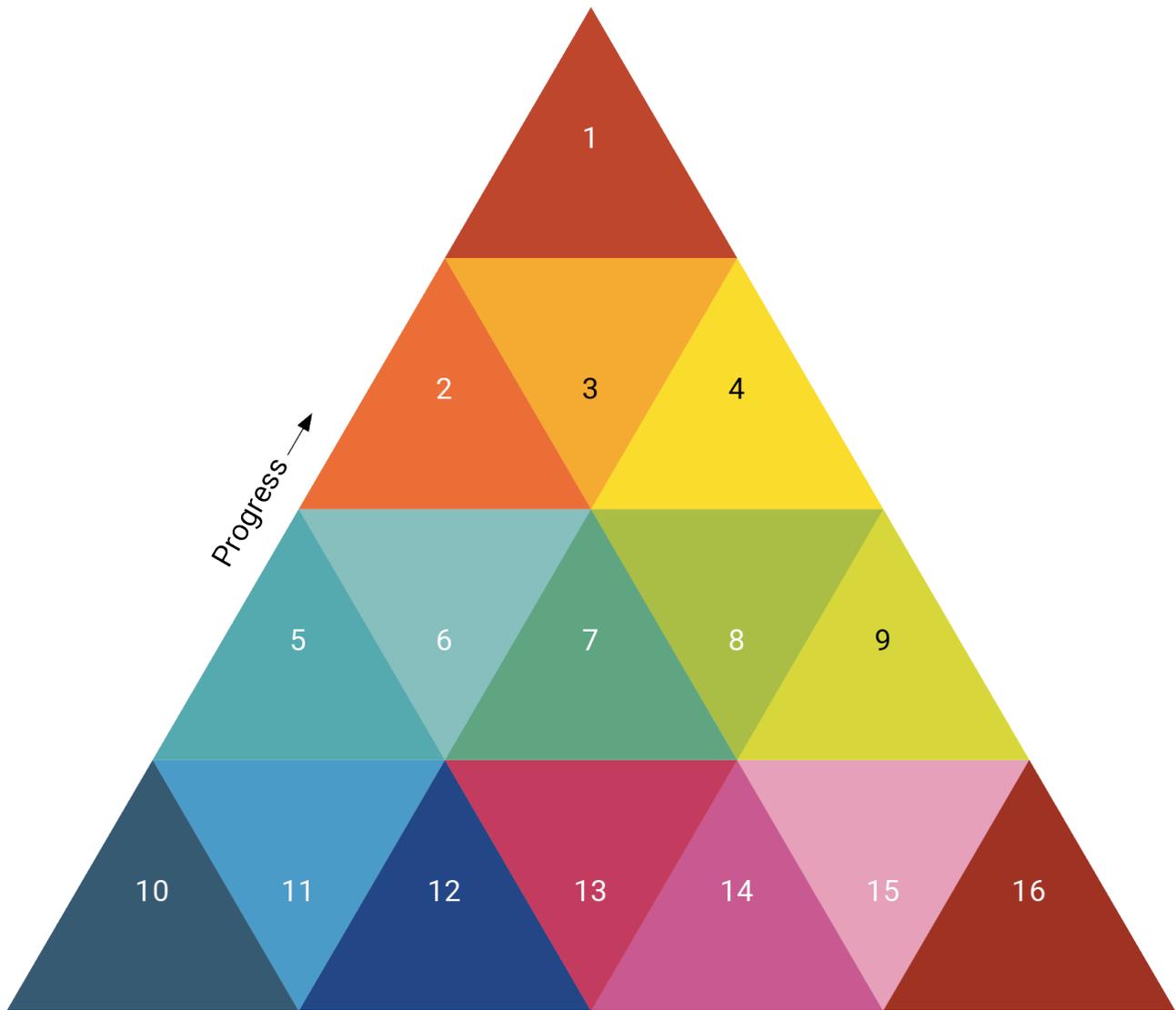
1. Different levels
2. Curriculum
3. Certificate
4. Standards
5. Tests
6. Categories
7. Cohorts
8. Groups
9. Competition
10. Rankings
11. Segregation
12. Separation
13. Behaviourism
14. Adult leading
15. Materialism
16. ...ism
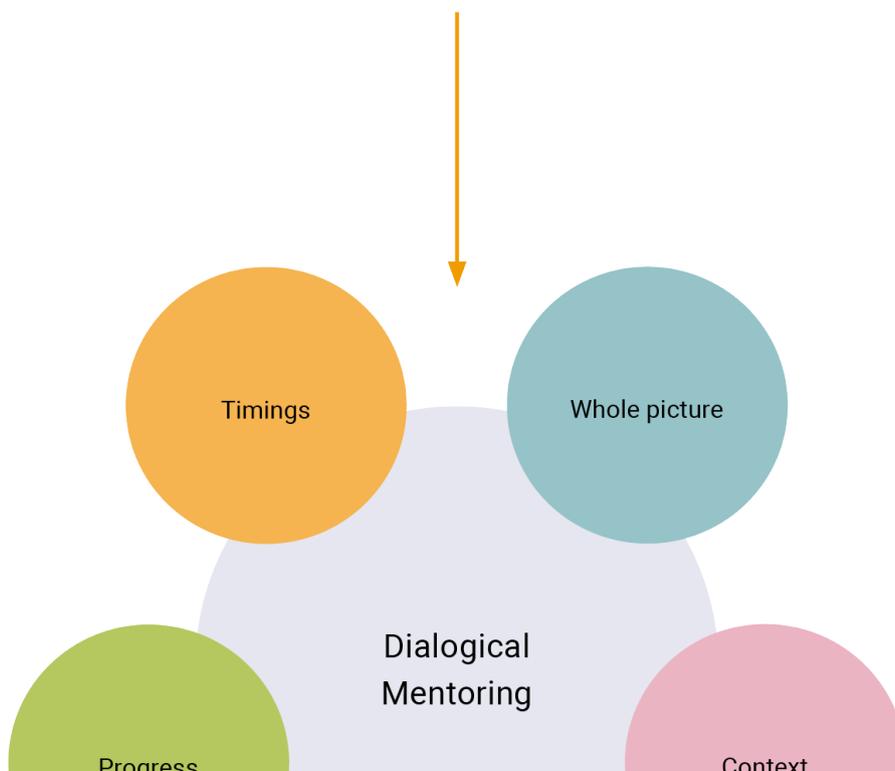
Constructing different levels and certificates as if everyone has to follow a 'holy' curriculum and fulfil certain standardised efforts to climb up and reach high levels by overcoming tests by being categorised and compared to a set-up cohort. To set up groups is seen as reducing the complexity and helps to define a frame for competition, so rankings can be used for segregation and separation. To keep this system working, it needs judgements, including rewards and awards. In the tradition of 'old authority' (Omer, 2016) they use not only tokens and punishments but all kinds of 'motivating' stories to challenge children and focus their will towards materialistic success. One daily materialistic story told while pushing through the pyramid says, 'Time is money!' All kinds of '…isms' (adultism, fascism, sexism, racism, …) are nurtured by this up-climbing vision. Here teachers are valued for having their class in their grip … and push or pull their students to the highest level reachable in this certificate dominated logic – to reach their full 'human capital', this is also used later for the labour market. As all societies are patterned on a dominator model, in which human hierarchies are ultimately backed up by force or the threat of force. We see that spaces of education and how they are structured and filled play an essential role.

In a hierarchical context 'mentoring' will always be a tool to optimise human resources but never Dialogic Mentoring. In a structure like this 'inclusion' is just a term that must be added without disturbing the dominant patterns.

What if the story is changed in "Time is life; life is time" (Korten, 2015; 83)? What if there is no pyramid to climb to the top by being 'excellent' and leave all other competitors as 'mediocre' or 'weak' ones behind? What if the narrative of progress in the domination model with fear and suppression is replaced by a partnership model with empathy and respect (Eisler, 2000, 2003, 2004, 2015, 2017)?

Instead of simplifying the educational process by cutting off the complexity, it's important to see the beauty of being different and equal like Dialogic Mentoring does.

To really practise an inclusive life in schools Dialogic Mentoring would be the core element to find transformation steps towards a common philosophy as shown on the right side of Figure 5: If all agree that there is no pyramid to fit into but we can all stay on the ground in different fields. This is displayed in Figure 5 above as the round circles.

Students labelled as having special educational needs confront many challenges apart from their academic duties. This can harm the studying process and hurt their achievements and development academically, socially, mentally and emotionally.

Thus, it is very important to find an opportunity for them to receive support and assistance so they will be relieved and encouraged. Dialogic Mentoring enables us to deal with that. In order to make that happen, Dialogic Mentoring in education has to widen the scope of subjects brought to the mentoring relations.

Commonly, we talk with our students about their formal learning issues, their grades, and their behaviour in class and school. However, they have a full life that many times is more challenging, interesting and intensive than school. The mentoring process will benefit if it is possible for the mentee to bring his whole self into the mentoring.

As stated before, children have a rich mental world. Very often, they experience pain, confusion and emotions they do not completely understand. All of these influence their everyday life and there is no way of supporting them without bringing them into consideration. Society delivers the message that achievements in school are important, so what happens when a student is challenged by everyday life in a way that disturbs his schooling. How does it influence him? Who is there to assist him aside from his peers? That task can be dealt with by mentoring. So let us decide to change the story (Korten, 2015) and move away from the norms that led to hurt and crisis to a story that carries into a welcoming future. According to David Korten (2023): "Humans are Earth's ultimate choice-making species. Our decisions have defining consequences for the whole of Earth's community of life."

His description of the necessity of awareness about the stories we use underlines what Riane Eisler analyses as serving either a domination system or heading for a partnerist context – and it connects with all intentions to decolonise education. So, there is no doubt where Dialogic Mentoring belongs when David Korten (2023) writes under the chapter title "Sharing an Authentic Narrative":

"We fail to recognise the tyranny for what it is because we live in a trance state induced by a Sacred Money and Markets cultural narrative that shapes our collective understanding of our world and our choices as a species. It is based on two foundational assumptions:

1. Because we humans are by nature self-centred, materialistic, and inherently competitive, the wealth of the society is best maximised by channelling these natural instincts to beneficial ends through unrestrained market competition.

2. There is no limit to the total wealth of a society. The affluence of the winners is their just reward for their contribution to the well-being of all. If the needs of some are not being met, simply accelerate growth to bring up the bottom.

Both assumptions are critically flawed. An authentic narrative is emerging grounded in three truths essential to our time:

1. As living beings, we are by nature dependent on our ability to organise as healthy communities that create and maintain the conditions essential to our well-being.

2. We humans shape our behaviour by cultural and institutional choices. These can support individualism, gluttony, violence, and competition. They can support communitarianism, frugality, peace, and cooperation. And almost everything in between.

3. We depend on the generative capacity of a finite living Earth and must learn to meet our needs within these limits. Wealth distribution is an essential concern.

For thousands of years the institutions of Imperial Civilisation pit us one against another in a competition for the positions of privilege that favour the few at the expense of the many. The dominator hierarchy of corporate rule and its legitimating cultural narrative are extensions of Imperial Civilisation and the sociopathic behaviour the Sacred Money and Markets story would have us believe defines our inherent nature."

How is Dialogic Mentoring connected to Inclusive Education?

So, Dialogic Mentoring can become a heart element of finding more inclusive steps to change the rules of 'the games' people play and to reorganise procedures, policies, rituals and structures. If the individuals and their topics are heard and become stronger within their settings the groups, communities – any WE – become stronger too. If, as Marsha Forest (O'Brien & Forest, 1989: 3) once said, the only prerequisite for inclusion is "breathing, life itself" – if necessary with a respirator -, Dialogic Mentoring is a condition to a free breath: THE ultimate basis for learning – and living – anyhow.

Similarly, when Jean Liedloff (1986) shows with her "continuum concept" and the "search of happiness lost," that it is the main longing of every person to feel welcomed, worthy and 'right' then it is a way to look at the purpose of inclusion:

- Feeling to be welcomed
- worthy and
- in the right moment at the right place.

Obviously Dialogic Mentoring opens up the space for the awareness of this longing and to express it in a sheltered constellation (the matrix), and then to define steps (the patterns) to create more fulfilling situations. Inclusive education starts with this attitude – it is the basis for following decisions. In a way one could call it 'inclusive diagnostic.' If beliefs are formed in a child's mind by the words of the people who live their daily life with, especially those expressed as absolute truths rather than as opinions, while repetition aggravates the effect, Dialogic Mentoring offers consciousness about these processes and helps to relieve from wrongness to welcome feelings.

To find a common clearness about the matrix first and then agree about patterns on this ground can also be seen in initiating future planning in circles of support.

To deepen and underline Jean Liedloff's point of view here follows a longer quote as a source for persons involved in Dialogic Mentoring and in that sense inclusive processes of uncovering damaging beliefs, something she calls "our western malady" (1991, 2023):

"I noticed something curious about normal, neurotic adults: what we were experiencing was not a variety of 'problems' at all, but rather the very same difficulty. Although the details and degrees of damage differed, the malady was the same. It manifested as a deep sense of being wrong — of being not good enough, not lovable, disappointing, incompetent, insignificant, undeserving, inadequate, evil, bad, or in some other way not 'right'. What's more, this feeling of wrongness had come about almost always through early interactions with parental authority figures. And it had evoked powerful unconscious beliefs that have informed our views of both self and self-in-relation-to-others.

Upon coming to this realisation, I searched for words to describe how human beings would have to feel about themselves in order to live optimally, to feel at home in their own skins and represent themselves accurately to others. I thought of the Yequana people, and arrived at the

words worthy and welcome. People need to feel worthy and welcome, not bent out of shape, angry, or apologetic about their existence" (Liedloff, 1991; 2023).

Who is involved in Dialogic Mentoring?

The mentoring process involves two main entities: the mentor and the mentee. Each of these participants plays a distinct and crucial role in the mentoring relationship and processes.

What is the role of the mentee?

The concept of a "mentee" can be understood through the lens of personal growth, guidance, and the interplay of knowledge between individuals. A mentee is someone who seeks to learn and develop themselves under the guidance and support of a mentor. The mentee is never identified with the problem that challenges them. As Michael White stated in his well-known quote: "The person is not the problem, the problem is the problem."

The role of the mentee is not one of passivity but rather an active engagement with the mentor's facilitation. The mentee is a whole human being holding points of view, having values and knowledge, having plans and goals, and enjoying their dignity. Mentee is the most authorised expert about themselves, who is encouraged to reflect, question, and internalise the lessons imparted by the mentor. Through this process, the mentee is not merely acquiring knowledge but also undergoing a transformative journey, honing their character, and developing a deeper understanding of themselves and the world around them.

In some philosophical traditions, the relationship between the mentor and the mentee can be seen as symbiosis, where both parties benefit from the exchange of knowledge and experience. The mentor gains satisfaction and fulfilment from passing on their wisdom, while the mentee gains valuable insights and growth opportunities.

Overall, the concept of a mentee is rooted in the recognition of the inherent interconnectedness between individuals and the belief in the potential for personal and intellectual development through learning from others.

Figure 6: The Relationship of mentee and mentor in Dialogic Mentoring (own figure)
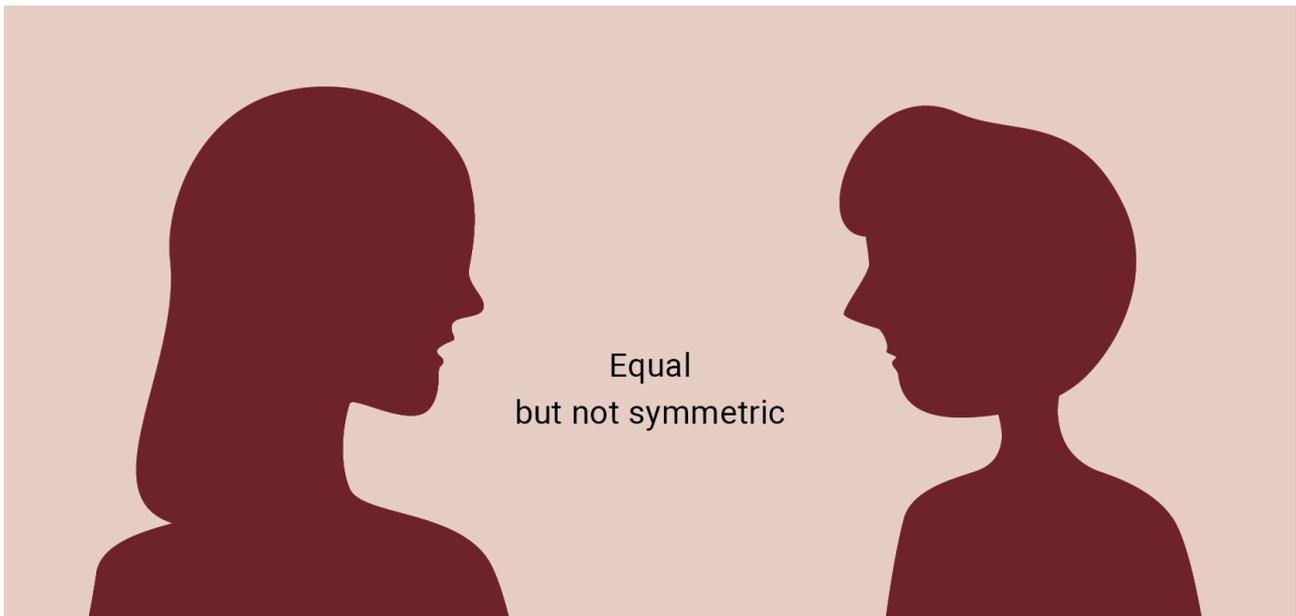
What role is the part of the Dialogic Mentor?

Mentor is a concept deeply rooted in ancient Greek literature and mythology, specifically in Homer's epic poem, "The Odyssey". In this work, Mentor is portrayed as a wise and trusted advisor and friend to Odysseus, the protagonist. However, it is essential to recognise that the concept of Mentor has transcended its initial literary context and has become a symbol of guidance, wisdom, and mentorship in broader philosophical discussions (Slatkin, 2005).

A mentor embodies the archetype of a knowledgeable and experienced individual who imparts valuable insights and teachings to a less-experienced person, known as a mentee. The role of a Mentor extends beyond simple instruction; it involves nurturing the mentee's personal and intellectual growth, providing support, and assisting them in navigating life's challenges. This relationship is often characterised by mutual respect, trust, and empathy – the Dialogic Mentoring mentioned above.

Figure 7: Roles of a Dialogic Mentor (own figure)

Mentor

Photographer	Anthropologist	Juggler
Reflecting mentee and himself	Curious Inquisitive Open	Following Leading Accompanying Pushing
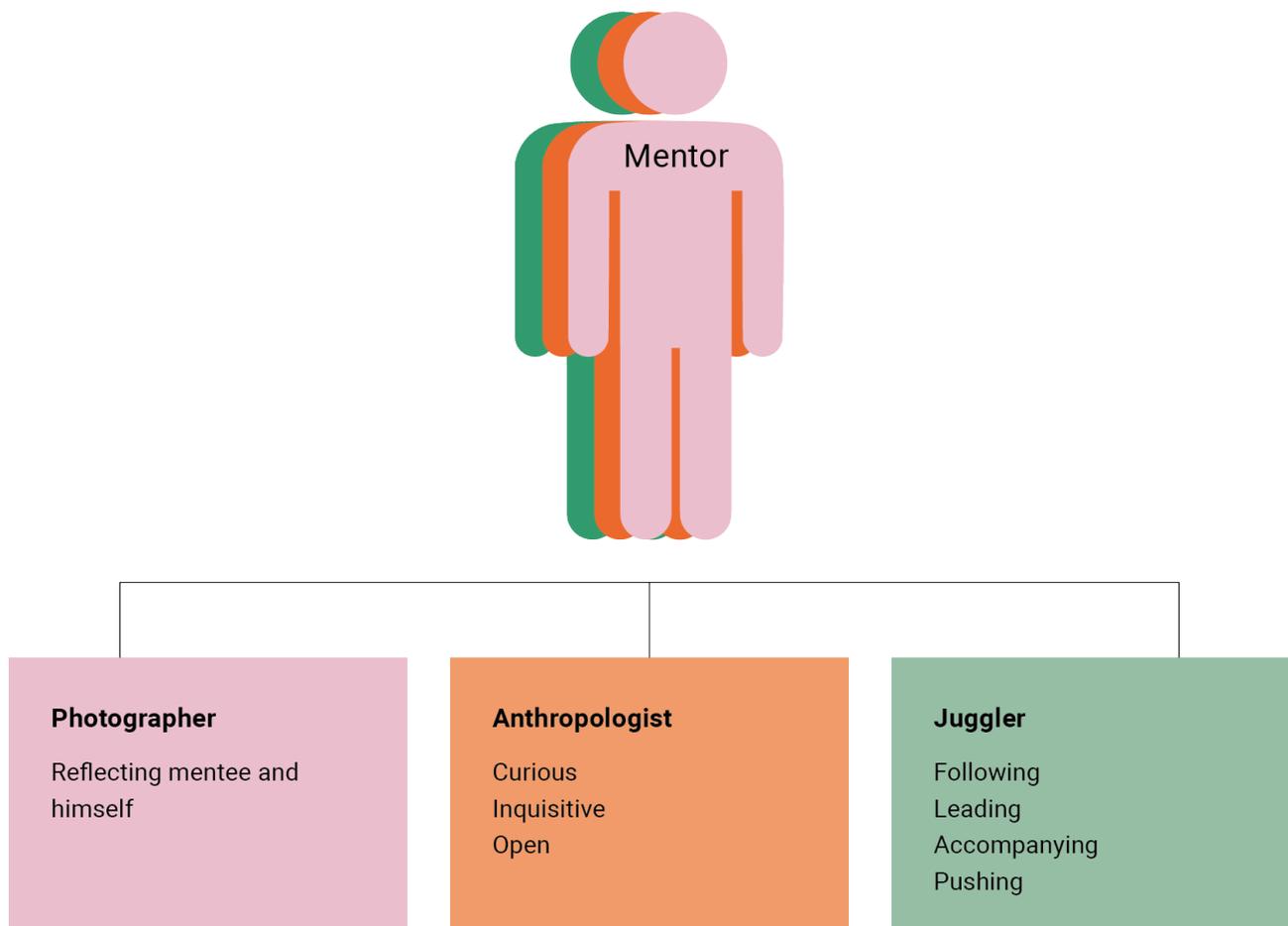
If metaphors are used to describe the multiple identities of mentors, then mentors can be likened to anthropologists, photographers, and jungle explorers. The anthropologist embodies an insatiable thirst for knowledge, an unyielding curiosity, and an open-mindedness that propels them to explore the intricacies of diverse cultures and societies. The photographer, in turn, assumes the role of both a reflective mentee and a self-aware artist, skilfully capturing moments that hold a mirror to both the subject and the photographer's own inner world. Jungle explorer, adept at seamlessly transitioning between roles, alternating between being a companion, a follower, a trailblazer, and an inspirer.

The concept of Mentorship highlights the interconnectivity of human experience and emphasises the value of passing knowledge from one generation to another. The Mentor's role is not to dictate or impose beliefs but to encourage critical thinking, self-reflection, and individual growth. This aspect aligns with broader philosophical ideas on education, personal development, and the pursuit of wisdom.

In conclusion, Mentor is a philosophical representation of a wise and guiding figure who fosters learning, growth, and self-discovery in the mentee. It symbolises the transformative power of mentorship, wherein knowledge and wisdom are transmitted, contributing to the continuous evolution of individuals and society as a whole (Daloz, 2012; Allen & Eby, 2007).

What qualities does a person need for Dialogic Mentoring?

Dialogic Mentoring requires several key qualities in a Mentor to be effective in the process. These qualities include (Fig. 8):

Figure 8: Attributes for Dialogic Mentoring (own figure, adopted from this project)

- Interest in the process: A person engaged in Dialogic Mentoring has a genuine interest in the process itself, valuing the exploration and exchange of ideas with the mentee. This curiosity fosters an open and dynamic learning environment.
- Willing to witness: The mentor should be willing to listen actively and be fully present during the dialogues with the mentee. Being a witness means being attentive and supportive, allowing the mentee to express themselves freely.
- Accepting subjectivity: Dialogic Mentoring acknowledges that different perspectives

and experiences shape individuals' understanding of the world. The mentor must be open to accepting the subjective viewpoints of the mentee and avoid imposing their own beliefs or biases.

- Awareness of the backstage: This quality refers to recognising the personal and emotional aspects that might influence the mentee's thoughts and actions. Understanding what happens "behind the scenes" helps the mentor provide more empathetic and insightful guidance.
- Reading the hidden message: Dialogic Mentoring goes beyond surface-level discussions. The mentor should be skilled at understanding underlying messages, unspoken emotions, and non-verbal cues to gain a deeper understanding of the mentee's needs.
- Asking inspiring questions: A mentor must possess the ability to ask thought-provoking and inspiring questions that encourage the mentee to reflect, explore new ideas, and develop their critical thinking skills.
- Enjoying contacts: Being able to establish a positive and meaningful connection with the mentee is crucial. Enjoying interpersonal interactions and being approachable can create a comfortable and trusting atmosphere for open dialogue.
- Containing: The mentor should be emotionally mature and capable of holding space for the mentee's emotional expression without being overwhelmed by it. Providing a safe and non-judgmental environment helps the mentee feel supported and heard.
- Partneristic: Dialogic Mentoring is a collaborative partnership between the mentor and mentee. The mentor should view the mentee as a partner in the learning journey, rather than adopting a hierarchical approach.
- 'Good enough' mentality: Recognising that perfection is not the goal, the mentor should embrace the idea of being 'good enough' and focus on progress and growth rather than expecting flawless outcomes.
- Open to various developments: The mentor should be flexible and open-minded, willing to explore different paths and adapt their approach based on the mentee's unique needs and learning style.
- Authenticity: Being genuine and transparent is crucial in building trust and rapport with the mentee. An authentic mentor creates a safe space for open and honest conversations.
- Curiosity: Curiosity drives continuous learning and encourages the mentor to stay receptive to new ideas, experiences, and perspectives. It also helps the mentor maintain a growth mindset and model a commitment to learning for the mentee.

In summary, this part introduced some key qualities that could help mentors to achieve Dialogic Mentoring, which requires a mentor who is genuinely interested in the process, empathetic, non-judgmental, open to diverse perspectives, and committed to creating a

collaborative and inspiring learning environment for the mentee. This leads to the question: How to develop and improve Dialogic Mentoring?

Which attitudes belong to Dialogic Mentoring?

The competences of clear role awareness, partnerism in a dialogic conversation with empathy, willing to reflect, differentiate, and to practise mentalisation, observation and containment, as Figure 9 puzzles together – with space for more:

Figure 9: Attitudes in Dialogic Mentoring (own figure)
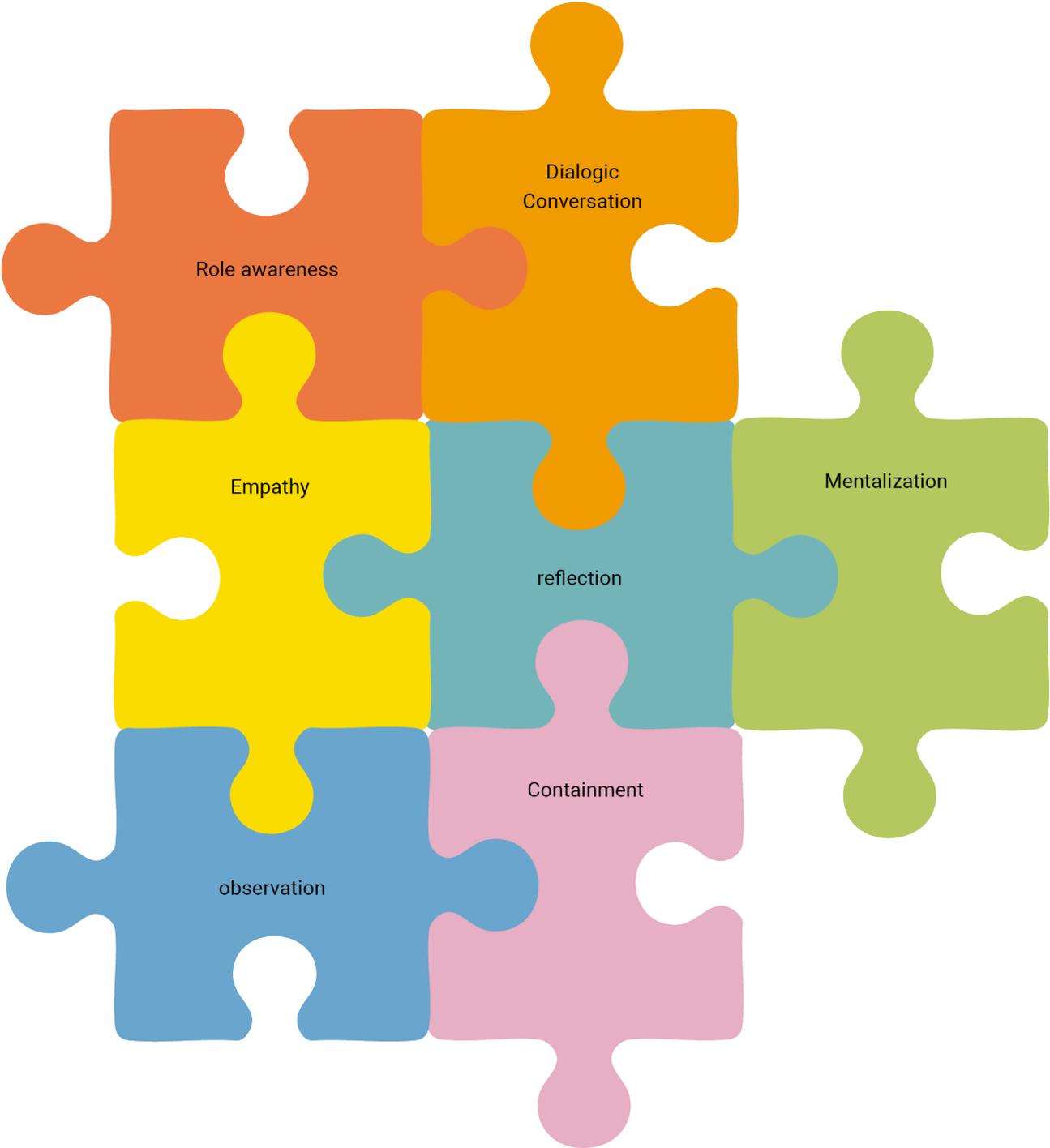
Connected to all pieces of the puzzle, there is the importance of an attitude that sees the relevance of a balance between the presence and the future. Does the future already exist? Is it like a train station waiting for us down the line? Is this where we are heading and there is nothing to do but prepare for what we think we saw? Or is it an uncertainty which is formulating in the present? If the first is correct, we have to stretch our necks as high as possible to try to see the next station so we can prepare for it. If the second option is correct, maybe we should be concerned with the present, with our relations today, with evoking our responsibility and understanding how we wish to shape our **existence today** and not the future.

What do children need us for? Do they need us to install 'programs' in them that will enable them to function or are all the 'programs' **already there** and all they need us for is to enable them to run and develop freely?

If we accept the uncertainty of the future and accept that our children have all the programs already installed, then the understanding of **concentrating on the presence** arises … always also aware of the stones that lay on the way (see Fig. 10):

Figure 10: What Dialogic Mentoring can let grow in its presence (own figure)
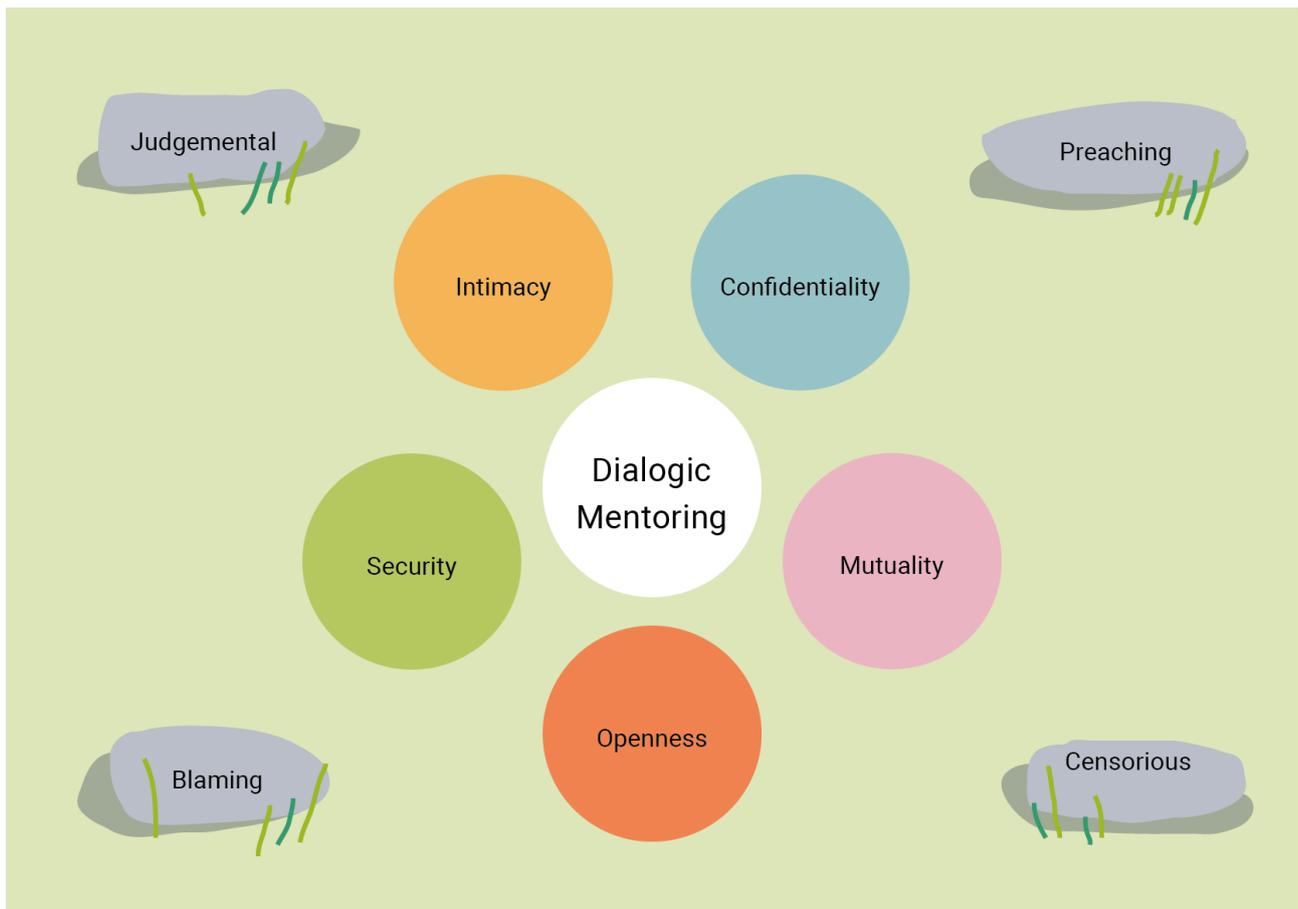
If we no longer 'prepare' for an uncertain 'futurum II' (perfect future) by preaching, censoring, blaming, judging, 'encouraging and challenging' – openness, security, intimacy, confidence

and mutuality can grow; and these are the plants for a bunch of learning everyone needs – right NOW!

How to support Dialogic Mentoring?

Understanding mentoring as a profession that needs to be learned, practised and constant support, it makes sense to create spaces where dialogues are of central meaning.

Figure 11: What Dialogic Mentoring needs (own figure)
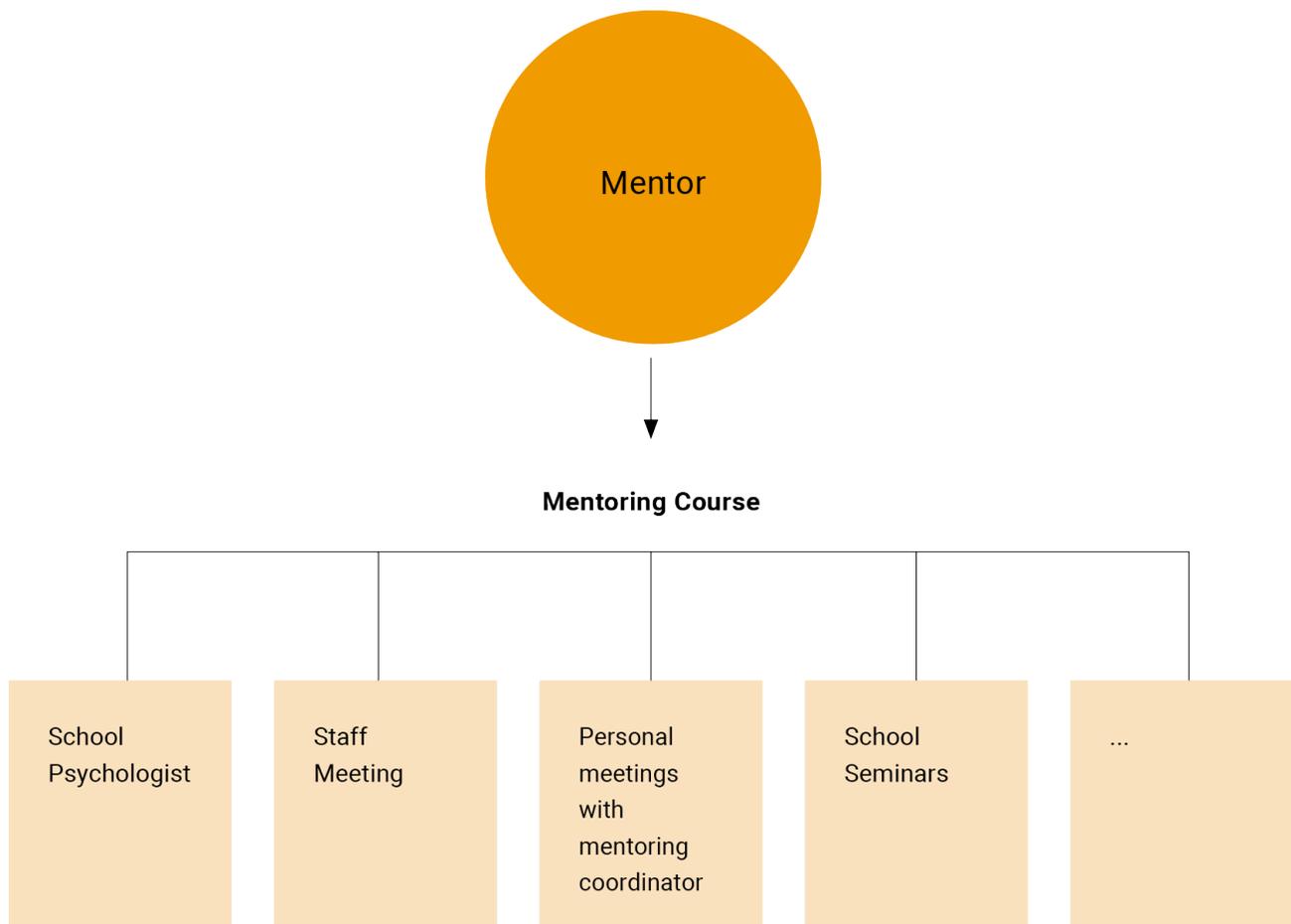
As Figure 11 shows, beneath a certain course for Dialogic Mentoring the exchange with a school psychologist or with other mentors in the staff meeting can be a continuous support. Very helpful are personal meetings with the coordinator for Dialogic Mentoring processes and of course seminars in the school are a huge support for all mentors to establish the attitude of Dialogic Mentoring in their field of action (Simri, 2020).

What supports mentors intending Dialogic Mentoring?

Beneath the above an ongoing training would be an appropriate support for mentors in the field of Dialogic Mentoring to reflect on their own attitude and to widen their competences of Dialogic Mentoring processes. This 'crimson'-side is urgent, as shown in Figure 12:

Figure 12: Dialogic Mentoring is to be supported (own figure)

Supporting Mentors

Training

Attitude

Tools of mentoring

Fonagy Eisler

White Epston
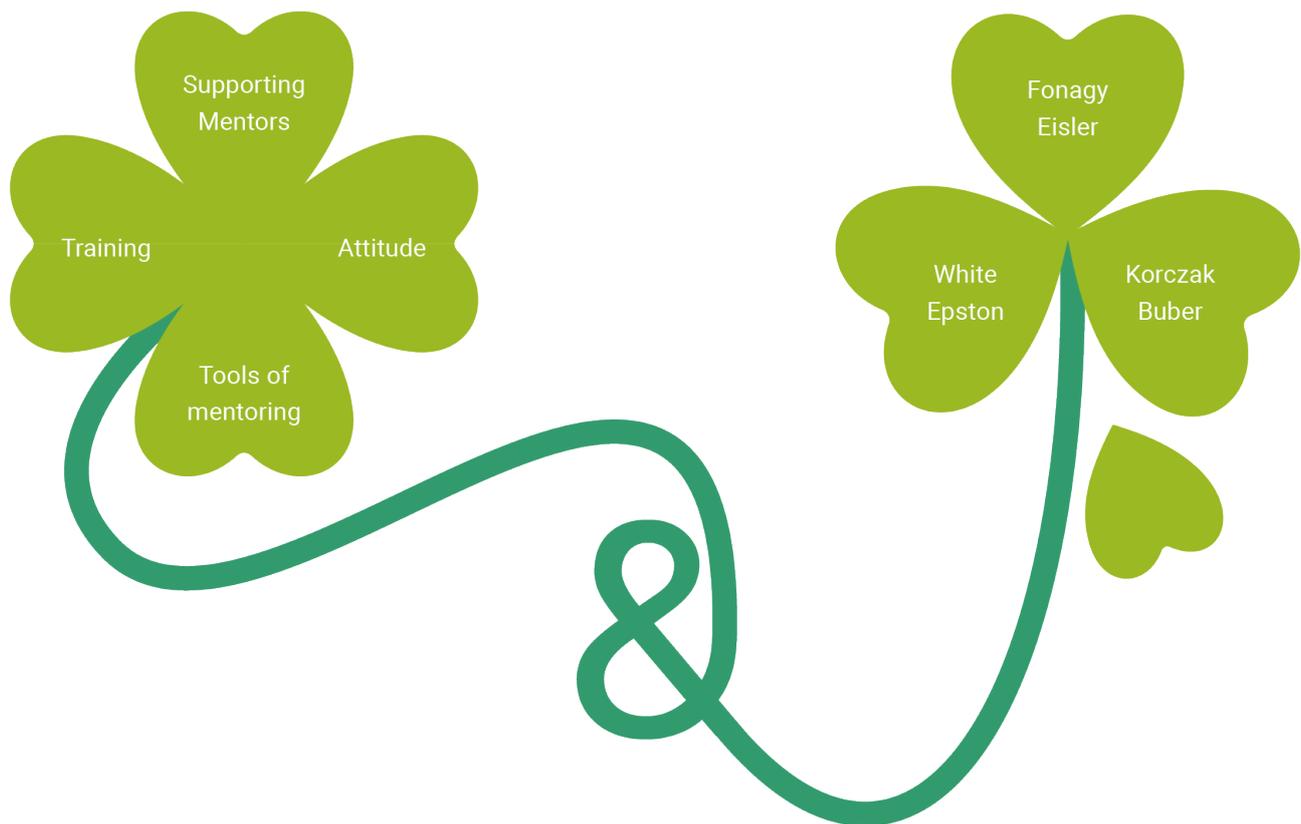
Korczak Buber

And there is an additional 'clover', proving that nothing is new about the ideas of dialog and mentorship; here the names of Martin Buber (1937, 1966) Janusz Korczak (1919, 1929, 1939), David Epston (Epston & White, 1992; Epston, Freeman & Lobovits, 1997),, Michael White (1995, 2004, 2007), Riane Eisler (2000, 2003, 2004, 2015, 2017, Eisler & Loye, 1990, Eisler & Fry, 2019) and Peter Fonagy (Fonagy et al. 2000) are arising – and the fourth leave symbolises, that there are a lot more witnessing authors supporting all that is needed for Dialogic Mentoring. Some examples of such sources will follow in our last chapter to encourage all for all readers to deepen and to nourish their attitudes to existential human needs, not only in school-life: Dialogic Mentoring.

Closing questions to discuss or tasks

What are further questions about Dialogic Mentoring?

If it is true, that the more we find out, the less we know – then let us collect some new arising questions that occur from the circle we created around Dialogic Mentoring (see Fig. 13).

Figure 13: More questions than answers? (own figure)

Three people with three extremely different backgrounds sit together in a circle and focus on a centred topic: Dialogic Mentoring. And still there is an empty space in the middle with questions.

Still crazy after all these words? A final thankful thought: The week of our common teamwork took place in Ireland while in Israel people demonstrated for the continuity of democracy. When we said *"Farewell"* this summer we could not even imagine the horror of the 7th of October and all that followed. Sinead O'Connor (08.12.1966 in Dublin – 26.07.2023 in London)– famous for *"Nothing Compares 2 U"*, a message fitting to the intention of Dialogic Mentoring has a gift of words for us now: "Thank you" stays for what we all are longing for – always:

"Thank you for hearing me … Thank you for loving me… Thank you for seeing me … And for not leaving me….Thank you for staying with me… Thanks for not hurting me … You are gentle with me …Thanks for silence with me… Thank you for holding me …Thank you for helping me…"

Local contexts

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it

online here:
https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=434#h5p-14

Closing questions to discuss or tasks

There may be a lot of different questions and tasks around Dialogic Mentoring depending on their background and contexts.

- How does a Dialogic Mentor deal with mentees of different ages?
- What is the relation like between the mentee and the parents during the process of Dialogic Mentoring?
- Is Dialogic Mentoring only working in a bubble of 'milieu' where Democratic Schools are working well? What about socially disadvantaged areas and state schools?
- How could you implement dialogic mentoring into your future school practice? Does it only work if the whole school commits to dialogic mentoring or how could it be implemented in your classroom or grade?

Literature

Allen, Tammy D., and Lillian T. Eby. *Common Bonds: An Integrative View of Mentoring Relationships*. *The Blackwell Handbook of Mentoring: A Multiple Perspectives Approach*, 2007.

Boban, Ines, and Andreas Hinz. "Mentoring in Demokratischen Schulen – Lernbegleitung Ohne Hierarchie." In *Lernprozesse Begleiten. Anforderungen an Pädagogische Institutionen Und Ihre Akteur*innen*, edited by Steffen Bartusch, Claudia Klektau, Kirsten Puhr, Toni Simon, Stephanie Teumer, and Anne Weidermann, 89–104. Wiesbaden: Springer, 2019.

Buber, Martin. *I and Thou*. Translated by Ronald Gregor Smith. 2nd Edition New York: Scribner, 1958; 1st Scribner Classics Edition, 2000. Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1937.

———. *The Way of Response: Selections from His Writings*. Edited by N. N. Glatzer. New York City, NY: Schocken Books, 1966.

Daloz, Laurent A. *Mentor: Guiding the Journey of Adult Learners*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley &

Sons, 2012.

Eisler, Riane. "Building a Caring Democracy: Four Cornerstones for an Integrated Progressive Agenda." *Interdisciplinary Journal of Partnership Studies* 4, no. 1 (2017). http://pubs.lib.umn.edu/ijps/vol4/iss1/2.

———. *Educating for a Culture of Peace*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2004.

———. "Nurturing Children's Humanity: Partnership Education." *Interdisciplinary Journal of Partnership Studies* 2, no. 2 (2015). http://pubs.lib.umn.edu/ijps/vol2/iss2/5.

———. *The Power of Partnership: Seven Relationships That Will Change Your Life*. Novato, CA: New World Library, 2003.

———. *Tomorrow's Children: A Blueprint for Partnership Education in the 21st Century*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000.

Eisler, Riane, and Douglas P. Fry. *Nurturing Our Humanity: How Domination and Partnership Shape Our Brains, Lives, and Future*. New York City, NY: Oxford University Press, 2019.

Eisler, Riane, and David Elliot Loye. *The Partnership Way: New Tools for Living and Learning*. San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1990.

Epston, David, Jennifer Freeman, and Dean Lobovits. *Playful Approaches to Serious Problems: Narrative Therapy with Children and Their Families*. New York City, NY: W.W. Norton, 1997.

Epston, David, and Michael White. *Experience, Contradiction, Narrative and Imagination: Selected Papers of David Epston & Michael White, 1989-1991*. Adelaide, South Australia: Dulwich Centre Publications, 1992.

Fonagy, Peter, Guörgy Gergely, Elliot L. Jurist, and Mary Target. *Affect Regulation, Mentalization, and the Development of the Self*. New York City, NY: Other Press, 2000.

Korczak, Janusz. *How to Love a Child (Jak Kochać Dziecko)*. Warsaw: Publisher unknown, 1919.

———. *Playful Pedagogy (Pedagogika Żartobliwa)*. Warsaw: Publisher unknown, 1939.

———. *The Child's Right to Respect (Prawo Dziecka Do Szacunku)*. Warsaw: Publisher unknown, 1929.

Korten, David C. "A Great Turning: The Process," 2023. https://davidkorten.org/great-turning/.

———. *Change the Story, Change the Future. A Living Economy for a Living Earth*. Oakland, CA: Berrett-Koehler, 2015.

Liedloff, Jean. "Normal Neurotics Like Us." *Mothering Magazine*, 1991. https://continuumconcept.org/articles/normal-neurotics-like-us.

———. *The Continuum Concept: In Search of Happiness Lost*. Boston, MA: Da Capo Press, 1986.

O'Brien, John, and Marsha Forest. *Action for Inclusion: How To Improve Schools by Welcoming Children with Special Needs into Regular Classrooms*. Toronto: Inclusion Press, 1989.

Omer, Haim. *The New Authority: Family, School and Community*. Cambridge: Cambridge

University Press, 2016.

Services (NEPS), National Educational Psychological. "Mentoring a Student in Post Primary Schools," 2016. https://assets.gov.ie/41321/acc32df494e94d4ea8765faf909abc48.pdf.

Simri, Dror. *Mentoring Through Dialog: The Hadera Democratic School Model*. Zichron Yaakov: Menifa, 2020.

Simri, Dror, and Andreas Hinz. "Mentoring Durch Dialog – Begleitung Und Beratung von Schüler*innen in Demokratischen Schulen in Israel." *Schule Inklusiv* 12 (2021): 39–41.

Slatkin, Laura M. "Homer's Odyssey." In *A Companion to Ancient Epic*, 315–29, 2005.

Teachers (PDST), Professional Development Service. "Restorative Practice," 2024. https://www.pdst.ie/post-primary/health-wellbeing/restorative-practice.

White, Michael. *Maps of Narrative Practice*. New York City, NY: W.W. Norton, 2007.

———. *Narrative Practice and Exotic Lives: Resurrecting Diversity in Everyday Life*. Adelaide: Dulwich Centre Publications, 2004.

———. *Re-Authoring Lives: Interviews & Essays*. Adelaide: Dulwich Centre Publications, 1995.

About the authors

Ines Boban

Once teacher in so called Integration-Classes at a comprehensive school (Reformschule Hamburg Winterhude), from 2002 until 2017 researcher and lecturer for Inclusive Education at the Martin-Luther-University Halle-Wittenberg.

Dror Simri

MA, education counsellor and family and couples therapist, working from 1992 until 2018 at Hadera Democratic School as a teacher, mentor and mentoring supervisor.

Linjie Zhang

Linjie Zhang is a researcher at the University of Vienna. Her primary research interests encompass structural inequality within the educational system, the development and management of international schools, elite education, neoliberalism and globalization, educational policy, and the application of capital theory in education.

CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR STAFF FOR DIVERSITY SENSITIVITY

Fetiye Erbil; Valeria Occelli; and Bodine Romijn

📱 *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=417#oembed-1*

Example Case

"Imagine that you are a middle school teacher. Alex, a pupil in your middle school, identifies as a young black man with a physical disability. Alex also comes from a low-income family. Alex encounters multiple obstacles as a result of the intersection of his identities. He faces obstacles associated with racial prejudice, ableism, and socioeconomic disparities in the school. You also realise that there is not much support allocated to help students like Alex. You are part of a group of teachers willing to learn more about diversity sensitivity, intersectionality and develop your practices for creating a more inclusive school culture. You also know that there is a group of teachers who avoid talking about these issues and who are reluctant to take part in professional development activities on topics outside their subject areas (e.g., teaching maths or science). Throughout the chapter, we will help you examine this case and reflect on what you have read."

Initial questions

1. In this chapter you will find the answers to the following questions:

   - **What are the different styles/types of CPD?**
   - **What impact can CPD have on the students, the teachers, and the learning environment?**
   - **How does ethos and culture affect CPD within a school?**
   - **How can you avoid the learning from CPD from moving away from the school when the teacher leaves?**
   - **What is the importance of CPD within the school environment?**

Introduction to Topic

In many European countries diversity is increasing, creating *super-diverse* classrooms. Super-diversity (Vertovec, 2007, 2010) refers to the fact that diversity is a far too complex concept to be defined by single characteristics/differences, such as gender, learning abilities or cultural background. These characteristics interact with one another, creating rich personalities and unique experiences of people. Unfortunately, not all experiences are equally positive. Numerous studies show that diversity characteristics are related to disadvantages and inequalities. Looking at the school context, we for instance see that there are unequal (learning) opportunities for girls, children with disabilities, children with darker skin tones, children from cultural or religious minorities, and so on. Because the identity of children consists of an interplay of diversity characteristics, this also means that some children experience disadvantages and inequalities at more than one level (for instance when you are a black girl with a learning disability). This is called *intersectionality*(Bešić, 2020).

Think about your student, Alex.
- How do his different identities intersect?
- How does this intersectionality result in more disadvantages for him at school?
- Think about the other students in the school. What might be similar cases?

Inclusive education is meant to tackle all students' diversities (and their interplay) in order to reduce all forms of exclusion, marginalisation and inequalities and to guarantee quality education for all (see Goal 4 of the UN 2030 Agenda; UNESCO, 2015). To fulfil this role, schools should be a place where all students are equally supported in their well-being and development. This means we should unequally invest in students, because of their different experiences. Students should receive the best possible support adapted to their needs (*equity*), rather than giving every student the same treatment (*equality*). In order to achieve this, we need teachers who are sensitive to the diversity of the class. *Diversity sensitivity* is

about the ability to acknowledge, accept and value diversity. These are important steps in creating an inclusive environment that supports students' well-being (Pastori et al., 2019, 2020).

Many teachers indicate that they lack this diversity sensitivity and that they feel ill-prepared for teaching the super-diverse classroom (e.g., Banjeree & Luckner, 2014; Slot & Nata, 2019). This chapter describes how continuous professional development can be used to further support teachers in working in diverse classrooms.

Continuous Professional Development

Professional development refers to all the actions and activities focused on education, training and development opportunities for teachers with the ultimate goal of improving students' developmental or educational outcomes (Sheridan et al., 2009). In other words, professional development is not about becoming a better teacher, but about becoming a better teacher for your students. Continuous professional development (CPD) emphasises that this learning should be a continuous and ongoing process. Teachers are learners themselves, and their initial teacher training is just a first step in the process, but they continue to develop as teachers long after that. With respect to diversity sensitivity, we should be aware that our understanding of "diversity" is evolving over time too, making it necessary to continuously develop on the topic.

CPD can take on a lot of different forms, ranging from short workshops to extensive multi-year curricula. However, not all forms of CPD are equally effective (Civitillo et al., 2018; Parkhouse et al., 2019). CPD is most likely to be effective and sustainable if it follows an embedded and contextual approach (Romijn et al., 2021). Using the following model (see Figure 1), we will explain what this means.

Figure 1: Conceptual framework of professional development
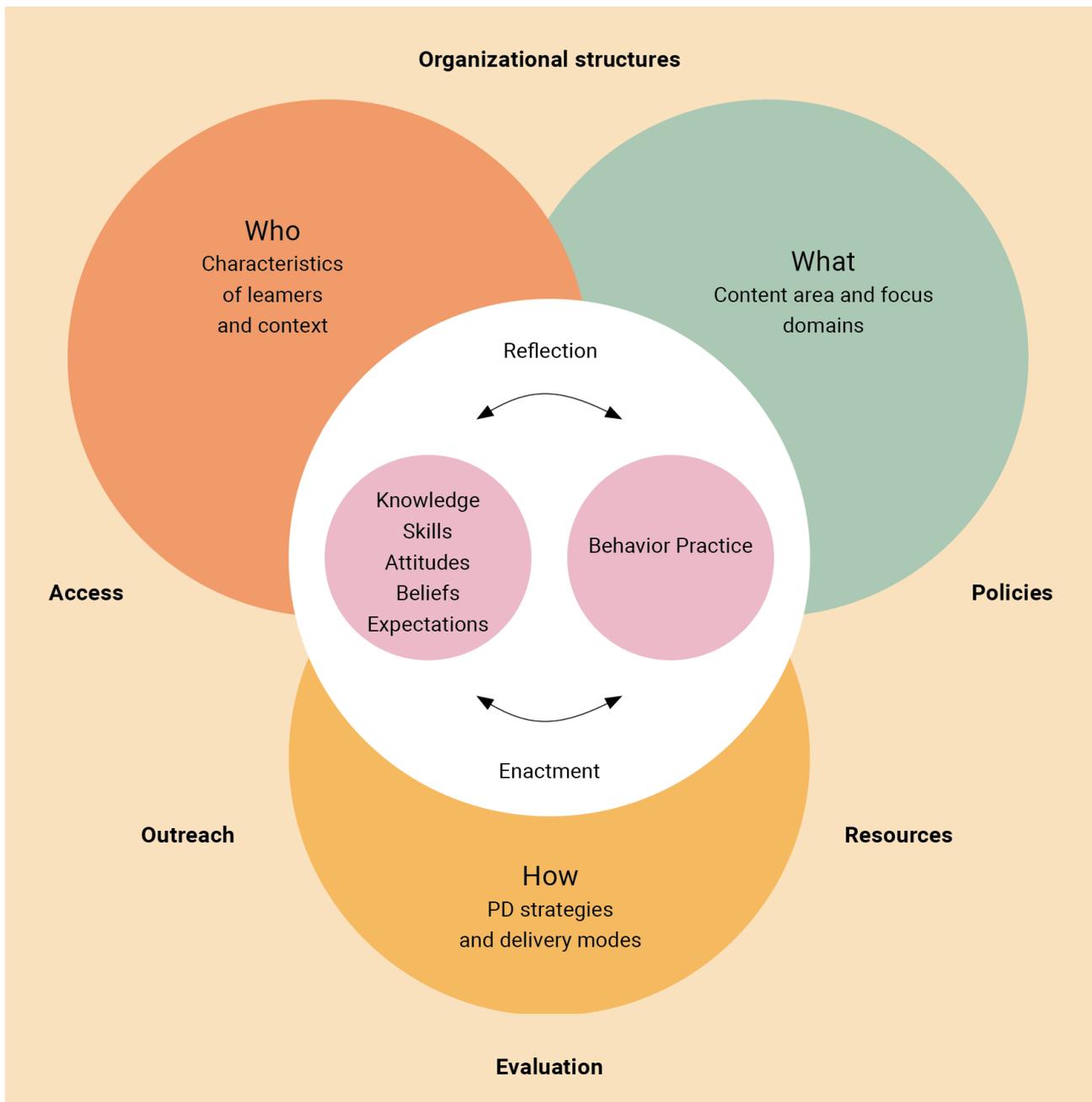
Source: Slot et al., 2017 as presented in Romijn et al., 2021

Key components of CPD

When choosing or designing a CPD activity, it is important to think about its key characteristics: *who* is it for, *what* is it about, and *how* is it delivered (Buysse et al., 2009).

   Who. CPD is always for someone, so we should consider the characteristics of the learners and their context. For instance, a teacher who has a lot of experience with students with visual impairments, might need a different approach from a teacher who has never worked with such students before. A teacher with a minority background can make use of other strategies when trying to bond with students with a minority background, than a

teacher with a majority background can. A teacher who is resistant to change will probably need a different strategy than a teacher who has an internal motivation to make a change because they want to solve a certain problem in their classroom. Thus, CPD is most likely to be effective when it is adapted to who the learner is.

What. CPD is always about a certain topic or targets a specific domain such as knowledge, skills, beliefs or behaviour. Depending on what your focus is, different strategies might be useful. For instance, if there is a need to learn new knowledge, reading a book (like you are doing now) can be a useful strategy. However, if teachers wish to improve their skills in communicating with children from different backgrounds, merely reading a book will not necessarily work. Thus, an important step in choosing or designing an effective CPD activity is to properly define what needs to be learned (*learning goals*).

How. A wide range of strategies and delivery modes exist, such as workshops, immersion experience (i.e., doing an internship), coaching, video-feedback, critical friendships, learning communities, online self-ratings. When learning goals are more complex, a combination of strategies and delivery modes is recommended. In general, research shows that strategies that are more intensive (in duration and dose) and have a collaborative component are more likely to be effective (Siraj et al., 2019). Later in this chapter, we will elaborate on what strategies and delivery modes are most common and how they can be effectively used.

Individual teachers in a wider context

Figure 1 also shows that while development happens within an individual teacher (intra-individual level), this individual teacher is always part of a wider context. To understand how development occurs, we must first investigate the underlying mechanisms within the individual. Teachers all have their own unique set of characteristics, related to their personal background and beliefs, previous experiences, knowledge and skills. This informs how they behave in classrooms and what practices they are likely to use with their students. However, this relationship between what one knows, feels or believes on the one hand and what one actually does on the other hand is not as straightforward as one might believe. Studies for instance show that teachers' explicit attitudes towards diversity are not always in line with their implicit beliefs and actual behaviour (Álvarez Valdivia & González Montoto, 2018). By using the mechanisms of *reflection* and *enactment* teachers can develop their knowledge, skills and beliefs as well as their behaviour and practice. In the next section we will elaborate on these internal mechanisms.

Though CPD is a process that primarily happens within the individual teacher, we cannot think of the teacher as a sole entity that is completely separated from their context. Teachers are always part of a classroom, part of a team of teachers and support staff and part of a school within a local community. Moreover, CPD has the ultimate goal to impact the students' well-being and development. Therefore, it is necessary that CPD also has a

sustainable impact that moves beyond the individual teacher. In the last part of this chapter, we will further discuss what needs to be done to make CPD more sustainable by properly embedding it within the wider context.

Read this sentence one more time: "Teachers all have their own unique set of characteristics, related to their personal background and beliefs, previous experiences, knowledge and skills".

● Think about your colleagues in your school. What do you know about their personal background?
● What do you know about their beliefs, previous experience, knowledge and skills about working with a diverse group of learners?
● With your group, what can you do to learn about the needs of all teachers so that you can have a starting point to build on in your professional development attempt?

Key aspects

Individual processes in learning and development

At the core, learning and development is an individual process. When engaging in CPD, teachers contribute a unique combination of characteristics encompassing their cultural background, upbringing, personal experiences, beliefs, as well as their existing knowledge, skills and competences. These individual variations impact how teachers approach their role as learners during CPD, their motivation and engagement, and the process outcomes. In this section, we will discuss the importance of individual belief systems for developing diversity sensitivity and elaborate on the mechanisms of *reflection* and *enactment*.

Teachers' belief systems

All teachers have a belief system, which is a set of developed assumptions, beliefs, attitudes and values (Spies et al., 2017). Though these terms are related, they cannot be used interchangeably, and a relevant distinction can be made especially between beliefs and attitudes. Teachers' ideas, beliefs and values encompassing the different factors involved in education, have been referred to as teachers' *beliefs* (Pajares, 1992). When beliefs towards a specific object, for example, diversity inclusive education, are organised and predisposed to action, this cluster of beliefs becomes an *attitude* (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993).

The main components of attitude are cognitive, affective, and behavioural, indicating that attitudes concern the individual's knowledge, feelings, and predispositions to (re)act toward a specific object (de Boer et al., 2011). When considered in relation to diversity in education, the cognitive component refers, for instance, to the teacher's beliefs regarding the adequacy of their school to embrace diversity (for example, "I hold the belief that students with special needs should be included in mainstream schools"), the affective component to teacher's emotions (for example, "I am worried that students with

behavioural issues may disrupt the classroom environment"), whereas the behavioural component pertains to how the teacher is inclined to behave in relation to a specific scenario (for example, "I can offer afternoon activities to support non-native speaking students"). According to the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 2001), teachers' attitudes play a role in determining their actual behaviour, insofar as attitudes are one of the factors influencing the intentions to perform it (for example, positive attitudes are likely to result in more open and welcoming behaviours, while negative attitudes are more likely to lead to avoiding and/or rejecting behaviours; see the box below for examples related to Alex's case). Attitudes towards diversity inclusive education have been found to be influenced by a wide range of factors (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002), including years of teaching experience and higher perceived self-efficacy, which you will learn more about in Section 2.5 (Kunz et al., 2021).

Think about Alex's case and possible teacher reactions in your school. Do they reflect the cognitive, the affective, or the behavioural component of attitudes?

"I believe that students with disabilities can be better supported in other schools"
"I'm afraid students coming from low SES backgrounds can disturb the order and change our pace because they tend to be slow learners"
"I'm not sure if I have enough time to learn about the case of every student. They are all different. I don't have enough resources to support all of them so I can't do anything".

Another distinction worth mentioning here is between explicit and implicit attitudes. Explicit attitudes are conscious and generally overtly reported. However, especially in relation to sensitive issues, such as diversity inclusive education, people might have opinions diverging from mainstream social norms. In this case, individuals might be more reluctant to overtly express what they think. For instance, a teacher might think "Dealing with diversity is so stressful that I would prefer to work in a special educational provision system rather than in an inclusive one," but might feel that this would not be well received by colleagues and supervisors. In contrast, implicit attitudes are automatic reactions to an object, which can be observed even in absence of the individual's awareness (Glock et al., 2019). We will see in Section 2.4 an example of how implicit attitudes affect teachers' practice.

The individuals' existing attitudes can influence the way they perceive and interpret new information. Indeed, to simplify information and make rapid decisions, individuals often activate cognitive patterns that align with their pre-existing beliefs and attitudes. These systematic patterns of thinking are known as *biases* (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974). Although biases allow people to handle the high amount and complexity of information in a time and resource efficient way, they can nevertheless lead to oversimplification and generalisation and thus open the doors to stereotypes and prejudices (Haselton et al., 2005).

Teachers, just as everybody else, may apply their generalised knowledge or stereotypical beliefs to their students, often without being fully aware of that (Glock et al., 2019; Turetsky et al., 2021). Examples include the assumption that students in culturally diverse schools are more prone to disruptive behaviours, that students with low socioeconomic background

are less likely to be high achievers, that girls are more likely to excel in verbal tasks and boys in STEM subjects, or that all students have a canonical family. Teachers' misconceptions about their students can significantly influence their interaction with them, the assessments and evaluations, as well as achievement expectations. Research shows that teachers' biases have a profound impact on students' actual learning outcomes and can contribute to the perpetuation of educational disparities (Pit-ten & Glock, 2019). However, while teachers' attitudes towards diversity typically have a lasting impact on their behaviour, it is crucial to recognise that these attitudes can nevertheless be modified through targeted CPD activities (Kunz et al., 2021).

Think about your school again and think about the different teachers who are teaching Alex.

- Do you think he has the same experience with every teacher?
- What are the different attitudes among teachers towards inclusive practices in your school?
- How do these attitudes differ and based on what?
- What might be the ways to understand the reasons for different attitudes so that you can start working on developing more inclusive and diversity sensitive practices?

The relation between belief systems and CPD engagement

Teachers' beliefs towards diversity influence their motivation to take part and commit to CPD initiatives (Liu et al., 2019). Additionally, any CPD approach, by employing specific practices, establishes particular ways of knowing as more significant than others (Musanti & Pence, 2010). Hence, it is unsurprising to witness resistance among teachers when it comes to engaging in CPD initiatives (Musanti & Pence, 2010). The sources of resistance are usually classified as individual resistance and political resistance (Musanti & Pence, 2010). Individual resistance reflects the conflict stemming from a discrepancy between the expectations or requirements placed on the teachers and how those align with the teachers' needs and evaluations. For example, teachers may perceive ad-hoc training on certain topics as relevant to only a subset of the category, leading them to implicitly question its relevance (for example "It is not my thing", "Why should I be involved? This doesn't apply to me"). Political resistance instead refers to the resilient act of reclaiming a sense of agency ("I didn't choose this, what isn't my voice heard when it comes to planning and designing such initiatives?").

What you can do in the professional development initiative that you start with fellow teachers in your community is:

- Gain an understanding of the existing stereotypes, prejudices and misconceptions teachers might have towards intersecting identities students?
- Create a safe and supportive space for all teachers to talk about what they know and what they want to know?
- Devise a plan on how you want to empower your school community in becoming more knowledgeable and skillful toward diversity sensitive practices?

Teachers' questioning implicitly challenges the perceived necessity of such training, which, in addition to pre-existing attitudes toward diversity inclusive education, might undermine the initiative as a whole. Resistance can nonetheless offer an opportunity of reflection on the scopes and aims of CPD initiatives (Walter et al., 2023). Even individuals who are "on board" may still have questions or concerns about CPD initiatives (for example, "Do I have the necessary skills to embark on this?", "What am I going to be exposed to?" "What am I supposed to learn?"). Some good practices help to promote resisting teachers' compliance with the proposed activities. For instance, establishing a psychologically safe environment, where group members feel safe to share and contribute, without any fear of being judged, is of crucial importance (Edmonson & Lei, 2014).

Your teacher learning community is working slowly but steadily. You have started getting together regularly with other teachers, organising meetings, doing readings and inviting experts. Not all of these events are initiated or followed by all the teachers in the school but most of the teachers care to join in at least a few of them and contribute to the community. However, you observe that there is a group of teachers who are hesitant, sometimes critical/judgemental of what you do.

- Why do you think they demonstrate resistance?
- What are their reasons for not joining?
- What can you do to create a channel for dialogue and communication to understand each other?
- What can you do to make them wonder about your community's activities?

Transformative learning

Given the sensitive nature of the topics involved, it is highly recommended to adopt a comprehensive approach when designing and delivering CPD activities aimed at fostering diversity within the educational environment. Two methods have been demonstrated to robustly mediate professional practice improvement (Cole et al., 2022):

- Critical reflection: refers to the practice of applying critical thinking to personal experiences, while at the same time taking some distance from them. When teachers engage in critical reflection, they ask themselves questions to extract meaning from the experienced events (Cole et al., 2022).
- Reflective practice: it arises from the recognition of a disparity between a new experience and the existing beliefs and knowledge one holds. This awareness prompts teachers to reframe their implicit assumptions about practice, in search of a new and more promising course of action, eventually bridging the gap between theory and practice (Russell, 2018).

How are critical reflection and reflective practices implemented in CPD? How can CPD make the best use of them? According to some authors, the learning potentials of critical reflection and reflective practices in CPD can be fully realised within a transformative learning experience framework. This framework promotes a profound structural shift in

thinking, as opposed to a superficial additive learning approach, where most existing beliefs remain unchanged (Wall, 2018). What does this mean in practical terms? This will be addressed in the following section.

Cognitive dissonance as a trigger of behavioural change

When considering the cases of two of Alex's teachers; one, in an attempt to compliment him, might exclaim "If someone had made me guess where you live, I wouldn't have bet on *that* neighbourhood!" Another one tends to constantly monitor him with the corner of her eye while in class. Both teachers might perceive themselves as treating Alex and the other students equally. However, with their behaviours, they are acting on their implicit attitudes, covertly denying or misvaluing Alex's background, or implicitly making assumptions about his trustworthiness and compliance to the norms. Behaviours like these qualify as microaggressions, acts that subtly communicate disrespect, degradation, and/or hostility that are directed against people in marginalised groups, either intentionally or unintentionally (Lilienfeld, 2017; Steketee et al., 2021). If questioned about their action, these teachers might say that they are genuinely complimenting him or devoting the same amount of attention to all pupils. This might nevertheless induce a conflict, a cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957), between their overt egalitarian attitudes and covert biassed intentions.

According to cognitive dissonance theory, the inconsistency between what people know or think and new pieces of information makes them experience a state of psychological tension. In the attempt at alleviating the emerging psychological discomfort, they aim to make their beliefs and new information align, by either modifying their existing beliefs or by assimilating the new information, so that the discrepancy can be reduced (McFalls & Cobb-Roberts, 2001). Remember we mentioned the concept of a transformative learning experience process early on? CPD activities that foster a sense of cognitive dissonance in the teachers, just like the one experienced by Alex's teachers, facilitate transformative learning (Thompson & Zeuli, 1999). To make the transformative learning experience more likely to be effective, other elements should be incorporated:

- Creating a structured environment that allows teachers enough time, the appropriate contexts and support, to allow teachers to reflect on and reconcile the conflict they experience.
- Incorporating activities that both stimulate and resolve this cognitive dissonance directly within teachers' daily teaching situations and practices, ensuring they are not isolated from their classroom work.
- Empowering teachers to cultivate a fresh set of teaching approaches that align with their newly acquired understanding. This will enable them to effectively implement their newfound knowledge in the classroom, thus developing a repertoire of practices that

are in harmony with their revised perspectives.
- Engaging and supporting teachers in an ongoing, continuous cycle of improvement and growth, providing them with the necessary guidance.

When we refer back to Alex's teachers' example, becoming aware of the biases being held and that some behaviours can be perceived as microaggressions act as the starting point to enable a progressive behavioural change. This, in turn, stimulates Alex's teachers to monitor their behaviour, so that potential microaggressive acts can be detected before being enacted, and thus be progressively avoided. In more general terms, practices that are implemented within the educational settings feedback and become a matter of further reflection and, in turn, nourish further reflection, so that they are constantly improved and made more effective. Through this circular process, teachers become more responsible to their own learning, and more accountable as professionals (Walter et al., 2023; Yost, 2006), and eventually develop a higher perceived self-efficacy, a concept you will learn more about in the following section.

Teachers' self-efficacy

The term "teachers' self-efficacy" defines the complex set of beliefs teachers have about their capabilities to effectively handle the tasks, obligations, and challenges related to their profession (Lazarides & Warner, 2020). According to Tschannen-Moran and collaborators (1998), two cognitive processes contribute to the emergence and development of teachers' self-efficacy. The first process involves examining the task and its context, identifying the challenges of teaching and weighing them against the resources at hand. The second process involves evaluating one's own skills and acknowledging any areas where they fall short in relation to the task. Different sources of information contribute to these processes (Bandura, 1977):

- Mastery experiences: outcomes of direct personal action (for example, successes enforce self-efficacy, failures weaken it).
- Vicarious experiences: observation of others and comparison with one's own experience. Useful when novel and challenging situations are faced, where personal accomplishments are still lacking or not yet mastered.
- Verbal persuasion: performance feedback from a supervisor or a colleague.
- Somatic/affective states: emotional or physiological reactions.

Interestingly, there is a reciprocal relationship between the information sources of self-efficacy, their interpretation by the individual, and the resulting self-efficacy itself (Bandura, 1977). This means that, if teachers believe that their performance is being successful, this belief will likely result in the enhancement of their self-efficacy perception and, in turn, contribute to their expectation of future success, thus establishing a sort of virtuous

self-fulfilling prophecy (Ulbricht et al., 2022). The cyclical nature of teachers' self-efficacy implies that, whenever a task is successfully completed, the positive outcome contributes to reinforce one's self-efficacy beliefs and, in turn, good practice (Gutentag et al., 2018; Saglam et al., 2023). CPD can play a vital role in addressing the challenges of diversity while simultaneously enhancing teachers' self-efficacy. By improving teachers' self-beliefs and confidence, significant progress can be made in effectively managing diverse classrooms and overcoming the associated challenges (Lazarides & Warner, 2020). The methods used to achieve this goal will be the topic of the next section.

Useful Strategies for Effective CPD for Diversity Sensitivity for Teachers

Teaching requires continuous learning and adaptation to new methodologies, concepts, and topics (Desimone, 2009; Kyndt et al., 2016). To adapt to societal and educational changes toward diversity, instructors must increase their knowledge, question their beliefs, develop their skills, and reflect on their instructional practices (Brookfield, 2002). This necessitates the creation of professional learning environments for instructors that incorporate reflection, interaction, and collaboration as essential CPD strategies. These methods – the "How" and "What" components of the model presented in Section 1.1 – will be described in detail within this section.

The Role of Reflection

Reflection is a metacognitive action that helps us to think about our thinking, beliefs, or behaviours. It allows us to be critically aware of what we do, how we do, and this self-realisation allows us to understand the influence of our thinking and beliefs on our actions (Dewey, 1933; Habermas, 1971; Lempert-Shepell, 1995). Reflection is a valuable tool for teacher professional development, particularly when it comes to cultivating sensitivity to diversity among educators. Therefore, a reflective approach needs to be the key element of all teacher-learning environments (Postholm, 2008).

Through self-reflection, teachers can evaluate their own biases, prejudices, assumptions, and deeply rooted beliefs about differences. They can consider how their own cultural backgrounds and personal experiences shape their perceptions of and interactions with students from diverse backgrounds (Fiedler et al., 2008). CPD activities to foster diversity sensitivity need to present opportunities for teachers in which they can be reflective on their instructional practices, the type of classroom and school culture they cultivate, and the level of inclusive practices they embrace (Gay, 2010; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017). Through the medium of self-reflective practices, teachers can be more aware of how their actions influence their students, which can open space for further discussion and room for improvement of more inclusive practices (Acquah et al., 2016; Ragoonaden et al., 2015).

Teachers can establish inclusive and supportive learning environments that celebrate

and embrace diversity through the ongoing professional development of these knowledge, skills, and competencies. They can effectively meet the diverse requirements of children, promote social justice, and promote effective learning for all students (Gay, 2013; Leeman & Ledoux, 2003). It is important to note here that being self-reflective is a skill that needs to be practiced and refined over time. Reflecting on your knowledge and practices is an ongoing, cyclical process which requires practice, time and dedication. Also, it is not enough to be self-reflective. In professional development activities, teachers need to co-reflect with their colleagues on their teaching practices and challenges they have to address diversity issues in their school community.

Practical Suggestions:

At this point, it might be useful to provide some concrete examples of reflective questions teachers can make use of in CPD. If teachers want to be critical of their professional practices, they might consider asking such questions:

- Am I aware of the different backgrounds of my students? What do I do to learn more about it?
- Am I aware of my own biases and how they influence my students?
- Am I creating an inclusive classroom environment in which my students feel valued and respected?

As well as these questions, continuous professional development programs can use methods such as reflective journaling, structured reflection exercises, peer analysis of classroom scenarios on inclusivity, and feedback from peers (Arrastia et al., 2014). The incorporation of feedback and evaluation processes into professional development activities enables teachers to receive input from peers, administrators, and outside experts. These feedback mechanisms can focus specifically on diversity sensitivity, providing teachers with constructive feedback on their practices, identifying areas for development, and providing suggestions for enhancing their approach to diversity in the classroom. Teachers are motivated to refine their strategies and implement more inclusive practices as a result of the feedback and evaluation they receive, gaining an outside perspective and evaluation from other teachers.

With your teacher learning community, you have read and learned about the importance of being self-reflective and also reflecting with your fellow colleagues. In your learning journey toward creating a more inclusive school environment:

- What kind of reflective questions can you ask?
- What kind of teaching practices do you think you should reflect on together?
- Can you reflect on any assumptions or biases that could affect your perception and interactions with the students of the community. How would you combat these biases and ensure that all students are treated fairly?

The Role of Interaction

As learners of all ages and backgrounds, teachers are also social learners (Wardford, 2011). They learn and develop through interacting with their fellow teachers, exchanging ideas, engaging in valuable discussions, and listening to different perspectives within their teacher community (Kyndt et al., 2016). Therefore, integrating elements of interaction in all forms of teacher professional development matters for their effective learning (Postholm, 2012).

Interaction plays an essential role in CPD for teachers in becoming more diversity sensitive. Interaction provides teachers with opportunities to engage with diverse backgrounds, allowing them to deepen their understanding of diversity, the intersectionality of differences, and ways to make classrooms more inclusive and safer learning environments for their students. Interaction enables instructors to engage in experiential learning in which they actively participate in discussions and simulations that promote understanding and empathy for diverse perspectives. By interacting with individuals from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and identities, instructors can acquire first-hand experiences and insights that heighten their sensitivity to diversity. This could be done by first learning about the teacher community's diversity (Postholm, 2012).

Practical Suggestions:

In CPD, to promote diversity sensitivity, interaction can be used as a tool to encourage open dialogue and reflection among teachers. Teachers can challenge stereotypes and broaden their perspectives about the complexities through meaningful dialogues and discussions that they engage in with their colleagues.

Interaction can also be used as a way of engaging with diverse communities, including students, families, and larger communities. This can be done by inviting speakers from various backgrounds, organising cultural activities, participating in community initiatives, or forming partnerships with local organisations working on the intersection of diversity.

You, as a group of teachers, came together to learn more about Alex's case and to empower yourself to address all students in your school community. Most of the focus of your discussions was about diversity among your students. However, have you looked at the diversity within the teacher learning community you have formed? You can ask these questions in your meetings to deepen your understanding of each other and then you can talk about what you think of the group's answers:

- How aware am I of the diversity of our teacher-learning community? Do I comprehend the unique experiences, origins, and points of view of my fellow educators?
- Have I taken the time to learn about my colleagues' cultural, linguistic, and social identities? What have I learned? What didn't I know?
- Are our teacher-learning community discussions and activities inclusive and available to all members of the teaching staff?
- In our conversations, do we actively search out and value diverse perspectives?
- Are there opportunities for instructors of varying backgrounds to share their knowledge and experiences?

The Role of Collaboration

In contrast to interaction, where teachers primarily engage in communication and learning from one another, collaboration in CPD involves actively working together, making joint decisions, engaging in collaborative tasks, and fostering communities of learners (Opfer & Pedder, 2011). Collaborative professional development allows teachers to learn from their colleagues and share their knowledge and expertise in the areas they feel competent (Garet et al., 2001). Teachers can contribute to a collective body of knowledge by exchanging ideas, strategies, and resources through collaborative interactions (Levine & Marcus, 2010). Teachers can observe and learn from one another's instructional practices and approaches to creating a supportive and inclusive school climate when they collaborate. Peer support and feedback can help teachers in gaining new perspectives, refine their abilities, and overcome obstacles more effectively (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Collaboration also fosters the development of teacher-professional learning communities and networks within educational settings.

Collaborating becomes much more important when it comes to designing CPD on diversity sensitivity and inclusivity. It is an important element of teacher learning of diversity sensitivity because it offers opportunities for teachers to learn about the diversity within their groups, to work on cases and scenarios, and to find solutions for common problems based on classroom practices on diversity and inclusivity (Szelei et al., 2020). Collaborative learning brings together teachers with diverse experiences, backgrounds, and expertise. This diversity enriches the learning environment by providing a variety of perspectives, encouraging critical thought, and nurturing a broader understanding of complex and challenging issues (Pijl, 2010).

Practical Suggestions:

In CPD programs, collaborative interactions can take the form of group discussions, case studies, workshops, and joint reflective exercises, giving teachers the opportunity to learn from one another and increase their collective understanding of diversity and inclusivity. Regardless of their experience, teachers can form or join the existing professional learning communities within and outside their school community in which they can collaborate on broader projects, develop materials, resources and increase their understanding of diversity-sensitive educational practices.

Case studies and simulations can also be tools to work with as they provide teachers with realistic and classroom-based scenarios in which they must apply their knowledge of diversity sensitivity. By engaging in group discussions and problem-solving activities based on these cases, teachers can analyse the complexities of diverse student needs and develop strategies for creating inclusive and equitable learning environments for everyone.

Working together with colleagues may not be as easy as it seems, especially when it comes to sensitive or challenging issues like diversity sensitivity. Here are some questions you can use to reflect on the collaborative practices of your teacher group:

● How well am I able to communicate and work efficiently with other teachers who come from a variety of backgrounds?
● How can we make our collaborative efforts to enhance diversity awareness in an environment that encourages sharing of ideas and information?
● How can we learn best from the perspectives of other teachers?
● How can we support one another in addressing biases and creating learning opportunities for all students that are equitable?

Delivery Modes

CPD programs vary in their forms depending on the available resources, the needs of the learners, the context, and the learning culture in the schools. Based on their needs and available options, teachers may enrol in one or more formats to continue their learning and development on any subject including diversity sensitivity and inclusive educational practices. These modes of delivery can be listed under four main categories: short training programs, mentoring, team-based learning, and professional learning communities (PLC).

Short training programs. Short training programs include formats like seminars, webinars, one-shot presentations, and courses (Waitoller & Artiles, 2013). The content is designed and prepared by experts for the teachers. They are the most common forms of professional development activities for teachers as they are practical and easily organised. They provide structured and focused learning opportunities for CPD on diversity. They are ideal for introducing new ideas, concepts, or topics on diversity sensitivity. However, they are mostly short in duration and there is not much room for interaction and collaboration among teachers in such formats (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Mentoring . Another mode of delivery is mentoring, in which teachers work with more experienced colleagues or academics from the field (Hudson, 2013; Kennedy, 2005). Through mentoring, experienced educators provide individualised support and feedback to less experienced teachers to improve their practices (Anderson & Shannon, 1988). Teachers have opportunities to make individual plans, practice what they learn, and reflect on it with their mentors. It allows critical thinking and reflecting on the knowledge, beliefs, attitude and practices of the teachers on diversity sensitivity and inclusive practices (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Santoro & Forghani-Arani, 2015).

Team-based learning. In team-based learning, some teachers from the same school work in small teams on new concepts, skills, and practices (Coolahan, 2002). These are usually organised by the professional development units of the schools and experts present the newly introduced content. Team-based learning makes use of collaborative learning experiences, by encouraging active participation, self- and co-reflection, and cooperation of teachers (Thompson & McKelvy, 2007).

Professional Learning Communities. Lastly, Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are collaborative structures that are designed for and by teachers of the school community (Keung, 2009). They are often built around a real need or a challenge that teachers have been experiencing; therefore, allowing them to get together, devise a plan to meet their own needs, and collaborate on reaching and sharing knowledge (Hord, 2009). Through PLCs, teachers take collective responsibility for their own learning along with their colleagues' learning, work on problems they bring from practice, and take on new approaches to transform themselves and the classroom culture they create for their students (Antinluoma et al., 2021; Ohi et al., 2019). PLCs can be formed by teachers within and outside the school community, making use of available resources, and inviting experts and other teachers who are willing to work on the same topic (Opfer & Pedder, 2011). As they are initiated by teachers and allow space for the agency, contribution, and needs of the participating teachers, PLCs represent a sustainable model for CPD (Borko, 2004; King & Newmann, 2000). We will deal more specifically with CPD sustainability in the next section.

Lea or Frank, could you connect this part with the Mentoring chapter?

> The formats and design of teacher professional development activities change and the effectiveness of these depends on your needs and expectations, in addition to how well the CPD activities are designed and delivered. Based on the needs and expectations of your teacher group:
>
> - How can you learn about the available CPD activities that you might be interested in?
> - What are the existing communities and networks you can reach out and join to learn more about diversity sensitive practices?
> - How can you contribute to the development of a learning community among the teachers in your school?
> - Which forms of delivery may serve the needs of your contexts the best at the given moment?

How can we make continuous professional development sustainable?

Research shows that many CPD activities have a positive impact on teachers (Bottiani et al., 2018; Parkhouse et al., 2019). However, effectiveness is usually measured using self-reported data of teachers. In other words, asking teachers if they feel like they developed in a positive way after a CPD activity (Romijn et al., 2021). Though it is great that teachers feel CPD has an impact, it is also necessary to measure this impact with more objective measures, such as classroom observations or student development measures (like test scores). Ultimately, we want CPD to change teachers' behaviour and practices to have an impact on students' development and well-being. As discussed earlier, the relationship between what teachers think or feel and what they actually do is not that straightforward. Therefore, just investigating if teachers think they changed is not enough.

Unfortunately, regarding the topic of diversity sensitivity, there is less research on what CPD activities have a positive impact on students' development and what activities are effective in the long run (Romijn et al., 2021). However, the consensus seems to be that

short training, which has a rather individual and passive character, is not the most effective form for sustainable change. The impact of this training is likely to be very limited (one teacher, one classroom) and often fades over time, with teachers going back to their old habits. What is even worse, is that teachers and schools seem to invest most of their time and resources in short training CPD (Lumpe, 2007). Therefore, the school system needs a shift towards more sustainable forms of CPD. To achieve this sustainable change, we should ensure that CPD is *embedded* within the wider context.

Embedded continuous professional development

Embedded means that CPD should not stand on its own in terms of time, people and context. If CPD is properly embedded, the impact is generally bigger and less likely to fade over time.

Time. CPD activities that have a higher intensity are more likely to be effective. The impact of a single workshop in one afternoon generally has a smaller impact than a multi-week training program. Thus, teachers should preferably engage in CPD activities that ask for a bigger time investment or should search for opportunities to intensify short CPD activities. For instance, after following a single workshop, one could schedule monthly moments to take the time to discuss the content of the workshops with colleagues, to reflect on how well newly implemented practices work, or to refresh the acquired knowledge.

People. CPD activities that target individual teachers, or the individual learning process are less likely to yield a big impact. Individual CPD can take many forms, from reading a book by yourself to reflecting on a video of your practice. Even if CPD is facilitated in groups, for instance when you complete training with fellow professionals from other schools, the focus of the activity is often still on the development of the individual teacher. Individual CPD activities can be very effective, especially when they are intensive and well-adjusted to the teachers' context (like coaching-on-the-job). However, a change in one teacher will only affect a small group of students within the school. Once that teacher leaves their position at that particular school, the impact on these students is lost. Therefore, it is important that CPD activities are team-based. In other words, multiple members of the same school team should be engaged. These could be other teachers but also support staff. By sharing knowledge and good practices within a team, the impact of the CPD is likely to be more sustainable.

Context. There is no such thing as the perfect 'one size fits all' CPD activity. That is because the context in which teachers work are very different. If one training was very effective for one teacher, this does not mean that the exact same training will work equally well for another teacher. Properly embedded CPD considers who the teachers are, what their context looks like, and how the CPD outcome can be implemented in their classroom.

This calls for a *needs assessment*. Several studies show that when there is a mismatch

between the CPD activity and what the teachers within their context need, CPD is more likely to fail (Spies et al., 2017). A needs assessment can take on several forms. Teachers could formulate their own learning goals or write down what problems they encounter. Also, other stakeholders in the school, like support staff, students or parents can provide useful information on what CPD is needed in the school. Besides such subjective measures of needs, information could also be gathered by more objective standards. For instance, by using observation tools or questionnaires to measure teachers' diversity sensitivity, self-efficacy, or prejudice.

> Suppose that you have decided to engage in a long-term CPD process with all the teachers in your school community.
>
>
> - What can you do to conduct a needs assessment before your CPD?
> - How can you understand the needs of your context?
> - How can you learn about the expectations, goals and preferences of your teacher learning community?

Important conditions to create embeddedness

Creating embedded CPD in schools is easier said than done. Only if the conditions are right, teachers can engage in embedded CPD. This comes down to four important considerations: the school's resources, structure, culture and policies.

School resources. Teachers need sufficient resources to develop their school resources. The most important resource they need is time. In many countries, the school system is under pressure leaving teachers little time to engage in CPD activities. Teachers need time inside and outside of the classroom. CPD is not well embedded if the school cannot facilitate teachers with sufficient hours to learn new knowledge, prepare activities, discuss practices and perspectives with colleagues, observe each other, and reflect on your development. CPD is not properly embedded if the school curriculum is so full that it leaves teachers with no room to try out new training within the classroom.

Besides time, other important resources are materials and external expertise. Imagine a teacher who wishes to improve their skills in supporting neurodivergent learners. On a teacher forum they read about these special Pictionary boards that can help teachers to better communicate with their students. If the school cannot provide the necessary materials for this, the teacher is hindered in their professional development (Biasutti et al., 2019). The use of external expertise has a similar story. We cannot expect teachers to be knowledgeable and skilled for every form of diversity as soon as they finish their initial teacher training. To support their development, they might need external expertise. If the school does not have funds to hire expert coaches or to send teachers to specific training programs, CPD stagnates.

After you have completed the needs assessment for the CPD for your community, it is time to look at the other factors that will affect the progress of your learning journey such as:

- What are the available resources that your school provides to sustain your CPD?
- How much time are teachers willing to allocate for the CPD activities?
- What can you do if the available resources are not enough, and you need more support?

School structure. As discussed earlier, CPD is preferably team-based on a regular basis. This is easier to achieve when there are structures within the school context that support regular evaluation, communication and collaboration within the team. Useful structures are for instance school wide study days in which the whole team takes the time to evaluate the schools' performance and to decide on shared development goals. Another example is to assign buddies that can observe and feedback each other every now and then or to create smaller sub teams within the school that can meet up on a regular basis to reflect together on a specific topic. Or (in)formal boards of teachers, parents and students (either combined or in separate boards) with the explicit task to evaluate the schools' quality every year. Furthermore, we should not forget that the staff in a school is more than a collection of teachers. It is important that support staff, such as special needs educators, care coordinators and those with managerial positions (like the school director) are included in these structures as well (Romijn et al., 2021).

School culture. Not just the formal structure, but also the more informal school culture is worth considering. As CPD should have a continuous character, teachers would benefit from a school culture that supports learning and development. Teachers should be supported by managers and colleagues to engage in CPD activities. Moreover, the school should be a safe environment in which teachers feel comfortable to reflect on themselves, to give feedback to others and to invent and try out new ways of working. A school culture where there is strong leadership but also a shared responsibility for development has a positive impact on the school quality (De Jong, 2022). This means that teachers try to motivate each other to develop continuously and that they collectively combat resistance to change. Moreover, it is about every teacher feeling like they can learn something from their colleagues, but also that they bring something to the table themselves. For instance, teachers with more experience are usually more skilled, while newly trained teachers tend to have more up to date pedagogical knowledge (Alkharusi et al., 2011).

> After reading about the importance of thinking of the school structure and culture in CPD for diversity sensitivity, it is important to reflect on your own school and then make some plans.
>
> - How would you describe your school culture?
> - Do you believe that there is enough administrative support for teachers' CPD?
> - How would you describe the cooperation between the teachers?
> - How would you describe the existing CPD teams in your school?
> - What are the areas to be improved?
> - How can you and your teacher group contribute to this improvement?

School policies. Finally, a school is not without limits and all teachers must navigate their work and development within certain boundaries. There are regulations and policies they need to abide by. These policies can be created by the school or school board, but also by local or even national entities. CPD activities are ineffective if they are not aligned with these policies and teachers lack empowerment to implement new ways of working (Brown et al, 2016; Daniel & Pray, 2017).

Imagine a teacher that notices their multilingual students struggle with their literacy skills. This teacher is looking for ways to support their students and they find an online seminar that gives the teacher new knowledge on how literacy skills develop in multilingual students. The teacher learns that encouraging them to make use of all their language knowledge (not just their knowledge of the majority language) is beneficial for these students. If the school has a policy to actively ban the use of minority languages in the classroom, the teacher will not be able to enact on their newly gained knowledge, hindering the teacher's (and students') development. Thus, CPD should take these boundaries into account if we want change to be sustainable. Again, including key persons (like school directors) is crucial here as they often have the necessary power to push boundaries.

> Let's go back to Alex's case where the intersectionality of his identities makes his education experience more challenging for him and puts you in a more advantaged position. You are a group of teachers trying to improve the school culture and make it a more inclusive place so that you can support Alex and all students. So, think about the school policies now:
>
> - Consider your role as an educator in influencing and shaping school policies. How can you effectively convey to administrators and other decision-makers the needs and benefits of inclusive policies for students with intersecting identities, such as Alex?
> - How can you work with colleagues and school administrators to identify and address policies that may impede the development and well-being of students with intersecting identities? How can a shared comprehension and commitment to inclusiveness be fostered?
> - Regarding policies, consider the significance of ongoing professional development. How can you ensure that CPD activities align with existing policies while simultaneously challenging and transforming policies that inhibit inclusive practices?
> - What steps can you take to cultivate a culture of continuous improvement and learning in your school's community?

Creating optimal conditions bottom-up and top-down

As a final remark, the described conditions above are created by both top-down as well as bottom-up processes. For instance, school leaders should take the responsibility to provide sufficient resources and create a school structure and culture that supports CPD. Simultaneously, teachers play a major role in the school culture and can take agency in shaping the organisation structure as well. Moreover, they can search for creative ways to engage in CPD, even when resources are limited. This combination of top-down and bottom up even applies at policy level. Policies that heavily support the development of diversity sensitivity have a strong top-down impact on teachers' CPD (DeJaeghere & Cao, 2009). CPD can be hindered when the policies themselves are not inclusive or (implicitly) create inequalities (Leeman & Van Koeven, 2019). In that case teachers should try to include key persons in the schools to find ways to push the boundaries and create a new reality from the bottom up.

Conclusion

As detailed in the previous sections, diversity sensitivity is crucial for creating inclusive school environments . Many teachers, probably including yourself, need a higher sensitivity towards diversity in the classroom. CPD plays an important role in achieving this. This chapter has shown how your behaviour in the classroom is shaped by your belief system and what activities you can undertake to change both your beliefs and behaviour. Moreover, you have read that CPD can take on many forms, but not all forms are equally effective. What matters most is that you engage in CPD activities that are contextualised and well embedded. This means that the activity should fit with who you are, where you work, what you already know and what you want to achieve. In addition to engaging in individual CPD activities that align with your personal goals and context, it is essential to involve your school and colleagues in the process. By actively collaborating with your school community, you can create a significant and sustainable impact on student outcomes. Remember, CPD is not solely an individual endeavour but a collective effort that extends beyond the confines of your classroom. By embracing collaboration and leveraging the support and expertise of your colleagues, you can foster a truly inclusive educational environment. This way you create the biggest and most sustainable impact on student outcomes.

Local contexts

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it

online here:
https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=417#h5p-48

Closing questions to discuss or tasks

After reading about the importance of Continuous professional development, it is important to reflect on your own school, your culture, your reflective journey and your CPD needs

- How would you identify your CPD needs after reflecting on this chapter?
- How would you embed CPD learnings into your practice?
- How would you build an ethos and culture of group CPD learning within your classroom or school?

You have been on this reading and reflection journey together with your colleagues in your school. Thank you for noticing the reality and needs of your students along with your professional development needs as teachers. We hope that the examples and questions have helped you relate the information with your experience and practices.

Your CPD journey only begins here. There is so much to learn about diversity in our schools. Your CPD journey with your community is going to be an enriching, ongoing process as long as you follow the essential strategies for teacher learning, pay attention to the contextual factors in your school and community, continuously reflect on your thinking and acting and be committed to become sensitive to diversity in educational settings.

HERE ARE SOME RESOURCES THAT MIGHT HELP YOU. SELECT ONE OF THESE LINKS TO READ AND MAYBE SHARE WITH YOUR COLLEAGUES: If you want to do further reading on the topic, here are some resources that might help you. Feel free to look for more and share them with your colleagues:

OECD – Educating Teachers for Diversity: https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/educating-teachers-for-diversity_9789264079731-en

UNESCO Online Course on Equitable and Inclusive Education: https://bangkok.unesco.org/content/unesco-launches-professional-development-online-course-equitable-and-inclusive-education

OECD – The Lives of Teachers in Diverse Classrooms:
https://one.oecd.org/document/EDU/WKP(2019)6/En/pdf

University of Antwerpen – Diversity Sensitive Teaching:
https://medialibrary.uantwerpen.be/files/2848/
545b0db1-332a-4554-af2b-1eb574ba8f55.pdf?_gl=1*wwm1kv*_ga*MjA5NDM5MTYwMy4
xNjg3NDQ1NTY0*_ga_WVC36ZPB1Y*MTY4NzcwMjgwOS4yLjAuMTY4NzcwMjgzMS4zOC
4wLjA.&_ga=2.145221620.1188588363.1687702810-2094391603.1687445564

ATU – Intersectionality Guide:
https://www.atu.ie/sites/default/files/2022-10/Intersectionality%20Guide.pdf

Literature

Acquah, E. O., M. Tandon, and S. Lempinen. "Teacher Diversity Awareness in the Context of Changing Demographics." *European Educational Research Journal* 15, no. 2 (2016): 218–35.

Ajzen, Icek. "Nature and Operation of Attitudes." *Annual Review of Psychology* 52 (2001): 27–58.

Alkharusi, H., A. M. Kazem, and A. Al-Musawai. "Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes of Preservice and Inservice Teachers in Educational Measurement." *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education* 39 (2011): 113–23. https://doi.org/10.1080/1359866X.2011.560649.

Álvarez Valdivia, I. M., and I. González Montoto. "Teachers' Intercultural Competence: A Requirement or an Option in a Culturally Diverse Classroom?" *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 22 (2018): 510–26. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2017.1377298.

Anderson, E. M., and A. L. Shannon. "Toward a Conceptualization of Mentoring." *Journal of Teacher Education* 39, no. 1 (1988): 38–42.

Antinluoma, M., L. Ilomäki, and A. Toom. "Practices of Professional Learning Communities." *Frontiers in Education* 6 (2021): 617613. https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2021.617613.

Arrastia, M. C., E. S. Rawls, E. H. Brinkerhoff, and A. D. Roehrig. "The Nature of Elementary Preservice Teachers' Reflection during an Early Field Experience." *Reflective Practice: International and Multidisciplinary Perspectives* 15 (2014): 427–44.

Avramidis, E., and B. Norwich. "Teachers' Attitudes towards Integration/Inclusion: A Review of the Literature." *European Journal of Special Needs Education* 7 (2002): 129–47. https://doi.org/10.1080/08856250210129056.

Bandura, A. "Self-Efficacy: Toward a Unifying Theory of Behavioral Change." *Psychological Review* 84, no. 2 (1977): 191–215.

Banerjee, R., and J. Luckner. "Training Needs of Early Childhood Professionals Who Work with Children and Families Who Are Culturally and Linguistically Diverse." *Infants & Young Children* 27 (2014): 43–59. https://doi.org/10.1097/IYC.0000000000000000.

Bešić, Edvina. "Intersectionality: A Pathway towards Inclusive Education?" *Prospects* 49, no. 3–4 (2020): 111–22.

Biasutti, M., E. Concina, and S. Frate. "Social Sustainability and Professional Development: Assessing a Training Course on Intercultural Education for in-Service Teachers." *Sustainability* 11 (2019): 1–12. https://doi.org/10.3390/su11051238.

Boer, A. de, S. J. Pijl, and A. Minnaert. "Regular Primary School Teachers' Attitudes towards Inclusive Education: A Review of the Literature." *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 15, no. 3 (2011): 331–53. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603110903030089.

Borko, H. "Professional Development and Teacher Learning: Mapping the Terrain." *Educational Researcher* 33, no. 8 (2004): 3–15.

Bottiani, J. H., K. E. Larson, K. J. Debnam, C. M. Bischoff, and C. P. Bradshaw. "Promoting Educators' Use of Culturally Responsive Practices: A Systematic Review of Inservice Interventions." *Journal of Teacher Education* 69 (2018): 367–85. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487117722255.

Brookfield, S. D. "Using the Lenses of Critically Reflective Teaching in the Community College Classroom." *New Directions for Community Colleges* 2002, no. 118 (2002): 31–38.

Brown, C. P., N. B. Weber, and Y. Yoon. "Reluctantly Governed: The Struggles of Early Educators in a Professional Development Course That Challenged Their Teaching in a High-Stakes Neo-Liberal Early Education Context." *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood* 17 (2016): 210–34. https://doi.org/10.1177/1463949116647286.

Brown, Martin, Herbert Altrichter, Igor Shiyan, Maria Jose Rodriguez Conde, Gerry McNamara, Herzog-Penzenberger, Irina Vorobyeva, et al. "Challenges and Opportunities for Culturally Responsive Leadership in Schools: Evidence from Four European Countries." *Policy Futures in Education* 0, no. 0 (2021): 1–28.

Buysse, V., P. J. Winton, and B. Rous. "Reaching Consensus on a Definition of Professional Development for the Early Childhood Field." *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education* 28 (2009): 235–43. https://doi.org/10.1177/0271121408328173.

Civitillo, S., L. P. Juang, and M. K. Schachner. "Challenging Beliefs about Cultural Diversity in Education: A Synthesis and Critical Review of Trainings with Pre-Service Teachers." *Educational Research Review* 24 (2018): 67–83. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2018.01.003.

Cole, C., E. Hinchcliff, and R. Carling. "Reflection as Teachers: Our Critical Developments." *Frontiers in Education* 7 (2022): 1037280. https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2022.1037280.

Coolahan, J. "Teacher Education and the Teaching Career in an Era of Lifelong Learning: OECD Education Working Paper, Number 2." OECD Education Directorate, 2002. http://www.olis.oecd.org/OLIS/2002DOC.NSF/LINKTO/EDU-WKP(2002)2.

Curriculum, National Council for, and Assessment (NCCA). "Access and Inclusion Model (AIM)," 2007. https://aim.gov.ie/.

———. "Together Towards Inclusion. Toolkit for Diversity in the Primary School," 2007. https://ncca.ie/media/2030/assessment_toolkit.pdf.

Daniel, S. M., and L. Pray. "Learning to Teach English Language Learners: A Study of Elementary School Teachers' Sense-Making in an ELL Endorsement Program." *TESOL Quarterly* 51 (2017): 787–819. https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.347.

Darling-Hammond, L., M. E. Hyler, and M. Gardner. *Effective Teacher Professional Development*. Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute, 2017.

De Jong, W. A. *Leading Collaborative Innovation in Schools*. Alblasserdam, The Netherlands: Ridderprint, 2022.

DeJaeghere, J. G., and Y. Cao. "Developing U.S. Teachers' Intercultural Competence: Does Professional Development Matter?" *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 33 (2009): 437–47. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2009.06.004.

Desimone, L. M. "Improving Impact Studies of Teachers' Professional Development: Toward Better Conceptualizations and Measures." *Educational Researcher* 38, no. 3 (2009): 181–99.

Dewey, J. *How We Think: A Restatement of the Relation of Reflective Thinking to the Educative Process*. Boston, MA: DC Heath and Company, 1933.

Eagly, A. H., and S. Chaiken. *The Psychology of Attitudes*. Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace, 1993.

Edmondson, A. C., and Z. Lei. "Psychological Safety: The History, Renaissance, and Future of an Interpersonal Construct." *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior* 1 (2014): 23–43. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-031413-091305.

Education (NCSE), National Council for Special. "An Inclusive Education for an Inclusive Society. Policy Advice Paper on Special Schools and Classes," 2024. https://ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Inclusive-Education-for-an-Inclusive-Society.pdf.

Festinger, L. *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1957.

Fiedler, C. R., B. Chiang, B. Van Haren, J. Jorgensen, S. Halberg, and L. Boreson. "Culturally Responsive Practices in Schools: A Checklist to Address Disproportionality in Special Education." *Teaching Exceptional Children* 40, no. 5 (2008): 52–59.

Garet, M. S., A. C. Porter, L. M. Desimone, B. Birman, and K. S. Yoon. "What Makes Professional Development Effective? Analysis of a National Sample of Teachers." *American Educational Research Journal* 38, no. 3 (2001): 915–45.

Gay, G. "Acting on Beliefs in Teacher Education for Cultural Diversity." *Journal of Teacher Education* 61, no. 1–2 (2010): 143–52. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487109347320.

———. "Teaching to and through Cultural Diversity." *Curriculum Inquiry* 43, no. 1 (2013): 48–70.

Glock, S., C. Kovacs, and I. Pit-Ten Cate. "Teachers' Attitudes towards Ethnic Minority Students: Effects of Schools' Cultural Diversity." *British Journal of Educational Psychology* 89, no. 4 (2019): 616–34. https://doi.org/10.1111/bjep.12248.

Gutentag, T., G. Horenczyk, and M. Tatar. "Teachers' Approaches Toward Cultural Diversity Predict Diversity-Related Burnout and Self-Efficacy." *Journal of Teacher Education* 69, no. 4 (2018): 408–19. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487117714244.

Habermas, J. *Knowledge and Human Interests*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1971.

Haselton, M. G., D. Nettle, and P. W. Andrews. "The Evolution of Cognitive Bias." In *The Handbook of Evolutionary Psychology*, edited by D. M. Buss, 724–46. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons Inc., 2005.

Hord, S. "Professional Learning Communities: Educators Work Together Toward a Shared Purpose." *National Staff Development Council* 30 (2009).

Hudson, P. "Mentoring as Professional Development: 'growth for Both Mentor and Mentee'." *Professional Development in Education* 39, no. 5 (2013).

Kennedy, A. "Models of Continuing Professional Development: A Framework for Analysis." *Journal of In-Service Education* 31, no. 2 (2005): 235–50. https://doi.org/10.1080/13674580500200277.

Keung, C.C. "Cultivating Communities of Practice via Learning Study for Enhancing Teacher Learning." *Journal of Educational Policy* 6, no. 1 (2009): 81–104.

King, M., and F. Newmann. "Will Teacher Learning Advance School Goals?" *The Phi Delta Kappan* 81, no. 8 (2000): 576–80.

Kunz, A., R. Luder, and W. Kassis. "Beliefs and Attitudes Toward Inclusion of Student Teachers and Their Contact With People With Disabilities." *Frontiers in Education* 6 (2021): 650236. https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2021.650236.

Kyndt, E., D. Gijbels, I. Grosemans, and V. Donche. "Teachers' Everyday Professional Development: Mapping Informal Learning Activities, Antecedents, and Learning Outcomes." *Review of Educational Research* 86, no. 4 (2016): 1111–50.

Lazarides, R., and L. M. Warner. "Teacher Self-Efficacy." In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education*, 2020.

Leeman, Y., and G. Ledoux. "Preparing Teachers for Intercultural Education." *Teaching Education*, 2003, 279–91. https://doi.org/10.1080/1047621032000135186.

Leeman, Y., and E. Van Koeven. "New Immigrants: An Incentive for Intercultural Education?" *Education Inquiry* 10 (2019): 189–207. https://doi.org/10.1080/20004508.2018.1541675.

Lempert-Shepell, E. "Teacher Self-Identification in Culture from Vygotsky's Developmental Perspective." *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 26 (1995): 425–42.

Levine, T. H., and A. S. Marcus. "How the Structure and Focus of Teachers' Collaborative Activities Facilitate and Constrain Teacher Learning." *Teaching and Teacher Education* 26, no. 3 (2010): 389–98.

Lilienfeld, S. O. "Microaggressions." *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 12, no. 1 (2017): 138–69. https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691616659391.

Liu, W., X. Li, and Y. Zou. "The Formation of Teachers' Intrinsic Motivation in Professional Development." *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science* 53 (2019): 418–30. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12124-018-9465-3.

Lumpe, A. T. "Research-Based Professional Development: Teachers Engaged in Professional Learning Communities." *Journal of Science Teacher Education* 18 (2007): 125–28. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10972-006-9018-3.

McFalls, E. L., and D. Cobb-Roberts. "Reducing Resistance to Diversity through Cognitive Dissonance Instruction: Implications for Teacher Education." *Journal of Teacher Education* 52, no. 2 (2001): 164–72. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487101052002007.

Musanti, S. I., and L. (Penny) Pence. "Collaboration and Teacher Development: Unpacking

Resistance, Constructing Knowledge, and Navigating Identities." *Teacher Education Quarterly* 37, no. 1 (2010): 73–89.

Ohi, S. and others. "Interrogating the Promise of a Whole-School Approach to Intercultural Education: An Australian Investigation." *European Educational Research Journal* 18, no. 2 (2019): 234–47. https://doi.org/10.1177/1474904118796908.

Opfer, V. D., and D. Pedder. "Conceptualizing Teacher Professional Learning." *Review of Educational Research* 81, no. 3 (2011): 376–407.

O'Sullivan, Carol, Sandra Ryan, Lisa O'Sullivan, and Mary Masterson. "Teacher Well-Being and Diversity. A Manual for Teachers in Diverse Educational Settings," 2024. https://www.pdst.ie/sites/default/files/ Teacher%20Wellbeing%20and%20Diversity%20Handbook%202019.pdf.

Pajares, M. Frank. "Teachers' Beliefs and Educational Research: Cleaning Up a Messy Construct." *Review of Educational Research* 62, no. 3 (1992): 307–32.

Parkhouse, H., C. Y. Lu, and V. R. Massaro. "Multicultural Education Professional Development: A Review of the Literature." *Review of Educational Research* 89 (2019): 416–58. https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654319840359.

Pastori, G., V. Pagani, and A. S. Sarcinelli. "The International Study. A Cross National Data Analysis." In *Resources, Experiences, and Support Needs of Families in Disadvantaged Communities*, edited by M. Broekhuizen, K. Wolf, R. Francot, T. Moser, G. Pastori, L. Nurse, E. Melhuish, and P. Leseman, 307–62. Utrecht, The Netherlands: ISOTIS, 2020.

Pastori, G., V. Pagani, and A. S. (Eds.) Sarcinelli. *Technical Report on the Child Interview Study. Children's Views on Inclusion at School*. Milan, Italy: ISOTIS, 2019.

Pijl, S. J. "Preparing Teachers for Inclusive Education: Some Reflections from the Netherlands." *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs* 10 (2010): 197–201. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-3802.2010.01165.x.

Pit-ten Cate, I. M., and S. Glock. "Teachers' Implicit Attitudes toward Students from Different Social Groups: A Meta-Analysis." *Frontiers in Psychology* 10 (2019).

Postholm, M. B. "Teachers Developing Practice: Reflection as Key Activity." *Teaching and Teacher Education* 24, no. 7 (2008): 1717–28.

———. "Teachers' Professional Development: A Theoretical Review." *Educational Research* 54, no. 4 (2012): 405–29.

Ragoonaden, K., A. Sivia, and V. Baxan. "Teaching for Diversity in Teacher Education: Transformative Framework." *The Canadian Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning* 6, no. 3 (2015). https://doi.org/10.5206/cjsotl-rcacea.2015.3.6.

Romijn, B. R., P. L. Slot, and P. P. M. Leseman. "Increasing Teachers' Intercultural Competences in Teacher Preparation Programs and through Professional Development: A Review." *Teaching and Teacher Education* 98 (2021): 1–15. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2020.103236.

Russell, T. "A Teacher Educator's Lessons Learned from Reflective Practice." *European Journal of Teacher Education* 41 (2018): 4–14. https://doi.org/10.1080/

02619768.2017.1395852.

Saglam, M. H., T. Goktenturk, I. Demir, and E. Yazıcı. "Environmental Factors for the Advancement of Teachers' Self-Efficacy in Professional Development." *Journal of Intelligence* 11, no. 2 (2023): 28. https://doi.org/10.3390/jintelligence11020028.

Santoro, N., and N. Forghani-Arani. "Interrogating Practice in Culturally Diverse Classrooms: What Can an Analysis of Student Resistance and Teacher Response Reveal?" *European Journal of Teacher Education* 38, no. 1 (2015): 58–70.

Sensoy, O., and R. DiAngelo. *Is Everyone Really Equal?: An Introduction to Key Concepts in Social Justice Education*. Teachers College Press, 2017.

Sheridan, S. M., C. P. Edwards, C. A. Marvin, and L. L. Knoche. "Professional Development in Early Childhood Programs: Process Issues and Research Needs." *Early Education and Development* 20 (2009): 377–401. https://doi.org/10.1080/10409280802582795.

Siraj, I., D. Kingston, and C. Neilsen-Hewett. "The Role of Professional Development in Improving Quality and Supporting Child Outcomes in Early Education and Care." *Asia-Pacific Journal of Research in Early Childhood Education* 13 (2019): 49–68. https://doi.org/10.17206/apjrece.2019.13.2.49.

Slot, P. L., B. R. Romijn, and O. Wysłowska. "Inventory and Analysis of Professional Development and Models Related to Inclusiveness." Utrecht, The Netherlands: ISOTIS, 2017.

Spies, T. G., C. Lyons, M. Huerta, T. Garza, and C. Reding. "Beyond Professional Development: Factors Influencing Early Childhood Educators' Beliefs and Practices Working with Dual Language Learners." *The CATESOL Journal* 29 (2017): 23–50.

Steketee, A., M. T. Williams, B. T. Valencia, D. Printz, and L. M. Hooper. "Racial and Language Microaggressions in the School Ecology." *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 16, no. 5 (2021): 1075–98. https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691621995740.

Szelei, N., L. Tinoca, and A. S. Pinho. "Professional Development for Cultural Diversity: The Challenges of Teacher Learning in Context." *Professional Development in Education* 46, no. 5 (2020): 780–96.

Thompson, C., and J. Zueli. "The Frame and the Tapestry: Standards-Based Reform and Professional Development." In *Teaching as the Learning Profession: Handbook of Policy and Practice*, edited by L. Darling-Hammond and G. Sykes. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, Inc., 1999.

Thompson, S. C., and E. McKelvy. "Shared Vision, Team Learning and Professional Learning Communities." *National Middle School Association* 10, no. 3 (2007): 12–14.

Tschannen-Moran, M., A. W. Hoy, and W. K. Hoy. "Teacher Efficacy: Its Meaning and Measure." *Review of Educational Research* 68 (1998): 202–48. https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543068002202.

Turetsky, K. M., S. Sinclair, J. G. Starck, and J. N. Shelton. "Beyond Students: How Teacher Psychology Shapes Educational Inequality." *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 25, no. 8 (2021): 697–709. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2021.04.006.

Tversky, A., and D. Kahneman. "Judgment under Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases."

Science 185, no. 4157 (1974): 1124–31.

Ulbricht, J., M. K. Schachner, S. Civitillo, and P. Noack. "Teachers' Acculturation in Culturally Diverse Schools – How Is the Perceived Diversity Climate Linked to Intercultural Self-Efficacy?" *Frontiers in Psychology* 13 (2022): 953068. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.953068.

UNESCO. "Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," 2015. https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda.

Vertovec, S. "Super-Diversity and Its Implications." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 30 (2007): 1024–54. https://doi.org/10.1080/0149870701599465.

———. "Towards Post-Multiculturalism? Changing Communities, Conditions and Contexts of Diversity." *International Social Science Journal* 61 (2010): 83–95. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2451.2010.01749.x.

Waitoller, F. R., and A. J. Artiles. "A Decade of Professional Development Research for Inclusive Education: A Critical Review and Notes for a Research Program." *Review of Educational Research* 83, no. 3 (2013): 319–56.

Wall, C. R. G. "Development Through Dissonance: A Longitudinal Investigation of Changes in Teachers' Educational Beliefs." *Teacher Education Quarterly* 45, no. 3 (2018): 29–51.

Walter, H. L., E. L. Kutscher, H. B. Fox, E. D. Tuckwiller, and K. B. Ball. "A Tale of Caution: Navigating Special Education Teacher Resistance to Well-Being Professional Development." *International Journal of Educational Research Open* 4 (2023).

Warford, M. K. "The Zone of Proximal Teacher Development." *Teaching and Teacher Education* 27, no. 2 (2011): 252–58.

Yost, D. S. "Reflection and Self-Efficacy: Enhancing the Retention of Qualified Teachers from a Teacher Education Perspective." *Teacher Education Quarterly* 33, no. 4 (2006): 59–76.

About the authors

Fetiye Erbil

Dr. Fetiye Erbil is a researcher and a lecturer at Bogazici University. She completed her PhD at the Learning Sciences Program of Bogazici University. Her research interests include social-emotional learning, teacher professional development, children's rights and participation and educational policies.

Valeria Occelli

Valeria Occelli is a lecturer in psychology at Edge Hill University. Her work focuses on human sensory and cognitive processes, and how they are affected by individual variability in personality traits, beliefs, as well as neurodevelopmental

conditions. She is interested in the promotion of inclusive practices in higher education and scientific research environments.

Bodine Romijn

Bodine Romijn is a researcher and lecturer at Utrecht University. Her work focuses on equality, diversity and inclusion in early childhood and primary education. She studies professionals' intercultural competences and the role organisations play in supporting and facilitating their staff in implementing culturally sensitive and inclusive practices.

UNDERSTANDING YOURSELF AS AN INCLUSIVE TEACHER – TEACHER PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

Ann-Kathrin Arndt; Beausetha Juhetha Bruwer; Sarah Volknant; and Zhicheng Huang

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=669#oembed-1

Example Case

"I am a teacher who, as a learner, experienced difficulties in school. I left primary school unable to read and write properly due to dyslexia and my disadvantaged background. In secondary school, I was placed in intervention groups, which restricted my access to the mainstream curriculum. To pass my exams, I had to study at the local library because I did not have internet access at home. I chose to become a teacher to gain a better understanding of the decisions my teachers made about my educational path."

Rhianna Murphy

Initial questions

In this chapter, you will find the answers to the following questions:

- What is Teacher Professional Identity Development (TPID)?
- Why do we need it to promote more inclusive education?
- How to develop and support TPID in times of change?
- How can intersectional perspectives contribute to TPID?

Introduction to Topic

Teacher Professional Identity Development (TPID) is a multifaceted concept that varies across countries and subject areas. To discuss TPID, it is essential to clarify several key terms. Teacher Professional Identity (TPI) refers to the recognition of teachers as professionals, similar to other fields such as medicine or engineering. Teacher Professional Development (TPD) involves continuously enhancing a teacher's subject knowledge and teaching skills. Going beyond TPD, TPID focuses on the broader development of a teacher's identity including their roles, values, and social influence.

TPID involves the ongoing construction of a teacher's professional self-image and role within the educational environment (Pishghadam et al., 2022). This process includes continuous learning, research, and collaboration, emphasising the teacher's potential for growth and development. It requires teachers to be lifelong learners, researchers, and collaborators who are deeply invested in maintaining their professional image (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2012). TPID enhances a teacher's professional knowledge and skills and fosters an understanding of educational philosophies, pedagogical approaches, and societal expectations. Through ongoing practice and reflection, teachers refine their professional identities, roles, and educational philosophies.

While TPD focuses on the enhancement of professional knowledge and skills, TPID is centred on the development of professional identity and self-awareness. Both concepts are interconnected, complementing each other to support a teacher's professional growth. TPD typically follows a series of stages, from novice to expert, as teachers gain experience and expertise. TPID, however, is a continuous and dynamic process, influenced by personal experiences, educational backgrounds, and social contexts. Teachers can develop their professional identity through reflective practice, participation in professional learning communities, and mentorship. In relation to being an inclusive teacher, TPID plays a vital role in fostering a deep sense of self-awareness, empathy, and commitment to diversity, which enhances a teacher's ability to create an inclusive and supportive learning environment for all learners.

This chapter will explore TPID by providing key theoretical concepts and offering multiple opportunities for reflection on your own journey, your personal educational and national context, and your identity as a teacher. It will delve into questions such as: What influences our perception of a good teacher and why? How is TPID shaped during times of change, and how does it vary across countries due to cultural, social, and historical factors? By looking at the educational approaches of China, Namibia, and Germany, the chapter will provide insights into how each of these countries addresses inclusion. Additionally, the chapter will encourage reflection on how privileges and disadvantages impact educational journeys and teacher identities. Finally, it will examine how we can cultivate sensitivity to the intersectional experiences of learners, fostering a more inclusive and equitable approach to teaching.

Key aspects

Teacher Professional Identity Development as a Constant Process and Multidimensional Concept

Teacher professional identity is regarded "as dynamic, multifaceted, negotiated, and co-constructed, the processes of identity negotiation being highly individual, but also shaped by teachers' socio-professional institutional environments" (Edwards & Burns, 2016: 735). The professional identity is of key importance for teaching (Martínez-de-la-Hidalga & Villardón-Gallego, 2019). According to Sachs (2005) teacher professional identity provides a framework for teachers to help them formulate ideas on how to be, act and understand their work, as well as construct their own ideas on their place in society.

When focusing on the development of teacher professional identity, you can either look at the individual level or refer to the collective ('teachers'). Based on previous research and ongoing discussions, both developing *individual* and *collective* teacher professional identity is considered as relevant (Suarez & McGrath, 2022). Collective teacher identity refers to a "shared understanding of professional communities" (Suarez & McGarth, 2022: 10) and encompasses a feeling of belonging (Davey, 2013). Teacher professional identity (development) has received increased attention in the last decades. Nevertheless, important questions, especially on collective teacher professional identity (development), remain (Suarez & McGrath, 2022: 10). Regarding the individual and collective level, teacher professional identity (development) is of great importance for pre-service and in-service teacher education (Martínez-de-la-Hidalga & Villardón-Gallego, 2019).

How can we understand individual and collective teacher professional identity *development*? Looking at professional standards or education policy documents might suggest that there is only one way to develop teacher professional identity. However, Mockler (2020: 323f.) emphasises that there are *multiple* ways to develop teacher professional identity. How can we define the development of teacher professional identity

to capture this? According to Mockler (2020: 324), developing teacher professional identity is "in a nutshell, (…) about understanding your own orientation to education, to schooling, to your learners, and to your subject area, and connecting and aligning these to your practice." Therefore, "a robust teacher professional identity can help you align 'who I am' with 'what I do'" (ibid.).

Let us pause and reflect.

Think about Mockler's (2020) 'in a nutshell' definition: What is important for your understanding of education, schooling, your (future) learners, and your subject area? If you have already had practical experiences within schools: How did this understanding align to your teaching practice?

Take some time to reflect on aligning 'who I am' with 'what I do' from your perspective: What comes to your mind? You could create a MindMap or visualisation of your choice to further reflect on this.

Earlier notions, for example, by Huberman (1989), referred to several consecutive "stages of the 'life cycle' of the teacher" (Mockler, 2020: 324). However, Mockler (2011: 324) emphasises that teacher professional identity development is "less linear and more complex" (Mockler, 2011: 324). At the same time, different understandings based on different theoretical frameworks of teacher professional identity (development) prevail. In this context, Akkerman and Meijer (2011: 308) draw on the theory of dialogical self in psychology to understand teacher professional identity "as both unitary and multiple, both continuous and discontinuous, and both individual and social."

While, by way of example, this gives you a glimpse into ongoing discussions on how to understand and conceptualise teacher professional identity, different understandings and models converge in the understanding of teacher professional identity as a multifaceted or multidimensional concept. Based on previous work (Mockler, 2011), Mockler (2020: 325) refers to the "confluence of personal, professional and political dimensions."

Figure 1: "Becoming and 'being' a teacher"

Enhanced self-knowledge & capacity for reflection

Greater political engagement (internal & external to the profession)

External political environment

Personal development

Teacher activism

'Being' a teacher

Personal experience

Professional context

Professional learning

Changes to practice
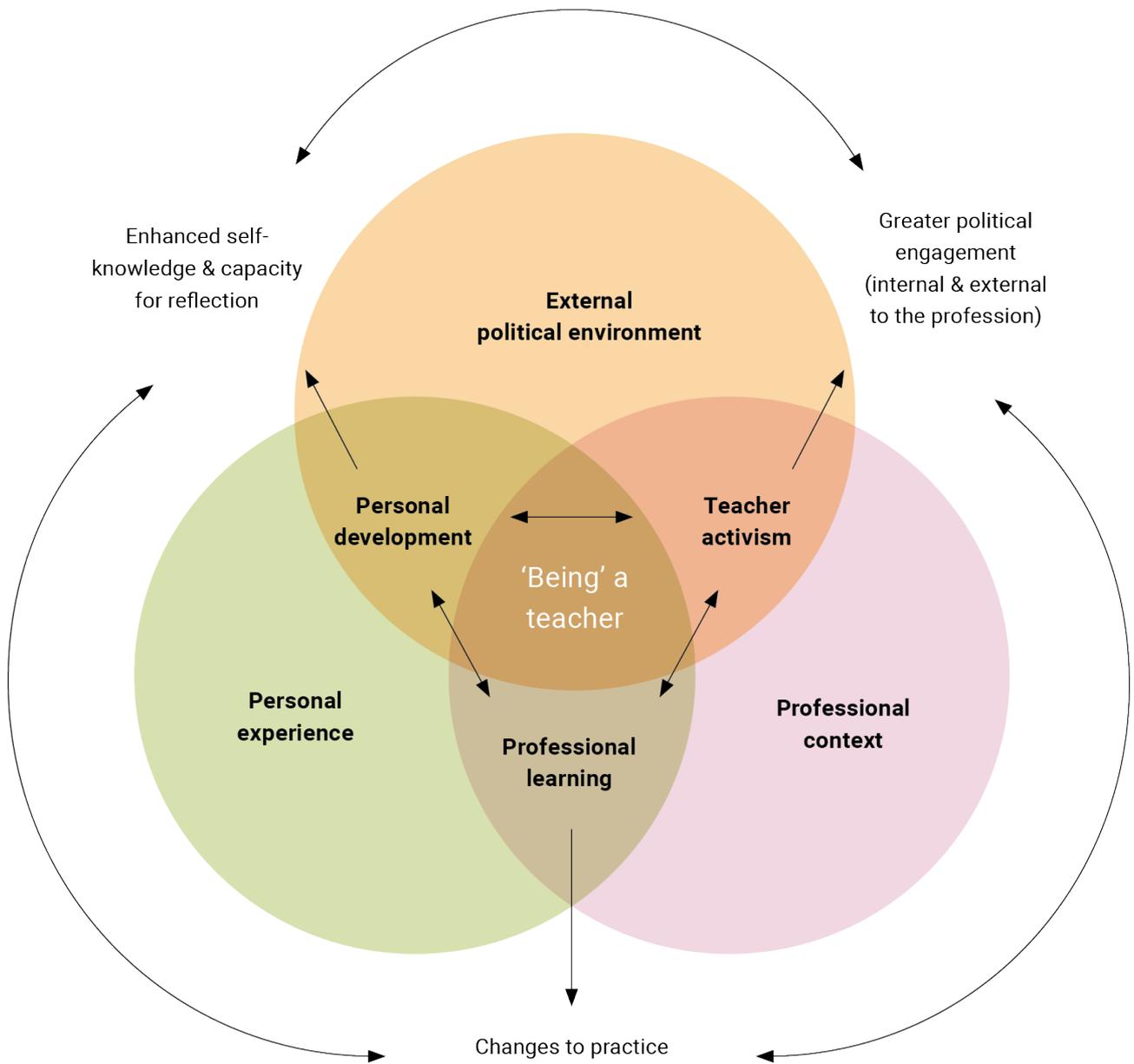
Source: Mockler, 2020: 325 based on Mockler, 2011: 521

As Reeves (2018: 98) highlights with regard to teacher identity work in neoliberal contexts, (re)negotiating teacher professional identity is situated within the "multiple, differentially-powered voices that conflict and converge around what makes for 'good' teaching and teachers." Looking at teacher professional identity in the era of accountability, Buchanan (2014: 700) notes that "20 years of standardisation, tight coupling, and ubiquitous testing practices have begun reshaping the nature of many teachers' professional identities." This is of particular importance as tensions between inclusive education and standardisation and accountability may arise, for instance concerning the understanding of student

achievement. At the same time, Ainscow et al. (2006) indicate that, on school level, the standards agenda and inclusive education are intertwined. Based on their research, they underline the need to "support teachers to take greater control over their own development" (Ainscow et al., 2006: 306).

Let us pause and reflect.

What are – conflicting as well as converging – ideas about 'good' teaching and teachers? How could these ideas, as well as the broader political situation, influence teacher professional identity? What tensions may arise regarding understanding yourself as an inclusive teacher?

Overall, it becomes clear that teacher professional identity is not a static concept. This is of particular importance when looking at teacher professional identity development in times of change.

Teacher Professional Identity Development in Times of Change

The professional profile of teachers has always been dynamic, adapting to meet the needs of educational systems influenced by societal shifts and advancements in learning processes (Martínez-de-la-Hidalga & Villardón-Gallego, 2019). Given teachers' significant impact on learner outcomes, society and educational systems place high and varied expectations on their roles, particularly during periods of transformation. In a world marked by instability and uncertainty, the complexities within educational systems are amplified, necessitating strategic and policy approaches that emphasise innovation and flexibility over traditional methods (Suarez & McGrath, 2022).

Teachers are responsible for fostering children's intellectual development and preparing future generations to face new challenges (Martínez-de-la-Hidalga & Villardón-Gallego, 2019). In this capacity they play a pivotal role in the modernisation of society. Therefore, the goals and outcomes of education must align with societal changes. School and system reforms, whether focused on national or global objectives, must adapt to these shifts by redefining teachers' roles and competencies. This requires ongoing professional development (see chapter on Professional Development) and lifelong learning programs, allowing teachers to keep their knowledge and skills up to date in response to evolving

societal demands, demands integral to the development and sustainability of teacher identity (Thomas, 2019).

As the professional landscape for teachers continues to evolve, a strong professional identity becomes increasingly important. This identity, which includes teachers' beliefs and perceptions of their roles, is vital for navigating these rising expectations and ensuring the delivery of high-quality education (Suarez & McGrath, 2022). To gain a clearer understanding of the contextual shifts that can challenge the role of a teacher and influence the development of their professional identity, this chapter will explore examples of changes that may be unexpected within the teaching profession.

The implementation of Inclusive Education

The role of teachers is dynamic in that it constantly adapts to the changing demands of education systems as it responds to societal shifts and developments in learning methods (Martínez-de-la-Hidalga & Villardón-Gallego, 2019). A pivotal transformation in educational science occurred in the 1970's when the focus moved from a segregated education system to one that promotes inclusive education, welcoming every child. The importance of inclusive education for all learners, both with and without special needs, has been well established. It represents a worldview where fundamental education is accessible to everyone, ensuring full participation, membership, and civic rights. Integrating learners with diverse abilities and cultural backgrounds into the same classrooms symbolises societal cohesion and integration, highlighting the broader societal value of heterogeneity in education beyond just academic outcomes (Galkienė, 2014).

UNESCO (2005) defines inclusive education by highlighting four key principles: Inclusion is an ongoing process aimed at continuously improving responses to diversity within the learning environment, it involves the continuous identification and removal of barriers to learning, it focuses on the participation and achievement of all learners in educational settings, and it places particular emphasis on groups of learners who may be at risk of marginalisation, exclusion, or underachievement. These principles highlight that educational systems constantly change, necessitating ongoing efforts to provide effective education for every learner (Zimba, Möwes & Victor, 2018).

A study done by Galkienė (2014) exploring the socio-educational characteristics that define the professional identity of teachers in the context of inclusive education shows that both learners and teachers highlight the significance of establishing a supportive and individualised learning environment that encourages participation from all learners. Learners appreciate teachers who exhibit empathy, understanding, and the ability to connect personally, valuing those who maintain a balance between being both demanding and caring (Galkienė, 2014). Teachers reflect on the need to build strong personal relationships with learners, recognising the importance of understanding each learner's uniqueness and interpersonal differences. They also highlight the necessity of continuous

professional development, creativity in organising the educational process, and the ability to motivate and support learners to achieve success (Galkienė, 2014). Thus, developing a teacher's professional identity in the context of inclusive education requires ongoing adaptation to the multiplicity of learners, shaped by the teacher's capacity to understand and embrace these differences. Teachers cultivate their professional identity through continuous reflection on their practices and by striving to enhance their skills and knowledge to ensure the success of every learner in an inclusive environment.

Unforeseen social change

As the teaching profession continues to evolve, marked by significant disruptions like the COVID-19 pandemic, the importance of cultivating a strong professional identity has become increasingly apparent (Suarez & McGrath, 2022). The pandemic posed unprecedented challenges, requiring teachers to rapidly adapt to new demands and environments. This adaptation included developing innovative teaching methods and utilisingnew online communication strategies with learners and colleagues. Balancing the pastoral care of their learners with their own professional and personal challenges profoundly impacted teachers' self-perception, emotions, and overall performance (Bacova & Turner, 2023).

The sudden closure of schools worldwide due to COVID-19 forced teachers to swiftly transition to virtual instruction to meet the needs of learners and families. Teachers adapted to new teaching modalities overnight, often working harder than before while managing their own children's education at home. They faced difficulties in ensuring learner engagement, particularly for those without reliable internet access. The pandemic underscored the essential role of teachers and their significant impact on learners' lives (Jones & Kessler, 2020). Before the pandemic, there was already a strong emphasis on the crucial role of teachers in supporting the academic, social, and emotional well-being of learners. Teachers build their professional identities around these discourses, which emphasise care and impact as central to their roles (Jones & Kessler, 2020).

Bacova and Turner (2023) emphasise the importance of open vulnerability in shaping teachers' professional identity. During the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers navigated an emotional journey from anxiety and self-doubt to a reaffirmation of their roles as caring professionals, often driven by positive feedback from learners, colleagues, and communities. Despite sometimes opposing institutional rules, teachers found pride in their autonomous decisions, reinforcing their self-image as compassionate educators (Bacova & Turner, 2023). Their vulnerability encompassed empathy, accountability, and a commitment to helping learners through the social and economic challenges. This approach also extended to supporting colleagues' well-being and professional growth. Reflecting on these experiences was found to be cathartic, helping teachers gain a deeper understanding of themselves and the future challenges they may face.

The Era of Technology

In the digital age, the role of teachers has expanded significantly, with their responsibilities constantly changing. Teachers are no longer just sources of information, they also serve as role models and mentors, shaping a society that is in constant flux (Avidov-Ungar & Forkosh-Baruch, 2018; Martínez-de-la-Hidalga & Villardón-Gallego, 2019). Traditionally, teacher identity was defined by the necessary competencies and knowledge, such as pedagogical skills and subject expertise. This traditional view underscores the importance of evaluation and ongoing professional development (Martínez-de-la-Hidalga & Villardón-Gallego, 2019). As educational needs and scientific advancements have progressed, teachers' roles have shifted from simply delivering knowledge to facilitating learning, providing guidance, support, and values education. This evolution calls for training that covers not just teaching skills but also interpersonal, communicative, and Information Communication Technology (ICT) competencies. Thus, teachers' professional identity involves understanding changing roles and acquiring relevant skills and knowledge (Martínez-de-la-Hidalga & Villardón-Gallego, 2019).

Such a role change occurred with the COVID-19 outbreak that forced educational institutions to implement extensive changes within weeks, shifting teaching to various online platforms that were unfamiliar to many teachers. Online teaching that goes beyond merely supplementing traditional methods requires teachers to re-evaluate their core beliefs about teaching and learning, as well as their roles. Many teachers were left unsupported and untrained to manage the transition to a fully technology-mediated environment, where policies and practices differ significantly from face-to-face settings. Consequently, teachers' professional identities can be impacted, as teachers can feel vulnerable when long-standing principles and practices are challenged by new policies or expectations (El-Soussi, 2022).

The COVID-19 outbreak enforced giant steps to adapting education to the 21st-century requirements, essential for adopting innovative pedagogy. This involves implementing new educational approaches to prepare learners better for modern challenges. Innovative pedagogy consists of planned educational activities, introducing new ideas to enhance learning through interaction, ideally using project-based learning focused on real-life problems (Avidov-Ungar & Forkosh-Baruch, 2018). Curricula then needs to be developed by teachers who have 21st-century skills, focusing on learners' interests and future skills. This includes integrating ICT to support knowledge-based teaching, active learning, and diverse resources. The concept of "quality pedagogy in an innovative environment" according to Avidov-Ungar and Forkosh-Baruch (2018), highlights the dynamic relationship between pedagogy and evolving learning contexts. Innovation in pedagogy may not always involve radical changes but can be seen as a gradual and relative process.

According to Steel (2009), as cited by El-Soussi (2022), teacher beliefs are often implicit and complex, potentially serving as either an obstacle to change or facilitator of effective

practices. Integrating technology into daily teaching is challenging, as even technologically proficient teachers may not recognise its pedagogical value. Teachers whose pedagogical beliefs do not align with technology use are likely to avoid it or use it in ways that do not fit their teaching philosophy. Conversely, teachers whose beliefs align with technology tend to be more successful in adopting it in their teaching (El-Soussi, 2022). Thus, positive attitudes and beliefs about the value and utility of technology, with proficiency in ICT, encourage the acceptance and use of innovative technology-based teaching methods. Consequently, how teachers develop their professional identity effects the advancement of pedagogical changes and reforms (Avidov-Ungar & Forkosh-Baruch, 2018).

Teacher Professional Identity Development in Times of Change involves teachers adapting and evolving their professional selves in response to shifts in the educational landscape. This process includes reflecting on their roles, values, and practices, particularly during significant changes like introducing new inclusive practices, adopting new technologies, adjusting to educational policy shifts, or facing unexpected challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic. Teachers continually redefine their professional identity to meet new demands and to ensure they can effectively support their learners' learning and well-being.

Let us pause and reflect.

In what ways can teachers proactively adapt their professional identities to navigate the challenges posed by societal changes while ensuring they continue to meet the diverse needs of their learners?

Changing teacher professional identity within inclusive education in different international contexts

Inclusive education is a global priority, but its implementation varies widely across countries and is influenced by cultural, social, and historical contexts. By examining the approaches of China, Namibia, and Germany, you can develop a deeper understanding of how diverse systems address inclusion. This highlights the successes, challenges, and opportunities in creating educational environments that cater to all learners, particularly those with special needs. The goal is for you to critically reflect on how professional development, teacher preparation, and societal attitudes shape inclusive practices. Grasping these dynamics can be significant for Teacher Professional Identity Development, as it enables educators to consider and adapt strategies from different contexts to effectively address local challenges.

Let us pause and reflect.

By exploring the strategies employed in China, Namibia, and Germany, you can ask yourself the following questions:

- What are the key challenges and successes in implementing inclusive education in each context?
- How does professional development differ across these countries?
- What elements do you recognise in your own country or context, and how do those elements help or hinder inclusive education?
- How do cultural and societal contexts influence the perception and practice of inclusion?

Inclusive Education in China

In China, there is a strong tradition of emphasising Teacher Professional Development (TPD) in teacher education, with future teachers studying their main subject for four years, encompassing both educational theory and practical teaching experience. After graduation, subject specialisation is a key part of a teacher's identity, particularly in primary and secondary schools, where teachers focus on a single subject such as mathematics, Chinese, or English. This contrasts with some other countries, where primary school teachers may handle multiple subjects.

TPD in China is an ongoing process that helps new teachers quickly develop their subject-specific teaching skills. Various strategies support this growth, including mentoring by experienced teachers, participation in instructional and research groups, observing other teachers, and receiving feedback on teaching effectiveness. Teacher promotion in China follows a structured hierarchy linked to both professional development and salary increases, ranging from new teachers to expert master teachers.

However, when it comes to inclusive education, TPD alone is not enough. Teachers also need to engage in Teacher Professional Identity Development (TPID) to fully understand and implement inclusive education. While inclusive education is still in its early stages in many parts of China, cities like Shanghai have begun integrating learners with special needs into mainstream classrooms. Despite these efforts, challenges remain as learners

with special needs are often exempt from academic exams, leading to a focus on learners without special needs due to teacher evaluations being based on learner performance.

Inclusive education in China is deeply connected to the reform of special education, which for over a century has segregated learners with special needs into special schools. By the late 1980's, China began transitioning to a more integrated system, moving learners with special needs from special schools into regular classrooms. By 2003, the majority of special education learners were learning in regular schools, though this shift has been met with mixed success. Many regular school teachers lack the training to effectively manage classrooms that include learners with special needs, and some reforms have been superficial, without a true change in mindset.

In recent years, the Chinese government has shown a commitment to inclusive education. Following the 2015 UNESCO Education Forum and the Education 2030 agenda, China has introduced policies to promote inclusive and equitable quality education. Scholars and experts in China have been instrumental in advancing research and practices in inclusive education, establishing centres for studies, and developing experimental projects in several provinces.

While progress has been made, significant challenges remain, particularly in fostering an inclusive culture within schools and society, reforming curricula, and adequately preparing teachers. Despite the Chinese definition of inclusive education emphasising the inclusion of all learners and opposing discrimination (Huang Zhicheng, 2004), many teachers continue to overlook the needs of learners with disabilities. As the country moves forward in both TPD and TPID, achieving true inclusive education remains a long-term goal, though the path towards it is becoming clearer.

Inclusive Education in Namibia

Inclusive education in Namibia continues to evolve. After ratifying key commitments that support the inclusion of learners with special needs in general education and, ultimately, their integration into society (such as the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of 2006, the Salamanca Declaration of 1994, and the National Policy on Disability Revised Draft of 2011), Namibia has made significant strides by establishing an Education Sector Policy for Inclusive Education in 2013 (Chitiyo et al., 2016).

With this policy, teachers have received in-service training to better support learners with special needs in inclusive classrooms. Existing special schools, now referred to as resource schools under the Sector Policy on Inclusive Education, continue to play a vital role in equipping other teachers with specific strategies for teaching and supporting learners with special needs. However, more efforts are required to effectively address needs and allocate resources (Chitiyo et al., 2016).

Inclusive teaching requires teachers to recognise and value the diverse experiences and abilities of all learners, understanding that every learner's potential is unlimited and

embracing diversity. Although teachers generally show a commitment to inclusive education, their attitudes are often influenced by concerns about their readiness and the adequacy of the education system's support. Effective inclusive teaching necessitates thorough training, adequate support, suitable working conditions, and the freedom to adapt teaching methods. Teachers must be responsible for offering diverse learning opportunities to all learners and continuously reflect on their practices to combat social biases and stereotypes (UNESCO, 2020).

High-quality training is crucial for inclusive teaching, addressing gaps in teachers' knowledge about inclusive pedagogies, instructional techniques, classroom management, and multi-professional collaboration. This training must be practical, comprehensive, and include follow-up support to help teachers integrate new skills into their classroom practices. The challenge lies in moving beyond the traditional approach of preparing different teachers for different types of learners that can suppress diversity issues in teacher education and hinder effective inclusive teaching (UNESCO, 2020).

In Namibia, the Ministry of Education has raised concerns about the adequacy of pre-service training for inclusive and special education. According to Chitiyo et al. (2016), a 2013 educational needs assessment report identified a shortage of skilled professionals, particularly in special education, where specific training is lacking. While some inclusive education training is provided, it is insufficient to meet the needs of learners with special needs. Therefore, specialised training and ongoing professional development are essential to better equip teachers and enhance education quality for these learners.

A study by Mokaleng and Möwes (2020) indicates that teachers in a particular region in Namibia view supportive leadership as crucial for the success of inclusive education, emphasising the vital role school leaders play in providing necessary support. Without this support, inclusive policies are at risk of failing. The study further highlights the need for inclusive leadership to implement effective educational policies and programs. Many teachers feel unsupported, leading to negative attitudes towards inclusive education, often linked to insufficient knowledge, skills, training, and support. In addition, the study points out that large class sizes are perceived as a significant challenge to inclusive education in Namibia, with many teachers feeling overwhelmed and unable to meet the needs of all learners effectively. Teachers acknowledge that their attitudes are critical to the success of inclusive education, and negative attitudes are often associated with inadequate training and skills. Many also believe that inclusive education places excessive demands on them, likely due to a lack of knowledge and support, contributing to feelings of being overwhelmed. Thus, negative attitudes that often arise from a lack of support are identified as a major barrier to successfully implementing inclusive education (Mokaleng & Möwes, 2020).

The majority of teachers in a study by Chitiyo et al. (2016) emphasised the importance of professional development for teaching learners with special needs. This indicates that teachers in Namibia see the need for further training, suggesting that current pre-service

education, which includes only a few courses on inclusive education, may not be enough to prepare them for supporting learners with special needs. However, the positive attitude toward professional development presents a valuable opportunity for Namibia to develop and implement robust special education training programs (Chitiyo et al., 2016). Research highlights a strong link between teacher professional development and overall education quality, particularly in relation to teachers' beliefs, practices, and learner education. Effective professional development includes workshops, in-class coaching, team planning, action research, peer observation, and study groups. Namibia's teacher development programs incorporate many of these elements, aligning with international best practices to enhance education quality (USAID/EQUIP1, 2006). However, significant work remains to be done in Namibia to ensure positive outcomes for all individuals with special needs.

Inclusive Education in Germany

In Germany, developments of inclusive education vary highly between the different federal states (Steinmetz et al., 2021), also regarding the persistence of special schools. As Powell et al. (2016: 244) conclude: "The German case, despite the legitimacy crisis of special schooling since ratification of the UN-CRPD, also reveals the remarkable path-dependent persistence of segregated and stratified schooling." With great variance between the federal states, the extensive network of special schools largely remains (Bildungsbericht, 2024). This parallel system of special schooling limits learners' opportunities for educational success by obtaining higher education qualifications (Bildungsbericht, 2024), as Goldan and Kemper (2020) have shown regarding learners with special educational needs in the field of learning difficulties.

In the last years, there have been increased links between inclusion and diversity in the German speaking discourses (Resch et al., 2020) and an increased emphasis on intersectional perspectives (Haas & Penkwitt, 2023). However, notions of inclusive education that focus on special educational needs or disabilities prevail (Löser & Werning, 2015). This leads to a missing link to migration pedagogy (Paraschou & Soremski, 2022) and disregards, for instance, intersections of language and disability (Mecheril & Natarajan, 2022). A narrow understanding of inclusive education as focused on special educational needs is reflected in a study on pre-service teachers' understandings by Schaumburg et al. (2019).

With regard to the ways in which inclusive education is embedded in German teacher education programs, Blasse et al. (2023) emphasise that teacher education should enable pre-service teachers to perceive relations of power and domination and reflect on their own positioning within them. This would entail questioning their own beliefs, learning about the deconstruction of normative images and concepts of education as a core component of teacher education, and fostering critical reflection on power dynamics, differences, and inequalities as an essential part of developing a professional identity as a teacher.

Paraschou and Soremski (2022) call for a broader understanding of inclusive education within educational science to ensure participation for everyone. The joint recommendations by the German Rectors' Conference and the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the States in the Federal Republic of Germany (2015) on "Educating teachers to embrace diversity" state: "degree programs which lead to a teaching position in any type of school and at any level of schooling should prepare prospective teachers cooperatively to take a constructive and professional approach to diversity" (HRK & KMK, 2015: 2).

However, several challenges for teachers' professional development and teacher education remain. The prevalence of a narrow understanding of inclusive education remains challenging regarding broader notions of diversity. For instance, Schreiter's (2021: 72) analysis of module descriptions in initial teacher education for primary education indicates a lack of reference to sexual and gender diversity in teacher education programs. Furthermore, the strong tradition of special schooling in Germany is also reflected in teacher education programs, which mostly rely on a distinct model with separate programs for general and special education (Heinrich et al., 2013). At the same time, there are differences concerning the federal states and their respective guidelines and frameworks for teacher education. Hence, there are also examples for more integrated approaches to teacher education on the university level (Bielefeld University: Kottmann & Miller, 2022) or there have been changes on the federal state level following the UN-CRPD, for instance in the federal state of Berlin. Within separate tracks for special education, Junge's (2020: 6) study on pre-service special education teachers reflects insecurities in the contexts of different situations in inclusive or special schools as well as the "need for students to be recognised as a 'real' teacher." By way of example, this reflects the crucial role of teacher professional identity development in the context of changes as well as persistence in schools.

In recent years, professionalisation and teacher professional development regarding inclusive education and diversity have been the focus of several initiatives on both the federal and state level. Especially within the Quality Initiative for Teacher Education (Qualitätsoffensive Lehrerbildung) funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) together with the federal states between 2015-2023. This initiative had the overall aim to improve the quality of teacher education, one major focus was placed on heterogeneity and inclusion. The projects included cross-sectional topics that considered curricula, methods, and teaching and learning arrangements in teacher education for all programs (BMBF, 2024). However, the end of funding places several challenges, for instance with regard to focusing on multidisciplinary collaboration as one important aspect for inclusive education (=> cross ref All means all chapters "Working within multidisciplinary teams" and "teacher agency"here) within teacher education programs (BMBF, 2023: 25).

By way of example, we reviewed teacher professional identity development in three contexts. At the same time, it is also important to engage with intersectional perspectives

on teacher professional identity development, which will be addressed in the following section.

Teacher Professional Identity Development and Intersectionality

Intersectionality is a framework that examines how various aspects of social identities – for example, race, gender, disability, language, religious beliefs, or socioeconomic background – interconnect to create unique life experiences and overlapping systems of discrimination and disadvantage. In educational practice, an intersectional perspective raises awareness about the diverse realities and discriminations faced by individuals, highlighting the impact of power dynamics (for example, racism, ableism, sexism, etc.) in schools. The framework of intersectionality helps to analyse how different social categories and power structures interact, focusing on their inclusive and exclusive effects as well as the reproduction of inequalities (Budde 2018, Riegel 2016). The goal of intersectionality is to deconstruct power hierarchies and promote social justice by examining and challenging relations of difference and dominance, thus holding significant transformative potential (Lawrence and Nagashima 2020; Riegel 2016).

Figure 2: Intersecting Aspects of Identity
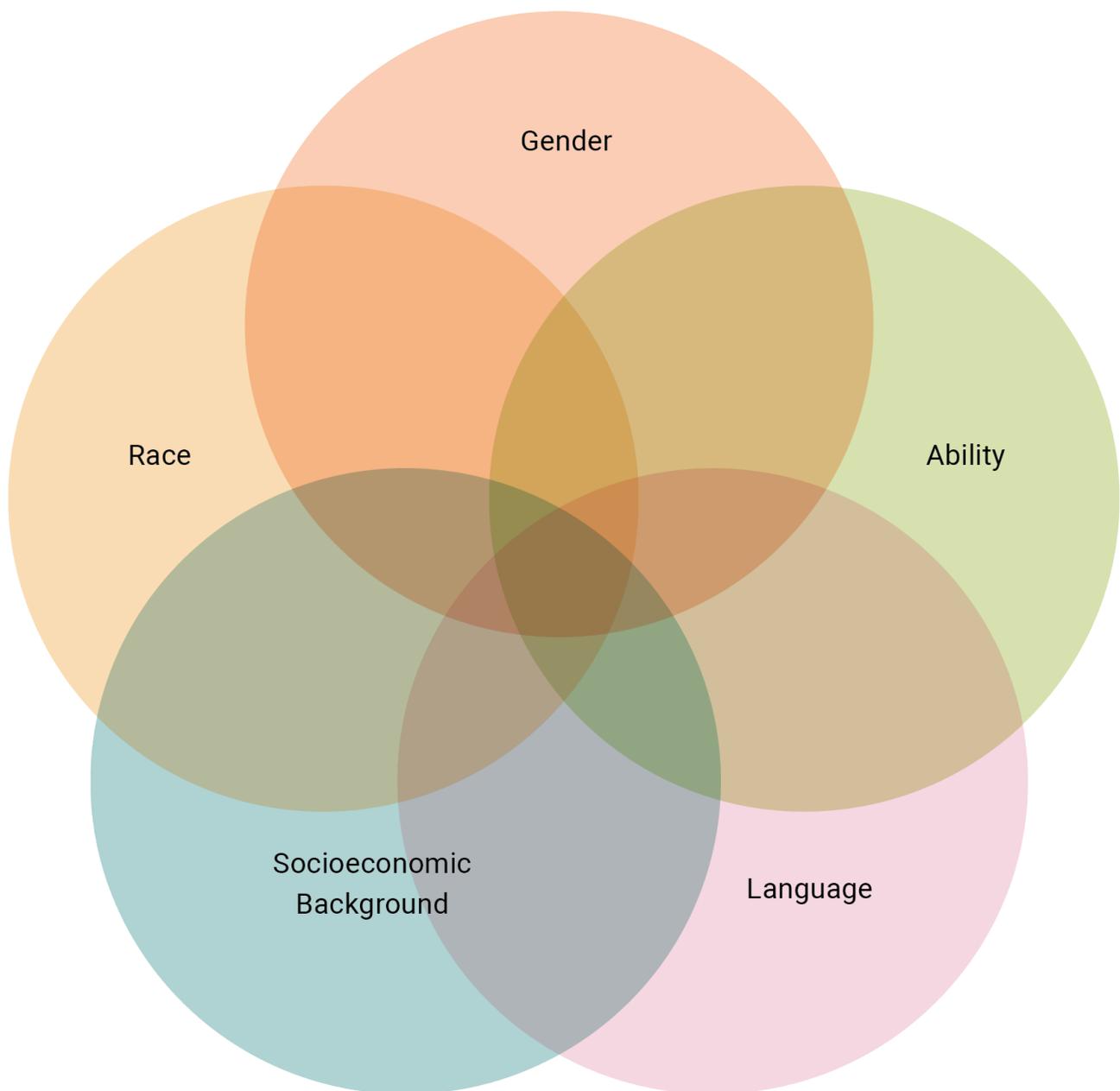
Figure 2 demonstrates how a selection of aspects of social identity might intersect with each other. It should be noted that this graphic includes only a selection; there are numerous other aspects that influence identity, such as religion, sexual identity, immigration status, and many more.

For pre-service and for in-service teachers, understanding intersectionality is crucial not only for appreciating the diverse identities of learners but also for recognising the importance of their own identities as educators (Pugach et al., 2019). An intersectional perspective allows pre-service teachers to reflect on their social positioning and on how it influences their teaching. It further helps to address and tackle inequalities that occur in every classroom (Boveda & Aronson, 2019). Pugach et al. (2019) undermine the need for an intersectional perspective on identity in teacher education:

"Probing the complexity of multiple identities not only can help [teacher] candidates

understand how risk is amplified based on multiple jeopardies; doing so can also surface the multiple assets students bring − across identity markers − that can be marshalled toward learning" (Pugach et al., 2019: 214).

By adopting an intersectional perspective, an asset-based approach can be taken, which is central to inclusive teaching as it focuses on the strengths and potentials of learners rather than on their assumed deficits. Another aspect that underscores the need for an intersectional perspective when addressing teacher professional identity development is the often-encountered demographic mismatch between teachers and learners' backgrounds. This mismatch can lead to problems in understanding learners, as well as prejudices and potential biases against them, which can hinder their educational experiences (Gershenson et al., 2016).

This section will closely examine these aspects, aiming to encourage self-reflection on intersectionality and the development of one's identity as a teacher. After providing a brief historical context of intersectionality, we will explore the meaning of disadvantages and privileges in education as they relate to intersectionality. The section will also offer examples of intersecting teacher identities and include biographical insights.

Historic context of intersectionality

The idea of intersectionality originated to a significant extent in Black feminism. Particularly within the Combahee River Collective, a Black feminist lesbian organisation that was active in Boston from 1974 to 1980. In their 1977 statement, they highlighted intersecting systems of oppression affecting Black women, however, without directly referring to the term "intersectionality." The statement called for social change by addressing interconnected systems of oppression like race, gender, sexual orientation and class, and it greatly influenced feminist theories and activism. In 1989, legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw introduced the term "intersectionality" to emphasise the unique experiences of individuals facing multiple forms of discrimination. The idea has since travelled through numerous disciplines (for example, law, philosophy, sociology), being referred to as a "traveling theory" (Salem, 2018) and a "traveling concept" (Lindmeier, 2023), and has long made its way into educational sciences.

Disadvantages and Privileges in Education

When applying an intersectional perspective to TPID, it is crucial to consider issues of power and oppression, as they are inseparably linked to different aspects of identity. Questions of privilege and disadvantage are particularly useful when reflecting on both

teacher and learner identities. While the term "privilege" may carry different meanings depending on the context, many people have an intuitive understanding of it as a common term. Black & Stone (2005) define privilege in relation to oppression, introducing the concept of social privilege. In this understanding, privilege is a special advantage that is context-dependent rather than universal. It is typically unearned and tied to a preferred social status or rank, benefiting those who possess it, often at the expense of others. Many times, individuals or groups holding privileges are unaware of them (ibid.). Since identities are shaped by multiple factors that intersect with privilege and disadvantage in different ways, it is essential to examine them through an intersectional lens. Black & Stone (2005) highlight this by discussing privilege within the context of socially constructed categories such as sexual orientation, socioeconomic status (SES), age, differing degrees of ability, and religious affiliation (ibid.). This list is not exhaustive; however, it underscores how multiple variables influence privilege. The challenges or possibilities that learners encounter due to being (de)privileged significantly shape their educational experiences.

For instance, Antoninis et al. (2020) took a closer look at the UNESCO 2020 Global Education Monitoring Report with a focus on inclusion and pointed out how disadvantages often intersect. It was observed that those most at risk of being excluded from education frequently face intersecting disadvantages related to "language, geographic location, gender, and ethnicity" (Antoninis et al., 2020: 105). Specifically, in at least 20 countries with available data, very few rural young women that live in poverty finish upper secondary school (ibid.). This example demonstrates the intersectional interaction of multiple factors, showing how limited access to resources – because of living in a rural area, having a low socioeconomic background, or living in poverty – interacts with linguistic background, age, and gender. In this way, an individual's educational participation is hindered by multiple structural disadvantages, which can be traced back to various relations of power and domination, such as linguicism, adultism and sexism, as well as patriarchal and capitalist structures.

Another example of how privilege influences educational opportunities becomes evident when examining learners' socioeconomic backgrounds. In Germany, only 32% of children from socioeconomically disadvantaged families receive recommendation for higher-level academic tracks, compared to 78% of children from privileged families (Autor:innengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung, 2024). Even when learners have the same academic performance and grades, still 59% of children from privileged families and only 51% of children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds receive such a recommendation (Autor:innengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung, 2024).

Figure 3: Intersecting axes of privilege, domination, and oppression
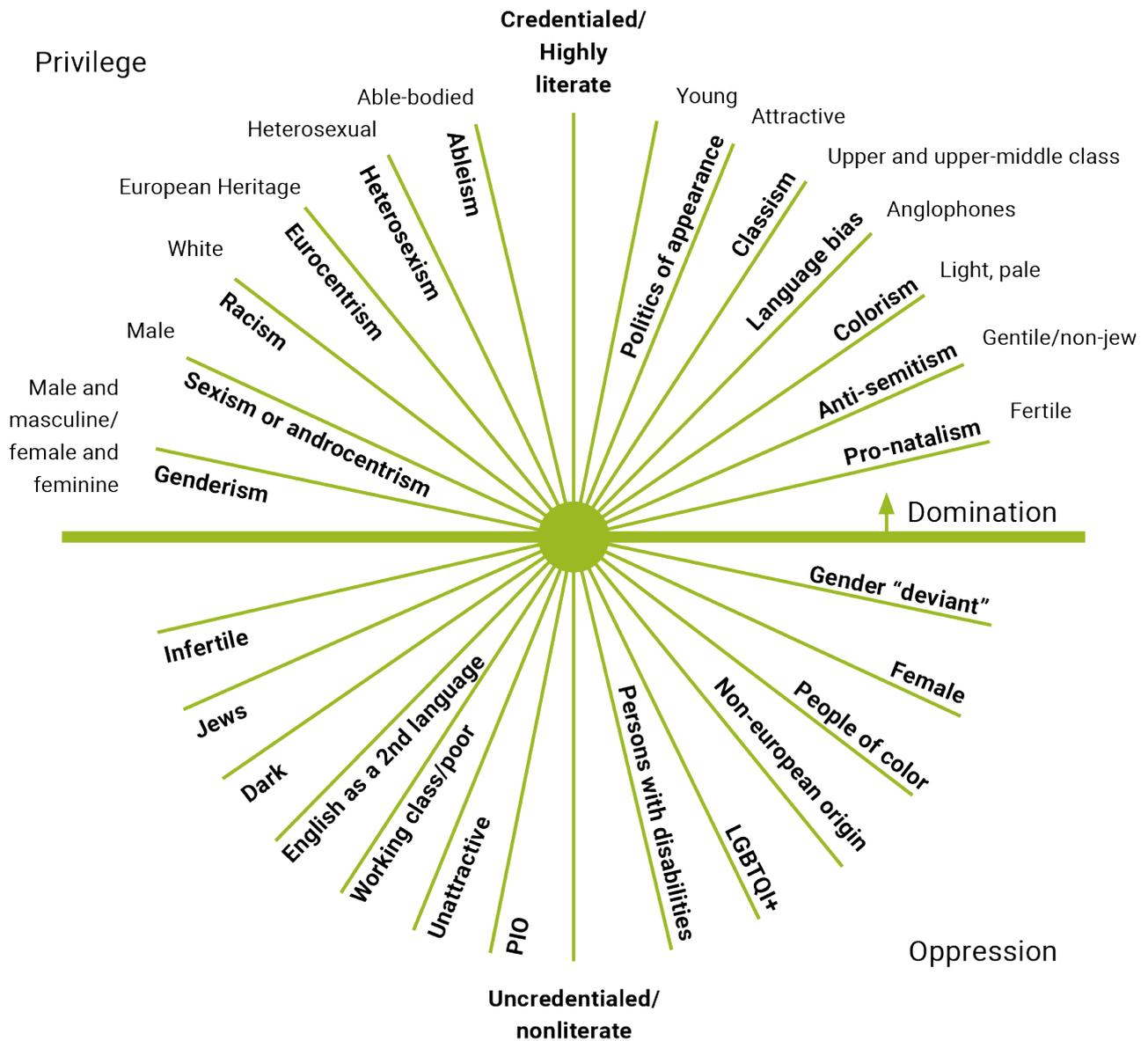
Source: Henr/iques et al., 2023, adapted from Morgan, 1996: 107

Figure 3 above illustrates how different social categories can be linked to privilege, oppression, and disadvantages. Each line represents a social category or aspect of identity, with one end associated with privilege and the other with oppression or domination. This representation wants to highlight how various aspects of identity can place individuals at different points on the privilege-oppression spectrum. It includes the concept of intersectionality by showing that these categories are interconnected and collectively shape a person's overall experience in society. For example, a Black woman with disabilities experiences life not just as a woman, a Black person, or a person with disabilities, but as a combination of all these aspects, creating a unique experience that may simultaneously be influenced by power dynamics such as sexism, racism, and ableism (AWIS, 2018). However, it should be noted that aspects of privilege and oppression are context dependent. For example, Figure 3 views speakers of English as a second language as disadvantaged

because it focuses on a U.S. context; however, the (de)privileging of languages depends on the specific context in which it occurs.

Let us pause and reflect.

Take a closer look at Figure 3. Try to think of three aspects of your identity that are especially important to you. Those aspects may or may not be represented in the figure. Write them down and reflect on how they have been connected to privileges, disadvantages, and oppression that you have experienced in your life.

Intersectional Teacher Identity

A teacher's identity is essential not only for their development as educators but also in how they address inequalities and differences in educational settings. "Teacher identity can be broadly defined by how teachers make sense of themselves as professionals, by how they present themselves to others, and by the roles that they play in response to their disciplinary, social, cultural, and political contexts" (Maddamsetti, 2023: 2540). This implies that in the process of developing their professional teacher identity, teachers should be reflecting on the interplay between their self-concept and the external expectations and societal contexts they navigate.

An example of how experiences with self-concepts and external expectations may play out in a classroom is provided by Lawrence & Nagashima (2020). The authors explored the connections between identity, teaching practice, and university classroom interactions from an intersectional perspective by analysing personal written narratives through duo ethnography. They found that the intersection of gender, sexuality, race, and native-speaker status significantly impacted their professional identities as language teachers. For instance, one author reported that, as a bisexual Japanese woman living and working in the U.S., she experienced both sexualisation and fetishisation. While already facing fetishisation as an Asian woman, she chose to conceal her bisexuality to avoid further hyper sexualisation, given the false perceptions of sexuality often associated with bisexual women. The author further expresses that despite her desire to incorporate LGBTQ+ topics into her classroom, she hesitates because she fears learners might react with homophobia or indifference, which could negatively affect her personally (Lawrence & Nagashima, 2020). This example highlights how heteronormativity, sexism, and racism influence

teachers' decisions, in this particular case leading to the exclusion of certain topics from the curriculum.

Let us pause and reflect.

Can you think of a moment in your teaching practice where you felt a conflict between your self-concept as a teacher and the external expectations of your teaching environment? How did you navigate this tension, and what insights did you gain about your evolving professional identity?

Reflecting on one's personal history is essential for understanding how individual experiences form professional identity. A teacher's biography profoundly influences their beliefs and practices as an educator, with early experiences profoundly shaping their perception of what it means to be a teacher (Pajrares, 1992). Such reflection helps teachers link their personal histories to their teaching practices, offering valuable insights into their professional development. For example, Leckie & De Buser (2020) conducted a study that explored teachers' autobiographies to investigate how intersectionality can act as a framework for professional growth. Their findings indicated that, through an intersectional perspective on their autobiographies, the participants were able to connect critical content with their own experiences in society and education. The study also revealed that even within a seemingly homogeneous group, teachers have encountered a variety of privileges and disadvantages in their biographies. By applying an intersectional lens to their own lives, teachers were able to better understand the experiences of diverse learners, despite differences in identity or social categories.

Let us pause and reflect.

With the above in mind, we would like to revisit the example case at the beginning of this chapter, which contains biographical narratives from a teacher named Rhianna. Please read

through the example case once more before continuing with the following section.

Referring back to our example case, we can see that Rhianna's self-understanding is deeply connected to and motivated by her own experiences at school. Reflecting on this from an intersectional perspective, considering the effective power structures and the privileged or deprived aspects of identity, we observe that her personal background resulted in hindrances on multiple levels. Her dyslexia, socioeconomic background, and limited access to resources intersected to shape her educational journey and created unique barriers and challenges. These challenges included being placed in intervention groups, which restricted Rhianna's access to the mainstream curriculum and, consequently, to education in the same way as her peers. The decision to place her in a separate program was likely made by educators and administrators, significantly impacting her educational path and highlighting how power dynamics can influence the quality and direction of a learner's education. These experiences inspired her to become a teacher, equipping her with the ability to empathise with learners facing similar challenges and informing her approach to teaching.

Let us pause and reflect.

Reflect on your own educational experiences and how they might have shaped your professional identity as a teacher.

- What aspects of your identity have led to advantages or disadvantages during your time at school?
- What barriers did you encounter (or not encounter) in your educational journey?
- Have these experiences influenced how you want to be as a teacher? If so, how?

Developing Intersectional Sensitivity

As demonstrated by Leckie & De Buser (2020), identifying and exploring various aspects of privilege and oppression and their interconnectedness can profoundly influence teaching practices. The authors further argue that reflecting on one's own experiences is essential for understanding and shaping one's role as a teacher (ibid.). Additionally, the adoption of an intersectional framework reveals that everyone, often unconsciously, internalises traits

from oppressive ideologies. This realisation underscores the importance of understanding how oppression shapes our society and therefore influences institutions, including schools and other educational facilities. To effectively incorporate these insights into teaching, the concept of "intersectional sensitivity" can serve as a reference point. According to Volknant et al. (in press), intersectional sensitivity in pedagogical practice encompasses several key aspects. Primarily, it involves teachers developing the ability to identify the individual circumstances their learners are in and also to recognise the privileges and disadvantages accompanying them. This approach requires more than just knowledge and diagnostic skills; it demands a mindset and practical approach that prioritises an empathetic understanding of the challenges that learners face in their everyday lives. Furthermore, it calls for responsive actions that address these challenges, considering each learner's individual biographical experiences (ibid.). To develop an identity as an intersectional sensitive teacher, the following points should be considered:

Knowing: Understanding the history and mechanisms of power and dominance, as well as inclusion and exclusion, particularly within the relevant context (for example, national, cultural, political, etc.).

Identifying: The ability to identify learners' individual needs in relation to their intersecting aspects of identity, as well as the power structures, privileges, and disadvantages at play and how they manifest in the classroom. An intersectional framework (Boveda & Aronson 2019; Leckie & De Buser, 2020; Riegel, 2016) can assist in this identification process.

Acting: Taking responsive actions that address learners' individual needs, continuously reflecting on one's practices, beliefs, methods, and materials. This involves addressing critical or discriminatory actions that occur within the classroom, among staff, or in school organisational structures. It also encompasses engaging in ongoing professional development, for instance, by continuously participating in teacher education.

Intersectional sensitivity is central when considering TPID because it emphasises the ongoing reflective process educators must undergo to understand their roles and responsibilities within a diverse and complex society, thereby enabling meaningful inclusive teaching.

Local contexts

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=669#h5p-40

Closing questions to discuss or tasks

- Reflect on the context of teacher professional identity in your country or context. What is the role of a teacher?
- What role do cultural and structural differences play in shaping teacher attitudes and professional development towards inclusive education, and how can these insights help create more effective training programs?
- Think about how you want to be as a teacher. Reflect on why including intersectional perspectives is crucial for your professional identity as a teacher and how it connects to your own identity, your learners' identities, and societal power structures. Try to visualise those connections through a drawing, diagram, or a written reflection that helps you express these relationships.

Literature

Ainscow, Mel, Tony Booth, and Alan Dyson. "Inclusion and the Standards Agenda: Negotiating Policy Pressures in England." *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 10, no. 4–5 (2006): 295–308. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603110500430633.

Akkerman, Sanne F., and Paulien C. Meijer. "A Dialogical Approach to Conceptualizing Teacher Identity." *Teaching and Teacher Education* 27, no. 2 (2011): 308–19. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2010.08.013.

Antoninis, Manos, Daniel April, Bilal Barakat, Nicole Bella, Anna Cristina D'Addio, Matthias Eck, Francesca Endrizzi, et al. "All Means All: An Introduction to the 2020 Global Education Monitoring Report on Inclusion." *Prospects* 49, no. 3–4 (2020): 103–9. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11125-020-09505-x.

Association for Women in Science (AWIS). "Intersectionality: A Critical Framework for STEM Equity," 2018. https://awis.org/wp-content/uploads/AWIS_FactSheet_Intersectionalityv4.pdf.

Autor:innengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung. *Bildung in Deutschland 2024: Ein Indikatorengestützter Bericht Mit Einer Analyse Zu Beruflicher Bildung*. wbv Media, 2024.

Avidov-Ungar, Orit, and Alona Forkosh-Baruch. "Professional Identity of Teacher Educators in the Digital Era in Light of Demands of Pedagogical Innovation." *Teaching and Teacher Education* 73 (2018): 183–91. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2018.03.017.

Bacova, Daniela, and Amanda Turner. "Teacher Vulnerability in Teacher Identity in Times of Unexpected Social Change." *Research in Post-Compulsory Education* 28, no. 3 (2023):

349–72. https://doi.org/10.1080/13596748.2023.2221115.

Black, Linda L., and David Stone. "Expanding the Definition of Privilege: The Concept of Social Privilege." *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development* 33, no. 4 (2005): 243–55. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2161-1912.2005.tb00020.x.

Blasse, Nina, Jürgen Budde, Andreas Köpfer, Lisa Rosen, and Edina Schneider. "Verankerung von Inklusion in Der Lehrkräftebildung." *Erziehungswissenschaft* 34 (2023): 63–71. https://doi.org/10.25656/01:28295.

Boveda, Mildred, and Brittany A. Aronson. "Special Education Preservice Teachers, Intersectional Diversity, and the Privileging of Emerging Professional Identities." *Remedial and Special Education* 40, no. 4 (2019): 248–60. https://doi.org/10.1177/0741932519838621.

Buchanan, Rebecca. "Teacher Identity and Agency in an Era of Accountability." *Teachers and Teaching* 21, no. 6 (2015): 700–719. https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2015.1044329.

Budde, Jürgen. "Erziehungswissenschaftliche Perspektiven Auf Inklusion Und Intersektionalität." In *Handbuch Schulische Inklusion*, edited by Tanja Sturm and Monika Wagner-Willi, 44–59. Utb Erziehungswissenschaft, Sonderpädagogik 4959. Opladen, Toronto: Verlag Barbara Budrich, 2018.

Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (BMBF). "Qualitätsoffensive Lehrerbildung: A Look Back, a Look Ahead," 2023. https://www.qualitaetsoffensive-lehrerbildung.de/lehrerbildung/shareddocs/downloads/files/abschlussbroschuere2024_en.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=2.

———. "Qualitätsoffensive Lehrerbildung: Programm," 2024. https://www.qualitaetsoffensive-lehrerbildung.de/lehrerbildung/de/programm/programm_node.html.

Chitiyo, Morgan, Elizabeth M. Hughes, Cynthy K. Haihambo, Simon G. Taukeni, Kristen M. Montgomery, and George Chitiyo. "Ocena Potrzeb Dotyczących Rozwoju Zawodowego Nauczycieli w Zakresie Kształcenia Specjalnego w Namibii." *Men Disability Society* 2016, no. 33 (2016): 5–18. https://doi.org/10.5604/17345537.1229115.

Davey, Ronnie. *The Professional Identity of Teacher Educators*. Routledge, 2013.

Edwards, Emily, and Anne Burns. "Language Teacher–Researcher Identity Negotiation: An Ecological Perspective." *TESOL Quarterly* 50, no. 3 (2016): 735–45. https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.313.

El-Soussi, Amira. "The Shift from Face-to-Face to Online Teaching Due to COVID-19: Its Impact on Higher Education Faculty's Professional Identity." *International Journal of Educational Research Open* 3 (2022): 100139. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedro.2022.100139.

European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education. "Teacher Education for Inclusion: Profile of Inclusive Teachers," 2012. http://www.european-agency.org/sites/default/files/Profile-of-Inclusive-Teachers.pdf.

Galkienė, Alvyra. "Professional Identity Characteristics of a Teacher Implementing Inclusive

Education: Pupil and Teacher Experience." In *Bildungswissenschaften Und Akademisches Selbstverständnis in Einer Globalisierten Welt- Education and Academic Self-Concept in the Globalized World*, edited by Gerd-Bodo von Carlsburg and Thomas Vogel, 1st, New ed. ed., 371–90. Baltische Studien Zur Erziehungs- Und Sozialwissenschaft 28. Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang GmbH Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften, 2014.

Gershenson, Seth, Stephen B. Holt, and Nicholas W. Papageorge. "Who Believes in Me? The Effect of Student–Teacher Demographic Match on Teacher Expectations." *Economics of Education Review* 52 (2016): 209–24. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2016.03.002.

Goldan, Janka, and Thomas Kemper. "Inklusive Beschulung Und Schulerfolg Im Förderschwerpunkt Lernen: Aktuelle Entwicklungen Anhand von Daten Der Amtlichen Schulstatistik." *Empirische Sonderpädagogik* 12, no. 3 (2020): 241–54. https://doi.org/10.25656/01:21610.

Haas, Benjamin, and Meike Penkwitt. "Intersektionalität Und Inklusive Pädagogik. Themenheft Der Zeitschrift Für Inklusion," 2023. https://www.inklusion-online.net/index.php/inklusion-online/issue/view/57.

Heinrich, Martin, Michael Urban, and Rolf Werning. "Grundlagen, Handlungsstrategien Und Forschungsperspektiven Für Die Ausbildung Und Professionalisierung von Fachkräften Für Inklusive Schulen." In *Inklusive Bildung Professionell Gestalten: Situationsanalyse Und Handlungsempfehlungen*, edited by H. Döbert and H. Weishaupt, 69–133. Münster, München, Berlin [u.a.]: Waxmann, 2013.

Hochschulrektorenkonferenz und Kultusministerkonferenz (HRK & KMK). "Lehrerbildung Für Eine Schule Der Vielfalt. Gemeinsame Empfehlung von Hochschulrektorenkonferenz Und Kultusministerkonferenz," 2015. http://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/veroeffentlichungen_beschluesse/2015/2015_03_12-Schule-der-Vielfalt.pdf.

Huang, Zhincheng. *Inclusive Education——All Means All*. Shanghai: Shanghai Education Press, 2004.

Huberman, Michael. "The Professional Life Cycle of Teachers." *Teachers College Record* 91, no. 1 (1989): 31–57. https://doi.org/10.1177/016146818909100107.

Jones, Alexis L., and Meghan A. Kessler. "Teachers' Emotion and Identity Work During a Pandemic." *Frontiers in Education* 5 (2020). https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2020.583775.

Junge, Alice. *Sonderpädagog*in Werden: Auf Dem Weg Zu Einer Professionellen Haltung*. Bad Heilbrunn: Klinkhardt, 2020.

Kottmann, Brigitte, and Susanne Miller. "Der Studiengang Der Integrierten Sonderpädagogik an Der Universität Bielefeld" 7815–5958 (2022). https://doi.org/10.25656/01:24894.

Lawrence, Luke, and Yuzuko Nagashima. "The Intersectionality of Gender, Sexuality, Race, and Native-Speakerness: Investigating ELT Teacher Identity Through Duoethnography." *Journal of Language, Identity & Education* 19, no. 1 (2020): 42–55. https://doi.org/10.1080/15348458.2019.1672173.

Leckie, Alisa, and Maya Buser De. "The Power of an Intersectionality Framework in Teacher Education." *Journal of Multicultural Education* 14, no. 1 (2020): 117–27. https://doi.org/

10.1108/JME-07-2019-0059.

Lindmeier, Christian. "Intersektionalität Als Thema Der Sonder- Und Inklusionspädagogik." *Zeitschrift Für Inklusion (ZfI)* 1 (2023). https://www.inklusion-online.net/index.php/ inklusion-online/article/view/696.

Löser, Jessica M., and Rolf Werning. "Inklusion – Allgegenwärtig, Kontrovers, Diffus?" *Erziehungswissenschaft* 26, no. 51 (2015): 17–24.

Maddamsetti, Jihea. "Diffractively Thinking About Teacher Identity in Body Mapping as Performance, Intersectional Positionality, and Material-Discursive Enactment." *The Qualitative Report (TQR)*, 2023. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2023.5975.

Martínez-de-la-Hidalga, Zoe, and Lourdes Villardón-Gallego. "Teacher Identity Research and Development." In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education*. Oxford University Press, 2019.

Mecheril, Paul, and Radhika Natarajan. "Praktische Wirksamkeit in Migrationsgesellschaftlichen Sprachordnungen." In *DisAbility in Der Migrationsgesellschaft: Betrachtungen an Der Intersektion von Behinderung, Kultur Und Religion in Bildungskontexten*, edited by Petra Engelbrecht and Lena Green, 56–64. Bad Heilbrunn Verlag Julius Klinkhardt Stuttgart utb GmbH, 2022. https://www.pedocs.de/ frontdoor.php?source_opus=24521.

Mockler, Nicole. "Beyond 'What Works': Understanding Teacher Identity as a Practical and Political Tool." *Teachers and Teaching* 17, no. 5 (2011): 517–28. https://doi.org/10.1080/ 13540602.2011.602059.

———. "Navigating Professional Identity as a Teacher of History." In *Historical Thinking for History Teachers: A New Approach to Engaging Students and Developing Historical Consciousness*, edited by T. Allender A. Clark and R. J. Parkes, 323–36. Abingdon, Oxon, New York, NY: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2020.

Mokaleng, Mercy, and Andrew Möwes. "Issues Affecting the Implementation of Inclusive Education Practices in Selected Secondary Schools in the Omaheke Region of Namibia." *Journal of Curriculum and Teaching* 9, no. 2 (2020): 78. https://doi.org/10.5430/jct.v9n2p78.

Morgan, Kathryn Pauly. "Describing the Emperor's New Clothes: Three Myths of Educational (In-)Equity." In *The Gender Question in Education*, edited by Ann Diller Barbara Houston, Kathryn P. Morgan and Maryann Ayim, 105–22. Routledge, 1996.

Pajares, M. Frank. "Teachers' Beliefs and Educational Research: Cleaning up a Messy Construct." *Review of Educational Research* 62, no. 3 (1992): 307–32. https://doi.org/ 10.3102/00346543062003307.

Paraschou, Athina, and Regina Soremski. "Inklusion Und Migration – Herausforderungen Und Chancen Für Eine Diversitätssensible Lehrer*innenbildung" 7815–5937 (2022). https://doi.org/10.25656/01:24536.

Pishghadam, Reza, Jawad Golzar, and Mir Abdullah Miri. "A New Conceptual Framework for Teacher Identity Development." *Frontiers in Psychology* 13 (2022). https://doi.org/10.3389/ fpsyg.2022.876395.

Powell, Justin J., Benjamin Edelstein, and Jonna M. Blanck. "Awareness-Raising,

Legitimation or Backlash? Effects of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on Education Systems in Germany." *Globalisation, Societies and Education* 14, no. 2 (2016): 227–50. https://doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2014.982076.

Pugach, Marleen C., Joyce Gomez-Najarro, and Ananya M. Matewos. "A Review of Identity in Research on Social Justice in Teacher Education: What Role for Intersectionality?" *Journal of Teacher Education* 70, no. 3 (2019): 206–18. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487118760567.

Reeves, Jenelle. "Teacher Identity Work in Neoliberal Schooling Spaces." *Teaching and Teacher Education* 72 (2018): 98–106. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2018.03.002.

Resch, Katharina, Katharina-Theresa Lindner, Bettina Streese, Michelle Proyer, and Susanne Schwab. "Vorwort." In *Beiträge Zur Bildungsforschung, Band 8, Inklusive Schule Und Schulentwicklung: Theoretische Grundlagen, Empirische Befunde Und Praxisbeispiele Aus Deutschland, Österreich Und Der Schweiz*, edited by Katharina Resch Katharina-Theresa Lindner, Bettina Streese, Michelle Proyer and Susanne Schwab, 8–9. Münster, New York: Waxmann, 2021.

Riegel, Christine. *Bildung – Intersektionalität – Othering: Pädagogisches Handeln in Widersprüchlichen Verhältnissen*. Bielefeld: Transcript, 2016.

Sachs, Judyth. "Teacher Education and the Development of Professional Identity: Learning to Be a Teacher." In *Connecting Policy and Practice: Challenges for Teaching and Learning in Schools and Universities*, 5–21, 2005.

Salem, Sara. "Intersectionality and Its Discontents: Intersectionality as Traveling Theory." *European Journal of Women's Studies* 25, no. 4 (2018): 403–18. https://doi.org/10.1177/1350506816643999.

Schaumburg, Melanie, Stefan Walter, and Uje Hashagen. "Was Verstehen Lehramtsstudierende Unter Inklusion? Eine Untersuchung Subjektiver Definitionen." *QfI – Qualifizierung Für Inklusion. Online-Zeitschrift Zur Forschung Über Aus-, Fort- Und Weiterbildung Pädagogischer Fachkräfte* 1, no. 1 (2019). https://doi.org/10.21248/qfi.9.

Schreiter, Franziska. "Vielfalt* Lehren – Sexuelle Und Geschlechtliche Vielfalt Im Studium Der Grundschulpädagogik." In *Von Der Vielheit Der Geschlechter*, edited by J. von Dall'Armi and V. Schurt, 67–82. Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden, 2021.

Steinmetz, Sebastian, Michael Wrase, Marcel Helbig, and Ina Döttinger. *Die Umsetzung Schulischer Inklusion Nach Der UN-Behindertenrechtskonvention in Den Deutschen Bundesländern*. Vol. 15. Nomos, 2021.

Suarez, Valentina, and Jason McGrath. "Teacher Professional Identity: How to Develop and Support It in Times of Change," 2022. https://doi.org/10.1787/b19f5af7-en.

Thomas, Ndame. "Managing Professionalism in Teacher Education: Issues of Teacher Identity Development in Cameroon," 2019. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3240681.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). "Guidelines for Inclusion: Ensuring Access to Education for All," 2005. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000140224.

———. "Inclusive Teaching: Preparing All Teachers to Teach All Students," 2020. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000374447.

USAID/EQUIP1. "Professional Development and Quality: Perspectives of Namibian Teachers," 2006. https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pnaea664.pdf.

Volknant, Sarah, Rena Janßen, Stefanie Scholz-Wemken, Ulla Licandro, Annett Thiele, and Mario Dunkel. "Intersektionale Sensibilität Als Pädagogische Handlungspraxis in Der Lehrkräftebildung: Perspektiven Aus Der Musik- Und Sonderpädagogik." In *Handbuch Intersektionale Pädagogik*, edited by Lena-Marie Staab, n.d.

Zimba, Roderick F., Andrew D. Möwes, and A. N. Victor. "Inclusive Education in Namibia." In *Responding to the Challenges of Inclusive Education in Southern Africa*, edited by Petra Engelbrecht and Lena Green, 2nd ed., 59–73. Hatfield, Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers, 2018.

About the authors

Ann-Kathrin Arndt

Ann-Kathrin Arndt, research, teaching and developing teacher education in the field of inclusive education. PhD on collaboration between general and special education teachers (Leibniz University Hannover). Main research areas: Multidisciplinary teamwork, constructions of difference in inclusive classrooms, inclusive, diversity-sensitive teacher education.

Beausetha Juhetha Bruwer

Beausetha Bruwer, instructor of inclusive education, deaf education, and sign language. Experiences as a teacher of deaf children and as a teacher and sign language interpreter trainer at college and university level. Her key areas of research interest include, among other things: language education, early literacy and language acquisition/ development for deaf learners, sign language linguistics and practices, Deaf culture, mother tongue education, multilingual education, early childhood inclusive practices, play pedagogy, outdoor pedagogy, and teacher preparation for inclusive practices.

Sarah Volknant

Sarah Volknant is an educator and researcher from Germany with a passion for the topics of inclusion, multilingualism, and intersectionality with a focus on teacher education. Her work delves into prejudiced perceptions of language within

educational contexts, aiming to uncover the underlying beliefs and socially constructed norms. Sarah's approach involves critically reflecting on and deconstructing biases by employing intersectional perspectives.

Zhicheng Huang

Zhicheng Huang, is professor of Institute of International and Comparative Education in East China Normal University, Shanghai, China. His research interests include comparative education, international education theories, curriculum and instruction, teacher education, inclusive education, educational administration, Latin America education, Paulo Freire education theory, etc. In 2004 he published the first book in China on *Inclusive Education——All means all*. He was visiting scholar in Chile, Mexico, Spain, USA, UK, Germany and Japan. He has managed several national and international cooperative research projects on inclusive education and others topics. He was vice-dean of Faculty of Education, director of Department of Curriculum and Instruction, director of Institute of International and Comparative Education in East China Normal University. He was vice president of China Association of Comparative Education.

REFLECTING ON TEACHER HABITUS - THE POTENTIAL TO SUPPORT INCLUSION IN THE CLASSROOM

Nico Leonhardt; Rose Ryan; and Valerio Ferrero

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=369#oembed-1

Example Case 1

"I was born and raised in western Germany in a Catholic, white, middle-class family without any academic background…and then I went to Berlin and I'm teaching at a school where most of my students have a completely different background, let's say. When I was first teaching there, I had to relearn many things because entering with my habitus, the way I was socialised, didn't work out very well because there were lots of misunderstandings, lots of biases from my side. And so, I was trying to better understand how I was raised and how my students were raised…and also, they have different families and different backgrounds, but it was very, very obvious to me that I couldn't just put my own beliefs and habitus on them because theirs was very different. […] As a teacher, you're always aware of the powerful side of that. So, I asked myself, how can I use that power in a positive way for my students? And how do I talk about my students, because this is a kind of reproduction of how I see them. So, first of all, how I talk about them with my colleagues. I just asked myself very concretely when I come out of class, when I finish a class and I go into the teacher's (staff) room, how do I talk? What do I say? Even if I'm frustrated, what kind of behaviour do I display when I talk about them in a biased way… if we think about teacher habitus and how we talk about students it is not only how we talk inside school, but also how we talk outside of school. So how do I talk to my own parents, to my own family about how I work, what I see and how I see my students? And this is also something that really changed during my working experience over the last ten years. If you change your perspective and you take on

board the student's perspective and their family's perspective, you see that it's not a school in a socially deprived or marginalised area, it's not a school facing lots of problems, it's also not in paradise. But for them, it's just a school, a normal school. So, if you change your perspective on these schools and the discourse, then you can also see the bias that you have, because it's a very normative way to look at these schools and these students. For me, trying to change my perspective and beginning with myself has helped me."

Simon Klippert, secondary school teacher, Germany

Initial questions

1. What does teacher habitus mean?
2. Why is it important for me as a teacher to consider teacher habitus?
3. How diverse is the teaching profession in Ireland, Italy, and Germany? What needs to change to achieve inclusion?
4. What is the impact of teacher habitus on students?
5. What are the challenges of engaging with your own teacher habitus?
6. How can I reflect on my own habitus as a teacher?
7. Through a better awareness of teacher habitus, what is the potential for me to support inclusion in the classroom and impact inclusive school culture?

Introduction to Topic

We know that teacher habitus is contextualised within one's own knowledge, behaviour, and social influences. Teacher habitus is also increasingly becoming the focus of a reflexive examination of pedagogical discourse. Habitus, as a person's overall appearance and internalisation of social and cultural norms of one's social class (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977), is significantly shaped by a person's background and biographical (and school) development. In this regard, the discourse on teacher habitus is also linked to the issue of educational inequality, because schools play an important role in producing and (re)producing class inequalities (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1979). Our expectations, assumptions, relationships, and interactions are closely linked to our beliefs (and biases) about what is considered 'normal' and 'capable'. Habitus significantly determines and

influences teacher action and thus student development (Helsper, 2015; Lange-Vester, 2015). Discrimination, stigmatisation, and the (re)production of social inequality can play a significant role in this.

In relation to teacher habitus, different types can be distinguished (Lange-Vester 2015). Concepts of the normality of teachers are closely linked to the respective (ability) expectations. In the context of teacher habitus, questions for consideration include to what extent my own habitus influences my everyday pedagogical work and/or which prejudices influence me as a teacher? Also, which experiences and habitual patterns remain invisible in everyday school life and are excluded in the sense of a hegemonic effect?

Knowing that power is immanent in the context of schooling, inclusive pedagogy, or inclusive teacher education faces the challenge of revealing and questioning habitus patterns in a power-critical way. This chapter explores the meaning and importance of teacher habitus, how it is affected, and considers the implications of the lack of diversity in the teaching profession in Ireland, Italy, and Germany (the authors' countries of origin). The chapter outlines the possibilities there are for confronting one's own habitus as a teacher in an inclusive pedagogical everyday environment.

Considerations for developing habitus sensitivity are used as potential for change. As a result, implications on two levels for self-reflective engagement are highlighted. On the one hand, on the level of the teacher and, on the other hand, on the level of the students or the school culture.

Key aspects

The meaning of teacher habitus

The term 'habitus' refers to the dominant norms and practices of particular social classes or groups (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977). Central to Bourdieu's notion of habitus is that in society certain classes use their social, cultural, and economic capital, to reproduce themselves and secure their dominance in society (Thomas, 2002). Thomas (2002) argues that habitus refers to more than norms or values because it is so embedded, often subconsciously, in everyday life and interactions (Thomas, 2002). In Bourdieu's sense, habitus can be described as "schemata or relations of perceptions, sense-making, and actions and their social conditions" (Höhne, 2013:261, Author's translation) and is essentially shaped by one's own experiences and social structures. It is thereby something "internalised, something that demarcates me and my world from another world" (Thümmler, 2022:220, Author's translation) and is not cognitively caught up, but finds expression in a person's practices (cf. te Poel 2022:142 after Kramer, 2019, Author's translation).

The meaning of social class, for example, plays an all-encompassing role in our contemporary society (Hooks, 2020). Nevertheless, reflection on social processes critical of classism, is only hesitantly moving into the focus of public discourses (ibid.). In the field

of education, however, the question of origin and its effects in the context of educational (in)justice is increasingly discussed (e.g., El-Mafaalani, 2020 or Behrmann, 2013). The topic discussed in this chapter, therefore, focuses on the concept of habitus and its impact on (inclusive) educational processes. The habitus of the elite are well suited to thrive in formal educational environments that are (deliberately) structured to meet their needs while the needs of other groups are far more likely to be divorced from the habitus of formal educational institutions. These can be summarised as structural barriers in education, particularly financial barriers, a disconnection between the students' habitus (values, norms, and culture) and the 'middle-class' habitus of schools, universities, and elite institutions, where students can experience education as a 'struggle' with a strong sense of 'not fitting in' or 'not being good en   ough'.

Habitus is of great importance, especially in the context of school: as Perrenoud (2001) states, it is the generative grammar of all practices. Teachers come to school with their "habitual orientations that have developed in their social environment" (Thümmler, 2022: 221, author's translation). The so-called teacher habitus is therefore an important part of current educational debates. In this context, Helsper (2018) differentiates the concept of habitus into four parts of an overall habitus of teachers, which are interconnected in terms of processes. First, Helsper identifies the primary habitus of origin. This is based on the cultural practices of the family and one's own social environment. It forms the basis of the overall habitus. From this, an individual habitus (second) develops, which is reciprocally strongly influenced by one's own life path and shaped by experiences in environments and spaces outside the family (ibid. & te Poel 2022). Depending on the contact with other environments, this can also lead to habitus transformations, in relation to the primary habitus. In addition, teacher habitus (third) and student habitus (fourth) are still essential field-specific formations of the overall habitus of a teacher, which in turn strongly influence each other. Thus, "teachers design student images equivalent to their own teacher habitus, which tend to remain concealed" (te Poel 2022: 142, Author's translation). Thus, the question is what learned behaviours, perceptions, and experiences determine teachers' behaviour? What notions of normality or difference influence teachers' concrete practices? What forms of 'othering', discrimination or stigmatisation are associated with habitual imprints? Lange-Vester (2015), for example, distinguishes three different habitus types among teachers (personal responsibility and inclusion, integration and equal opportunities, and order and discipline), which in turn are each linked to specific expectations of students and can lead to different patterns of action. Thus, the view of social inequalities differs across patterns, and expectations of students are linked to them. For example, who receives recognition for which skills, or who is expected to succeed in school and who is not?

Considering your own habitus as a teacher: why is it important?

Example Case 2

"I am a primary school teacher in Ireland. Recently, a child from Serbia arrived in my classroom: she did not speak English and felt lost. Observing her, I noticed that she loves to draw and doodle during playtime. So, I decided to include drawing in my lessons as a strategy for communicating and approaching different topics: she started to feel at ease within the class. Feeling welcome, she started to use drawings as a map to speak in English. It was crucial for me to consider my habitus and perceive myself as a change agent for this child: she should have every opportunity to succeed."

Dean Vaughan, primary school teacher, Ireland

Much has been written in pedagogy books on what it means to be a good teacher, on how to welcome and value diversity from an intersectional perspective, on how to implement inclusion (Azer, 2005; Biesta, 2017; Ida, 2017). However, every teacher, even the one with the most refined and precise academic preparation, knows the feeling when certainties break down in front of a group of students who are decidedly different from the typical cases presented in university textbooks. No two students are the same and there is no single way to be a good teacher. However, reflection on habitus is useful in this perspective and is connoted in terms of equity and social justice (Bell, 2016; Carlisle et al., 2006; David et al., 2001; Hackman, 2005). The issue is to ensure excellent educational opportunities for all, and it can be achieved mainly through teachers.

Teachers can be agents of change by exerting transformative and ameliorative potential for their students' school paths and lives (Brown et al., 2021; Cooper et al., 2015; Pantić et al., 2022), but they can also reproduce and produce inequalities because of their stereotypes and prejudices and their idea of schooling that may not match that of some students and families. (Collins, 2009; Ferrero, 2023; Reichelt et al., 2019; Behrmann 2013). This is certainly not a new dynamic (Bourdieu, 1966; Mickelson, 1987), but in the context of current emergencies (the pandemic, the geopolitical crisis, energy, and food autonomy), it becomes essential to affirm the crucial role of schools and teachers in supporting equal opportunities and social inclusion for all.

As we have outlined earlier in this chapter, each teacher is a person with their own ideas, values, beliefs, history, and culture. Everyone reads and understands reality with their own interpretative schemes, not being free from stereotypes or prejudices that have an influence

on their educational relationships with students (Inan-Kaya & Rubie-Davies, 2022; Mason et al., 2014; Sabarwal et al., 2022) and on evaluative practices (Beg et al., 2021; Triventi, 2019). In this context, not all teachers will value diversity in all its forms: there are some more likely to accommodate cultural diversity than sexual orientation, others more comfortable with disability than religious difference, still others more likely to appreciate socioeconomic diversity than family composition (Granata, 2016).

Considering one's own positionality is critical to fully analysing reality, tracing unknown stimuli back to known categories, counteracting false and inflexible processes (Allport, 1979) that risk producing and reproducing inequalities. This is why it is essential for each teacher to consider their own habitus and to reflect on their own modes of professional action. Considering one's own habitus as a teacher and consciously working on one's own way of constructing educational relationships, of communicating with students and families, means valuing the ethical and deontological dimension of educational professionalism (Damiano, 2007; Milani et al., 2021; Morin, 2004), i.e. on their own educational role and on how their actions convey meanings and have consequences on students' educational pathways.

Habitus is a central aspect of teaching professionalism because actions and practices must change to respond to the diversity of the classroom: there is no one size fits all, but it is necessary to understand which strategies will meet the needs of the students. It is imperative for every teacher to consider their habitus and perceive themselves as agents of change for each individual student. Both in the choice of materials to be adopted and in the operations to create an open and inclusive environment, one's own view of the world comes into play; being aware of this means paying attention to the effects that one's ideas about education may have on the students and on the (lack of) appreciation of everyone's uniqueness.

Understanding habitus is first and foremost a reflection on oneself, which connotes professional action for which creativity, empathy, and emotional intelligence are required to increase their view of the world (Feucht et al., 2017; Zembylas, 2014). In this perspective, attention to the teacher's habitus is indispensable in order to let its transformative potential emerge, not only regarding the individual, but also for the school culture in which one is immersed (Balkar, 2015; Feldman, 2016). Asking questions about the organisation we are in and questioning it (Cansoy & Parlar, 2017; Mincu & Granata, 2021; Yusof et al., 2016) can change what produces inequalities.

The teacher can be an agent of change not only for students, but also for school life. Equity and inclusion are systemic issues for everyone; schools, teachers, and students. From the teacher's perspective, considering one's own habitus and taking a reflective posture is important because it supports professional growth, change, inclusion, and equity.

Talking to all, representing all: How diverse is the teaching profession in Ireland, Italy, and Germany? What needs to change to achieve inclusion?

Based on the importance of teachers reflecting on their own habitus, the diversity of the teaching profession in Ireland, Italy, and Germany (the authors' countries of origin) is described in the following section.

In all three countries, various similarities emerge in the composition of the teaching profession. Regarding the availability of data on the characteristics of teachers, differences also emerge. In Germany, for example, it has not yet been comprehensively researched "how heterogeneous or homogeneous the habitus patterns are within a teaching staff" (Thümmler, 2022: 222, author's translation). However, it can be observed that teachers mainly come from upper and middle social milieus (ibid.) and that there are still discriminatory barriers to entry when it comes to accessing the teaching profession. In Ireland, teachers are predominantly white, Irish, female, settled, Catholic, and middle class (Heinz & Keane, 2018). In Italy, the situation is quite similar, although there is a lack of specific studies on the composition of the teacher and student population in teacher education. Cultural and religious diversity is poorly represented (Colucci & Gallo, 2017) and there are few teachers with disabilities or other special needs (Bellacicco et al., 2022). Data on sexual orientation and family composition are lacking. In Italy, more than 90% of kindergarten and primary school teachers are female, and this gender also predominates in the other school types, albeit to a lesser extent (OECD, 2017; 2018).

Access to teacher training programmes in all three countries is only possible through access to higher education. In Germany for example you need a Master's degree, state examination or university part-time training as a lateral entrant to work as a teacher. This means that access to be a teacher isn't yet very inclusive because universities or university colleges of teacher education are strongly characterised by an "aura of exclusivity" (Alheit, 2014), so that access to this form of knowledge (re)production cannot be thought of independently of privileges and marginalisations (cf. Leonhardt, Schuppener, Goldbach, 2022 & Goldbach et al., 2022). Thus, teacher education is already affected by the fact that it only recognises certain habitual patterns and denies different groups of people access to the university system. Even though there are now opportunities for lateral entry into the profession, this too is tied to university training (exemplified by Leonhardt, 2020). In Germany, the issue of class affiliation is still very much reflected in educational success, which is well illustrated by the recurring PISA results, among other things. This means that access to the teaching profession requires successful passage through the school system (see Helsper 2018 & El-Mafaalani, 2020).

Regarding access to teacher education in Italy, for kindergarten, and elementary school teachers there is a qualifying master's program. For middle and high schools there are disciplinary master's programs that must be accompanied by qualifying courses that are subject to constant reforms (Mortari & Silva, 2020). In general, access to the profession is

difficult and, in many cases, expensive due to the high cost of teacher education courses. Students from low or middle socioeconomic and sociocultural backgrounds acquire fewer linguistic and logical-mathematical skills than their peers (INVALSI, 2022) and less affluent students choose high schools at the age of 14 that restrict their opportunities to pursue professional programmes of study (Benadusi & Giancola, 2021), resulting in a homogeneous teacher population.

In Ireland, while there has been significant investment in widening participation in higher education and some reduction in inequality, access to higher education remains highly stratified (Higher Education Authority, 2015:14). National policy has focused on increasing the number of higher education entrants from lower socioeconomic groups, first-time entrants, mature entrants, students with disabilities, part-time and flexible learners, continuing education degree holders, and Irish Travelers (HEA, 2015: 34). Inequality in education is reflected in inequity in access to high-status professions, such as law, teaching, and medicine (Keane & Heinz, 2016) resulting in a homogenous teacher population (Heinz & Keane, 2018) Ireland's National Plans for Equal Access to Higher Education (2015-2019 and 2022-2028) (Higher Education Authority 2015 and 2022) include a focus on diversifying initial teacher education as a key national strategic priority stimulating the development of projects nationally that focus specifically on broadening the diversity of teachers in Ireland.

The diversity (lack of diversity) of the teaching profession in all three countries described above highlights the possible disconnection between the habitus (predominantly 'middle-class' values, norms, and culture) of many teachers and the habitus of many students (working class, students with disabilities, students from different ethnic minorities for example).

The impact of teacher habitus on students

Example Case 3

"I grew up as a child in a position where I was gendered differently from what I felt. Myself and my teachers always asked the question: what do you want to be when you grow up and my answer was always, I want to be a boy. I want to be a guy. I want to be a police MAN. […] and teachers always told me, that's funny. What do you really want to be? And so, I kept saying, I want to be a boy. I want to be a guy. I want to be a man. But it became almost like a weird joke because that was the way they translated my words all the time and I still remember that meeting ending with me having no clear path of what I want to do and not really feeling

acknowledged. Even when I contacted those professionals, I went into that room laughing and joking and trying to use humour as a way of talking about my position because the only way I've learned to talk about it was with people laughing at me. And then when I went through transitioning and went into trans groups, I felt very alienated because I wasn't sure I was supposed to be there. I still had memories coming back to me of the teachers telling me that I was a joke. They didn't want to harm me. They just didn't really see that that was even possible. I don't think there was intent. It was not because they were cruel or were politically involved in anything. Their mind view was just this couldn't happen. So, it was just a joke."

Sebastian Nemeth – Expert and Researcher/adjunct

As Sebastian Nemeth's words make clear, norms associated with the teacher habitus can lead to discriminatory actions, which in turn have a strong influence on students' biographies. Helsper (2018: 118, Author's translation) also points out that the "conflation of habitus and teacher orientation" can contain a "potential for problems", for example, when teachers have little or no understanding of life situations or lifeworld's due to their own habitus. In turn, unconscious teacher behaviour develops from their own learned ideas, as can be seen in the previous example. In this regard, te Poel (2022) also shows that these habitual student images can be linked to recognition orientations. This means that recognition or lack of recognition towards pupils can arise from learnt beliefs. As described earlier, internalised norms and prejudices relate to habitus, which can have an influence on who we recognise and value.

Following this thought and knowing that habitus also guides action, a direct connection between the habitus of the teacher and the possible recognition behaviour towards the students becomes apparent. Accordingly, the development of a sense of belonging is strongly tied to teacher orientations or beliefs. Empathy can be a great challenge if there is no habitual ability to fit in with the students (ibid.), so that there is no access to their lifeworld. One's own prejudices and conceptions of norms can therefore have a great influence on the development of pedagogical relationships (cf. Chapter Pedagogical Relationships in this   book).

Teacher habitus has a major impact on students' orientations, their sense of belonging, of being valued, of being heard (Helsper, 2018; Thümmler, 2022). The question of who I expect to be successful or which student do I trust with which skills can therefore strongly influence students in their learning and in their educational biography. These habitual teacher orientations can thus contribute to the stabilisation and further development of educational trajectories or (re)produce (educational) inequalities.

The confrontation with your self – challenges of engaging with your own

teacher habitus

The influence of the teacher habitus is extensive and remains mostly unconscious. It is therefore very complex and difficult to break through these internalised norms. Looking at one's own status and confronting one's own privileges is often emotional and painful, especially since these are biographically rooted. Studies and biographical descriptions have shown that challenging one's own habitus is complex and can also lead to tensions (e.g., with one's own family environment or milieu of origin). Furthermore, self-reflection from one's own point of view will always be limited, as this is done from a restricted position influenced by one's own norms and prejudices. Certain perspectives on discrimination are thus denied through pure self-reflection. Perspective on the subject matter may also be limited because many teachers themselves have been successful in (and therefore value) established systems. They value the system, and the definitions of success, which has advantaged them. Self-reflection in the context of school cannot replace a 'pluraliaation of perspectives' as exemplified by Emcke (2019).

In addition, school is always subject to and characterised by powerful structures and cultures (cf. Leonhardt et al., i.p.). Breaking through this 'grammar of school' (cf. Feichter, 2020) as a teacher is associated with strong limitations, so that confronting one's own habitus and its effects can lead to feelings of powerlessness in challenging norms. Efforts to change habitual effects cannot be viewed in isolation from societal (norm) ideas and structures. For example, schools play a significant role "in ableist subject formation" (Buchner, 2022: 207, author's translation) in that students are "confronted with specific ability-related imperatives and norms and forced to relate to them." This makes it clear that even when teachers are highly motivated, socially produced "patterns of perception, thought, and action […] are not simply suspended" (ibid., 211, author's translation). Furthermore, such a reflexive examination requires time, which is too often not available in everyday pedagogical life since it can also only be considered as a process.

Developing empathy for students and their lifeworld can be challenging when mutual (learnt) beliefs do not match. In addition, it cannot be the goal to create a complete habitual fit between teachers and all students. Students are characterised by high diversity, and it seems impossible that all lifeworlds are reflected in one's own experiences and conceptions of norms (cf. Helsper, 2018). Rather, it should be about the formation of empathy that enables the development of relationships with students. In this regard, concrete strategies will be described in the following sections.

The teacher reflecting on their own habitus: a systemic task

Reflecting on your own teacher habitus requires the ability to stay in ambiguous and even contradictory situations without letting yourself be overwhelmed and turning mistakes, or critical episodes, into opportunities. Schön's (1987) well-known image of the teacher as a reflective operator is fundamental. Questions that you can ask yourself might include, for

example, what does it mean for me to be a teacher? How does my value system influence my educational practice? How can I be a good teacher and an agent of change for equity and social justice? Asking these questions is not an exercise in style, but an indispensable operation to illuminate teaching as a socially and politically strategic profession that promotes empowerment and conscious development in the people of today's and tomorrow's society (Biesta, 2017).

Dewey (1910; 1929) talks about reflexive action, which develops from a situation of cognitive unease, doubt, perplexity, hesitation, to evolve into an act of investigation and research that can overcome the initial uncertainty. Faced with the complexity present in a school classroom, each teacher has no choice but to abandon one's certainties and explore new possibilities for action. Reflection on your own habitus, on the cultural aspects of teaching, on the students' responses to the curriculum, on the school culture and its effect on the students, is essential to connote teaching in terms of inclusion and equity (Beck & Kosnik, 2001; Jaeger, 2013; Umutlu & Kim, 2020).

A starting point to work in this direction, beyond rhetoric, is collegiality (Khourey-Bowers et al., 2004; Shah, 2012): a person discovers more about themselves through dialogue with others, so it is desirable to imagine opportunities for dialogue between teachers to discuss issues that raise questions, ethical dilemmas, and may produce inequalities in students' everyday school life (Thomas et al., 1998). Examining experiences together, confronting one's own personal beliefs, and understanding how one's own values, ideas and stereotypes influence one's actions serves to become aware of one's habitus as a teacher.

There is an opportunity for shared reflection at the individual school level. By holding focus groups during the school year, teachers from the same school can confront each other on issues felt to be urgent and relevant, building a professional community capable of self-analysis and having a transformative potential on everyone's professional self, school culture and students' learning paths (Choi Fung Tam, 2013; Hadar & Brody, 2010). Of course, it is work that can never be considered finished, because no acquisition is valid forever and one must always be prepared to increase one's degree of equity as a professional community, as a school, and as individual teachers. All means All, but the word all can acquire different meanings every day, welcoming new uniqueness's that must be valued.

Serious and constant work on your own habitus as a teacher, therefore, serves to be open to diversity, to welcome it without homologating it, and to be an agent of change and equity.

Through a better awareness of teacher habitus, what is the potential to support inclusion in the classroom?

As outlined earlier in this chapter, the term 'habitus' refers to the dominant norms and practices of particular social classes or groups (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977). In reference to Lange-Vester & Teiwes-Kügler (2014: 177, author's translation) we "understand habitus sensitivity as a kind of distinct feeling for the counterpart, as a key competence, and

prerequisite in the everyday pedagogical work of teachers, which comes very close to 'understanding' in Bourdieu's (1997) sense. What is meant is the ability and willingness to put oneself mentally in the social place that a student occupies. This chapter has explored the disconnection between the habitus (values, norms, and culture) of some students (for example, those working class students, students with disabilities, students from different ethnic minorities) and the predominantly 'middle-class' habitus of schools, universities, and elite institutions. In these spaces, some students can feel a "kind of habitus dislocation," a disconnection between their own background and culture and the habitus of educational institutions where they experience education as a 'struggle' with a keen sense of being different, of 'not fitting in' or 'not being good enough' (Lehmann, 2009: 638).

As educators there are a range of practical strategies that you can consciously adopt to address this 'habitus dislocation' and to support inclusion in the classroom (Zoletto, 2010).

- ## Awareness of one's own habitus

The most powerful tool is to have a better awareness of your own habitus, to empower and challenge yourself by considering your own social background, your own values, norms, and culture. Consider your own positionality, your own biases, privilege, and prejudice. Exploring these issues at times specifically structured for this purpose is a key dimension of each teacher's professional action, both as an individual and within the network of collegial relations. You are then better placed to recognise and address inequality (and privilege) in the classroom, school, as well as in broader societal systems and structures.

- ## How I understand 'difference'

Consider how 'difference' is positioned in society and mirrored in the education system. Historically 'difference' has long been associated with 'deficits.' Disability, for example, has been conceptualised as an inherently negative, pathologised, individual, and undesirable state of difference and deficit, assuming dependency and necessitating charity (Abberley ,1987; Braddock and Parish, 2001; Barnes, 1991; Cottini, 2017; Finkelstein, 1980; Oliver, 1990; Pavone, 2014; 2015). These conceptualisations and historical contexts continue to influence the lives of people with disabilities today, where to have a disability is to have 'something wrong with you' (Oliver, 1996: 30). The medical model of disability has relevance as it has been the dominant perspective in education, suggesting that the deficit lies within the child rather than in the education system. Thus, it is desirable to move to a biopsychosocial model that enhances the strengths of individuals and their abilities: the question is to imagine interventions not on the individual, but on life contexts so that they become capacitating and not limiting.

Similarly, in society the "negativity associated with the working class is ubiquitous" (Skeggs, 1997: 75). In Ireland, being 'working class is widely represented and stereotyped

as 'an underclass', associated with drugs, criminal gangs, crime, and welfare dependency (Finnegan, 2012). Also, in Germany classist advantages are very powerful in society (ct. Kemper & Weinbach, 2009) and in the pedagogic field (ct. El-Mafaalani, 2020). Thus, many teachers' "own middle-class affiliation […] conditions their preference for the education-motivated and upwardly mobile middle class-similarity is preferred and their own culture is reproduced" (Behrmann, 2013: 262 with reference to Lütkens, 1959; Bernstein, 1977; Schumacher,2002 & Birkelbach, 2011). In Italy, too, there is a very strong socio-cultural reproduction dynamic, with students from low or lower-middle status families achieving lower test results, dropping out of school, and not accessing higher and university education (Benadusi & Giancola, 2021; Giancola & Salmieri, 2020). These conceptualisations of social class underpinned by assumptions of deficit, difference, and inferiority, continue to influence the lives of working-class students in education today. Like the stigma associated with disability, there was and continues to be a strong belief that to be 'working-class' is negative, that to be working-class is an individual deficit and that it "is to get things wrong, to fail, to be lesser" (Fleming et al., 2017:155), a label that signifies "all that is dirty, dangerous and without value" (Skeggs, 1997: 74). Many of these themes, of difference, deficit, segregation, and individual failure, are common to the experiences of many marginalised groups.

As an educator, consider how the construction of social identities, and the assumption of homogeneity within these identities, has created common hierarchies of inferiority, and privilege, and positioned individuals within these hierarchies as polar opposites, the 'ideal' and 'normal' versus the 'undesirable' and 'abnormal', the 'able' versus the 'disabled', the 'working class' versus the 'middle class', with a clear distinction between those that are valued and those that are not. As an educator, you can champion change by challenging these deficit models, challenging the individualisation of difference, positioning difference as 'a problem,' and locating that problem within the individual. Consider instead how structures and systems produce and reproduce inequality in education and in society. Think how powerful the institution of school is (Leonhardt et al., i.p.; Pescarmona, 2012), the influence of institutional discrimination (Gomolla & Radtke,2009) and how this effects your own professional actions.

- **How 'difference' is constructed in my school**

Consider how difference is constructed (and operationalised) in your classroom or school. Negative assumptions around disability, sexuality, social class, and ethnicity for example, can be endemic among students and teachers. Consider carefully how children and young people negatively experience being 'different'. In Ireland, the sense of social class, for example, for students is pervasive and impactful and had a bearing on each individual's sense of self as well as on student experiences, trajectories, and outcomes across the education system (Fleming et al., 2017). Lynch and O'Riordan (1998) suggested that the

experience of working-class students in education in Ireland is one where working-class culture and background is positioned as inherently inferior in schools and that low expectations and the perception of being an 'outsider' in a dominant middle-class culture had a pervasive impact on students. In Ireland, there is evidence that teachers had lower academic expectations of students with disabilities even when this was not consistent with ability (Shevlin et al., 2002; O'Donnell, 2003; Rose and Shevlin, 2004; Rose et al., 2010). With reference to Dederich (2007), it is also clear that these low expectations can lead to what is called learned helplessness, as is particularly common among students with disabilities (see also Schuppener, 2021). Buchner (2022) also shows that differences are produced by ableist notions of norms and notions of ability. He shows the importance of dealing with one's own (school) biography and the 'work on the self'.

- ### The power of language

As part of a more inclusive classroom and practice, consider the power of language and how language can reinforce negative stereotypes. The language of disability for example can be highly medicalised with reference to 'chronic disease', 'illness', 'malfunction', 'malformation', 'disease' and 'conditions.' The language used to portray disability and the images used to represent disability continue to label and to portray people with disabilities as "…deficient, pitiable, wicked or malign, dangerous or valueless" (Hosking 2008: 14). Powerful professionals diagnose some students with learning difficulties, syndromes, issues, impairments, problems, and disorders. This is the negative language of disability that all students internalise and navigate in education and society. Social class operates just as powerfully on an individual and on a collective level as "class is deeply embedded in everyday interventions, in institutional processes, in struggles over identity, validity, self-worth and integrity" (Reay, 2005: 924). Reflect on the language that you use, and the language used in the classroom and the school. Consider how powerful and impactful language is and use inclusive language in all environments.

- ### Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

How you teach also matters! 'Universal Design for Learning' has been defined in US legislation as 'A scientifically valid framework for guiding educational practice that provides flexibility in the way information is provided, in the way students respond or demonstrate knowledge and skills, and in the way students are (Higher Education Opportunity Act, Sec. 103, Additional Definitions). In Ireland, there is a recognition that 'Providing a fully inclusive learning environment is complex and creating a culture of engagement and inclusion that works for all students requires a shift in thinking and a change of behaviour at an institutional level… Universal Design for Learning (UDL) provides an effective framework to improve the learning experience of all students within the mainstream teaching

environment' (AHEAD, 2017). Adopting UDL teaching practices in your classroom means challenging the status quo of the traditionally advantaged learner, recognising that students have different ways of experiencing the education system and learning (Cottini, 2019; Savia, 2016).

As an educator, think about your own practice and how you can respond in an innovative way to diversity in the student population. Think about redesigning your own educational practice with diversity in mind, to create an inclusive, accessible, and welcoming learning environment for all students. Think about multiple means of presenting materials, multiple means of action and representation and multiple means of engagement. If you do this, it will reduce the need for individual adaptation, while likely increasing the motivation of all learners. It also means critically considering the curriculum where many students do not see themselves reflected in the text or the images.

For many children and young people being different has a negative connotation and is often highly stigmatised (Banks et al., 2015; McCoy et al., 2016). Students suggest that inclusive teachers who provide support in an inclusive way are important and that students do not want to be singled out or to be treated or labelled as being different, which was seen to be implicitly negative (Squires et al., 2016; Barnes-Holmes et al., 2013). As an educator, consider how you can create a culture in your classroom, and in your school, where there are high expectations for all students and where diversity is celebrated, and all students are equally valued. Ultimately, a better awareness of teacher habitus can empower you to better understand your own habitus and to consciously act to improve your educational practice. As a teacher, you can be an agent of transformation and change consciously fostering a sense of belonging for everyone in your school community, supporting inclusion, transforming student opportunities, experiences, and outcomes.

Conclusions

Reflection on the teacher's habitus is crucial for individuals and schools that want to promote equity, inclusion, and social justice. It is about a production of empathy through reflection that allows for an openness to the other.

The generative grammar of all practices, as habitus is defined by Perrenoud (2001), should be the subject of a reflection that examines biographical experiences, their interpretations, and the implicit habitual orientations that accompany them. In summary, biographical work (Miethe, 2011) and habitus sensitivity work (Sander, 2014) is critical for the formation of a professional habitus, because it allows for the confrontation of "intuitive beliefs" (Helsper, 2018: 133, author's translation).

The issue is intimately connected with the reduced human capacity to form an adequate image of other people (Emcke, 2019).

Sensitivity to habitus can support the development of a good working alliance between teacher and student (Helsper, 2018), who get to know each other, recognise each other,

and establish an authentic educational relationship. The teacher is the one who has the professional responsibility to open a dialogue with all their students, ensuring no one is excluded (Mbembe, 2000; Burgio, 2022; Milani et al., 2021; Zoletto, 2010) and understanding that individual action can create opportunities for equity. Reflection on one's habitus is fundamental to being agents of change and having transformative potential in terms of inclusion and equity.

From the point of view of educational action in the classroom, the focus is on how to ensure that all students have what they need to learn. Mincu (2012) "inclusive pedagogy stands for a school in which differentiated empowerment should take place, but which does not produce differences." Thus "traditional performance orientations and related orientation patterns are challenged and adapted from the perspective of recognition theory and democracy" (Buchner, 2022: 210, author's translation), so that everyone has the same opportunities to learn and realise their aspirations.

Understanding habitus reflection as collegial work to bend school culture in a direction of inclusion and equity is the consequence of the reflections elaborated so far: teachers are nodes within a larger system, which has its own culture and rules of operation. Being agents of change means venturing into unexplored avenues not only in one's own classroom, but also and above all, in imagining alternative organisational modes that can foster effective inclusion of all diversities.

Local contexts

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=369#h5p-18

Closing questions to discuss or tasks

1. How do I interpret my role as a teacher in a specific school as a space for co-construction of a community and the freedom to teach?
2. How can I better understand the lifeworld and meet the specific needs of my students?
3. Does the organisation of my school risk putting some students and families at a disadvantage, creating inequality? How?
4. As a teacher, how could I change the organisational structure of my school?

5. Through a better awareness of teacher habitus, what is the potential for me to support inclusion in the classroom and impact school culture?
6. Do I perceive myself as an agent of change for my students and my school? Why?

Literature

Abberley, Paul. "The Concept of Oppression and the Development of a Social Theory of Disability." *Disability, Handicap & Society* 2, no. 1 (1987): 5–19.

Alheit, Peter. "Die Exklusionsmacht Des Universitären Habitus. Exemplarische Studien Zur „neuen Deutschen Universität"." In *Die Idee Der Universität – Revisited*, edited by Norbert Ricken, Hans-Christoph Koller, and Edwin Keiner, 195–208. Springer, 2014.

Allport, Gordon. *The Nature of Prejudice*. New York: Basic Books, 1979.

Banks, Joanne, Bertrand Maître, and Selina McCoy. "Insights into the Lives of Children with Disabilities: Findings from the 2006 National Disability Survey." *Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) Research Series*, 2015. www.esri.ie/pubs/BKMNEXT274.pdf.

Barnes, Colin. *Disabled People in Britain and Discrimination: A Case for Anti-Discrimination Legislation*. London: C. Hurst & Co. Publishers, 1991.

Barnes-Holmes, Yvonne, Geraldine Scanlon, Deirdre Desmond, Michael Shevlin, and Nigel Vahey. "A Study of Transition from Primary to Post-Primary School for Pupils with Special Educational Needs." National Council for Special Education, 2013. http://ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Transitions_23_03_13.pdf.

Beck, Clive, and Clare Kosnik. "Reflection-in-Action." In *Defence of Thoughtful Teaching*, 31:217–27. Curriculum Inquiry 2, 2001.

Beg, Sabrin, Anne Fitzpatrick, and Adrienne M. Lucas. "Gender Bias in Assessments of Teacher Performance." *American Economic Association Paper and Proceedings* 111 (2021): 190–95.

Behrmann, Laura C. "Reproduktion Sozialer Ungleichheit in Der Schule: Was Wissen Die Lehrkräfte?" In *Wissen Und Soziale Ungleichheit*, edited by Oliver Berli and Martin Endreß, 260–82. Beltz Juventa, 2013.

Bell, Lee Anne. "Theoretical Foundations for Social Justice Education." In *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice*, edited by Maurianne Adams, Lee Anne Bell, and Pat Griffin, 3–26. Routledge, 2016.

Bellacicco, Rosa, Dario Ianes, and Marisa Pavone, eds. *Insegnanti Con Disabilità e DSA. Dilemmi, Sfide e Opportunità*. Milano: FrancoAngeli, 2022.

Benadusi, Luciano, and Orazio Giancola. *Equità e Merito Nella Scuola. Teorie, Indagini Empiriche, Politiche*. Milano: FrancoAngeli, 2021.

Bernstein, Basil. *Beiträge Zu Einer Theorie Des Pädagogischen Prozesses*. Frankfurt a. M.:

Suhrkamp, 1977.

Biesta, Gert J. J. *The Rediscovery of Teaching*. New York: Routledge, 2017.

Birkelbach, Klaus. "Lehrerurteile Im Lebenslauf: Valide Prognose Oder Self-Fulfilling Prophecy?" *Soziale Welt* 62 (2011): 227–49.

Boger, Mai-Anh. "Zwischen Partikularisierung Und Solidarisierung." Presented at the Behinderung ohne Behinderte!? Perspektiven der Disability Studies, Hamburg, November 1, 2016.

Bourdieu, Pierre. "L'école Conservatrice. L'inégalité Sociale Devant l'école et Devant La Culture." *Revue Française de Sociologie* 7, no. 3 (1966): 325–47.

———. "Politik, Bildung Und Sprache." In *Die Verborgenen Mechanismen Der Macht.*, edited by Pierre Bourdieu, 13–30. Schriften Zur Politik Und Kultur 1. Hamburg: VSA, 2005.

———. "Verstehen." In *Das Elend Der Welt*, edited by Pierre Bourdieu et al., 779–802. Konstanz: UVK, 1997.

Bourdieu, Pierre, and Jean-Claude Passeron. *Reproduction in Society, Education and Culture*. London: Sage, 1977.

Braddock, David Lawrence, and Susan L. Parish. "An Institutional History of Disability." In *Handbook of Disability Studies*, edited by Gary L. Albrecht, Katherine D. Seelman, and Michael Bury. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2001.

Brown, Chris, Robert White, and Anthony Kelly. "Teachers as Educational Change Agents: What Do We Currently Know? Findings from a Systematic Review." *Emerald Open Research* 3, no. 26 (2021).

Brunner, Claudia. "Von Selbstreflexion Zu Hegemonieselbstkritik." *Sicherheit Und Frieden* 35, no. 4 (2017): 196–201.

Buchner, Tobias. "Ableism Verlernen? Reflexionen Zu Bildung Und Fahigkeit Als Professionalisierungsangebot Für Lehrer*innen Im Kontext Inklusiver Bildung." In *Lehren Und Lernen in Differenzverhältnissen Interdisziplinäre Und Intersektionale Betrachtungen*, edited by Yalız Akbaba, Tobias Buchner, Alisha M.B. Heinemann, Doris Pokitsch, and Nadjy Thoma, 203–28. Springer, 2022.

Burgio, Giuseppe. *Pedagogia Postcoloniale. Prospettive Radicali per l'intercultura*. Milano: FrancoAngeli, 2022.

Cansoy, Ramazan, and Hanifi Parlar. "Examining the Relationship between School Culture and Teacher Leadership." *International Online Journal of Educational Sciences* 9, no. 2 (2017): 310–22.

Carlisle, Lenore Reilly, Bailey W. Jackson, and Alison George. "Principles of Social Justice Education: The Social Justice Education in Schools Project." *Equity & Excellence in Education* 39, no. 1 (2006): 55–64.

Collins, James. "Social Reproduction in Classrooms and Schools." *The Annual Review of Anthropology* 38 (2009): 33–48.

Colucci, Michele, and Stefano Gallo, eds. *In Cattedra Con La Valigia. Gli Insegnanti Tra Stabilizzazione e Mobilità*. Roma: Donzelli, 2017.

Connor, David J. "Michael's Story: 'I Get into so Much Trouble Just by Walking': Narrative Knowing and Life at the Intersections of Learning Disability, Race, and Class." *Equity & Excellence in Education* 39, no. 2 (2006): 154–65.

Cooper, Justin T., Regina G. Hirn, and Terrance M. Scott. "Teacher as Change Agent: Considering Instructional Practice to Prevent Student Failure." *Preventing School Failure: Alternative Education for Children and Youth* 59, no. 1 (2015): 1–4.

Cottini, Lucio. *Didattica Speciale e Inclusione Scolastica*. Roma: Carocci, 2017.

———. *Universal Design for Learning e Curricolo Inclusivo*. Trento: Erickson, 2019.

Damiano, Elio. *L'insegnante Etico. Saggio Sull'insegnamento Come Professione Morale*. Assisi: Cittadella, 2007.

Davis, Laura, Jasmine L. Whiteside, and Hua-Yu Sebastian Cherng. "One Size Fits All? Gender, Race/Ethnicity, and Happiness in Schools." *Teachers College Record: The Voice of Scholarship in Education* 123, no. 1 (2021): 1–28.

Dederich, Markus. "Abhängigkeit, Macht Und Gewalt in Asymmetrischen Beziehungen." In *Herausforderungen. Mit Schwerer Behinderung Leben*, edited by Markus Dederich, 139–52. Frankfurt a. M.: Mabuse, 2007.

Dept of Justice and Equality. "National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017 – 2021," 2017.

———. "National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017 – 2021," 2017.

Dewey, John. *Experience and Nature*. New York: Allen, 1929.

———. *How We Think*. Boston: D.C. Health & Company, 1910.

El-Mafaalani, Aladin. *Mythos Bildung. Die Ungerechte Gesellschaft, Ihr Bildungssystem Und Seine Zukunft*. Köln: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2020.

Emcke, Carolin. *Gegen Den Hass*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2019.

Eribon, Didier. *Rückkehr Nach Reims*. Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2018.

Feichter, Helene. "Die Grammatik Der Schule Als Partizipationshindernis." In *Partizipation Und Schule. Perspektiven Auf Teilhabe Und Mitbestimmung von Kindern Und Jugendlichen*, edited by Sabine Gerhartz-Reiter and Cathrin Reisenauer, 25–40. Springer, 2020.

Feucht, Florian C., Jo Lunn Brownlee, and Gregory Schraw. "Moving Beyond Reflection: Reflexivity and Epistemic Cognition in Teaching and Teacher Education." *Educational Psychologist* 52, no. 4 (2017): 234–41.

Finkelstein, Victor. *Attitudes and Disabled People: Issues for Discussion*. World Rehabilitation Fund, Inc., 1980.

Finnegan, Fergal. "Welcome to the Knowledge Factory? A Study of Working Class Experience, Identity and Learning in Irish Higher Education." National University of Ireland Maynooth, 2012.

Fleming, Ted, Andrew Loxley, and Fergal Finnegan. *Access and Participation in Irish Higher Education*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.

Giancola, Orazio, and Luca Salmieri, eds. *Sociologia Delle Disuguaglianze. Teorie, Metodi, Ambiti*. Roma: Carocci, 2020.

Goldbach, Anne, Mandy Hauser, Saskia Schuppener, Nico Leonhardt, Hannah van Ledden, and Daniel Bergelt. "Social Responsibility in the Context of Inclusive Higher Education Development – Experiences and Insights from the Perspective of Participatory Higher Education Teaching." *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education* 23, no. 4 (2022): 799–814.

Gomolla, Mechtild, and Frank-Olaf Radtke. *Institutionelle Diskriminierung. Die Herstellung Ethnischer Differenz in Der Schule*. Wiesbaden: SpringerVS, 2009.

Granata, Anna. *Pedagogia Delle Diversità. Come Sopravvivere Un Anno in Una Classe Interculturale*. Roma: Carocci, 2016.

Gümüşay, Kübra. *Sprache Und Sein*. München: Hanser Berlin, 2020.

Hackman, Heather W. "Five Essential Components for Social Justice Education." *Equity & Excellence in Education* 38, no. 2 (2005): 103–9.

Hadar, Linor, and David Brody. "From Isolation to Symphonic Harmony: Building a Professional Development Community among Teacher Educators." *Teaching and Teacher Education* 26, no. 8 (2010): 1641–51.

Helsper, Werner. "Lehrerhabitus. Lehrer Zwischen Herkunft, Milieu Und Profession." In *Ungewissheit Als Herausforderung Für Pädagogisches Handeln*, edited by Angelika Paseka, Manuela Keller-Schneider, and Arno Combe, 105–40. Springer, 2018.

———. "Schulkultur Revisited: Ein Versuch, Antworten Zu Geben Und Rückfragen Zu Stellen." In *Schulkultur. Theoriebildung Im Diskurs*, edited by Jeanette Böhme, Rolf Torsten Kramer, and Merle Hummrich, 447–500. Springer VS, 2015.

Higher Education Authority. "National Access Plan: A Strategic Action Plan for Equity of Access, Participation and Success in Higher Education 2022-2028." Dublin: HEA, 2022. https://hea.ie/policy/access-policy/national-access-plan-2022-2028/.

———. "National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-2019." Dublin: HEA, 2015. http://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/06/National-Plan-for-Equity-of-Access-to-Higher-Education-2015-2019.pdf.

Höhne, Thomas. "Der Habitusbegriff in Der Erziehungswissenschaft Und Bildungsforschung." In *Pierre Bourdieus Konzeption Des Habitus. Grundlagen, Zugänge, Forschungsperspektiven*, edited by Alexander Lenger, Christian Schneickert, and Florian Schumacher, 216–84. SpringerVS, 2013.

Hooks, Bell. *Die Bedeutung von Klasse*. Münster: Unrast, 2020.

Hosking, David L. "Critical Disability Theory: A Paper Presented at the 4th Biennial Disability Studies Conference at Lancaster University," 2008. www.lancaster.ac.uk/fass/events/disabilityconference_archive/2008/papers/hosking2008.pdf.

Inan-Kaya, Gamze, and Christine. M. Rubie-Davies. "Teacher Classroom Interactions and Behaviors: Indications of Bias." *Learning and Instruction* 78 (2022).

Jaeger, Elizabeth L. "Teacher Reflection: Supports, Barriers, and Results." *Issues in Teacher Education* 22, no. 1 (2013): 89–104.

Keane, Elaine, and Manuela Heinz. "Excavating an Injustice?: Nationality/Ies, Ethnicity/Ies

and Experiences with Diversity of Initial Teacher Education Applicants and Entrants in Irland in 2014." *European Journal of Teacher Education* 39, no. 4 (2016): 507–27.

Kemper, Andreas, and Heike Weinbach. *Klassismus. Eine Einführung*. Münster: Unrast, 2009.

Khourey-Bowers, Claudia, Richard L. Dinko, and Raymond G. Hart. "Influence of a Shared Leadership Model in Creating a School Culture of Inquiry and Collegiality." *Journal of Research in Science Teaching* 42, no. 1 (2004): 3–24.

Kramer, Rolf-Torsten. "Sequenzanalytische Habitusrekonstruktion." In *Lehrerhabitus. Theoretische Und Empirische Beiträge Zur Praxeologie Des Lehrerberufs*, edited by Rolf-Torsten Kramer and Hilke Pallesen, 49–72. Bad Heilbrunn: Klinkhardt, 2019.

Kremsner, Gertraud. "Gewalt Und Machtmissbrauch Gegen Menschen Mit Lernschwierigkeiten in Einrichtungen Der Behindertenhilfe." *Teilhabe* 59 (2020): 10–15.

Lange-Vester, Andrea. "Habitusmuster von Lehrpersonen – Auf Distanz Zur Kultur Der Unteren Klassen." *Zeitschrift Für Soziologie Der Erziehung Und Sozialisation* 35, no. 4 (2015): 360–76.

Lange-Vester, Andrea, and Christel Teiwes-Kügler. "Habitussensibilität Im Schulischen Alltag Als Beitrag Zur Integration Ungleicher Sozialer Gruppen." In *Habitussensibilität. Eine Neue Anforderung an Professionelles Handeln*, edited by Tobias Sander, 177–207. SpringerVS, 2014.

Lehmann, Wolfgang. "Becoming Middle Class: How Working-Class University Students Draw and Transgress Moral Class Boundaries." *Sociology* 43, no. 4 (2009): 631–47.

Leonhardt, Nico. "Inklusive Bildung Trotz Lehrer*innenmangel – Erfahrungen Aus Der Seiteneinstiegsqualifizierung Im Hinblick Auf Inklusionsorientierte Lehrer*innenbildung." *QfI – Qualifizierung Für Inklusion* 2, no. 3 (2020). https://www.qfi-oz.de/index.php/inklusion/article/view/38.

Leonhardt, Nico, Anne Goldbach, Lucia Staib, and Saskia Schuppener. *Macht in Der Schule – Perspektiven in Schwerer Und Einfacher Sprache*. Bad Heilbrunn: Klinkhardt, n.d.

Leonhardt, Nico, Saskia Schuppener, and Anne Goldbach. "Menschenrecht Auf (Hochschul)Bildung – Eine Reflexion Ableistischer Ordnungen Im Rahmen Diversitätssensibler Lehre." In *Menschenrechte Im Interdisziplinären Diskurs: Perspektiven Auf Diskriminierungsstrukturen Und Pädagogische Handlungsmöglichkeiten*, edited by Nico Leonhardt, Robert Kruschel, Saskia Schuppener, and Mandy Hauser, 259–72. Weinheim & Basel: Beltz, 2022.

Liebel, Manfred. *Unerhört. Kinder Und Macht*. Weinheim, Basel: Beltz Juventa, 2020.

Lütkens, Charlotte. "Die Schule Als Mittelklasseinstitution. Soziologie Der Schule. Non Scholae Sed Vitae." Edited by Peter Heintz. *Soziologie Der Schule*, no. Sonderheft 4 (1959): 22–39.

Lynch, Kathleen, and Claire O'Riordan. "Inequality in Higher Education: A Study of Class Barriers." *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 19, no. 4 (1998): 445–78.

Mason, Benjamin A., Adalet Baris Gunersel, and Emilie A. Ney. "Cultural and Ethnic Bias in Teacher Ratings of Behavior: A Criterion-Focus Review." *Psychology in the Schools* 51, no.

10 (2014): 1017–30.

Mbembe, Achille. *On the Postcolony*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.

McCoy, Selina, Bertrand Maître, Dorothy Watson, and Joanne Banks. "The Role of Parental Expectations in Understanding Social and Academic Well-Being among Children with Disabilities in Ireland." *European Journal of Special Needs Education* 31, no. 4 (2016): 535–52.

Meirieu, Philippe. *Ce Que l'école Peut Encore Pour La Démocratie. Deux Ou Trois Choses Que Je Sais (Peut-Être) de l'éducation et de La Pédagogie*. Paris: Autrement, 2020.

–––. *Faire l'École, Faire La Classe. Démocratie et Pédagogie*. Paris: ESF, 2011.

Merkens, Andreas. "Einleitung Sowie Erziehung Und Bildung Im Denken Antonio Gramscis. Eckpunkte Einer Intellektuellen Und Politischen Praxis." In *Erziehung Und Bildung*, edited by Antonio Gramsci and Andreas Merkens, 6–46. Hamburg: Argument-Verlag, 2004.

Mickelson, Roslyn Arlin. "The Case of the Missing Brackets: Teachers and Social Reproduction." *Journal of Education* 169, no. 2 (1987): 78–88.

Miethe, Ingrid. *Biografiearbeit. Lehr- Und Handbuch Für Studium Und Praxis*. Weinheim & München: Juventa, 2011.

Milani, Lorena, Cristina Boeris, and Emanuela Guarcello. *Come Una Stella Polare. Deontologia per Insegnanti, Educatori e Professionisti Affidabili*. Bari: Progedit, 2021.

Mincu, Monica E. *Personalisation of Education in Contexts: Policy Critique and Theories of Personal Improvement*. Rotterdam: Brill Academic Pub, 2012.

Mincu, Monica E., and Granata Anna. "Teachers' Informal Leadership for Equity in France and Italy during the First Wave of Education Emergency." *Teachers and Teaching*, 2021, 1–22.

Morin, Edgar. *La Méthode 6. Étique*. Paris: Seuil, 2004.

Mortari, Luigina, and Roberta Silva. *Teacher Education in Italy*. Edited by Karanam Pushpanadham. *Teacher Education in the Global Era. Perspectives and Practices*. Springer, 2020.

O'Donnell, Margaret. "Transfer from Special to Mainstream: The Voice of the Pupil." Edited by Michael Shevlin and Richard Rose. *Encouraging Voices– Respecting the Insights of Young People Who Have Been Marginalized*, 2003, 228–53.

Oliver, Michael. *Politics of Disablement*. London: Macmillan International Higher Education, 1990.

–––. *Understanding Disability: From Theory to Practice*. London: MacMillan Education UK, 1996.

Pantić, Nataša, Sarah Galey, Lani Florian, Srećko Joksimović, Gil Viry, Dragan Gašević, Helén Knutes Nyqvist, and Krystallia Kyritsi. "Making Sense of Teacher Agency for Change with Social and Epistemic Network Analysis." *Journal of Educational Change* 23 (2022): 145–77.

Pavone, Marisa. *L'inclusione Educativa. Indicazioni Pedagogiche per La Disabilità*. Milano: Mondadori Università, 2014.

–––. *Scuola e Bisogni Educativi Speciali*. Milano: Mondadori Università, 2015.

Perrenoud, Philippe. "De La Pratique Réflexive Au Travail Sur l'habitus." *Recherche et Formation Pour Les Professions de l'éducation* 15, no. 36 (2001): 131−62.

Pescarmona, Isabella. *Innovazione Educativa Tra Entusiasmo e Fatica*. Bologna: CISU, 2012.

Poel, Kathrin te. "Zur Bedeutung Eigener Schüler*innenbiografischer Erfahrungen von Angehenden Lehrpersonen Für Den Sich Anbahnenden Lehrer*innenhabitus Und Seine Anerkennungsbezüge." In *Grenzen.Gänge.Zwischen.Welten. Kontroversen − Entwicklungen − Perspektiven Der Inklusionsforschung*, edited by Bernhard Schimek, Gertraud Kremsner, Michelle Proyer, Rainer Grubich, Florentine Paudel, and Regina Grubich-Müller, 141−48. Bad Heilbrunn: Klinkhardt, 2022.

Reay, Diane. "Beyond Consciousness? The Psychic Landscape of Social Class." *Sociology* 39, no. 5 (2005): 911−28.

Reichelt, Malte, Matthias Collischon, and Andreas Eberl. "School Tracking and Its Role in Social Reproduction: Reinforcing Educational Inheritance and the Direct Effects of Social Origin." *The British Journal of Sociology* 70, no. 4 (2019): 1323−48.

Rose, Richard, and Michael Shevlin. "Encouraging Voices: Listening to Young People Who Have Been Marginalised." *Support for Learning* 19, no. 4 (2004): 155−61.

Rose, Richard, Michael Shevlin, Eileen Winter, and Paul O'Raw. "Special and Inclusive Education in the Republic of Ireland: Reviewing the Literature from 2000 to 2009." *European Journal of Special Needs Education* 25, no. 4 (2010): 359−73.

Ryan, Rosario. "How Inequality in Education in Ireland Is Produced, Reproduced, Justified, and Resisted at the Intersection of Disability and Social Class." PhD Thesis, National University of Ireland Maynooth, 2019.

Sabarwal, Shwetlena, Malek Abu-Jawdeh, and Radhika Kapoor. "Teacher Beliefs: Why They Matter and What They Are." *The World Bank Research Observer* 37, no. 1 (2022): 73−106.

Sander, Thomas, ed. *Habitussensibilität. Eine Neue Anforderung an Professionelles Handeln*. Wiesbaden: SpringerVS, 2014.

Savage, Mike, Fiona Devine, Niall Cunningham, Sam Friedman, Daniel Laurison, Andrew Miles, Helene Snee, and Mark Taylor. "On Social Class, Anno 2014." *Sociology* 49, no. 6 (2015): 1011−30.

Savia, Giovanni. *Universal Design for Learning. La Progettazione Universale per l'apprendimento e Una Didattica Inclusiva*. Trento: Erickson, 2017.

Scarry, Elaine. "Das Schwierige Bild Der Anderen." In *Schwierige Fremdheit: Über Integration Und Ausgrenzung in Einwanderungsländern*, edited by Friedrich Balke, Rebecca Habermas, Patrizia Nanz, and Peter Sillem, 229−63. Frankfurt: Fischer, 1993.

Schnitzer, Anna, and Rebecca Mörgen. "'Das Ist Eben so, Dass Schüler Kommen, Die Diskutieren Können' − Die Bedeutung Sprachlicher Fähigkeiten Für (Schulische) Partizipationsmöglichkeiten." In *Sprache Und Partizipation Im Schulfeld*, edited by Stefan Hauser and Nadine Nell-Tuor, 18−38. Bern: Hep, 2019.

Schön, Donald. *Educating the Reflective Practitioner: Toward a New Design for Teaching and Learning in the Professions*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1987.

Schumacher, Eva. "Die Soziale Ungleichheit Der Lehrer/Innen – Oder: Gibt Es Eine Milieuspezifität Pädagogischen Handels?" In *Pädagogik Und Soziale Ungleichheit. Aktuelle Beiträge – Neue Herausforderungen*, edited by Jutta Mägdefrau and Eva Schumacher, 253–71. Bad Heilbrunn/Obb: Klinkhardt, 2002.

Schuppener, Saskia, Anne Goldbach, Helga Schlichting, and Mandy Hauser. *Pädagogik Bei Zugeschriebener Geistiger Behinderung*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2021.

Shah, Madiha. "The Importance and Benefits of Teacher Collegiality in Schools – A Literature Review." *Procedia. Social and Behavioral Sciences* 46 (2012): 1242–46.

Shevlin, Michael, Mairin Kenny, and Eileen McNeela. "Curriculum Access for Pupils with Disabilities: An Irish Experience." *Disability & Society* 17, no. 2 (2002): 159–69.

Skeggs, Beverley. *Formations of Class & Gender: Becoming Respectable*. Vol. 51. London: Sage Publications, 1997.

Spivak, Gayatri Ch. *Can the Subaltern Speak? Postkolonialität Und Subalterne Artikulation*. Wien: Turia & Kant, 2008.

Squires, Garry, Afroditi Kalambouka, and Joanna Bragg. "A Study of the Experiences of Post-Primary Students with Special Educational Needs. NCSE Research Report No. 23." Trim: National Council for Special Education, 2016.

Thomas, Guy, Sam Wineburga, Pam Grossmana, Oddmund Myhrea, and Stephen Woolworth. "In the Company of Colleagues: An Interim Report on the Development of a Community of Teacher Learners." *Teaching and Teacher Education* 14, no. 1 (1998): 21–32.

Thümmler, Ramona. "Habitussensibilität Und Subjektive Theorien Im Kontext (Sonder-)Pädagogischer Interaktionen." In *Die Macht Der Ordnung. Perspektiven Auf Veränderung in Der Pädagogik*, edited by Susanne Leitner and Ramona Thümmler, 218–31. Weinheim & Basel: Beltz Juventa, 2022.

Triventi, Moris. "Are Children of Immigrants Graded Less Generously by Their Teachers Than Natives, and Why? Evidence from Student Population Data in Italy." *International Migration Review* 54, no. 3 (2019): 765–95.

Tyler, Imogen. "'Chav Mum Chav Scum': Class Disgust in Contemporary Britain." *Feminist Media Studies* 8, no. 1 (2008): 17–34.

Umutlu, Duygu, and ChanMin Kim. "Design Guidelines for Scaffolding Pre-Service Teachers' Reflection in Action Toward Culturally Responsive Teaching." *Reflective Practice* 21, no. 5 (2020): 587–603.

Yusof, Hamidah, Muhamad Nursalam Al-Hafiz Osman, and Mohd Asri Mohd Noor. "School Culture and Its Relationship with Teacher Leadership." *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences* 6, no. 11 (2016): 272–86.

Zembylas, Michalinos. "The Place of Emotion in Teacher Reflection: Elias, Foucault and 'Critical Emotional Reflexivity.'" *Power and Education* 6, no. 2 (2014): 210–22.

Zoletto, Davide. *Straniero in Classe*. Milano: Raffaello Cortina, 2010.

About the authors

Nico Leonhardt

Nico Leonhardt is research assistant at the Leipzig University (Institute of Special Education). His work and research focuses are inclusive school development and social space orientation, inclusion-sensitive higher education development, accessible language, participatory research and teaching.

Rose Ryan

Dr Rose Ryan is Director of Access at Maynooth University with responsibility for leading strategic change in relation to widening participation in higher education in Ireland. Dr Ryan leads the Maynooth University Access Programme (MAP) which works in partnership across the University and alongside under-represented learners, schools, and communities to increase equity of access and support student success.

Valerio Ferrero

Valerio Ferrero does research in the field of intercultural education, focusing on equity and inequality in schools. He is also interested in community philosophical practices, on which he also carries out training activities. Before starting his research work, he was a primary school teacher.

BECOMING AN INCLUSIVE TEACHER

Wurud Jayusi; Declan Markey; Kavyta Raghunandan; and Graham Maher

---

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=423#oembed-1

Example Case

Mr. Malik recently joined a high school in an urban area with a diverse student population. Growing up as a first-generation college graduate from a low-income immigrant family, Mr. Malik vividly remembers the challenges he faced navigating an educational system that often didn't acknowledge or support his unique needs.

In his first week, he noticed several students in his classroom who reminded him of his younger self—students who seemed hesitant to speak up, struggled with a sense of belonging, or carried the weight of balancing school with family responsibilities. Among them was Aisha, who often stayed quiet in group discussions, and Mateo, who worked part-time after school to support his family.

Drawing from his own experiences, Mr. Malik shared parts of his journey with the class: how he learned to navigate structural barriers, overcome self-doubt, and embrace his identity as a strength rather than a barrier. His openness resonated deeply with students like Aisha, who later confided that hearing his story gave her hope that she could succeed despite her challenges.

To connect further, Mr. Malik implemented strategies that mirrored the support he wished he had received as a student. He created after-school mentorship hours to help students with study skills and applications for scholarships or internships. He also designed project-based learning assignments where students could share aspects of their cultural backgrounds,

struggles, and dreams, which gave Mateo an opportunity to reflect on his family's migration story and feel pride in his contributions.

By modeling resilience and providing a safe space for open conversations, Mr. Malik cultivated a classroom environment where students felt seen, heard, and empowered. Over time, he noticed a shift in his students: Aisha began participating more actively in discussions, and Mateo became a peer mentor for younger students. Many of his students later expressed that having a teacher who truly understood their challenges made them feel capable of overcoming barriers they had once thought insurmountable.

Initial questions

In this chapter you will find the answers to the following questions:

1. What do we mean by inclusive teaching and learning?
2. Why inclusive teaching and learning is important?
3. How can we put inclusive teaching and learning into practice?
4.

A teacher's perspective;

I realise that being a great teacher isn't just about subject knowledge or classroom management—it's about meeting the needs of all students, embracing their diversity, and creating an inclusive environment where every learner feels valued. So, what needs to change? How do I grow to become the kind of teacher who can serve and inspire every student I encounter?

For us, becoming an inclusive teacher entails the following…

Learn from students experience

Build positive relationships

Create safe learning spaces

Emotionally and culturally compentent

Be patient and flexible

Respectful interactions

Put your words into practice

Create a joy of life-long learning

Model good practice

Encourage the use of multiple sources of information

Actively listen

Guided learning to create critical thinker

Your journey to becoming an inclusive and diverse teacher

Authenticity and open mindedness

Innovate, don't imitate

Failure is okay, it is part of learning

Learn from mistakes

Actively commit to inclusivity, diversity and equality in education

Counter story-telling

Decolonisation

Telling our stories

Encouraging multi-cultralism

Attend conference and talks to fill gaps in knowledge

Engage community groups

Introduction to Topic

Teaching is a profoundly impactful profession, and teachers hold a unique position of influence in their schools and communities. However, as the example case demonstrates, teachers who share lived experiences with their students can build deep connections and serve as powerful role models. Yet, globally, teachers are disproportionately drawn from dominant social, racial, cultural, and linguistic groups. For instance, in the United States, 79% of public school teachers are white, compared to a student population that is only 53% white (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020). Similar trends are evident in Europe (OECD, 2020) and Australia (Santoro, 2013), highlighting the need for systems that better reflect the diversity of the communities they serve.

While programmes like Turn to Teaching in Ireland and Pathways2Teaching in the United States are instrumental in fostering a more diverse teaching workforce, they are only part of the solution. Pathways2Teaching introduces high school students from underrepresented backgrounds to teaching as a career path, while Turn to Teaching provides alternative pathways for disadvantaged or underrepresented individuals to enter the profession. Such initiatives are critical in diversifying the profession, however, we must also focus on empowering the existing teacher workforce to develop more inclusive and culturally responsive practices.

Even teachers who share some commonalities with their students' backgrounds may not fully grasp how their own position as educators comes with inherent privilege. As McIntosh (1989) reflects, "I have come to see white privilege as an invisible package of unearned assets which I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was 'meant' to remain oblivious". (McIntosh, 1989, p. 74)

Acknowledging privilege requires recognising these invisible advantages and understanding how they shape one's experiences, perceptions, and teaching practices. Such reflection helps bridge the gap between teachers' and students' experiences, fostering empathy and inclusivity.

All teachers have the potential to be role models, not only teachers from diverse backgrounds. For us, being an inclusive teacher, no matter what your background, can make you a positive role model for your students and your school community. So, when we say All Means All!, in relation to inclusive teaching, we mean that ALL teachers need to become inclusive teachers, enriched by the diversity of the students and teachers they work with, and the communities they work in.

The following text will offer an insight into what we believe being an inclusive teacher is all about. We will do this by sharing some inspiring stories of teachers applying inclusive teaching and embracing diversity in their teaching practice and learning environments. These stories involve members of our group directly, or what we have learned about through our interactions with the people involved. We hope these stories will provide readers with

an understanding that, in becoming an inclusive teacher, you are embarking on a journey of discovery and transformation for you, your students and your school community.

Beginning the journey towards inclusive teaching

The authors of this chapter recommend reading Dr Lilian Nwanze's Anti-Racist Manifesto for Adult Education in Ireland, which appears in her PHD thesis Un-silencing the silenced: Using Black Migrant Women's experiences of racism to propose a critical anti-racist pedagogy for Irish Adult Education (2024). Dr Nwanze's manifesto connects with many of the topics explored in this chapter. Although the manifesto is aimed at adult educators, the All Means All authors of this chapter believe it is applicable to all teachers and educators. Dr Nwanze's manifesto can be accessed here:

Un-silencing the silenced: Using Black Migrant Women's experiences of racism to propose a critical anti-racist pedagogy for Irish Adult Education. – MURAL – Maynooth University Research Archive Library

Part 1 – Self Reflection: what you can do in any given situation

Acknowledge privilege and the impact it can have- a reflective beginning

Acknowledging privilege and understanding its impact is an essential step for any teacher committed to creating an inclusive and equitable learning environment. Checking privilege is a way for teachers and prospective teachers to begin to be more inclusive in their teaching, as it allows us to raise awareness of our own biases, acknowledge social inequalities and promote equitable educational practices. To begin with, it is necessary to learn about privilege and investigate its various forms, such as racial, gender, socio-economic, and educational privilege. This will give you an insight into the potential difficulties some of your students, your colleagues and the wider school community could be facing on a daily basis.

Privilege checking does require us to reflect our own social identities and recognise the advantages we possess due to factors such as race, gender, socioeconomic status, or ability (McIntosh, 1988). This self-reflection and awareness enables teachers to understand how their experiences may differ from those of their students and how their privilege can influence their teaching practices and interactions in the classroom. Acknowledging your own privilege can allow you to begin to put yourself in another person's shoes and increase the level of empathy you can work with in your career.

In this section we will focus on two stories that show the way different teachers have increased inclusivity, diversity, and equality in their teaching practice, their students and

their classrooms. These stories are brief examples of how small actions can have huge impacts.

Story 1 – The power of apology

We sometimes have expectations of young people in education; they may need to behave and act a certain way even when it may not suit their character or personality. We as educators may at times act in contradiction to these expectations, and this can be damaging to students' learning and unravel any positive relationships that we have built with them. The following story relates to a school in Inner City Dublin, which is part of the DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) programme. DEIS is aimed at addressing the educational needs of students in communities that are characterised by poverty. It provides additional resources to promote student engagement, and academic achievement, in communities at risk of disadvantage and social exclusion (source). In these contexts, socio-economic issues and generational trauma related to education can have a significant impact on students, shaping the challenges they face and the support they require.

In this situation I was responsible for a poor reaction to behaviours that I normally dealt with in a consistent and controlled manner. This experience involves my interaction with a student I knew well. I had not slept the night before due to one of my children being sick and upon arriving at school I encountered the student in my class who was clearly distressed and was disrupting the class. I was aware that they had very little support at home and they had been working with professional support services to help with anger management issues. However, maybe due to my tiredness, my reaction to the situation was one of annoyance.

I was refusing to take any of the student's perspectives on board. It was a poor way to react to a vulnerable young person, but I could not see past my tiredness and irritation. After our interaction, the student went to their next class and I learned that they had another bad experience, possibly due of our earlier interaction. Hearing about this I went to find the student, but I was informed that they had left the school early and gone home.

The following morning, I waited for the student and the first thing I asked for was a chat with them. I immediately apologised to the student for how I had behaved. I did not offer any excuse for my behaviour, I simply apologised. I told the student I would explain the background behind my reaction if they wished, whilst explaining it was not an excuse for my behaviour. The student wanted to know and so I explained about my tiredness and we finished our conversation. I did not ask for or expect any apology in return.

Our relationship in class was back to normal and it began to improve, and nothing was said

about the interaction again. That was until the student graduated from school, when they brought the incident up and talked about the impact that it had. The student explained that it was the first time ever that an adult had taken responsibility and apologised to them. The student shared with me that they had always been blamed for any negative interactions that went poorly between them and any adults. This student explained that it was shocking, but good, to see adults taking responsibility for a mistake, whilst having the power to learn from the mistake and resolve the issues. It gave this student an insight and understanding of their own behaviours. This student realised it was okay to make a mistake, once you accept it, face it and learn from it.

What can be learned?

Safe space for learning: The teacher in this situation gave the student an insight into their life and the effect that personal experiences can have on their interactions with others. The teacher acknowledges their poor behaviour and the need to make amends, thus showing the student that learning from mistakes can have a real benefit in building positive relationships. Taking responsibility for the behaviour created a safe space for learning where an adult had shown that failure, or poor decisions, can be used in a constructive way.

Emotionally competent: The teacher showed an understanding of their own behaviour and the effect it can have on others. This situation allowed the teacher to explain to the student that they understood the impact that they can have and how making mistakes is part of education. The acceptance of responsibility allowed this student to understand and experience empathy from a person in power.

Story 2 – A Language Exchange

An Italian teacher was trying to teach immigrant students her native language. The students were learning Italian in an effort to improve their ability in school. However, the learning was taking much longer than the teacher expected and she had tried several different tactics and teaching tools, but none had worked. The teacher came up with the idea that she would learn alongside her students. So, while the students were learning Italian the teacher would learn the students native language too. An exchange of learning was agreed upon between the teacher and the students. This shift in the relationships between the teacher and the students (the teacher was now also a student and the students were now also teachers) had

a dramatic impact on the learning environment and the relationships. So much so that the students began to learn Italian at a much quicker rate than the teacher expected. This created an equity in the educational transaction, a shared ownership that fostered a positive relationship, ultimately creating a safe space for these students.

What can be learned:

Building positive relationships: A positive relationship was built between the teacher and students as she shared the learning journey with them. Her involvement in the process changed from being a teacher to that of being a student as well. In this instance the teacher was sharing the difficult experiences of the students learning a new language. This ability to empathise and immerse herself with her students created a safe space for all to learn.

Challenging Dominant Norms: Instead of framing the students as linguistically deficient for not knowing the dominant language, the teacher treated all languages as equally valuable. This shift disrupted the traditional power dynamics in the classroom and highlighted the potential for a multilingual, inclusive approach. The teacher's strategy reframed the students as competent and knowledgeable, emphasising the value of their languages and cultural backgrounds rather than positioning them as lacking.

Models good practice: The teacher showed a willingness to learn something new alongside her students. There was no requirement or expectation for her to do this, but by engaging in learning something new, she modelled the good practice that she wanted to see from the students themselves.

Emotionally and culturally competent: This teacher has shown a willingness to learn from another culture. The ability to speak the same language as the students from a different ethnicity can support the learning journey. It demonstrates an openness and willingness to take into account the students' experience, which in turn can increase the engagement of these students in education and make the learning environment an inclusive space.

Cultivating a joy of life-long learning

Developing a life-long approach to learning can have dramatic effects for teachers and students alike. Lifelong learning is a vital tool to be used for personal development and self-fulfilment. Through engaging in this, teachers can enrich the lives of the wider school community as they continue to adapt to changing circumstances, acquire new competencies, and maintain a sense of intellectual and personal growth (Jarvis, 2007).

Who Am I?

The role of personal and critical reflection is increasing in importance across education, as it provides practitioners with an opportunity for continuous improvement in their craft. By

engaging in reflection, we allow ourselves to keep abreast of the current intellectual, social, emotional, and physical environments our students operate in.

We would encourage all members of the school community to engage in deep self-reflection to identify their own privileges, and what privileges (or lack thereof) have helped you get to where you are today. Reflecting on these factors helps you to understand how they may have influenced your own experiences, opportunities and assumptions of the world around you, whilst also enhancing the level of empathy you can use towards your students in class. The use of your personal understanding of privilege can lead to the development of authentic and safe spaces for students, colleagues and parents/guardians to continue their journey through education.

Recognising and leveraging the funds of knowledge that students bring into the classroom can empower learners and foster truly inclusive educational practices.

Part 2 – Inter-relational: Engaging + Being emotionally + Culturally competent

The Israeli context[1]

Palestinians in Israel are a national ethnic group and an indigenous minority, totaling 20% of the population; of these, 85% are Muslims, 6% Druze, and 7.5% Christians (Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics, 2017). Indigenous minority (Palestinian minority in our case) refers to the remaining minority of a group that resides in its own homeland, considers themselves distinct from other sectors, and develops and transmits their ethnic identity and cultural heritage to the next generation (Jamal, 2005, 2011). This Palestinian minority aims to retain its unique characteristics while becoming integrated within the majority culture.

In the Palestinian society in Israel, there is an excess of teachers, while in the Jewish society, there is a shortage of teachers. Therefore, some of the Palestinian teachers choose to teach in secular Jewish public schools (Jayusi & Bekeman, 2019a, 2019b). Teaching in such diverse cultural contexts presents complexities, as it involves navigating themes such as cultural competence, teacher identity, and the challenges faced by educators in multicultural environments (Gutman et al., 2023). The Palestinian teachers have positive relationships with students, parents, and colleagues. They believe that their work helps reduce prejudice and increases mutual understanding among the groups in conflict through successful acculturation, despite some difficulties (Jayusi & Bekerman, 2019a, 2019b).

---

1. This chapter was created during the summer of 2023, over a year before the outbreak of the conflict initiated by the October 7th attack on Israel and the subsequent war. Readers are encouraged to consider that the content reflects perspectives, discussions, and priorities prior to the event. Hence, interpretations or references to the region or related topics are not shaped by the developments and global reactions that followed.

They see in their work the potential to be effective agents of social change by helping their students (parents and colleagues) combat racism and prejudice.

Furthermore, Palestinian teachers promote and sustain direct and indirect contact with the parents, which results in a generalising effect, reducing prejudice and changing attitudes even when the contact is indirect (Asbrock et al., 2014). Although lacking in intercultural training, the teachers seem to recognise that reducing prejudice implies working on the social-cognitive development of their students through the promotion of sustained contact (Allport, 1954), offering anti-bias information (Bigler & Liben, 2006), empowering students to construct new knowledge (Peucker & Reiter, 2008), and widening the socio-psychological repertoire (Bar-Tal, 2013).

Story 3 – A Remembrance Day with Two Meanings

This story focuses on Palestinian Israeli teachers' involvement in the celebration of Israel's Independence Day. For Arab teachers, this day holds a different meaning, as it marks the Nakba catastrophe, a time of remembrance for the expulsion and loss suffered by Palestinians in 1948. This day of remembrance is one of sorrow and loss and is a discomforting experience for the Arab teachers. Conversely, for Israeli students and colleagues, the day represents one of celebration. Despite this, all teachers, driven by inclusivity and respect, participate in this day despite their personal pain. Their ability to adapt, show compassion and patience, and remain flexible allows them to accommodate their students' needs, even if it requires participating in activities that may contradict their own narratives.

"It is too hard for me on Independence Day. I used to stand with them, but it was very hard. I cried several times and other teachers hugged me. I explained to them that it hurts me to stand because I think about my people who were killed… I don't mention the word "Nakba" but I don't see how I can stand in a good way on this day. I'm not disparaging it, but it is hard."

What can be learned:

1. Building positive relationships: The teacher empathises with her student's and colleagues' feelings. She recognises the student's personal connection to the day and

the teacher creates a safe and supportive environment, showing respect and a willingness, above all else, to continue to build positive student-teacher relationships.

2. Authentic and open-minded: Although faced with such a challenging situation every year the teacher remains true to herself and yet still open-minded to appreciate the significance of the experience for her students in terms of their needs and well-being. This demonstrates the teacher's commitment to supporting the student's emotional well-being and understanding their unique circumstances.

3. Respectful approach: Despite the teacher's personal difficulties and discomfort, she participated in the event. This respectful approach highlights the teacher's ability to empathise with others' experiences while still acknowledging their own emotions and perspectives. Palestinian teachers respect, and embrace, their Jewish students and colleagues, fostering a sense of belonging within the school. This is especially evident when the principal and Jewish teachers show respect and inclusivity towards the Palestinian teachers throughout the year. If the school administration were not inclusive, Palestinian teachers would not feel comfortable and might even seek to leave. In other words, a supportive and inclusive school environment strengthens the sense of belonging for minority teachers. As a result, they are more willing to respect and embrace their students and fellow teachers.

Story 4 – Not the Right Doctor

This story highlights the positive impact the teachers from diverse backgrounds can have on their students and the wider community. It shows how diversity can play a pivotal role in reducing prejudices and stereotypes against culturally diverse societies, particularly in the Palestinian culture.

Before encountering his Arab teacher, a Jewish student admitted being indifferent to the plight of Arabs in Israel. He recounted a time when he fell ill, and his mother took him to the hospital where an Arab doctor attended to him. His mother expressed discomfort and insisted on a Jewish doctor, showing a discriminatory attitude toward the Arab doctor. Although the student did not react to this when it occurred, he informed the teacher that after reflecting on the incident, the student expressed his anger towards his mother's behaviour and regretted his own complicity in allowing racism to prevail. He revealed that, thanks to his Arab teacher, he realised a valuable lesson in that we must embrace equality and treat people fairly, regardless of their ethnicity. He now advocates for respect towards Arabs and acknowledges the importance of treating everyone with dignity.

What can be learned:

1. The power of personal experiences: Building a relationship with the Palestinian teacher had a profound impact on the Jewish student. It challenged his preconceived notions and opened his eyes to the reality of discrimination and inequality. This highlights the importance of personal experiences in shaping our perspectives and beliefs.

2. The impact of diverse education: The Palestinian teacher played a crucial role in the student's transformation. Through education and dialogue, the teacher helped the student understand the importance of equality and treating all people with dignity and fairness. This underscores the power of education in fostering empathy, understanding, and breaking down stereotypes.

3. Advocacy for respect and equality: The student's transformation led him to become an advocate for respect towards others and a proponent of equal treatment for all individuals, regardless of their ethnicity. This highlights the potential for personal growth and the positive impact individuals can have when they actively work towards creating a more inclusive and just society.

Story 5 – My students and I

This story centres on a Palestinian teacher who taught a diverse class of Jewish students, comprising individuals from various groups of the Jewish society. Within the classroom it was clear to the teacher that the students themselves, although of the same ethnicity, still held prejudices and stereotypical beliefs about each other because of their different backgrounds.

"[…] my presence in the Jewish school makes a difference. My students learned that it is important to know about the "other", not to judge, [but rather] to accept the "other.." […] I send a message to the students that the fact that the other is different doesn't make him or her worth less."

This teacher shared that through her guidance, inclusive teaching methods, and diverse classroom discussions, the students gradually learned to appreciate and respect one another's differences – whether they were Russian, Ethiopian, Eastern, or Arab. She implemented interactive activities, such as group discussions on identity and cultural backgrounds, storytelling exercises where students shared their personal histories, and role-playing activities to challenge biases. Creating a safe and respectful learning environment

empowered students to ask questions, engage in open dialogue, and develop a more empathetic and nuanced understanding of their peers.

Through these experiences, the teacher was able to enhance her students' awareness, compassion, and ability to see beyond stereotypes, fostering not only respect within the classroom but also a broader sense of inclusivity within their wider community and society.

What can be learned:

1. The significance of representation and diversity in educational settings: When students have the opportunity to interact with individuals from different backgrounds, it broadens their perspectives, promotes understanding, and challenges stereotypes.
2. The value of knowledge and understanding: The teacher emphasises the importance of knowing about the "other" and not judging them. Education and awareness play a crucial role in fostering empathy and acceptance. By learning about different cultures, religions, and perspectives, students can develop a more nuanced understanding of the world and appreciate the diversity that exists.
3. Embracing and accepting differences: The story emphasises the need to accept the "other" despite their differences. It encourages students to recognise that the worth of an individual is not determined by their differences but by their inherent value as a human being. This promotes inclusivity, tolerance, and respect for diversity.
4. Challenging prejudice and discrimination: By sending a message to the students that the fact that someone is different does not make them worth less, the quote addresses and challenges prejudice and discrimination. It encourages students to question their biases and preconceived notions, promoting an environment of equality and fairness.
5. The impact of individual actions: The speaker's presence and their message to the students indicate the potential impact of individual actions. By modelling acceptance and respect, they are able to influence and shape the attitudes and behaviours of the students. This underscores the power of individuals to make a positive difference in their communities and foster a more inclusive society.

In conclusion, being a diverse teacher goes beyond the mere transmission of knowledge. It fosters understanding, empathy, and building shared humanity. Diverse teachers create a positive change, inspiring their students to embrace diversity, stand against prejudice, and have respect for all people.

Part 3 – Societal Relations: To actively commit to inclusivity, diversity and equality in education

What does decolonising mean?

Broadly speaking, decolonising the curriculum explores the ongoing impact of legacies of colonialism and imperialism on perceived knowledge, learning and society. It seeks to recognise and challenge this legacy in re-balancing dominant Eurocentric processes within curricula by including and integrating a much wider range of perspectives. Rather than seeking a neat definition of this, it is more instructive to see decolonising the curriculum as an approach and as an ongoing journey. In fact, what is often referred to as decolonising the curriculum simply amounts to diversifying the curriculum, as, realistically, a process of decolonising the curriculum would require a momentous overhaul of the system of education rather than modifications to course content (Tuck & Yang, 2012; Bhanot, 2015)

While the ethical and moral rationale for diversifying our curriculum is self-evident, there are practical benefits for taking this undertaking on, for example:

- Highly diverse student cohorts often do not see themselves reflected in mainstream teaching methods and content, which are predominantly shaped by white, middle-class perspectives. This misalignment challenges the principles of authentic student-centred pedagogy, which should acknowledge and incorporate the lived experiences of all students.
- Rich opportunities to co-create knowledge production from the Global South and non-Western sources.
- Both staff and students are enabled to deeply reflect on their own positionality and privilege in social, economic and political contexts.
- Decolonising work is a necessary extension of inclusivity in its shared aim for all students to experience positive well-being and belonging (Tran, 2021).

Potted history timeline

The concept emerged from the Rhodes Must Fall campaign in 2015 where students in Cape Town, South Africa, demanded the removal of a statue of Cecil Rhodes, the imperialist, racist business magnate, from their campus. Their battle cry, #RhodesMustFall, sparked an international movement calling for the decolonisation of universities all over the world. Following similar calls by students in Cape Town, students at Oxford University called for a statue of Cecil Rhodes to be removed. This was not simply about tearing down an outward symbol of British imperialism – a monument glorifying a colonial conqueror – but highlighted the need to confront the toxic inheritance of the past and challenge the continued underrepresentation of Black and Global Majority people at universities. This went to the very heart of the pernicious influence of colonialism in education today.

Why do we need to do this work?

The curriculum provides a way of identifying the knowledge we value, and structures the ways in which we are taught to think and talk about the world. By amplifying the voices of those currently underrepresented in the curriculum, for instance from Black and Global Majority, LGBTQ+, disabled, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller groups, this is just one mechanism that can go some way to creating a safe learning environment and generate lasting impactful change. Similarly, critical race theorists adopt counter-storytelling as a way to speak back to dominant and mainstream narratives in its reframing and rearticulating the experiences of minority groups. There is no universal template to decolonising, but it is helpful to consider this in stages. One starting point is diversifying reading lists to ensure the inclusion of a wide range of voices. Below, is one example of how a primary school in North East London began their journey into decolonising through this route.

Story 6 – Counter-stories in action

The power of authentic representation

I was working with a headteacher on a project on the use of comics and graphic novels as a tool to develop racial literacies. Her initial concerns were centred around how her positioning as a white, British woman in a leadership role, would bear on her participation in the work of decolonising and diversifying. She quickly came to realise that it was actually the work of everyone to be inclusive and diverse, regardless of background or position. Her main aim was to address the lack of relevant materials to engage the pupils. We worked together on creating a book box for 9-10 year olds that drew on as wide a range of perspectives as possible and which reflected her student population. We sought titles that are not typically found in school curricula and which would, hopefully, connect with the readers. The school librarian disseminated the book box to some of the teachers to implement in their lesson plans. I can honestly say that it had a significant impact. A few days later a 10 year old Sikh boy knocked on the headteacher's door with a graphic novel in his hand – Fauja Singh Keeps Going. This book was based on the true story of a 100 year old Sikh man who broke world records to become the oldest man to run the British marathon. The boy said: "Miss, I just wanted to say thank you so much for this book. I've never seen myself in a book – ever". He was visibly emotional, which in turn, made both of us emotional! It was such a heartfelt moment of gratitude that said so much about the power of authentic representation, and

how this approach, when undertaken with thought and consideration, rather than a form of 'cancel culture' can enrich the learning for both staff and students. It highlightly how an educator really can make a difference – and it is up to you what difference you want to make.

From recognition to action

I guest lectured on an undergraduate module called Decolonising Politics for a colleague. The month that I delivered the module happened to coincide with South Asian Heritage Month which takes place every year across Britain from mid-July to mid-August. In the session, I spoke about racial capitalism and how capitalism and colonialism are historically intertwined with the theft by colonial powers funding the emergence of capitalist enterprises in Europe. Slavery, in this context presented as an economic category, became racialised over time and is a well-known aspect of global history (even if not taught correctly), I added a section on Indian indenture in the Caribbean: a lesser-known and an even lesser-taught underrepresented aspect of British and South Asian history. After the lecture, a small group of students questioned me about the system and operationalisation of indenture, following the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833, and how the British Empire recruited workers from India (as a cheap source of labour), for their sugar plantations in the Caribbean. I went on to underscore how the descendants of Indian indenture embarked on another wave of labour migration, in the form of the 1949–71 Windrush migrations to the United Kingdom. The Windrush generation had a high number of Indo-Caribbean and Chinese-Caribbean migrants that made this journey, but their stories rarely get told in the wider Windrush narrative. The 'minority within a minority' as they are described by scholars, consequently occupy a marginal positionality.

This session resonated deeply with one of the students who had distant Indo-Caribbean heritage, as she reflected about her own positioning and disidentification as part of her identity particularly as these experiences were not discussed amongst her family or relatives. She also spoke about how her racialised identity negated, if not disallowed, any notion of Indianness simply because of how she was perceived. Following this session and our conversation, she embarked on a project with her two peers to learn more about this part of British, Indian and Caribbean history and developed a proposal to host a small community event in South London as part of a wider museums' engagement project. The group identified and invited people of Indo-Caribbean heritage to a roundtable to share their memories, stories and family histories with the goal being to support and recognise the legacies of the Windrush generation and specifically how the Indo-Caribbean community continued to struggle to find a place in the Windrush story which is so often overlooked. The roundtable event was a considerable undertaking by students who took it upon themselves

to embark on a 'decolonial activity' in an attempt to provide a corrective to this oft-ignored part of our migration and social history.

These two examples speak to so many factors in our opening diagram, but in particular they emphasise the power of counter-story telling, and the practice of diversifying colonial narratives that can connect and inspire our students who often feel no real connection to course content. Opportunities to integrate and embed counter-stories that diversify curriculums are available to all educators and can be incorporated into learning environments. By doing so, educators can ensure that they are embracing processes of guided learning to create critical thinking and widen opportunities for learning.

The stories remind us that….

Unpacking privilege and challenging systemic inequalities can be uncomfortable and challenging at first. It can be a difficult process to engage with initially, but in doing so, can create numerous opportunities to create inclusive and diverse education. Embrace feedback and guidance using your own reflective tasks, colleagues, mentors, students, and all other stakeholders in your school community.

Your vibrant and active school community offers an excellent opportunity to learn, ask questions and actively listen. Actively seek out and listen to the experiences and perspectives of individuals from all communities that are represented, or linked to your school or community. Attend workshops, conferences, or events that promote dialogue and understanding around privilege and social justice, or failing this, invite speakers to come to your school to speak to staff, students, and parents/guardians. In a safe space, engage in conversations with colleagues, students, and community members who have different backgrounds and life experiences. Or even act as an instrument of change and work with your students to create an event that explores topics such as as decolonisation or counter-stories. Working with your students, and giving them the autonomy to represent themselves and perspectives that have value and meaning, will create a space of inspiration and empowerment in your school.

In Conclusion

Our message to initial teacher trainees is that anyone can be an inclusive and diverse teacher and, in fact, every teacher needs to be inclusive and embrace diversity in their teaching practice.

Sometimes when a new teacher joins the school, and is different from the majority, there may be a perception that this new teacher will oversee the diversity work in the school. As we have heard from Wurud's story (story no.5), teachers who have a different life or different lived experience from the majority of students or school staff, can have a transformative impact on peoples' understanding and perspective of the world they know. However, it is not only the responsibility of diverse teachers to be inclusive and embrace diversity in their teaching (to ensure all students feel respected and valued), every teacher must adopt strategies and approaches to ensure they are being an inclusive and diverse teacher. Just like in Kavyta's example (story no.6), the school principal can change the reading lists to ensure students lived experience and culture was reflected in the school's curriculum.

For educators, such examples make teaching an exciting and an inspiring career move. In trying to become an inclusive and diverse teacher, you are embarking on a journey of continuous discovery and transformation for everyone connected to you and your school. Therefore, when we say All Means All in relation to inclusive and diverse teaching, we mean that all teachers need to become inclusive teachers, and be enriched by the diversity of students and teachers they work with.

As a final thought, consider the timeless wisdom of a phrase often attributed to Plutarch:
"The mind is not a vessel that needs filling, but wood that needs igniting."

While the exact authorship of this quote is debated[2], the message is universal and deeply relevant to inclusive teaching. Education is not about simply transferring information but about sparking curiosity, critical thinking, and a passion for lifelong learning. By embracing inclusivity and diversity, teachers can light the fire within each student, encouraging them to realise their potential and make meaningful contributions to their communities.

Local contexts

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=423#h5p-47

---

2. For more on the origin and context of this quote, visit Quote Investigator.

Closing questions to discuss or tasks

- How can we ensure that all students can be heard and encouraged to participate?
- What is the importance of incorporating global perspectives into inclusive teaching?
- Think about strategies to involve students actively in decision-making processes and inclusive practices.
- Consider a specific challenge in your own teaching or educational context. What inclusive strategies from this chapter could you adapt to address it?
-

Literature

Allport, Gordon W. (1954). The Nature of Prejudice. Cambridge, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Asbrock, Frank; Lemmer, Gunnar; Becker, Julia C.; Koller, Jeffrey; & Wagner, Ulrich. (2014). "Who are these foreigners anyway?" The content of the term foreigner and its impact on prejudice. SAGE Open, 4(2), 1–8. Crossref.

Bar-Tal, Daniel. (2013). Intractable conflicts: Socio-psychological foundations and dynamics. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. Crossref.

Bhanot, Kavita. (2015). Decolonise Not Diversify. Media Diversified. Retrieved from https://mediadiversified.org/2015/12/30/is-diversity-is-only-for-white-people/.

Bigler, Rebecca S., & Liben, Lynn S. (2006). A developmental intergroup theory of social stereotypes and prejudice. Advances in Child Development and Behavior, 34, 39–89. Crossref, PubMed, Web of Science.

Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics. (2017). Israel in Figures, Selected Data from the Statistical Abstract of Israel 2017. The State of Israel.

Jayusi, Wurud, & Bekerman, Zvi. (2019a). 'Yes, We Can! Palestinian-Israeli Teachers in Jewish-Israeli Schools.' Journal of Teacher Education, 71(1), 86–98.

Jayusi, Wurud, & Bekerman, Zvi. (2019b). 'Does Teaching on the "Other" Side Create a Change?' Teaching and Teacher Education, 77, 160–169.

In Gutman, Mary; Jayusi, Wurud; Beck, Michael; & Bekerman, Zvi (Eds.). To Be a Minority Teacher in a Foreign Culture: Empirical Evidence from an International Perspective. Springer Open Access. Available at https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-25584-7.

Jamal, Amal. (2005). Civic lexicon for pupils in the Arab education system in Israel. Jerusalem, Israel: The Gilo Center, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. (In Arabic).

Jamal, Amal. (2011). Arab minority nationalism in Israel: The politics of indigeneity. London, England: Routledge. Crossref.

Jarvis, Peter. (2007). Globalisation, Lifelong Learning and the Learning Society: Sociological Perspectives. London: Routledge.

McIntosh, Peggy. (1988). White privilege and male privilege: A personal account of coming to see correspondences through work in women's studies. In Andersen, Margaret L. & Collins,   -Patricia Hill (Eds.), Race, class, and gender: An anthology (pp. 95–105). Cengage Learning.

McIntosh, Peggy. (1989). White privilege: Unpacking the invisible knapsack. Peace and Freedom Magazine (July/August): 10–12. Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Philadelphia.

Nwanze, Lillian Ngozi. (2024). Un-silencing the silenced: Using Black Migrant Women's experiences of racism to propose a critical anti-racist pedagogy for Irish Adult Education. PhD thesis, National University of Ireland Maynooth.

Peucker, Mario, & Reiter, Stefanie. (2008). Educational tools, resources and informal learning frameworks that help to reduce prejudice: Mapping study on behalf of the Rothschild Foundation Europe. London, England: Rothschild Foundation.

Tran, D. (2021). Decolonizing University Teaching and Learning. London: Bloomsbury .

Tuck, Eve, & Yang, K. Wayne. (2012). Decolonization is not a metaphor. Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society, 1(1), 1–40.

About the authors

Wurud Jayusi

Dr. Wurud Jayusi is a senior lecturer, researcher, and the head of the Arab Academic Institute at Beit Berl College. Being a member of the Palestinian minority in Israel, Wurud Jayusi is passionate about fostering greater understanding and acceptance among diverse cultural groups. Through Wuruds research and academic work, wurud has published articles, presented at conferences, and co-edited two books on diversity, including topics such as integrating Palestinian teachers into Jewish schools, peace education, and creating a shared society.

Wurud strongly believes in the power of diversity in teaching. A diverse teacher embodies various facets, such as being an ethnic minority educator in a predominantly different cultural setting in my case, or simply a teacher with cultural competence who fosters multiculturalism, equality, and respect for others who are different from them.

As a researcher Wurud has had the privilege of interviewing Palestinian teachers as part

of the research on their integration into Jewish schools. Their stories are both enlightening and inspiring. The stories reflect Engaging, Being emotionally and culturally competent.

Declan Markey

Declan Markey works on a programme called Turn to Teaching, which provides an alternative pathway to becoming a teacher for students who have experienced educational disadvantage or are from communities who are under-represented in the teaching profession in Ireland. Turn to Teaching's objective is to diversify the teaching profession and support teachers and schools in becoming more inclusive teaching and learning environments. Through his work he constantly encounters the impact and legacy that teachers have on their students – be that teachers who inspire students to break-through societies preconceptions or judgements and reach their full potential or those teachers that uphold these prejudices and stereotypical beliefs, which then impact negatively on their students. All teachers have the opportunity and, it could be said, the responsibility to ensure that they become the former – the teacher that can inspire.

Kavyta Raghunandan

Kavyta is a course leader for the MA in Race, Education and Decolonial Thought and Senior Lecturer in Race and Education at Leeds Beckett University. Her teaching cuts across undergraduate and postgraduate levels and she teaches on Education Studies degrees, as well as contributing to undergraduate, masters, and doctoral degree supervision. Her teaching, writing and research interests lie in intersectional ways of thinking through race, gender and identity across multiple platforms namely education, popular culture, graphic novels and more recently nature spaces. Her work, so far, has also been influenced by anti-racist pedagogies and decoloniality as a theoretical framework to examine South Asian representation.

Graham Maher

Graham Maher is a teacher in a secondary school in Dublin, Ireland. He has been working in secondary schools around Dublin, ranging from private schools to DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) band 1. The reason he became involved in All Means All is to increase the diversity of teaching in Ireland. Graham is a white, middle class, highly educated, Irish national; and this is mirrored across most of the education sector in Ireland. The representation of diverse teachers must increase to better reflect the multi-cultural development of Ireland. This increase of diversity, he believes, will increase the inclusivity, diversity, and equality in Irish education.

TEACHER AGENCY AND INCLUSION

Günalp Turan; Madhusudhan Ramesh; Rhianna Murphy; Sara Baroni; and Tamara van Woezik

---

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=651#oembed-1

Example Case

"Example quote"

who, Institution, Country

Initial questions

- What is teacher agency?
- Why does teacher agency matter for inclusion?
- What are the elements of teacher agency?
- How can teacher agency be supported in a professional context?
- How can teacher agency be achieved?

Introduction to Topic

With continuous social changes and increased globalization, the education system is experiencing pressure to adapt and prepare children and students to face related challenges. Teachers around the world are called upon to drive this transformation, and become? "agents of change". Yet to study the concept effectively, it is crucial to clarify the objectives and scope of this change (Pantić, 2015; Pantić & Florian, 2015). Furthermore, there is a need for a better understanding of what this role involves and thus, what *teacher agency* means.

In this chapter, teachers are seen as crucial actors capable of making significant strides towards *inclusion* and *social justice* (Pantić & Florian, 2015). Recalling the legacy of the *Education for All* Movement (UNESCO, 1990; 2005), the *Salamanca Declaration*(UNESCO, 1994), the *SDG4-Education 2030* and the *Incheon Declaration* agreed at the World Forum on Education in May 2015 (UNESCO, 2015) that *inclusion* and *equity* should be considered the essential foundation for quality education (Ainscow, 2020). Within this framework every learner matters and therefore it is necessary to recognise the disparities and barriers that some learners may encounter in the access to a good quality education, enhancing their possibilities of learning and participation (*ibidem*). *Equity*refers to the principle of *fairness* that every educational system should encompass, developing strategies and plans for promoting lifelong opportunities for all (UNESCO, 2015; Ainscow, 2020), and going beyond merely achieving high measurable standardised performance (Seitz et al., 2023). Accordingly, adopting a *social justice* approach means ensuring everyone has the conditions necessary to develop their *capabilities* and participate as equal citizens within society (Nussbaum, 2006). Policies should therefore aim to create environments that support the growth of each person's capabilities and promote inclusivity, reflecting a commitment to participatory justice and equal citizenship.

In some countries inclusive education is generally associated with integrating children with disability into general school settings, however, a more broader perspective of inclusion is adopted here. Conceptual difficulties exist when defining inclusive education, particularly since the meaning is often highly contextual. Ainscow and Booth (2002) describe inclusive education as the process of increasing participation and decreasing exclusion. On this basis, it is important that teachers learn how to recognise exclusion and actively intervene – in other words, being agentic – in order to "mitigate the external causes of educational inequality" (Pantić & Florian, 2015, p. 334). Hence teachers themselves cannot remove structural inequalities, but instead, through their awareness, act by preventing their reinforcement? High quality teacher training that develops "reflective practitioners" (Schön, 1993) who can recognise and implement inclusive practice that values participation, can thus help every learner to foster his/her potential (Seitz, 2024).

For this reason, we will explore, in this chapter, the individual and contextual factors relating to teacher agency, and specifically adopt an ecological perspective. Initially we

must define teacher agency (Section 1), and why teacher agency matters for inclusion (Section 2). We the describe elements of teacher agency using a case study example from the research experience of one of the authors (Section 3). In paragraph 4, we describe how professional development can support teacher agency, and finally, in Section 5, we provide a more practice-oriented section in attempting to explain how teachers can achieve their agency.

Key aspects

What is teacher agency?

 Teacher agency can be a challenging concept to define and may be interpreted differently in various contexts. For instance, agency might refer to a company, or in some countries, a supply teacher. A common understanding, especially amongst sociologists, is that agency is an innate human capacity or capability (Giddens, 1984; Bandura, 2001; Bandura, 2006; Barker & Jane, 2005; Emirbayer & Mische, 1998): something which the individual either possesses or not. A potential difficulty with these approaches is that agency is viewed as individual responsibility. This may disregard social or organisational pressures that an individual has little control over.

Recently, there has been a move towards a more ecological approach to agency (Priestley et al., 2015; Li & Ruppar, 2020). This perspective views agency as the capacity of teachers to make choices and take purposeful action in their professional contexts. It emphasises that agency is not a fixed trait or a personal attribute, but instead is situational, emerging from the interplay between individuals and their environments (Priestley et al. 2015). One reason why teacher agency can be hard to define is that it is not always visible. For example, when a teacher decides to teach about Ancient Egypt, this choice may be a result of their intention to relate to their students' backgrounds and needs, or it may be a result of working within a restrictive method that prescribes this topic. Therefore, what we see the teacher do might be a result of teacher agency, but it is not the agency itself. In other words, the process behind how teachers make these decisions is often not apparent.

Teacher agency refers to "action with intentionality, the capacity to formulate possibilities for action, active consideration of such possibilities and exercise of choice" (Priestley 2016, p. 23). Rather than focusing on whether a teacher has or doesn't have agency, the focus is on "how teachers may achieve agency in their everyday settings and what might help or hinder in this" (ibidem, p.14). This perspective places teacher agency as something emergent, something achieved by individuals in their present contexts (Emirbayer & Mische, 1988). In other words, teacher agency is not only the capacity for an individual to act, but also the interplay of the environment the individual is in, their background, knowledge and experiences, the resources and relationships, and aspirations for their future self and their learners (Priestley, 2016).

Why does teacher agency matter for inclusion?

The social justice agenda of inclusive education is a response to the segregation of children based on their ability and disability. The *Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education* (UNESCO, 1994) were among the key developments which shifted the focus from special education to inclusive education in terms of the education of children with disabilities. Today, the concept of inclusive education has expanded to incorporate all forms of marginalisation.

The work of inclusion (in a school) may be classified as access, participation, engagement and achievement of all students where process, roles and structures are developed towards the intention of inclusion. Within this agenda, teachers are called upon to highlight the process of inclusion and are often referred to as *agents of change* (Fullan, 1993 ; Pantić, 2015). Teachers play a vital role in realising inclusion since access or entry into a 'regular' school does not guarantee inclusion into the classroom.

As classrooms across the world become more diverse (due to geo-political reasons and as we embrace a more disability-inclusive policy) teachers will need to reflect on their practices and ensure every learner feels included (Florian & Spratt, 2014). When teachers deepen their understanding of their context (students' backgrounds), they are more likely to feel equipped to create an inclusive environment. However, an important prerequisite to enable this is to create an environment that encourages teacher agency to thrive.

If teachers are best placed to raise awareness about social justice, we must consider how best they can be supported. It is widely recognised that motivation for work depends on whether people feel that they can act on their values and competencies (Ryan & Deci, 2000). They also need to feel supported and competent in their endeavours, which therefore requires a supportive network to help them achieve agency (Chirkov et al., 2003). The achievement of agency can also lead to greater job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is important because teachers are under increased pressure due to multiple teaching demands. For instance, teachers face a range of issues such as ongoing staff shortages, high turnover rates, and an increasingly diverse student population. Consequently, the workload of teachers has increased while their well-being is declining (Sandmeier et al., 2022). Teachers may feel overwhelmed, nevertheless tapping into agency might help to regain a sense of control and thus promote well-being (Burger et al., 2021). In this sense, agency is also related to the concept of resilience (see **Box A**). When supporting teachers, it is important to understand that agency is not viewed as another teacher activity, but rather as a way to empower teachers.

Resilience and agency

Resilience and agency are often used interchangeably? and even though they are interconnected they should be defined separately. Defining *resilience* is not an easy task, given the growing recent number of studies and research paradigms. The psychological definition understands resilience as the process and the outcome of successfully adapting to difficult or challenging life experiences (APA, 2018). However, this perspective carries the risk of reducing teacher resilience to an individual's behavioural adjustment to external and internal demands, overlooking the critical roles of contextual factors and the potential for "being agents of change". In contrast, we adopt an ecological perspective, as articulated by Ungar (2012). In this regard, when people face significant challenges, resilience refers to their ability to find and use resources that support their well-being, working individually or together to ensure these resources are used according to their culture (Ungar, 2012). This broader perspective highlights the interplay between individual and environmental factors in fostering resilience.

Despite the limited research on teacher resilience within inclusive learning environments, a recent sociological structural model sheds light on the complexity of this phenomenon. This model, developed by Mu et al. (2024), frames resilience as a dynamic process encompassing individual capacities, structural constraints, and *teacher agency*. Notably, even under the pressures of emotional exhaustion, neoliberal challenges, and the risk of teacher de-professionalisation, teacher agency plays a pivotal role. By harnessing agency, teachers can foster positive outcomes, mitigate negative consequences, and sustain their resilience over time (ibidem).

We understand this model to imply that teacher agency, as well as resilience, are best understood from an ecological perspective. Hence, this short reflection highlights the importance of looking for definitions of concepts that do not reduce complexity but show the multidimensional character of the terms used.

Box A. Relationship with the concept of resilience.

In conclusion, teacher agency plays a critical role in creating an inclusive classroom, particularly as teachers are in the best position to identify the needs of the students and raise awareness about diversity issues. It is also crucial for job satisfaction and well-being, in order that teachers feel competent in addressing inclusivity issues. Changes towards a more inclusive educational approach is a way to both engage in professional development and shape teacher agency. Florian and Pantić (2017) highlight the importance of teacher education in fostering critical thinking and situating professional autonomy **(see Box B)** within the broader work context. This perspective underscores the need for systems and

structures that enable individuals to recognise and act upon the possibilities for making a difference. In the next section, the discussion will explore the elements of teacher agency, emphasising how they are shaped by and interact with the ecological context, including institutional, cultural, and policy-related factors.

Autonomy

Teacher autonomy is the ability of teachers to make key decisions about their work. It is defined as the "capacity of teachers to make key decisions that affect the content and conditions of their work within a frame of regulations and resources" (Lennert da Silva & Mølstad, 2020, p. 118). Autonomy can be seen as a resource for agency, giving teachers the freedom to act (Oolbekkink-Marchand et al., 2022). On the other hand, agency may also be achieved in contexts with limited autonomy, such as within prescriptive schemes of work. The main difference between autonomy and agency is that teacher autonomy refers to the amount of freedom (from restrictions) that a teacher perceives while teacher agency highlights how a teacher can make use of this, e.g. the dynamic interplay between the teacher and the conditions of his/her environment.

Box B. Difference between autonomy and agency.

What are the elements of teacher agency?

Teacher agency can be conceptualised in multiple ways. This chapter adapted an ecological model of teacher agency first introduced by Priestley, Biesta and Robinson (2016). This model claims that teacher agency is built up of three elements: iterational, practical-evaluative and projective. Whilst this model splits agency into three elements, an interplay exists between the three elements (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Model of elements in achieving teacher agency

Iterational	Practical-evaluative	Projective
Personal histories • Biographical histories (background) • Identity **Professional histories** • Teacher education • Professional development • Teacher experience and experience with children with SEN	**Structural** • Social Structures (relationships, roles, power and trust) **Cultural** • Societal views and beliefs • Performativity and accountability • Ideas, values, beliefs, discourse and language **Material** • Resources (curriculum, physical resources • Physical environment/ space • Teaching assistants • Technology	• Short term • Long term • Vision for students • Vision for professional • Transformative agency

Teacher Agency

Source: Adaptation of Priestley's (2016) Model of elements in achieving teacher agency.

The figure shows three boxes next to each other, the first 'iterational', the second 'practical evaluative' and the third 'projective'. The boxes have arrows between them to show that they interact with each other. The arrow underneath the three boxes points towards 'teacher agency'.

Initially, the model is briefly explained. Subsequently, an example is used to dive deeper into the different factors within the model.

The iterative dimension of agency is the element of teacher agency which has a past orientation. For example, this would include a person's experiences, both professional and personal, and their knowledge and skills as well as professional learning and childhood educational experiences.

The practical-evaluative element has a present orientation and is the only element where agency can be acted out. This element focuses on the context within which a teacher works

such as materials (resources and physical environment), social structures (relationships with staff and children, and school level and national policy) and culture (school and societal views).

Finally, there is the projective element which has a future orientation. This includes long-term and short-term goals. In other words, it focuses on visions and aspirations that a teacher has for themselves and also for their learners.

Building upon Priestley and colleagues model, our understanding of agency, and the elements shaping it, underscores the interconnectedness and interactions between factors. By using Freire's definition of praxis, it can be argued that action and reflection employed by educators may have an intention to change the world (Freire, 1970). Therefore action can contribute to projective visions and as an iterative process, reflection can further improve teaching practices (Kemmis & Smith, 2008). Therefore, we identify bidirectional interactions between the factors, each affecting the other. The ecological model allows us to conceptualise the different elements that constitute teacher agency, whilst at the same time viewing the interplay across other elements. For example, if a teacher has past experiences of feeling excluded in their classroom as a child (iterational), this has the potential to influence their aspirations for the future (projective). For instance, ensuring that her own learners do not feel this way and aspire to achieve an inclusive classroom. This then could influence the decisions she makes today in the classroom (practical-evaluative). In the next section, a case study example is shown, which is used to further illustrate the terms of this ecological model of agency.

Rebecca's story of inclusion and agency – a case study

Rebecca* works as a teacher within a special needs department at St. Augustine High School* in India, a school that has a hundred-year-old legacy. The school, like many private schools in India, segregates students in three ways: the 'average' and 'above average' achieving students who go to the mainstream school, the 'low' achieving students (many of whom may have learning difficulties) who go to a separate section at the same school. This section has more flexibility in the curriculum, learning processes and a different school-board called National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS). The third section, known as the special unit, is for children with disabilities. Before Rebecca took on the role of a teacher within the special unit, she worked as parent-volunteer in the school for three years, during which time she also gained a diploma in inclusive education. She says: "*I would have preferred to work in a role which acts as a bridge between the different [segregated] sections… but I was given this role*". Within two years of taking up the role, Rebecca has enacted inclusion in three distinct ways.

First, she ensures her classroom activities engage every child (no one must be left behind). There are alternatives for every task as well as alternatives to how it can be done. There is room for children to sit together at a community table or sit separately if they

want to work independently. Rebecca sometimes finds that it difficult to reach children with her instructions, so she also uses visual aids and drawings to communicate. She invites her colleagues from other departments of the school to visit her classroom to seek their feedback.

Second, she uses her time on the school bus to ask her peers about their methods of working with children with disabilities or difficulties in their classrooms. She enjoys this daily commute with her peers as it allows them to talk freely about various school issues and she finds her colleagues more receptive to her ideas while on the bus. Though teachers are not open to a system where children with disabilities are integrated into the 'mainstream' classroom, they are still curious about how Rebecca works with children with disabilities.

Third, she nudges the school management to consider making the school more inclusive. Through her diploma, Rebecca learnt to look at her school from a theoretical lens and was able to analyse the different functions of the school. During her diploma, she also developed a few long-term goals and her own vision for her school. With the support of the management, she recently conducted a school-wide survey about teachers' awareness of inclusive education which led to important discussions in the staff rooms and faculty meetings and further resulted in the management seeking guest lectures on the subject of inclusive education. Rebecca now has her eyes set on making school events (such as sports day) inclusive. She hopes to continue to take such steps to make gradual shifts in the school culture and practice.

Figure 2: Description of Rebecca's agency in terms of the model of teacher agency.

Code:

Iterative   Practical-evaluative   Projective

In the middle of this figure stands a black-and-white woman, representing Rebecca. Around her are small boxes in three different shapes and colours, referring to the different elements of teacher agency. Blue circles refer to Iterative, orange hexagons to Practical-Evaluative and purple squares refer to Projective.

Implications of the teacher agency model for Rebecca's case

Iterational

Iterational

Personal histories

- Biographical histories (background)
- Identity

Professional histories

- Teacher education
- Professional development
- Teacher experience and experience with children with SEN

Personal Histories

Rebecca's personal experiences include being a parent of a child with a disability. This role provides her with first-hand experience in understanding and working with children with disabilities. This could also enable her to empathise with other parents who have children with disabilities. These personal experiences equip her with valuable insights and knowledge that can shape her agency fostering inclusivity.

Professional Histories

Rebecca's professional experiences are equally significant. She has spent several years working as a teacher with children with disabilities, during which time she has interacted with a diverse range of students. Her role as a teacher gives her a comprehensive understanding of the existing structures within her school. Additionally, Rebecca has pursued professional development in inclusive education, enhancing her knowledge and leading to greater competence in this area. These professional experiences contribute to her overall ability to support and implement inclusive practices in her classroom and school. In the case study of Rebecca, both her professional and personal experiences may impact the achievement of agency when it comes to developing an inclusive classroom and school environment.

In sum, the model highlights that the achievement of agency is always informed by past experience, and in this particular case, this concerns both professional and personal experience (Priestley, Biesta and Robinson, 2016).

Projective

Projective

- Short term
- Long term
- Vision for students
- Vision for professional
- Transformative agency

The projective element encompasses both long-term and short-term aspirations and visions. In the case study, Rebecca's proactive efforts to promote inclusion are closely tied to her long-term vision of creating a more inclusive school system. This alignment between her day-to-day practices and her broader goals helps explain her strong commitment to inclusion. Supporting this perspective, wider literature also illustrates how long-term goals can shape a teacher's agency. For instance, Gu, Liang, and Wang (2020) conducted research on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in China, revealing that these educators had long-term goals focused on ensuring student progress. These ambitions motivated them to take actions aimed at elevating the status of English in their local communities, thereby supporting the achievement of their long-term goals. Whilst the iterational element is discussed separately in this chapter, it is important to recognise its interconnectedness with other dimensions. For instance, Rebecca's personal experience as a mother of a child with a disability and experience as a teacher may partly explain and motivate her vision to create a more inclusive educational environment. In other words, her personal journey could be providing the foundation for her aspirations (projective).

Practical-evaluative

Practical-evaluative

Structural

- Social Structures (relationships, roles, power and trust)

Cultural

- Societal views and beliefs
- Performativity and accountability
- Ideas, values, beliefs, discourse and language

Material

- Resources (curriculum, physical resources
- Physical environment/ space
- Teaching assistants
- Technology

Considering the practical-evaluative element of teacher agency, which encompasses structural, cultural, and material factors, we can analyse the factors affecting Rebecca's agency.

Structural

In Rebecca's case, certain policies and school structures might be hindering her agency. For example, school policy segregates children according to those with, and without, disabilities. This may restrict Rebecca's agency as she is unable to make the decision to mix the classes.

The second structure which possibly could hinder Rebecca's agency is that the prescribed, compulsory curriculum requires her special needs unit to take a more vocational approach to education, providing children with practical skills over disciplinary knowledge – resulting in restrictions on the curriculum content. According to Leijen, Pedaste and Lepp (2020) "educational policies that emphasise testing, accountability and efficiency have been heavily criticised for restricting teacher agency" (p. 296).

The case study also indicates that Rebecca's agency could be influenced by teachers and senior management in her setting. For example, she exchanges ideas with other teachers and feels able to discuss inclusive education with them. This could positively influence the achievement of agency in the school and classroom environment as she may feel supported by others.

Cultural

Rebecca's school, having a hundred-year-old legacy of serving the community it resides in, is moderate in making progressive decisions even when national policies encourage certain changes such as adopting inclusive education. It relies on the consensus among parents and staff opinion when considering changes. For instance, Rebecca's approach to gently persuade the school management and her peers towards inclusive practices is based on her deep understanding of the school and its beliefs. Her agency comes from the cultural knowledge she possesses of the school from having been a parent, a parent volunteer, and now a teacher at the same school. Rebecca belongs to a city (societal context) where there are only a handful of 'mainstream' schools that include children with disabilities. Those who do include children with disabilities follow a similar model of segregation as her school. This is unsurprising, as noted by Singal (2019), teachers in India feel unprepared to teach children with disabilities alongside children without disabilities.

Rebecca's school, which is built on Christian values, feels obligated to serve the community and all children (including those with disabilities). It also views children with disabilities in a charitable manner, which, in the short term, has aided Rebecca's goal of inclusion and has given her agency to be a disability advocate, and to mobilise her peers towards inclusive practices.

Resources

Access to resources can significantly impact a teacher's agency. For instance, Priestley, and colleagues (2016) claim that agency is partly shaped by the availability of physical

resources and the nature of physical constraints. In Rebecca's case, her classroom is spacious and specifically designed for children with disabilities. It includes numerous visual resources and calm areas for the children to use, setting it apart from traditional classrooms. These resources, and the ample physical space, allow Rebecca to select from a variety of visual materials and activities, creating options which may enable her to tailor her teaching to the needs of her students, and ultimately therefore creating the potential to lead to a more inclusive classroom.

To conclude, the analysis of Rebecca's case identifies that there are many elements which hinder, and support, the goal of agency in her setting. Whilst this section has discussed the iterative, practical-evaluative and projective examples from Rebecca's case study, it is important to note that there may be many more relevant examples and factors influencing the achievement of agency.

How can teacher agency be supported in a professional context?

To move towards more inclusive education, changes in the way of working in the school and in the classroom are required. To ensure that such transformations are successful, teachers must feel that changes are in line with their beliefs, and that they have the competencies or resources to contribute to this change (Palmer et al., 2017). This alignment can be shaped by reflection and discussion. School reform also relies on the professionalism of the teachers. During this process, teachers may have opportunities to explore their values and learn new professional skills (Imants & van der Wal, 2020). Such an exploration can help to further shape their values and competencies. As a professional (in training) it is important to recognise how your professional context can support you to achieve teacher agency.

In this paragraph, different professional contexts and how they can shape teacher agency will be further discussed, through the contexts of teacher education, early career teaching, and communities of practice. Finally, the role of reflexivity, as an overarching premise for professional development, is highlighted in the last section of this paragraph.

Teacher education

In teacher education, teachers can practise the achievement of agency in their settings. An overlap with student agency may also exist, as the student teacher may identify themselves as both a student and a teacher, depending on the programme. In some programmes,

teacher education will include internships[1] in which student teachers have increasing responsibility over a class.

The teacher education context can be very valuable in developing teacher agency, by allowing sufficient time to learn by experimenting, and reflecting on, the curriculum (Korthagen, 2016). While still in teacher education, it may be difficult to achieve agency due to the hierarchical dependencies on a supervisor or teacher educator, in addition to balancing high workload with feelings of incompetence (Squires et al., 2022). However, there are ways in which student teachers can develop agency. They can reflect on how their personal goals relate to the course work or internship experiences, thereby increasing feelings of personal responsibility (Stockdale & Brockett, 2011). Within the limits of assignments, there may also be space to express one's own views. While reading and discussing theory or literature, it can be helpful to ask how the readings relate to your own perspective. Such exercises can help to shape both the iterational and projective elements of teacher agency.

Within the context of a university or education institute, teacher educators can make sure there is room for exploration of the student teachers' own values and related actions. This can be achieved by focusing on the student-teachers' learning process, through self-directed learning methods for example (van Woezik, 2020) or by considering democratic or transformative learning methods (Freire, 1970; Vianna & Stetsenko, 2011; Stetsenko, 2019). These educational methods help students to set their own goals, while considering one's own values and making room to discuss these values. By setting personal goals, even if they are bound by a curriculum, a sense of agency can be developed.

With regard to internships, the student teachers' perspective is also valuable, particularly as new teachers can bring a fresh perspective to both the school and teacher education curriculum (März & Kelchtermans, 2020). Such ways of enacting agency are more informal and individual (Snoek et al., 2019). One could also think about more formal ways of enacting agency. For instance, by taking part in a student council or a council in the school in case of an internship. Moreover, one can achieve agency as co-agency (see **Box C**), meaning one could find like-minded peers or colleagues with whom they could voice any concerns or work on a project.

Co-agency

---

1. The word internship is used in this chapter to indicate that student teachers are involved in schools during the teacher education program. Depending on the (national) context, these internships can be highly integrated into the regular curriculum of teacher education or stand alone. Internships may also be known as placements.

Co-agency refers to both individual and collective action to forge new possibilities in the institutional, political and societal power structures that frame the environment. Co-agency emphasises interactions, relations, networks and alliances as the building blocks for agency in guidance practice (Toiviainen, 2022).

The principle of co-agency understands that improving learning requires a joint effort between teachers and students. It highlights that teachers need to align their influence with the students' own power to make a meaningful impact on their development. By applying co-agency in their decisions, teachers focus on enhancing the learning environment and opportunities, aiming to empower students to use their own agency effectively. This principle guides teachers to continuously consider how their actions can encourage and support students in taking charge of their own learning (Hart et al., 2014).

Box C. Defining the concept of co-agency.

Example

A student teacher created a chart of all the learners in their classroom, including the learning preferences and the type and quantity of contact they needed from the teacher. Based on this, the student teacher made a new seating plan where children with higher levels of distractibility would be in the front and centre of the classroom to have as little sensory input as possible, and children with social anxiety would be further in the back having less eye contact with the teacher. The student teacher also mapped children who need encouragement in the walking routes, and those who work well in teams were placed further in the back so they can talk without disturbing others. They discussed the initiative with peers and teacher educators. In this way, the student teacher took advantage of the space in the teacher education curriculum to experiment with this way of seat planning.

In-Service Teacher Education

The role of in-service teacher education is to address challenges and dilemmas that teachers are likely to face at different stages of their careers and to also introduce new ways of teaching and learning to improve school processes and culture. In-service teacher education has the potential to not only improve the professional knowledge and skills of a teacher, but also to facilitate teacher agency. Indeed, research has shown that teacher agency includes directing one's own professional growth and that of colleagues (Calvert, 2016; Imants & van der Wal, 2020). Fullan (1993) argues that a key ingredient for teacher agency is 'mastery', where sufficient expertise is required for educators to bring sustained changes to their context. He further states that "mastery involves strong initial teacher

education and career-long staff development, but when we place it in the perspective of comprehensive change, it is much more than this. Beyond exposure to new ideas, we have to know where they fit, and we have to become skilled in them, not just like them" (Fullan, 1993, p. 4). If, for instance, any new ideas refer to an inclusive classroom practice, teachers will need to rely on their expertise and agency to make decisions on how, or when, they would implement the particular practice. Florian (2014) supports that same view by pointing out that inclusive practice requires teachers to continually develop their practice in order to identify improved ways to reach children. She makes the case for this by stating that the "difficulties students experience in learning can be considered as dilemmas for teaching rather than problems within students" (Florian, 2014, p. 291).

In-service teacher education is important for teacher agency as the projective element of teacher agency calls for teachers to have a vision upon which they can act. In-service teacher education therefore provides an opportunity or a platform where they develop skills that can help them achieve their vision. Fullan also claims that "People *behave* their way into new visions and ideas, not just think their way into them [...] New mind-sets arise from mastery as much as the reverse" (Fullan, 1993, p.4).

In-service teacher education programmes often bring together teachers with varying degrees of experience and backgrounds and in doing so, creates room for collaboration and learning where teachers can share similar experiences which, in turn, may inspire greater teacher agency.

Example

Inspired by a course on autonomy-supportive teaching, a teacher decides to make more space for the children allowing them to choose where they want to work and how quickly they will go through the assignments. Children can also walk in and out of the classroom. The teacher wants to show colleagues this change in the classroom, and invites colleagues to come and observe how the children and the teacher themselves are working. After a short observation, the teacher and a colleague sit together. They discussed what was going well and identified areas for improvement, such as checking in on the children that are outside the classroom. The observation also led to a discussion about the role of the teacher, the core values (e.g., autonomy for the children versus transfer of knowledge), and how the teachers feel agency to enact such changes in their classroom.

Early career

As an early career teacher, one may feel like there is still a lot to learn. Early career teachers tend to have less experience, which previous research indicates may play a key role in the achievement of agency (Burkhauser & Lesaux 2017; Dampson, 2019). Some early career teachers can feel overwhelmed in the first period as a teacher, having responsibilities for their own classroom and getting accustomed to a new environment. However, it is also worth bearing in mind that teachers will have a lot to learn. As an early career teacher,

one might bring a fresh perspective on the school and the classroom, thereby enabling them to identify practices that could be changed or addressed. Early career teachers also bring new ideas and insights that can be valuable for the school. This is called innovative professional potential (van Leeuwen, 2024). Innovative professional potential has been found even during stressful times of teachers' careers, indicating that even though it is influenced by external factors, it is not always constrained by them. Oolbekkink et al. (2022) describe early career teacher's agency across different categories ranging from restricted to extended. For example, teachers who experience restricted forms of agency can only enact agency within strict limitations relating to methods used in the classroom or school regulations. Teachers who experience extended agency often notice that they are invited by their school leaders and colleagues to experiment or expand their influence.

Example

I teach a year 3 class (7-8 year olds) in England. Our school uses a pre-packaged scheme of work which provides prescriptive topics, termly plans and descriptive lesson plans. The topics tend to be interdisciplinary meaning a range of subjects are integrated. This term, the topic has been Prehistoric Britain. This scheme of work is very restrictive as "what" I am teaching and sometimes "how" I am to teach are prescribed. For example, this week our objective in topic (history) was "to understand what Stonehenge looks like". Stonehenge is believed to be a religious monument built in the prehistoric period. The scheme of work provided a PowerPoint presentation which identified facts and different parts of Stonehenge and a follow-up activity sheet for the children to complete labelling different parts of Stonehenge. However, I knew my class liked to build and do practical tasks. I asked senior management if I could get the children to make models of Stonehenge using materials in school, such as Lego, building blocks and cardboard, instead of using the worksheet. With the support of senior management, I was able to achieve agency within my classroom.

However, as a newly qualified teacher, the scheme of work has been beneficial (in some cases). For example, it supports my curriculum coverage and, by having pre-made resources, it saves me time as I do not need to create my own. Without having this scheme of work this year, I would not have known where to start planning my history lessons. I believe confidence with curriculum content and coverage will come with time and I hope to diverge further away from the scheme of work.

Picture A. Reconstruction of Stonehenge, photography of the author. The picture shows several wooden squares positioned upright and put in a circle, with sticks on top and smaller blocks in the middle of that circle.

Picture B. Photography of Stonehenge by Uliana Sova from Unsplash. The picture shows several stones positioned upright and put in a circle, with stones on top and smaller stones in the middle of that circle.

As a teacher, one can achieve agency in an informal way, meaning that one takes action in the classroom or in the school based on their initiative. This can be seen in the example above. Such an initiative might resonate with school leaders, and lead to a formal position. This means that whilst coming from personal effort, one might move to having an allocated role and time to work on these issues. Individual initiatives may also spark the interest of colleagues and lead to forming a group of colleagues with a shared vision or goal resulting in a collective way of working. Working in a collective is helpful to find support and more traction for one's cause. Communities of practice are a specific form of this.

Communities of Practice

Although there are multiples terms used for the groups of professionals who work on an issue or just collaborate on a daily basis, (i.e., professional learning communities or learning communities), we can define them as groups formed by individuals who share a concern, a problem, an intention, or a passion about a topic that collaborates and interacts on a regular and consistent basis (Wenger, 1998). In this chapter, we will use the term "Communities of Practice" (CoPs) to refer to such groups, to highlight the notion of practice and reflexivity inherent in these groups.

However, it's also important to make the distinction between other familiar structures in order to create a better understanding of how CoPs may interact with teacher agency.

These familiar groups that may be mistaken for a CoP and are often identified as "teams", "task forces", "training groups", and "networks" (Wenger-Trayner et al., 2023). While a team, task force, training group, or a network may have a focus on developing a product, solve an issue, follow premade curriculum in a time-bound process in which hierarchical relations may be present, a CoP focuses on collective learning and reasoning where the practitioners have the lead and share common values and a group identity (Wenger-Trayner et al., 2023). With this comparison in mind, let's look at how teacher agency in the context of inclusion may benefit from engaging in CoPs. It is safe to say that there are multiple ways in which a CoP can foster agency and inclusion. Possible benefits can be categorised as follows:

- Shared Leadership: The inherent horizontal relationships between community members fosters individuals' capacity to take action. This way of forming relationships also encourages people of the community to share the leadership role in addition to collaborative decision-making practices (Harris, 2003; Campbell et al., 2019). As a result, they provide a space for teacher agency to foster and nurture individual's capacity to act on their visions.
- Collaboration & Reflective Practice: CoPs create a highly conductive and interactive environment for establishing effective collaboration among teachers by creating space for professional solidarity (Ayan, 2020). Therefore, the members share competences, skill sets, strategies, etc. In this collaborative environment, individuals also find a space to engage in collective reflection where they can critically analyse their practices and make more informed decisions (Schon, 1983). Moreover, the nature of collaborative practice also provides teachers with new resources which they may otherwise not be able to reach. It can also provide the teachers with privileged access to resources extending from personal experiences to documents and tools (Wenger-Trayner et al., 2023).
- Professional Development: CoPs provide ongoing, relevant professional development that supports teacher growth and responsiveness to new educational challenges (Desimone, 2009). CoPs also build knowledge capital involving human, social, tangible, reputational, learning capital (Wenger et al., 2011).
- Fostering Inclusion: CoPs promote understanding and respect for cultural diversity, enhancing teachers' abilities to create inclusive classrooms (Gay, 2010). In CoPs, through teachers' interaction, members can address diverse student needs, developing inclusive strategies and practices (Ainscow et al., 2006). As diversity is inherent in the CoPs, members can acquire different perspectives on issues. In addition, problem-solving activities within CoPs allows members to tackle complex educational issues, enhancing their critical thinking abilities (Jonassen, 2000). Engaging in collaborative inquiry and dialogue within CoPs also encourages the questioning of assumptions, exploration of diverse perspectives, and development of critical thinking skills (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009).

As school populations become increasingly diverse, teachers need to consider how to make schools more equitable and inclusive for all learners. CoPs provide opportunities to employ agency by allowing shared leadership, promote collaboration and reflection, support professional development, and at the same time foster inclusion. To summarise, it can be argued that a community of practice which fosters diversity has the potential to produce solutions that will meet the diverse needs of all learners. As previously mentioned, this stems from the fact that communities that encompass different perspectives and different modes of existence will generate a variety of solutions to problems, which will, in turn, pave the way for the creation of more inclusive solutions via classrooms (Ayan, 2020).

Reflexivity

Research has shown that reflexivity of teachers is crucial for agency, inclusion and social justice, as well as for professional development in general. In daily practice, teachers often report lacking the time to reflect on their professionalism, identity, beliefs, and values, nor having time to consider structural, cultural and material dimensions. Indeed, these are often taken for granted. In some school contexts, it is common to hear statements like "I'm doing it because we are used to doing so," which indicates a lack of critical reflection on potential inequalities and the solutions needed to address them. The problem with unexamined presumptions within institutional contexts is that they can sustain unequal educational outcomes for certain students. Pantić (2017) discovered that even inclusive educators who believe in their crucial role in advancing social justice and removing barriers to education often perceive students and their families as vulnerable, and instead focus on helping them conform to existing standards. Without questioning their underlying beliefs about schools as politically neutral and equal-opportunity environments, these educators might view special schools or self-contained classrooms as more suitable for students' well-being and safety, while also seeing disability as inherent and unchangeable (Broderick & Lalvani, 2017; cf. Li & Ruppar, 2020). In the literature, *reflection* has been inquired since the 1980s but there is not always consensus on its conceptualisation. In order to better clarify some key terms, this next section distinguishes between reflexivity, reflexive posture and reflective practice.

Reflexivity refers to an explicitly knowledge-oriented process that is based on a "complex network of relationships aimed at giving meaning to actions and stimulating new ones, and aimed at interpreting the experience through which we understand the reasons why we act in a certain way" (Nuzzaci, 2011, p. 11). In this definition, the role played by *experience* clearly emerges, which, paraphrasing Dewey (1986), can be understood as the interaction between subject and object, between organism and environment, and which manifests itself in problematic situations in which the individual tries to overcome a problem to respond to his or her own need or necessity. This process is similar to that described by Mezirow who conceptualises the *transformative learning* process as a series of stages

through which an individual, starting from a challenging situation (which he calls *disorienting dilemma*), tries to revise its own schemes of meaning, reworking them and making them more appropriate to the situation, until coming to a new, more adequate conceptual perspective (Mezirow, 2003; 2016; crf. Baroni, 2021). Reflexivity is thus configured as a deep learning process, which also involves the emotional dimension of the subject, as well as the behavioural one (Nuzzaci, 2018). Alternatively, when one speaks of *reflexive posture*, one refers to an attitude "that is episodic and spontaneous in character and leads one to reflect discontinuously on a certain practice without an assumption of awareness or change in action" (ibid., p.11).

The third one, *reflexive practice*, is understood as integrally part of the teacher's professional identity, since it consists in being able to operate a constant reflexive process to guide action, regardless of the obstacles or difficulties encountered (Altet, 2008; Perrenoud, 2001). Moreover, in this practice, the professional can recall possible functional strategies to carry out a given task. This shares commonalities with reflexivity in that it presupposes a habitus (Bourdieu, 1972), i.e. a way of acting in practice, constituted as much by actions, as by languages, rules, objectives and implicit strategies (Nuzzaci, 2011). Thus, it is the case that the practitioner in question is constantly engaged in a reflexive operation that leads him/her to become more and more aware and thus sustain his/her resilience (La Marca & Longo, 2016).

Engaging in reflective practice is not always easy, especially as an early career teacher or when you work in structures that do not foster such practices. Still, it may be worthwhile to look for possibilities. You can think about finding like-minded colleagues, with whom you can reflect during a coffee or lunch break. Perhaps there are opportunities within the school to find a mentor or other form of professionalisation that will help you find time for reflection. Or you might even address the issue with school management, perhaps together with other colleagues.

Underlining the role of reflexivity, and of being a reflective practitioner (Schön, 1993) is crucial while working towards the implementation of inclusive school practices. In particular, it is necessary to find space and time in which the individuals and the groups (crf. community of practice) can create opportunities to step back, recognise and assess situations of inequality, find solutions to leave behind routinised mechanistic practices, and act positively (Pantić, 2015).

We could understand reflexivity as a "superpower" that empowers teachers in monitoring both self and the society, enabling them to accomplish their purposes. Research has shown that educators that are able to reflect on their practice could positively enact change through agency, such as "reflecting on their own practices and environments in seeking to accommodate all learners; constantly monitoring their own actions with respect to their commitments (…); articulating practical professional knowledge and justifying actions; making sense of the structures and cultures in their schools as sites for social transformation" (Li & Ruppar, 2020, p. 48).

Example

In the "Action Research Teacher" programme facilitated by Teachers Network, a dynamic community of educators was established through ongoing discussions focused on inclusive classroom practices. Supported by the organisation, this community collaborated closely with experts from an inclusive education centre, engaging in a continuous cycle of observation, discussion, design, implementation, and reflection. As part of this process, teachers maintained observation diaries where they reflected daily on their own practices and classroom environments within the context of inclusion. These diaries often revealed exclusionary practices, discourses, and identified vulnerable groups and identities. Group reflections on these observations led to broader discussions and a sense of empowerment, enriched by the diverse experiences of the community members (Yurtseven et al., 2021).

How can teacher agency be achieved?

As teacher agency is understood more as an ecological concept instead of an individual capacity, our answers on how to achieve teacher agency should also adopt an ecological approach. As discussed in this chapter, teacher agency should not be defined as another task or a skill that teachers need to complete or achieve on their own. In order to understand how to develop agency inside the ecosystem shaping agency, the system itself and its actors need to be highlighted. Priestley and colleagues (2021) identify five distinct sites of activity including; nano, micro, meso, macro, and supra, that interact in the context of teachers' classroom practices. Although they offer a model for reframing the curriculum making process, the same ecological model can be applied to teacher agency, as the actors and the sites of activities do not change.

Building upon the established ecological models of education and agency (Bronfrenbrenner, 1994; Biesta & Tedder, 2007; Priestley et al., 2016), a revised framework is proposed, in order to reframe the model and diagram to better fit the context of teacher agency. Refraining from repeating a hierarchical structure, the current model illustrates the system in a nonlinear/non-hierarchical way, to account for the constant interaction between the actors in the system and the sites of action in various directions.

To achieve teacher agency, teachers remain the core actors, and their engagement with the whole system drives teacher agency. In addition to their systematically constructed capacity of agency, their impact on the ecosystem itself (through forming relations, groups, as advocates for more inclusive policies, and challenging the prejudices inherent in the culture), can reshape the whole system. However, teachers are not the only actors in our model that function in the individual domain. Students and school leaders can also be taken into consideration in the individual domain whose iterational, practical-evaluative and projective elements of agency shapes teacher agency in the ecosystem. For example, a school leader's projective value on inclusive classrooms may enable teachers' understanding of inclusion and consequently may build autonomy in the school system

which directly contributes to teacher agency. On the other hand, students' various personal histories, identities, values, and discourse may also foster teachers' vision for an inclusive classroom and may cause teachers to reflect on their own values and identities. Therefore, the individual site of agency as not being restricted to teachers' themselves, is the core of teacher agency. Importantly, the ripple effects of individual agency has similar repercussions on other actors within the ecosystem?

Figure 3. An illustration of the ecological model of teacher agency developed by the authors.
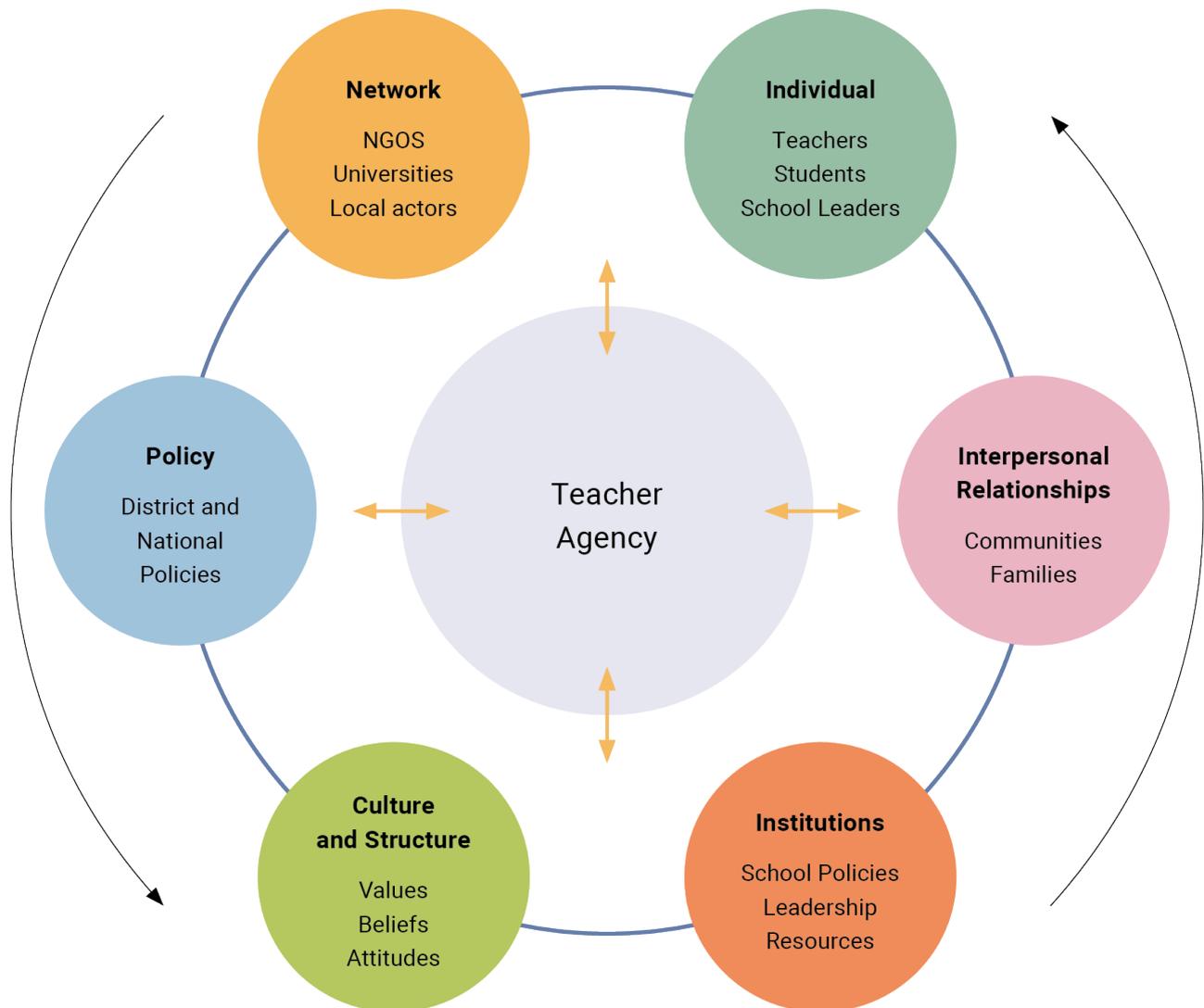
The illustration shows the words 'Teacher Agency', with a circle around, divided into six parts which say 'Individual', 'Interpersonal Relationships', 'Institutions', 'Culture and Structure', 'Policy' and 'Network'. There are arrows around the circle to indicate movement, and there are arrows inside the circle pointing towards the words 'Teacher Agency'.

Interpersonal Relationships

Aside from the individual, interpersonal relationships are defined as another actor which shapes agency. The web of relationships and engagement between the actors in the

individual level (such as colleagues, students, school leaders, and support staff) acts as another sociocultural factor reframing, enabling or hindering teacher agency. Beyond this site, there is the institutional domain where school policies, leadership and resources available may shape how agency is perceived and practised. This site also links to the practical-evaluative elements of agency heavily by fostering or hindering the teachers capability to act.

Institutions

As a teacher, it is important to engage in conversation with your school leader or department head. School leaders are an important asset for teacher agency as they can provide the autonomy teachers need to enact their agency. Sometimes, school leaders are not aware of the needs of teachers, so it is important to advise them if there are areas which could benefit from improvement or change? This may also help to frame your ambitions in line with the school vision or societal needs. School leaders might look upon student teachers and early career teachers as people who still have a lot to learn. While this is true, early career teachers are also assets who may bring new perspectives and ideas to the school. Knowledge of the organisation culture, beliefs and structure to navigate their environment is also important. Kelchtermans (2019) labels this micropolitical literacy as it allows teachers a degree of freedom for actions and decision making which may impact on their learners. The organisation structure, restrictive as it may be, is not a one-way interaction. Therefore, it helps to dive into the organisational structure of your school and find out how it might be possible to make changes.

Network

Taking one step into the larger social structures, in areas Bronfenbrenner (1994) refers to as exosystem and macrosystem, we see sites of network, policy, and culture and structure. In our model, we identify the site of the network where NGOs, local organisations, universities that interact with the school and the teachers themselves, play an important role in achieving teacher agency. An NGO working on teacher empowerment or a university project, may help teachers to act upon their visions, and inspire and develop more inclusive approaches can greatly affect teacher agency. In this site, through interactions and experiences , teachers may even transform their understanding of agency and inclusion, and influence their teaching practices.

Policies

Beyond the network domain, there are educational policies at the district, state, and national levels that also have a profound impact on teacher agency and inclusion which may also shape the level of interaction inside the network around the school ecosystem. For example,

a ministry of education may enforce prescriptive practices, form centralistic and rigid hierarchical interactions; therefore limiting the area of network, institutions, relationships, and individuals.

At the outermost layer, the culture of the society involves the values, beliefs, and attitudes within the school and the broader society. A culture promoting values such as inclusivity and autonomy is essential for enhancing teacher agency. So let's start with what can be done. How can we achieve and nurture teacher agency in this complex web of relationships and interactions? We can start by talking a little about the core, the individual, the teachers themselves and what they can do to support their own agency?

Culture and Structure

The cultural and structural aspect of teacher agency concerns societal beliefs about teachers and the importance placed on them in policy. If policies are too hierarchical and seek to control the role of teachers, this would limit one's agency. As some scholars have stated , teachers should not be role-takers, they should be role-makers. Teachers' roles need to be viewed beyond that of implementers of policies. To be agentic here would mean teachers need to critically think about how a particular policy affects the inclusion of children. Teacher agency needs to be seen as an integral part of the profession, and structures need to ensure teachers are not working in isolation and instead make room for collective agency (as seen in CoP).

Local contexts

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=651#h5p-36

Closing questions to discuss or tasks

1. Think about a recent situation in which you experienced teacher agency. Try to analyse it through the teacher agency model (iterational, practical-evaluative, projective).

2. Think about your school's structural, cultural, material dimensions. How can you achieve agency within this context?
3. How does collaboration with peers and/or colleagues support teacher agency and promote inclusion? Make concrete examples.
4. Can you think about situations that may limit or inhibit the achievement of agency? What can you do?
5. Do you believe that you can always have agency, or can you think of a situation where you would have no agency? Discuss in groups.
6. How can you be an agent of change for inclusion in your own practice?

Literature

Ainscow, Mel. "Promoting Inclusion and Equity in Education: Lessons from International Experiences." *Nordic Journal of Studies in Educational Policy* 6, no. 1 (2020): 7–16. https://doi.org/10.1080/20020317.2020.1729587.

Ainscow, Mel, and Tony Booth. *The Index for Inclusion: Developing Learning and Participation in Schools*. 2nd ed. Bristol: CSIE, 2002.

Ainscow, Mel, Tony Booth, and Alan Dyson. *Improving Schools, Developing Inclusion*. Routledge, 2006.

Altet, Marguerite. "Professionnalisation et Universitarisation de La Formation Des Enseignants: Tensions et Conditions Pour Une Réussite." In *Colloque CDIUFM La Formation Des Enseignants En Europe*. Paris, 2008.

American Psychological Association. "Resilience," 2018. https://dictionary.apa.org/resilience.

Bandura, Albert. *Social Cognitive Theory: An Agentic Perspective. Annual Review of Psychology*. Vol. 52. 1, 2001. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.52.1.1.

———. "Toward a Psychology of Human Agency." *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 1, no. 2 (2006): 164–80. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-6916.2006.00011.x.

Barker, Chris, and Emma A. Jane. *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice*. SAGE Publications, 2005.

Baroni, Sara. "Covid-19 and Transformative Learning: From the Disorienting Dilemma to the Importance of Relationships for Teachers in the Project ripARTiamo!" *Formazione & Insegnamento* XVI, no. 1 (2021): 734–46. https://doi.org/10.7346/-fei-XIX-01-21_62.

Biesta, Gert, and Michael Tedder. "Agency and Learning in the Lifecourse: Towards an Ecological Perspective." *Studies in the Education of Adults* 39, no. 2 (2007): 132–49. https://doi.org/10.1080/02660830.2007.11661545.

Bourdieu, Pierre. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Geneva: éditions Droz, 1972.

Broderick, Alicia, and Priya Lalvani. "Dysconscious Ableism: Toward a Liberatory Praxis in Teacher Education." *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 21, no. 9 (2017): 894–905. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2017.1296034.

Bronfenbrenner, Urie. "Ecological Models of Human Development." In *International Encyclopedia of Education*, 2nd ed. Vol. 3. Oxford: Elsevier, 1994.

Burger, Julian, Henrik Bellhäuser, and Margarete Imhof. "Mentoring Styles and Novice Teachers' Well-Being: The Role of Basic Need Satisfaction." *Teaching and Teacher Education* 103 (2021): 103345. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2021.103345.

Burkhauser, Mary, and Nonie Lesaux. "Exercising a Bounded Autonomy: Novice and Experienced Teachers' Adaptations to Curriculum Materials in an Age of Accountability." *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 49, no. 3 (2015): 291–312. https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2015.1088065.

Calvert, Laurie. *Moving from Compliance to Agency: What Teachers Need to Make Professional Learning Work*. Oxford, OH: Learning Forward and NCTAF, 2016.

Campbell, Todd, Julianne A. Wenner, Latanya Brandon, and Molly Waszkelewicz. "A Community of Practice Model as a Theoretical Perspective for Teacher Leadership." *International Journal of Leadership in Education* 25, no. 2 (2019): 173–96. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603124.2019.1643500.

Chirkov, Valery, Richard M. Ryan, Youngmee Kim, and Ulas Kaplan. "Differentiating Autonomy from Individualism and Independence: A Self-Determination Theory Perspective on Internalization of Cultural Orientations and Well-Being." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 84 (2003): 97–110. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.84.1.97.

Cochran-Smith, Marilyn, and Susan L. Lytle. *Inquiry as Stance: Practitioner Research for the Next Generation*. Teachers College Press, 2009.

Dampson, Dandy George, Stephen Kwakye Apau, and Uriel Amuah. "Freedom to Choose within Limits: Teacher Autonomy from the Perspectives of Basic School Teachers in Ghana." *European Journal of Educational Management* 1, no. 35 (2019): 35–44. https://doi.org/10.12973/eujem.2.1.35.

Desimone, Laura M. "Improving Impact Studies of Teachers' Professional Development: Toward Better Conceptualizations and Measures." *Educational Researcher* 38, no. 3 (2009): 181–99.

Dewey, John. "Experience and Education." *The Educational Forum* 50, no. 3 (1986): 241–52.

Emirbayer, Mustafa, and Ann Mische. "What Is Agency?" *American Journal of Sociology* 103, no. 4 (1998): 962–1023. https://doi.org/10.1086/231294.

Florian, Lani. "What Counts as Evidence of Inclusive Education?" *European Journal of Special Needs Education* 29, no. 3 (2014): 286–94.

Florian, Lani, and Nataša Pantić. *Teacher Education for the Changing Demographics of Schooling. Issues for Research and Practice*. Springer International Publishing, 2017.

Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Continuum, 1970.

Fullan, Michael G. "Why Teachers Must Become Change Agents." *Educational Leadership* 50

(1993): 12–12.

Gay, Geneva. *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice*. Teachers College Press, 2010.

Giddens, Anthony. *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*. University of California Press, 1984.

Harris, Alma. "Teacher Leadership as Distributed Leadership: Heresy, Fantasy or Possibility?" *School Leadership & Management* 23, no. 3 (2003): 313–24.

Hart, Susan, Mary Jane Drummond, and Donald McIntyre. *Learning without Limits: Constructing a Pedagogy Free from Determinist Beliefs About Ability*. *The SAGE Handbook of Special Education*. Vol. 2, 2014.

Imants, Jeroen, and Merel M. Van der Wal. "A Model of Teacher Agency in Professional Development and School Reform." *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 52, no. 1 (2020): 1–14. https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2019.1604809.

Jonassen, David H. *Computers as Mindtools for Schools: Engaging Critical Thinking*. Prentice Hall, 2000.

Kelchtermans, Geert. *Module 10. Schoolorganisatie*. Edited by Jan Elen and Andy Thys. *Leren in Maatschappelijk Betrokken Onderwijs*. Universitaire Pers Leuven, 2019.

Kemmis, Stephen, and Tracey J. Smith. *Enabling Praxis: Challenges for Education*. Sense Publishers, 2008.

Korthagen, Fred A.J. "Pedagogy of Teacher Education." In *International Handbook of Teacher Education*, edited by John Loughran and Mary L. Hamilton. Springer, 2016. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-0366-0_8.

Leijen, Äli, Margus Pedaste, and L. Lepp. "Teacher Agency Following the Ecological Model: How It Is Achieved and How It Could Be Strengthened by Different Types of Reflection." *British Journal of Educational Studies* 68, no. 3 (2020): 295–310.

Lennert da Silva, Ana Lucia, and Christina Elde Mølstad. "Teacher Autonomy and Teacher Agency: A Comparative Study in Brazilian and Norwegian Lower Secondary Education." *The Curriculum Journal* 31, no. 1 (2020): 115–31.

März, Virginie, and Geert Kelchtermans. "The Networking Teacher in Action: A Qualitative Analysis of Early Career Teachers' Induction Process." *Teaching and Teacher Education* 87 (2020): 102933. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2019.102933.

Mezirow, Jack. *Apprendimento e Trasformazione: Il Significato Dell'esperienza e Il Valore Della Riflessione Nell'apprendimento Degli Adulti*. Raffaello Cortina, 2003.

Nussbaum, Martha C. *Frontiers of Justice: Disability, Nationality, Species Membership*. Harvard University Press, 2006.

Nuzzaci, Antonella. "La Ricerca Azione Nel Rapporto Tra Teoria e Pratica: Praticare La Teoria o Teorizzare La Pratica?" *MeTis. Mondi Educativi. Temi, Indagini, Suggestioni* 8, no. 2 (2018): 137–75. https://doi.org/10.30557/mt00026.

———. "Pratiche Riflessive, Riflessività e Insegnamento." *Studium Educationis* 3 (2011): 9–27.

Oolbekkink-Marchand, Helma, Anna van der Want, Harmen Schaap, Monika Louws, and Paulien Meijer. "Achieving Professional Agency for School Development in the Context of Having a PhD Scholarship: An Intricate Interplay." *Teaching and Teacher Education* 113 (2022): 103684. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2022.103684.

Palmer, Ian, Richard Dunford, and David A. Buchanan. *Managing Organizational Change: A Multiple Perspectives Approach*. McGraw Hill Education, 2017.

Pantić, Nataša. "A Model for Study of Teacher Agency for Social Justice." *Teachers and Teaching* 21, no. 6 (2015): 759–78. https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2015.1044332.

———. "An Exploratory Study of Teacher Agency for Social Justice." *Teaching and Teacher Education* 66 (2017): 219–30. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2017.04.008.

Pantić, Nataša, and Lani Florian. "Developing Teachers as Agents of Inclusion and Social Justice." *Education Inquiry* 6, no. 3 (2015): 27311. https://doi.org/10.3402/edui.v6.27311.

Perrenoud, Philippe. *Développer La Pratique Réflexive Dans Le Métier d'enseignant*. ESF, 2001.

Priestley, Mark, Daniel Alvunger, Stavroula Philippou, and Tiina Soini. *Curriculum Making in Europe: Policy and Practice within and across Diverse Contexts*. Emerald, 2021.

Priestley, Mark, Gert Biesta, and Sarah Robinson. *Teacher Agency: An Ecological Approach*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2016.

Ryan, Richard M., and Edward L. Deci. "Self-Determination Theory and the Facilitation of Intrinsic Motivation, Social Development, and Well-Being." *American Psychologist* 55 (2000): 68–78.

Sandmeier, Anita, Sophie Baeriswyl, Andreas Krause, and Julia Muehlhausen. "Work until You Drop: Effects of Work Overload, Prolonging Working Hours, and Autonomy Need Satisfaction on Exhaustion in Teachers." *Teaching and Teacher Education* 118 (2022): 103843. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2022.103843.

Schön, Alan Donald. *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*. Basic Books, 1993.

Seitz, Simone. "Leistung in Der Grundschule – Überlegungen Zum Leistungsbezogenen Handeln Innerhalb Eines Inklusiven Bildungssystems." Edited by H. Demo, S. Cappello, V. Macchia, and S. Seitz. *Didattica e Inclusione Scolastica / Inklusion Im Bildungsbereich – Vernetzt / Costruire Comunità*, 2024, 81–93. https://doi.org/10.13124/9788860461964.

Seitz, Simone, Petra Auer, and Rosa Bellacicco. "Introduction: In the Light of Educational Justice: International Perspectives on Inclusion." In *International Perspectives on Inclusive Education: In the Light of Educational Justice*, 11–16. Verlag Barbara Budrich, 2023.

Singal, Nidhi. "Challenges and Opportunities in Efforts towards Inclusive Education: Reflections from India." *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 23, no. 7–8 (2019): 827–40.

Snoek, Marco, Frank Hulsbos, and Inge Andersen. *Teacher Leadership: Hoe Kan Het Leiderschap van Leraren in Scholen Versterkt Worden?* Hogeschool van Amsterdam, 2019.

Squires, Vicki, Keith Walker, and Shelley Spurr. "Understanding Self-Perceptions of Wellbeing

and Resilience of Preservice Teachers." *Teaching and Teacher Education* 118 (2022): 103828. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2022.103828.

Stetsenko, Anna. "Radical-Transformative Agency: Continuities and Contrasts With Relational Agency and Implications for Education." *Frontiers in Education* 4 (2019). https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2019.00148.

Stockdale, Susan L., and Ralph G. Brockett. "Development of the PRO-SDLS: A Measure of Self-Direction in Learning Based on the Personal Responsibility Orientation Model." *Adult Education Quarterly* 61, no. 2 (2011): 161−80. https://doi.org/10.1177/0741713610380447.

Toiviainen, Sanna. "Co-Agency: Reconsidering Agency in Guidance Practice." *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling* 50, no. 4 (2022): 547−56.

UNESCO. *Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action Towards Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education and Lifelong Learning for All*, 2015. http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Documents/incheon-framework-for-action-en.pdf.

———. *Guidelines for Inclusion: Ensuring Access to Education for All*. UNESCO, 2005.

———. *The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education*. Salamanca, Spain: UNESCO, 1994.

———. *World Declaration on Education for All and Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs*. UNESCO, 1990.

Ungar, Michael. "Social Ecologies and Their Contribution to Resilience." In *The Social Ecology of Resilience: A Handbook of Theory and Practice*, edited by Michael Ungar, 13−31. Luxembourg: Springer Science+Business Media, 2012.

Vianna, Eduardo, and Anna Stetsenko. "Connecting Learning and Identity Development through a Transformative Activist Stance: Application in Adolescent Development in a Child Welfare Program." *Human Development* 54, no. 5 (2011): 313−38. https://doi.org/10.1159/000331484.

Wenger, Etienne. *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*. Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Wenger, Etienne, Beverly Trayner, and Marteen De Laat. *Promoting and Assessing Value Creation in Communities and Networks: A Conceptual Framework*, 2011.

Wenger-Trayner, Etienne, Beverly Wenger-Trayner, Phil Reid, and Claude Bruderlein. "Communities of Practice Within and Across Organizations," 2023.

Woezik, Tamara E. T. van, Rob P. B. Reuzel, and Jur J. Koksma. "Exploring Open Space: A Self-Directed Learning Approach for Higher Education." *Cogent Education* 6, no. 1 (2019). https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2019.161576.

Yurtseven, Evrim, Fisun Aykır, Melike Ergün, and Mine Aksar. *Değişim Benimle Başlar: Eylem Araştırmacı Öğretmen Raporu (Change Starts with Me: Action Researcher Teacher Report)*. Öğretmen Ağı, 2021.

About the authors

Günalp Turan

Günalp Turan is an NGO professional and an educator with a focus on communities of practice and teacher empowerment. He has a BA in language education and has taken graduate studies in cultural studies. He has been managing and advising national and international projects and organizations on inclusive education, critical thinking, community building, and andragogy.

Madhusudhan Ramesh

Madhusudhan Ramesh is an assistant professor in inclusive education. He heads a PG diploma programme in Inclusive Education designed for mid-career educators. His research interests include teacher agency, inclusive pedagogy, teacher professional development, and children's experiences of difference and disability.

Rhianna Murphy

Rhianna is a former primary school teacher with international teaching experience. She has a background in educational research, with a focus on curriculum-making and teacher agency. She has also worked on a range of small scale research projects with British Educational Research Association (BERA) and has experience lecturing on a range of teacher education courses.

Sara Baroni

Sara Baroni is Doctor of Research in Pedagogy and Didactics and primary school teacher. She is interested in wellbeing and equity at school, education in emergency situations, teacher reflective practices and inclusive education. She is part of different research groups in Italy and abroad.

Tamara van Woezik

Dr. Tamara van Woezik is assistant professor in teacher education with a focus on affective learning processes. She coordinates and teaches courses about pedagogy and teacher professionalisation. Her research focuses on sense of belonging, inclusion and autonomy-support using qualitative and arts-based methods.

ANTI-BIAS EDUCATION

Ira Schumann; Mai Trang Vu; Hazar Chaouni; and Seun Adebayo

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://book.all-means-all.education/ ama-2025-en/?p=388#oembed-1

Example Case

Suki, a British-born student of Indian heritage, was incorrectly placed in an English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) course despite English being her first language. She was identified as having severe literacy difficulties, but rather than receiving targeted support for her needs, she was enrolled in ESOL due to her low reading and writing proficiency.

Suki was placed in an ESOL course designed for non-native English speakers, despite being a native English speaker. This placement failed to acknowledge her primary challenge—dyslexia-related literacy difficulties, not language acquisition.

The college refused to assess Suki for dyslexia, claiming that her reading and writing skills were too low to meet the criteria for formal testing. This created a systemic barrier that prevented her from accessing the specialist support she needed. Despite her strong verbal communication skills, Suki struggled significantly with reading and writing, leading to frustration and disengagement. Without appropriate intervention, she was placed in an environment that failed to address her specific learning needs. Had she received the right support in a mainstream course, she could have thrived academically, but instead, the lack of tailored assistance reinforced feelings of inadequacy and limited her educational progress.

Institutional rigidity: Attempts to challenge her placement were met with resistance, with educators asserting that the system could not accommodate alternative solutions.

This case highlights a critical gap in educational support systems for students with undiagnosed or misdiagnosed learning difficulties. Suki's case was not an issue of ESOL eligibility but a failure to recognise and support dyslexia.

Suki's experience highlights systemic issues in literacy assessment and support, particularly the rigidity of criteria that hinder early identification of dyslexia. Her case emphasises the need for individualised learning pathways, ensuring students are placed in appropriate courses based on their actual needs rather than standardised test scores. Greater advocacy and awareness are essential to empower educators to challenge these shortcomings and implement meaningful interventions. To address these issues, Further Education institutions must recognise that low literacy does not automatically qualify a student for ESOL, implement early dyslexia screening regardless of reading level, and provide specialist literacy support within mainstream education. These reforms are crucial to preventing the unnecessary segregation of students with additional learning needs and ensuring equitable access to education.

Had Suki been given the correct support, she could have developed her literacy skills within an inclusive, mainstream environment—rather than being placed in a lower-level ESOL class that did not meet her needs. This case study serves as a powerful reminder of the importance of challenging systemic barriers and advocating for the right support for every learner.

example case by Nysha Givens, University of Wolverhampton, UK

Initial questions

In this chapter you will find the answers to the following questions:

- What is anti-bias education?

- Why is anti-bias education important?

- How is anti-bias education connected to inclusion?

- Why should anti-bias education be an essential part of teachers' everyday work?

- What is intersectionality?

- How can teachers implement anti-bias education in the classroom?

Introduction to Topic

This chapter introduces the concept of taking an anti-bias approach to education. Unfortunately, children do not grow up with equal opportunities, they can be disadvantaged or advantaged because of their social identities. Taking an anti-bias approach means that you are aware of these inequalities and take steps to create an environment where differences are celebrated as well as creating an awareness around the different positions children may have in society. Taking an anti-bias approach is necessary to ensure you are an educator who is truly inclusive in their teaching, and it also prevents children from being further disadvantaged in the classroom. This chapter will take you through the goals of anti-bias education and provide you with the information you need to start taking an anti-bias approach to teaching.

Key aspects

What is anti-bias education?

Anti-bias education is an approach to teaching that acknowledges and celebrates differences in identities. It is about building a community that encourages diversity, critical thinking and self-discovery. With an anti-bias approach, children can be strengthened in their self-identities as well as their social identities and learn to interact respectfully with others despite their different backgrounds. Inclusion and equity are the heart of anti-bias education, so students are taught about the impact and unfairness of bias and discrimination and how they can stand up for themselves and each other.

Why is anti-bias education important?

"Children are not only learning to read and write texts: they are learning to read and write human possibilities. They read each other's faces and clothes as they do any storybook, and they write each other's future in the stories they imagine" (Dyson, 1997).

Societies around the world are becoming increasingly heterogeneous, socio-culturally, strongly due to the continuous movement of migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers (Adebayo and Chinhanu, 2020). While the sociocultural changes experienced in societies globally have brought about a richness in diversity, it has also led to the observation of "how many societies try to fit people into a cultural box" (Adebayo and Chinhanu, 2020; Vandenbroeck, 2007). In other words, minoritised and disadvantaged communities/people worldwide continue to experience bias and discrimination due to their backgrounds.

Furthermore, recent events in the United States have brought about the urgent need to respond to institutional and structural racism worldwide. Within the context of education, the momentous Black Lives Matter Movement has highlighted the cruciality of developing

anti-bias education and promoting equity and inclusion in education (Adebayo, 2020). Additionally, the recent COVID-19 outbreak led to the closing of schools worldwide, and this resulted in "1.6 billion children missing out on education, which has further amplified inequalities inherent in many education systems" (Adebayo, 2022).

Furthermore, the current global landscape highlights the urgent need to address the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) outlined by the United Nations in 2015, specifically SDG 4, which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. However, new evidence indicates that the world is falling short of achieving these targets by the set date of 2030 (Adebayo, 2022; UNESCO, 2020). One crucial aspect hindering the progress of SDG 4 is the challenges faced by teachers who play a vital role in realising the goals. In multilingual and diverse classrooms, educators are struggling to meet the diverse needs of their students (Adebayo and Chinhanu, 2020; UNESCO, 2019). These classrooms are characterised by a wide range of languages spoken, varying cultural backgrounds, and unique learning requirements, making it increasingly challenging for teachers to provide inclusive and equitable education.

The demands placed on teachers to accommodate diverse learners require specialised skills and knowledge that many educators currently lack. Inadequate training and resources often leave teachers ill-equipped to effectively engage students from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. This deficiency in teacher preparation directly impacts the quality of education and hinders progress towards achieving SDG 4 (Adebayo, 2022; UNESCO, 2020). To address this pressing issue, it is crucial to invest in comprehensive teacher training programs that equip educators with the necessary tools and strategies to effectively teach in multilingual and diverse classrooms. By empowering teachers with the skills to navigate cultural and linguistic diversity, we can create inclusive learning environments that cater to the unique needs of every student.

Following the above, we posit that the development of anti-bias education and competencies for teachers is crucial for education systems worldwide to ensure that all learners have access to equitable and quality education. According to Killoran and colleagues (2004: 150), "many teachers only scratch the surface of what a true anti-bias education should be." Therefore, we argue that anti-bias knowledgeable teachers can be considered 'quality teachers' in this contemporary era (Adebayo, 2019).

Furthermore, anti-bias education is crucial to an inclusive learning environment (Dash and Peters, 2021; Derman-Sparks and Edwards, 2019; Vandenbroeck, 2007). Therefore, we cannot genuinely have an inclusive teaching and learning environment without anti-bias education. Apart from adding richness to students' learning experience, anti-bias education has many benefits, and they include the following:

– Anti-bias education develops students' skills to think critically and be culturally aware to recognise, acknowledge, and confront discrimination and bias personally, institutionally and within the society at large.

− Anti-bias education helps students in developing intercultural relationships by embracing cultural diversity.

− Anti-bias education commits teachers and educators to the emotional and cognitive development of all students, irrespective of their cultural values.

− Anti-bias education creates room to support the development of students' self-confidence and identity by recognising, acknowledging and celebrating cultural diversity and differences.

How is anti-bias education connected to inclusion?

Anti-bias education connects to inclusion because it promotes interaction between children who are different from each other. Instead of shying away from and being uncomfortable with these differences, an environment is created where these differences are accepted, understood, and celebrated. At the same time, children are taught that society does not treat or value everybody in the same way, precisely because it does not embrace the differences in identities. Anti-bias education helps children grow up with a better understanding of themselves, others, and society in general and − hopefully − a more inclusive mindset. Anti-bias education is based on the same values as inclusion. It can be seen as a practical approach to inclusion. One big question that teachers have regarding inclusion is often "But how exactly can I do it?" Anti-bias-education provides an answer to this question.

Why should anti-bias education be an essential part of teachers' everyday work?

It is essential that teachers make anti-bias education part of their everyday work because students cannot just leave their social identities at the door. There is a very institutional element to discrimination and marginalisation, and unfortunately schools are no exception. Without an anti-bias approach, we are not equipped to adequately recognise and respond to discrimination within the school. If a black student faces racism, we need to be able to acknowledge that, name it and act accordingly. Without the proper knowledge and tools, we might (accidentally) downplay situations in which students faced discrimination, or we might even subconsciously discriminate against students, making the classroom an unsafe environment. We might put or hold barriers in place that students must work hard to overcome or cannot overcome at all, giving them a disadvantage that could affect how they perform in school. For example, there is the possibility that we might overlook access needs or other ways in which we are unaccommodating, making education inaccessible for children with a disability. If we want to be fair to students and make sure they feel included and seen, anti-bias education is indispensable.

The anti-bias approach assumes that everyone has biases. It does not distinguish between "good" people who are not biased and "bad" people who are. Everyone has some

amount of unconscious bias. We might not think of ourselves as biased, or we might not know about our biases even though they are within us; that's the unconscious part. It happens quite often that we are biased towards people or towards certain groups.

We have grown up in societies with, for example, racist, sexist, ableist, or fatphobic ideas 'floating around' and they are part of our way of thinking, of the stories we tell ourselves as a society, of our languages, and the words we use. There are so many words which have hidden messages about certain people, and certain groups. Furthermore, these ideas, this bias, are also in our institutions and structures. We are all surrounded by these ideas from the first moment we are born. Research has shown that children "know" about differences and stereotypes when they are 3 to 4 years old and apply them in interactions with other children and other people in general (MacNaughton, 2006: 3, in German: Wagner 2009).

The problem with biases is: They influence how we perceive other people and their actions. In this way, they also influence our work with other people, whether we want to or not. It is important for everyone to learn about their unconscious bias, but it is especially important for teachers. Bias influences how we perceive people, how we perceive their actions and how we treat them. For example, bias impacts who we perceive as capable. Who do we think is capable of learning and doing certain things, and who might be seen as incapable?

When our biases are not conscious, it happens that we create barriers for students and their families without even realising it. So, we will unintentionally produce barriers for students which could harm their wellbeing and their chances for learning. It is also possible that we do not recognise barriers that already exist for them. Hence, if your bias remain unconscious you will not be able to do a good job as a teacher. Of particular importance is that from the perspective of anti-bias education, it is not possible to be "bias free", but it is possible to be "bias conscious." The German version of the anti-bias approach is called "Vorurteilsbewusste Bildung und Erziehung" and the word "vorurteilsbewusst" translates as "bias conscious." The idea is, thus, already in the wording of the concept (Derman-Sparks, 2010).

Another important thing to note is that becoming conscious about your own biases is a long, maybe even lifelong, process. It is not something that is done in a week of training.

Teachers need a certain knowledge, certain skills, to make their classroom more inclusive, to realise anti-bias education. The knowledge needed is different from what people often imagine it to be. Sometimes, teachers imagine they now have to learn about every disability that exists, or they have to know all the languages spoken in their classroom, and so on.

However, a different kind of knowledge is needed. For example: Teachers need to know about which differences exist in their society and how these differences influence people's experience of the world because we are not all experiencing it in the same way. Teachers need to know about inequality, about barriers that exist for some people, and privileges that exist for others, and also how privilege makes it really hard to perceive barriers. This

knowledge helps them understand why they might be able to perceive some barriers but not others. Teachers need to know how discrimination works and what form it can have, so they can detect discrimination when it happens at school. All this knowledge helps to identify barriers that affect or may affect students and their families. Only then can teachers remove the barriers and make it possible for all students to feel welcome, to feel seen and appreciated, to learn and develop well.

If we want to analyse situations or institutions so that we can work against discrimination, we need to know what discrimination can be, what it can look like, or else we do not recognise it.

However, the problem is, when we think about discrimination, we often think about a certain type of discrimination that happens in interactions between people. We imagine one person with bad intentions saying something discriminating against another person, or even becoming physically violent. However, discrimination is so much more than these situations. Many forms of discrimination are more subtle and are not so easily recognised, especially for people who are not affected by it.

For instance, these can be the so-called microaggressions. These are very small situations that seem harmless for someone not affected by it. However, for the people affected by it, they happen again and again and again, and become something that takes up a lot of energy and can be very hurtful and damaging. One example in Europe or North America is the question "Where are you from?" to people who are not white and are perceived as not coming from the country they are living in, even if they might have been born there. For some people this is a harmless question, but for others it is something they hear again and again in their life, and it comes with the message of "you do not belong here" and a feeling of being excluded. This is a form of microaggression that happens to people who are perceived as having a migration background, be it is because they have dark hair, maybe dark skin, but also maybe because they have a name that seems to be not, for example, German or Dutch or Swedish. There is a video explaining microaggressions and it uses the metaphor of mosquito bites. It says that some people get bitten once every so often, but other people get bitten by mosquitos several times every day and all these bites really add up, and it is really harmful for people affected by it (Fusion Comedy, 2016).

Turning back to discrimination in general, to put it in a nutshell can be very tricky: discrimination can even happen when we have really good intentions, and this can also happen at schools. Teachers may discriminate against students, their families, or colleagues while having the best intentions. For example, if a teacher has internalised the prejudice that disabled people are not as capable and competent as other people and therefore, gives a disabled student easier tasks, even though the pupil would be able to work on more difficult tasks, and able to learn more. It is not the intention of the speaker or the person doing things that decides if something is discriminating, but the effect it has on other people.

It is important to know that discrimination does not solely exist on a personal level.

Discrimination is also systematic and institutional. It can be woven into processes, how things get decided, into how things are done in institutions. If you do not know about these processes or instances, you cannot detect them in your classroom, or in your school, then discrimination just perpetuates itself and forms barriers for students.

An intersectional approach to realizing anti-bias education

Intersectionality is a way of describing how social identities such as race, disability, and gender intersect. Picture it as a crossroads where different identities come together, which causes specific forms of discrimination and marginalisation, such as mysoginoir (mysogyny directed towards black women). Intersectionality is crucial in anti-bias education, as a student can face more than one form of discrimination. In order to accommodate them accordingly and create an inclusive and safe environment, it is important to be aware of the fact that someone can be marginalised in more ways than one.

In this chapter, we use the work by Crenshaw (1991) on intersectionality, as well as by Derman-Sparks & Edwards (2010) and Derman-Sparks & Edwards (2019) on anti-bias education as a conceptual framework to address the "simultaneous intersections" (García and Ortiz, 2013) between languages, cultures, gender, race/ethnicity, (dis)ability, and socio-economic conditions. Indeed, diversity can be, and should be, conceptualised as "the broader array of multiple social identities", rather than (only) different abilities (García and Ortiz, 2013: 32). Derman-Sparks & Edwards's (2010; 2019) framework enables teachers to support each child to develop to their fullest potential.

People can be discriminated against or marginalised because of different dimensions of their identities. An immigrant female student's experiences of being bullied may be shaped by her being a girl and having a migrant background, and not speaking the local language well enough yet. Her experiences may become even complex if she has dyslexia, and if she has just moved from a country at war.

In this situation in real life, therefore, different discourses such as sexism and racism (and xenophobia and disablism) intersect. However, despite these realities, in feminist and anti-racist practices, these discourses are often not seen as intersectional (Crenshaw, 1991)

Crenshaw (1991) observed that in the response of activists to combat social injustices, it is often that the multiple dimensions of our lived experiences are treated separately. Feminists and anti-racist activists, for example, tend to view the discriminations and other disadvantages happening to a girl student of an immigrant background as if the issues are disassociated. Crenshaw argued that such a single-faceted approach that sees identity as girl/woman or person of colour or having poor language skills, and then responds to one or the other dimension, is in fact not effective. This is because it will cause such a student to be marginalised in all three dimensions: gender, racism, and languages/cultures (and/or disability, or class). Rather, an intersectional perspective and approach that goes beyond the traditional boundaries of separate discourses, and that recognises the student as

having intersectional identities and being affected by them, is necessary. This intersectional approach responds to all three dimensions, and therefore, will be helpful in understanding people's experiences and informing responses and practices.

As a single-faceted theoretical lens seems not comprehensive enough to address the complexities of social injustice discourses, teachers may want to adopt more intersectional approaches. These approaches help them understand the multiple dimensions of anti-bias education, attend to within-group differences, and start to employ it in the classroom.

Avoiding a deficit approach: 'microwave' anti-bias education

Within the context of anti-bias education, teachers need to understand the differences between equity and equality in education. While there are complexities around the two concepts, equity in education is how teachers respond to the specific needs of all students to ensure they access quality teaching and learning. On the other hand, equality is based on fairness, that is, treating all students the same (Adebayo, 2022). In other words, equality is 'giving everyone a shoe' while equity is giving 'everyone a shoe that fits' (Naheed Dosani).

A deficit approach to anti-bias education bases its implementation on a perspective that foregrounds students' problematic sociocultural background to argue for their poor academic performance (Vandenbroeck, 2007). This particularly concerns students from marginalised or culturally diverse backgrounds. In other words, a deficit approach personalises failure, i.e., when educators believe that if students work harder, there will be no need for anti-bias education. This approach to anti-bias education must be avoided to ensure that all students have access to equitable and quality education, irrespective of their sociocultural background. Anti-bias education is for all students. We can avoid a deficit approach to anti-bias education by taking it as a school-wide commitment that adds richness to the learning experiences of all students (Dash and Peters, 2021).

A US-based educator named Cornelius Minor came up with the term 'Microwave Equity,' which is explained as a situation in which teachers and educators attempt to quickly reach the goal of equitable education for all learners. Mirroring this idea, one may also identify 'microwave anti-bias education' when educators intend to achieve the goals of anti-bias education within a short time. However, both are not possible because equitable education for all, and truly implementing anti-bias education require patience and a substantial investment of time (Adebayo, 2022). The real work towards anti-bias education is a lifelong process that requires the continuous investment of resources and efforts to create an anti-bias teaching and learning environment. This is why Dash and Peters (2021: 59) strongly emphasise that educators working towards anti-bias education should continue to ask themselves: "Are we doing the right thing?"

An intersectional framework for classroom anti-bias education

As indicated above, anti-bias education is based on the value that differences are good,

and differences need to be respected and celebrated (Derman-Sparks et al., 1989; Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2010; 2019). However, the framework is also action-oriented: it enables teachers and students to identify and confront unfair beliefs and behaviour. In particular, Derman-Sparks & Edwards (2010; 2019) discussed the four goals of anti-bias education which include the dimensions of identity, diversity, justice, and activism.

Goal 1: Identity: This goal is seen as the starting place for all children, in all contexts. Derman-Sparks & Edwards (2010; 2019) proposed that each child shall have the opportunities "to demonstrate their self-awareness, confidence, family pride, and positive social identities" (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2019: 7). Children are able to confidently express who they are, while respecting who others are. They are also able to positively describe their social or group identities (for example, gender, racial/ethnic, cultural, language, religious, and socio-economic class groups) without being superior, or inferior, to others (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2010; 2019).

Goal 2: Diversity: With this goal, children are able to "express comfort and joy with human diversity, use accurate language for human differences, and form deep, caring connections across all dimensions of human diversity" (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2019: 7). Children learn to understand the differences, as well as similarities, between themselves and others, and use that   to treat each other in a caring and just way (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2010; 2019).

Goal 3: Justice: This goal helps children develop a sense of fairness and justice. They will "increasingly recognise unfairness (injustice), have language to describe unfairness, and understand that unfairness hurts" (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2019: 8). Children learn to empathise with others, but also to engage in critical thinking in order to identify negative, hurtful, unjust practices around them. These can be in the form of ideas and attitudes (for example stereotypes), comments (for example teasing, shaming), and behaviour (for example exclusion, discrimination) (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2010; 2019).

Goal 4: Activism: This goal aims to enable children to stand up to unjust ideas, attitudes and behaviour, and act against injustice: "children will demonstrate a sense of empowerment and the skills to act, with others or alone, against prejudice and/or discriminatory actions" (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2019: 8). Children learn to take perspective, perform positive interactions with others, resolve conflicts, and create a fair classroom environment (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2010; 2019).

Derman-Sparks & Edwards (2010; 2019) emphasised that the four goals are interconnected and all of them should be continuously incorporated into the curriculum and daily educational practices. In realising the four goals of anti-bias education, the role of teachers is to encourage and nurture students' construction of identities, perspectives, and the ability to take action. It is important, therefore, for teachers to observe and listen to students' questions, thoughts, and ideas, to be aware of the hurtful biases, stereotypes and misinformation that students are exposed to, to look for 'teachable moments' – where teachers see the opportunities to expand students' thinking, to help them further develop

knowledge and understanding, and to plan the curriculum and teaching accordingly. Anti-bias education should be a combination of student-initiated activities, teachable moments, and teacher-initiated activities (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2016; 2019).

How can teachers implement anti-bias education in the classroom?

Embracing and implementing anti-bias education is a process, and entails challenges (Derman-Sparks et al, 1989). However an awareness of, and a sensitivity to, emotions, attitudes, beliefs, identities, as well as stereotypes, biases, and even discomfort (Nganga, 2020) will be a starting point for teachers. In what follows, we suggest implications for anti-bias education, classroom tools and inspirations for teachers that may help them in this process.

Creating opportunities for students to express their identities

As establishing a confident, strong sense of personal and social identities serves as the foundation for students to continue to achieve the next three goals of anti-bias education (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2010; 2019), teachers can help create as many opportunities as possible for students to express who they are with confidence. Ice-breaker activities that allow students to introduce themselves, their family, and backgrounds can help students start talking about their identities in a natural context. For example, an activity called "The meaning of my name" can be an engaging homework activity. When discussing that homework in the class, the teacher can start by explaining their name first: what it means, what it means in their family, and what it means to them, personally; then students, in pairs or small groups, can talk about their names. This activity can especially be relevant and meaningful for a culturally and linguistically diverse classroom and can be a good start to introduce plurilingual and intercultural competence. Students can also creatively express their identities, something special and unique about themselves, what they like, what they dislike, through narrative and creative writing (free writing, story, poetry), and by using multimodality (for example combining talking, writing, drawing, dancing, and acting). These activities can accommodate students' different needs, interests, abilities, and language capabilities. Regarding identity expression, Derman-Sparks, Edwards, and Goins (2020) suggest that teachers can also use materials as a tool to make all students feel welcome; for example, by including images of people from diverse groups and backgrounds in the materials.

Supporting students in respecting and celebrating differences

Teachers can help students change their attitudes towards differences: often differences are the cause of discrimination. Students will understand that each person is unique – they have unique traits, appearance and physical features, and different opinions and ways of thinking; and these differences in their personal and group identities must be respected. More than that, these differences can also be regarded as positive because they help widen and enrich one's knowledge, experiences, and world views. At the same time, students

also need to learn about how they are similar to others (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2016), so that they can relate to, and connect with, each other. This can be done by teachers asking students to share their prior experiences, for example, in solving a problem, or in dealing with a real-life situation or dilemma that is relevant to their contexts. Discussion activities that encourage students to express their personal thoughts and opinions can also help students learn to respect differences, for example, traditional music from different countries, or the paralympics can be possible topics.

One helpful strategy identified by Derman-Sparks, Edwards, & Goins (2020) is that teachers go through their teaching materials and critically check if they represent diversity fairly and accurately, and if there are possible hidden biases and stereotypes. For example, a gender perspective (Sadker & Silber, 2007) can be used to critically detect if housework is always associated with girls and women and not boys and men (stereotype bias), or if all astronauts are portrayed as men (selectivity bias). Critical multiculturalism can be a lens for teachers (Nganga, 2020; Yu, 2020) to investigate if some particular ethnic groups, cultures, or languages are portrayed as dominant or invisible, privileged or marginalised, or in stereotypical ways.

Extra-curriculum activities can also be designed on themes of diversity, for example, a theme day on the topic of multilingualism (How many languages can students speak at our school?) can generate discussions on languages, cultures, and history. Students are to be encouraged to share their own knowledge and experiences in learning more about other cultures as well as their own cultures.

Teaching students about empathy

Empathy is the ability to imagine oneself in another person's situation and having understanding and feelings towards their experiences – in other words, changing perspectives to put oneself in other people's shoes. Research (Athanases & Sanchez, 2020) has shown that drama-based pedagogy can help students develop empathy and be engaged in social justice-oriented discussions. Teachers can make use of role-play and other drama-based activities to help students relate to others' thoughts, feelings, and experiences. This will enable them to empathise with others and to see the world from different perspectives. Drama-based teaching, possibly done in small groups, can be beneficial for a diverse classroom, because the approach is inclusive in itself: it allows students to explore, express, and learn in varied, non-conventional ways. Besides drama-based pedagogy, experiential learning can also be implemented to teach students about empathy, for example, thematic days on different forms of impairment can be organised at schools, where people with disabilities are invited to be speakers. Students can visit the home of people with disabilities, so they better understand their challenges and lived experiences.

Promoting students' critical thinking

To promote students' critical thinking, teachers may choose a critical approach to

teaching, where self-reflection and critical thinking are considered. When working with reading and literature, teachers may ask questions that activate reflective discussions.

Escayg (2019) suggested that anti-bias education on the topic of race can be introduced to even young children by teachers asking questions to help them first deconstruct the system of racial ideologies, power and privilege in everyday life. Based on the responses from students, teachers can then ask students to consider if this system is fair to everyone.

Helping students develop a sense of fairness and justice

Although it is not always easy to define what is 'fair' and 'just', teachers may introduce students to essential values such as democracy and human rights, and that aggressive and discriminated attitudes, words, and behaviour including isolation, rejection, and exclusion, can be as hurtful as physical aggression and violence is. Teachers may invite students to express their thoughts and opinions about statements or situations overshadowed by societal inequalities and injustice.

Teachers also need to be explicit when dealing with injustices. As mentioned earlier, children even at an early age can become involved in (race- and ethnic-based) verbal and physical bullying towards their peers (Yu, 2020). It is suggested that teachers should explicitly bring in racial and ethical issues into discussions with children. This can be done, for example, by discussing with the children concepts such as stereotype and bullying, and not just stop at vague scolding such as "being mean" or "disrespectful towards others" (Yu, 2020).

Another way to help students start to engage in the questions of fairness and justice is to support them to approach one problem from as many perspectives as possible. Thus, students will learn to be open-minded, and adopt multi-angled views rather than only one-sided views. Problem-solving and debate activities can be helpful for this purpose. Additionally, teachers can provide students with comprehensive information about particular groups (why helping them be aware that identities are fluid and dynamic) and encourage them to learn to critically evaluate the information they receive.

Facilitating students to respond to injustice issues

In helping students to become activists, to stand up to unfairness, inequality, and injustice, it is important that teachers are their role models. Teachers need to be aware of their own bias and implement anti-bias education, values and principles in their daily practices.

At the same time, teachers can enable students to actively participate in creating a fair, tolerant classroom environment. Students can also learn to resolve possible conflicts. Restorative justice approach is a mediation method implemented in several countries (Reyes-Quilodran, LaBrenz, & Donoso, 2019) where students learn to build peace by acknowledging and owning their mistakes. In order to do that, students need to know the necessary language and communication skills in conflict-resolution. For example, when an incident happens between students, teachers talk to each involved party separately first,

then call a conference where all parties talk about what has happened, listen to each other, reflect on their actions, acknowledge their mistakes, and apologise.

Democratic education can also be an approach to empower students to respond to injustice. Students' voices can be heard through student committees, where they can raise and discuss issues. Schools and teachers can provide opportunities for students (for example by using surveys, polls, forums, and in-class discussions) to express their opinions and wishes to actively contribute to the curriculum goals and content, as well as how this content is going to be taught.

In all cases, it is important for teachers when implementing anti-bias education in their classrooms to remember that all forms of support and intervention need to be closely linked to the realities of children's lives, and thus their needs (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2019).

Building relationships and partnerships with parents for anti-bias education

Engaging parents in the educating of their children is vital for developing anti-bias education. Some ways educators or teachers can build relationships with parents include teachers making the first move in building trust with parents. This is particularly relevant for parents of minority ethnic migrant backgrounds who may not be familiar with the host country's school system. This may result in these parents being timid and not effectively engaged in their children's schooling. Secondly, teachers can find out what culturally diverse parents value in terms of engagement and activities and outcome. It is crucial for teachers to see parents as a vehicle to understand their children's background. Thirdly, teachers can personally invite parents and use phone conversations and in-person encounters instead of letters or emails, which can be a huge barrier for parents with weak proficiency in the host country's language of instruction. This will help teachers build a cultural knowledge base useful for effective teaching in culturally diverse classrooms.

Conclusion

In conclusion, implementing anti-bias education in the classroom is a critical endeavor that requires a multifaceted approach. By embracing strategies such as creating opportunities for students to express their identities, supporting students in respecting and celebrating differences, teaching empathy, promoting critical thinking, fostering a sense of fairness and justice, facilitating students to respond to injustice issues, and building relationships and partnerships with parents, teachers can create inclusive and empowering learning environments.

By valuing and affirming students' diverse identities, teachers lay the foundation for respectful and inclusive classrooms. Encouraging students to share their experiences and perspectives helps promote understanding and empathy among peers. Through activities that challenge stereotypes and biases, teachers can foster an appreciation for differences and promote a sense of belonging for all students.

Promoting critical thinking enables students to question and challenge societal

inequalities and injustices. By providing accurate information and encouraging students to critically evaluate the world around them, teachers empower students to become active participants in creating a more equitable society. Furthermore, it is crucial for teachers to model anti-bias principles in their own practices and engage in ongoing self-reflection to address their own biases. Building strong relationships with parents and involving them in the educational process enhances collaboration and cultural understanding, ultimately benefiting the students.

Incorporating anti-bias education into the classroom is a continuous and evolving process. It requires teachers to be open-minded, adaptable, and committed to ongoing learning. By embracing these strategies, educators have the power to create inclusive spaces where all students feel valued, respected, and equipped to navigate an increasingly diverse world. Through their efforts, teachers play a vital role in shaping a more equitable and just society for generations to come.

Local contexts

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=388#h5p-25

Closing questions to discuss or tasks

Choose three to four of the following tasks:

- How do you think your own biases could influence your approach to teaching? Can you think of a moment where you might have acted on a bias, even unconsciously? How would you address this in the future?
- What practical steps can you take as a teacher to create an inclusive and equitable classroom environment? How would you ensure that all students feel seen and valued?
- How can empathy be cultivated among students in a way that supports anti-bias education? Share an example of an activity or strategy that might help students develop empathy.
- How can understanding intersectionality help educators address the diverse needs of students in their classrooms? Provide a hypothetical example where an intersectional approach could improve a student's experience.

- How can teachers help students critically evaluate stereotypes and biases they encounter in daily life? Can you think of a classroom activity that would achieve this goal?
- What challenges do you anticipate when implementing anti-bias education in a classroom? How might you address these challenges?
- Considering that anti-bias education is a lifelong process, how can schools create a culture that continuously supports this approach among staff and students?
- How can teachers effectively involve parents from diverse backgrounds in anti-bias education? What strategies might you use to build trust and collaboration with families?
- Discuss the difference between equity and equality in education. Why is equity essential in an anti-bias approach, and how can it be achieved in a classroom setting?
- How can educators empower students to become active participants in challenging injustice within and beyond the school environment?
- What role should teachers play in modeling activism?

Literature

Adebayo, Seun B. "Equity in Education during COVID-19 and the Danger of 'Microwave Equity,'" 2022. https://blog.eera-ecer.de/category/networks/nw-4-inclusive-education/.

———. "Qualified Teachers: Research Evidence on Effective Educational Practices," 2019. https://globaldev.blog/blog/qualified-teachers-research-evidence-effective-educational-practices.

Adebayo, Seun B., and Chiedza A. Chinhanu. "Ubuntu in Education: Towards Equitable Teaching and Learning for All in the Era of SDG 4," 2020. https://www.norrag.org/ubuntu-in-education-towards-equitable-teaching-and-learning-for-all-in-the-era-of-sdg-4-by-chiedza-a-chinhanu-and-seun-b-adebayo/.

Athanases, Steven Z., and Susana L. Sanchez. "'A Caesar for Our Time': Toward Empathy and Perspective-Taking in New Teachers' Drama Practices in Diverse Classrooms." *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance* 25, no. 2 (2020): 236–55.

Crenshaw, Kimberlé. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color." *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1991): 1241–99.

Dash, Trisha, and Laura Peters. "Are We Doing the Right Thing? An Early Childhood Teacher's Reflections on Persona Dolls as a Child-Centered Tool for Anti-Bias Education." *International Critical Childhood Policy Studies Journal* 8, no. 1 (2021): 47–61.

Derman-Sparks, Louise. "Anti-Bias Education for Everyone – Vorurteilsbewusste Bildung

Und Erziehung Für Alle," 2010. https://situationsansatz.de/publikationen/anti-bias-education-for-everyone-vorurteilsbewusste-bildung-und-erziehung-fuer-alle/.

Derman-Sparks, Louise, and Julie Olsen Edwards. *Anti-Bias Education for Young Children and Ourselves*. Washington, DC: NAEYC, 2010.

———. "The Goals of Anti-Bias Education: Clearing Up Some Key Misconceptions." *Exchange*, 2016, 14–18.

———. "Understanding Anti-Bias Education: Bringing the Four Core Goals to Every Facet of Your Curriculum." *Young Children* 74, no. 5 (2019): 6–12.

Derman-Sparks, Louise, Julie Olsen Edwards, and Carol M. Goins. "Teaching About Identity, Racism, and Fairness: Engaging Young Children in Anti-Bias Education." *American Educator* 44, no. 4 (2020): 35–40.

Derman-Sparks, Louise, and The A.B.C. Task Force. *Anti-Bias Curriculum: Tools for Empowering Young Children*. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1989.

Dyson, Anne. *Writing Superheroes: Contemporary Childhood, Popular Culture, and Classroom Literacy*. New York: Teachers College Press, 1997.

Escayg, Kareen A. "'Who's Got the Power?': A Critical Examination of the Anti-Bias Curriculum." *International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy* 13, no. 1 (2019): 1–18.

García, Sarah B., and Adrienne A. Ortiz. "Intersectionality as a Framework for Transformative Research in Special Education." *Multiple Voices for Ethnically Diverse Exceptional Learners* 13, no. 2 (2013): 32–47.

How Microaggressions Are Like Mosquito Bites. Fusion Comedy, 2016. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hDd3bzA7450.

Killoran, Irene, Maria Panaroni, Susan Rivers, Yara Razack, David Vetter, and David Tymon. "Rethink, Revise, React: Using an Anti-Bias Curriculum to Move Beyond the Usual." *Childhood Education* 80, no. 3 (2004): 149–56.

MacNaughton, Glenda. *Respect for Diversity: An International Overview*. Den Haag: Bernhard van Leer Foundation, 2006.

Nganga, Lucy. "Analyzing Children's Literature for Hidden Bias Helps Preservice Teachers Gain Pedagogical Practices in Critical Multicultural Education." *Journal of Research in Childhood Education* 34, no. 1 (2020): 93–107.

Reyes-Quilodran, Claudio A., Carol A. LaBrenz, and Graciela Donoso. "A Path to Peace: A Comparative Study of Practitioners' Views of Juvenile Restorative Justice in Chile, England, Italy, and Sweden." *International Social Work* 62, no. 1 (2019): 255–70.

Sadker, David M., and Ellen S. Silber, eds. *Gender in the Classroom: Foundations, Skills, Methods, and Strategies Across the Curriculum*. Psychology Press, 2007.

Schwartz, Sharlee, and Marjorie Bone. *Retelling, Relating, Reflecting: Beyond the 3 R's*. Toronto, ON: Irwin, 1995.

UNESCO. "Inclusion and Education: All Means All." Global Education Monitoring Report, 2020. https://gem-report-2020.unesco.org/.

———. "Migration, Displacement and Education: Building Bridges, Not Walls." Global Education Monitoring Report, 2019. https://en.unesco.org/gem-report/report/2019/migration.

Vandenbroeck, Michel. "Beyond Anti-Bias Education: Changing Conceptions of Diversity and Equity in European Early Childhood Education." *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal* 15, no. 1 (2007): 21–35.

Wagner, Petra. "Vorurteilsbewusste Bildung Und Erziehung in Kindertageseinrichtungen," 2009. https://www.kindergartenpaedagogik.de/fachartikel/bildungsbereiche-erziehungs-felder/soziale-und-emotionale-erziehung-persoenlichkeitsbildung/1989/.

Yu, Hsiu-Man. "Understanding Race and Racism Among Immigrant Children: Insights into Anti-Bias Education for All Students." *Early Childhood Education Journal* 48, no. 5 (2020): 537–48.

About the authors

Ira Schumann

Ira Schumann works on the topic of inclusive school development at the University of Bremen. She also gives workshops on topics such as inclusion, diversity, racism/critical whiteness and fat acceptance/fat liberation.

Mai Trang Vu

Mai Trang Vu is Associate Professor of TESOL Teacher Education, Department of Language Studies, Umeå University, Sweden. Her teaching and research areas include teacher education, teacher professionalism, teacher knowledge, critical pedagogy, and education policy. She has also conducted research on inclusive education, gender, and internationalisation.

Hazar Chaouni

Hazar Chaouni is a passionate disability rights advocate and a member of Feminists Against Ableism, an intersectional disability justice collective. She actively advises organizations on inclusive policies and accessibility, working to ensure that spaces and practices are inclusive and just for all. Through her essays, workshops, and speeches, Hazar aims to create awareness about disability and ableism, promoting intersectional justice and systemic change. Her advocacy is deeply rooted in her personal and professional experiences, and she emphasizes the importance of the principle "nothing about us without us" in all her work.

Seun Adebayo

Dr Seun Adebayo has over 10 years of experience and a diverse background in global education, equity and quality education, EdTech, research and policy advocacy. His dedication lies in cultivating transformative learning journeys that transcend barriers and amplify possibilities, particularly for learners from marginalized communities. His journey encompasses collaborations with international organizations, steering curriculum improvements, and integrating technology to establish an educational landscape that is both inclusive and poised for the future. His passion revolves around ensuring education's accessibility, equitability, and readiness for all.

PART II
SECTION 2: SUPPORTING INCLUSION IN THE CLASSROOM AND BEYOND

NEUROINCLUSION: A SCHOOL COMMUNITY APPROACH

Alison Stapleton; Deirdre Forde; Nicola Ryan; and Paty Paliokosta

---

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://book.all-means-all.education/ ama-2025-en/?p=657#oembed-1

Example Case

"Imagine a neurodivergent child arriving at school on a Monday morning. For them, the transition to the classroom after a hectic weekend feels difficult. In the chaos of the morning rush, they have forgotten to bring their lunch, and one of their socks is on inside out. On mornings that run more smoothly, this child comes to school well-rested and ready to work. Today, however, they feel tired.

As teacher hands out a worksheet, they describe what they would like the class to do. The child does their best to listen and remember each demand because they want to do well in school even when they are tired. Teacher explains that they want to see each child holding their pencil correctly, not talking to the person seated beside them, and sitting quietly in their chair. The neurodivergent child begins to worry; holding the pencil "correctly" means that their hand gets tired very quickly, and sometimes they find it easier to read when they whisper to themselves. In addition, the neurodivergent child is seated in a squeaky chair, which means they cannot tap their foot and sit quietly at the same time. On top of this, the neurodivergent child notices that teacher's handout has crowded text, which is more difficult for them to read. As their sense of worry grows, the neurodivergent child becomes increasingly aware of the other people around them. They do not want to seem "weird", so they try to calm down and focus. Teacher then says, "Okay, class. Let's begin with a simple task. Correct the misspelled words on the handout".

One way to understand this child's experience is by using the metaphor of a capacity jug. This morning, the child had a smaller capacity jug than they normally would, meaning that their capacity jug became full quite quickly. And, with all of the demands, the teacher's "simple" task could not fit neatly in their capacity jug; the "simple" task causes it to overflow. Yet, the child's day does not end there. We can imagine how the rest of their day might go as they struggle to tolerate keeping their collared shirt buttoned up, as their friend chats with them about their favourite TV show, as the various school bells sound for lunch times, as they go to the sweet shop on their walk home from school. We can imagine their capacity jug growing and shrinking, becoming more or less full depending on the situation and task at hand. We might also notice times when a task did not need to entail so many demands and could have filled the capacity jug less.

There are many variants of this metaphor, however, this version is adapted from Holly Sutherland (2023). The point is that each of us has a capacity jug, with different demands filling our jugs in different ways. This chapter focuses on neuroinclusion and how communities might create a neurodivergent-friendly ecosystem that helps us all to gently expand our capacity jugs, to notice what fills them, and to notice times when demands can be reduced to prevent our capacity jugs from overflowing.

Figure 1 Title: An overflowing capacity jug does not have space for a supposed "simple" task.

Correct misspelled words

"Don't be weird"

Crowded text

Squeaky chair

No talking

Pencil grip

Adapted from Holly Sutherland by Alison Stapleton.

Initial questions

In this chapter you will find the answers to the following questions:

1. What is neurodiversity?
2. Why are neurodiversity movements necessary for neuroinclusion?
3. How might we create a neurodivergent-friendly ecosystem?

Introduction to Topic

The diversity within neurodiversity: A preface

Building on Steven Kapp's (2020) discussion of the diversity within neurodiversity, we would like to acknowledge that there are many ways to approach the concepts covered in this chapter. We would also like to acknowledge that because many people care deeply about this topic, and because this topic can require using new terminology, it can feel risky to engage. Importantly, the meaning of many concepts outlined in this chapter is evolving (Patrick Dwyer, 2022). In addition, conceptualisation and language preferences differ across contexts, as do individual preferences. Therefore, we would like to emphasise that we are not saying ours is the "correct" way to approach this topic. Rather, aligning with Robert Chapman (2020, p.219), the present approach is one we have found to be "epistemically useful" and invaluable in our practices. We are sharing our views at this point in time in the hopes that they help to resource and nurture neuroinclusive communities.

What is neurodiversity?

Collectively developed through the 1990s and 2000s (Monique Botha et al., 2024), in a descriptive sense, "neurodiversity" refers to the fact that all human nervous systems work differently (Steven Kapp, 2020). This means that each of us experiences the world in different ways, and thus we act in different ways. From this perspective, neurodiversity is a subset of biodiversity and a biological fact (Steven Kapp, 2020). The existence of terms like autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), dyslexia, and more may be attributed to this fact. If each of our nervous systems worked in the exact same way, then we would not have terms to describe differences from supposed norms (neurodivergences); these terms are a consequence of the fact of neurodiversity. As a concept, neurodiversity includes all types of nervous systems (neurotypes).

Being neurodivergent means having a nervous system that works differently from what is considered "normal". Importantly, there is no consensus on who is considered neurodivergent (Steven Kapp, 2020). For example, sometimes the term "neurodivergent" is used to exclusively refer to people with neurodevelopmental differences (e.g., autism) and not people who have an acquired brain injury or trauma. This chapter does not impose limits on the meaning of "neurodivergent" and instead, aligning with Steven Kapp (2020), invites readers to identify and organise within neurodiversity movements at their own discretion.

If you are not neurodivergent, then you are neurotypical (i.e., neurotypical people have nervous systems that work in "normal" ways). The only way to identify someone as neurotypical is by ruling out all forms of neurodivergence. Therefore, it is best practice to not assume that someone is neurotypical. Some scholars and advocates suggest that neuronormalised may be a more appropriate term than neurotypical and that neurominoritised may be a more appropriate term than neurodivergent. Amandine Catala

(2023) argues that these alternative terms decenter socially accepted (neuronormative) points of reference and serve to highlight the social positions created by the associated power relations. In simpler terms, although neurodiversity is naturally occurring, the way we "judge" neurotypes is not. Instead, what we consider "normal" depends on our context (i.e., which neurotype has more power). So, from this perspective, being "neurodivergent" means having less power in that context. Approaching these concepts in this way can be pragmatically useful because it allows us to distinguish between people who are likely harmed by existing systems versus not. However, given the risk of conflating "being neurodivergent" with "experiencing disability", and given that the terms "neurodivergent" and "neurotypical" are more commonly used, neurodivergent and neurotypical are used throughout this chapter.

What is a neurodiversity paradigm?

A neurodiversity paradigm is an application of neurodiversity at a conceptual level. Nick Walker's (2021) neurodiversity paradigm contains three fundamental principles:

1. Neurodiversity is a naturally occurring, valuable form of human diversity. This means that (i) neurodiversity is not something we create artificially, and (ii) strength is a collective property of diversity; the fact that we are all different is a strength.
2. "Normality" is a social construct. Just as there is no "correct" ethnicity or gender, there is no universally "correct" nervous system. No one "way of being" (neurotype) is inherently better than any other.
3. Neurodiversity operates like other dimensions of equality and diversity, such as ethnicity or gender. This means that neurodiversity is subject to the same types of social dynamics (e.g., privilege and oppression). For this reason, it can be helpful to approach and affirm neurodiversity similarly to the ways we approach other dimensions of human diversity.

To illustrate the principles of Nick Walker's (2021) neurodiversity paradigm, consider the following metaphor (adapted by Alison Stapleton from Alyssa Alcorn et al.'s (2022) woodland metaphor):

Imagine a rainy garden that has lots of plants, specifically one lantern plant, two rose bushes, three viola tricolors, and lots of iris plants. Too many iris plants to count! In fact, most of the plants in this garden are iris plants. In this garden, we can see all three tenets of Nick Walker's (2021) neurodiversity paradigm operating.

First, the variation between plants is an inherent property of the biodiversity in the garden; by nature, each plant is unique. For example, no two iris plants lean in exactly the same way or have the exact same patterns on their leaves. And yet, even though all plants differ, it is

helpful to use the term "iris" to refer to the class of iris plants. We can also see the strength that comes from diversity; the garden is a rich and varied oasis rather than being home to just one type of plant.

Second, all plants in this garden have equal value. We would not say that the lantern plant is inferior to the iris plant, nor would we berate the lantern plant because it did not grow long green leaves like an iris plant. The lantern plant has equal value as a plant. Whether a plant is thriving depends on its environment. For example, lantern plants are prone to root rot if overwatered. This means that it is difficult for the lantern plant to thrive in the rainy garden. Similarly, the garden has snails that eat rose bush leaves, so the roses cannot thrive. This particular garden is also home to a dog that enjoys eating viola tricolors, so those plants cannot thrive.

Finally, we can see that iris plants are in the majority. By default, environments tend not to serve minority groups. Unlike the minority plants, iris plants thrive with lots of rain and are rarely targeted by snails or the dog. Hence, iris plants thrive in the garden because they do not experience the same stressors as the minority plants; the same garden environment is experienced in different ways. So, rather than blaming a plant for not thriving, we can instead shift our focus to plant-environment fit. How can we change our garden so that all plants have maximum opportunities to thrive?

In the same way that each plant is unique in the garden metaphor, each person is unique; even people who share the same neurotype are not the exact same. Yet, it can be helpful to provide people with labels to describe shared ways of experiencing the world (Juwayriyah Nayyar et al., 2024); terms for describing neurotypes can be useful. Similarly, just as the minority plants experienced stressors, neurominorities experience minority stressors such as everyday discrimination and internalised ableism (Monique Botha & David Frost, 2018). In line with minority stress theory, these stressors, including the demands of neuronormative standards (e.g., "you must make eye contact when listening to me"), increase neurominorities' risk of poorer health outcomes (Monique Botha & David Frost, 2018). Importantly, in this context, "minority" and "majority" do not merely reflect differences in numeric quantity. Instead, these terms are intended to highlight differences in power.

In terms of applications, rather than blaming a neurodivergent child for struggling/not thriving, the outlined neurodiversity paradigm allows us to add the environment to our analysis. Attending to person-environment fit offers teachers alternative pathways for supporting neurodivergent children; what can we change in our classrooms so that all children have maximum opportunities to thrive? In this way, teachers can embrace neurodiversity paradigms (be neurodiversity-affirming) and advance neurodiversity movements (be neuroinclusive).

What are some myths and misconceptions about neurodiversity?

If we adopt neurodiversity rhetoric without an understanding of the associated movements and paradigms, then we risk failing to achieve its transformative potential, impeding meaningful change, and/or causing active harm (Dinah Aitken & Sue Fletcher-Watson, 2022). Common myths and misconceptions about neurodiversity and its associated paradigms include:

Myth 1: "When we talk about neurodiversity, we are not talking about the entire human population, rather we are talking about a subset of neurodivergent people".

This is a myth because neurodiversity includes everyone, and, as outlined, neurodiversity is not a synonym for "being neurodivergent". If we apply neurodiversity to just a subset of the human population, then we risk merely replacing dominant terms with neurodiversity rhetoric rather than enacting meaningful system-level change. We also risk reinforcing stigma, further ossifying "us-them" (neurotypical-neurodivergent) categories, and centering neurotypical experiences. In order to push back against stigma, we need a language that includes everyone; neurotypical people are not outside of neurodiversity.

Myth 2: "Neurodiversity is only about celebrating neurodivergent talent".

Although it is important to identify, celebrate, and nurture an individual person's strengths, focusing on individual talents alone does not fully realise the potential of neurodiversity. Relatedly, "superpower" narratives that stereotype neurodivergent people as having special talents may also result in exploitation and reflect performative activism (Patrick Dwyer et al., 2024).

Rather than just centering neurodivergent talent, neurodiversity paradigms can allow us to understand the differences between people as a source of strength. For example, Harriet Axbey et al. (2023) found that, in comparison to neurotype-matching pairs, neurotype-mismatching pairs (e.g., one autistic person and one non-autistic person) worked more creatively when completing a task together.

Relatedly, if we are truly valuing people equally, whether they have a talent is irrelevant; we all have equal value regardless of our strengths and support needs. A failure to frame strength as a collective property risks pressuring neurodivergent people to outperform their peers or somehow compensate for being neurodivergent. It also risks reinforcing systems that value people only by their grades or productivity (Dinah Aitken & Sue Fletcher-Watson, 2022). Critically, who decides what "talents" are? What happens to children who believe that they do not have any talents? How different might our communities be if everyone believed that they had value simply because they were a member of the community?

Myth 3: "Neurodiversity erases the struggles of neurodivergent people".

When we argue that a neurotype is not solely characterised by deficits, that does not mean that we ignore experiences of disability. Embracing neurodiversity movements can involve identifying ways to improve person-environment fit rather than solely framing problems as being located within individual people. In this way, it is possible to reject deficit-focused labels while also attending to experiences of disability. As a movement, neurodiversity can be both needs-affirming and rights-respecting. As Dinah Aitken and Sue Fletcher-Watson (2022) note, "the word difference should point us to acceptance of needs without judgement, rather than denial of needs without support".

Importantly, there are debates about the extent to which neurodiversity movements represent the needs and interests of neurodivergent people who have relatively higher support needs (Jonathan Green, 2023). However, the movement is intended to include everyone; it is important to continually decenter dominant perspectives and ensure all neurotypes are represented.

Related to assertions that embracing neurodiversity erases struggle, sometimes neurodiversity-affirming practice is framed as necessitating a total rejection of conceptualisations of neurodivergences as "disorders" and "deficits" rooted in biology (medical models of disability). Aligning with this, Patrick Dwyer et al. (2024) found that, in a sample of 504 adults with a connection to autism (278 autistic, 226 non-autistic), neurodiversity movement support/identification predicted lesser endorsement of medical models. Yet, Julia Knopes (2024) reported that neurodivergent people's understanding of their lived experience indicated ambivalence towards medical and neurodiversity models, concluding that "rather than imposing one model of disability over another, we might instead pause to consider how people apply different models to appreciate different aspects of their day-to-day lives" (p.27). For teachers, this might mean respecting an individual child's way of understanding themselves and not limiting the child's narrative to one of strength and difference.

At times, depending on the jurisdiction, teachers may be asked to contribute to identification processes for neurodivergent children. In contexts where neurodivergent children are identified solely per pathologizing models and where formal identification is required for access to accommodations and support, it is particularly important for teachers to name children's struggles. By reporting on struggles honestly and gently, with respect and compassion, teachers can help neurodivergent children and their families to access effective support as needed and wanted.

Myth 4: "Being neurodiversity-affirming means anything goes."

In the context of rights-respecting movements, neurodiversity does not mean that "anything goes" (i.e., that there are no boundaries or rules). Being neuroinclusive means facilitating the cohabitation of all neurotypes, not prioritising one form of needs/preferences over

others. Everyone must be aware of the multiple intersections that they occupy and reflect on whether they are using their power in ways that harm others who have less power. Being neuroinclusive means asking questions like, what can I change in this environment to make it safer and more comfortable for everyone?

3.5 The present chapter

This chapter employs a participatory approach and reflects a collaboration between neurodivergent and neurotypical professionals and advocates. In this chapter, we explore why neurodiversity movements are necessary for neuroinclusion and how communities might create a neurodivergent-friendly ecosystem. We adopt a needs-affirming, rights-respecting approach and aim to cultivate neuroinclusive communities that affirm and accommodate all neurotypes.

4. Using Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory to Conceptualise the Community

Urie Bronfenbrenner's (1979; 1986) ecological systems theory (EST; later termed the "bioecological model") suggests that children's growth and development are influenced by a set of interconnected environmental systems, namely the microsystem (e.g., teacher-child interactions), mesosystem (e.g., teacher-parent interactions), exosystem (e.g., disability organisations), macrosystem (e.g., neuronormativity), and chronosystem (e.g., neurodiversity movements). Bronfenbrenner depicted these systems as concentric circles, with each system arising from "a place where people can readily engage in face-to-face interaction" (Urie Bronfenbrenner 1979, p.22). EST emphasises the importance of studying a child in the context of multiple ecological systems in order to fully understand their development. As such, the EST framework presents the child at the centre surrounded by influencing subsystems of the environment, the most influential and intimate of which is closest to the child. EST helps us to understand that children and their families do not exist in isolation but rather are embedded into a larger social structure interconnected with other institutions and domains which can indirectly impact the immediate environment of the child. And, from this perspective, development arises as a result of reciprocal processes between a developing child and their systems. For this reason, we argue that a neurodiversity-affirming systems approach is necessary to cultivate neuroinclusion.

Why are Neurodiversity Movements Necessary for Neuroinclusion?

Neurodiversity movements can help us to decenter medical models of disability.

We can reframe supposed "deficits" as differences or strengths.

Historically, medical models of disability have been viewed as oppressive (Andrew Hogan, 2019). At an ideological level, medical models have been described as "personal tragedy models" because they tend to frame disability as "something to be pitied, a personal tragedy

for both the individual and [their] family" (Licia Carlson, 2010, p.5). As conceptualisation frameworks, medical models approach forms of neurodivergence as "disorders" and "deficits" rooted in biology that should be cured, prevented, or suppressed. From this perspective, forms of neurodivergence are viewed as "pathological" deviations from "normal" human species functioning that directly lead to the experience of disability. Hence, medical models can be understood as placing the "problem" solely within neurodivergent people.

Many people believe that the goals and attitudes of neurodiversity movements and medical models are dissimilar (Patrick Dwyer et al., 2024). And, depending on how one defines "neurodiversity", this may be true (Ari Ne'eman and Elizabeth Pellicano, 2022). Yet, mandating a total rejection of medical models may reflect an epistemic injustice (Julia Knopes, 2024), and some neurodiversity approaches aimed to offer a middle ground between medical and other models of disability (Patrick Dwyer, 2022). Hence, rather than imposing a singular model of disability through which neurodivergent people must understand their own experiences, being neurodiversity-affirming may require creating space for multiple types of stories, including those stemming from medical models (Robert Chapman, 2021).

Across contexts, many professionals rely on medical models of disability. For example, many neurodivergent people are identified per the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders – 5th Edition (DSM-V; American Psychiatric Association, 2013) and the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11; World Health Organization, 2022). Neurodiversity movements provide an opportunity to decenter dominant approaches to neurodivergence, including those grounded in medical models. Extending beyond traditional medical models, adopting a neurodiversity-affirming stance allows us to attend to person-environment fit. Rather than asserting that a neurodivergent person just needs to be "fixed", we can expand our lens to include the environment, since the "problem" may be that it is unaccommodating and unaccepting. In addition, rather than pathologising all differences, we can broaden our awareness of the contexts that transform differences into disabilities, and indeed the contexts that support differences serving as strengths.

We can cultivate neurodivergent identities.

Strong medical models tend to only use language that perpetuates stigma, upholds neuronormative standards, and reinforces unfavourable evaluations of neurodivergent people, contributing to ongoing discrimination and marginalisation (Patrick Dwyer, 2022). In contrast, neurodiversity theorist Robert Chapman (2021) calls for a "rejection of default pathologisation of neurodivergence, not of neurodivergent pathologisation as such". In line with this, neurodiversity movements tend to use language that affirms neurodiversity, facilitates greater acceptance of neurodivergent people, and validates neurodivergent identities. By using language that highlights how every human nervous system is unique,

neurodiversity movements center collective strength, thus creating opportunities for all members of the community to maintain a sense of belonging and value. This shift in terminology and understanding is crucial to dismantle neuronormative systems, redress harm caused, and nurture neuroinclusive communities where neurodivergent people are valued and understood.

In addition, some neurodivergent people describe forging their neurodivergent identity as crucial to self-understanding, with neurotype serving as a useful framework for working with their nervous system (Juwayriyah Nayyar et al., 2024). Hence, rather than only using deficit approaches (replacing neurodivergent culture with neuronormalised practices) or difference approaches (teaching neuronormalised practices without regard for neurodivergent culture), true neuroinclusion necessitates an asset-based approach. In this context, an asset-based approach might look like explaining neuronormative standards while actively sustaining neurodivergent culture; inviting all community members to notice their differences, how no one way of being is superior, and how it is not enough to merely respect neurodivergent culture – we must also extend it. See Django Paris (2012) for a discussion of this type of culturally sustaining pedagogy; remember neurodiversity is understood as operating like other dimensions of equality and diversity.

We can empower neurominorities and protect neurominorities' autonomy.

By framing scientists and doctors as cognitive authorities, medical models tend to perpetuate power imbalances and a sense of "us-them", furthering the divide between neuromajorities and neurominorities. This differential treatment can mean that neurodivergent people are viewed as incapable of autonomy, which can lead to a loss of agency and the ability to make decisions about their own lives. This can exacerbate societal exclusion and subjugation.

In contrast, neurodiversity-affirming approaches aim to empower neurominorities and return power to neurodivergent people, protecting their autonomy and agency. This approach is not only more inclusive and supportive but also upholds the rights-based perspective of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006).

Neurodiversity movements can help us to improve our understanding of neurodivergent people's experiences.

Neurodivergent people tend to be misunderstood, in part due to neuronormativity. For example, the way a neurodivergent person expresses their emotions may radically differ from the way a neurotypical person expresses their emotions. In line with Nick Walker's (2021) neurodiversity paradigm, no one way of expressing yourself is "correct", and thus both "ways of being" are of equal value. However, neuronormativity devalues authentic neurodivergent expression in favour of neurotypicality. This means that neurodivergent

people can be judged in less favourable ways than their neurotypical peers, with Noah Sasson and colleagues (2017) reporting that lesser favourable judgements of neurodivergent people were associated with lesser willingness to interact.

One conceptualisation of misunderstandings of neurominorities that is consistent with Nick Walker's (2021) neurodiversity paradigm comes from Damien Milton's (2012) theory of the double empathy problem. According to this theory, members of different social groups have different experiences and viewpoints on the world (i.e., have an empathy gap). For this reason, miscommunications are likely to occur when members of different groups interact. From this perspective, the "problem" with communication is experienced by both group members (i.e., it is a double problem). And yet, there is inequality to its impact. Power dynamics mean that minority group members are often expected to fully and completely cross the empathy gap (i.e., adjust their responding to better meet the needs and preferences of majority group members). In addition, because majority group members tend not to experience miscommunications, they experience the resulting sense of disconnection as more intense, while miscommunications are understood to be a common experience for minority group members.

To illustrate the double empathy problem, consider the following example. While interacting with a non-autistic person, an autistic person does not make eye contact. From the perspective of the autistic person, they are not making eye contact because it feels overwhelming and makes it more difficult for them to fully attend to what their conversational partner is saying. And yet, the non-autistic person interprets this action as meaning that the autistic person is not paying attention and has an ulterior motive.

In this example, we have two members of two different groups, and thus, we have an empathy gap. A neuronormative way to resolve this empathy gap might involve mandating that the autistic person make eye contact, regardless of how it impacts their ability to engage with their conversational partner. Alternatively, a more neurodiversity-affirming way to approach the empathy gap might involve acknowledging that both the autistic and non-autistic experiences are valid and valuable. Therefore, it is possible for both the autistic and the non-autistic person to adjust their responding. In fact, research has shown that autistic-to-autistic communication is just as effective as non-autistic-to-non-autistic communication (Catherine Crompton et al., 2020). So, it is not valid to assert that a neuronormalised approach to communication is "better". Importantly, neurodiversity paradigms do not dictate how we should approach the empathy gap. Instead, neurodiversity movements invite us to affirm both "ways of being" and think critically about who is crossing the empathy gap and why.

Figure 2 Title: Visual representation of an empathy gap between an autistic person and a non-autistic person by Alison Stapleton.

by Alison
Stapleton

Group	Experience	Action	Experience	Group
		Empathy Gap		
Autistic person	"Eye contact feels over-whelming and makes it difficult for me to focus."	Not making eye contact	"They are not paying attention to me. They have an ulterior motive."	Non-Autistic Person
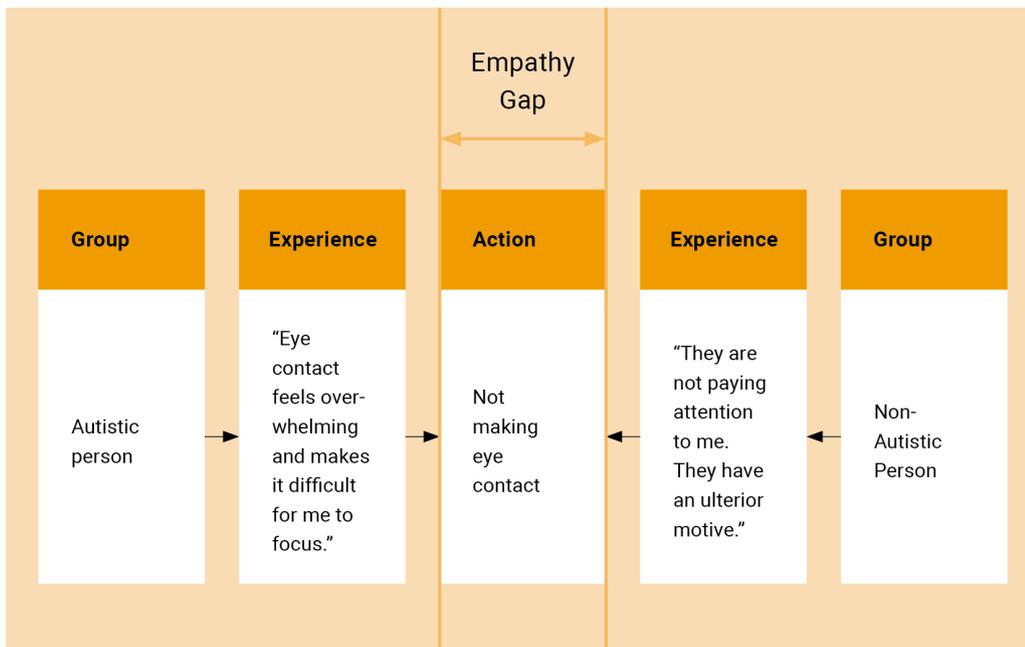
Although the double empathy problem was first presented in the context of autism, it can be applied to other forms of neurodivergence, and indeed other social groupings. For example, a person with ADHD might interrupt their non-ADHD conversational partner because they are excited, and yet their non-ADHD conversational partner might interpret that action as impatience. Even if you are not neurodivergent, you can likely recall a time you felt misunderstood by someone who had experiences and viewpoints that differed from your own.

Recently, Sebastian Shaw et al. (2023) proposed a triple empathy problem. Applied to education, the triple empathy problem arises when there is both a neurotype mismatch (e.g., autistic versus non-autistic) and a role mismatch (e.g., teacher versus student). Communities should strive to identify empathy gaps as they arise and reduce any inequalities in their impact. This might begin by asking questions like, how can I cultivate safety, comfort, and authenticity in my interactions with people who are members of different groups than me?

Neurodiversity movements can help us to dispel neuromyths.

Educational neuromyths are misconceptions about how the brain works and how this affects learning (Marta Torrijos-Muelas et al., 2021). Neuromyths have been observed in educators, healthcare professionals, parents of neurodivergent children, children, and the wider community (Silvia Gini et al., 2021). Neuromyths are harmful because they can reinforce stereotypes and associated stigma, and can result in misidentification or a complete failure to identify neurodivergence (Patrick Corrigan & Amy Watson, 2002).

There are many neuromyths about forms of neurodivergence; some examples include "autism is a learning disability", "all autistic people have special abilities", that ADHD can be cured by supplementing the diet with vitamins, that ADHD means the brain is over-

aroused, or that mental capacity is hereditary and cannot be changed by the environment or experience (Marta Torrijos-Muelas et al. 2021).

Although the impact of neuromyths on teaching practice is unclear (Brenda Hughes et al., 2022), some research has examined the extent to which educational professionals endorse neuromyths. In their study of general population members and people working in education from preschool to higher education (including administration staff, inclusion managers, and mainstream teaching staff), Silvia Gini et al. (2021) found no difference in neuromyth endorsement between the general population and educational professionals. And, reported familiarity with neurodivergence was not associated with greater knowledge. Neuromyths related to autism were recognised more by teachers rather than neuromyths about ADHD, Downs Syndrome, and Dyslexia. Silvia Gini et al. (2021) suggest that this may be linked to campaigns and government initiatives for raising awareness of autism which suggests more work needs to be done with raising awareness and increasing knowledge of other forms of neurodivergence.

Given that neurodiversity paradigms can decenter dominant approaches to forms of neurodivergence, neurodiversity movements can create novel avenues for research, ultimately helping us to dispel neuromyths and cultivate epistemic justice.

How Might We Create a Neurodivergent-Friendly Ecosystem?

Before describing ways we might move closer toward a neurodivergent-friendly ecosystem, it is important to acknowledge that achieving complete neuroinclusion is not easy. Individual teachers (and indeed their schools) are inherently subject to multiple competing contingencies, i.e., they are embedded in a larger social structure and interconnected with other domains that indirectly impact them.

In examining teachers' views of systemic support within their schools, Stuart Woodcock and Lisa Marks Woolfson (2019) reported that leadership support, professional development opportunities, and adequate funding were deemed vital to support inclusion. Stuart Woodcock and Lisa Marks Woolfson (2019) also noted that participants felt that other teachers' rigidity and unwillingness could undermine inclusion efforts, with some teachers reportedly framing inclusivity as a mere increase in workload for them.

Yet, importantly, we do not know what a true neuroinclusive classroom looks like. As Dinah Aitken and Sue Fletcher-Watson (2022) ask, "How much of the difficult behaviour teachers struggle with in class right now is motivated by children trying to hide their difficulties, or push adults away because they don't feel they can be trusted?". What if true neuroinclusion meant a reduction in overall workload? And, even if it does not, how can we create environments that support systems being inclusive anyway? Neuroinclusion requires systemic change. We cannot mandate that neurodivergent people conform to a neuromajority. Rather than always asking neurodivergent people to change to accommodate their environments, we should explore ways to change environments to

better accommodate and support neurodivergent people. And, we cannot leave individual teachers to do this work without adequate compensation, resources, training, and support from the broader ecosystem. We need a neurodiversity-affirming systems approach.

Given the scope of this chapter, it is neither possible nor appropriate to give specific recommendations for accommodating and supporting particular neurotypes. Instead, we present strategies for becoming more neurodiversity-affirming in general.

Creating a Neurodivergent-Friendly Ecosystem: The Classroom

As part of the microsystem, a child's classroom has one of the most direct, immediate impacts on their development. As best they can, teachers should familiarise themselves with neurodiversity and its associated paradigms and movements, ultimately striving to be neurodiversity-affirming. Additionally, because lack of understanding and stigma are key contributors to inequality, teachers could introduce all students to the concepts of neurodiversity and double empathy (Alyssa Alcorn et al., 2024).

The LEANS (Learning About Neurodiversity at School) programme is one freely available whole-classroom resource that may be used to teach children aged 8 to 11 years old about neurodiversity (Alyssa Alcorn et al., 2022). Through videos and teacher-delivered activities, LEANS aims to inform staff and children about neurodiversity, increase positive attitudes towards neurodivergent people, and increase inclusive actions within the school community (Alyssa Alcorn et al., 2022). Reesha Zahir et al. (2024) reported that LEANS received a high level of support for its usability, acceptability, and usefulness from survey respondents, 50% of whom reported experience working in education. Alyssa Alcorn et al. (2024) found that children who participated in LEANS scored significantly above chance in the Neurodiversity Knowledge Quiz and reported significant increases in the likelihood of behaving in inclusive ways.

Alyssa Alcorn et al. (2024) also found that LEANS participants reported significantly lower agreement with LEANS-aligned beliefs (e.g., "In my class, most people are kind and friendly to people who are different than they are"). However, this unexpected finding was interpreted by Alyssa Alcorn et al. (2024) as suggesting that LEANS led children to think more deeply about their views of the classroom. Notably, one adverse event was reported during Alyssa Alcorn et al.'s (2024) study. This led the LEANS team to add further guidance for teachers about staff-student and staff-family conversations on neurodiversity. The team further emphasise the need for all classroom staff to be involved in safety planning and the need for agreed procedures for handling sensitive conversations. LEANS can be accessed at https://salvesen-research.ed.ac.uk/leans

Another freely available resource that teachers may use to inform their neuroinclusive practices is Catherine Crompton et al.'s (2024b) NEurodivergent peer Support Toolkit (NEST). Codesigned by seven neurodivergent young people (aged 13 to 15 years old) and nine adults who reported experience working with neurodivergent young people (Francesca

Fotheringham et al., 2023), NEST aims to facilitate student-led peer support for neurodivergent children in mainstream schools. Preliminary evidence supports the feasibility and acceptability of NEST, with students reporting that peer groups facilitated friendships, fulfilment, and a sense of community (Catherine Crompton et al., 2024a). Although designed for older children, professionals working with younger cohorts of children may draw on NEST to generate ideas for activities that can be used in their settings. NEST can be accessed at https://salvesen-research.ed.ac.uk/our-projects/nest-neurodivergent-peer-support-toolkit

Beyond extant programmes, less structured approaches to neuroinclusion at a microsystem level might involve responding to children in ways that help them to develop a healthy sense of self. For example, being attentive and responsive when a child identifies how they think or feel, or understanding that a child is the expert of their own experience (Alison Stapleton and Louise McHugh, 2021). As discussed above, each of our nervous systems works differently. This means that we can experience the same sensory input in different ways. Professionals working with neurodivergent children must be mindful of the potential for distortion of neurodivergent people's experiences. For example, a child who identifies a room as being too bright for them might be responded to with assertions that the lighting is fine. From this, the child may derive that they are too sensitive or that their experience can be disregarded so long as the environment is fine for others. This distortion of the child's experience hinders self-advocacy and could be understood as a form of sensory gaslighting that promotes masking (suppression of authentic responses in favor of alternatives). Professionals need to understand that nervous systems work differently and avoid mandating neuroconformity. Being neurodiversity-affirming is about ensuring each child has a comfortable journey and reaches their destination safely; it is not about cramming children into a non-stop shuttle bus headed for society's destination of choice. Other frameworks, such as Mary Doherty et al.'s (2023) Autistic SPACE or Universal Design for Learning (CAST, 2024), may also be useful for professionals seeking less structured approaches to neuroinclusion at the classroom level.

Creating a Neurodivergent-Friendly Ecosystem: The School

At school-level, recommendations from Marion Rutherford and Lorna Johnston (2019) that were highlighted by Dinah Aitken and Sue Fletcher-Watson (2022) include (i) reducing or eliminating the burden of school uniform policies and (ii) not ringing a school bell between classes. Schools may also create sensory-friendly spaces and flexible classroom setups. Given their "whole school" approach, each of these actions may benefit neurodivergent students who have sensory processing differences, including those who have not been formally identified as neurodivergent.

As part of the mesosystem, schools house myriad relationships and interactions between microsystems, such as teacher-parent interactions, teacher-teacher interactions, teacher-

psychologist interactions, and many more. To help create a neurodivergent-friendly ecosystem, teachers could avoid ableist language and challenge neuronormativity within these interactions.

For example, if contributing to a School Support Plan or Individualised Education Program, regardless of whether the child has been formally identified as neurodivergent, teachers could ensure stated goals do not reflect a normalising agenda that prioritises the comfort of the neuromajority at the expense of others (Kristen Bottema-Beutel et al., 2024). Teachers could also critically evaluate whether stated goals are truly measurable, unpacking any in-built neuronormative assumptions (Kristen Bottema-Beutel et al., 2024). In general, it can be helpful for teachers to reflect on apparent priorities; why is this goal being set? Who does this goal serve? What are the implications of this goal for the child? What alternatives are available? It can also be helpful to reflect on which knowledge bases inform our viewpoints (i.e., the child's input, other teachers' input, etc.).

As another example, if participating in identification processes for a neurodivergent child, teachers could report on the child's struggles honestly and gently, with respect and compassion. This is particularly important when children are identified solely per pathologizing models and when formal identification is the only pathway to accommodations and support. In this way, neurodivergent struggles are not erased and dignity is respected, reflecting a needs-affirming, rights-respecting approach.

Creating a Neurodivergent-Friendly Ecosystem: Beyond the Classroom and School

Expanding our focus to exosystem elements, many professionals use the DSM-V and ICD-11 to identify neurodivergent people. As such, these classification systems are often included in curricula for trainee teachers in higher education. If other approaches are not included, then trainee teachers' understanding of neurodivergent people may lack important nuance. For example, they may adopt medical model ideology (e.g., that a neurodivergent person just needs to be "fixed") and neglect alternative viewpoints (e.g., that unaccommodating and unaccepting environments need to be fixed).

Adopting a participatory approach to the co-design of neurodiversity-affirming modules in initial teacher education can help to ensure that curriculum content reflects multiple viewpoints and challenges neuronormative standards, stigma, and discrimination. Per EST, neurodiversity-affirming training in initial teacher education may mobilise neurodiversity narratives in our educational environments and communities, thus contributing to social change. For example, training educators to recognise, support, and actively sustain neurodivergent "ways of being" can lead to more effective teaching strategies and promote acceptance.

Across disciplines (e.g., teaching, nursing, psychology, etc.), one area of development seems to be ensuring that training curricula include examples of neurodivergent people's

lived experiences in different topic areas with educational opportunities including case studies and live simulations (where actors would role-play with students to support their learning). One example of how this could be done is Margaret Quinn and Sallie Anne Porter's (2023) curriculum immersion for pediatric nurse practitioners where content about autism was embedded into existing topics to increase the knowledge and skills of nurses working with autistic people. Curriculum immersion offers a good opportunity to think about how we understand neurodivergence and the language used when sharing information about neurodivergent people regarding assessment and support. Below are extracts of assessment diagnostic formulations describing one form of neurodivergence (autism). Two versions are presented, one more pathologizing than the other. When looking at the extracts, reflect on the language used.

- How might each formulation inform your understanding of the child's strengths and support needs?
- How might each formulation translate to the classroom? What resources may be needed?
- How might you have a conversation with the child and/or their family based on the information shared? Does the type of language used make it easier or more difficult for you to have those conversations?

Sample extracts of assessment diagnostic formulations. Adapted by Nicola Ryan from an example used in assessment by the National Autistic Society UK.	
More pathologizing description	Less pathologizing description
Different, perceived as odd or a loner.	Bob reports feeling different from his peers in many ways. He does not enjoy school and notes finding many aspects confusing, especially navigating social relationships. Bob believes that his peers misunderstand him and feels as though he needs to pretend to be someone else in order to fit in. Bob likes spending time with people, particularly in a one-to-one setting and has enjoyed spending time in group settings when he could rest and recover afterward.
Social communication difficulties, pedantic, inflexible	Bob presents as a precise communicator. He enjoys language and particularly likes to focus on accurate detail. Bob speaks passionately about things he is interested in and reports struggling to focus and maintain interest when other conversation topics arise. Bob is most comfortable with unambiguous, straightforward communication styles.
Obsessive, restricted, and repetitive interests and behaviours. Hypo/ Hypersensitive to his environment.	Bob is a naturally monotropic thinker and is at his best when he can focus on a topic in-depth, particularly without interference. Bob demonstrates good attention to visual detail and touch that allows him to enjoy painting and other arts subjects. Background noise or noises that he cannot explain can be distracting or even distressing for Bob, and Bob notes that his peers may not understand his experience.

Our conceptualisations and the language we use to describe neurodivergent people matters because they can have a cascading effect across subsystems. Consider the potential implications of a neurodiversity-affirming healthcare professional preparing a report on a neurodivergent child's support needs that will be shared with a neurodiversity-affirming teacher. How might outcomes for this child differ from those of a child who has a pathologizing report shared with a teacher who has only learned about medical models approaches to neurodivergence?

Beyond improving curricula, other ways to create a neurodivergent-friendly ecosystem include conducting and addressing sensory audits of built and digital environments. For example, in Ireland, as part of the "Making UCD a Neurodiversity Friendly Campus" project, the University College Dublin Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Neurodiversity Working Group (2024) developed a sensory audit tool using data from their scoping review, gap analysis, survey, and qualitative interviews. The sensory audit included items assessing layout, signage, décor, lighting, temperature, and auditory, tactile, and olfactory experience. Across the audited areas, concerns included open-plan working environments, a lack of designated sensory spaces, and inconsistency in the use of accessibility features within the virtual learning environment. For another sample audit, see Paty Paliokosta et al. (2024).

Such audits can address all EST subsystems. Specifically, we can focus on the microsystem by improving the physical, emotional, and digital environments where students interact daily. Involving students in the audit's creation strengthens the mesosystem, enhancing connections between different microsystems like students and administration. The audit also impacts the exosystem by influencing policies and practices, creating a more inclusive environment. It reflects societal values in the macrosystem by promoting neuroinclusion. And, finally, the audit's iterative nature aligns with the chronosystem, ensuring the learning environment evolves to meet changing student needs. This comprehensive approach can foster a supportive and inclusive environment for all.

As we come to the end of this chapter, we invite you to return to our Example Case. Recall the neurodivergent child that has arrived at school after a hectic weekend. They have forgotten to bring their lunch, and one of their socks is on inside out. Their teacher asks them to correct misspelled words on a handout. How might we reduce the demands filling their capacity jug? How might we gently expand their capacity jug?

Local contexts

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=657#h5p-37

Closing questions to discuss or tasks

- What fills your capacity jug? What helps you to gently expand your capacity jug?
- When have you experienced the "double empathy" problem, whether on the basis of your neurotype or another group membership?
- Reflecting on your professional training to date, what language do you tend to use to describe neurodivergent people?
- How can you help to create neuroinclusive communities?

Literature

Dinah Aitken and Sue Fletcher-Watson:

Aitken, D., & Fletcher-Watson, S. (2022, December 15). Neurodiversity-affirmative education: why and how? The British Psychological Society. https://www.bps.org.uk/psychologist/neurodiversity-affirmative-education-why-and-how

Alyssa Alcorn, Sue Fletcher-Watson, Sarah McGeown, Fergus Murray, Dinah Aitken, Liam J. J. Peacock, and William Mandy:

Alcorn, A.M., Fletcher-Watson, S., McGeown, S., Murray, F., Aitken, D., Peacock, L.J.J., & Mandy, W. (2022). Learning about neurodiversity at school: A resource pack for primary school teachers and pupils. University of Edinburgh. https://salvesen-research.ed.ac.uk/leans

Alyssa M. Alcorn, Sarah McGeown, William Mandy, Dinah Aitken, and Sue Fletcher-Watson:

Alcorn, A. M., McGeown, S., Mandy, W., Aitken, D., & Fletcher-Watson, S. (2024). Learning About Neurodiversity at School: A feasibility study of a new classroom programme for mainstream primary schools. Neurodiversity, 2(1). https://doi.org/10.1177/27546330241272186

American Psychiatric Association:

American Psychiatric Association. (2013). Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (5th ed.). American Psychiatric Publishing.

Harriet Axbey, Nadin Beckmann, Sue Fletcher-Watson, Alisdair Tullo, and Catherine J Crompton:

Axbey, H., Beckmann, N., Fletcher-Watson, S., Tullo, A., & Crompton, C. J. (2023). Innovation through neurodiversity: Diversity is beneficial. Autism, 27(7), 2193-2198. https://doi.org/10.1177/13623613231158685

Monique Botha, Robert Chapman, Morénike Giwa Onaiwu, Steven K Kapp, Abs Stannard Ashley, and Nick Walker:

Botha, M., Chapman, R., Giwa Onaiwu, M., Kapp, S. K., Stannard Ashley, A., & Walker, N. (2024). The neurodiversity concept was developed collectively: An overdue correction on the origins of neurodiversity theory. Autism, 28(6), 1591-1594. https://doi.org/10.1177/13623613241237871

Monique Botha and David Frost:

Botha, M., & Frost, D. M. (2018). Extending the minority stress model to understand mental health problems experienced by the autistic population. Society and Mental Health, 10(1), 20-34. https://doi.org/10.1177/2156869318804297

Kristen Bottema-Beutel, Noah J. Sasson, Rachael McKinnon, Caroline Braun, Ruoxi Guo, Brittany N. Hand, Steven K. Kapp, Daniel R. Espinas, Aiyana Bailin, Jessica Nina Lester, and Betty Yu:

Bottema-Beutel, K., Sasson, N. J., McKinnon, R., Braun, C., Guo, R., Hand, B. N., Kapp,

S. K., Espinas, D. R., Bailin, A., Lester, J. N., & Yu, B. (2024). Recognizing and resisting ableist language in schools: Suggestions for school-based speech-language pathologists and related professionals. Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools, 55(4), 1025-1038. https://doi.org/10.1044/2024_LSHSS-24-00036

Urie Bronfenbrenner:

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979) The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design. Harvard University Press, Cambridge.

Urie Bronfenbrenner:

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1986). Ecology of the family as a context for human development: Research perspectives. Developmental Psychology, 22(6), 723–742. https://doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.22.6.723

Licia Carlson:

Carlson, L. (2010). The faces of intellectual disability. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

CAST:

CAST (2024). Universal design for learning guidelines version 3.0 [graphic organizer]. Lynnfield, MA: Author.

Amandine Catala:

Catala, A. (2023, April 11). Understanding neurodiversity, unlearning neuronormativity. Blog of the American Philosophical Association. https://blog.apaonline.org/2023/04/11/understanding-neurodiversity-unlearning-neuronormativity/

Robert Chapman:

Chapman, R. (2021). Negotiating the Neurodiversity Concept, Psychology Today. https://www.psychologytoday.com/gb/blog/neurodiverse-age/202108/negotiating-the-neurodiversity-concept

Robert Chapman:

Chapman, R. (2020). Defining neurodiversity for research and practice. In H. Bertilsdotter Rosqvist, N. Chown & A. Stenning (Eds.), Neurodiversity studies: A new critical paradigm (1st ed., pp.218-220). Routledge.

Patrick W Corrigan and Amy C Watson:

Corrigan, P. W., & Watson, A. C. (2002). Understanding the impact of stigma on people with mental illness. World Psychiatry, 1(1), 16–20.

Catherine J Crompton, Danielle Ropar, Claire VM Evans-Williams, Emma G Flynn, and Sue Fletcher-Watson:

Crompton, C. J., Ropar, D., Evans-Williams, C. V., Flynn, E. G., & Fletcher-Watson, S. (2020). Autistic peer-to-peer information transfer is highly effective. Autism, 24(7), 1704-1712. https://doi.org/10.1177/1362361320919286

Catherine J Crompton, Francesca Fotheringham, Katie Cebula, Charlotte Webber, Sarah Foley, and Sue Fletcher-Watson:

Crompton, C. J., Fotheringham, F., Cebula, K., Webber, C., Foley, S., & Fletcher-Watson,

S. (2024a). Neurodivergent-designed and neurodivergent-led peer support in school: A feasibility and acceptability study of the neurodivergent peer support toolkit (NEST). Neurodiversity, 2. https://doi.org/10.1177/27546330241275248

Catherine J Crompton, Francesca Fotheringham, Charlotte Webber, Katie Cebula, Sarah Foley, and Sue Fletcher-Watson:

Crompton, C.J., Fotheringham F., Webber, C., Cebula, K., Foley, S. & Fletcher-Watson, S., (2024b) The NEurodivergent peer Support Toolkit (NEST). University of Edinburgh.

Mary Doherty, Sue McCowan, and Sebastian CK Shaw:

Doherty, M., McCowan, S., & Shaw, S. C. (2023). Autistic SPACE: a novel framework for meeting the needs of autistic people in healthcare settings. British Journal of Hospital Medicine, 84(4), 1-9. https://doi.org/10.12968/hmed.2023.0006

Patrick Dwyer:

Dwyer P. (2022). The Neurodiversity Approach(es): What Are They and What Do They Mean for Researchers?. Human development, 66(2), 73–92. https://doi.org/10.1159/000523723

Patrick Dwyer, Ava N Gurba, Steven K Kapp, Elizabeth Kilgallon, Lynnette H Hersh, David S Chang, Susan M Rivera, and Kristen Gillespie-Lynch:

Dwyer, P., Gurba, A. N., Kapp, S. K., Kilgallon, E., Hersh, L. H., Chang, D. S., Rivera, S. M., & Gillespie-Lynch, K. (2024). Community views of neurodiversity, models of disability and autism intervention: Mixed methods reveal shared goals and key tensions. Autism, 1-18. https://doi.org/10.1177/13623613241273029

Francesca Fotheringham, Katie Cebula, Sue Fletcher-Watson, Sarah Foley, and Catherine J Crompton:

Fotheringham, F., Cebula, K., Fletcher-Watson, S., Foley, S., & Crompton, C. J. (2023). Co-designing a neurodivergent student-led peer support programme for neurodivergent young people in mainstream high schools. Neurodiversity, 1(1). https://doi.org/10.1177/27546330231205770

Silvia Gini, Victoria Knowland, Michael S.C. Thomas, and Jo Van Herwegen:

Gini, S., Knowland, V., Thomas, M. S., & Van Herwegen, J. (2021). Neuromyths about neurodevelopmental disorders: Misconceptions by educators and the general public. Mind, Brain, and Education, 15(4), 289-298. https://doi.org/10.1111/mbe.12303

Jonathan Green:

Green, J. (2023). Debate: Neurodiversity, autism and healthcare. Child and Adolescent Mental Health, 28(3), 438-442. https://doi.org/10.1111/camh.12663

Andrew Hogan:

Hogan, A. J. (2019). Moving away from the" medical model": The development and revision of the World Health Organization's Classification of Disability. Bulletin of the History of Medicine, 93(2), 241-269. https://doi.org/10.1353/bhm.2019.0028

Brenda Hughes, Karen A. Sullivan, and Linda Gilmore:

Hughes, B., Sullivan, K. A., & Gilmore, L. (2022). Neuromyths about learning: Future

directions from a critical review of a decade of research in school education. Prospects, 52(1), 189–207. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11125-021-09567-5

Steven Kapp:

Kapp, S. K. (2020). Introduction. In S.K. Kapp (Ed.), Autistic community and the neurodiversity movement: Stories from the frontline (pp.1-19). Palgrave Macmillan Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-8437-0

Julia Knopes:

Knopes, J. (2024). Mental health conditions between neurodiversity and the medical model. AJOB Neuroscience, 16(1), 20-31. https://doi.org/10.1080/21507740.2024.2412549

Damien Milton:

Milton, D. E. (2012). On the ontological status of autism: The 'double empathy problem'. Disability & society, 27(6), 883-887. https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2012.710008

Juwayriyah Nayyar, Alison Stapleton, Suzanne Guerin, and Cliodhna O'Connor:

Nayyar, J. M., Stapleton, A., Guerin, S., & O'Connor, C. (2024). Exploring lived experiences of receiving a diagnosis of autism in adulthood: A systematic review. Autism in Adulthood. https://doi.org/10.1089/aut.2023.0152

Ari Ne'eman and Elizabeth Pellicano:

Ne'eman A., Pellicano L. (2022). Neurodiversity as politics. Human Development, 66(2), 149–157. https://doi.org/10.1159/000524277

Django Paris:

Paris, D. (2012). Culturally sustaining pedagogy: A needed change in stance, terminology, and practice. Educational Researcher, 41(3), 93–97.

Paty Paliokosta, Anne Maloney, and Aga M. Buckley:

Paliokosta, P., Maloney, A., & Buckley, A. M. (2024). Neurodiversity Learning Environment Audit. PubHTML5. https://pubhtml5.com/daayw/xvbq/

Margaret Quinn and Sallie Anne Porter:

Quinn, M. & Porter, S.A. (2023). Development of Curriculum Immersions in a Nurse Practitioner Program: Autism Spectrum Disorder as an Exemplar. The Journal for Nurse Practitioners, 19(5), 104578. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nurpra.2023.104578

Noah J. Sasson, Daniel J. Faso, Jack Nugent, Sarah Lovell, Daniel P. Kennedy, and Ruth B. Grossman:

Sasson, N. J., Faso, D. J., Nugent, J., Lovell, S., Kennedy, D. P., & Grossman, R. B. (2017). Neurotypical peers are less willing to interact with those with autism based on thin slice judgments. Scientific Reports, 7(1), 1-10. https://doi.org/10.1038/srep40700

Sebastian CK Shaw, Laura Carravallah, Mona Johnson, Jane O'Sullivan, Nicholas Chown, Stuart Neilson, and Mary Doherty:

Shaw, S. C., Carravallah, L., Johnson, M., O'Sullivan, J., Chown, N., Neilson, S., & Doherty, M. (2023). Barriers to healthcare and a 'triple empathy problem'may lead to adverse

outcomes for autistic adults: A qualitative study. Autism, 28(7), 1746-1757. https://doi.org/10.1177/13623613231205629

Alison Stapleton and Louise McHugh:

Stapleton, A., & McHugh, L. (2021). Healthy selfing: Theoretically optimal environments for the development of tacting and deictic relational responding. Perspectivas em Análise do Comportamento, 12(1), 125-137. https://doi.org/10.18761/PAC.2021.v12.RFT.10

Holly Sutherland:

Sutherland, H. E. A. (2023). Whose "support" is it anyway?: A critical look at supportive environments (Version 1). figshare. https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.24082047.v1

Marta Torrijos-Muelas, Sixto Gonzlez-Víllora, and Ana Rosa Bodoque-Osma:

Torrijos-Muelas, M., González-Víllora, S., & Bodoque-Osma, A. R. (2021). The persistence of neuromyths in the educational settings: A systematic review. Frontiers in Psychology, 11(1), 591923. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.591923

University College Dublin Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Neurodiversity Working Group:

University College Dublin Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Neurodiversity Working Group. (2024). Making UCD a neurodiversity friendly campus. University College Dublin. https://www.ucd.ie/equality/t4media/UCD%20Neurodiversity%20Friendly%20Campus%20Full%20Report%20FINAL%20FOR%20PRINT%20ACCESSIBLE.pdf

United Nations:

United Nations. (2006, December 13). Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities. https://www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/crpd/pages/conventionrightspersonswithdisabilities.aspx

Nick Walker:

Walker, N. (2021). Neuroqueer heresies: Notes on the neurodiversity paradigm, autistic empowerment, and postnormal possibilities. Autonomous Press. https://neuroqueer.com/neuroqueer-heresies/

Stuart Woodcock and Lisa Marks Woolfson:

Woodcock, S., & Woolfson, L. M. (2019). Are leaders leading the way with inclusion? Teachers' perceptions of systemic support and barriers towards inclusion. International Journal of Educational Research, 93(1), 232-242. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2018.11.004

World Health Organization:

World Health Organization. (2022). ICD-11: International classification of diseases (11th revision). https://icd.who.int/

Reesha Zahir, Alyssa M. Alcorn, Sarah McGeown, Will Mandy, Dinah Aitken, Fergus Murray, and Sue Fletcher-Watson:

Zahir, R., Alcorn, A. M., McGeown, S., Mandy, W., Aitken, D., Murray, F., & Fletcher-Watson, S. (2024). Short report: Evaluation of wider community support for a neurodiversity teaching programme designed using participatory methods. Autism, 28(6), 1582-1590. https://doi.org/10.1177/13623613231211046

About the authors

Alison Stapleton

Dr Alison Stapleton is a multiply neurodivergent Chartered Psychologist, lecturer, and advocate. Alison co-founded the Association for Contextual Behavioural Science (ACBS) Neurodiversity-Affirming Research and Practice Special Interest Group, served on the ACBS Board of Directors (basic science Member at Large), and assists psychological services in identifying, accommodating, and supporting a range of neurotypes. Alison has published several book chapters and scientific articles, including contributions to The Oxford Handbook of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy and a systematic review of adults' experiences of being identified as autistic in adulthood.

Deirdre Forde

Dr. Deirdre Forde is a distinguished lecturer in Inclusive Education at Maynooth University. With a background as a qualified primary teacher and a chartered child and educational psychologist, she brings extensive experience from various educational settings and psychological services to her role. Deirdre's research and teaching interests are diverse and encompass areas such as disability and the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion within educational and societal contexts. She is particularly passionate about amplifying children's voices, advancing relational education, and shaping policies related to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI). Her work is dedicated to fostering inclusive environments that acknowledge and celebrate diversity.

Nicola Ryan

Nicola Ryan, clinical nurse specialist in child & adolescent mental health, cognitive behavioural therapist, senior lecturer at Kingston University in the UK. Areas of interest and research include intersectionality, child and adolescent mental health, neurodiversity, psychological and behavioural therapies, education of autism and ADHD for students and educators.

Paty Paliokosta

Paty Paliokosta is an Associate Professor in Inclusive Education at Kingston University and a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. With over two decades of experience in the field of special and inclusive education, my journey has been dedicated to promoting social justice and empowering diverse learners, particularly

those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEN/D). As an educator, inclusion manager, local authority advisor, researcher, and advocate she has actively contributed to shaping inclusive policies, leading innovative participatory research projects, and championing social justice within schools, local authority, higher education and the community. She leads the 'Inclusion and Social Justice' SIG and the 'Inclusivity, Anti-oppression and Underserved Communities' bidding network. Her full profile can be found here: https://www.kingston.ac.uk/staff/profile/dr-paty-paliokosta-730/

TEAMWORK IN THE CLASSROOM

Outi Kyrö-Ämmälä; Becky Ward; and Silver Cappello

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=157#oembed-1

Example Case

"A few years ago, I was involved in an Erasmus+ funded project called THRIECE: Teaching for Holistic, Relational and Inclusive Early Childhood Education. Some of the work we did in the Irish part of the project was looking at relationships in the classroom. What was very special about this piece of work was it involved the whole school community. So, everybody was involved: teachers, special needs assistants, the librarian, the secretary, the caretaker; everybody in the whole school community came together, both in terms of teamwork and collaboration in the classroom. What was interesting was that through this project, the barriers across staff roles started to break down. So, for example, previously, if a teacher had a professional question that they weren't sure about, they might ask a colleague, another teacher. However, when we were evaluating this project and having conversations with the people involved, they said one of the biggest benefits of this kind of relational approach across the whole school was that they started to recognise the expertise in other groups of staff. It might not have occurred to a teacher before to ask a special needs assistant for their opinion, and yet there was a huge bank of expertise there, and they were missing out on this expertise by not engaging with special needs assistants. Once those barriers began to break down, it meant that different groups of staff could really collaborate. Or let's say the secretary might have been the first person to see the child on the way in the door and see an angry face on a child and think, "OK, I need to let the teacher know to be gentle here." It made a big, big difference to the staff team as a whole to be able to rely on each other and draw on the expertise that was there."

Dr. Leah O'Toole, Maynooth University, Ireland

Introduction to Topic

In inclusive classrooms, it should be possible for all students to learn in their own local neighbourhood (Slee, 2014), with education that enables them to reach their full learning potential (Booth & Ainscow, 2011), and feeling a sense of belonging to their school community (Qvortrup and Qvortrup, 2018). However, this is not without its challenges, and a teacher can face many difficulties, such as lack of time, material, learning spaces and personnel (Lingard & Mills, 2007). A teacher may also find it challenging to consider students' individual needs (Joseph et al., 2013) and students may be left without appropriate support (Lumby & Coleman, 2016).

In this chapter, we focus on teamwork in the classroom. It is one solution to the challenges that a teacher may confront in everyday school life when working with diverse students. The core of our chapter is to describe what kinds of professional competencies teachers need when they are working in teams.

Teamwork and collaboration are at the heart of inclusive education; collaboration among adults, professionals and parents/carers and, above all, collaboration with and appreciation of the pupils. Inclusive education is values-led. The European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (2012:11) identifies the values which form the foundation for all teachers in inclusive education.

"These four core values are:

1. Valuing learner diversity – learner difference is considered as a resource and an asset to education.

2. Supporting all learners – teachers have high expectations for all learners' achievements.
3. Working with others – collaboration and teamwork are essential approaches for all teachers.
4. Continuing personal professional development – teaching is a learning activity and teachers take responsibility for their own lifelong learning."

In this chapter we focus on value 3 Working with others and how collaboration and teamwork are vital for teachers. However, teamwork also overlaps with the other core values, especially valuing learner diversity and developing personal skills in continuing personal professional development.

In order to value learner diversity and support all learners, multiple methods and perspectives are needed (Diana Jr., 2014). In this way, the benefits of teamwork become apparent. It is also important to recognise that teachers are lifelong learners and continuing personal professional development is important to improve our attitude and ability to work in teams and to learn skills for effective teamwork (Lindsay, Proulx, Scott, and Thomson, 2014).

The definition of teamwork in the classroom

Just putting people together does not make them a team. It has been stated that teams need "clarity of purpose, accountability, team structure, and trust" (Sparks, 2013: 29). Teamwork happens when a group of people work together to reach a common goal. Although each person brings their individual contribution, they influence the others in the team and in the same way, are influenced by their co-workers. At each step of the project, the team works to make a joint decision, and then moves on to the next step. When there are disagreements and different ideas, the team must work together to find a common solution. Finally, the common goal is reached with each person having contributed to the outcome (Radiæ-Šestic et al., 2013).

In a classroom, teamwork is describing, for example, how educational professionals can work together to prepare and deliver teaching, evaluate the learning, and plan future projects. Well-functioning teaching teams are essential to continuous improvement of teaching and learning, providing mentoring and support for new staff, benefiting students, teacher-teacher peer mentoring, and problem-solving with different perspectives (Sparks, 2013). Through collaboration, a system of flexible support can be built for the social communities of children (Lakkala & Kyrö-Ämmälä, 2017).

There are many different people who influence what happens in the classroom. There may be different kinds of teachers in the school, support staff, student teachers, therapists, the principal and senior leadership team, social workers, educational psychologists, the pupils themselves, and the families of the pupils. In this chapter we use the terms 'student'

and 'pupil' interchangeably to describe the learners in the school. This reflects the language used in different school systems. We use the term 'student teacher' to describe those training to be teachers. Focusing on the classroom, on a day-to-day basis, teachers, student teachers, support staff, pupils and therapists are the people most likely to be in the classroom during the school day. Teamwork can be challenging because it relies on trust within these relationships, valuing different people's contributions, and finding ways to overcome differences of opinion (Whatley, 2009).

Key aspects

Dimension 1: Competence of the Teacher

In this section, the focus is on teachers' competencies based on a document published by the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (2012). A combination of professional knowledge, both in terms of content and pedagogy, along with values and motivation aligned to learning, and self-regulation comprise the model of professional teacher competence (Baumert & Kunter, 2013). When characterising teacher competencies, it is crucial to distinguish between two elements: firstly, the concrete and visible actions seen when teachers engage in professional responsibilities, such as teaching; and secondly, the knowledge, skills and processes of perception, interpretation and decision making (including cognitive and non-cognitive competencies) that are critical for implementation but may not be observed by outsiders (richardWeinert, 2001). According to Koster and Dengerink (2008), the competence of a teacher includes a combination of knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and personal characteristics that allow the teacher to act professionally and effectively in specific teaching and learning situations.

In the Profile of Inclusive Teachers (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2012) teachers' competencies are made up of three elements: teachers' attitude, knowledge, and skills. A certain attitude or belief demands certain knowledge or level of understanding, it also demands skills in order to implement this knowledge in a practical situation. All the elements should be seen as the foundation for specialist professional development routes and the starting point for discussions at all levels on the context specific areas of competence needed by teachers working in different country situations. As identified earlier, the core value of 'working with others' highlights collaboration and teamwork as essential approaches for all teachers.

Teamwork in the classroom is also related to two other spheres: teachers' working with parents and families; and teachers' working with other educational professionals. In this chapter, we focus on teachers' collaboration with a range of educational professionals.

Teachers' attitudes

Teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and values are connected to their practical decisions and

strategies in the classroom (Buehl & Alexander, 2009). These background factors may come from previous experiences of schooling, or they may be concepts that are commonly agreed in the school community (Richardson, 1996). They are subjective, something a person holds to be true, and so may be resistant to change even in the face of conflicting evidence (Buehl & Alexander, 2009).

Attitudes, beliefs, and values behind teamwork in the classroom include some essential ideas, which are introduced in the Profile of Inclusive Teacher (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2012). Firstly, it is obvious that inclusive education requires all teachers to work in teams. Diverse classes present different challenges for teachers, as they try to be sure everyone is being challenged and learning the material. To do this alone, can be a huge task for one teacher and there are great benefits to teachers working with colleagues in a team. Traditionally, the teaching profession has been seen as an individual profession (Canaran & Mirici, 2020), but now it should be seen more as a team profession. Student teachers should also adopt this way of thinking during their studies. Collaboration, partnerships, and teamwork are essential approaches for all teachers and should be welcomed in all schools and classrooms. Moreover, collaborative teamwork supports professional learning with and from other professionals. In this way, the classroom is a learning organisation where each member learns from everyone and teaches everyone (Kools & Stoll, 2016).

Sometimes tensions arise in teamwork, for example, between teachers and support staff because there is insufficient time to co-plan and reflect (Dixon, 2003). Also, confusion on training and the unclear role of support staff may complicate teaching practices. Sometimes, for example, teaching assistants may not be included in staff meetings, and their work may be ignored in briefings and policy documents (Wilson & Bedford, 2008). The culture of inclusion and teamwork in the school needs to be broad, including all staff, and led by the senior leaders in the school (Wilson & Bedford, 2008). Teamwork needs effective communication, with the benefits resulting in a consistent approach for children in the school (Ward et al., 2021). Teachers act as reflective practitioners (Jay & Johnson, 2002). They analyse their work and develop their practice by assessing and then acting on their own learning.

Teachers' knowledge and understanding

According to the Profile of Inclusive Teachers (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2012), teamwork in the classroom requires some essential knowledge and understanding including an idea of the value and benefits of collaborative work with other teachers and educational professionals.

Teacher education should develop student teachers' theoretical understanding and provide opportunities for real life experiences about multi-professional work. There is a need to become acquainted with support systems and structures available for further help,

input and advice and multi-agency working models where teachers cooperate with other experts and staff from a range of different disciplines. Also, understanding collaborative teaching approaches is important, where a team approach involves teachers, learners themselves, parents, peers, other school teachers, support staff, and finally, multi-disciplinary team members, for example therapists and teachers should also be addressed in teacher education. A common understanding of the language/terminology and basic working concepts and perspectives of other professionals involved in education are crucial for teachers: they need to have a common language when talking to each other about student issues. Additionally, the power relations between different stakeholders should be recognised and dealt with effectively in teacher education. In some situations, non-teaching staff, for example, support teachers and teaching assistants, are not given a voice and have less opportunities to contribute their knowledge to the classroom; but they may have a lot of experience and a different and valuable perspective in contrast to teachers (Mackenzie, 2011; O'Brien & Garner, 2001). Different types of knowledge exist and are useful for improving learning (Nonaka, 1994; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). Explicit knowledge stems from training courses, reading, and qualifications, whereas tacit knowledge comes from experience, school systems, and the environment or culture. A joined-up team approach draws on each person's knowledge, sharing power, creating space, and opportunity for voices that often go unheard (Nind, 2014; Parsons, 2021).

Teachers' skills and abilities

Teamwork relies on teachers developing social skills, including relational skills, emotional competency, diversity competency, intercultural competency and interaction (Metsäpelto et al., 2021). Furthermore, generic competencies (for example information-processing abilities), and affective and motivational competences (for example abilities to regulate emotions) are fundamental teacher's skills (Blömeke & Kaiser, 2017).

In the Profile of Inclusive Teachers (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2012), essential skills and abilities related to teamwork in the classroom to be developed during initial teacher education are introduced. The initial teacher education should include implementing classroom leadership and management skills that facilitate effective multiagency and team working. Student teachers need to be equipped for co-teaching and working in flexible teaching teams. For teachers it is also necessary to learn how to work as part of a school community and draw on the support of internal and external resources. In the classroom they need preparation on how to build a class community that is part of a wider school community. When thinking about the development processes of schools, student teachers should have skills to contribute to whole school evaluations, review and development processes and collaborative problem solving with other professionals. Schools do not act alone, and therefore teachers are contributing to wider school partnerships with other schools, community organisations and other

educational organisations. Moreover, they need to be drawing on a range of verbal and non-verbal communication skills to facilitate working cooperatively with other professionals.

In teacher education around the world, efforts have been made to define the key skills of the teaching profession for many years. Teaching is a multidimensional and challenging profession that demands expertise which is developed and renewed throughout initial teacher education and the professional's career. According to Desimone (2009), a teacher's development is a continuous process and includes changes in the teacher's cognitive and affective skills, used in teaching tasks and in adapting classroom practices. Ideally, the core of teacher education includes skills that make a difference in the classroom and promote student achievement (Hattie, 2009). The Multidimensional Adapted Process model of teaching (MAP) (Figure 1) describes the key competence domains perceived to be critical for the teaching profession and depicts them as a comprehensive teacher competence model (Metsäpelto et al., 2021).

Figure 1:

The MAP model is based on Blömeke and colleagues' (2015) model, which divides (1) the competence related to the efficient performance of the teacher's work, (2) the individual knowledge and skills underlying and enabling effective teaching, and (3) the situational skills to perceive, interpret and make decisions in teaching and learning situations. The MAP model outlines a teacher's successful work performance (competence) and the critical knowledge and skills that enable and promote it (competencies) and thus aims towards a more comprehensive understanding of the key skills of teachers' work and their development at different career stages. In the MAP model, there are five core competencies of teachers: cognitive thinking skills, knowledge base of teaching and learning, social skills, personal orientations, and professional wellbeing (Metsäpelto et al., 2021). In the model, the ultimate goal of teacher activity is teacher effectiveness at the students' level, in students'

learning, motivation and well-being. As Berliner (2001; see also Klassen & Kim, 2018) has stated, some attributes thought to be included in teacher competence, are specific to the educational environment and to the cultural, social, and task-specific context, while some other attributes are universal.

Dimension 2: The Meaning of Context

Teamwork is shaped by the context in which teachers work.

Like bioecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006), the classroom teacher is situated in a classroom. This classroom is situated in a school and the school is situated in a regional and national context. At every level, the context influences what happens in the classroom. The chronosystem describes those changes that happen over time. Additionally, the bidirectional interaction between different levels, i.e. the relationship between classroom and whole school or whole school and region, also influences the way in which teachers work in their own classrooms.

Figure 2:
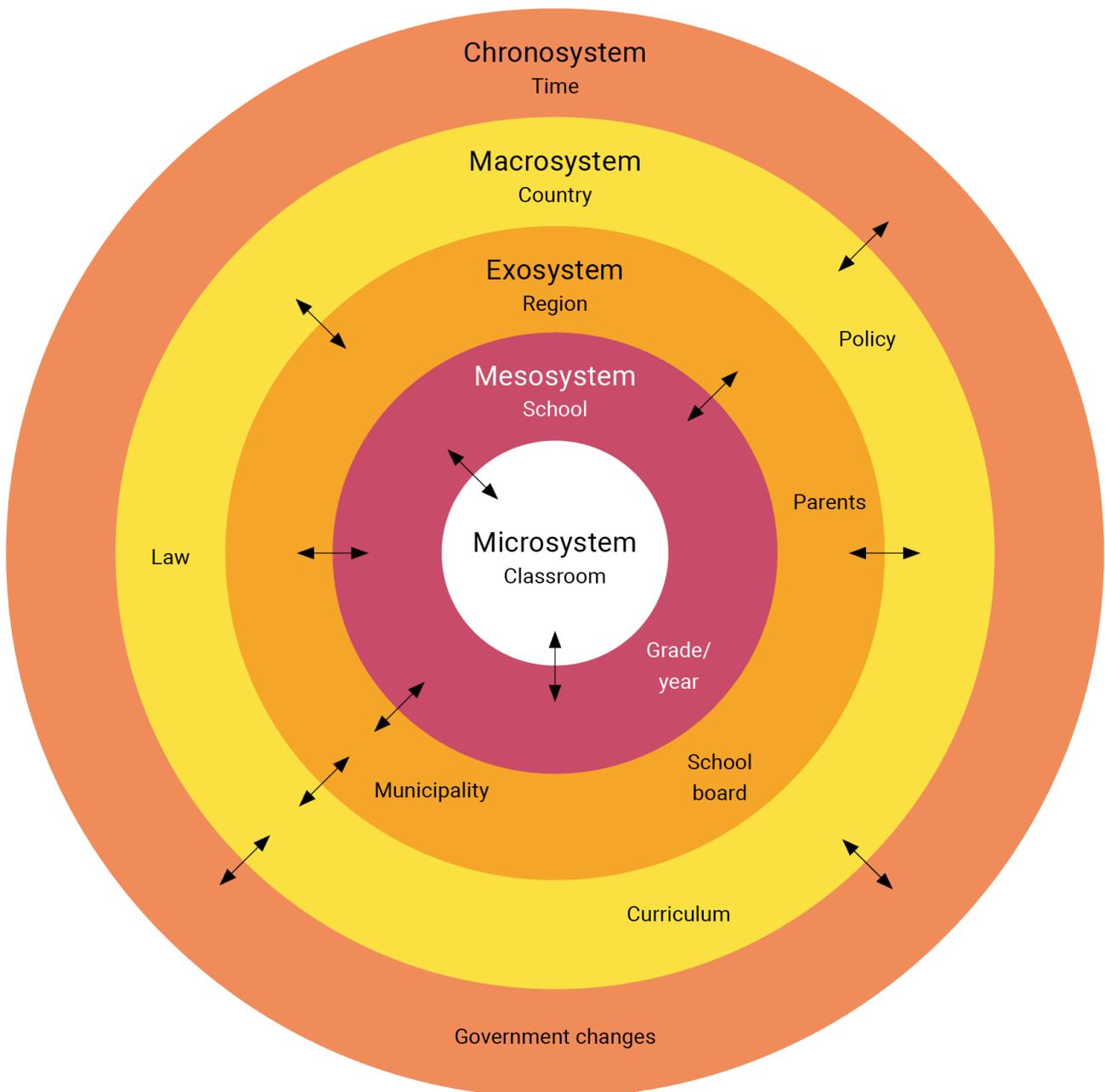
The classroom can be thought of as the **microsystem**. The teacher plans, delivers and evaluates each lesson. They can potentially work as a team with other teachers, student teachers, teaching assistants or external therapists who come into the classroom.

The classroom is situated in the school, the **mesosystem**. Within the wider school, there may be requirements to ensure each teacher communicates with other teachers in the same year group or education phase.

The regional or local school board can be considered the **exosystem**. Schools may be grouped together in local areas, or regional school boards/municipalities may provide guidance or regulations for local schools. This could also include parents and families, and external professionals working with the school.

The regional school board or municipality sits within the national system of education, which can be thought of as the **macrosystem**. The macrosystem includes national

education policies, including the curriculum and staffing structures which will influence how teamwork can happen in your school. There may be a shortage of types of school staff; for example, specialist subject teachers, special education teachers, support staff, or healthcare professionals who work in the classroom.

This macrosystem is situated in the **chronosystem** as changes in policies and procedures happen over time; for example, when a new government is elected.

Some national education policies are very broad, and others narrow. For example, a broad national curriculum provides an overview of each subject area and flexibility and autonomy for individual schools or teachers to plan, deliver and assess their schemes of work and lessons. However, in other countries, the national curriculum is prescriptive with specific textbooks identified for areas of the curriculum and standardised assessments for all pupils. Similarly, staffing structures vary from country to country. For example, in one country a classroom could have one teacher and three assistants for 30 children. Whereas in other countries, a classroom may only have one teacher for 30 children.

At each contextual level, there are several factors to address. Table 1 provides some practical examples from different school systems and contexts considering the members of the team and the way in which this level might influence teamwork in the classroom.

Table 1:

Bioecological system	Education level	Authority/ responsibility	Considerations	Practical examples from different school systems
Microsystem	Classroom	Lesson plans, delivery of lessons, evaluation and assessment	Potential/ actual members of the team in the classroom	A teacher and a special education teaching assistant (TA) work in the same classroom. The teacher asks the TA how to differentiate the learning for a group of children with special educational needs. They then plan the lesson together as a team.
Mesosystem	School	Schemes of work, phases of education	Other classrooms in the year group or education stage	In a school, there are three classes in grade 5. Each class has one teacher and no additional staff. The class teachers want to work as a team but are not able to do this in each classroom. So, they meet outside the classrooms and plan a series of lessons on a topic. Each teacher then delivers the lessons independently in their own classroom. After the series of lessons is finished, the teachers meet again to evaluate the scheme of work.
Exosystem	School board/ regional education body	Regional variations on national policy	Partnerships between schools within a region	Although the national education policy allows solo teaching or co-teaching, a regional school board wants to promote co-teaching and introduces a policy that all schools in their area must incorporate co-teaching in the school. Each school then organises the classrooms to enable co-teaching to happen.
Macrosystem	National education policy	Curriculum, standardised assessments, staffing policies, initial teacher training requirements	Required qualifications/ professional standards for education professionals or external professionals e.g. therapists	The national policy for children with special educational needs requires a child with an IEP to receive individual support within the classroom. The class teacher has 5 children with IEPs within the classroom who are supported by two classroom assistants. There are now three staff members in the classroom who can work as a team.
Chronosystem	Changes over time	New governments, education minister	Introduction and management of new policies and curricula	A new government is elected and changes the education policy which increases or decreases the number of staff in each school and each classroom.

There are many ways in which teamwork can operate in the classroom, depending on the context and the members of the team. Three examples follow, exploring co-teaching, pupils' voice, and collaborations.

Co-teaching methods and forms of collaboration

One important example about teamwork in the classroom in a practical way could be co-teaching, which is a practice where two or more teachers (class and/or support teachers) plan, teach and assess together for a group of students. According to Friend and Cook (2007), there are six types of co-teaching methods for working in teams, where big triangles are teachers and small triangles are students (Figures 3-8 created by authors), but it is important to use the approach that most effectively meets the needs of the students in a specific context:

Figure 3:
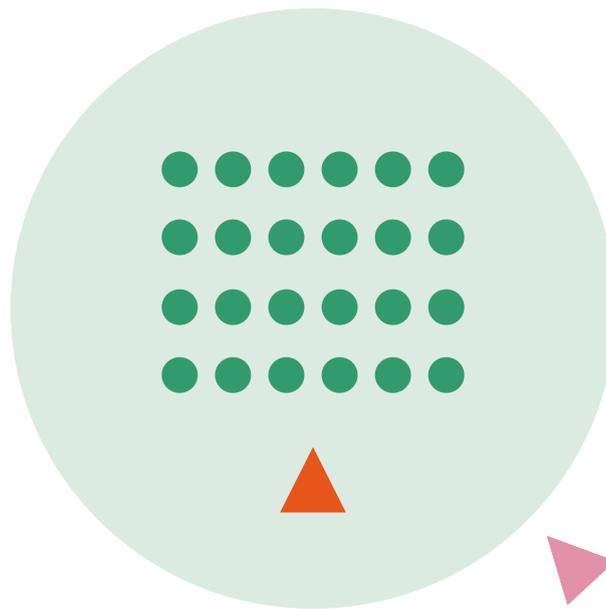
One teaches, one observes.

One teaches, one observes: one teacher conducts the lesson, while the other simply observes students' learning processes and collects different kinds of data which have been determined in advance.

Figure 4:
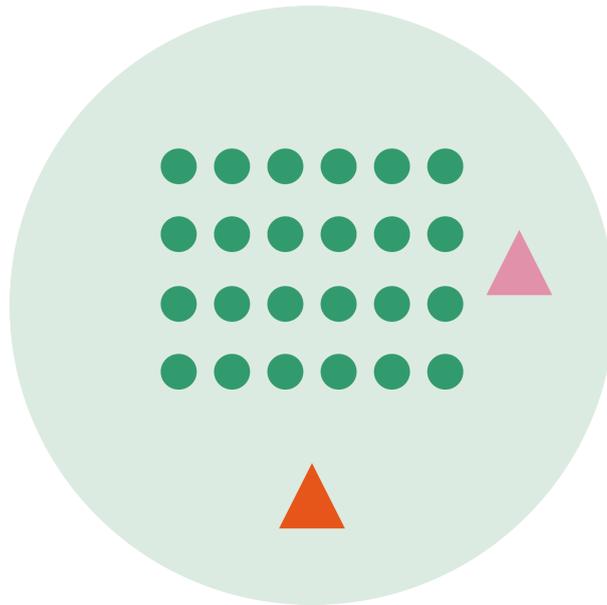
One teaches, one assists.

One teaches, one assists: one teacher teaches a full group lesson, while the other teacher roams and helps individual students, often providing additional support for learning or behaviour management.

Figure 5:
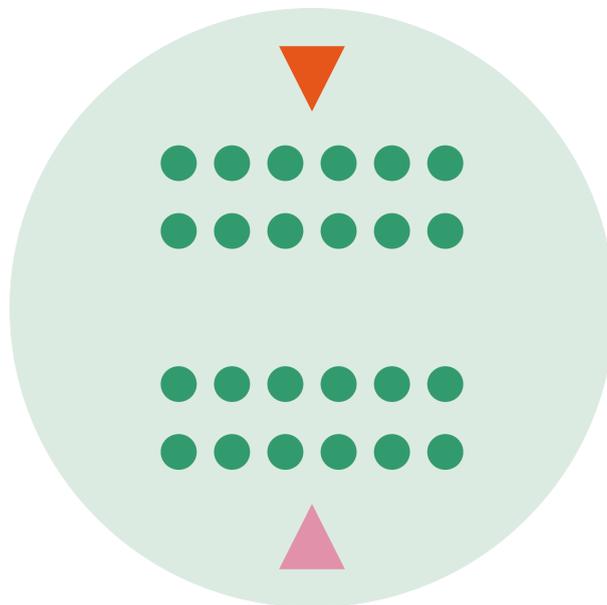
Parallel teaching

Parallel teaching: the team splits the class into two groups and each teacher teaches the same information at the same time to a smaller group.

Figure 6:
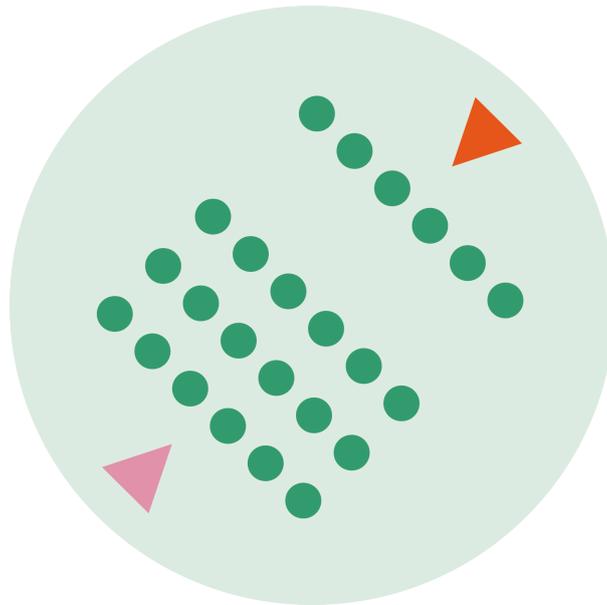
Alternative teaching

Alternative teaching: one teacher instructs most of the class and the other teacher teaches an alternate or modified version of the lesson to a smaller group of students.

Figure 7:
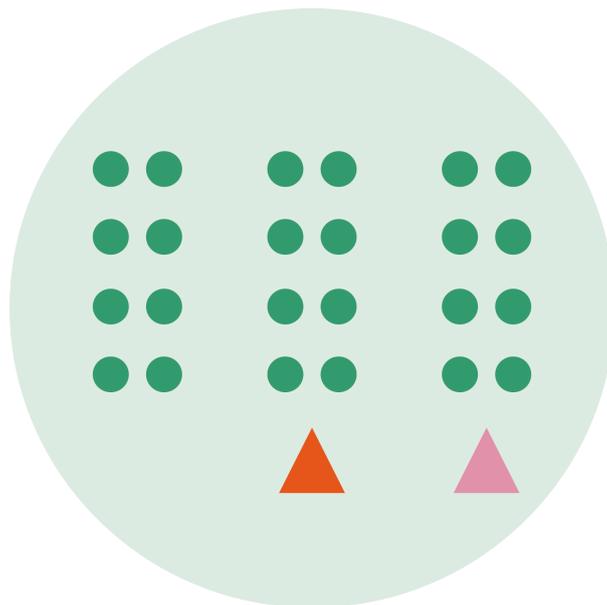
Station teaching

Station teaching: the class is divided into three or more groups, where students rotate through the stations, while the teachers teach the same material in different ways to each group; if there are more stations than teachers, at least one will focus on independent work or practice opportunities, while the others may be managed by students.

Figure 8:
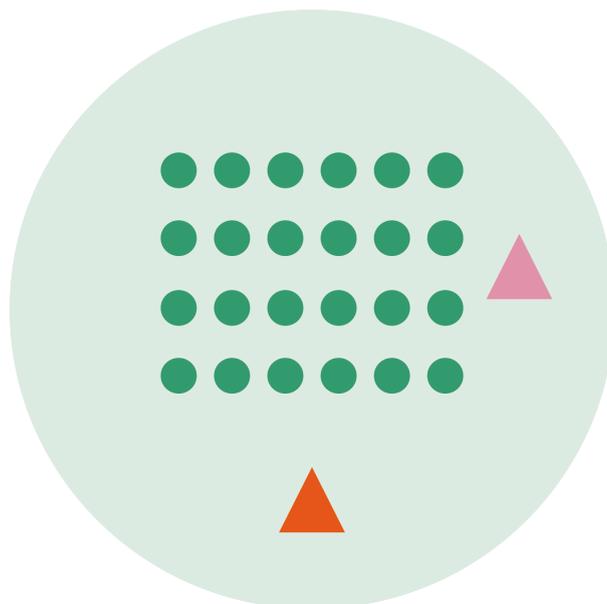
Team teaching

Team teaching: both teachers are in the room at the same time but take turns teaching the whole class, like co-presenters.

Co-planning for positive collaboration

Co-planning is one of the three co-teaching phases. It is really important because it represents the starting point of the process. Teachers have to plan collaboratively (co-plan) because co-teaching is not possible if one teacher handles the planning alone (Shumway et al., 2011). Initially it is not easy, because the collaboration could be influenced by the number of students in the class, pupils individualised or personalised needs, the additional work and time needed, teachers' flexibility, their relationships and their interpersonal communication skills (Cramerotti & Cattoni, 2015).

There are some important aspects for co-planning to be considered. Firstly, the roles and responsibilities for teachers before, during and after each lesson need to be discussed. These would include who does what, when, where and with whom. Secondly, expectations about the lesson structure and the rules for the class need to be agreed to ensure consistency in the classroom. Thirdly, teaching skills, tools, and methods to apply in the classroom need to be agreed. Finally, important documents, such as reports, tables, and tools for working together, need to be prepared and completed. Teachers should co-plan with short, regular meetings, in order to have a common approach to the delivery of the teaching and learning process. The team need to agree on the goals, the learning process and individual needs of students, the teaching methods and lesson structures, the different activities for a variety of groups and single students, and the evaluation methods (Cramerotti & Cattoni, 2015).

Co-planning introduces diversity into the planning and delivery of teaching, as staff members share best knowledge and practice, and increases representation of people from

different cultures, backgrounds, and perspectives. This reflects the wide range of students with different needs and backgrounds. A more inclusive classroom is developed as co-planning between teachers, and of course between teachers and other specialists, enables a multi-disciplinary view of pupils' needs and helps to develop effective interventions. Each staff member brings a diversity of skills and resources ensuring that each student receives the support they need. In addition to this, collaboration between teachers can serve as an example to students of cooperation, empathy, and appreciation of diversity, fostering inclusive thinking.

Co-assessment for teamwork.

Co-assessment covers two different concepts. On the one hand, the teachers need to evaluate their lessons, actively discussing and sharing their ideas and practices (Conderman & Hedin, 2012). This might include self-evaluating the teaching and then revising some of the activities. On the other hand, teachers also need to assess the learning of pupils, including their engagement in the lesson and their completion of the learning outcomes.

Assessment might involve collecting multiple sources of information in which each teacher shares data providing different types of information about students' progress (multidimensionality) (Ghedin, Aquario & Di Masi, 2013). It could also be done using a participative approach to assessment with students themselves (self-evaluation).

Deidda and Silvestro (2015) provide some sample questions for self-evaluation in teams:

- How were the time schedules for planning respected?
- How did pupils react to the proposed activities?
- What effective forms of communication were used?
- List any social skills needing to be reinforced or taught.
- Describe how co-teaching is effective.
- How were the goals achieved?
- Identify any problems that occurred during the lesson. How were they managed?

The inclusion of students' and pupils' voice

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNESCO, 1989) introduced Article 12 in 1989: the right for children and youth to take part in decision-making processes that affect them. As a consequence, starting from the 1990s, educational research has given a central role to students' voice. One particular aspect that has been considered and discussed in educational research is strictly connected with the idea of having a voice and of expressing it as a right, since school and education highly affects children and youth. In this conceptualisation, the word 'voice' goes beyond the understanding of voice in terms of sound and information; it stands for presence, participation and the power

of the individual being (Cook-Sather, 2006). The Student Voice approach in educational research simply means listening to students and taking into account their opinions in order to consider their point of view in research and in changes for education policies. In the field of inclusive education this issue is particularly relevant as it makes research methods more participative and inclusive. It is also very demanding because it requires data collection instruments that can give voice to all students, including disabled students, in a reliable way. Pupil voice has become increasingly important in educational research at an international level, but it can only be authentic if pupils feel free to express their opinions and point of view. The reliability of student voice is also connected with a participatory culture that creates a positive context for expression. Students should be encouraged to participate in debates and to explain their opinions (Fielding, 2004). There is also the issue that students may have something to say, and their contribution is useful for the whole teaching–learning process, but they do not know how to proceed and their opinions remains excluded (Rudduck & Fielding, 2006). For this reason, work has to be done within the school context so that it is seen as a supportive environment for participation, enhancing the quality of research based on students' voices. The Lundy Model of Participation provides a framework for best practice guiding the participation of children and young people in decision-making (Lundy, 2007). The key principles include Space (providing a safe space in which children can speak up and share their views), Voice (facilitating the sharing of views by children), Audience (ensuring that children's views are heard by decision-makers), and Influence (ensuring that children's views are acted on where appropriate). The Lundy Model can be used by any educational setting to guide the development of pupils' voices.

The Montessori approach is an important and concrete example of giving voice to students. This consists of inclusive teaching that respects the individual in their learning, with an environment organised in such a way that the individual pupil can direct their learning, based on their interests, preferred methods, and the time needed to complete the tasks. The Montessori approach provides pupils with the space to take an active role in their learning. For the first six years of age, the materials are mainly sensory, i.e. they allow children to gain appropriate knowledge by actively experiencing phenomena (touching, moving, interlocking, classifying, etc.), while for the following six years, an attempt is made to offer a school environment that responds to the curiosity of boys and girls, to their desire to understand the world, encouraging social participation and opportunities for individual and collective commitments aimed at empowerment (Caprara, 2022). The educational context makes it possible for the pupil to choose a task on which to concentrate and to choose the method of learning; either independently or by collaborating with small groups of classmates. The teacher then devotes their time to observing the class, facilitating the learning for each pupil, providing an educational context characterised by movement, freedom of choice, collaborative work, and self-determination of each pupils' learning goals (Caprara, 2022).

Teachers' collaboration with other educational professionals

One of the teacher's most natural co-workers is the support teacher or teaching assistant. The teacher and the teaching assistant can plan, implement, and evaluate the teaching together and share the responsibilities of the teaching process. Of course, the main responsibility for teaching is always with the teacher, but the teaching assistant is an essential part of teaching a diverse group, as they can be responsible for certain pupils or groups (Groom, 2006). The teacher must recognise the assistant's tacit knowledge: they often have a lot of experience with pupils and know their strengths and challenges very well and so are a real expert in teaching and learning situations (Greenway & Edwards, 2020). Additionally, when teachers and assistants work together in a team, they bring multiple views and attitudes, which might positively challenge those currently holding negative perspectives (Greenway & Edwards, 2020).

Teachers also emphasise the importance of multidisciplinary teams in the classroom (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). To support children with particular special educational needs, classroom teams may also include therapists; for example, physiotherapists, speech therapists and occupational therapists (Lindsay et al., 2014). The benefits of these multidisciplinary teams are that both educational and health-related perspectives can inform the teaching and learning activities in the classroom. A range of strategies and advice can be considered from these different perspectives. Additionally, each professional has their own relationship with the child and can consider how best to support a child in a variety of activities (Lindsay et al., 2014). Therapists can participate in lessons, lead individual tasks, or contribute to joint training with the pupil they support. Equally, the therapist does not always have to work one-to-one with the pupil; seeing the pupil with their peers can broaden the therapist's perspective in the learning process (Richardson, 2002).

The challenges of teamwork in the classroom

One of the challenges for teamwork is finding the time and space to meet, particularly if you have a busy teaching schedule, considering that teamwork will almost certainly involve an increase in additional work at the beginning (Hestenes et al., 2009). Finding space could also be problematic if classrooms are small in the school where co-teaching-methods could be implemented. Having a regular planning session, even an hour each week with your co-teacher, will help teachers to get started in co-teaching. Co-teaching may initially require more time than planning and teaching alone, but over time, as experience is gained and teachers get to know each other better, the need for planning is likely to decrease. No one can be forced to co-teach, and each teacher must be able to do their job in the way that suits them best. However, positive, and effective models of co-teaching can encourage even the most sceptical teacher to give it a try (Cramerotti & Cattoni, 2015).

There might also be challenges to do with your context; whether colleagues in your classroom, school or system want to work in teams, what attitudes your colleagues have

towards each other, or what skills each person has. One particular issue might be teachers' fear of losing autonomy and responsibility in the classroom (York et al., 2007). Additionally, teachers may feel under scrutiny by their peers and anxious about other teachers' perceptions of their approach or competence (York et al., 2007). In order to overcome this challenge, initially, the important thing is to understand why a colleague may not want to co-teach. Rather than making assumptions, ask them what they think the positives and negatives are with co-teaching. If they can only see problems, prompt them to think of any benefits, or suggest some yourself, for example, diversity of approaches. You may even start by explaining that you want to develop your own teaching and so are keen to work with others. You may be able to use examples of how a colleague seems to have very positive lessons with a certain student that you find more difficult to teach, and vice versa.

Resolving differences could present obstacles if teams have very different ideas and practices to share. Conflicts between teachers might be difficult to resolve and if there is confusion about the roles of each team member, it may hinder decision-making (Canaran & Mirici, 2020). This is where it can be helpful to clearly identify each person's role in the planning, delivery, and assessment of the learning. Additionally, it is good to identify practices that both teachers use and incorporate those to start with, before adding in more individual practices once trust has been established.

The benefits and importance of teamwork in the classroom

However, one of the benefits of teamwork is that it brings together different perspectives and different experiences taken from everyday practice. Teachers can then reflect on and evaluate their own practice (Boud & Hagar, 2012; Doppenberg et al., 2012) and build capacity, which tends to show longer-term results (Stoll et al., 2006; Vrieling et al., 2016; Wenger, 1998). There is evidence to show that teamwork for teachers can enable them to develop innovative teaching pedagogies, for example working in small groups, and improve teachers' job satisfaction and self-efficacy (European Commission, 2013).

Another benefit is that pupils see and hear different types of teaching – different explanations, different activities – which can help their learning, meet their different learning styles, and enhance their social development (Murawski & Swanson, 2001; Sapon-Shevin, 2003). Over time, teamwork can also help teachers to share the workload, for example, creating resources and developing lesson plans, and reduce the time that each teacher spends on preparation.

Local contexts

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=157#h5p-1

Closing questions to discuss or tasks

- What attitudes, knowledge or skills do you need to develop for teamwork?
- Thinking about your context, what are the challenges for you in participating in teamwork in the classroom? How could you overcome the challenges?
- What do you see as the three greatest benefits for inclusive education from working in a team?

Literature

Berliner, David C. (2001): Learning about and learning from expert teachers. In: International Journal of Educational Research 35, S. 463–482.

Blömeke, Sigrid (2017): Modelling teachers' professional competence as a multidimensional construct. Paris: OECD. S. 119–135. Online unter: https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/pedagogical-knowledge-and-the-changing-nature-of-the-teaching-profession/

modelling-teachers-professional-competence-as-a-multi-dimensional-construct_9789264270695-7-en.

Blömeke, Sigrid/Gustafsson, Jan-Eric/Shavelson, Richard (2015): Beyond Dichotomies Competence Viewed as a Continuum. In: Zeitschrift für Psychologie 223, S. 3–13.

Booth, Tony/Ainscow, Mel (2000): Index for Inclusion: Developing Learning and Participation in Schools. Online unter: https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Index-for-Inclusion%3A-Developing-Learning-and-in-Booth-Ainscow/dba04116b3801b0aaa6bf08773ec39f8a33e0603.

Borland, James H. (2003a): Equity, excellence, and school reform: Why is finding a common agenda so hard? In: Rethinking Gifted Education. Teachers College Press. S. 127–142.

Borland, James H. (2003b): Rethinking Gifted Education. Teachers College Press.

Bronfenbrenner, Urie (1981): The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Buehl, Michelle M./Alexander, Patricia A. (2009): Beliefs about learning in academic domains. In: Handbook of motivation at school. New York, NY, US: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group. S. 479–501. (= Educational psychology handbook series).

Cambridge University Press (2020): competence. In: Cambridge Dictionary. Cambridge University Press. Online unter: https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/competence.

Campbell, Elizabeth (2008): The Ethics of Teaching as a Moral Profession. In: Curriculum Inquiry 38, S. 357–385.

Campbell, Elizabeth (2014): Teaching Ethically as a Moral Condition of Professionalism. In: Handbook of Moral and Character Education. 2. Aufl. Routledge.

Conderman, Greg/Hedin, Laura (2012): Purposeful Assessment Practices for Co-Teachers. In: TEACHING Exceptional Children 44, S. 18–27.

Cook-Sather, Alison (2006): Sound, Presence, and Power: "Student Voice" in Educational Research and Reform. In: Curriculum Inquiry 36, S. 359–390.

Cramerotti, Sofia/Cattoni, Angela (2015a): Cos'é la compresenza didattica? Modelli operativi per la sua attuazione in classe. In: Compresenza didattica inclusiva. Indicazioni metodologiche e modelli operativi di co-teaching. Erickson. S. 57–86.

Cramerotti, Sofia/Cattoni, Angela (2015b): La collaborazione e la co-progettazione tra gli insegnanti. In: Compresenza didattica inclusiva. Indicazioni metodologiche e modelli operativi di co-teaching. Erickson. S. 39–56.

Deidda, Diego/Silvestro, Priscilla (2015): Sempre in aula. Un'esperienza di co-teaching tra insegnanti di scuola comune e insegnanti di sostegno. In: Compresenza didattica inclusiva. Indicazioni metodologiche e modelli operativi di co-teaching. Erickson. S. 161–176.

Demo, Heidrun/Capello, Silver/Macchia, Vanessa: Sei gradi di libertà: il lavoro libero come pratica inclusiva nell'approccio Montessori. In: Didattica e inclusione scolastica – Inklusion im Bildungsbereich. Bozen-Bolzano University Press. S. 17–32.

Desimone, Laura M. (2009): Improving Impact Studies of Teachers' Professional Development: Toward Better Conceptualizations and Measures. In: Educational Researcher 38, S. 181–199.

Diana, Thomas J. (2014): Co-teaching: Enhancing the Student Teaching Experience. In: Kappa Delta Pi Record 50, S. 76–80.

Dixon, Annabelle (2003): Teaching Assistants: whose definition? In: FORUM 45, S. 26–29.

European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education: Teacher Education for Inclusion – Profile of Inclusive Teachers. In: European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education. Online unter: https://www.european-agency.org/resources/publications/teacher-education-inclusion-profile-inclusive-teachers.

Fielding, Michael (2004): Transformative approaches to student voice: theoretical

underpinnings, recalcitrant realities. In: British Educational Research Journal 30, S. 295–311.

Florian, Lani/Black-Hawkins, Kristine (2011): Exploring inclusive pedagogy. In: British Educational Research Journal 37, S. 813–828.

Friend, Marilyn (2010): Co-Teach!: A Handbook for Creating and Sustaining Effective Classroom Partnerships in Inclusive Schools. 12. Aufl. Greensboro: Marilyn Friend Inc.

Friend, Marilyn/Cook, Lynne (2006): Interactions: Collaboration Skills for School Professionals. 5. Aufl. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Gess-Newsome, Julie (2002): Pedagogical Content Knowledge: An Introduction and Orientation. In: Examining pedagogical content knowledge: PCK and science education. S. 3–17.

Ghedin, Elisabetta/Aquario, Debora/Masi, Diego Di (2013): Co-teaching in action: una proposta per promuovere l'educazione inclusiva. In: Italien Journal of Educational Research, S. 157–175.

Graber, Kim C. (1996): Influencing student beliefs: The design of a "high impact" teacher education program. In: Teaching and Teacher Education 12, S. 451–466.

Greenway, Charlotte W./Rees Edwards, Alison (2020): Knowledge and attitudes towards attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD): a comparison of teachers and teaching assistants. In: Australian Journal of Learning Difficulties 25, S. 31–49.

Groom, Barry (2006): Building Relationships for Learning: The Developing Role of the Teaching Assistant. In: Support for Learning 21, S. 199–203.

Guy Evans, Oliviia (2023): Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory. Online unter: https://www.simplypsychology.org/bronfenbrenner.html.

Hattie, John (2009): Visible Learning: A Synthesis of Over 800 Meta-Analyses Relating to Achievement.

Husu, Jukka/Tirri, Kirsi (2001): Teachers' Ethical Choices in Sociomoral Settings. In: Journal of Moral Education 30, S. 361–375.

Ianes, Dario/Cramerotti, Sofia (2015): Compresenza didattica inclusiva. Indicazioni metodologiche e modelli operativi di co-teaching. Erickson.

Joseph, Stephen et al. (2013): The Impact of Differentiated Instruction in a Teacher Education Setting: Successes and Challenges. In: International Journal of Higher Education 2, S. 28–40.

Klassen, Robert/Kim, Lisa (2018): Selecting Teachers and Prospective Teachers: A Meta-Analysis.

Kools, Marco/Stoll, Louise (2016): What Makes a School a Learning Organisation? Paris: OECD. Online unter: https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/what-makes-a-school-a-learning-organisation_5jlwm62b3bvh-en.

Koster, B./Dengerink, J. (2008): Professional standards for teacher educators: How to deal with complexity, ownership and function. Experiences from the Netherlands. In: European Journal of Teacher Education 31, S. 135–149.

Lakkala, Suvi Päivikki/Kyrö-Ämmälä, Outi (2017): The Finnish School Case. In: Galkienė, Alvyra (Hg.): Inclusion in socio-educational frames. Vilnius: The publishing house of the Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences. S. 267–309.

Lindsay, Sally et al. (2014): Exploring teachers' strategies for including children with autism spectrum disorder in mainstream classrooms. In: International Journal of Inclusive Education 18, S. 101–122.

Lingard, Bob/Mills, Martin (2007): Pedagogies making a difference: Issues of social justice and inclusion. In: International Journal of Inclusive Education 11.

Lumby, Jacky/Coleman, Marianne (2016): Leading for Equality: Making Schools Fairer. 55 City Road, London.

Metsäpelto, Riitta-Leena et al. (2022): A multidimensional adapted process model of teaching. In: Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability 34, S. 143–172.

Murawski, Wendy/Swanson, H. (2001): A Meta-Analysis of Co-Teaching Research. In: Remedial and Special Education – REM SPEC EDUC 22, S. 258–267.

Qvortrup, Ane/Qvortrup, Lars (2018): Inclusion: Dimensions of inclusion in education. In: International Journal of Inclusive Education 22, S. 803–817.

Richardson, Virginia (1996): The role of attitudes and beliefs in learning to teach. In: Handbook of Research on Teacher Education. S. 102–119.

Richardson, Pamela (2002): The School as Social Context: Social Interaction Patterns of Children With Physical Disabilities. In: The American journal of occupational therapy: official publication of the American Occupational Therapy Association 56, S. 296–304.

Rudduck, Jean/Fielding, Michael (2006): Student Voice and the Perils of Popularity. In: Educational Review – EDUC REV 58, S. 219–231.

Seidel, Tina/Stürmer, Kathleen (2014): Modeling and Measuring the Structure of Professional Vision in Preservice Teachers. In: American Educational Research Journal 51, S. 739–771.

Shulman, Lee (2011): Knowledge and Teaching:Foundations of the New Reform. In: Harvard Educational Review 57, S. 1–23.

Slee, Roger (2014): Inclusive schooling as an apprenticeship in democacy? In: The SAGE Handbook of Special Education: Two Volume Set. Second Edition. London: SAGE Publications Ltd. S. 217–230.

Sparks, Dennis (2013): Strong Teams, Strong Schools: Teacher-to-Teacher Collaboration Creates Synergy that Benefits Students. In: Journal of Staff Development 34, S. 28–30.

van Es, Elizabeth/Sherin, Miriam (2002): Learning to Notice: Scaffolding New Teachers' Interpretations of Classroom Interactions. In: Journal of Technology and Teacher Education 10.

Ward, Rebecca J/Kovshoff, Hanna/Kreppner, Jana (2021): School staff perspectives on ADHD and training: understanding the needs and views of UK primary staff. In: Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties 26, S. 306–321.

Weinert, Franz E. (2001): Concept of competence: A conceptual clarification. In: Defining and selecting key competencies. Ashland, OH, US: Hogrefe & Huber Publishers. S. 45–65.

Whatley, Janice (2009): Ground Rules in Team Projects: Findings from a Prototype System to Support Students. In: Journal of Information Technology Education 8, S. 161–176.

Wilson, Elizabeth/Bedford, Dorothy (2008): 'New Partnerships for Learning': teachers and teaching assistants working together in schools – the way forward. In: Journal of Education for Teaching 34, S. 137–150.

York-Barr, Jennifer/Ghere, Gail/Sommerness, Jennifer (2007): Collaborative Teaching to Increase ELL Student Learning: A Three-Year Urban Elementary Case Study. In: Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk (JESPAR) 12, S. 301–335.

About the authors

Outi Kyrö-Ämmälä

Outi Kyrö-Ämmälä, PhD, is a University Lecturer in Teacher Education at the University of Lapland, Finland. Her research interests include teacher education and teacher professional development, inclusive and special education, and students' cognitive skills. She has been involved in several national and international projects developing inclusive education and teacher education. Outi is also a member of the Finnish Teacher Education Forum.

Becky Ward

Becky Ward, PhD, is a collaborative researcher in psychologically-informed practice. She pursues research with and for marginalised groups and individuals, but also has a particular interest in neurodiversity, homelessness and young people. She supervises and teaches both undergraduates and postgraduates in Psychology, including Clinical, Developmental and Educational Psychology. Her PhD from the University of Southampton explored a collaborative model of co-producing school staff ADHD resources. She is an experienced youth worker, trainer and advocate with a demonstrated history of working with vulnerable young people.

Silver Cappello

Silver Cappello has accomplished a PhD in General Education, General and Social Pedagogy at the Free University of Bolzano-Bozen (Italy). He is qualified as primary school teacher with a specialisation as support teacher and he has

worked as primary school teacher (mainly teaching second language), as assistant for people with disabilities, and as research assistant on different research projects at the Competence Centre for School Inclusion of the Free University of Bolzano-Bozen.

"PLEASE, DON´T SIT ON MY SHOULDER" - FROM NEO-LIBERAL TO EMANCIPATORY PERSPECTIVES: SHIFTING LANDSCAPES IN THE ROLES OF TEACHING AND PERSONAL ASSISTANTS

Danielle Farrel; Marie McLoughlin; Eileen Schwarzenberg; and Melanie Eilert

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=451#oembed-1

Example Case My Desire for Independence and the Need for Support: Finding the Right Balance

"Don't sit on my shoulder"

"I am a wheelchair user. Increasingly, I have found that I need to balance the support I receive from my Personal Assistant (PA) with the need to build friendship in my own right. For example, on a recent night out for a colleague's retirement, I required support to attend this event from my PA. Of course my PA was involved in some of the social interactions during the evening, but it was important for me to mix and interact with colleagues on my own. This is my preference, and I always make it clear when recruiting staff. It is important for me that my PA is present but not 'sitting on my shoulder'. However, from the point of view of the PA, this can be hard to manage, especially if they are used to working with a variety of people who may have complex needs or if they are used to working in a residential environment and move to supporting someone to live independently in their own home."

Dr Danielle Farrel, Managing Director Your Options Understood (Y.O.U.), UK

Initial questions

This chapter sets out to provide an overview of Teaching Assistants and Personal Assistants. In this chapter you will find the answers to the following questions:

1. What is a Personal Assistant and Teaching Assistant?
2. What roles and tasks does a Personal Assistant and Teaching Assistant undertake?
3. How are they employed?
4. What qualifications, education and training do they have?
5. How can they positively influence social integration?
6. How is the relationship with other professionals or the person they assist characterised?
7.

Introduction to Topic

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the role of Personal Assistants (PAs) and Teacher Assistants (TAs) in supporting people with disabilities in their daily lives. Since 1994, Maher and Vickerman (2018) refer to the Salamanca Statement which "expressly entreated national governments to 'adopt as a matter of law or policy the principle of inclusive education, enrolling all children in regular schools" (UNESCO). Since then, inclusion principles have been reinforced by a number of global and European policies such as the Dakar Statement (Maher & Vickerman, 2018) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO, 2009) through Policy Guidelines on Inclusion in Education. Significantly, this topic is enshrined within the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD) which provides a comprehensive framework to protect and promote the rights of people with disabilities and highlights several key rights. Article 9 stipulates that measures should be put in place to ensure accessibility by removing barriers that hinder full participation in society for persons with disabilities. Article 19 requires

the provision of appropriate support services, including personal assistance, to enable individuals with disabilities to live a full life in the community and exercise their autonomy. Finally, Article 24 recognises a right of access to persons with disabilities to education on an equal basis with others. Hence, the provision of inclusive education, with reasonable accommodations and supports, is necessary to facilitate the effective education of persons with additional needs (United Nations, 2006).

This chapter begins by providing a brief overview of the context for employing TAs and PAs. We then proceed to examine the role of TAs and PAs in supporting persons with disabilities in their daily lives and in educational settings. Next, we endeavour to define the roles, discuss associated terminology and provide an overview of the respective responsibilities associated with both roles. Additionally, we explore how teachers and assistants engage and interact with each other in various settings. Further, we discuss supports that are in place to help Personal/Teacher Assistants (P/TAs) and their employers as well as the influence P/TAs can have on peer relations and social integration. Finally, recommendations for the future are discussed.

At times, the topic is discussed within the context of a few specific countries namely, the UK (Scotland in particular), Ireland and Germany. Beside scientific contents, you will find in the chapter several case studies which illustrate the contents and provide a deeper insight into the perspective of the self-advocates. Most case studies were written by one of the authors of the chapter, Danielle Farell.

Description of structural disadvantages and how to address or prevent them

While there are several structural disadvantages, we have chosen two very significant disadvantages on the recommendation of self-advocates, both of which have received little attention in research so far. Firstly, we discuss the influence of TAs and PAs on social integration, and secondly we focus on the relationship between TAs and PAs.

Structural disadvantage 1: The Influence of TAs/PAs on Social Integration

Social integration of people with disabilities is limited. Many suffer from social exclusion and discrimination, despite the UNCRPD's existence in many countries which supports/ emphasises? greater participation. On the one hand, TAs and PAs can positively support people/pupils with disabilities to participate in social life, however, they can also influence social integration negatively (see Case Study 1). The term social integration has no single definition. Indeed, social integration, social inclusion and social participation are often used interchangeably while social integration as a term is variously defined (Koster et al., 2009). In this section, we employ the definition from Stinson and Antia (1999) discusses the

importance of social integration in relation to peer acceptance and friendship, and view peer interaction as an essential factor in social integration.

Social integration of students with TAs in regular classroom

In general, studies indicate that the social position of students with special needs is particularly poor when educated in a regular classroom. Often, they are less accepted and less popular than their classmates without special needs, and consequently make fewer friends (Banks, McCoy and Frawley, 2018; Saddler, 2014). It is important to notice that pupils with SEN are a heterogenous group. Therefore, peer relations can differ according to the type of special needs (Koster et al., 2009). Nevertheless, it is important to examine how social integration of students can be improved if a TA is involved.

Influence of a TA on social integration

We will now explore the influence of teaching assistants on social interaction. There is a paucity of research in this area and outcomes also vary across studies. Furthermore, previous research has primarily focused on the influence of TAs on academic achievement which generally suggests that TAs have a positive influence on students' learning achievement (Farrell et al., 2010; Saddler, 2014). Research on increased social integration of students in Germany occurred through the promotion of social skills, peer contact and peer interaction (Jerosenko, 2019). Additionally, supporting social behaviour was seen to contribute to more social contacts (Schindler, 2019).

In contrast, however, Webster and de Boer (2021) contend that facilitating the inclusion of pupils with learning difficulties can reduce interactions with teachers and peers and create dependencies on TAs. Zauner and Zwosta (2014) studied the stigmatising effect of TAs on students in Germany and found that most teachers did not recognise such effects (62%) and failed to acknowledge the disturbance of other pupils by the presence of the TAs in the classroom (72%). However, a significant proportion still see some stigmatising effects or disturbances.

In terms of students with Profound Intellectual and Multiple Disabilities (PIMD), high-quality interactions are crucial for their quality of life (Haakma et al., 2021). Due to their profound special needs in terms of physical condition, mobility, health problems, sensory impairments and non-verbal language, one-to-one teaching assistance is increasingly important. Many PIMD students use Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) and therefore their interaction with peers differ. In a single case study, Schwarzenberg, Melzer and Penczek (2016) found that peers often use several communication strategies to interact with the PIMD student who uses AAC. They accepted the student, and some made friends with the student. Additionally, Haakma et al. (2021) revealed that TAs tried to facilitate interactions between peers and PIMD students. For example, some TAs adjusted the student's position by taking a student out of their wheelchair and placing them on

the ground among a group of playing students. However, even if the TAs attempted to facilitate interactions between students with PIMD and peers, these interactions were often unsuccessful. This represents how difficult it is for TAs to initiate and influence peer interaction positively.

Negative Effects linked to Social Integration of Students with SEN and a TA

Several studies point to the negative effects linked to social integration of students with SEN. Giangreco et al. (2005) outline five negative effects: firstly, students with a TA are often seated apart from peers in a corner of a classroom; secondly, students become dependent on support from the TA and are unable to participate without the TA. Thirdly, TAs disturb peer interactions by establishing a physical or symbolic barrier for peers. Fourthly, the TA and the student have a very close relationship by virtue of doing everything together, hence other teachers and peers may be excluded. Finally, students feel stigmatised due to the continuous presence of the TA. Similar findings were identified by Sharma and Salend (2016) which found that TAs often taught SEN pupils separately in individual and small groups, thus spending less time in the classroom with fewer peer interactions. Furthermore, the constant presence of TAs and the delivery of separate instruction also limited student interactions. Students with a TA can be perceived by their peers as different and dependent, which can lead to stigmatisation. For example, Jerosenkos (2019) stated that the presence of TAs was increasing students' dependence and impeding the child's interactions with classmates.

How can TAs positively influence social integration?

In light of these findings, how can TAs positively influence peer interaction and social integration? Firstly, awareness of the roles and responsibilities of TAs in schools should be improved. This includes reflections on roles and responsibilities of TAs which may lead to shifts in responsibilities. Teams should reflect on whether a TA is needed in each situation and the benefit of TAs in specific situations (Giangreco et al., 2005). For instance, Highton (2017) interviewed six TAs and found that the frequency and intensity of peer interactions depended on how the assistants fulfilled their role and how they interacted with the students. If they act in a very dominant, instructive and regulatory way, interactions were prevented. If they acted as so-called "coaches" and offered support to help students in solving their conflicts themselves, peer interaction and friendships can develop over the long term.

In terms of participation, it is important to activate and strengthen the child's voice. In other words, students themselves should be more involved in deciding what support they need. In the majority of the studies, teachers and assistants were interviewed whilst the student's perspective was not considered. Schools need to establish a culture of collaboration within classrooms. Hence, strengthening collaboration between general and

special educators, building capacity in general education, and increasing reliance on natural supports is recommended (Giangreco et al., 2005). In addition, natural support should be considered whereby peers can be more involved in supporting the disabled peer with a TA as peer supporters.

Finally, parental perspectives are examined in terms of how TAs may be best deployed for their children and if their views are consistent with the effective use of TAs in inclusive classrooms (Sharma and Salend, 2016). Parents should be asked why they want support for their child, and how best this support can be offered. These perspectives can then be considered in the deployment of TAs.

The Influence of Personal Assistants on Social Integration

A PA can support people with disabilities to participate in everyday life. However, this can lead to people with disabilities becoming dependent on the PA. and thereby precluding them from making friends and being part of a group (see Case 5). For example, Wadensten and Ahlström (2009) found that PAs can enable the establishment of close relationships, social interaction, company, and a community spirit through activities in, and outside, of the home. Some participants reported that their PAs have a social function where they felt they had new people to interact with and therefore felt less lonely. That said, PAs described "difficulties of being in a subordinate position" (Ahlström and Wadensten, 2012, p. 112) even if they expressed satisfaction with their work. Some reported feeling lonely and missed the work community. They also felt that they have a lack of control in unstructured work and experienced stress with too much responsibility. The majority reported a need for more education (Ahlström and Wadensten, 2012).

How can the balance between support and independence be strengthened? Toward cooperative models of living and working together

When a person with disabilities relies on support from a PA to assist them with social interactions, it is crucial that the PA enables the disabled person to develop their own identity and build their own relationships. The PA's role is fundamental in this instance, particularly if the disabled person has a high level of support needs. Nevertheless, the PA's role must be balanced by enabling the supported person to spend time with their peers, family members and colleagues, and allowing others to build a relationship with the person who requires support, as opposed to building a relationship with them and their PA.

Maskos (2014) criticises that in today's discourse of self-determination, an emancipatory perspective is missing, in which disability, illness and dying are an integral part of life. People are dependent on each other, in varying degrees, including people with disabilities. Therefore, it is necessary to consider how life can be shaped with, and in, these dependencies, rather than requiring that all dependencies be overcome. More cooperative models of living and working together are needed.

Structural disadvantage 2: Relationships between teachers and TAs and between a self-employer and a PA

Relationships play an important role in dealing with the support of people/students with disabilities through PAs or TAs. Relationships, even if professional in nature, are rarely conflict-free, and various factors, such as different roles and responsibilities, influence relationships. In the field of education, there are several professional relationships, such as the relationship between teachers and TAs. The central question is how to work together in a team? The same question can be applied to the relationship between a person with a disability and a PA.

Team Relationships between Teachers and TAs

Many professionals, such as social workers, therapeutic professionals (e.g., speech therapists, learning therapists), as well as TAs are increasingly working in tandem with teachers in schools (Serke and Streese, 2022). The research indicates there is a need for teachers to improve their work with TAs (Jackson et al., 2021). In an international systematic review of 26 studies, Jackson (2021) examines the teachers' perspective of their work with TAs and identified four key themes including; roles and responsibilities, planning and pedagogy, leadership, and interpersonal relationships.

Firstly, the role of a TA, and the expectations associated with the role, cause tensions in TA-teacher relationships. According to Butt and Lowe (2012), teachers and TAs perceive the role differently, and in some instances, teachers are not certain about what level of responsibility TAs should be given.

A second issue, related to the respective roles, concerns the nature of the working relationship between SNAs and teachers. This has been described in terms of collaboration, partnership and teamwork which implies joint planning and problem solving (Logan, 2006). Yet, there seems to be a lack of awareness around the real benefits associated with collaborative planning and indeed in most jurisdictions, time for such planning is often limited (Jackson et al., 2021). Interestingly, Logan's research found that 70% of SNAs perceived that teachers did in fact involve them in planning, whilst by comparison, only 53% of teachers felt they involved the SNA in planning. That said, 85% of teachers felt it was appropriate to do so. Relatedly, teachers are often challenged in understanding whether or not a TA has the capability to assume a pedagogical role, which is often associated with the level of qualification the TA holds. In sum, it could be construed that the provision of time, and awareness building around how and why to engage in planning, may support the development of enhanced collaborative partnership towards better overall provision for the children in their care.

A third theme associated with relationships is that of teacher leadership. Teachers need to assume a leadership role but often lack the requisite knowledge and skill. Jackson et al. (2021) concludes that: "Teachers need to view themselves as leaders of TAs. They

should be involved in recruitment, supervision, and training of TAs yet they need time and supervisory training themselves to learn and hone this skill" (p. 83).

Finally, it has been found that interpersonal relationships between TAs and teachers have been influenced by differences in status, working conditions (Jardi et al., 2022), and school type (Blatchford et al., 2009). Degrees of co-operation are also associated with certainty about one's own role, which in turn affects levels of job satisfaction for TAs (Blatchford et al., 2009).

How can the relationship between a TA and teachers be supported?

Jardí et al. (2022) examined how effective interpersonal partnerships are built. Findings show that having a close affinity with each other, open communication, a sense of belonging, professional compatibility, interpersonal treatment, and trust are equally important. Contextual factors, such as employment conditions, supervision, and administrative support, were less important. They concluded that: "Building a partnership is reported to be a long-term pathway, it is a process that should be purposefully fostered and adjusted through time" (Jardi et al., 2022, p. 8). TAs and teachers need time to get to know and understand each other to ensure collaborative and supportive attitudes. A sense of belonging and the perception of being welcomed are more important for TAs than for teachers. Above all, TAs want to feel respected and valued by teachers.

A recurring theme in the literature is the promotion of effective teamwork. Three specific models have been developed around this (Vincett, Cremin and Thomas, 2005). The Room Management Model (RMM) requires that all adults in the room are given a clear role; the Zoning Model refers to a system of classroom management where adults take responsibility for different zones in the classroom. In the Reflective Teamwork Model (RTM), the participants receive training in skills based on teamwork, with a particular emphasis on effective communication. Additionally, the teacher and the TA are asked to plan and review their teaching sessions in equal collaboration daily (Vincett et al., 2005). According to O'Brien (2010), the RTMl was favoured by participants as it improved communication, developed more positive working relationships, and supported role clarification.

Jackson et al. (2021) concluded that "teachers who are aware of the delineation between their roles and responsibilities and those of TAs may be more likely to implement more equitable and inclusive models of student support" (p. 76). Clearly, all of these point to the need for a redefinition of tasks, roles and responsibilities in addition to a strengthening of structures towards the enhancement of cooperation and collaboration (Serke and Streese, 2022).

1.2.3 Potential challenges of changing roles

A potential challenge for students leaving school is the transition from teaching assistant to personal assistant. Here, it is important to consider how students can be accompanied during the role change and, if necessary, how this can be prepared for in the long term

at school by consciously addressing the process and gradually giving the student more responsibility for guiding the assistant. A gradual transition from assisting the teacher to assisting the pupil can help prepare young people with disabilities for their role as employers.

Relationship between PAs and self-employed / Person with disability – towards more awareness

Despite the fact that PAs play an important role in the lives of people with disabilities, the relationship between PAs and self-employed persons with disabilities is delicate. "There exists, therefore, a disjunction between the ideal image of PA as a commercial relationship free from emotional dilemmas, and a disparate literature charting moral dilemmas and interpersonal conflict within PA relationships" (Porter et al., 2022, p. 632). Porter et al. (2022) reported challenges that PAs faced under three different headings: 1) practical trouble, for example in working conditions and management style; 2) personal trouble, for instance, conflicts because of different personalities or different values; and 3) proximal trouble, for example socio-spatial proximity of a PA. A major area of tension is where the person with a disability is both an employer and an expert in his or her own life, whilst at the same time, is existentially dependent on his or her employees. For example, it can be difficult for the person with disabilities to criticise their PA if, at the same time, they are existentially dependent on the PA. The PA has an intimate insight into the life of the person giving the work, while at the same time being an employee. This tension between the employer's dependence on the employee must always be reflected upon and dealt with professionally (Kasper and Zuber, 2023).

PAs must be aware that their place of work is often within a private home. People with disabilities and their families may feel uncomfortable with having strangers in their home (Porter et al., 2022). Conflicts can arise due to different attitudes and perceptions. In this context, PAs need, among other things, a high degree of attentiveness and considerable practice in expressing their own opinion but only when requested and in a restrained manner. In addition, they should always critically reflect on their own behaviour with regard to possible tendencies to influence the person receiving assistance. Furthermore, PAs should always clarify and become aware of their current role (friend, assistant, advisor, ambassador, bridge builder) (Kasper and Zuber, 2023).

Key aspects

Historical Context for the Establishment of Personal Assistants and Teaching Assistants

Personal Assistants – Independent Living Movement

The establishment of the PA role can be traced back to the so-called "Independent Living Movement" in the 1960s and 1970s. In the USA and the UK, many people advocated for people with disabilities to live independent lives within the community and not in institutions. Experts and organisations in the field of special education and rehabilitation have been partially replaced by a new paradigm, which was developed by people with disabilities themselves (Barnes, 2014). The movement started in the early 1980s in Germany with the slogan of "Selbstbestimmt-Leben-Bewegung" (self-determined living movement) (Maskos, 2014). In many countries, this movement changed views on people with disabilities from a medical or individual model to one of a social model of disability (Barnes, 2014). In contrast to the medical model, where disability is seen as an individual phenomenon, which is addressed with medical measures (Waldschmidt, 2005), the social model of disability is seen as a 'social problem' (Barnes, 2014). Hence, disability is understood as a social construct, created through discrimination and oppression. This shifts the focus to society, rather than the individual (Degener, 2016).

Another model which emerged following the establishment of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) is the human rights model of disability (Degener, 2016). In this model, human rights cannot be invalidated by disability, but are taken for granted. This contrasts with the social model, in that human rights could be partially denied through attribution (Degener 2016). Personal assistance is well linked to the human rights model of disability underpinned by the UNCRPD as it empowers people with disabilities to live independently and receive community-based support. One primary goal of the Independent Living Movement was deinstitutionalisation, i.e., the dissolution of institutions for people with disabilities and the provision of assistance to enable people with disabilities to exercise more control over their own lives, and live life to the fullest. PAs, which emerged from this campaign, are perceived as a necessity to support people with disabilities, affording them the same choices and control in their everyday lives that people without disabilities take for granted (Maskos, 2014).

With this movement, there has been an undeniable shift in the landscape of social care resulting in an upsurge in demand for PAs as more people with disabilities now live in their own homes. Notwithstanding this trend, significant work has still to be done as many people with disabilities still live in institutions (Maskos, 2014). To compound matters, the UK and many other countries experienced a recruitment crisis (following the Covid-19 pandemic) across all areas of social care. This has precipitated the need for closer examination of the current provision of services. Consequently, in recent years, the

UK reviewed adult social care services. In England, this review was conducted under the Social Care Reform (Migration Advisory Committee, 2022) whilst the Scotland Government conducted the independent Adult Social Care review (Feely, 2021) aimed at the implementation of a National Care Service. Within this, there are plans for better working conditions for employees in Social Care, including PAs, which in turn may address the increasing demand for skilled people to fulfil these roles. In Ireland, a slower uptake with 'personalisation' is evident – this umbrella term is used to refer to people living with disability who now have choice and control around their support. In implementing this strategy, a similar approach is adopted in Scotland, whereby disabled individuals and families living with disability are afforded options on how to allocate and spend their budget. As a result, there has been an increase in demand for PAs. The same increase in demand for PAs emerged in Germany in 2016 when the so-called Bundesteilhabegesetz (BTHG) came into force. Up to 2023, four reform stages were implemented, which will fundamentally change the law for people with disabilities. The aim is to implement the UNCRPD to help people with disabilities to have more participation and individual self-determination. To this end, services are no longer institution-centred but person-centred (Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales, 2016).

Before proceeding, it is important to distinguish between special educational needs (SEN) and special education needs and disability. As the authors of this chapter are from Ireland, the UK and Germany, both terms are used. The former – SEN – is defined within Irish legislation to mean:

> a person [who has]…, a restriction in the capacity […] to participate in and benefit from education on account of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or learning disability, or any other condition which results in a person learning differently from a person without that condition and cognate words shall be construed accordingly; (Government of Ireland, 2004, p. 5)

In documentation from the UK, young people who have SEN may have a disability under the Equality Act 2010:

> …a physical or mental impairment which has a long-term and substantial adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'…[]…This definition includes sensory impairments such as those affecting sight or hearing, and long-term health conditions such as asthma, diabetes, epilepsy, and cancer. Children and young people with such conditions do not necessarily have SEN, but there is a significant overlap between disabled children and young people and those with SEN. Where a disabled child or young person requires special educational provision they will also be covered by the SEN definition" (DofE & DofH, 2015, p. 16).

In the UK, the term Special Educational Needs and Disability is typically used as an umbrella term, however, SEN usually applies to children with a specific learning difficulty while a child with SEND may also have a diagnosed disability.

The Emergence of Teaching/Special Needs Assistants in Education

In recent years, the increase in numbers of Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) coupled with the provision of greater training opportunities, demonstrates the importance attached to the development of this role. Between 1992 and 1996, there was a 56% increase in the number of staff working in primary schools in England (Groom & Rose, 2005). Concurrently, a commitment to inclusive policies in England resulted in an increase in the number of pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) or Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) attending mainstream schools (Maher & Vikerman, 2018). A similar development can also be observed in Germany. Since Germany signed up to the UNCRPD in 2009, inclusive education has been established in many federal states. Pupils with special needs attend the mainstream school and, within this context, require support. This support is offered by an increasing number of TAs (Sansour & Bernhard, 2018). However, in Germany, the number of hours of special education teachers per student has decreased over the last 30 years, while the number of hours provided by teaching assistants has increased dramatically. Previously the education authority traditionally financed teaching hours, whereas teaching assistants are now financed through the social welfare budget.

The role of the TAs has been identified as critical in the promotion of inclusive schooling. Many students may not have been effectively managed in educational settings without the support of these essential professionals. Indeed, Zhao, Rose and Shevlin (2021) found that in Ireland, SNAs were considered crucial in delivering more inclusive learning environments. However, whilst studies related to the German context highlight the importance of teaching assistants, focus was placed predominantly on the characteristics of and structures for Teaching Assistants within individual federal states, as opposed to examining the topic across states (Lübeck & Demmer, 2022).

Terminology and Definition: Personal Assistant and Teaching Assistant

In the field of disability, the term 'assistance' has become a contested term in recent years. However, most are not aware of what assistance actually means in the context of people with disabilities (Leuenberger, 2023). Across Europe, the terminology used to describe individuals who assist people with additional needs varies from country to country, and sometimes from state to state. Broadly speaking, there are two distinct terms, that is a PA and a TA.

Defining Personal Assistance

A PA is a clearly defined term. The UN Committee (2017) clarifies this: "Personal assistance means person-directed/user-directed human support for a person with disabilities and is an instrument for self-determined living" (UNCRPD, 2017, p. ?). Personal assistance is not

simply another word in the multitude of terms used to describe assistance services, but is closely linked to the enabling of a self-determined life (Leuenberger, 2023). Therefore, personal assistance has been defined by members of the independent living movement as "a tool which allows for independent living" (Mladenov, 2020, p. 2). In Germany and other German speaking countries, the terms "Assistenz" (Assistance) and "Persönliche Assistenz" (Personal Assistant) are used (Leuenberger, 2023). In line with Irish policy, a personal assistant is someone "employed by the person with a disability to enable them to live an independent life. The personal assistant provides assistance, at the discretion and direction of the person with the disability, thus promoting choice and control for the person with the disability to live independently" (Buchanan, 2014, p. 12). These services are generally provided to persons with physical and sensory disabilities. In contrast, persons with disabilities over the age of 65 access the Home Support Service which provides home-based supports, such as cleaning, cooking and sometimes personal care.

Defining Teacher Assistants

TA is generally used to describe support staff who assist pupils in schools. This may also include higher-level teaching assistants (Saddler, 2014), while further afield, in Australia and USA, TAs are also referred to as paraprofessionals, teacher aides, and paraeducators (Sharma & Salend, 2016).

In the United Kingdom, TAs in educational settings can also be referred to as Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) (Groom & Rose, 2005). In Ireland, TAs are known as SNAs and provide schools with extra staff to support children who have additional and significant care needs. Such assistance facilitates pupils' attendance at school, fosters the development of independent living skills and reduces disruption to teaching time for all pupils (DES, 2014). In a comprehensive review of the role of SNAs, the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) in Ireland recommended that SNAs "be re-named as Inclusion Support Assistants to reflect their role in promoting independence and inclusion" (NCSE, 2018, p.7). This indicates a shift from special needs terminology which some students find difficult. Zhao, Rose and Shevlin (2021) confirm this redesignation in the terminology, and highlight their specific care role which differs to the role and duties of the teacher.

It is important to note that these terms may vary from country to country and indeed across regions, depending on local practices and policies. For example, in Germany, terms differ across federal states. Defining a job title is still problematic today, as there are no precise legal regulations on their roles. In addition to the term Schulbegleiter* (school companion), terms such as "Schulassistenz" (school assistance), "Integrationshelfer*in" (integration aide), and "Schulbegleiter*in" (school aide) are used. These terms refer to individuals who support students with disabilities or additional needs in inclusive classrooms (Dworschak, 2010). Progressive states (such as Bremen) are currently testing solutions in which school assistants are not assigned to individual children, but rather are

available to the class as a pool offer (Vanier, 2024) and subsequently support different children as required.

Responsibilities Carried out by Personal Assistants

PAs are individuals who support a person with a disability to live an independent life (Self-Directed Support Scotland, 2021). The role of the PA emerged from the Independent Living Movement (see Chapter 4.1.1 and 5.1). The person with disabilities directs how tasks should be completed by the PA. A PA does not generally assist with making decisions or choices but rather assists the person with a disability in meeting identified outcomes. The key difference between a PA and a paid carer/support worker is that the PA is accountable to their person with disability who is their employer, who, in turn, is responsible for the welfare and safety of the PA, as well as their conditions of employment (Self-Directed Support Scotland, 2021). The case below provides an insight into the role of a PA:

Case Study 1: My Role as a Personal Assistant

"It's a job that is as varied and interesting as the human experience can be"

I've worked as a PA for a few different people over several years, and each job is as individual as that person is. Essentially my job is to support a person with disabilities to live independently. I support them with whatever they might need, anything from attending birthday parties to after-school clubs, holidays or work trips, support to run a business, to perform in theatres, do homework, write an article, or just to get on with their daily lives at home. The job can involve varying degrees of personal assistance, for example, assistance with mobility aids, communication aids or feeding devices, and it requires a high level of trust and respect. It's a job that is as varied and interesting as the human experience can be, and I feel very lucky to be able to do it.

Maria Herbert-Liew, Personal Assistant, Scotland

Responsibilities Carried out by Teacher Assistants

The introduction of additional in-class support has been hailed as the single most important factor in enabling pupils with SEN to be integrated and maintained in mainstream classrooms (Groom and Rose, 2005). Zhao, Rose and Shevlin (2021) explored the role of SNAs within Irish schools and found that SNAs were highly valued in the education system. They contend that SNAs availability has greatly enabled schools to create flexible,

inclusive learning environments for children. However, the authors also stress the complex and multi-dimensional nature of the role. More generally, they describe the multitude of responsibilities comprising physical caretaking, organisational support, managing behaviour, promoting independence, collaboration between SNAs, teachers and other school professionals. In Ireland, the Department of Education (DES) lists the primary care needs provided by a SNA which comprise: assistance with severe communication difficulties; assistive technology, feeding, toileting, general hygiene, mobility, orientation, moving and lifting of children; supervision; administration of medicine; care needs associated with specific medical conditions or requiring frequent interventions or withdrawal from the classroom (DES, 2014). Secondary care tasks carried out by SNAs include: assistance with the preparation and tidying of workspaces; the development and review of plans; monitoring pupils attendance and care needs; enabling access to therapy or psycho-educational programmes; preparation of school files and materials, liaising with class teachers and other teachers; attending meetings and attendance at out-of-school activities (DES, 2014). Blatchford et al. (2009) also identified tasks related to TAs or SNAs, which include: support for teachers and/or the curriculum; direct learning support for pupils; direct pastoral support for pupils; indirect support for pupils and support for school administration, communication and environmental (p. 76). Similarly, Giangreco et al., (2005) refer to the variety of valued roles carried out by TAs, for example, "clerical tasks; follow-up instruction or homework assistance; supervision in group settings (e.g., cafeteria, playground, bus boarding); assisting learners with personal care needs (e.g., bathroom use, eating, dressing and facilitating social skills, peer interactions, and positive behaviour support plans" (p. 29). Whilst educational instruction should be the responsibility of trained teachers, TAs often assume primary instructional roles which can foster improved academic, behavioural and social outcomes for students when they are appropriately trained and supervised. It is evident that the TA role is broad, varied and dependent on the needs of the specific needs of the pupil. The example below is a testimony from a TA:

Case Study 2: My Role as a Teacher Assistant

"He is now able to cope with everyday school life independently"

My name is Simone Manger, I am a nursery teacher and I worked for four years as a Teaching Assistant for a student with special educational needs (SEN). The company I applied for is a GmbH (limited liability company). Beside Teaching Assistants, they employ personal assistants but they offer teaching assistant positions, family support and inclusive

holiday support. My student was nine years old when we met first and he went to the fourth class of a regular, mainstream school. My tasks were to offer the student structures, safety and individual support to get more independent. Together with the class teacher I planned my tasks and responsibilities collaboratively. To avoid stigmatisation by his fellow students, we figured out that I can support other students as well if he doesn't need my support. Another important aspect of my work was the cooperation with the student's parents. They had high expectations for their son's learning. So, I had to clearly distinguish myself and repeatedly demand understanding for their son's individual development. As the close relationship with my student was an essential part of my pedagogical work, it was always a challenge for my student when I was replaced by colleagues he did not know in case of my illness. He often refused to cooperate on such days and conflict with his classmates increased. During the COVID-19 pandemic, my student was supported by another colleague, as I had to homeschool my own children. This colleague spent five hours a day at my student's home, accompanied him during the video conferences and supported him with the subsequent tasks. After the lockdown my student went back to school and I then took over again. I observed that the intensive home schooling had led to a significant improvement in his grades on the one hand, but on the other hand he was less independent in solving tasks and problems on his own. Central aspects of my work were then to support him in regaining his independence at school and the social integration into the class after the pandemic. Within the four years as a school support teacher, I was able to support my student in (further) developing his academic and social skills to the extent that he is now able to cope with everyday school life independently.

Simone Manger, Teaching Assistant, Germany

Employment

Employment of TAs and PAs is organised according to the specific country and differs regarding work situation, qualifications and payment. In this section we focus first on the employment of PAs and then describe employment of TAs.

Employment of Personal Assistants

There are two ways PAs in Germany are employed. Firstly, the PA is employed by a care service/company (see Case 3). The care service/company organises and pays the assistant. Secondly, PAs are employed on the basis of 'direct payments'. People with disabilities become 'employers' or 'contractors' who either directly recruit, hire and manage their personal assistants, or do so through the mediation of independent service providers (Mladenov, 2020). The employment is possible due to the so-called "Persönliches Budget"

("Personal budget"). This concept of assistance is intended to express a different understanding of professional help, and the relationship between beneficiaries and service providers is thus redefined (Konrad, 2019). Which service provider pays depends on the personal situation and on the specific assistance required. For example, if you need work assistance, the Federal Employment Agency (BA) or the Integration Office can pay the costs. As in many professions, the salary depends on the respective employer (Konrad, 2019).

In the UK, if an individual requiring support decides to employ PAs directly, this is usually undertaken through Direct Payment. This is one of four options of Self-Directed Support in Scotland, and is also an option in the south of the UK. Although opting for a Direct Payment gives disabled people and families more choice and control around their support, it also brings with it all the responsibilities of an employer, such as recruitment, ongoing training and managing staff. Payroll companies are also set up across the majority of the local authorities in Scotland to assist PA employers with payroll. Some of these organisations may also be able to assist with the training and recruitment of PAs, however, the supported person is still the employer. The phrase 'employed by' in the Irish context, means that the service user has full control over the PA. Typically, however, service users avail of allocated funding to employ a PA through service providers (Carroll & McCoy, 2022).

The figure below illustrates how support is organised via Direct Payment in seven steps (in Control, 2020).

Figure 1: Information about self-directed support

Source: https://in-control.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/seven-steps-easy-read-poster.pdf

Danielle and Maria outline seven steps in building cooperation towards support (see Case 3 below).

Case Study 3: How I am Employed as a PA

"She still has all the choice and control around her support and how it's provided"

My name is Maria and I am employed by Enable to support Danielle. Enable is one of a small number of provider organisations that work within a PA structure. The beauty of being supported by an organisation working within a PA structure is that they recruit a team specifically around each person and their support needs. Danielle is involved in the interview process and in deciding whether staff are successful in gaining a post in her team. She still has all the choice and control around her support and how it's provided but she doesn't have the responsibility of being an employer and managing her PA team. Most provider

organisations across the UK, who deliver Social Care services do not have this structure and instead simply send staff where and when they are needed. As a result of this approach, it is often the case that the supported person does not receive continuity of care.

Danielle Farrel, Managing Director Your Options Understood (Y.O.U.) and Maria Herbert-Liew, Personal Assistant, Scotland

Employment of Teaching Assistants

In Germany, the employment of TAs varies across federal states. In a study from 2022, Idel and Korff found that TAs in the federal state of Bremen were employed by different private providers/agencies (such as private providers, foundations, and welfare associations) who all compete for business. There is no legal regulation for the control of these providers consequently costs vary. TAs view their employment situation as precarious, nevertheless, they hold high intrinsic motivation, as extrinsic motivation factors, such as better payment and promotion opportunities, do not exist (Kißgen et al., 2016).

In Ireland, the NCSE "is responsible, through its network of local Special Educational Needs Officers (SENOs) for allocating SNAs to schools to support children with special educational needs" (DES, 2014, p. 13). An SNA's contract of employment is with the managerial authority of the school in which they are employed. An SNA's salary is paid directly by the DES, and prior to the appointment of an SNA, applications are made by the school to the NCSE. Allocations are considered on the basis of an assessment made by a relevant professional who reports that a pupil has a significant medical, physical or sensory impairment. Under certain circumstances, SNA support may be allocated where the care needs relate to behaviour. SNAs are allocated to schools and not individual pupils, and are therefore a school-based resource. Schools manage their allocation by targeting the children in greatest need and exercise autonomy and flexibility in order to provide for the care needs of identified children as, and when, those needs arise. SNA allocations are also time bound and specifically linked to the Personal Pupil Plan (PPP). The allocation may be made initially for a maximum period of three years, but is subject to annual review and a full reassessment of their care needs at the end of this period. As the care needs in schools change, SNA positions may avail of a redundancy scheme operated by the DES (DES, 2021).

In the UK, TAs are employed directly by the school, the local authority, or academy trusts. The average salary for a TA starts at £14,000 per annum and more experienced TAs may earn up to £21,000 (National Careers Service UK). TAs are not generally assigned to a specific child, rather they may provide support fluidly across groups of pupils or only for particular lessons. Models of deployment reported were whole-class support; targeted in-class learning support; or targeted intervention delivery (Skipp and Hopwood, 2019).

Educational Training and Qualifications

As described previously, one major concern in the field of employment is educational training and qualifications of TAs and PAs. In this section we will describe education and training in different countries.

Education and Training of Teaching Assistants

It seems that a very heterogeneous group of people work as TAs. While some TAs have basic qualifications, others have little specialist training or qualifications. Sharma and Salend (2016) contend that TAs rarely receive adequate training and supervision. In Ireland, the minimum qualifications required for appointment to the post of SNA is either a FETAC Level 3 qualification on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) or a minimum of three grade Ds in the Junior Certificate or equivalent (DES, 2021). Despite this, the NCSE states that training opportunities available to SNAs are insufficient. Additionally, although training for SNAs was deemed the responsibility of the Board of Management in schools, funding is not provided. The review concluded that whilst many undertook training at their own expense and in their own time, a generic programme should be available for all SNAs to address topics relevant to the role, along with customised programmes specific to the needs of certain children (NCSE, 2018).

Likewise no regional or national standards exist for TAs in Germany, despite evidence suggesting that high-quality education for children with special educational needs can only be implemented if professionals are appropriately qualified (Billerbeck, 2022). The granting of a TA is subject to varied pedagogical qualifications / or varies according to contexts? For example, if a child gets a TA in accordance with the SGB VII (Social Code Book VIII) of the Child and Youth Welfare Services, a qualification is necessary. However, this is not the case for a child or young person with a mental, physical or multiple disability according to SCB XII (Social Code Book XII) of the Social Welfare Services (Billerbeck, 2022). TAs with qualifications have, in general, a pedagogical, medical or nursing professional background whereas TAs with no qualifications may have experience in a range of working areas (Kißgen et al., 2016). The training rate in some federal states, such as Bavaria, Thuringia, as well as in the Lower Saxony/Hannover region is over 50%, even if no qualification is required. Dworschak and Markowetz (2010) emphasise the professionalisation of TAs and recommend further education and training.

In the UK, schools and local authorities set their own entry requirements. However, entrants into relevant courses usually require 2 or more General Certificates of Secondary Education (GCSE) at Grades 9 to 3 or 4, or 5 GCSEs at Grades 9 to 4 or equivalent (National Careers Service, 2023). College qualifications at certificate level such as Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools are available where persons interested may enter the

role with a qualification in childcare or early years education. An alternative route is via a Teaching Assistant Advanced Apprenticeship.

Education and Training of Personal Assistants

In the UK, PAs and Support Workers who work for support providers differ in the level of formal qualifications required to fulfil the role. In the UK, staff working for a provider organisation are usually required to have at least a SVQ (Scottish Vocational Qualification) 2 or equivalent in Social Care. PAs are unlikely to be employed full-time and often work under zero-hour contracts. Furthermore, they are less likely to hold formal care qualifications – yet tend to earn more than their care worker counterparts Interestingly, some people with disabilities deliberately choose not to have assistants trained as care workers because they want assistants who act on the instructions of the person with disabilities and not on the basis of previous work experience in the healthcare sector.

Case Study 4: How I organise self-directed support and Personalised Budgets

"Promote my independence and my identity."

My name is Dr Danielle Farrel and I am a Personal Assistant (PA) employer in Scotland. In order to assist with the recruitment of personal assistants, I receive financial support from the local authority based on an individual needs' assessment. I have opted to use a mixed approach to budgeting for the support services I need. On the one hand, I can have a self-directed budget and on the other, I can access funding which is managed by the local authority (Scottish Government, 2013) to assist with the employment of personal assistants. In my personal and professional experience, a number of issues have become apparent to me when employing a PA. Firstly, I believe that qualities such as person-centredness, listening skills and respect for the need to assist me in living my life in the way I want to, are critical. My PAs need to have the ability to promote my independence and individual identity. In addition, my PA should help me in a positive manner to help me to reflect on and address my own identity without "sitting on my shoulder". I continuously strive to advise my PA team of what support/s I require. In this regard, mutual respect is key and both parties should have a clear understanding of the expectations associated with the role. Formal qualifications aren't necessarily a must. These qualities outweigh any formal qualification.

Dr Danielle Farrel, Managing Director Your Options Understood (Y.O.U.), Scotland

Conclusion and recommendations

Over the last few decades, views of disability have encompassed medical, social and, more recently, human rights approaches/perspectives? The human rights model has led to greater empowerment of people with disabilities encouraging a more independent and autonomous way of living. Relatedly, there has been an increase in demand for TAs and PAs and the corresponding rise in terms and labels suggests a need to re-define these roles to ones which accurately reflect their roles and responsibilities??

Similarly, with respect to responsibilities carried out by both TAs and PAs, evidence points to the challenge of balancing adequate support along with fostering independence, choice and autonomy. With regard to teacher and TA responsibilities, other concerns remain. Most notable of which is the regular blurring of responsibilities, which requires careful navigation and most importantly, the need for professional dialogue between all parties. Moreover, there needs to be an awareness of collaborative teamwork. Teachers and TAs should discuss, and clearly define, their roles and responsibilities, respect each other as experts and take time for teamwork. When relationships are collaborative, TAs are likely to feel more valued and appreciated. This equally applies to the relationship between PAs and the person with disabilities as self-employed. to work in a collaborative manner.

Clearly, all of the above point to the need for a redefinition of tasks, roles and responsibilities, in addition to a strengthening of structures towards the enhancement of cooperation and collaboration. The RTM could be adopted to enhance positive working relationships which, in turn, can positively influence peer interaction and social integration. Team reflection on the benefits of having a TA and/or PA in specific situations necessitates the activation and strengthening of the voice of the person with disabilities. They themselves can be more involved in deciding what support they really need. Moreover, natural support is a potential solution, whereby peers or friends are more involved in supporting the person with a disability. Finally, further consultation with parents or relatives about the preferred support for the person with disabilities and how such support can be offered could cast light on the emerging roles of TAs and PAs.

Overall, raising awareness about the existence and roles played by PAs and TAs would be beneficial. TAs support students with SEN to attend mainstream schools and PAs offer people with disabilities to live an independent life. Learning to effectively work with an assistant while in school is essential for students with disabilities. This dynamic empowers the student, positioning them as the decision-maker, thereby fostering their independence and self-advocacy skills. Unlike teaching assistants who operate within the framework set by the teacher, personal assistants work directly under the student's guidance. This distinction is vital in recognising the different support approaches: teaching assistants support educational goals collaboratively with teachers, while personal assistants follow the directives of the student, ensuring their personal needs and preferences are prioritised.

Reflecting on these approaches is essential for creating inclusive environments that respect the autonomy and unique requirements of students with disabilities.

TAs and PAs play a significant role in implementing the rights of persons with disabilities to participate fully in society as decreed by the UNCRPD. Given the importance of this role, training and education varies considerably and is often ad-hoc and non-standardised across countries. Further discussion on baseline qualifications and skills could help to formalise the TA and PA roles? In addition, while employment conditions of TAs and PAs differ from country to country, precarious employment is more common among PAs, who are often employed privately by an agency or directly by a person with a disability. Thus, the terms and conditions associated with this role require greater development and refinement?

Considering the issues highlighted in this chapter, there is a need for a radical shift of the roles for TAs and PAs in the disability sector. Societal perspectives require a shift from the neo-liberal perspective towards an emancipatory approach. Persons with disabilities themselves should decide on what support they need and how best this is organised. While current legislation espouses the right for a person with disabilities to live a fully independent life, barriers exist which prevent the manifestation of this vision. One such barrier is attitudes and perceptions towards people with disabilities who often experience social exclusion and are regularly victims of discrimination. The unequivocal endorsement of empowerment, self-determination and participation as rights is paramount. For this to be realised, heightened awareness in society is the first step, followed swiftly by newly imagined models of co-operative living and working.

Local contexts

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=451#h5p-6

Closing questions to discuss or tasks

- Reflect on the balance between providing necessary support and promoting independence. How can TAs and PAs ensure they are not hindering the social integration of those they assist? How can you, as a teacher, make sure they are as inclusive as possible?
- Discuss the potential conflicts that might arise between TAs and teachers or PAs and their employers. How can these relationships be managed effectively?
- Consider the qualifications and training for TAs and PAs in your country. What improvements could be made to better prepare them for their roles?
- How can the perspectives of the individuals receiving support be more effectively integrated into the planning and provision of assistance (especially in schools)?

Literature

Ahlström, Gerd, and Wadensten, Babro (2012). Enjoying Work or Burdened by it? How Personal Assistants Experience and Handle Stress at Work. Journal of Social Work in Disability & Rehabilitation, 11(2), 112-127.https://doi.org/10.1080/1536710X.2012.677648 (accessed on 24th September 2023).

Banks, Joanne, McCoy, Selina and Frawley, Denise (2018). One of the gang? Peer relations among students with special educational needs in Irish mainstream primary schools, European Journal of Special Needs Education, 33:3, 396-411, DOI:10.1080/ 08856257.2017.1327397 (accessed on 25th September 2023)

Barnes, Colin (2014). Independent Living, Politics and Policy in the United Kingdom: A Social Model Account. Review of Disability Studies. An International Journal. Vol 1, No.4, https://rdsjournal.org/index.php/journal/article/view/366 (accessed on 6th July 2023).

Billerbeck, Eva-Maria (2022). Qualifikation und Qualifizierung von Schulbegleiter/ innen. In: Laubner, Marian, Lindmeier, Bettina & Lübeck, Anika (Hrsg.): Schulbegleitung in der inklusiven Schule. Grundlagen und Praxis. 3. Auflage. Weinheim, Basel: Beltz Verlag. 53 – 68.

Blatchford, Peter, Bassett, Paul, Brown, Penelope, Martin, Clare, Russell, Anthony and Webster, Rob (2009). Deployment and impact of support staff in schools. Characteristics, working conditions and job satisfaction of support staff in schools (Strand 1, waves 1-3 in 2004, 2006, 2008). Institute of Education, University of London. http://maximisingtas.co.uk/ assets/content/disss1w123r.pdf (accessed on 23rd June 2023)

Buchanan, Lilian (2014). Access to Life: Personal Assistant Services in Ireland and Independent Living by People with Physical and Sensory Disabilities. 2014.

https://www.disability-federation.ie/assets/files/legacy/ DFI001_Access_to_life_report_.pdf (accessed on 4 November 2022).

Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales (2016). Bundesteilhabegesetz verabschiedet. URL: https://www.bmas.de/DE/Service/Presse/Meldungen/2016/bthg-verabschiedet.html (accessed on 20th September 2023)

Butt, Rosemary and Lowe, Kaye (2012). Teaching assistants and class teachers: differing perceptions, role confusion and the benefits of skills-based training, International Journal of Inclusive Education, 16:2, 207-219, https://doi.org/10.1080/13603111003739678 (accessed on 20th June 2023)

Carroll, Eamonn and McCoy, Selina (2022). Personal Assistance Services in Ireland: A Capability Approach to Understanding the Lived Experience of Disabled People. Disabilities 2022, 2, 694-714. https://doi.org/10.3390/disabilities2040049 (accessed on 14th August 2023)

Degener, Theresia (2016). Disability in a Human Rights Context. Laws. 5(3):35. https://doi.org/10.3390/laws5030035 (accessed on 5th August 2023)

Department of Education and Skills(2014) DES Circular 0030/2014: Special Needs Assistant (SNA) scheme https://circulars.gov.ie/pdf/circular/education/2014/30.pdf [accessed 26 September 2023]

Department of Education (2023). Revision of Salaries for Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) under Building Momentum – A New Public Service Agreement 2021-2023 ("The Agreement") Circular Letter 0008/2023 file:///C:/Users/mmcloughlin/Downloads/ 247572_d4e53e9f-ffbd-4e4b-af88-fa4fa9606233.pdf (accessed on 26th September 2023)

DfE and DoH (Department for Education and Department of Health). (2015) Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0 to 25 Years. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/ 398815/ SEND_Code_of_Practice_January_2015.pdf (accessed 10 December 2024)

Department of Education (2021). Payroll Information Note For Special Needs Assistants (SNA) file:///C:/Users/mmcloughlin/Downloads/93561_8ad831c3-93ca-4c3c-bfc6-5417f424cd4f%20(2).pdf [accessed 26 September 2023]

Department of Health & Social Care (2011). Supporting Personal Assistants Working in Adult Social Care [Online] Available: Supporting personal assistants working in adult social care – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) (accessed on 3rd August 2023)

Dworschak, Wolfgang (2010). Schulbegleiter, Integrationshelfer, Schulassistent? Begriffliche Klärung einer Maßnahme zur Integration in die allgemeine Schule bzw. die Förderschule. Teilhabe, 49 (3), 131 –135.

Dworschak, Wolfgang and Markowetz, Reinhard (2010). Professionalisierung von Schulbegleitung in der inklusiven Schule. Ausgangsbedingungen und Qualifizierungscurriculum. https://www.edu.lmu.de/esE/downloads/forschung/ profess__schulbegleiter-innen.pdf (accessed on 9th of September 2023)

Enable (2023). Enable Cares. https://www.enable.org.uk/enable-cares (accessed 3rd August 2023)

Farrell, Peter, Alborz, Alison, Howes, Andy, and Pearson, Diana (2010). The impact of teaching assistants on improving pupils' academic achievement in mainstream schools: A review of the literature. Educational Review, 62(4), 435–448. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2010.486476 (accessed on 10th June 2023)

Feely, Derek (2021). Independent Review of Adult Social Care in Scotland. Edinburgh: Scottish Government. https://www.gov.scot/groups/independent-review-of-adult-social-care/ (accessed on 25th August 2023)

Giangreco, Michael F., Yuan, Susan, McKenzie, Barbara, Cameron, Patricia and Fialka, Janice (2005). "Be Careful What You Wish for …": Five Reasons to be concerned about the Assignment of Individual Paraprofessionals. TEACHING Exceptional Children, 37(5), 28–34. https://doi.org/10.1177/004005990503700504 (accessed on 26th June 2023).

Groom, Barry and Rose, Richard (2005). Supporting the inclusion of pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties in the primary school: the role of teaching assistants. Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs; Vol. 5(1), 20-30 https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-3802.2005.00035.x (accessed on 3rd August 2023)

Haakma, Ineke, De Boer, Anke. A., Van Esch, Sanne, Minnaert, Alexander E. M. G., and Van der Putten, Annette, J. (2021). Inclusion moments for students with profound intellectual and multiple disabilities in mainstream schools: The teacher assistant's role in supporting peer interactions. European Journal of Special Needs Education, 36(2), 231–247 https://doi.org/10.1080/08856257.2021.1901374 (accessed on 24th June 2023)

Highton, Sean (2017). Teaching assistants' influence on the peer relationships of pupils with SEND: A grounded theory study from the perspective of teaching assistants. [University of Essex]. https://repository.essex.ac.uk/21542/1/1402623%20-%20Thesis%20-%20FINAL.pdf (accessed on 8th July 2023)

Idel, Tills-Sebastian, Korff, Natascha and Mettin, Carlotta (2022). Expertise Inklusion 2022. https://doi.org/10.26092/elib/1667

In Control Scotland (2021). The Seven Steps to being in Control of My Support [Online]. Available: Self Directed Support – In Control (in-control.org.uk) (accessed on 10th October 2023)

Jackson, Claire, Sharma, Umesh, Odier-Guedj, Delphine, and Deppeler, Joanne (2021). Teachers' Perceptions of Their Work with Teacher Assistants: A Systematic Literature Review. Australian Journal of Teacher Education, 46(11), 69-88, http://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2021v46n11.5 (accessed on 3rd July 2023)

Jardí, Andrea; Webster, Rob; Petreñas, Cristina & Puigdellívol, Ignasi (2022). Building successful partnerships between teaching assistants and teachers: Which interpersonal factors matter?, Teaching and Teacher Education,Volume 109, 2022, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2021.103523 (accessed on 2nd August 2023)

Jerosenko, Anna (2019). Soziale Integration durch Schulbegleitung? Effekte von

Schulbegleitung auf die soziale Integration von Schülern mit seelischer Beeinträchtigung an bayerischen Regelschulen [Dissertation LMU – Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München]. DOI: 10.5282/edoc.25651 (accessed on 25th June 2023)

Kasper, Daniel and Zuber, Jennifer (2023). Assistenz – ein neues Arbeitsfeld im Auftrag von Menschen mit Beeinträchtigungen. Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Heilpädagogik, Jg. 29, 02/2023, https://doi.org/10.57161/z2023-02-01 (accessed on 25th September 2023)

Kißgen, Ruediger, Carlitschek, Jessica, Fehrmann, Sara E., Limburg, Daniela. and Franke, Sebastian (2016). Schulbegleiterinnen und Schulbegleiter an Förderschulen Geistige Entwicklung in Nordrhein-Westfalen: Soziodemografie, Tätigkeitsspektrum und Qualifikation. In: Zeitschrift für Heilpädagogik, Heft 67, 252-263 https://www.afet-ev.de/ assets/veranstaltungen/ 2016-05-31_SchulbegleitungArtikel6-2016_ZeitschriftfrHeilpdagogik.pdf (accessed on 24th September 2023)

Konrad, Michael (2019). Die Assistenzleistung: Anforderung an die Eingliederungshilfe durch das BTHG. Köln: Psychiatrie-Verlag.

Koster, Marloes, Nakken, Han., Pijl, Sip Jan, and Van Houten, Els (2009). Being part of the peer group: A literature study focusing on the social dimension of inclusion in education. International Journal of Inclusive Education, 13(2), 117–140, https://doi.org/ 10.1080/13603110701284680 (accessed on 10th May 2023)

Leuenberger, Simone (2023). Persönliche Assistenz gemäss Behindertenrechtskonvention. Einen Begriff im Überdehnungsmodus zurechtrücken. Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Heilpädagogik, Jg. 29, 02/2023, 18-23, https://ojs.szh.ch/ zeitschrift/article/view/1144/1181 (accessed on 18th August 2023)

Logan, Anna (2006). The Role of the Special Needs Assistant Supporting Pupils with Special Educational Needs in Irish Mainstream Primary Schools. Support for Learning, v21, n2, 92-99.

Lübeck, Annika and Demmer, Christine (2022). School support in inclusive schools. Basics and practical aids. Laubner M, Lindmeier B, Lübeck A (Eds); Pädagogik 3rd, edited edition. Weinheim: Beltz-Verlag. 12-29.

Maher, Anthony John and Vickerman, Philip (2018). Ideology influencing action: special educational needs co-ordinator and learning support assistant role conceptualisations and experiences of special needs education in England. J Res Spec Educ Needs, 18: 15-24. https://doi.org/10.1111/1471-3802.12389 (accessed on 8th September 2023)

Maskos, Rebecca (2014). „Pflegestufe drei und Spaß dabei!". Der Selbstbestimmungsbegriff in der Behindertenbewegung. https://rebecca-maskos.net/ 2014/02/02/pflegestufe-drei-und-spas-dabei-ein-kritischer-blick-auf-den- selbstbestimmungsbegriff-der-behindertenbewegung/ (accessed on 22nd September 2023)

Mladenov, Teodor (2020). What is good personal assistance made of? Results of a

European survey, Disability & Society, 35:1, 1-24, https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2019.1621740 (accessed on 17th August 2023)

Migration Advisory Committee (2022) Social Care Reform [Online] Available: Review of adult social care 2022 – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) (accessed on 12th July 2023)

National Careers Service (unknown). https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/ (accessed on 10th October 2023)

National Council for Special Education (NCSE) (2018). Comprehensive Review of the Special Needs Assistant Scheme: A New School Inclusion Model to Deliver the Right Supports at the Right Time to Students with Additional Care Needs, Dublin: NCSE .

National Council for Special Education (NCSE) Special Needs Assistant (SNA) Scheme Information for Parents/ Guardians of Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs https://ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/NCSE-SNA-Scheme-Information-Pamphlet.FINALwebaccessibleversion.16.01.151.pdf [accessed 26 September 2023]

O'Brien, Elaine. (2010). Teachers and Special Needs Assistants in Irish Classrooms: An Evaluation of a Model of Reflective Teamwork. REACH: Journal of Inclusive Education in Ireland, 23(2), 81–94.

Porter, T., Shakespeare, T., & Stockl, A. (2022). Trouble in Direct Payment Personal Assistance Relationships. Work, Employment and Society, 36(4), 630–647. https://doi.org/10.1177/09500170211016972 (accessed on 25th September 2023)

Saddler, Helen (2014). Researching the influence of teaching assistants on the learning of pupils identified with special educational needs in mainstream primary schools: Exploring social inclusion. Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs, 14(3), 145–152. https://doi.org/10.1111/1471-3802.12019 (accessed on 3rd July 2023)

Sansour, Teresa and Bernhard, Dörte (2018). Special needs education and inclusion in Germany and Sweden. Alter – European Journal of Disability Research / Revue Européenne de Recherche Sur le Handicap 12 (3):127-139 https://doi.org/10.1016/j.alter.2017.12.002 (accessed on 20th June 2023)

Schindler, Florian (2019). Die Entwicklung des Lern- und Sozialverhaltens bei Schülerinnen und Schülern mit Schulassistenz: Eine längsschnittliche Studie. Vierteljahresschrift für Heilpädagogik und ihre Nachbargebiete, 88. Jg., 1-25, https://doi.org/10.2378/vhn2019.art38d (accessed on 2nd June 2023)

Schwarzenberg, Eileen; Melzer, Conny and Penczek, Susanne (2016). Peer Interaction mit einem Schüler mit Komplexer Beeinträchtigung in einer inklusiven Klasse. In: TEILHABE, 55 (1), 17-23.

Serke, Björn and Streese, Bettina (Hrsg.) (2022). Wege der Kooperation im Kontext inklusiver Bildung. Bad Heilbrunn: Klinkhardt Verlag.

Scottish Government (2013). The Four Options – Self-directed Support: Practitioners Guidance [online] Available: https://www.gov.scot/publications/self-directed-support-practitioners-guidance/pages/9/ (accessed on 22nd June 2023)

Scottish Government (2022). Coming Home Implementation Report [Online] Available: Coming Home Implementation report – gov.scot (www.gov.scot) (accessed on 12th July 2023)

Self Directed Support Scotland (2021). Welcome – The PA & PA Employer HandbookThe PA & PA Employer Handbook [online] https://handbook.scot/M (accessed on 22nd June 2023)

Sharma, Umesh, and Salend, Spencer, J. (2016). Teaching Assistants in Inclusive Classrooms: A Systematic Analysis of the International Research. Australian Journal of Teacher Education, 41(8), 118-134 http://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2016v41n8.7, (accessed on 10th September 2023)

Skipp, Amy & Hopwood, Vicky (2019) The Deployment of Teaching Assistants in Schools https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5d1397fc40f0b6350e1ab56b/ Deployment_of_teaching_assistants_report.pdf (accessed 10 October 2023)

Stinson, Michael, S. and Antia, Shirin, D. (1999). Considerations in educating deaf and hard-of-hearing students in inclusive settings, Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education, 4(2), 163–175.

United Nations (2006). Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/optional-protocol-to-the-convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html (accessed on 26th September 2023)

United National Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2017) General comment on article 19: Living independently and being included in the community https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/CRPD/CRPD.C.18.R.1-ENG.docx

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) (2009). Policy Guidelines on Inclusion in Education. Paris: UNESCO https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ ark:/48223/pf0000177849 (accessed on 25th June 2023)

UK Government. National Careers Service. https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk (accessed 10 October 2023).

Vereinigung Integrations-Förderung e.V. (2022). Als Assistentin arbeiten. Häufig gestellte Fragen.https://www.vif-selbstbestimmt-leben.de/als-assistent-oder-assistentin-arbeiten/ haeufig-gestellte-fragen/ (accessed on 26th September)

Vincett, Cremin and Thomas (2005). Teachers and Assistants Working Together: A Handbook, 1st ed. London: Open University Press;

Wadensten, Babro and Ahlström, Gerd (2009). Ethical values in personal assistance: narratives of people with disabilities. Nurs Ethics. 2009 Nov;16(6):759-74. DOI: 10.1177/ 0969733009341913 (accessed on 15th September 2023)

Waldschmidt, Anne (2005).'Disability studies: individual, social and/ or cultural model of handicap?', Psychologie und Gesellschaftskritik, 29(1), pp. 9-31.https://nbn-resolving.org/ urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-18770 (accessed on 3rd May 2023)

Webster, Rob and de Boer, Anke (2021). Teaching Assistants: Their Role in the Inclusion,

Education and Achievement of Pupils with Special Educational Needs, European Journal of Special Needs Education, 36:2, 163-167 https://doi.org/10.1080/08856257.2021.1901369 (accessed on 5th July 2023)

Your Options Understood (Y.O.U.) (2023). How an Alexa Show 8 Has Helped Increase My Independence [online] Available: https://youroptionsunderst.wixsite.com/y-o-u Date accessed 22nd June 2023

Zauner, M. and Zwosta, M. (2014). Effektestudie zu Schulbegleitungen. https://www1.kjf-regensburg.de/documents/10502/146634/ Effektestudie+Schulbegleitungsma%C3%9Fnahmen.pdf/ 2ea54aae-4221-41a2-b1a0-83016f48e49a (accessed on 25th August 2023) Zhao, Yu; Rose, Richard and Shevlin, Michael (2021). Paraprofessional support in Irish schools: from special needs assistants to inclusion support assistants, European Journal of Special Needs Education, VOL. 36 (2) 183–197 https://doi.org/10.1080/08856257.2021.1901371 (accessed on 23rd July 2023)

About the authors

Danielle Farrel

Danielle Farrel has both lived and professional experience in the field of disability. She has a passion for changing the narrative for disabled people and those from other marginalised groups. Danielle graduated with her PhD from the University of the West of Scotland in 2015 and her thesis was entitled 'The 2012 Child Abuse Scandal: The Multifuctional Nature of Online Discourse'.

Marie McLoughlin

Marie Mc Loughlin is a qualified primary teacher with experience of teaching in educational disadvantaged schools. She also worked as a national co-ordinator for a programme of teacher professional development and is currently working as a teacher educator in initial teacher education in a university in Ireland. Her research interests are play, early childhood education, organisational culture, mergers and teacher education.

Eileen Schwarzenberg

Eileen Schwarzenberg is a qualified special education teacher. Eileen graduated with her PhD in 2013 and is since then working as a lecturer in inclusive education in a university in Germany. Before that, she worked as a research

assistant and lecturer at various universities in the field of special education. Her research interests are teacher education, teaching assistants and inclusive education for students with profound intellectual and multiple disabilities and Augmentative and Alternative Communication.

Melanie Eilert

Melanie Eilert has lived experience as someone living with personal assistants. Graduated with a Bachelor Professional in HR Management she is employed at a service provider that provides personal assistance to people with disabilities.

WORKING WITHIN MULTIDISCIPLINARY TEAMS

Alexandra Anton; Ann-Kathrin Arndt; Miriam Sonntag; Beausetha Juhetha Bruwer; Miriam Cuccu; and Lydia Murphy

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://book.all-means-all.education/ ama-2025-en/?p=535#oembed-1

Example Case

Multidisciplinary teamwork is complex and varies in different constellations and contexts. To give you an impression of multidisciplinary teams in different early years and school context, we provide four short example cases. To engage with the complexities, we provide more information for two cases later in the chapter.

Example Case 1: Multidisciplinary Teams in the Finnish Early Childhood and Care (ECEC)

When I first visited a Finnish daycare, I was amazed by the diversity of professionals involved in educating and caring for small children compared to what I knew from the Romanian school system.

The moment I stepped into the teachers' lounge that morning, I knew something important was happening. In a separate area, away from the noisy group moving in and out in the morning rush, several adults were seated around a table. I couldn't hear what was discussed, and even if I could, my lack of the Finnish language would have impeded me from understanding anything. However, that didn't stop me from asking another teacher not involved in the discussion what that was about. I then found out that in Finland each child receives the needed support based on their assessment and individual learning plan created by the kindergarten teacher in collaboration with the family at the beginning of the school year.

Their plan is revisited and adjusted throughout the year, according to the developmental milestones achieved, and travels with the child throughout the early years and in the transition from early years to preschool and school. Considering the diverse and complex needs of young children when they arrive in daycare, the ECEC team is informed about the trajectory of each child before the age of 3.

When things don't go according to plan, multidisciplinary teams usually gather and give each other an update on the child's progress, renew the existing goals, exchange insights, provide recommendations and inputs on related services or modifications to be tried out in the following weeks or months.

Are you interested in learning more about how Finnish early childhood and care is multidisciplinary by design? Take a closer look! (See section "A closer look on Example Case 1")

Example Case 2: Early Learning and Care [ELC] in the Irish Context

Every morning, we met this little person at the school gate. They clung to their primary carer, arms tightly wrapped around their neck and their legs similarly around the waist. Acknowledging "You are so snuggly and warm around them." They replied "My little koala bear." The educator also acknowledged "It's hard to leave them in the morning." This little person would move from their primary carer's arms to the educator, squeezing them just as tight. Upon entering the classroom, it was loud, and busy, with active children all engaged in play. When the educator was putting them back down on the ground, they could see their eyes darting from side to side. The little person would then rest their head on the educator's stomach 'they were too tired for school; they wanted to go home'.

This little person was struggling with the level of noise in the classroom. At times, they would seek rest from the overstimulating classroom by putting the educator's hands over their ears or leaning really close to their key person to seek rest. From our training and reflective conversation and from the groundwork with the team members we decided to turn an unused art room into a 'nurture nook' for this little person to have comfort and safety from the busy room when needed. An unintended result of this room change meant all the children had more space which made the room less noisy for everyone. This room was equipped with a sliding door the children could open and close depending on their needs. It was used as a place for peer-to-peer and adult/ child communication, story-time and/or a place for the children to have private conversations with educators or with other children. We received funding from an external agency to equip this room with weighted blankets, ear defenders, and speakers to play soft music intermittently. The children added teddy bears to it for comfort.

While this little person started to arrive earlier to school, and their attendance improved, possibly because they were able to transition to school using this room to acclimatise themselves to the bigger group in the morning and throughout the day. Still, school could be a

real challenge for this little person. With consultation with their primary carer, we sought outside multidisciplinary support from the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) to ascertain supportive strategies when they were changing clothing from inside to outside and strategies for dealing with peer relationships. Their primary carer also accessed support from the multidisciplinary primary care team with Ireland's Health Service Executives (HSE). However, due to COVID-19 and an extremely long waiting list, an appointment was not available before he transitioned to primary school. Nonetheless, using an inclusive, relational approach in our education setting, linking in with the Access and Inclusion Programme, and with the support of their primary carer this little person's strengths-based progress was able to continue with them to primary school.

Example Case 3: Supervision in the Italian Context

Teachers usually perceive their daily routine as overwhelmed with meetings and bureaucratic commitments. They often do not have time to reflect together on their practices, or to talk deeply about the students.

Within the Labs to Learn project (https://labstolearn.it/) aimed at minors in the Piedmont region (Italy) to combat school dropout rates and prevent educational poverty, a monthly supervision for teachers was part of the action Study Method.

Study Method was dedicated to the first-year classes in lower secondary school, so that each child could find "made-to-measure" strategies, considering individual differences, strengths and learning styles (Stenberg, 1998), thereby strengthening perceptions of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1994) connected to school. The supervision, aimed at each class council, guaranteed a space to reflect and talk about challenges connected with the experimentation of personalised study methods in the classroom.

The meetings allowed them to talk about emotions connected with working in the classroom, during and after the pandemic. Throughout the meetings, teachers shared their fears about how to deal with interruptions of the lessons due to the lockdown. They had time to share impressions of each student (beyond marks), including those who have needs that they cannot express clearly. All points of view contributed to a holistic understanding of the students. This approach helped to work on the group dynamics, to generate a sense of togetherness and to find common strategies for a better classroom management.

Example Case 4: Primary School/Pedagogical Counselling Centre in the Austrian Context

Patrick, a boy in the second year of primary school, has difficulty following the lessons and his academic performance does not meet the expectations of the curriculum standards for primary school. The class teacher, who is young and in general ready for open lessons, feels overwhelmed by the "heterogeneity of the learning group" to respond to Patrick's individual

needs within the framework of regular lessons. Talks with the parent or guardian fail, appointments are not kept. Patrick often comes to school with clothes that are not suitable for the weather or without breakfast. He seems neglected and often consumes media that are not appropriate for his age, has access to game consoles etc. and often attracts attention through aggressive behaviour. As the head of the Pedagogical counselling centre at the time, I got to read Patrick's special educational needs assessment during the procedure for determining special educational needs. (PBZ, later Departments of Inclusion, Diversity, and Special Education, FIDS, see Key aspect 3)

It clearly states that Patrick does not show any signs of a disability, but due to his difficult environment and his persistently weak performance at school, he should be given special educational needs for the general special school (learning focus). Instead of assigning him Special educational needs, I worked with the head teacher, the class teacher in charge and a counselling teacher who was temporarily present on site to find out which support system Patrick needs to reduce his barriers to learning and development. We were guided by the following questions, among others:

- *What interventions can be made in the classroom?*
- *What personnel resources can the school authorities provide in the short term to enable the class teacher to teach in a more open and differentiated way as a team?*
- *What extracurricular institutions and contact persons are there that can provide relief and support for Patrick's home environment?*
- *How can the guidance counsellor use her resources profitably for Patrick and the class teacher? Which competencies should be developed within the class?*

Concrete steps were planned, a support system was established inside and outside the school in close co-operation with the school supervision and the guardians, and the SEN (Special Educational Needs) procedure was paused for the time being. Patrick was able to develop positively over the next few months: both his school performance and social behaviour were able to stabilise, the class teacher felt relieved, and the counselling teacher repeatedly reported a positive course of development – for the entire system. As a result, the SPF procedure could be dropped after about half a year and Patrick's barriers could be significantly reduced by establishing a support system without having to receive a stigmatising label.

If you want to know more about the Austrian Departments of Inclusion, Diversity, and Special Education (FIDS), see subsection: Support structures on regional level.

Initial questions

Think about your experiences in educational institutions like kindergarten or school. Apart from your own school days, you might think about your observations during school visits or your experiences during internships or practical phases within your initial teacher education. Furthermore, some of you might have previous or current experiences of working in kindergarten or schools:

- Who is part of the multidisciplinary team in this context?
- What could be the difficulties of working in a multidisciplinary team?
- What are the benefits of multidisciplinary teamwork?
- What practices contribute to positive multidisciplinary teamwork experiences?

Introduction to Topic

"I"-Perspective

Picture a teacher sitting at home thinking:

"Oh, but I was not trained for that (new situation or challenge) …. I don't have enough time (to discuss it with someone else in the professional team) … I don't want/find it hard to work with (other professionals)… I don't know how to deal with this situation…"

The above thoughts depict teachers struggling with a certain situation in the classroom, but not feeling prepared to deal with it properly, not thinking that the training or previous experience helps in any way and not being willing to cooperate with other professionals within and outside the educational setting. When reading the thoughts above, they may sound familiar to you, as these thoughts are common to all teachers, irrespective of whether they are new in the profession or already highly experienced. We are going to examine in closer detail four scenarios that depict different cultural contexts and grade levels that may help you think about the topic differently. These scenarios will be accompanied by the specific working conditions that underpin the connections and dynamics between the members of the multidisciplinary teams. The realities of each of the contexts within which the educators and other professionals of these scenarios (Example Case 1-4) find themselves will be discussed. Throughout the chapter there are reflection questions for the reader to pause and reflect on the section just read. These are highlighted similar to the reflective question below.

What can teachers do when they do not know how to deal with a situation?

Firstly, let's establish that it is normal to have these different thoughts and feelings. Secondly, teachers do not need to work on their own; they do not have to be a lonesome player, although this was common in schools for a long time and in many cases still is (Terhart & Klieme, 2006).

Aiming for an inclusive school system changes the perspective completely: every class is a diverse learning group with diverse needs, and it is normal to look for a wide range of competences and professions (Booth & Ainscow, 2019).

For one person it is overwhelming to identify and overcome barriers of learning and to respond individually to the diverse needs of all students. Whether you are a new teacher or have years of experience, there will always be challenging and new situations. You cannot manage it alone, there is a need for certain support, there is a need for a team (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2022). If that team is multidisciplinary, it is even better, because then you have a huge variety of knowledge within the team. It is important for teachers to collaborate in the classroom and school community because you will find new and proper solutions when you have other educators, other experts, other views, other perspectives and competences to communicate with (Ahlgrimm, 2021).

Teachers often do not know about the opportunities for collaboration that exist in and outside their school. As a teacher, when you do not know how to deal with a situation, you can look for a team to solve it. You can ask colleagues, your team-teaching partner, relevant actors and other professionals. You can also ask your principal if there are any experts on the situation you are experiencing already in the school. Also, you can seek support from institutions outside your school. There are several support systems established to answer questions, queries, challenges that you might experience. Therefore, it is a competence to ask for advice.

Our starting point refers to the "I"-perspective. In this chapter, we focus on five key aspects: Key aspect 1 refers to understandings of multidisciplinary teams based on a differentiation between multi-/inter-/transdisciplinary teams, stages of teamwork and understanding multidisciplinary teamwork as an ongoing process of negotiation. Key aspect 3 draws on the challenges and benefits of working in a multidisciplinary team on individual and team level and refers to challenges arising from the wider context of neoliberalism and the benefits of relational approaches. Key aspect 3 refers to developing multidisciplinary teamwork by considering beneficial attributes and practices, structures on school level, organising and decision-making as well as structures on regional level. Key aspect 4 highlights reflective practices to enhance multidisciplinary teamwork by summarising the relevance of reflective practices and providing two examples for reflective practices. Key aspect 5 focuses on multidisciplinary teamwork in pre-service and in-service teacher education by referring to designing initial teacher education and case-based approaches. After these five key aspects, we provide "a closer look" at example case 1 to learn how Finnish early childhood education is multidisciplinary by design. In the end, we provide closing tasks and a conclusion which emphasises a shift from "I"- to

"We-"perspective. There is a link to Figure 1 below: https://seafile.cloud.uni-hannover.de/f/ac19978f45894b7e806a/

Figure 1: Overview of the Chapter
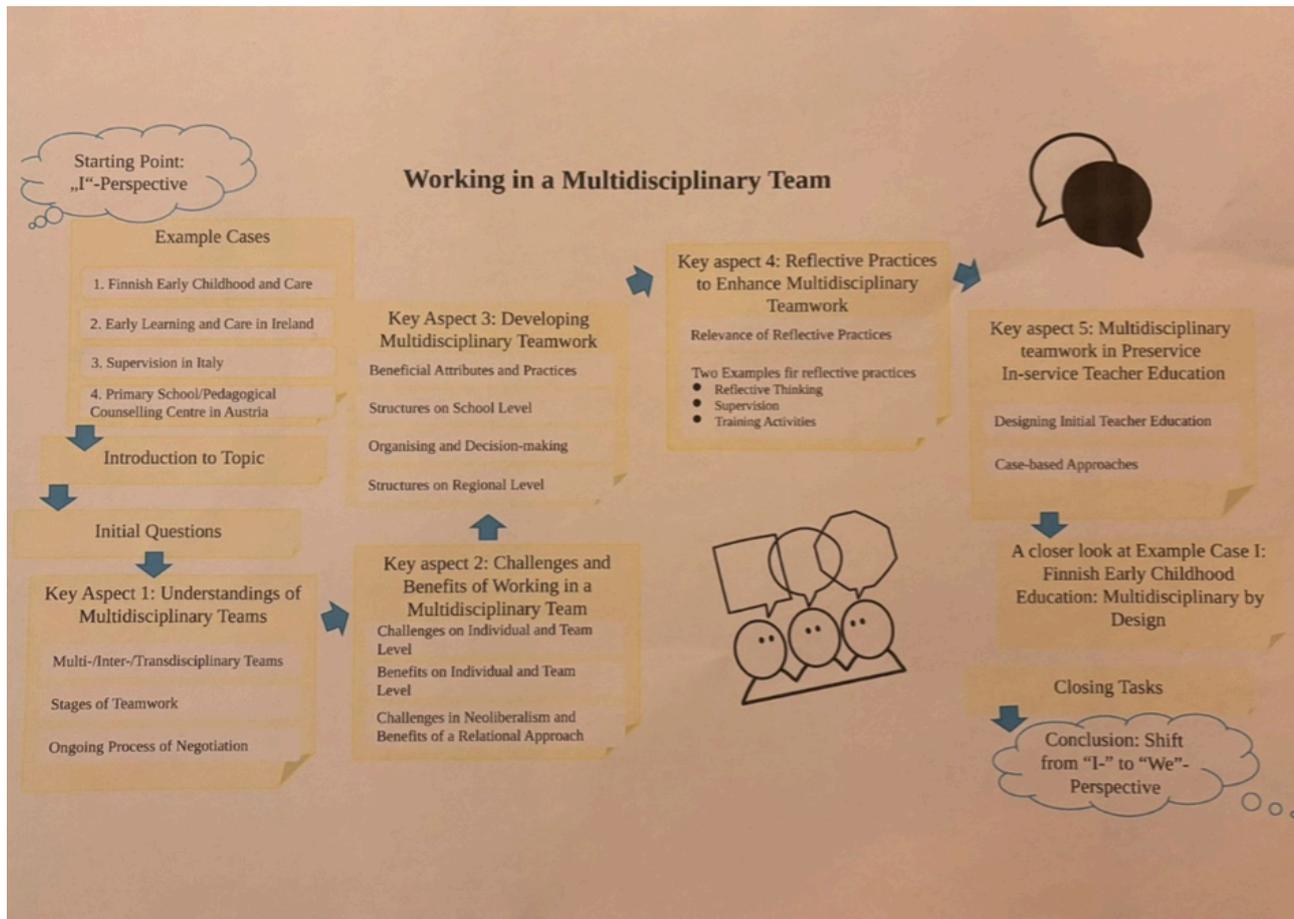
Key aspects

Key Aspect 1: Understandings of Multidisciplinary Teams

There are various understandings of multidisciplinary teams. For example, in some contexts, it would be more likely that we would talk about multiprofessional teamwork. Hence, different terms might be used depending on the particular context. At the same time, terms are often used interchangeably. For simplicity, we use **multidisciplinary team** in this chapter to refer to different constellations, intensities, and contexts. Knowing and reflecting about different terms is useful to reach a common understanding.

Let's start, by briefly looking at "team" and "teamwork": A **team** is a group of individuals with a shared understanding of interdependence, the necessity for communication, and the value of teamwork who have been organised for a specific goal. **Teamwork** is the interaction that is demonstrated in the information sharing between team members, which assures the synchronisation, coherence of the pace and rhythm of collaborative activities and results in the effective operation of the entire team and a high level of individual

commitment (Volkova et al., 2021). At the same time, team constellations working together can differ regarding the intensities of teamwork, goals, and context as pointed out by the conceptual model "Multi-/inter-/transdisciplinary teams".

Differences between Multi-, Inter- and Transdisciplinary Teams

Starting from the basic questions of who works with whom with which goal, Friend and Cook (2010: 65) refer to multi-, inter- and transdisciplinary teams as three different models of team interaction.

These differ concerning the **"philosophy of team interaction"** (Friend & Cook, 2010: 65): How do members understand themselves? In **multidisciplinary** teams, members value the importance of contribution of different professional groups or disciplines, but their "services remain independent" (Friend & Cook, 2010: 65). An example of this would be when teachers work together with professionals outside school, for example physical therapists. In **interdisciplinary** teams, members share their responsibilities, however, each professional group remains "primarily responsible" for their tasks (Friend & Cook, 2010: 65). For example, in German or Austrian in whole day schools, there is often an institutional distinction between teachers who mostly teach their lessons before the lunch break and educators who are responsible for various activities in the afternoon. While teachers and educators might not teach together, they might, for example, develop a shared individual educational plan. In **transdisciplinary**teams, members work together "across disciplines" and learn from one another (Friend & Cook, 2010: 65). On the classroom level, co-teaching of classroom or subject teachers with special educators or other specialists is an essential approach for inclusive schools. In one school in Namibia, an English teacher and a sign language teacher co-taught to facilitate English language learning helping all students to understand English better. In Finish early childhood education and care, several professionals like kindergarten teachers, social welfare workers, childcare workers, and special education teachers – to name but a few – are involved in a child-centred task together.

Multi-, inter- and transdisciplinary teams differ in the **way they communicate** (Friend & Cook, 2010: 65): **Multidisciplinary** teams share information about their independent work, for example, on assessment, and develop separate education or service plans. In**interdisciplinary** teams, members meet on a regular basis, for example, in case conferences, and combine their goals for a single individual education plan. In a **transdisciplinary** team, regular team meetings for both sharing information and learning from each other are crucial. This allows them, for example, to assess collaboratively and develop an individual education plan together.

Besides the **"role of the family"** (Friend & Cook, 2010: 65) varies: In **multidisciplinary** teams, families meet with each professional group separately. In i**nterdisciplinary** teams,

families meet with all the team members, but these report independently. In **transdisciplinary** teams, families are more involved in these joint meetings.

Think of your own experiences in educational institutions. How can you relate these experiences to the model of multi-, inter- and transdisciplinary teams? What's important for team interaction in your particular context?

This differentiation between multi-, inter- and transdisciplinary teams supports thinking about the intensity, goals, and context of working together. Even if different terms like multiprofessional team are more commonly used in your context, differentiating between multi-, inter- and transdisciplinary teams helps you to understand your own team better and find starting points for future development. As mentioned in the beginning, we use multidisciplinary team in this chapter to refer to different constellations, intensities and contexts.

Stages of Teamwork according to Tuckman

Another differentiation which is also helpful to understand different constellations of multidisciplinary teams, looks at the development of the teams: Dugang (2020) describes Tuckman's model as a significant method to understand the evolution of teamwork. This model acknowledges that teams do not initially exist in a fully developed and functional state. The model proposes that teams develop through a series of distinct phases, from their inception as loosely connected teams of individuals through their development as cohesive teams with a clear purpose. According to this model, as discussed by Dugang (2020), there are four stages to teamwork that include:

Figure 2: Stages of Teamwork According to Tuckman

Forming	In the early stages of team development, people are still getting to know one another. Everyone is preoccupied with figuring out their role on the team, evaluating one another, and contemplating their purpose for being on the team.
Storming	People start to identify with being on a team. At this point, they could disagree with one another and the team leader about what the team is doing and how things need to be done. As implied by the name of this phase, conflict, and confrontation are typical of this phase as differences become apparent. The performance or focus on the task may suffer as a result.
Norming	In this phase, team members work together, creating procedures, laying out ground rules, and defining who is responsible for what and how things will be done. During this phase, there is a developing sense of 'togetherness'.
Performing	This stage is where increased attention to the work and team dynamics come together to create synergy. People working together successfully promote performance.

The benefit of Tuckman's concept is that it aids professionals in understanding how teams evolve over time. It also helps to think about how people experience various issues at various points in their growth as a team (Dugang, 2020). However, in order to establish and cultivate a pleasant, functional team environment, teamwork depends on the presence of synergy between all team members, creating an environment where they are all motivated to contribute and participate. Team members need to be adaptable enough to function in collaborative contexts where teamwork and social interdependence are prioritised over individualised, competing aims (Tarricone & Luca, 2002).

Multidisciplinary Teamwork as an Ongoing Process of Negotiating Roles and Responsibilities

Multidisciplinary teams are considered as a reaction to (increasing) complexities (Easen, Atkins & Dyson, 2000). At the same time, multidisciplinary teamwork is not a "quick-fix" (Nichols et al., 2010). Hence, it is important to take the complexities of multidisciplinary teamwork into account. Bauer (2014) suggests a process-oriented perspective on multidisciplinary teamwork: in our initial questions we ask who – which professional or occupational group – is part of a multidisciplinary team. Instead of thinking about these

professions or groups as unchanging/unchangeable and self-contained, Bauer (2014) emphasises that collaboration takes place

"between professional actors who continuously have to define and negotiate their specific tasks, responsibilities and abilities, trying to come to terms with each other and sometimes also bargaining against each other. In this process, boundaries between professional groups shift, new tasks and responsibilities emerge and are distributed and assigned" (Bauer, 2014: 274).

This process-oriented perspective refers to the theoretical concept Negotiated Order(ing) by Strauss et al. (1981) which highlights how professionals negotiate their tasks and division of labour. This includes – for example, when new staff members join the team or when new conceptual frameworks or technologies become relevant in a certain field – renegotiating tasks and responsibilities. Overall, (re)negotiation between different professionals stabilises or, at least in the long term, might also change social order (Strauss, 1978). For understanding multidisciplinary teamwork, this raises the important question: what is perceived as (non) negotiable by whom? (Strauss, 1978: 252). In this regard, it's fruitful to pay attention to ways multidisciplinary teamwork is situated (Clarke, 2005), for instance, in different national and local school contexts (Arndt, 2022; Hansen et al., 2020; Naraian, 2010).

Based on an ethnographic study on multidisciplinary teamwork in Swiss primary education, Kosorok Labhart and Maeder (2016) highlight, that planning and clarifying one's roles and responsibilities is part of the continuous negotiation. Overall, understanding multidisciplinary teamwork as an ongoing process enables a change of perspective by not focusing solely on the individual teacher and, for instance, their (lacking) willingness to collaborate, as it is often the case in discussions on multidisciplinary teamwork.

Key Aspect 2: Challenges and Benefits of Working in a Multidisciplinary Team

Teamwork amongst role players is crucial to develop inclusive schools, which involves all school systems. The inclusive school community places teamwork at its core, and it is a key strategy for assisting all participants in such a community. This suggests that no teacher, parent, education support worker, student, or volunteer should have to handle significant challenges by themselves. Successful inclusive education is built on support. The focus of inclusive classrooms and schools is on how to run them as loving and supportive environments where a sense of belonging is developed and everyone feels accepted, encouraged, and cared for by everyone else in the school community (Swarts & Pettipher, 2016).

However, interacting with other people can sometimes be hard. Each one of us has our own personality, character, way of communicating, and habits, and it can be difficult to engage with people who are different from us. However, by working closely with people with different skills from yours, you not only have the unique opportunity to learn something

completely new every day but also transfer to others some of your own knowledge. You can learn from other people's experiences things that you would not be able to find in books, or that would probably take you a long time to learn on your own (Pinti, 2018).

It is important to address challenges and benefits of working in a multidisciplinary team. We take a two-fold approach: First, we take a closer look at common difficulties and benefits on individual and team level:

- Why is it sometimes difficult to work in a multidisciplinary team?
- Why is it worth it to work in a multidisciplinary team?

After this, we situate challenges of multidisciplinary teamwork in the broader context by focusing on tensions arising in education in neoliberalism, especially with regard to the so called 'hidden curriculum'. In this respect, relational pedagogy can form an important approach to critically reflect on these tensions.

Challenges on Individual and Team Level

Working in a multidisciplinary team might be challenging, both at an individual and at a team level. When faced with difficult situations, your first reaction could be to think that it is your sole responsibility to solve it, that it is faster to do it on your own, or that it is less messy, and so asking for help does not come easily.

Challenges at the individual level
● When you see your profession as isolated, at the same time you acknowledge that a different set of skills is needed to respond to the complex situations you encounter in your classroom (Bauer, 2014; Pölkki & Vornanen, 2016).
● For this reason, it can be hard to fully trust other professionals (Ekins, 2015). ● You even rank your and others' input and opinions according to a certain hierarchy, and based on their level of qualification, you might see yourself or others as more or less entitled to contribute to the common effort (Hood, 2015). ● You can be blinded by the human ego, which stops you from seeing the common good that a team can achieve (Herbert & Broomfield, 2019).
Challenges at the team level
● Finding enough resources and the right competencies needed to tackle a situation, and finding the right professionals at the right time can be tough (Unabhängiger Monitoringausschuss der Republik Österreich [UMA], 2023).
● Or even beginning to consider that other professionals in the same school or in the close community might help, can be exceptional (Solvason & Winwood, 2022). ● Collaborating across institutional boundaries can surge the challenges. Without having or designing operating models, guides and procedures, it can be problematic to find common grounds or reach agreements and communicate important information (Behringer & Höfer, 2005).

Benefits of Individual and Team Level

It most certainly is worth working in a multidisciplinary team. Just like with the challenges,

the benefits of working in a multidisciplinary team can be identified at both the individual and the team levels.

Benefits at the individual level
• Not feeling like we are the lone warriors helps us have a broader perspective, helps us respond to the needs of our students better and feels a sense of accomplishment about our work. • Strengthening our communication skills, becoming more empathic, and being willing to adopt other perspectives will help us build more trusting networks and achieve effective cooperation (Kumpulainen, 2013). • By working closely with people with different skills from yours, you not only have the unique opportunity to learn something completely new every day but also transfer some of your own knowledge to others. You can learn from other people's experiences things that you would not be able to find in books, or that would probably take you a long time to learn on your own (Pinti, 2018). Working in a multidisciplinary team shifts the boundaries of individual professions, and adds in new tasks and areas of responsibility, which helps us become more flexible and adaptable; instead of the "everyone does everything" type of culture, there is more clarity in our roles and responsibilities (Bauer, 2014; Onnismaa, 2017).
Benefits at the team level
• When working together in a multidisciplinary team, educators and other professionals exchange information and perspectives about our students, which can do better justice to them and contribute to our commitment to inclusive education (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2022). • As multidisciplinary team members who develop joint solutions to challenges, we learn from and with each other, and by strengthening our professional actions our workload decreases (Ahlgrimm, 2021). • To provide adequate support to students who face learning obstacles, it is important that all role players in the learning process cooperate and help one another. To do this, it is essential to value each person's knowledge, abilities, and experience while also promoting their engagement and involvement. This calls for collaboration between each and every teacher as well as between educators and other stakeholders in general. In a team that works together, fostering an environment of trust, openness, and dedication needs to be a core rule. Due to the nature of true professional barriers being crossed, this type of collaboration can be referred to as transdisciplinary teamwork (see models of team interaction).

Reflect on your own experiences of working in a group or with a team. Alternatively, you can also reflect on a situation which you observed, for example, during a classroom visit.

What challenges did you perceive – or observe – on an individual level and on the team level?

What were the benefits of working in a team on an individual level and team level?

Challenges in the Context of Neoliberalism and Benefits of a Relational Approach

While we focused on challenges and benefits on individual and team levels before, next we take a closer look at challenges of multidisciplinary teamwork arising from teachers' role as 'lonesome players' by situating this in the broader educational and societal context influenced by neoliberalism. Today, education is still mostly operating based on a confirmative-based ecology to produce the long-term outcomes of an equitable workforce (Öchsner & Murray, 2019). Neoliberal policy in teacher education is creating a competitive

environment stressing the sole interest of an I-focus rather than a We-culture. Thus, eroding a collegial environment promotes teachers' agency to make decisions and problem-solve. By quantifying (measuring) educators' performance and steering an environment of competition over the connection, teachers can be in the space of feeling vulnerable in their work with colleagues, learners and their families. Ljungblad (2021) suggests teachers are finding it really difficult to use pedagogical tact (intuition) when powerful neoliberal agendas – reflected, for example, in policy documents stressing 'efficient', 'effective', 'standards',' tools' – are at play.

To put the above literature into context, focusing on classroom-based education and changes to policy strategies, we could possibly unpack the nested paradoxes that can be layered in professionalisation, for example, leading to greater emphasis on hierarchies—a major challenge for working in multidisciplinary teams. Let us take a look at current development in the Irish early education system seeking to professionalize a newly constructed degree-led profession.

New degree-led profession, new hierarchies in multidisciplinary teams?

Currently, Ireland's Early Learning and Care sector is going through a huge amount of change whilst the leaders are trying to professionalise the sector. The implications of these changes have not been all negative, for example, the under three's now have a voice and are being seen, this is welcomed by most in the sector. However, one of the paradoxes within the Irish context is the government's strategy to professionalize the early years sector by implementing a tiered pay scale for managers and deputy managers running a play school. Also, there was a structured minimum regulated wages requirement for early years educators depending on your level of qualification. By introducing funded pay scales this then establishes a hierarchical classroom by promoting one degree graduate to become the classroom's lead educator. Moreover, moving away from a co-teaching structure to now embed a ranked system in our early years classroom (Nurturing Skills, 2021).

The Irish ELC sector has only recently had an influx of degree-led graduates, many educators with vocational qualifications but twenty to thirty years' experience could not apply for the lead educator positions as they did not have the academic qualifications for the position.

What are the unintended consequences of this decision?

How could an understanding of teamwork be evoked in this situation?

Hierarchies can also be linked to the so called "hidden curriculum" which – in contrast to valuing multiple perspectives in a multidisciplinary team – emphasises certain perspectives: Dean, Roberts, and Perry (2023) admit that neoliberalism has caused a 'curriculum hierarchy' or/and the 'narrowing of curriculum' meaning subjects such as Literacy, Numeracy, and Scientific knowledge are seen as superior or more valuable in the education system because they can be measured. The ramification of this narrowing is effectively changing the teachers' role and identity.

An example below is looking at educational inequality from the Australian context.

Resources for multidisciplinary teams in the context of educational inequality in Australia:

Sahlberg (2011) states this marketisation policy of education falls under the Global Education Reform Movement (or GERM) allowing parents to put pressure on the school system to produce academic outcomes. Australians are noticing educational inequalities from the marketisation of education particularly in learners in vulnerable backgrounds (Dean, Roberts & Perry, 2023). Public funding is being used to fund and resource private education in Australia. Making sure learners attending private school have access to multidisciplinary teams and private educational supports causing a disparity between teachers working in public schools because of underfunding and being under-resourced having a knock-on effect for teachers and what education looks like for these schools. Paving a bigger divide of educational, career opportunities, and inequity for the future of more impoverished families. Perry and Southwell (2014) conducted a study on the effects of socio-economic status on education and found that learners from more impoverished backgrounds had less opportunities for curriculum diversity.

How does this system affect teacher education in Australia in working together?

Think about private schooling versus public schooling in your context, what are the differences, for example, concerning the resources and professional groups involved?

What other differences between schools (for example, special and inclusive schools, urban and rural schools) are relevant when it comes to resources, professional groups and (multi-) professionalism?

By way of example, this reflects the limitations of solely focusing on the school level and highlights the importance of considering the 'ecologies' of the multidisciplinary team (see for an ecosystemic perspective on teamwork: Chapter on teamwork in the classroom).

At the same time, these challenges arising from neoliberalism, highlight the **importance of Relational approaches** to look beyond measures and focus on a We-Perspective. Relational approaches emphasise the importance of the 'whole' learner and their families, working in connection instead of competition for greater opportunities for diverse learners and communities. Through critical thinking, decision making and problem-solving, university educators are trying to tackle some of the tensions between collegial workplaces in communities and sole interest learners (Rodriguez, 2017). Teachers and learners are engaging in relationships all day long making split-second decisions throughout the day. Educators (in training) may at times possibly have a feeling of unease within themselves to conform to academic structures or they may have a feeling of pressure to implement strategies that go against their living values.

Ljungblad (2022) suggests the answer to this problem is the reciprocity of relationships. Knowing these values and beliefs are ever evolving regardless of how long you are in education. Thus, teacher education and third level education play an important role for the ideal of growing and flourishing (Wojciechowska, 2022) which can support the aforementioned benefits of multidisciplinary teamwork on individual and team level.

Key Aspect 3: Developing Multidisciplinary Teamwork

Multidisciplinary teams with members who understand how to learn from shared experience will be the most productive. The different points of view of the team members should complement one another. It is necessary to select team members wisely because, in addition to practical expertise and a problem-solving perspective, effective teamwork also necessitates collaboration and soft skills.

Attributes and Practices to Motivate Positive Multidisciplinary Teamwork

Literature correspondingly provides several attributes that motivate positive multidisciplinary teamwork. Many of these have been consistently repeated, and some are overlapping (Engelbrecht & Hay, 2018; Pinti, 2018; Tarricone & Luca, 2002). Noteworthy attributes and practices that were identified to motivate positive multidisciplinary team experiences are:

- **Open communication and positive feedback**
  A productive work environment is facilitated by attentively listening to team members' needs and concerns, recognising their contributions, and expressing appreciation for them. Members of the team should be prepared to offer and accept constructive criticism as well as give honest feedback.
- **Commitment to team success and shared goals**
  Team members have a commitment to the project's success as well as to the team's success. Successful teams aspire to achieve at the highest level and are highly motivated.
- **Interdependence**
  Team members must foster an environment where their combined contributions will be much greater than their individual ones. The team can accomplish its objectives at a much higher level when there is a positive, interdependent team atmosphere.
- **Interpersonal skills**
  The capacity to be open and honest with team members, to be dependable and supportive, and to respect the team and its members as individuals. It is important to encourage a compassionate work atmosphere, which includes the capacity for productive teamwork.
- **Commitment to team processes, leadership, and accountability**
  Members of the team must take responsibility for their contributions to the team and the project. They must understand team procedures, best practices, and fresh concepts. For a team to succeed, including in shared decision-making and problem-solving, effective leadership is important.
- **Equality**
  Members should actively seek to ensure that all other members feel equally

empowered in their potential to positively affect results and should all experience an equal sense of equality in decision-making.

- **Trust**

  Members should have confidence in the dependability or trustworthiness of the strength, skill, and character of their fellow members. To build reciprocal participatory and collaborative development, interpersonal trust elements such as character trust, competence trust, and communication trust are essential.

- **Respect and Cultural Sensitivity**

  Members must honour one another and act and speak in a way that shows that respect. This calls for introspection and awareness of one's own belief systems, as well as an investigation of one's own comprehension of and respect for other people's belief systems.

- **Modesty**

  Being modest does not require you to minimise your abilities, your job, or yourself. It suggests that while you should be happy with your achievements and recognise your talents, you should not constantly and incessantly boast about yourself or believe that you are superior to others. Recognise both your strengths and your flaws. We are always learning because knowledge is endless. It is highly possible that you will drive your team members away if they think of you as a haughty, conceited person with a big ego who brags, feels superior to others, and has a showy personality. This could have an effect on team communication, making it uncomfortable for your team members to bring up fresh ideas and problems with you. As a result, the success of the team will be hampered.

- **Open-mindedness**

  Respect others' thoughts and give them a sincere ear. Key elements of successful teamwork include meetings, talks, and brainstorming sessions. You need to put the other team members in the same position as you to share and discuss fresh ideas and challenges to find answers and make choices. Do not mock the ideas of others. Allow everyone to speak, listen, maintain composure, and wait to interject until they are through. The success of the team depends on everyone learning and sharing new things, but it also benefits you personally and broadens your knowledge.

- **Supportiveness**

  Ask for assistance and offer to assist. If any of your team members could benefit from your knowledge or experience, make the time to assist them. Offer to assist, even if it is just by checking over a team member's text for errors or keeping an ear out while they practise their talk. Do not be hesitant to seek assistance if you are unable to handle a problem on your own. Of course, there needs to be a healthy balance. Try your best on your own before asking others to help. To build a peaceful work atmosphere, it is crucial that team members feel supported by one another and by the team as a whole.

- **Reliability**

We often find ourselves working on certain project components in multidisciplinary or team projects based on our areas of expertise. This indicates that our work frequently depends on the work of others, and vice versa. Thus, it is crucial that we adhere to deadlines and complete our tasks on time. Regardless of how busy you are, make sure you finish your work as quickly as you can and that your colleagues can depend on you.

Furthermore, an **appropriate team composition** is crucial for developing multidisciplinary teams, which is linked to team members' awareness of their unique roles and requirements. This leads us to take a closer look at the institutional level. For example, we focus on schools.

Creating Structures to Support Multidisciplinary Teamwork at the School Level

Collaboration between teachers and different professionals is considered "an essential part of successful inclusion" (Wallace et al., 2002: 350; see also De Vroey et al., 2015). At the same time – and the difficulties we mentioned above reflect this – it is a common misunderstanding or "myth" that professional collaboration "comes naturally" (Friend, 2000: 132). While this highlights the importance of addressing multidisciplinary teamwork in initial teacher education and continuous professional development (see key aspect 4), developing collaboration between teachers and other professionals can also be considered an important "task" or focus in the ongoing process of inclusive school development (Lütje-Klose & Urban, 2014).

We want to take a closer look at the school level based on a qualitative study on inclusive school development and quality criteria from teachers, school leaders and parents' perspectives in the German context (Arndt & Werning, 2016, 2018): in retrospect, professionals described developing professional collaboration as one important milestone in their school development. With regard to collaboration between special and general education teachers on classroom level, a common starting point was a division of responsibilities in which special education teachers were responsible for students with special needs, while general teachers were responsible for the "regular students" by predominantly using the co-teaching approach; "one teach, one assist" or pull-out strategies. Developing collaboration was based on an emphasis on shared responsibility for all students and using a broader range of co-teaching approaches including switching roles (see for co-teaching approaches: chapter on teamwork in the classroom). Developing professional collaboration appears interconnected with other areas of inclusive school development like ideas on student grouping and cooperation (see chapter on cooperative learning).

On school level, three aspects appeared central for creating structures to support teamwork (Arndt, 2016):

Composition of teams
Within their scope of influence, schools use different strategies in composing teams, for example, to create 'manageable' team sizes in large schools. Schools try to reduce complexity by focusing on teachers' expertise in subject and/or areas in team composition. Another strategy focuses on creating continuity with regard to relationships between teachers and students. Combining both strategies, special and general education teachers form a classroom teacher team at one secondary school: One teacher goes along with the group from year 5 to 10, the other uses their expertise, for example, to facilitate transitions to upper secondary school or vocational training after year 10.
(External) Support for teamwork
Supporting teamwork and team development takes various forms: Linked to continuous professional development, schools focus e.g. on collaborative approaches to Individual Education Plans or developing their teaching approaches. Besides, they use external support like coaching or supervision/mentoring (see below Three Examples for Reflective). For instance, each new year 5 team receives coaching on team development in the beginning as well as a follow-up opportunity (like a "voucher") for another coaching session. This takes into account that professionals with different backgrounds, frames of reference and professional languages might experience conflict while working together (Conderman, 2011).
Regular team meetings
As Kosorok Labhart and Maeder (2016) point out based on an ethnographic study in Swiss primary education, a lack of scheduled team meetings can burden one team member with organising a meeting. Adequate time to meet is considered as important for teachers' professional development (Rytivaara & Kershner, 2012) as well as classroom practices and school development (Arndt & Werning, 2016). Hence, regularly scheduled team meetings are considered as important, while the lack of time for collaboration is considered a major constraint for working in multidisciplinary teams.

Organising and Decision-making in Multidisciplinary Teams

On the school level, looking at creating structures to support multidisciplinary teamwork raises this question: Who organises multidisciplinary teamwork? Based on a mixed-methods longitudinal study in the German context, Lütje-Klose and colleagues (2016) emphasise the importance of school leaders' support of multidisciplinary teamwork. Furthermore, questions concerning the role of teams in decision-making (Idel et al., 2012) arise. In the context of ongoing discussions on autonomy and collaboration (Fabel-Lamla et al., 2021; Kelchtermans, 2006), this leads to questions of autonomy on the team level as well as on participation in decision-making on institutional level.

Think about a school or educational institution:

Which decisions can teams make on their own?

Who participates in 'fundamental decisions' on an institutional level, for example, on working in age-mixed learning groups?

To make decisions and accomplish a common goal, team members should concentrate on collaborative, effective, and creative tasks and be able to merge their different thoughts and experiences (Volkova et al., 2021). The decision-making and support processes in an inclusive educational setting should involve all role-players equally. Thus, it is necessary to develop a cooperative partnership based on similar values, respect, open communication, common goals, and consideration of cultural differences (Nel et al., 2016). However, it

is important to critically reflect on hierarchies and their influence on decision-making, for example, when professionals from medicine and education work together (Bauer, 2019).

Beyond the individual school, this is also linked to different approaches in educational leadership in the broader context: Is there an orientation towards distributed leadership like in the Finnish context (Heikka & Suhonen, 2019)? Or are school leaders more likely to act as the lonesome player though ideas of distributed leadership arise like in Austria (Pham-Xuan & Amman, 2020)? Hence, it is important to look "beyond the school gate" (Ainscow et al., 2012: 206). By way of example, we next focus on support structures on a regional level in Austria.

Support Structures on the Regional Level: The Austrian Departments of Inclusion, Diversity, and Special Education (FIDS)

In Austria, multidisciplinary teamwork in schools is highly influenced by the development of support structures on the regional level. The ratification of the UN CRPD in 2008 in Austria results in far-reaching changes for the Austrian education system. One of the central measures was the anchoring of inclusive model regions (Federal Ministry for Education and Woman, 2015) in three federal states of Austria (Tyrol, Steiermark, Kärnten). The plan was to gradually convert the special school system into an inclusive system through implementing a new support system and thus increase the integration rate at all Austrian schools (BMASGK, 2012: 65). From the beginning, these so-called Pedagogical Advisory Centres had the task to "provide, coordinate, advise and support inclusive education, especially special education, in their areas of responsibility to teachers who teach students with Special Education Needs or with disabilities in general schools. The form of support depends on the support needs of individual students and on the already developed inclusive quality of the class or school" (BMBF, 2015: 6). Multidisciplinary collaboration with key pedagogical and other actors has been a central concern of this reform from the beginning. The schools and the teachers should receive diverse support in the implementation of inclusive education and support in networking (with all relevant pre-school, post-school and out-of-school support systems).

Due to the education reform 2017/18 (Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung, 2017), the previous special education agendas of the Pedagogical Advisory Centres were transferred throughout Austria to the new federal-state authority "Education Directorate" and expanded to coordinate inclusive education. In each education directorate, a Pedagogical Service Department has been set up, which, in addition to quality management, cooperation in education controlling and pedagogical expertise in teaching staff management, is responsible for the overall management of inclusion, diversity issues and special needs education. Therefore, since 2018, diversity managers control the department and are professionally supported by pedagogical consultants (regional teachers). With the implementation of the concept at hand, the performance of the educational system with regard to its inclusion capacity is to be increased and the

necessary support for each individual child with his or her individual support needs is to be ensured. In addition, experts from school psychology and regional personnel management are available for multidisciplinary co-operation in the educational region.

The new Department for Inclusion, Diversity and Special Education (FIDS) takes over the following tasks in the regions: Determination of (special educational) needs, provision of expertise in the field of inclusion, diversity and special education, participation in regional education monitoring, support of schools in all questions of inclusion/diversity/special education, support of transition processes, concept development of individual questions, parent counselling as well as networking with other school and non-school institutions (Lang, 2023). For these tasks, the FIDS have counselling teachers with different training who cover different areas: learning, behaviour, inclusion counselling, language education and language support. The guidance counsellors pursue the central goal of supporting all those involved in the school system in terms of inclusive teaching development (Lang, 2023). There are also other counselling teachers with a focus on physical and sensory disabilities (Lang, 2012).

School counselling addresses precisely the question of how lessons can be designed so that all children and young people can develop their individual talent potential and participate in both the educational process and the social processes at school? The individual needs of pupils are considered with regard to the existing conditions in the school and class, whereby systemic solution-oriented counselling is assumed here (Lang, 2023).

Key Aspect 4: Reflective Practices to Enhance Multidisciplinary Teamwork

As multidisciplinary teamwork is a complex endeavour, reflexivity is of great importance. Next, we focus on the relevance of reflective practices with regard to enhancing multidisciplinary teamwork. After this, we provide two examples for reflective practices.

Relevance of Reflective Practices

Teaching professionals operate within a framework characterised by constant changes and challenges. Teachers face a complex environment that encompasses cognitive, emotional, affective, and relational needs at both individual and group levels. Decision-making in teaching occurs in unique and unpredictable situations, blurring the line between theory and practice and influencing the overall teaching experience. These changes redefine didactic planning and the teacher's role, shifting from someone who follows pre-established models to a professional who observes the learning environment and employs strategies to achieve predetermined objectives (Crotti, 2017).

Teaching practice is not simply a set of observable actions and reactions, but rather a complex network of relationships in which choices and decisions are made. The choices are influenced by conduct, languages, rules, objectives, and strategies that form the professional community's "know-how" in teaching. In the face of classroom complexity,

teachers often need to make rapid decisions. It is thus essential to accompany these decisions with meta-reflection, a form of "reflection-for-action". This type of critical reflection extends beyond difficult or unexpected situations and also encompasses routine situations perceived as problematic. It involves understanding one's experiences within the social context and utilising acquired knowledge for future practice. This is why reflection makes it possible to generate new skills and new expertise, since through a professional research and development programme teachers can gradually increase the ability to understand their work and as a result, improve it (Stenhouse, 1975).

As reflective professionals (Martins et al., 2015; Schon, 1983), teachers need spaces to reflect on their own professional identity and the contexts in which they are working. Schon (1983) identified two types of reflection in professional education: *reflection-in-action* and *reflection-on-action*. The first one allows teachers to reshape the activity on which they are working while it is unfolding, and it helps to reflect on unpredicted experiences so as to generate both a new understanding and a change in the situation. The second one concerns reflecting on an experience after it has occurred, in order to understand what happened and why they acted as they did.

Establishing communities of practice within the professional context allows reflection to operate collectively, bringing together experiences, history, culture, and shared language to find solutions to complex situations. Reflection in teamwork improves the exchange of knowledge and raises new understandings. Moreover, the multidisciplinary perspective enhances collaborative processes orientated towards seeking strategies with the awareness of working for (and with) all members of the community, students, parents, teachers and other professionals (Cadei, Deluigi & Pourtois, 2016). There are numerous reflection practices in teamwork: below three examples with a multidisciplinary perspective are described.

Two Examples for Reflective Practices in Multidisciplinary Teamwork

1. **Reflective Thinking in Multidisciplinary Teamwork**

Reflective thinking plays a crucial role in multidisciplinary teamwork, particularly when sharing tacit knowledge across different professions. These aspects need to be explicit and shared among team members.
Knowledge of professionals include:

- personal knowledge
- values
- attitudes
- beliefs
- experiences

- theories
- philosophical-ethical elements

Reflective conversations among team members facilitate this process, allowing for the exploration and articulation of personal knowledge. Developing a multidisciplinary practical theory requires communication between implicit personal elements and conscious theoretical elements. Through this approach professionals with different backgrounds can detect differences between languages, concepts, working cultures, roles and identities.

The process of reflection, as Lakkala et al. stated (2017), has different stages and it begins with descriptive reflection, where team members identify a problem that needs to be addressed. Initially, the problem may seem ambiguous or undefined. Emotions and thoughts related to the problem are then examined, and it is framed within a conceptual framework.

Framing the experience enables team members to compare different aspects and questions related to the problem, referred to as comparative reflection. Multidisciplinary teamwork often involves tension and challenges, but it is important to acknowledge that conflicts between concrete experiences and analytic discussions are inherent to the learning process. By creating an atmosphere that allows dilemmas to surface, team members can reach a transformative point where they gain a broader understanding of the problem or reframe it through critically reflective analysis. The final phase of the reflective process is planning, where new solutions are sought and tested. This stage involves generating ideas and strategies to address the identified problem. Through this iterative process of reflection and action, multidisciplinary teams can enhance their collaboration and problem-solving abilities.

2. Supervision

One important reflective practice to enhance multidisciplinary teamwork is supervision: The conjunctive key words in various definitions of supervision are learning, reflection and development (Ērgle & Rutka, 2016). According to Wiles (1967) supervision is the assistance of an external expert in the development of a better teaching learning situation. Moreover, as said by Goldhammer, Anderson and Krajeski (1980), supervision is supportive of teacher growth since it stimulates the professional development, influences teacher's behaviour in the classroom and fosters the selection, development, use, and evaluation of good instructional approaches and materials.

Providing supervision at school can foster shared reflection on the changes observed in class, in which the highlighted dynamics became the subject of reflection from multiple views that were heterogeneous but at the same time, from a single community. The mediation of an external education professional also makes possible to channel shared views into strategies for new designs for the method, in line with the context of reference

and its characteristics, in a virtuous circle of theory and practice that considers micro locations and specific skills, as well as opportunities and critical aspects. It is also a space in which to go further, where teachers use time away from bureaucratic issues to deal with educational stresses and the challenges connected to the class and the specific needs of individuals. Supervision spaces represent the chance to exchange knowledge and planning, to enable meta-reflection, to review actions in terms of their own reflected image and as a result, to recognise and appreciate the images of students with their differences and identities (Cuccu, 2022).

Supervision can be divided into steps as follow:

Figure 3: Phases of Supervision

Design	The composition of the group is an important variable and influences the supervisor's choices. Groups can be homogenous (educators, teachers, social workers, coordinators...) or heterogeneous (different roles). This aspect will guide content, methods, and objectives, taking into consideration the different tasks, needs, and problems of participants. For example, a homogeneous group could focus on roles and/or methods, or share common strategies related to their field, while a heterogeneous group could choose a more general path or concerning the relation among different entities.
Act	The path will start with getting to know the members (if necessary) and activating the engagement with the constant participation of teachers, so as to exchange resources and competencies in a cooperative way. Discussion about case studies can be effective to promote problem-solving skills and bring out reflections from different perspectives. The supervisor will collect and systematize the contributions in order to give back input and generate new reflections from the group toward the design of common strategies.
Evaluate & re-design	Documenting the supervision is important for reconceptualizing the experience. Documentation can be: a recording, a summary, or a diary of the group. The material is also useful for the supervisor, the teacher, or the class council to design an action or redesign the supervision. Through the supervision participants learn how to analyze the coherence among activities and objectives, considering the needs and demands of beneficiaries.

Source: Zanchettin, 2009

Key Aspect 5: Multidisciplinary Teamwork in Pre-service and In-service Teacher Education

For academia to acknowledge that it dominates the design and the process of implementation of teacher education today (Zeichner, 2018, 2022) is a crucial step forward

to understanding what funds of knowledge are usually left out and how they could fill the gaps that appear later in teachers' careers. This is neither an easy fix nor a fast one, which makes it complex and even messy at times. A multi-year and multi-layered approach to working along existing teams and learning to build new multidisciplinary teams is realistic and is precisely what we should aim for in the future of teacher education and for a more collaborative future of education research. (The Collaborative Education Research Collective, 2023)

Students acquire competencies to develop and implement inclusive practices in multidisciplinary teams. The training of future teachers is confronted with the challenge of implementing the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, (United Nations, 2006), also in the field of education. Student teachers also see themselves obliged to meet these requirements and in doing so encounter a school system that is in the middle of a transition process. The associated paradigm shift within teacher training is therefore of great importance, because an inclusive school system requires educators who are able to co-operate in a team and who do not (any longer) take on the role of lonesome player.

Against the background of these developments in society as a whole, the professional profile of teachers is also changing in the sense that networked and cooperative work by all "education professionals" (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2022: 18) is of central importance in order to meet the demands of inclusive education: "Teachers do not work in isolation, nor do they work in homogeneous groups of teachers. Inclusive practice is performed by teams of diverse professionals. Therefore, a broader perspective is needed to prepare and support school staff and school professional networks to implement and sustain inclusive practice" (ibid., :18). (See chapter on "Teamwork in the classroom")

Designing Initial Teacher Education at University of Innsbruck (Austria)

The teaching model of the University of Innsbruck (Austria) attempts to form a new teacher personality for the current challenges. The focus is on establishing a professional ethos that considers cooperation with different actors in the school system as enriching and profitable in order to be able to professionally meet the diverse needs of the students (Sonntag, 2023). The teaching concept implies close cooperation with different actors in the educational landscape at Tyrol/Austria (Department of Inclusion, Diversity and Special Education of the Tyrol Directorate of Education, inclusion educators, and guidance counsellors) in order to prepare prospective students for this. In addition, the concept offers a wealth of opportunities for personal discussion, which in the context of a seminar-accompanying learning diary stimulates the basis for the students' self-reflective learning. The seminar is characterised by a variety of methods: in addition to more classical teaching-learning methods (impulse lectures, literature studies, seminar discussions and group work), there are also teaching methods that contribute in particular to students'

personal development (work with the so-called learning diary). Teaching methods that enable a concrete interlocking of scientific theories with professional practice (work phases with external experts or actors from the educational landscape) as well as teaching methods that are research-oriented (qualitative interviews in the form of group discussions at the end of the course, qualitative evaluation of the learning diaries) and represent an important link between teaching and research.

The aim of the learning diaries is to encourage students to engage in "deep learning" (Bräuer, 2016: 22) through a continuous reflection process. On the one hand, regular written follow-up and reflection should enable deeper insights into the seminar content covered. On the other hand, this procedure also creates opportunities to elaborate and reflect on the individual learning process. In this respect, these "knowledge stocks […] form a basis for the formation of schemata and scripts relevant to professional practice" (te Poel, Schlag, Lischka-Schmidt, Wittek, Hartung-Beck & Bauer 2022: 125). The focus is primarily on aspects that are subjectively particularly significant for the students.

Prospective teachers need (specialist) knowledge about different professional groups, structures, theories, models, and concepts of cooperation in schools, about local supporting guidance structures and actors or institutions. They need communication skills to build trusting networks and effective cooperation. Empathy and willingness to adopt perspectives are a prerequisite.

Case-based Approaches in Pre-service and In-service Teacher Education: Reflecting on (Re-)Producing Differences in Multidisciplinary Teams

Within the project "Reflection, Achievement & Inclusion. " Please see link to website here https://www.uni-frankfurt.de/103948295/Reflexion__Leistung___Inklusion A qualitative study was conducted at two comprehensive schools and two advanced secondary schools ('Gymnasien'). Based on this, materials for case-based approaches for both pre-service were developed (Arndt et al., 2021) and in-service teacher education (Lau & Lübeck, 2021). In one workshop of continuous professional development general and special education teachers of one school participated, including the one who is leading the educational stage group and the one who is responsible for the school's concept on inclusive education. During the workshop professionals discussed general and special education teachers' collaboration in student assessment which led to critically reflecting on their current teaching concepts and practices. For instance, they had introduced using a specific room as a flexible way for individual students to work outside the classroom based on their situation-specific needs. However, during the workshop professionals critically reflect on their observation that this room was now used for the pull-out of students with special needs: Students with special needs were pulled out of the classroom during the lessons to provide instruction for them. Professionals started to share first ideas on how to change this structure and practices to provide more flexible support for all students (Lau et al., 2021).

The use of pull-out strategies varies across context and also within schools (Arndt & Werning, 2016; Scruggs et al, 2007). As there is a risk of stigmatisation for students who are pulled out often, pull-out is a good example to demonstrate why it is important to reflect on the (unintended) consequences of division of task and responsibility within a multidisciplinary team. One possible starting point is to take a closer look at students' perspectives within cased-based approaches in teacher education.

Example for Casuistic Material: Student's Perspective

At one comprehensive school, in 6th grade, the student Tim was interviewed. The interviews were conducted in German. We refer to a translated and slightly shortened version (see for the original excerpt from the interview: Arndt et al., 2021:11). The interviewer who also conducted participant observation refers to students who sometimes work in a small group and ask Tim about it. Tim states:

"In the small group, it's something quite different from the large group. You understand much faster and better in the small group, because […] it's the four of us and Mrs. Peters [special education teacher] explains everything individually. If you need help, it takes only one or two minutes or like thirty seconds."

Tim explains that they are taught separately ('to be outside') in the main subjects like Maths, German lessons and English. They work on teaching and learning material which is easier compared to the one of the students within the (main) classroom. Tim prefers to work in the "large" (main) classroom or group. The interviewer asks if Tim can explain why. Tim tells:

"Because it's much better in the large [main] classroom. […] The teacher also explains really well. I rather prefer to stay inside. […] If we are in the small group […], well I don't know, but I want to be in the large/main group. […] Because the ones in the large group will have more success. They will get a Realschulabschluss […] or […] Gymnasialabschluss.

Asked about the small group, Tim adds: "And in the small group, we can only get a Hauptschulabschluss". Tim refers to different school leaving certificates in the German stratified school system: "Hauptschulabschluss" refers to the general education leaving certificate after 9th grade (lower secondary school). "Realschulabschluss" refers to the general school leaving certificate after 10thgrade, "Gymnasialabschluss" refers to the Abitur which is the secondary school leaving certificate after 12/13 years and general higher education entrance qualification.

What is your first impression when you read about this?

How does Tim characterise the "small" and the "large/main" group?

Based on interviews with students on primary level, Laubner (2014) refers to special education teachers as 'highlighting the difference' (by pulling-out students with special needs). Take this as a starting point for discussing potential unintended consequences of roles and responsibilities in multidisciplinary teams.

Engaging with students' views (Messiou, 2019) can form a starting point to reflect on unintended consequences and (re)producing of difference in multidisciplinary teamwork.

As classrooms are not only sites of responding to differences, but also of (re)producing differences with regard to intersecting "difference categories" (Plösser & Mecheril, 2012: 797), reflecting on constructions of differences in pre-service and in-service teacher education is important with respect to multidisciplinary teamwork. Multidisciplinary teamwork can also be characterised by underlining tensions if (specialist) support is linked to certain "target groups", especially in funding (Moser, 2017). Based on a qualitative study on multidisciplinary collaboration in Denmark, Hansen et al. (2020) raise questions on direct forms of provision in which the specialist works directly with the child as well as indirect forms in which the specialist works directly with the teacher and indirectly supports the child.

A Closer Look at Example Case I: Finnish Early Childhood Education – Multidisciplinary by Design

The Finnish ECEC is multidisciplinary by design: it was initially under the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health until 2013, which has influenced how the daily teamwork and leadership of early childhood is still organised today (Kinos, 2008). Known as Educare or ECEC (Early childhood education and care), it strongly relies on multidisciplinary teamwork ideology and comprises care, education, and teaching, seen as an open care or community care system. Groups of multi-skilled professionals are involved in a child-centred task together (Solvason & Winwood, 2022): early childhood healthcare services, primary healthcare, specialised medical care, developmental disability services, and social services, are all highly involved in a wide range of activities in the child's life to support the flow of ECEC and other aspects of life (Äikäs & Pesonen, 2022).

Early interventions can influence the entire life of a child. Early years are recognised as being critical times when children's development depends on various factors and when with the intentional help of daycare professionals, children's and families' safety and well-being can be considerably increased and supported accordingly. A multidisciplinary team, with a larger array of qualifications and perspectives, is more prone to provide profiled support, for example, for families with special needs, as well as guide them to attend child guidance clinics or other special services (Pölkki & Vornanen, 2016). Therefore, what better time than early years for multidisciplinary teams to work collaboratively to influence the beginning of the story, so that they can influence the whole story? (Belloni, 2019).

Pedagogical and Welfare Professionals and their Qualifications

The regular contact staff in ECEC consists of Pedagogical professionals and Welfare professionals (Onnismaa, 2017):

- Kindergarten Teacher (Lastentarhanopettaja)

- Social Welfare Worker (Sosionomi)
- Practical Nurse/ Nursery Nurse (Lähihoitaja)
- Children's Instructor/Childcare Worker (Lastenohjaaja)
- Special Education Teacher (Erityislastentarhanopettaja or Varhaiskasvatuksen erityisopettaja)
- Special Needs Assistant (Avustaja)

Other professionals that might supplement the needs of the regular contact staff can be kindergarten teachers who become specialised in one particular, for example:

- Finnish as a second language teachers (can be dedicated to one daycare or can travel in between daycares to support children with cultural and linguistic diverse backgrounds)
- Curriculum developers (who are dedicated to one daycare and help improve their curriculum)
- Psychologists
- Therapists (e.g., Speech, Art)

The minimum qualification requirements for ECEC staff in Finland varies a lot. Approximately 30% of all employees have tertiary-level education. The highest level of training is required to become:

- a Kindergarten Teacher – Bachelor's degree of 3 years of university training specialising in early childhood education
- a Social Welfare Worker – Bachelor's degree of 3½ years higher education institution (polytechnic) specialising in social services
- a Special Education Teacher (early childhood) – 1-year postgraduate university study route in special needs education following qualification as Kindergarten Teacher (university route) and 2 years work experience as Kindergarten Teacher

All three are core practitioners with group responsibilities and can also be centre heads (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2017).

It is important to mention that as part of their studies in education, future kindergarten teachers study **Pedagogical leadership and multidisciplinary cooperation** (University of Helsinki, 2023), and then during their workplace learning they become acquainted with administration and working as a member of multidisciplinary teams and networks. So, becoming an active member of a multidisciplinary team is highly regarded in Finland and is given space and time to be studied and practised even before being a qualified EC teacher.

Approximatively 70% of the Finnish ECEC staff has vocational training, which is required for:

- Practical Nurse/ Nursery Nurse (3 years upper secondary vocational qualification in social welfare and health care)
- Children's Instructor/Childcare Worker (3 years upper secondary vocational qualification in childcare, education, and family welfare)
- Special Needs Assistant (Recommended: 1–2 years vocational training)

The first two are qualified co-workers and the last one is a non-qualified co-worker.

Roles and Responsibilities

Some of the **Kindergarten teachers' responsibilities** are: teaching the group; creating individual study plans and following their implementation in co-operation with the educational team; evaluating and developing the culture of the whole educational community; multidisciplinary and networked cooperation between the school, the health service and the with the health care and special services for children, especially when this cooperation is related to the child's development and learning issues; cooperating with families; developing practices that enable parents to participate in the development of early childhood education and care activities; communicating the pedagogical activities of the group.

Some of the **ECE social worker's responsibilities** are working closely with families to promote the child's well-being and networking between families; being familiar with the network, services, and practices of municipal and provincial family services; being able to guide families in various situations requiring support at a low threshold; supporting other staff in the educational community in this area of specific responsibility.

The **EC special education teachers** can be consultants or group supervisors. They are specialists in planning and assessing the identification of a child's need for support and assessment of the child's needs, and to take these into account in the activities of the child, the group, the adults, and the day nursery. They are also experts in the development of learning environments and pedagogy.

Some of the **Nursery Nurses' responsibilities** include having a sensitive interaction with children and focusing in particular on the overall well-being and health of the children, while working in partnership with families in the area of responsibility.

For multidisciplinary teams to work well, the roles of each professional group are mentioned in the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care (540/2018), so that the so-called 'everyone does everything' culture is avoided (Onnismaa, 2017).

The above-mentioned professionals are not the only ones who can contribute to the success of appropriate care, education, and teaching in Finnish education. Based on the children's needs (Douglas, 2020), the expertise of the multidisciplinary teams requires flexible arrangements and continuous collaboration within the community.

For example, when working with culturally diverse children and their families, the ECEC

team might require some **language support from interpreters**, in which case, for some specific time, speakers of various languages Somali and Arabic join in and provide the permanent team with language support. Moreover, with young children who don't speak Finnish at all, or are just starting with it, at the municipal level, it is decided which kindergarten teachers focus their daily activity exclusively on **teaching Finnish as a second language**. In such cases, kindergarten teachers move from one group to another and from one daycare to another to cover as many children who need support as possible. Currently, these teachers are not specialised in universities to be second language teachers, but they go through ongoing professional development courses in order to learn more about the most effective interventions and discuss with researchers how they can turn theory into practice.

Good interaction and cooperation among multidisciplinary team members working in ECE is the basis for the process (Salminen, 2017). Since Finnish ECE staff come from different educational backgrounds and form a multidisciplinary community (Kangas & Ukkonen-Mikkola, 2019) they need to build a learning community in which all members learn from each other and develop community action (Kinos, 2008). When the ECEC team members have sometimes more, sometimes less, or no ECE training, pedagogical leadership is highly awaited by kindergarten teachers in Finland (Kahila et al., 2020).

Considering their training profile, their pedagogical and curriculum design responsibility, **kindergarten teachers** in Finland **lead** the planning, assessment, and development of pedagogy, and at the same time, they also engage their multidisciplinary colleagues in the process, so that everyone works together to achieve the learning goals set for every child. (Harju-Luukkainen et al., 2022). These exchanges of ideas and perspectives are planned and usually take place during the weekly team meetings, when kindergarten teachers initiate and enhance the reflection of the daily practices among the team members, bringing up topics that they find important. It is crucial that all members of the team are present, they are all heard, and their ideas are taken into consideration, and that everyone learns with and from everyone, by complementing one another's views and daily work.

As a result of such meetings, the kindergarten teachers can observe that it would be useful, for example, to develop various practices, or create a more systematic documentation of their practices. Agreeing on and verbalising the goals makes these goals more visible in the planning and in the practices of the entire multidisciplinary team.

Challenges and Support in Multidisciplinary Teamwork

In the absence of professional trust between different groups (Ekins, 2015), when competition between groups, rather than co-operation predominates (Rose & Norwich, 2014), or when "implicit professional hierarchy" between team members with different levels of qualifications and status takes over (Hood, 2015) instead of the **greater good** for the group, **the big picture**, and the benefits for the children (Herbert & Broomfield, 2019)

– multidisciplinary teams cannot function. It is important to know that and to be aware of the human ego that can come in the way of successful multidisciplinary teams. Everyone in the team contributes to a fruitful or fruitless collaboration. Everyone's expertise as well as appreciating the expertise of others, and feeling valued as well as valuing others, are key components of a nurturing environment for multidisciplinary collaboration (Solvason & Winwood, 2022).

As mentioned earlier when challenges on individual and team level were discussed, similar challenges can be observed in the Finnish context as well. We must acknowledge the fact that sometimes it can be hard for multidisciplinary teams to come to an agreement. Take for example a recent study by Savolainen et al. (2021) about how multidisciplinary collaboration in children's mental health promotion functions in Finland. More than half of the about 500 professionals who took part in the study were not satisfied with the multidisciplinary collaboration between their organisation and child psychiatric services. They referred to the lack of 'clear operating models and agreed guidelines,' besides low financial and human resources needed to focus their attention on the needs of children with psychiatric symptoms. Some of the ECEC teachers felt that they were alone with the problems encountered with symptomatic children and did not get occupational counselling, though they felt they needed it. In such cases, cross-sectoral collaboration can be affected by the lack of technical solutions and coordination across the service systems required by multidisciplinary collaboration (Äikäs et al., 2022; Savolainen et al., 2021).

What would then help in such cases? One possibility is ECEC professional training (Bricker et al., 2022), but also for multidisciplinary team members to take part in multidisciplinary education (Fox et al. 2018; Labrague et al., 2018), for them to acquire the competencies needed in collaborative practice (interprofessional communication, or appreciation of interprofessional team roles). The realistic description of individual and multidisciplinary team competence is that in the negative scenario, when the children's situation is experienced as challenging, the responsibility lies with the professional alone to identify and organise significant support, but in the positive scenario, it is heavily collaborative (Äikäs et al., 2022).

For multidisciplinary teams to work, cultural factors should also be regarded. Considering that Finland has been identified as a country of low power distance and equalitarian culture, it is common that the dynamics within the ECEC multidisciplinary teams to involve open and frank discussions, backed by confidentiality and humour, which leads to an overall atmosphere of collegial trust, support, and cooperation. Especially when teams are composed of experienced teachers, shared leadership is quite common and is based on strong collaboration between teachers, which helps support their leadership responsibilities.

When the multidisciplinary teams are effective, this will only benefit children and their families by creating opportunities to improve multidisciplinary collaboration, which is needed for the inclusion of all children, which is a central aim of ECE. At the same time,

functional multidisciplinary teams increase job satisfaction and improve pedagogical quality, for which enhancement of multidisciplinary teamwork skills is required (Kumpulainen, 2013). Nonetheless, for multidisciplinary teams to complement each other's work on a daily basis, they need sufficient time to focus on specific cases or problems, and dedicated opportunities for professional development and high-quality interaction (Douglas, 2020).

Conclusion

Shift from "I"- to "We"-Perspective

As we read before, learning to work in a multidisciplinary team is complex and requires a change of perspective. It is essential to switch from an "I-perspective" – the focus on myself, my tasks, my problem, my loneliness at work if this is the feeling in one's own context – to a "We-perspective" and the perception of ourselves as a part of a professional team that work together. It is an ongoing process, and it takes time.

Local contexts

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=535#h5p-29

Closing questions to discuss or tasks

At the end of this section, we propose a method to reflect on one's own and the other's strengths in educational contexts, to be more aware of personal resources and of the team.

Individual level:
Think about an educational context in which you are currently working or have worked before. Alternatively, go back to one of the example cases in this chapter: Find three images that represent your three main resources as a (student)teacher. You can draw them, cut them

from a magazine or find them on internet. Then put them on a sheet of paper or on a virtual document. Think about: What kind of resources do your images represent? In what situations do you use these resources?

Team level:

In a group of 3-5 colleagues, share your images with the others. They should look at your images and try to interpret the meaning. It is likely that not all interpretations will be precise, but it is important to allow the sharing of a large number of positive characteristics connected to the colleague(s). Afterwards, you describe your composition: My resources are… I choose these images because…

Closing reflection: What did this activity give? What did you experience during it?

Literature

Ahlgrimm, F. "Zusammenarbeit in Teams Stärken," April 27, 2021.

Äikäs, A., and H. Pesonen. "Vaativa Erityinen Tuki Perusopetuksessa: Käsitteen Tarkastelua Design-Tutkimuksen Avulla [Significant Support in Basic Education. Examining the Concept by Educational Design Research]." *NMI-Bulletin. Oppimisen Ja Oppimisvaikeuksien Erityislehti [Finnish Journal of Learning and Learning Disabilities]* 32, no. 2 (2022): 67–86.

Äikäs, A., Pesonen, H., Heiskanen, N., Syrjämäki, M., Aavikko, L., and E. Viljamaa. "Approaches to Collaboration and Support in Early Childhood Education and Care in Finland: Professionals' Narratives." *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 2022, 1–15. https://doi.org/10.1080/08856257.2022.2127081.

Ainscow, M., Dyson, A., Goldrick, S., and M. West. "Making Schools Effective for All: Rethinking the Task." *School Leadership & Management* 32, no. 3 (2012): 197–213. https://doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2012.669648.

Arndt, A.-K. *Situierte Aushandlung Und Differenzkonstruktion – Zuwendung Zur Komplexität Unterrichtsbezogener Kooperation von Regelschullehrkräften Und Sonderpädagog*innen in Inklusiven Schulen*. Institutionelles Repositorium der Leibniz Universität Hannover, 2022. https://doi.org/10.15488/12524.

———. "Zwischen (Unterrichts-)Alltag Und Fortwährender Entwicklung: Kooperation von Lehrkräften an Inklusiven Schulen." In *Kooperation Im Kontext Schulischer Heterogenität*, edited by Kreis A., Wick, J. and C. Kosorok Labhart, 127–41. Waxmann, 2016.

Arndt, A.-K., Becker, J., Köhler, S.-M., Löser, J. M., Urban, M., and R. Werning. "Perspektiven von Schüler*innen Auf Das 'Rausgehen' Als Gemeinsamer Reflexionsimpuls." *Herausforderung Lehrer*innenbildung – Zeitschrift Zur Konzeption, Gestaltung Und Diskussion* 4, no. 1 (2021): 135–57. https://doi.org/10.11576/HLZ-4045.

Arndt, A.-K., and R. Werning. "Qualitätskriterien, Bedingungen Und Entwicklungsprozesse

Inklusiver Schule Aus Sicht von Lehrkräften, Schulleitungen Und Eltern an Jakob-Muth-Preisträgerschulen: Ergebnisse Der Qualitativen Studie 'Gute Inklusive Schule.'" In *Inklusive Schulkultur: Miteinander. Leben. Gestalten: Grundlagen Und Beispiele Gelungener Praxis*, edited by S. Laux and E. Adelt, 15–33. Waxmann, 2018.

———. "Unterrichtsbezogene Kooperation von Regelschullehrkräften Und Sonderpädagog/Innen Im Kontext Inklusiver Schulentwicklung: Implikationen Für Die Professionalisierung." *Zeitschrift Für Pädagogik. Beiheft* 62 (2016): 160–74. https://doi.org/10.25656/01:17178.

Bandura, A. "Self-Efficacy." In *Encyclopedia of Human Behavior*, edited by V. S. Ramachaudran, 4:71–81. Academic Press, 1994.

Bauer, P. "Kooperation Als Herausforderung in Multiprofessionellen Handlungsfeldern." In *Sozialer Wandel: Herausforderungen Für Kulturelle Bildung Und Soziale Arbeit*, edited by S. Faas and M. Zipperle, 273–86. Springer VS, 2014. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-04166-3_21.

———. "Sozialpädagogische Fallbesprechungen Im Team: Spannungsfelder Und Interaktionsdynamiken." In *Pädagogische Teamgespräche: Methodische Und Theoretische Perspektiven Eines Neuen Forschungsfeldes*, edited by Cloos P., Fabel-Lamla, M., Kunze, K. and B. Lochner, 16–33. Beltz Juventa, 2019.

Belloni, M. "OMEP Policy Forum: Paving the Road to a Better Future: Early Childhood Development for Migrant and Refugee Children." *International Journal of Early Childhood* 51, no. 1 (2019): 1–4.

Booth, T., and M. Ainscow. *Index Für Inklusion. Ein Leitfaden Für Schulentwicklung*. 2. korrigierte und aktualisierte Auflage. Weinheim, Basel: Beltz, 2019.

Bräuer, G. *Das Portfolio Als Reflexionsmedium Für Lehrende Und Studierende*. 2., Erweiterte Auflage. Vol. 4141. UTB Schlüsselkompetenzen, Hochschuldidaktik. Opladen, Toronto: Verlag Barbara Budrich, 2016.

Bricker, D. D., Felimban, H. S., Lin, F. Y., Stegenga, S. M., and S. O. Storie. "A Proposed Framework for Enhancing Collaboration in Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education." *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education* 41, no. 4 (2022): 240–52. https://doi.org/10.1177/0271121419890683.

Cadei, L., Deluigi, R., and J.P. Pourtois. "Fare per, Fare Con, Fare Insieme. Progetti Di Cittadinanza Tra Scuole e Famiglie." Spaggiari, 2016.

Clarke, A. E. *Situational Analysis: Grounded Theory after the Postmodern Turn*. Sage Publications, 2005.

Conderman, G. "Methods for Addressing Conflict in Cotaught Classrooms." *Intervention in School and Clinic* 46, no. 4 (2011): 221–29. https://doi.org/10.1177/1053451210389034.

Crotti, M. "La Riflessività Nella Formazione Alla Professione Docente." *Edetania* 52 (2017): 85–106.

Cuccu, M. "'Labs to Learn': From Training Process to Cooperative Dynamics. Countering School Dropout with an Interdisciplinary Approach." In *XIX International Congress of AIFREF 2022 (Session 17)*. Venezia (online), 2022.

De Vroey, A., Struyf, E., and K. Petry. "Secondary Schools Included: A Literature Review." *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 2015. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2015.1075609.

Dean, J., Roberts, P., and L.B. Perry. "School Equity, Marketisation and Access to the Australian Senior Secondary Curriculum." *Educational Review* 75, no. 2 (2023): 243–63.

Douglas, A. S. "Contradictions in Children's Centre Service Provision: The Art of the Possible in Multi-Professional Work." *International Journal of Early Years Education* 28, no. 4 (2020): 319–35. https://doi.org/10.1080/09669760.2019.1685471.

Dugang, P. "Teamwork and Effectiveness." *Journal of World Englishes and Educational Practices* 2, no. 2 (2020): 92–102.

Easen, P., Atkins, M., and A. Dyson. "Inter-Professional Collaboration and Conceptualisations of Practice." *Children & Society* 14, no. 5 (2000): 355–67. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1099-0860.2000.tb00190.x.

Education, Ministry of and Culture. "Varhaiskasvatuksen Kehittämisen Tiekartta Vuosille 2017–2030 [Roadmap for Finnish ECEC 2017–2030]," 2017. http://minedu.fi/julkaisu?pubid=URN:ISBN:978-952-263-487-0.

Ekins, A. *The Changing Face of Special Educational Needs*. Routledge, 2015.

Engelbrecht, P., and J.F. Hay. *Creating Collaborative Partnerships in Inclusive Schools*. Edited by P. Engelbrecht and L. Green. *Responding to the Challenges of Inclusive Education in Southern Africa*. 2nd ed. Pretoria: Van Schaik, 2018.

Ērgle, L., and L. Rutka. "The Theoretical Nature and Practical Necessity of Pedagogical Supervision." In *Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference Rural Environment, Education, Personality (REEP)*, 9:66–73, 2016.

Fabel-Lamla, M., Kollmeier, A., Krol, L., and R. Reinisch. "Autonomie in Der Multiprofessionellen Zusammenarbeit an Schulen." In *Kooperation – Koordination – Kollegialität: Befunde Und Diskurse Zum (Multi-)Professionellen Zusammenwirken Pädagogischer Akteur*innen an Schule(n)*, edited by Kunze K., Petersen, D., Bellenberg, G., Fabel-Lamla, M., Hinzke, J.-H., Moldenhauer, A., Peukert, L., Reintjes, C. and K. te Poel, 48–70. Klinkhardt, 2021. https://doi.org/10.35468/9783781559196.

Fox, L., Onders, R., Hermansen-Kobulnicky, C. J., Nguyen, T.-N., Myran, L., Linn, B., and J. Hornecker. "Teaching Interprofessional Teamwork Skills to Health Professional Students: A Scoping Review." *Journal of Interprofessional Care* 32, no. 2 (2018): 127–35. https://doi.org/10.1080/13561820.2017.1399868.

Friend, M. "Myths and Misunderstandings About Professional Collaboration." *Remedial and Special Education* 21, no. 3 (2000): 130–60. https://doi.org/10.1177/074193250002100301.

Friend, M., and L. Cook. *Interactions: Collaboration Skills for School Professionals*. 6th ed. Pearson Education, 2010.

Goldhammer, R., Anderson, R.H., and R.J. Krajeski. *Clinical Supervision Special Methods for the Supervision of Teachers*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1980.

Hansen, J. H., Carrington, S., Jensen, C. R., Molbæk, M., and M. C. Secher Schmidt. "The Collaborative Practice of Inclusion and Exclusion." *Nordic Journal of Studies in Educational Policy* 6, no. 1 (2020): 47–57. https://doi.org/10.1080/20020317.2020.1730112.

Harju-Luukkainen, H., Kangas, J., and S. Garvis. *Finnish Early Childhood Education and Care: A Multi-Theoretical Perspective on Research and Practice*. Springer, 2022.

Heikka, J., and K. Suhonen. "Distributed Pedagogical Leadership Functions in Early Childhood Education Settings in Finland." *Southeast Asia Early Childhood* 8, no. 2 (2019): 43–56.

Helsinki, University of. "Course Unit AYEDUK019: Open Uni – Pedagogical Leadership and Multiprofessional Cooperation," July 11, 2023. https://studies.helsinki.fi/courses/cu/hy-CU-127688871-2020-08-01.

Herbert, J. L., and L. Broomfield. "Multi-Disciplinary Teams Responding to Child Abuse: Common Features and Assumptions." *Children and Youth Services Review* 106 (2019): 1–11.

Hood, R. "How Professionals Experience Complexity: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis." *Child Abuse Review* 24 (2015): 140–52.

Idel, T.-S., Lütje-Klose, B., Grüter, S., Mettin, C., and A. Meyer. "Kooperation Und Teamarbeit in Der Schule." Edited by Cloos P., Fabel-Lamla, M., Kunze, K. and B. Lochner. *Pädagogische Teamgespräche: Methodische Und Theoretische Perspektiven Eines Neuen Forschungsfeldes*, 2019, 34–52.

Kahila, S. K., Heikka, J., and N. Sajaniemi. "Teacher Leadership in the Context of Early Childhood Education: Concepts, Characteristics and Enactment." *Southeast Asia Early Childhood Journal* 9, no. 1 (2020): 28–43.

Kangas, J., and T. Ukkonen-Mikkola. "Multi-Voiced Development in Finnish Early Childhood Education Practices." *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research* 18, no. 11 (2019): 1–17.

Kelchtermans, G. "Teacher Collaboration and Collegiality as Workplace Conditions: A Review." *Zeitschrift Für Pädagogik* 52, no. 2 (2006): 220–37.

Kinos, J. "Professionalism – A Breeding Ground for Struggle: The Example of the Finnish Day-Care Centre." *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal* 16, no. 2 (2008): 224–41. https://doi.org/10.1080/13502930802141642.

Kosorok Labhart, C., and C. Maeder. "Aushandlungsordnungen Multiprofessioneller Teams an Einer Integrativen Primarschule: Ethnografische Einblicke." In *Kooperation Im Kontext Schulischer Heterogenität*, edited by Kreis A., Wick, J. and C. Kosorok Labhart, 223–42. Waxmann, 2016.

Kumpulainen, K., Sajaniemi, N., Suhonen, E., and H. Pitkäniemi. "Occupational Well-Being and Teamwork in Finnish Early Childhood Education." *Journal of Early Childhood Education Research* 12, no. 2 (2023): 71–97. https://doi.org/10.58955/jecer.v12i2.119784.

Labrague, L., McEnroe-Petitte, D., Fronda, D., and A. Obeidat. "Interprofessional Simulation in Undergraduate Nursing Program: An Integrative Review." *Nurse Education Today* 67 (2018):

46–55. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2018.05.001.

Lakkala, S., Turunen, T.A., Kangas, H., Pulju, M., Kuukasjärvi, U., and H. Autti. "Learning Inter-Professional Teamwork During University Studies: A Case Study of Student-Teachers' and Social Work Students' Shared Professional Experiences." *Journal of Education for Teaching* 43, no. 4 (2017): 414–26.

Lau, R., and A. Lübeck. ""Drinnen" Oder "Draußen": Exklusion von Schüler*innen Mit Sonderpädagogischem Förderbedarf Aus "inklusiven" Lerngruppen." *DiMawe – Die Materialwerkstatt* 3, no. 2 (2021): 49–59. https://doi.org/10.11576/dimawe-4128.

Laubner, M. "Deutungsmuster von Schülern Zum Zwei-Lehrer-System." *Schulmanagement-Handbuch* 152 (2014): 25–35.

Ljungblad, A. "Key Indicator Taxonomy of Relational Teaching." *Journal of Education for Teaching* ahead-of-print (2022): 1–13.

———. "Pedagogical Relational Teachership (PeRT) – A Multi-Relational Perspective." *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 25, no. 7 (2021): 860–76.

Lütje-Klose, B., Serke, B., Hunger, S. K., and E. Wild. "Gestaltung Kooperativer Prozesse Und Schulstrukturen Als Merkmal Effektiver Unterrichtung von Schülerinnen Und Schülern Mit Sonderpädagogischem Förderbedarf Im Lernen: Ergebnisse von Schulleitungsinterviews Aus Der BiLieF-Studie." In *Kooperation Im Kontext Schulischer Heterogenität*, edited by Kreis A., Wick, J. and C. Kosorok Labhart, 109–25. Waxmann, 2016.

Lütje-Klose, B., and M. Urban. "Professionelle Kooperation Als Wesentliche Bedingung Inklusiver Schul- Und Unterrichtsentwicklung." *Vierteljahresschrift Für Heilpädagogik Und Ihre Nachbargebiete* 2 (2014): 112–23.

Martins, A.O., Coimbra, M.N., Pinto, I.P., and R. Serradas. "How Teachers Experience Practical Reflectivity in Schools: A Case Study." *American Journal of Educational Research* 3, no. 7 (2015): 918–22.

Messiou, K. "The Missing Voices: Students as a Catalyst for Promoting Inclusive Education." *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 23, no. 7–8 (2019): 768–81. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2019.1623326.

Moser, V. "Schulentwicklung Inklusion: Konzepte Und Befunde." In *Inklusion Und Schulentwicklung: Konzepte, Instrumente, Befunde*, edited by V. Moser and M. Egger, 127–43. Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 2017.

Naraian, S. "General, Special and … Inclusive: Refiguring Professional Identities in a Collaboratively Taught Classroom." *Teaching and Teacher Education* 26, no. 8 (2010): 1677–86. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2010.06.020.

Needs, European Agency for Special, and Inclusive Education. "Profile for Inclusive Teacher Professional Learning. Including All Education Professionals in Teacher Professional Learning for Inclusion," 2022. https://www.european-agency.org/resources/publications/TPL4I-profile.

Nichols, J., Dowdy, A., and C. Nichols. "Co-Teaching: An Educational Promise for Children with Disabilities or a Quick Fix to Meet the Mandates of No Child Left Behind?" In *Education*,

130:647–51. 4, 2010.

Öchsner, M., and G. Murray. "Women, Capitalism and Education: On the Pedagogical Implications of Postfeminism." *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 51, no. 7 (2019): 709–20.

Onnismaa, E.-L. "Finland – ECEC Workforce Profile," 2017.

Österreich, Unabhängiger Monitoringausschuss der Republik. "Sonderbericht Art. 24 – Bildung Anlässlich Der 2. Staatenprüfung Der Republik Österreich Durch Den UN-Fachausschuss." Wien, 2023.

Perry, L.B., and L. Southwell. "Access to Academic Curriculum in Australian Secondary Schools: A Case Study of a Highly Marketised Education System." *Journal of Education Policy* 29, no. 4 (2014): 467–85.

Pham-Xuan, R., and M. Ammann. "Schulleitung in Österreich. Zwischen Leadership Und Schulmanagement." *Die Deutsche Schule – Zeitschrift Für Erziehungswissenschaft, Bildungspolitik Und Pädagogische Praxis* 112, no. 3 (2020): 296–301. https://doi.org/10.25656/01:21850.

Pinti, P. "Hello Bio," 2018. https://hellobio.com/blog/multidisciplinary-teamwork-tips-for-a-productive-and-harmonious-workplace.html.

Ploesser, P. M., and P. P. Mecheril. "Neglect – Recognition – Deconstruction: Approaches to Otherness in Social Work." *International Social Work* 55, no. 6 (2012): 794–808. https://doi.org/10.1177/0020872811416143.

Pölkki, P. L., and R. H. Vornanen. "Role and Success of Finnish Early Childhood Education and Care in Supporting Child Welfare Clients: Perspectives from Parents and Professionals." *Early Childhood Education Journal* 44, no. 6 (2016): 581–94. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-015-0746-x.

Rodriguez, C. "A Quantitative Examination of the Relationship of Work Experience to Attitudes of Business Ethics in Graduate Students." *Journal of Leadership, Accountability and Ethics* 14, no. 3 (2017): 64–75.

Rose, J., and B. Norwich. "Collective Commitment and Collective Efficacy: A Theoretical Model for Understanding the Motivational Dynamics of Dilemma Resolution in Inter-Professional Work." *Cambridge Journal of Education* 44, no. 1 (2014): 59–74.

Rytivaara, A., and R. Kershner. "Co-Teaching as a Context for Teachers' Professional Learning and Joint Knowledge Construction." *Teaching and Teacher Education* 28, no. 7 (2012): 999–1008. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2012.05.006.

Sahlberg, P. "PISA in Finland: An Education Miracle or an Obstacle to Change?" *CEPS Journal* 1, no. 3 (2011): 119.

Salminen, J. "Early Childhood Education and Care System in Finland." *Nauki o Wychowaniu* 5, no. 2 (2017): 135–54. https://doi.org/10.18778/2450-4491.05.09.

Savolainen, O., Sormunen, M., Bykachev, K., Karppi, J., Kumpulainen, K., and H. Turunen. "Finnish Professionals' Views of the Current Mental Health Services and Multiprofessional Collaboration in Children's Mental Health Promotion." *International Journal of Mental Health* 50, no. 3 (2021): 195–217. https://doi.org/10.1080/00207411.2020.1848235.

Schön, D.A. *The Reflexive Practitioner*. Basic Books, 1983.

Solvason, C., and J. Winwood. "Exploring Drivers and Barriers: Working in Multiprofessional Teams to Support Children and Families." *The School Community Journal* 32, no. 1 (2022): 105–26.

Sonntag, M. "Innovative Professionalisierungsprozesse Im Kontext Inklusiver Bildung," 2023. https://gutelehre.at/projekt?tx_gutelehre_default%5Baction%5D=show&tx_gutelehre_default%5Bcontroller%5D=Project&tx_gutelehre_default%5Bproject%5D=1840&cHash=b384bc046122dda2fed089a64f16ec4f.

Stenhouse, L. *An Introduction to Curriculum Research and Development*. Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1975.

Sternberg, R.J. *Stili Di Pensiero: Differenze Individuali Nell'apprendimento e Nella Soluzione Di Problemi*. Erickson, 1998.

Strauss, A.L. *Negotiations: Varieties, Contexts, Processes, and Social Order*. Jossey-Bass, 1978.

Strauss, A.L., Schatzman, L., Bucher, R., Ehrlich, D., and M. Sabshin. *Psychiatric Ideologies and Institutions. With a New Introduction by the Authors*. Transaction, Inc., 1981.

Swart, E., and R. Pettipher. "A Framework for Understanding Inclusion." In *Addressing Barriers to Learning: A South African Perspective*, edited by E. Landsberg D. Kruger and E. Swart, 3rd ed., 3–26. Van Schaik, 2016.

Tarricone, P., and J. Luca. "Successful Teamwork: A Case Study." In *Quality Conversations, Proceedings of the 25th HERDSA Annual Conference*, 640–46. Perth, Western Australia, 2002.

Terhart, E., and E. Klieme. "Kooperation Im Lehrerberuf – Forschungsproblem Und Gestaltungsaufgabe. Zur Einführung in Den Thementeil." *Zeitschrift Für Pädagogik* 52, no. 2 (2006): 163–66.

Vesisenaho, M., Lakkala, M., Manu, M., Pöysä-Tarhonen, J., Kallunki, V., Kyllönen, M., Toom, A., Peltonen, M., and P. Häkkinen. "Pre-and In-Service Teachers' Teamwork Behaviour in Integrated Teacher Training." *Journal of Teacher Education and Educators* 12, no. 1 (2023): 95–121.

Volkova, N., Lebid, O., Hrom, O., Zinukova, N., and T. Korobeinikova. "SHS Web of Conferences 104, 03003." *SHS Web of Conferences* 104 (2021): 03003. https://doi.org/10.1051/shsconf/202110403003.

Wallace, T., Anderson, A. R., and T. Bartholomay. "Collaboration: An Element Associated With the Success of Four Inclusive High Schools." *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation* 13, no. 4 (2002): 349–81. https://doi.org/10.1207/S1532768XJEPC1304_05.

Wiles, K. *Supervision for Better Schools*. Prentice-Hall, 1967.

Wojciechowska, M. "Number of Acquaintances vs Individual Social Capital of Librarians." *Public Library Quarterly* 41, no. 6 (2022): 513–34.

Zanchettin, A. *La Supervisione Pedagogica Nella Formazione Professionale*, 2009.

Zeichner, K. "Interview with Ken Zeichner: Current Challenges and Future Possibilities for Teacher Education." *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education* 50, no. 2 (2022): 130–43. https://doi.org/10.1080/1359866X.2022.2045472.

———. *The Struggle for the Soul of Teacher Education*. Routledge, 2018.

About the authors

Alexandra Anton

Alexandra Anton, researcher specialising in teachereducation at the Åbo Akademi University. Her research is situated at the intersections of early childhood, teacher agency, and just pedagogies for multicultural and multilingual learners. She is an experienced practitioner in early childhood, language learning and teaching, and is involved in cross-cultural research projects.

Ann-Kathrin Arndt

Ann-Kathrin Arndt, research, teaching and developing teacher education in the field of inclusive education. PhD on collaboration between general and special education teachers (Leibniz University Hannover). Main research areas: Multidisciplinary teamwork, constructions of difference in inclusive classrooms, inclusive, diversity-sensitive teacher education.

Miriam Sonntag

Miriam Sonntag, practitioner and researcher in the field of inclusive education, focusing on interdisciplinary and multiprofessional collaboration. Experiences as a special education teacher in inclusive schools, research associate, teacher trainer, in-service trainer, director of a pedagogical consulting centre for inclusive school development, lecturer at colleges and universities.

Beausetha   Juhetha Bruwer

Beausetha Bruwer, instructor of inclusive education, deaf education, and sign language. Experiences as a teacher of deaf children and as a teacher and sign language interpreter trainer at college and university level. Her key areas of research interest include, among other things: language education, early literacy and language acquisition/ development for deaf learners, sign language linguistics and practices, Deaf culture, mother

tongue education, multilingual education, early childhood inclusive practices, play pedagogy, outdoor pedagogy, and teacher preparation for inclusive practices.

Miriam Cuccu

Miriam Cuccu, pedagogist and subject expert in general and social pedagogy at the University of Macerata (Italy). She is involved in projects focused on intercultural education with a community-based and arts-based approach. She collaborates in monitoring and evaluating interventions to counter educational poverty and in training for education professionals. Her main research interests include dialogue between cultures, community participation and empowerment through creative languages.

Lydia Murphy

Lydia Murphy is a trained educator in Early Childhood Care and Education. Her special interests include relational pedagogy, love in education, empowering voices, and reflective practice. As an early years researcher she studies the role of the early years professionals supporting reciprocal relationships with themselves, babies /toddlers/children, their carers and educational environments/communities. Within this she explores potential deficit narratives that trickle into communities particularly those experiencing disadvantage.

'TO BUILD UP A COMMUNITY' - COLLABORATION WITH PARENTS

Assimina Tsibidaki; Linjie Zhang; and Nico Leonhardt

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://book.all-means-all.education/ ama-2025-en/?p=421#oembed-1

Example Case

"I have many, many examples where we succeeded with parental involvement, but I want to give you one example. I have worked in a community that is still very nomadic, and they keep cattle, and it's important for everybody in the family to participate in cattle grazing and other chores. So, the school was having parental meetings, and they were having these meetings at the school. The school reported to us that they have tried to bring in parents on different days of the week, but they always had to cancel or postpone the meetings because the parents wouldn't come. So, when they approached my research team, asking how they should handle the issue, we asked them, how about doing this meeting in the community, which is about 50 kilometres from the school, and asking the parents what time would suit them for the meeting? The very first meeting they held in the community, they had almost 100% attendance (except for those who had responsibilities of going to find the lost cattle and so on), because the parents decided on the time of the meeting, felt at home in the community and felt free to speak in their language. The school reported to us that it was the first time that they had this kind of attendance and this kind of involvement. So, I think it is very important to first consult with the parents who you want to involve and to give them a choice about the time and how the meeting should occur. In my country, "parents" are not only the biological parents of the learners. Parents can be community members; a parent can be in the form of an uncle; they can be older siblings and so on. They say that if they had this kind of meeting at the school,

they wouldn't even have a place big enough to host the parents. But in the community, everybody attended because you qualified to be a parent. That's my story."

Cynthy Haihambo, Lecturer, University of Namibia

Initial questions

- **Why is collaboration between parents and schools essential in fostering an inclusive educational environment?**
- **What are the main barriers that prevent effective parent-teacher collaboration, and how can schools address them?**
- **How do cultural and socioeconomic factors influence parental involvement in their children's education?**
- **What strategies or models are discussed in the chapter to enhance meaningful partnerships between schools and parents?**
- **How can schools shift from a teacher-centered approach to a more community-based model of collaboration with parents?**

Introduction to Topic

Collaboration with parents constitutes a process that requires a personal commitment based on a clear rationale and a high level of collective and personal self-efficacy. This commitment, honours the diverse structures and backgrounds of the families, employs real communication skills, provides curricula and problem-solving solutions that are aligned with the parents' and students' goals and occurs within a parent-driven relationship (Porter, 2008). Successful home-school collaboration is more about how individuals share their work, and it is characterised by voluntariness, mutual goals, parity, shared responsibility for critical decisions, joint accountability for outcomes, and shared resources (Friend & Cook, 2017).

This chapter aims to explore the importance of teacher-parent collaboration in inclusive education. In particular, it highlights what it means to collaborate, working with parents,

and the key barriers and risks in collaboration. Finally, it seeks to provide key principles and examples of effective and efficient home-school collaboration.

It is worth mentioning that this chapter is based on the philosophy of inclusive education, focusing on human relations, and its main goal is to create an inclusive school and an inclusive society.

Key aspects

The meaning of collaboration with parents

The term "collaboration" is of high value and quality. A common definition of collaboration is a partnership to achieve a common goal or a set of goals. It refers to a reciprocal dynamic process that occurs among systems, schools or classrooms, and/or individuals who share decision-making toward common goals, solutions and decisions in order to support student success (Cowan et al., 2004; Gerdes et al., 2022; Minch et al., 2023; Witte et al., 2021). Collaboration is characterised by voluntary, co-equal, and authentic partnerships between parents and teachers (Cox, 2005 as cited in Minch et al., 2023).

The importance of good parent-teacher collaboration has been well documented. More specifically, promoting collaboration in education improves children's academic and social outcomes, both in early education and beyond (Castro et al., 2004). When collaboration is focused on improving the well-being of children and adolescents, decades of research show that children benefit. Benefits include improved academic, social, behavioural and mental health outcomes (Witte et al., 2021). The collaboration continuum describes the three dimensions of co-work as cooperation, coordination and collaboration (McNamara, 2012).

Collaboration with parents constitutes a process that requires a personal commitment based on a clear rationale and a high level of collective and personal self-efficacy. This commitment honours the diverse structures and backgrounds of families, employs real communication skills, provides curricula and problem-solving solutions that are aligned with the parents' and students' goals and occurs within a parent-driven relationship (Barker & Harris, 2020; Jorgenson, 2023; Porter, 2008). Successful home-school collaboration is more about how individuals share their work, and it is characterised by voluntariness, mutual goals, parity, shared responsibility for critical decisions, joint accountability for outcomes, and shared resources (Friend & Cook, 2017).

Various theoretical models for fostering cooperation and collaboration between parents and educators are delineated and scrutinised within the academic literature, utilising a range of adaptable frameworks (Sadownik & Višnjić Jevtić, 2023). Among the most prevalent models are (Figure 1):

1. The *expert model* portrays parents as passive recipients of professional expertise.

2. The transplant model endeavours to harness parental involvement by viewing parents as executors of received expertise and guidance.

3. The *consumer model* positions parents as rational and well-informed decision-makers, while educators serve as purveyors of information and facilitators of various educational options.

4. The *empowerment model* aims to promote collaborative decision-making and upholds the right of educators to create the necessary framework (Dale, 2008).

5. The *negotiating mode*l promotes a partnership characterised by shared responsibilities. This model emphasises negotiation to reach mutual decisions and resolve any disagreements that may arise. Negotiation may result in a consensus or disagreement, and the model advocates for adaptable roles and mutually agreed-upon outcomes. It underscores the valuable and distinct contributions of both parents and educators, asserting that their differing perspectives are essential for fostering successful collaborations that yield positive outcomes for the child (Abed, 2014).

6. The *partnership model* underscores the importance of collaborative decision-making and shared accountability (Hornby, 1989; 2011).

These models address diverse aspects and dynamics inherent in parent-teacher relationships, underscoring the necessity of tailoring approaches to suit specific contextual nuances and requirements (Sadownik & Višnjić Jevtić, 2023).

Figure 1: The models of parent-teacher collaboration

1. The expert model:	2. The consumer model:
Teachers deal with the child without active relationships with parents	Parents are considered as a consumer for teacher's services
3. The transplant model:	4. The empowerment model:
Teachers transplant their knowledge to parents, and assist them to be like teachers	Parents have the right to choose the services that they will offer to their child, and teachers assist parents in their empowerment
5. The negotiating model:	6. The partnership model:
Both parents and teachers have helpful and separate contributions to offer	Parents have a central role regarding their needs and strengths

Aiming to meet the increasingly demanding tasks of parents as well as the complex requirements of school learning, a common understanding of collaboration is needed (Walper, 2021, 343). In the sense of inclusive education, it is about the design of inclusive learning and living spaces for pupils and a networked cooperation of many actors, especially parents and teachers. To reach the students, to get to know their situation, their lifeworld's, we have to see parents or families as partners in education (Leonhardt et al., 2024, in press). We have to integrate parents into the school communication and relationship culture (Werning & Avci-Werning, 2021). An inclusive understanding of school and education not only ties school success to an increase in performance but also aims at the well-being of the students. This requires a systemic view of schools and students. This means that collaboration is not a bilateral negotiation, but rather the building of a community that includes teachers, parents and the social space of the school. This process is challenged by various aspects (see Section 3). Above all, however, it is to recognise the school as a powerful system (Leonhardt et al., 2023; Liebel 2020), especially in order to take into account the mentioned and necessary exclusion analysis.

The idea is not just to bring students with differences into the system, it is more a question about educational justice from a human rights-based perspective. In this sense, inclusive processes are always connected with a continuous determination of the

relationship between inclusive and exclusive aspects (Oldenburg, 2021). For that, it is important to always analyse different kinds of exclusion also.

We must think about different kinds of aspects of school (like classes, social interaction, pedagogical relations…) and if they are really inclusive. We must also think about this for the parents. In this inclusive understanding, school is like a learning organisation and so it is important to integrate this thinking into school development processes.

International studies show that parents play a significant role in school learning success (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Jeynes, 2005, 2007, 2011; Kruschel et al. 2023; Textor, 2009,). However, it is not so much 'passive' or formalised formats of parent collaboration that lead to student success (Pomerantz et al., 2007). Rather, the active participation of parents is central to creating successful learning environments and inclusive educational spaces for students (Sacher, 2013; Schwaiger & Neumann 2011). This is therefore central to the design of inclusive school development processes. Also, in relation to collaboration with parents, it is important to approach different levels together in order to uncover and reflect on possible exclusion processes.

Different backgrounds of parents and how these influence the collaboration

Research shows that parents, despite all their differences, share a multitude of perspectives and commonalities (Müller, 2014). Many parents are mostly satisfied with inclusive forms of learning if the necessary equipment is provided (ibid.). However, when it is about inclusion, it is not just the students who are very diverse, the parents are also. There are more parents with many different backgrounds. At the same time, there are many connecting aspects with parents that need to be considered. The 'old' ways of thinking about parents or collaboration doesn't fit anymore, especially in inclusive schools.

To think teachers just must inform them isn't enough. The lifeworld and the biography of families are very different, so we need to create different ways of working together. These different family backgrounds have a huge impact on the types of parent collaboration. For example, research shows that social background has an influence on successful education (see below). What is their experience and connections to school? What do they know about the school system? Those are just some of the questions that are very much related to teacher-parent collaboration. Also, other kinds of experience and dimensions can be very important in this case, for example, cultural, religious background or experience in relation to the sexual orientation or experience of disability.

As the example from Namibia at the beginning made clear, in some cases it is not exclusively the birth parents who are responsible for the students. It can also be family members, guardians or other community members. There is a lot of diversity to be considered in this regard also. Furthermore, in the sense of dialogue-based cooperation, it is important not only to keep the different life worlds of the parents in mind but also to critically and reflectively consider the previous experiences of the teachers. Expectations,

ideas of normality, prejudices, and false ability requirements in the sense of classist or ableist attributions can decisively shape the actions within the cooperation (see also the chapter 'Teacher Habitus' or 'Labelling').

In the following, we would like to take this broad understanding of two dimensions (social/cultural & disability) as examples in order to show the influence of different backgrounds.

First dimension – social, cultural

Several studies indicate that there is an imbalance in parental participation even within the same school (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Lareau, 2003; McNeal, 2014). Disparities in parent inclusion and involvement are evident based on factors such as race, ethnicity, social class affiliations and students with and without special needs (Harry & Klingner, 2014; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Lareau, 2011). Additionally, when examining schools located in American low-income neighbourhoods and communities as the primary focus, researchers have frequently observed that parental engagement in school-centric activities and programs tends to be sporadic, minimal or entirely absent (Hill & Tyson, 2009). One of the reasons for this is that these parents are "not sufficiently perceived with their fears and concerns" (Paseka & Killus, 2021: 180, translated).

The existing research on parent involvement in low-income school communities highlights various intricate sociocultural and political factors that can contribute to limited parental engagement in activities initiated or centred around the school. The Corona period has made visible the dependence and linkage to family resources, as well as the close connection to the perpetuation of educational inequalities (Huebener et al., 2021: 182). Studies have shown that disparities in parental participation among different socioeconomic groups could be attributed to the conflictive relationships and interactions between teachers and low-income parents (Hill & Tyson, 2009; Lareau, 2013). These interactions are frequently marked by conflicts that stem from disparities in societal status and power (Delgado-Gaitan, 2004). Scholars in the field noted the prevalence of school-centric and ethnocentric communication patterns within the interactions between teachers and parents, which can further exacerbate these conflicts (Hannon & O'Donnell, 2022; Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Additionally, recent research has raised questions about the extent to which some low-income and ethnic minority groups could engage in institutional processes shaped by dominant cultural norms and frames of reference (Warren & Mapp, 2011). Moreover, Henderson and Mapp (2002) emphasise the critical role of recognising and addressing racial and cultural issues within educational institutions. Failing to acknowledge and address these issues, especially when there are disparities in treatment and opportunities, can reinforce racial and cultural divisions and boundaries between schools and families (Warren & Mapp, 2011). Parents in challenging life situations are less recognised as a resource and thus less actively involved in school (development)

processes. At the same time, they themselves have fewer resources to become (self-)actively involved. This problem becomes even more acute in challenging neighbourhoods since the perception of students and parents in these areas tends to be more problem-oriented than appreciative (Fölker & Hertel, 2015). At the same time, it is evident that teachers are mostly middle-class-oriented, which can lead to difficulties in comprehension and a lack of habitus sensitivity. (see chapter Teacher Habitus)

In low-income, ethnically concentrated school communities, the concept of parental engagement seems to be both constrained and constraining. It is constrained because of the fact that it is mostly defined and applied by educators within a relatively narrow, yet significant, school-centred framework. Its constraining aspect arises from the fact that parents often perceive and define the significance and roles of parental involvement beyond the confines of the school, whereas teachers' predominantly technical interpretations suggest that the term might only capture a fraction of their understanding and expertise regarding school-family interactions.

When exploring the dynamics of role construction involving both educators and parents, parents and teachers in low-income school communities often find themselves in conflicting roles, subsequently influencing the extent of parental involvement in educational institutions. According to Pantić and Florian (2015), educators' roles are typically characterised by specificity and limitation, which promotes a more objective and impartial assessment of children's behaviour, development, and readiness. This perspective stands in stark contrast to the broader and boundless viewpoint of parents, who tend to perceive each child through the lens of their personal experiences and circumstances (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). In summary, these marked disparities are believed to engender discontinuities, disconnections, and cycles of blame between families and schools, with detrimental repercussions for children, families, and educators alike (Epstein, 2018).

Second dimension – Special Educational Needs-Disability (SEND)

Example Case – "I work with children with seven kinds of disabilities and difficulties. If f I need some kind of successful example, it should be to build an educational network which involves us as the school. It can involve all kinds of actors that are around the child or the young people, such as teachers, family therapists and doctors etc… We need to talk about this because when we talk about disabilities, it is a really complicated situation. We must have functional communication with all of these actors. I truly believe that school can play a central role in this. It is easier to have a school in which families and therapists can go inside and have a moment to dedicate to a particular child or a particular kind of problem." (Francesca Mara Santangelo, teacher for special needs education, Italy)

Collaborating with parents raising children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) is essential. The collaboration process brings educators, parents, and other specialists together to support children and adults with SEND. The goal of the

collaboration is to ensure that students with SEND have access to the resources and supports they need to succeed in school and life (Saikat, 2022).

It is important to note the literature confirms a range of benefits associated with effective inclusive education (Sharma et al., 2022) and home-school collaboration for students with and without SEND (Hehir et al., 2016). Some parents of children without SEND may object to their children sharing a classroom with students with SEND, believing that their difficulties or needs could impact the learning of other children (Cardona, 2006). However, parents gain knowledge about inclusive education, they may change their perspectives and become advocates for inclusion (Kalyva et al., 2007). Moreover, they recognise the positive effects on their children without SEND, such as improved academic outcomes and greater acceptance of diversity (Hehir et al., 2016).

In addition, when working with a family raising one or more children with SEND, we need to follow a basic principle, that every family is unique. We may come across families that have one or two parents with a disability and/or one or more children with a disability. Disabilities vary in type and severity, so in every process of working with the family, we should have an individualised and holistic approach (Dale, 2008; Seligman & Darling, 2007). Collaboration with parents raising children with SEND is child-centred, providing parents with a voice on placement services. Both parents and children participate in the decision-making. Parents who are the most familiar with their children can contribute to a partnership by sharing information about their children. However, before they openly collaborate, they must trust the team (Bennie, 2023). Parents' collaboration is not only beneficial for children there are also possible gains for all parties (Saikat, 2022):

- Parents increase interaction with their children with SEND, become more responsive and sensitive to their needs and more confident in their parenting skills.
- Educators acquire a better understanding of families' culture and diversity, feel more comfortable at work and improve their morale.
- Schools, by involving parents and the community, tend to establish better reputations in the community.

The key components of effective collaboration in special education include:

- A common understanding of the goals of the student's Individualised Education Program (IEP).
- Open communication between all members of the team. This includes both verbal and written communication.
- Respect for each other's roles and responsibilities on the team.
- A willingness to work together towards the best interests of the student with SEND (UNICEF, 2014).

Main barriers to parent-teacher collaboration in inclusive education

In the context of parental co-operation within education systems, there are numerous barriers and challenges that can vary significantly from country to country. These differences are often rooted in distinct historical and cultural backgrounds that shape each education system.

> **Please be aware** that the barriers and challenges in the context of parental co-operation may differ from country to country. For example, education systems may have very different historical backgrounds, which are important points of reference. This can also lead to different questions and challenges for parents in relation to inclusion. For example, in German-speaking education, which is mostly characterised by segregation, a much bigger debate exists about whether pupils learn better in inclusive settings than in separate classes. In other countries, where there are (almost) no special schools, this question may be less of an issue for parents.

Despite the strong theoretical and research acknowledgement of the benefits of family-school collaboration, there are many challenges to putting this into practice (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018; Minch et al., 2023). The barriers related to all parties involved. The various barriers to collaborating with parents can be considered as follows (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018; Minch et al., 2023): Societal factors (which influence the functioning of both schools and families), individual parent and family factors, parent-teacher factors, and child factors.

Common barriers from the parents' perspective can include:

- Parents' work demands and lack of time.
- Parents feeling overwhelmed and outnumbered.
- Language, cultural or socioeconomic difference.
- Parent attitudes about the school.
- Prior negative experiences with schools.
- Lack of parent education to help with schoolwork.
- Shared or complicated custodial situations.
- Limited access to technology.
- Unequal power relationship between parents with low status and mainstream cultural values.

Common barriers from the teachers/school perspective can include:

- Limited school resources.
- School policy versus reality.
- Inflexible work schedules.
- Staff attitudes toward parents.
- Unspoken expectations about family engagement.
- Lack of parental understanding.

- Language differences between parents and staff (IES – NCES, 1998; Parentpay Group, 2022; Understood, 2019).
- Teachers' lack of ownership, withdrawal and scepticism caused by exclusion from schools' program development

Teachers lack ownership of school reform initiatives in part because they are excluded from planning those programs. As a result, they are less likely to become involved and believe that new reform initiatives about collaboration will result in real change (Datnow, 2020).

- Teachers' negative attributions caused by the school's use of incentives

Incentives for parent involvement could lead to the negative effect that teachers feel caught in a value conflict. Even when parents get active in their children's education, incentives drive teachers to believe that parents do not fundamentally value education (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

Barriers from the children's perspective can include:

- Children may have negative attributions of parent involvement which could lead to difficulties when establishing positive connections between teachers and parents (Loughran, 2008).

While parent-teacher collaboration has numerous benefits for all (parents, teachers and children), the literature has identified a variety of beliefs, attitudes and behaviours that act as barriers in collaboration in inclusive settings. Research has also revealed many facilitators of teachers-parents collaboration that we will discuss in the next section.

Core principles for effective school-family collaboration in inclusive settings

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) suggested that parents usually become involved in their children's education when three necessary conditions and preconditions exist:

- Parents have developed a parental role that is affirming to parental involvement in education.
- Parents have a positive sense of efficacy in helping their children succeed,
- Parents perceive positive opportunities and invitations to become involved in their children's school.

The following suggestions might be helpful in achieving these three conditions (Turnbull et al., 2015):

- Communication: Teachers and parents communicate openly and honestly in a medium

that is comfortable for the family.

- Professional competence: Teachers are highly qualified in the area in which they work, continue to learn, and communicate high expectations for students and families.
- Respect: Teachers treat families with dignity, honour cultural diversity, and affirm strengths.
- Commitment: Teachers are available, consistent, and try to ensure individual needs of the learner are successfully met.
- Equality: Teachers recognise the strengths of every member of a team, share power with parents, and focus on working together with families.
- Advocacy: Teachers focus on getting the best solution for the student in partnership with the family.
- Trust: Teachers are reliable and act in the student's best interest, sharing their vision and actions with the family.

Loughran (2008) suggests that due to the diversity among parents and to best communicate with each parent, it is necessary to:

- Communicate succinctly and clearly. Organise your thoughts ahead of time and review written messages.
- Make clear to each one that he or she is respected and his or her participation is encouraged.
- Be flexible, encouraging working parents to participate actively and be involved when and where possible.
- Secure multiple methods of two-way communication: email, telephone, postal mail, face-to-face communication and apps (for example, WhatsApp, REMIND, Blackboard, ClassDojo, etc.) (Gerdes et al., 2022).

Lawson (2003) argues that schools play an important role with regards to building up school-community partnerships. Schools can:

- Create a cooperate-friendly environment in which parents, children and teachers are all involved and share equal power as well as access to resources, so that they can positively engage with each other.
- Help to build consensus on cooperation between families and teachers.
- Provide additional support for disadvantaged families as a social service referral agent.

Finally, think of the TEAM acronym (Bennie, 2023):
T – Together **E** – Everyone **A** – Achieves **M** – More.

Selection of some good practice examples for successful parental

collaboration

Example Case – "I also have many examples. One that I can share with you would probably be about one of many Arabic families who came to Germany in 2015. I've been accompanying these people from day one until the present day, and I remember the first contact was difficult because they had a lot of expectations. There was a language barrier that we needed to overcome and there were cultural differences also. It was very difficult for me at first to establish a relationship because we had to work with translators. I found this very distracting because you never have direct communication between two people, it is always with somebody in between, no matter how nice they may be. The families started learning German and I started learning Arabic f. It was a lovely experience because I would so to their home for a coffee and try to learn Arabic. Not only was a learning the language but I also seeing a different context by getting an opportunity to see the families background and establish a different type of relationship with each other. It was really nice for them to teach me Arabic because, of course, I made a fool of myself because I did not speak Arabic proficiently. Of course, it is still something that we can laugh about together. In Arabic culture, they were very apprehensive to speak German, because it is often customary to laugh at you if you make mistakes. They found that if they made mistakes when speaking German to me, I would not laugh, and I would not judge. That was sort of the foot in the door to establishing this relationship. That relationship became really important in teaching them how to get by in the German system by explaining to them how the system works and what our values and traditions are. I also showed them what things they need to abide by. And it's not just about telling somebody you must do this, and you must not do this, but for them to truly understand how it works, which is important for them to be successful. It takes many, many years to understand all of this. I recall a lot of situations when they were very overwhelmed by the German paperwork. You feel very vulnerable when you are in a different country, and you cannot read or write their language, and you don't know what to do or you have to ask for help. They would ask me, and I would help them and I tried to establish some kind of system with them" (Chris Carstens, secondary teacher, Germany).

There are many successful examples of collaboration with parents. Some have already been presented at the beginning of this text. In order to gain further insight, we now want to present more good practice examples. However, these examples have always been developed in a specific individual and social context. The following are some examples of best practice to give the basic 'idea' of collaboration.

Examples of building 'bridges' between school and parents

In the context of appreciative and successful parental cooperation, the extracurricular programme of the so-called *'bridge builders'* in Basel (Switzerland) was conceived (Leonhardt & Kruschel, 2023). The main questions that were addressed for this project

were, how can we reach more parents and how can a dialogue be established and maintained?

The project has a goal-oriented effect on three levels:

- Parents: Strengthening and empowerment through information and resource-oriented support
- Children: Increasing equal opportunities through improved parental cooperation
- Professionals: Sharing background knowledge and strengthening intercultural competence.

The trained 'bridge builders' (https://www.heks.ch/was-wir-tun/brueckenbauerinnen) all have experience in intercultural mediation and/or in parental co-operation. Together they speak approximately 16 languages, have diverse cultural backgrounds and are themselves very familiar with the social environment. The target groups are parents with children in the age of pre-school to primary school. Contact is usually established through recommendations by the school staff, parents' evenings, participation in school conferences or through written information channels (newsletters, press in the neighbourhood, flyers). The central tasks of the bridge builders are:

- Meeting with the families at agreed locations, determined by the families, to support, inform, advise and accompany them.
- Providing information and advice on educational support services.
- Accompanying them to the appropriate services or specialised agencies.
- Support in understanding forms, letters or information from schools.
- Help with orientation in the neighbourhood, for example, by providing information about services for families with children.
- Support in contacting the school and in exchanging information with teaching and specialist staff.

At the Burgweide school in Hamburg, so-called *'parental mentors'* (https://www.burgweide.de/eltern-elternberatung.html) support co-operation with parents. Parents were trained to support other parents in challenging situations. On the one hand, this is intended to strengthen co-operation and, on the other hand, to give parents an understanding of school. A school culture has also been developed that considers parents who work here as part of the staff. The 'parental mentors' mediate between school actors and parents by creating awareness for each other through their services. They are 'contact people' and 'networkers' at the same time.

Concrete offers are:

- Organisation of counselling services within the framework of a parents' café.

- Support with applications and communication (mis)understanding, for example, correspondence with the school.
- Organisation of further education, tailored to the parents' living environment. These could include language courses, digital learning formats, reading and spelling courses.
- Language translation for important development talks or training courses.
- Representation and networking in the district/social space.
- Support in catching up on qualifications (parenting school).

In Groningen (Netherlands) there is a similar type of bridge building. Whereas in Basel the bridge builders are actors from outside the school, in the Dutch city positions are created by teachers directly in the respective school. There are now 20 positions in a total of 12-13 schools. The so-called *'brugfunctionaris'* (https://gemeente.groningen.nl/brugfunctionaris) are teachers without current teaching duties with the task of intensifying co-operation with parents. The focus is less on cultural mediation and more on school connection and relationship building between school and parents.

The 'brugfunctionaris' are described by the school team as an important resource for building a trusting relationship with parents. An important task is also to make it easier for parents to access the school premises and to talk to them directly on site.

Further support and exchange opportunities

Some schools offer various thematic courses and training for parents. The schools offer a wide variety of topics and focal points, also because they are very much geared to the individual needs of the parents. Exemplary topics are:

- Parent-child courses.
- Language courses.
- First aid courses.
- Life skills.
- Digital learning media.

Some of these courses are designed to help parents better support their children in their learning journeys. Others are designed to empower parents to acquire educational skills themselves. These services are also supported by networking with other actors in the social space. In this way, individual meetings take place with actors from outside the school thus relieving the teachers at school. At the same time, parents have the opportunity to (re)gain trust in the school. Extracurricular partners also make use of such educational offers in order for parents to understand more educational processes.

A frequent form of easy contact is the so-called 'parental café.' Parents can meet at these cafés for a certain amount of time. They have some snacks and talk about various uncertainties and questions. This is also an opportunity for the schools to learn more about

the needs of parents and the parents can build trust in schools and school stakeholders. This is a way for communication to increase and gain clarification on many topics ranging from information in letters the parents may have received to gaining a greater understanding of the structure of the school system.

Do we actually need 'collaboration'?

Collaboration should happen necessarily with equal evolvement of each side. Both parents and teachers should be reflective of their predominant opinion of co-operation.

For example, some teachers perceive collaboration with parents as school-based parent involvement. They believe that parent involvement within the school setting should primarily aim to improve students' learning experiences. It should contribute to students' success by aligning with the school's and teachers' requirements. From this perspective, teachers see the welfare of students as contingent upon the presence of supportive parents and families. Therefore, teachers' perception of collaboration can be characterised as both children-focused and school-centric.

Educators often perceive the importance of co-operation with parents because they understand that success in school is frequently associated with the socioeconomic capital and resources that parents can provide (Lareau, 2000). This perception leads teachers to hold the view that intergenerational patterns within families are reproductive, as not all parents possess equal ability or resources to offer the necessary support for their children's success in the school system (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). For instance, parents with higher educational attainment and stable employment may have greater financial resources to invest in educational enrichment activities, such as tutoring or extracurricular programs, which can positively impact their children's academic outcomes.

In contrast, families facing low educational attainment, negative social modelling, and unemployment often find themselves in an environment characterised by hardship and persistent educational challenges (Lareau, 2000). These challenges can perpetuate a cycle of disadvantage and contribute to a sense of inescapability. Teachers, recognising the influence of these external factors, do not believe that schools, or even themselves individually, can single-handedly reverse such complex and deeply ingrained cycles of inequality (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). This happens because teachers, influenced by the pre-existing subconscious acceptance of social reproduction theories, tend to integrate these beliefs into their practical approaches, resulting in specific causal chains of events that ultimately lead to predetermined outcomes.

Some parents' theories of action are deeply rooted in their conviction that the school plays a pivotal role in fostering their children's success. They believe that the school is not only capable, but primarily responsible, for ensuring their children's academic achievements (Epstein, 2018). This perspective often results in an expectation that the school should take full responsibility for their children's learning, from providing high-quality instruction to

addressing any challenges or obstacles their child may encounter during their educational journey. For example, these parents might expect the school to provide extensive academic support, such as additional tutoring or specialised interventions, if their child faces academic difficulties. They may also look to the school to address non-academic issues, such as behavioural or social challenges, assuming that the school should take the lead in resolving these issues. In this regard, parents' conceptions and strategies for parent involvement are both child focused and community centric.

As a result, and somewhat ironically, the theories of action held by teachers and parents exhibit a dual nature of simultaneous alignment and near contradiction. They align in their child-centred focus, yet they diverge significantly due to teachers' school-centric and parents' community-centric perspectives, which consistently lead to conflicts between them.

These intricate (adverse) exchanges arise due to the divergence in perspectives, conflicting knowledge frameworks, and action theories held by teachers and parents: they have varied interpretations and understandings of the purposes and roles of parental engagement.

School as a social institution serves as the society and has a significant role of creating the school-community partnerships. The concept of a partnership typically implies a collaborative relationship where individuals or groups are perceived to have equal influence and equitable access to resources (Lareau, 2013).

It is recommended that individuals and processes should establish clear provisions when shaping and guiding the framework for mutually beneficial school-family practices. These provisions should consider issues such as recognising and addressing power imbalances and dynamics. Efforts to acknowledge and respect the strengths and perspectives of parents should be implemented without creating a division that devalues school-centred involvement activities that can enhance children's learning and well-being, and without diminishing the genuine needs of teachers for meaningful support, professional growth, and acknowledgment (Lawson, 2003). In doing so, it is possible to align teachers' and parents' perceptions of collaboration, thereby reducing the disparities caused by school-centred parental involvement.

Local contexts

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=421#h5p-10

Closing questions to discuss or tasks

- Why is it important to collaborate with parents in inclusive education?
- In your opinion, which barrier is the most significant to teacher-parent collaboration and how can we work with it?
- What opportunities do teachers in schools have to support parents in co-creating and understanding structures and practices?
- What could a non-judgmental culture of dialogue and cooperation with parents in schools look like?
- How the educational inequality could be reproduced during collaboration with parents? How to improve that?
- Why it's important to develop a consensus of collaboration between parents and teachers ?

Literature

Abed, Mohaned Ghazi. "Challenges to the Concept 'Partnership with Parents' in Special Needs Education." *I-Manager's Journal on Educational Psychology* 7, no. 4 (2014): 1–11. https://doi.org/10.26634/jpsy.7.4.2651.

Barker, Barbara, and Diana Harris. *Parent and Family Engagement: An Implementation Guide for School Communities*. ARACY, 2020.

Bennie, Maureen. "Collaboration in Education—Working Together for Positive Outcomes." Autism Awareness, February 2023.

Bourdieu, Pierre, and Jean-Claude Passeron. *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture.* Sage Publications, 1990.

Cardona, María Cristina. *Diversidad y Educación Inclusiva. Enfoques Metodológicos y Estrategas Para Una Enseñanza Colaborativa*. Pearson Educación, 2006.

Castro, Dina C., Donna M. Bryant, Ellen S. Peisner-Feinberg, and Martie L. Skinner. "Parent Involvement in Head Start Programs: The Role of Parent, Teacher and Classroom Characteristics." *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 19 (2004): 413–30. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2004.07.005.

Cowan, Richard, Susan M. Swearer Napolitano, and Susan Sheridan. "Home-School Collaboration." Educational Psychology Papers and Publications, 2004. https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/edpsychpapers/18.

Cox, D. D. "Evidence-Based Interventions Using Home-School Collaboration." *School Psychology Quarterly* 20, no. 4 (2005): 473–97. https://doi.org/10.1521/scpq.2005.20.4.473.

Dale, Naomi. *Working with Families of Children with Special Needs: Partnership and Practice*. Routledge, 2008.

Datnow, Amanda. "The Role of Teachers in Educational Reform: A 20-Year Perspective." *Journal of Educational Change* 21, no. 3 (2020): 431–41.

Delgado-Gaitan, Concha. *Involving Latino Families in Schools: Raising Student Achievement through Home-School Partnerships*. Corwin Press, 2004.

Desforges, Charles, and Alberto Abouchaar. "The Impact of Parental Involvement, Parental Support and Family Education on Pupil Achievement and Adjustment: A Literature Review." DfES, 2003.

Epstein, Joyce L. *School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Preparing Educators and Improving Schools*. 3rd ed. Westview Press, 2018.

Fölker, Laura, and Thorsten Hertel. "Differenz Und Defizit. Rekonstruktionen Zu Pädagogischen Orientierungen Und Praktiken Der Klientelkonstruktion an Zwei Segregierten Großstadtschulen." In *Brennpunkt (-) Schule. Zum Verhältnis von Schule, Bildung Und Urbaner Segregation*, edited by Laura Fölker, Thorsten Hertel, and Nils Pfaff, 105–22. Opladen & Farmington Hills, 2015.

Friend, Marilyn, and Lynne Cook. *Interactions: Collaboration Skills for School Professionals*. 8th ed. Pearson, 2017.

Gerdes, Jantien, Sui Lin Goei, Mariëtte Huizinga, and Doret De Ruyter. "True Partners? Exploring Family-School Partnership in Secondary Education from a Collaboration Perspective." *Educational Review* 74, no. 4 (2022): 805–23.

Group, Parentpay. "5 Common Barriers to Communication between Parents and Teachers," 2022. https://www.parentpay.com/parentpaygroup/blog/5-common-barriers-to-communication-between-parents-and-teachers/.

Hannon, Laura, and Grainne M. O'Donnell. "Teachers, Parents, and Family-School Partnerships: Emotions, Experiences, and Advocacy." *Journal of Education for Teaching* 48, no. 2 (2022): 241–55.

Harry, Beth, and Janette Klingner. *Why Are so Many Minority Students in Special Education?: Understanding Race and Disability in Schools*. Teachers College Press, 2014.

Hehir, Thomas, Todd Grindal, Brian Freeman, Renée Lamoreau, Yolanda Borquaye, and Samantha Burke. "A Summary of the Evidence on Inclusive Education." Abt Associates, 2016. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED596134.

Henderson, Anne T., and Karen L. Mapp. "A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement." Annual Synthesis, 2002, 2002.

Hill, Nancy E., and Diana F. Tyson. "Parental Involvement in Middle School: A Meta-Analytic Assessment of the Strategies That Promote Achievement." *Developmental Psychology* 45,

no. 3 (2009): 740–63.

Hoover-Dempsey, Kathleen V., and Howard M. Sandler. "Why Do Parents Become Involved in Their Children's Education?" *Review of Educational Research* 67, no. 1 (1997): 3–42.

Hornby, Garry. "A Model for Parent Participation." *British Journal of Special Education* 16, no. 4 (1989): 161–62.

———. *Parental Involvement in Childhood Education: Building Effective School Family Partnerships*. Springer, 2011.

Hornby, Garry, and Ian Blackwell. "Barriers to Parental Involvement in Education: An Update." *Educational Review* 70, no. 1 (2018). https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2018.1388612.

Hornby, Garry, and Rayleen Lafaele. "Barriers to Parental Involvement in Education: An Explanatory Model." *Educational Review* 63, no. 1 (2011): 37–52.

Huebener, Mathias, Laura Schmitz, C. Katharina Spiess, and Sabine Zinn. "Familiale, Individuelle Und Institutionelle Einflussfaktoren Auf Bildungsungleichheiten." In *Generation Corona? Wie Jugendliche Durch Die Pandemie Benachteiligt Werden*, edited by Dieter Dohmen and Klaus Hurrelmann, 165–85. Weinheim, 2021.

Jeynes, William H. "A Meta-Analysis of the Relation of Parental Involvement to Urban Elementary School Student Academic Achievement." *Urban Education* 40, no. 3 (2005): 237–69.

———. *Parental Involvement and Academic Success*. New York and London, 2011.

———. "The Relationship Between Parental Involvement and Urban Secondary School Student Academic Achievement: A Meta-Analysis." *Urban Education* 42 (2007): 82–110.

Jorgenson, Olaf. "The Parent-School Partnership: Optimizing Relationships and Building Understanding." National Association of Independent Schools, 2023. https://www.nais.org/learn/independent-ideas/january-2023/the-parent-school-partnership-optimizing-relationships-and-building-understanding/.

Kalyva, Efrosini, Maria Georgiad, and Vlastaris Tsakiris. "Attitudes of Greek Parents of Primary School Children without Special Educational Needs to Inclusion." *European Journal of Special Needs Education* 22, no. 3 (2007): 295–305. https://doi.org/10.1080/08856250701430869.

Kruschel, Robert, Saskia Schuppener, and Nico Leonhardt. "Eltern Als Bildungspartner*innen Inklusiver Schulen – Familienorientierte Zusammenarbeit in Stadtvierteln in Herausfordernder Lage." In *Raum. Macht. Inklusion. Inklusive Räume Erforschen Und Entwickeln*, edited by M. Hoffmann, T. Hoffmann, L. Pfahl, M. Rasell, H. Richter, R. Seebo, M. Sonntag, and J. Wagner, 295–302. Klinkhardt, 2023.

Lareau, Annette. "Assessing Parent Involvement in Schooling: A Critical Analysis." In *Family-School Links: How Do They Affect Educational Outcomes*, 57–64, 2013.

———. "Social Class and the Daily Lives of Children: A Study from the United States." *Childhood* 7, no. 2 (2000): 155–71.

———. *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life*. 2nd ed. University of California Press, 2011.

Lawson, Michael. "School-Family Relations in Context: Parent and Teacher Perceptions of Parent Involvement." *Urban Education* 38, no. 1 (2003): 77–133.

Leonhardt, Nico, Anne Goldbach, Lucia Staib, and Saskia Schuppener. *Macht in Der Schule. Wissen – Sichtweisen – Erfahrungen. Texte in Leichter Sprache, Einfacher Sprache Und Fachsprache*. Klinkhardt, 2023.

Leonhardt, Nico, and Robert Kruschel. "Mit Eltern 'Brücken Bauen' – Sozialraumorientierte Unterstützungsstrukturen Für Eine Gelingende Elternkooperation in Basel." In *Inklusive Schule Im Sozialraum. Entwicklungsprozesse Durch Kooperation Und Interprofessionalität in Herausfordernder Lage*, edited by Saskia Schuppener, Nico Leonhardt, and Robert Kruschel, 251–62. SpringerVS, 2023.

Leonhardt, Nico, Robert Kruschel, and Saskia Schuppener. *Praxishandbuch Sozialraumorientierte Und Inklusive Schule. Bildung Gestalten*. BeltzJuventa, 2024.

Liebel, Manfred. *Unerhört. Kinder Und Macht*. Beltz Juventa, 2020.

Loughran, Sandra B. "The Importance of Teacher/Parent Partnerships: Preparing Pre-Service and in-Service Teachers." *Journal of College Teaching & Learning (TLC)* 5, no. 8 (2008). https://doi.org/10.19030/tlc.v5i8.1239.

McCombs, Barbara L., and Jo Sue Whisler. *The Learner-Centered Classroom and School: Strategies for Increasing Student Motivation and Achievement*. Jossey-Bass, 1997.

McNamara, Madeleine. "Starting to Untangle the Web of Cooperation, Coordination, and Collaboration: A Framework for Public Managers." *International Journal of Public Administration* 35, no. 6 (2012): 389–401. https://doi.org/10.1080/01900692.2012.655527.

McNeal Jr, Ralph B. "Parent Involvement, Academic Achievement and the Role of Student Attitudes and Behaviors as Mediators." *Universal Journal of Educational Research* 2, no. 8 (2014): 564–76.

Minch, Devon, Andy Garbacz, Laura Kern, and Emily Baton. "Assessing and Evaluating Family–School Collaboration in Schools." In *Handbook of Family-School Collaboration*, 169–85, 2023. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-20006-9_12.

Müller, Frank J. *Integrative Grundschulen Aus Sicht Der Eltern – Auf Dem Weg Zur Inklusion. Eine Qualitative/Quantitative Erhebung Zur Elternzufriedenheit*. Klinkhardt, 2014.

NCES, Institute of Education Sciences-. "Parent Involvement in Children's Education: Efforts by Public Elementary Schools." National Center for Education Statistics, 1998. https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/frss/publications/98032/index.asp?sectionid=7.

Oldenburg, Maren. *Schüler*innen – Studierende – Inklusion. Orientierungen Auf Dem Weg Zu Differenzsensibler Lehrer*innenbildung?* Klinkhardt, 2021.

Pantić, Nataša, and Lani Florian. "Developing Teachers as Agents of Inclusion and Social Justice." *Education Inquiry* 6, no. 3 (2015): 27311.

Paseka, Angelika, and Dagmar Killus. "Die Sicht von Eltern Auf Den Umgang Mit Heterogenität an Schulen. Empirische Befunde Und Konsequenzen Für Eine Heterogenitätssensible Schulentwicklung." In *Inklusive Schule Und Schulentwicklung. Theoretische Grundlagen, Empirische Befunde Und Praxisbeispiele Aus Deutschland,*

Österreich Und Der Schweiz, edited by Katharina Resch, Katharina-Theresa Lindner, Bettina Stresse, Michelle Proyer, and Susanne Schwab, 172–81. Münster, 2021.

Pomerantz, Eva M., Elizabeth A. Moorman, and Scott D. Litwack. "The How, Whom and Why of Parents' Involvement in Children's Academic Lives: More Is Not Always Better." *Review of Educational Research* 77, no. 3 (2007): 373–410.

Porter, Louise. *Teacher-Parent Collaboration: Early Childhood to Adolescence*. ACER Press, 2008.

Sacher, Werner. "Elternarbeit: Lohnt Der Aufwand?" *Lernende Schule* 16, no. 61 (2013): 4–7.

Sadownik, Alicja R., and Adrijana Višnjić Jevtić. "(Re)Theorisation of More-Than-Parental Involvement: New Directions and Hopes." In *(Re)Theorising More-than-Parental Involvement in Early Childhood Education and Care*, edited by Alicja R. Sadownik and Adrijana Višnjić Jevtić, 191–203. Springer International Publishing, 2023. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-38762-3_12.

Saikat, Shahriar. "What Is Collaboration in Special Education?," 2022. https://eduedify.com/collaboration-in-special-education/.

Schwaiger, Marika, and Ursula Neumann. "Der Internationale Forschungsstand Zur Interkulturellen Elternarbeit Und Elternbeteiligung." *Unsere Jugend* 62, no. 11/12 (2011): 450–62.

Seligman, Milton, and Rosalyn Benjamin Darling. *Ordinary Families, Special Children: A Systems Approach to Childhood Disability*. 3rd ed. Guilford Press, 2007.

Sharma, Umesh, Stuart Woodcock, Fiona May, and Pearl Subban. "Examining Parental Perception of Inclusive Education Climate." *Frontiers in Education* 7 (2022). https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/feduc.2022.907742.

Textor, Martin R. *Bildungs- Und Erziehungspartnerschaft in Der Schule: Gründe, Ziele, Formen*. Norderstedt, 2009.

Turnbull, Ann A., H. Rutherford (Rud) Turnbull, Elizabeth J. Erwin, Leslie C. Soodak, and Karrie A. Shogren. *Families, Professionals, and Exceptionality: Positive Outcomes through Partnerships and Trust*. Pearson Education, 2015.

Understood. "Parent-Teacher Communication Strategies," 2019. https://www.understood.org/en/articles/how-to-break-down-communication-barriers-between-teachers-and-families.

UNICEF. "Parents, Family and Community Participation in Inclusive Education, Webinar 13—Companion Technical Booklet." United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 2014.

Walper, Sabine. "Eltern Und Schule – Chancen Der Zusammenarbeit Besser Nutzen!" *Die Deutsche Schule* 113 (2021): 336–47.

Warren, Mark R., and Karen L. Mapp. *A Match on Dry Grass: Community Organizing as a Catalyst for School Reform*. OUP USA, 2011.

Werning, Rolf, and Meltem Avci-Werning. "Mit Eltern Kooperieren. Elterneinbindung in Inklusiven Schulen," n.d. www.friedrich-verlag.de/schulleitung/inklusion/elterneinbindung-in-inklusiven-schulen/.

Witte, Amanda, Tyler Smith, Patti Hershfeldt, and Tyler Smith. "Enhancing Family-School Collaboration with Diverse Families." *The Family-School-Community Alliance and the Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)*, 2021.

About the authors

Assimina Tsibidaki

Assimina Tsibidaki is an Associate Professor of Special Education in the Department of Primary Education at the University of the Aegean, Greece. Her research interests include students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), families raising children with SEND, home-school collaboration, social support networks, technology in inclusive education, and the portrayal of disability in children's literature and cinema. She has authored two books and contributed to edited volumes, academic journals, and conference proceedings. Additionally, she has presented her work at numerous national and international conferences.

Linjie Zhang

Linjie Zhang is a researcher at the University of Vienna. Her primary research interests encompass structural inequality within the educational system, the development and management of international schools, elite education, neoliberalism and globalization, educational policy, and the application of capital theory in education.

Nico Leonhardt

Nico Leonhardt is research assistant at the Leipzig University (Institute of Special Education). His work and research focuses are inclusive school development and social space orientation, inclusion-sensitive higher education development, accessible language, participatory research and teaching.

NAVIGATING HORIZONTAL TRANSITIONS: BUILDING PARTICIPATION AND SUPPORT FOR YOUNG LEARNERS AND FAMILIES IN EDUCATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SETTINGS

Chris Carstens; Francesca Mara Santangelo; and Nariko Hashida

---

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=661#oembed-1

Example Case

Let us start by reading about this experience of a horizontal transition and the development of an educational network that took place in southern Italy.

Three years ago, I worked with a boy who had severe behavioural difficulties and a total lack of control over his emotions. As you may know, the Italian school year begins in September. From September to December, this boy had four special needs teachers, each of whom shortly thereafter abandoned their position due to the difficulties of managing the child, his aggression, and other behavioural issues. One day, the last support teacher to arrive called me because she had known me for some time, and they were desperate at the school. I went to the school and met this boy, his teachers, and his classmates. He was eight years old at the time and was as tall as me. I had a fun and creative time with them at school. My initial goal was to build a relationship with the young learner and gain mutual trust. This is because I strongly believe that in any educational and care relationship, the person must be placed at the centre, with the resources revolving around them in a harmonious manner and in dialogue.

Around the young learner, we built a network made up of the family, the school director, the teachers, me as a pedagogist, the psychologist, the neuropsychiatrist, and the managers

of two social communities responsible for designing personalised educational and health interventions through laboratory and occupational activities.

For all of us, the first step was to identify the most important need of the child and his family. In Italy, we have a very important official document, namely the community educational pact, drawn up by all the actors involved in an educational project: the family, school staff, therapists, and the rehabilitation and educational associations or communities involved. Within these agreements are the educational objectives that are intended to be achieved for the well-being of a young learner and their family.

In our case, we identified the actors involved and defined not only their roles but also the spaces and times to develop the educational project for this child. After several conversations with the young learner and his parents, we came to define his educational project, of which I'm going to list only the most important features.

Political institutions made a free transport service available to the family, responsible for accompanying the child to various places during his day: school, the rehabilitation centre, the headquarters of an association, and finally home. Together with the head teacher, the parents, and the health facility managers, we decided that the young learner would spend 3 to 4 hours at school with his classmates, carrying out normal teaching activities with the support of a special needs teacher in the classroom. Then, he would be taken to the rehabilitation centre, where he could participate in therapeutic activities to improve his behaviour and gain emotional control. Before returning home, on some days of the week, he would take part in educational and recreational projects with other peers at the school or at the headquarters of other associations.

Over time, the results highlighted a reduced stress load for the family, who, having other children, were unable to manage the entire situation, including the necessary travel. Even more importantly, the therapeutic objectives achieved allowed for more peaceful teaching activities in the classroom, better family management, and a greater sense of well-being for the young learner, who never lost contact with his classmates and peers and was able to benefit from a strong support system created with and for him.

Initial questions

In this chapter, you will find the answers to the following questions:

- What does horizontal transition mean, and what situations does it include?
- What are the barriers to building an educational network for horizontal transitions?
- How do horizontal transitions between different educational settings (e.g., public to private schools, or between different school districts) affect young learners' performance and their social and emotional well-being?
- What are the primary challenges faced by schools and educators in managing horizontal transitions, and how can these challenges be mitigated?
- What strategies and support systems are most effective in facilitating successful horizontal transitions for young learners?

Introduction to Topic

Horizontal transitions in education refer to the changes young learners' experience within the same level of education, such as moving between schools, shifting from one classroom to another, or transitioning between educational programs. Unlike vertical transitions, which follow a clear progression from one life stage to the next (e.g., moving from primary school to secondary school), horizontal transitions occur when young learners move across similar educational environments. These shifts can result from various circumstances, such as family relocations, changes in educational needs, or placement in specialised programs.

It is essential to remember that not all individuals experience a wide range of horizontal transitions, and the types and impacts of these transitions can vary significantly. For some, horizontal transitions may be infrequent or limited to a single shift between schools or classrooms. Others may face multiple transitions in a short period, each requiring them to adapt to different social, academic, and environmental factors. For instance, while one young learner might transition from a mainstream to a specialised program within the same school, another might shift between multiple schools due to frequent relocations, each time confronting new routines, peer groups, and expectations.

These transitions are often complex and layered, as they require learners to adjust to new surroundings, teaching styles, peer dynamics, and support systems—all while trying to maintain academic progress and emotional stability. For vulnerable young learners—such as those with disabilities, learning difficulties, or emotional and psychological challenges—horizontal transitions can be particularly demanding. The unfamiliarity of each new setting may heighten anxiety, disrupt learning continuity, and amplify feelings of isolation or instability. For such young learners, additional resources, personalised support, and careful planning are crucial to ensure they continue to thrive in their new environment.

Furthermore, the nature of these transitions varies not only across individuals but also within different educational or cultural contexts. For example, an adult refugee moving between countries due to political or economic instability may experience horizontal transitions that are more radical than those within a single country or educational system. A young learner with a disability may need to transfer between mainstream education and a rehabilitation or specialised educational community, each with distinct support structures and expectations. Recognising these variations in horizontal transitions underscores the importance of personalised planning that is responsive to each individual's unique needs and circumstances.

Effective management of horizontal transitions is vital for minimising disruption and promoting continuity in a young learner's education. Schools and educational institutions play a key role in facilitating these transitions by creating supportive, inclusive environments and by coordinating efforts among educators, families, and specialised services to meet each learner's specific needs. Addressing the emotional, social, and academic aspects of these transitions is essential to help young learners feel secure, resilient, and empowered in their new settings.

As you read through this chapter, keep in mind that each learner's experience with horizontal transitions is distinct, shaped by their personal, social, and educational context. Developing an awareness of the diverse ways these transitions manifest will enhance your understanding of how to create effective, tailored support plans that enable learners to adjust smoothly and maintain their educational progress.

Key aspects

Definition

Understanding transitions requires recognizing the multiple layers influencing a learner's experience, as outlined in Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model. This model emphasises that a young learner's ability to adapt is shaped by immediate settings, such as family, peers, and school, as well as by the interactions between these groups. Beyond these, broader societal factors—including policies, cultural norms, and the availability of resources—further impact transitions. By acknowledging these layers, educators and stakeholders can better identify the barriers that may hinder a young learner's adjustment, as well as the support structures that can help them succeed. This holistic perspective sets the stage for creating educational environments that foster smoother, more supportive transitions for all learners (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

We can distinguish between two types of transitions: vertical and horizontal. Vertical transitions refer to the major chronological events in life, such as progressing from birth, to nursery, to primary school, and eventually entering the workforce and retirement. These

transitions, mapped on a vertical axis, reflect the stages everyone passes through. However, comprehensive planning for these transitions is often lacking (Ginger & Patton, 1996).

Horizontal transitions are less visible than vertical transitions and occur frequently. They refer to the everyday moves that children (or any person) make in different parts of their lives, such as going from home to school or from one care setting to another (Cappello, Ferrel, Pallokosta, and Iturria, 2023). In other words, all those things happening on the same temporal plane, placed precisely on a horizontal axis. Such transitions could be, for example, the transition from public schools to private schools, a transfer to different school districts, or a change in educational programs within the same institution. These transitions are common due to various factors such as family relocations, academic demands, or personal preferences. However, the implications of these transitions on young learners' academic achievement and social and emotional well-being are profound and multifaceted. Understanding the challenges and opportunities presented by horizontal transitions is critical for educators, policymakers, and parents.

Using Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model as a lens, these transitions reveal how support structures at different ecological levels—family, school, peer groups, and the broader community—impact the young learner's ability to adjust. For instance, vertical transitions may demand strong institutional support and curriculum alignment to bridge educational gaps. Horizontal transitions often depend on more immediate support systems, like consistent peer and teacher relationships, to create stability and continuity in the learner's educational and social experience. This figure underscores the importance of tailored support systems that respond to the specific nature of each transition, helping young learners with special needs navigate new environments and maintain their well-being.

Figure 1: Vertical and select horizontal transitions. Note. From Transition From School to Adult Life for Students with Special Needs: Basic Concepts and Recommended Practices

Birth	hospital → home	
	technology → assistance no technology	
Preschool Years	home → preschool	
	public setting → private setting	
School Years - Elementary	separate school → neighborhood school	
	special education → general education	
School Years - Secondary	special education → general education	
	special/general education → alternative ed	
Earty Adulthood	single → maried/partner (children)	
	living with family → living alone/with others	
Middle Adulthood	family care → alternative care	
	residential placemen → community living	
Older Adulthood	family relationships → alone	

Source: J. R. Patton, 1995, Austin, TX: PRO-ED. Copyright 1995 by PRO-ED. Reprinted with permission.

The figure above illustrates both vertical and horizontal transitions specifically for young learners with special needs. Vertical transitions, shown as milestones like progressing from primary to secondary school, signify shifts to new educational stages with increased expectations and challenges. Horizontal transitions, in contrast, represent moves within the same educational level, such as transferring between special education programs or changing schools due to family relocation.

One of the most important and frequently discussed horizontal transitions is the movement from separate settings to less restrictive, more inclusive ones (Ginger and Patton, op.cit.). Moving from segregated to more inclusive settings is important for the

horizontal transition of people with disabilities. Figure 1 highlights several such transitions for individuals with disabilities from a chronological perspective.

The need for transitions into inclusive communities, though not always labelled as "horizontal transitions," has been a topic of discussion since the 1980s. Fish (1986) argued that the objectives of these transitions should be the same for everyone, regardless of disability. He identified four key, interrelated objectives for successful transitions:

- Employment, useful work, and valued activity
- Personal autonomy, independence, and adult status
- Social interaction, community participation, leisure, and recreation
- Roles within the family

The objective of social interaction, community participation, leisure, and recreation highlights that greater community involvement can promote increased personal autonomy, independence, and shifts in family roles and relationships. In essence, participation in a more inclusive society can foster greater independence and autonomy for learners with disabilities or other needs, ultimately transforming their relationships and helping them achieve personal and social milestones.

Throughout this chapter, we will analyse the process of horizontal transitions, starting with the framework of Schlossberg's theory and identifying four key concepts that, in our opinion, outline the fundamental aspects of a horizontal transition.

Schlossberg's Transition Theory

Schlossberg's transition theory, named after Nancy Schlossberg, professor emerita of counselling psychology at the University of Maryland, can be really helpful in understanding not only what transitions are but also how people experience change and what could help them cope well with this process.

Whatever type of transition we are discussing, they tend to exist on a continuum, so they can be formal or informal. For example, it could be leaving one school to move to another. It could be planned. It could be something that was planned for two years and then gradually happens. Or it could be completely unplanned. This could be someone having to flee one country to move to another or transitioning between occupations. As we can already imagine, some of these transitions may be easy, while others are exceptionally difficult.

The theory was developed by Schlossberg, who conducted research on a group of adults who had been unexpectedly fired from their jobs. Suddenly facing unemployment and an unplanned transition, these individuals responded to the situation in different ways. Schlossberg was curious to understand why some people were able to navigate this transition positively, achieving favourable outcomes, while others struggled. Originally, the theory was part of research on adult development, designed to help understand and

manage life transitions as part of the "ordinary and extraordinary process of living" (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010). Over time, it has become a guiding framework for understanding and explaining horizontal transitions in other life phases, beyond just adulthood.

Referring to Schlossberg's theory to understand and intervene in a transitive process, understood by the authors as "any event or non-event that translates into a change in relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles," we can outline it as follows (Anderson, Goodman, and Schlossberg, 2012):

A. Look carefully at the transition

a) Identify the **type**. Schlossberg's theory identifies three: anticipated – refers to foreseen events, unexpected – refers to sudden and unplanned transitions, non-events – concerns events that should have occurred but did not take place.

b) Clarify the **context** – the circumstances in which the transition occurs.

c) Evaluate the **impact** – the reactions that arise from a specific transition.

B. Create the resources framework

The theoretical model identifies the so-called **4 S**, i.e. four main factors that influence a person's ability to face a transition. These factors are:

a) **Situation** – the context in which we find ourselves: what are you starting from? What or where are you moving towards?

b) **Self** – personal resources: who are we? What kind of psychological resources do we have? What are our prospects? What is our perspective or what values do we have?

c) **Strategies** – how we deal with events in our lives, especially unexpected ones? It is a fact that we all go through transitions throughout our lives. But what are our strategies when we discover that something stressful is happening? Do we deal with the situation by avoiding it or pretending it's not happening?

d) **Support** – external resources: what support do we receive from family or people in our networks? Having relationships that generate support and support plays a fundamental role in transitions, as it represents a protective factor against the risk of negatively facing a sudden event and experiencing situations of marginality, social isolation and vulnerability.

C. Strengthen resources and intervention

The resources available during a transition can either provide opportunities for growth and improvement or, conversely, lead to decline. According to Goodman et al. (2006), transitions can be broken down into three phases:

1. Moving in: This represents the moment in which you learn the characteristics of the new situation, including the rules, expectations, and new roles.
2. Moving through: This is about finding balance in the new dimension of life.
3. Moving out: This represents the end of the transition process and the continuation of life, awaiting new transitions.

In this process, the person will face the transition in a positive, neutral, or negative way, based on the resources they have available. Regarding the first "S" (Situation), key factors include the nature of the event, its timing and duration, the level of control the person has over the situation, changes in their role, and any simultaneous sources of stress. The second "S" (Self) refers to how personal attributes—such as age, gender, cultural background, socio-economic status, health, values, beliefs, ego, resilience, and psychological resources—affect how someone navigates a transition. The third "S" (Strategies) involves developing flexible and varied action plans, which offer a wider range of responses to challenging events. This includes coping strategies, the ability to adapt and adjust, and the capacity to manage stress while maintaining a focus on self-care and well-being. Finally, the fourth "S" (Support networks) comprising emotional connections with family, friends, intimate relationships, institutions, and other community resources, are crucial in creating a protective environment around the individual during times of transition.

Barriers to horizontal transitions

Transitioning to a new educational environment often requires young learners to adapt to a curriculum with different levels of progression and difficulty and to form relationships with new peers, teachers, and staff. Young learners are expected to navigate these significant changes in a short period, but not all young learners experience a smooth horizontal transition. This section discusses possible barriers to horizontal transitions between schools or education systems at the same level.

Differences in curriculum

It is well known that the vertical transition between primary and secondary school is often challenging. Hanewald notes that during the transition from primary to secondary school, young people move from small, self-contained classrooms to larger, more heterogeneous schools with increased expectations of independent academic performance and less teacher support (Hanewald, 2013). Galton et al. suggest that around 40% of pupils experience a hiatus in progress during vertical transitions, particularly when moving from primary to secondary school, due to a lack of curriculum continuity between these educational stages (Galton et al., 2000).

However, this type of difficulty can also arise during horizontal transitions between schools or programs at the same level of education. Higher levels of school mobility are associated with lower academic performance, more emotional or behavioural problems, and greater difficulties with social adjustment (Snozzi et al., 2024). As this type of transition is not necessarily experienced by many young learners, little attention has been paid to the issue.

Young learners experience horizontal transitions and difficulties in different ways, even within the same stage of education. Slightly higher rates of young learner mobility are

reported for young learners with special educational needs (SEN) than for young learners without SEN, and mobility appears to be particularly high for young learners with emotional disturbance (Snozzi et al., 2024).

When a young learner with SEN moves from a special education program (school or class) to a mainstream program (school or class), the young learner may find it difficult to adapt to the faster paced and more advanced curriculum. Demetriou et al. explain the decline in motivation in terms of a loss of self-esteem in a larger and more overtly competitive environment (Demetriou et al., 2000). Conversely, young learners moving from mainstream to special classes may find the content too easy and unengaging (Tsutsumi 2019), leading to decreased motivation to learn. Thus, differences in content and learning levels resulting from school transfers can reduce motivation and hinder young learners' ability to learn in a new environment.

Furthermore, migrant and refugee young learners attending schools in different countries need to study subjects through a foreign language other than their mother tongue. Japanese research suggests that acquiring a foreign language as a language of study takes longer than learning it as a language of life (Kinnan 2024). This presents unique difficulties for migrant and refugee young learners, extending beyond mere academic catch-up and impacting their overall learning progress.

Changing relationships

As Spernes' review shows, the transition from primary to secondary school may elicit social and emotional challenges for young learners (Spernes, 2020). Traditionally, schools have facilitated a smoother transition from primary to secondary school by ensuring that pupils move to the new school or class with at least one good friend (Demetriou et al., 2000). Having a peer helps young learners meet their social needs for familiarity and companionship in the "big school," easing some of the anxieties that come with the transition (ibid). As Blatchford (1998) points out, "friendships can help reduce uncertainty and thus facilitate adjustment to school." Additionally, a positive relationship with teachers plays a key role in promoting young learners' commitment to learning. When a young learner moves to another country or state or switches to a different educational program, maintaining previous friendships and relationships with staff becomes increasingly challenging. They must rebuild relationships with others in a new community. However, migrant or refugee young learners may face additional barriers, such as limited proficiency in the local language, hindering their ability to connect with their peers.

Additionally, some teachers and young learners at the new school may view new young learners as 'newcomers' and struggle to empathise with their feelings. Demetriou et al. describes a 'good teacher' for young people as someone who consults them, who is fair, who makes them feel important, and who treats them in an respectful way (Demetriou et

al., 2000). To facilitate a smooth transition, it is necessary to support both young learners and teachers in the new school to cultivate positive relationships.

Schools, classrooms and communities that exclude diversity: Barriers and reasons for horizontal transition

Traditionally, schools and classrooms have played a role in perpetuating and reinforcing homogeneity, often at the expense of valuing diversity. Therefore, children who belong to a minority group are more likely to face exclusion due to their perceived 'differences'. International research has emphasised the exclusion and bullying experienced by vulnerable children, including those with disabilities, refugees, and children affected by migration (Menesini and Salmivalli, 2017).

Considering that positive relationships between children can influence their academic performance, there is concern that excluded and bullied children may underachieve. Furthermore, poorer performance or difficulties in adjustment may lead to children being placed in segregated educational settings, such as special classes and schools. The over-representation of children from migrant backgrounds, as well as children with disabilities, in special education is also believed to be linked to the high level of exclusivity in mainstream education (Kinnan, 2024).

Therefore, inclusive schools and classrooms that recognize and embrace diversity and do not exclude children from different cultural and social backgrounds, are essential. Holistic school programs to prevent bullying are often successful, and in several countries, it is a legal requirement for schools to have an anti-bullying policy (Menesini and Salmivalli, 2017). In schools in England, disability equality training has been led by disability organisations to eliminate bullying of children with disabilities and promote diversity inclusion (Hashida 2024).

Difficulties in sharing information and coordination

When young learners transition between schools or education systems, seamless coordination and information sharing between the local education authorities, schools, families, and young learners are crucial.

Teachers and coordinators at the previous school are familiar with their young learners' learning achievements, special educational needs, and social dynamics, such as how they relate to their friends. Sharing such information enables teachers at the new school to effectively support the learning and relationships of transferred young learners. This requires developing systems to share data on young learners' learning, friendships, and support needs. If the previous and new schools fall under the same inter-municipal authority, communication and information sharing are relatively easy. However, when young learners move to schools in a different country or region, communicating and information sharing become significantly more challenging.

Even when information is shared, there is no guarantee that the new school can offer the same learning content. In England, for example, the introduction of the National Curriculum was intended to ensure continuity and coherence of learning across schools. However, Galton et al. found that in spite of this curriculum framework, there were still serious discrepancies between the work pupils were given before and after the transition from primary to secondary school. Their research in the English education system shows that these gaps in curriculum alignment can significantly disrupt young learners' progress during this key educational transition (Galton et al., 2000).

Moreover, young learners with special educational needs may not receive the same level and quality of support in their new school due to potential differences in inclusion policies, staffing structures, and teacher attitudes between schools. These difficulties in information sharing and coordination can disrupt the smooth transition of young learners to their new school or educational program. Snozzi et al. said that if a young learner transferred from a special class to a mainstream class, it could be determined that the young learner received SEN support in the special class, but there was no information in the data about whether the young learner continued to receive SEN support after the transition (Snozzi et al., 2024).

Collaborative strategies and support systems for successful horizontal transitions

Effective strategies and support systems are essential for ensuring successful horizontal transitions, such as moving between schools or educational programs. Addressing not only academic but also social and emotional needs is critical to helping young learners adjust. Collaboration between teachers, peers, families, and the wider community plays a key role in this process. Strong communication among all parties ensures that personalised support is in place, while peer and teacher relationships provide young learners with a sense of belonging and stability. Family and community involvement further reinforces these support networks, helping to create an inclusive environment where young learners can confidently navigate their transitions and thrive.

Collaboration and communication

Collaboration and communication are key components in managing horizontal transitions within the educational system. Effective collaboration and communication between various stakeholders – including young learners, teachers, parents, and administrators – can significantly impact how well young learners adjust to these transitions, ensuring both their academic progress and emotional well-being.

Let us read this example case from Germany:

Germany is reputed to be extremely bureaucratic and any kind of legal procedure involves a large amount of paperwork going backwards and forwards. Even though the standard procedure requires mandatory meetingsconcerning childrens' welfare or educational paths,

these rarely involve authentic communication between participants or with children and their respective families. Because of this we often lack transparency and real human connection. A school I used to work at for example was in an area which had extremely high rates of crime and poverty which occasionally made it necessary for us to report certain incidents, seek assistance or even relocate children if their home environment was deemed unsafe. Despite this the school had a notoriously bad relationship with Child Protective Services (CPS), which made collaborating almost impossible. Mails went unanswered, appointments were denied and any kind of feedback concerning the young learners who needed assistance was non-existent. Case workers would simply show up in my classroom unannounced and try to arrest young learners in order to take them to a general holding facility – this was both traumatic and catastrophic considering school needs to be a safe environment for everyone. I used to have a huge problem with that, until one day we wanted to take a young girl into care because there was a very dramatic situation in her home, and it was clear she would not be able to return.

First of all, I sat down with the girl and I explained to her what the situation was and how the procedure worked so that she would understand exactly what the next steps would be. Transparency and predictability are extremely important in such stressful and traumatic situations. She had her bag packed beforehand and we discussed the phone call she and I would now have to make. We were optimistic because we had planned this transition in advance and had selected a lovely foster family who knew the girl in advance and was willing to take her in. In my eyes it was the best you could have made out of a drastic situation. But CPS does not work that way in Germany. You basically have to call a hotline and you do not know who is going to pick up the phone, and it is more than likely that they will simply take over the case without any further collaboration or planning. That usually ends up in the child being taken to a general holding facility until further evaluation. I had to explain this to the girl, because I think it is very important to prepare them for all the possible scenarios, so that they can brace themselves. In this case, luckily enough, a gentleman whom I had not met before, picked up the phone and was extremely laid back and helpful when I explained the situation and our ideas to him. He agreed to let me take the girl to the foster family in my own car and met us there to evaluate and assess the situation on the same afternoon. We actually sat outside in the family's garden and had coffee and cake, and the girl got to explain her situation and the case worker got to know everybody and wrote his respective report. This was the smoothest transition and the most ideal outcome for a very dramatic situation.

Additionally this turned out to be a very fruitful development for my collaboration with CPS because over coffee I got to explain the troubles our school had been having with their institution and how I wished it could be different. From that we struck up a kind of friendship and started meeting on a regular basis to discuss cases, ideas or just vent about everyday work problems. Meanwhile we have included many others in our meetings, organiseworkshops together and have formed a very constructive and supportive network which transcends school and CPS themselves. I now have an insight into who the people

on the other end of the paper trail are and what their work schedule looks like. Our regular meetings have broken down barriers and helped form trust and an authentic human connection in order for us to successfully work together.

The role of collaboration in horizontal transitions

Collaboration among educators, young learners, and families is essential in facilitating smooth horizontal transitions. When teachers and school staff work together to coordinate young learner transitions, it reduces academic disruptions and ensures continuity in learning. This collaboration often involves sharing information about a young learner's learning needs, academic progress, and social-emotional status to ensure that the receiving teacher or school is well-prepared to support the young learner.

Collaborative strategies such as team meetings, joint planning sessions, and professional development programs allow educators to align their practices and expectations. This is especially critical in transitions involving diverse learning needs, such as young learners with disabilities or English language learners. For instance, ensuring that there is sufficient planning beforehand such as the US model of Individualised Education Plans (IEPs) or that language acquisition programs are seamlessly implemented across different schools or classrooms requires close coordination between educators and specialists (Willis, Doutre, Jacobsen, 2019).

Additionally, collaboration between schools and outside organisations, such as community centres or after-school programs, can enhance the support provided to young learners during transitions. These partnerships often provide additional resources, such as tutoring or mentoring, which can help young learners adapt to new learning environments more successfully (Graham et al., 2022).

Communication as a critical factor

Open, consistent communication is critical in ensuring successful horizontal transitions. When communication between schools, families, and young learners is strong, it promotes transparency, reduces anxiety, and allows for proactive problem-solving. One key aspect of effective communication is providing clear, timely information about the transition process, expectations, and available resources. Studies show that when families are well-informed about what to expect during a transition, they are better able to support their children, helping them feel more confident and prepared (Harper, 2016).

Teachers and administrators must maintain ongoing dialogue with young learners to understand their concerns and ensure that they feel supported throughout the transition. This may involve regular check-ins, feedback sessions, and creating a culture where young learners feel comfortable expressing their challenges and needs. Open communication between young learners and educators helps identify potential issues early, allowing for timely interventions that address both academic and social-emotional challenges.

Parent and teacher communication is another vital element of successful transitions. When teachers engage with families and actively involve them in the transition process, young learners benefit from a more cohesive support system. This is especially important when young learners are transitioning between different learning formats, such as in-person to online learning, as families play a more active role in facilitating their children's learning in virtual settings. Communication tools such as parent-teacher conferences, newsletters, and digital platforms can help connect home and school, making sure that families stay informed and involved.

Collaborative models for successful transitions

Schools that implement structured collaborative and communication frameworks see more successful transitions. For example, multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) integrate both academic and social-emotional support strategies through collaboration among teachers, counsellors, and administrators. These systems use data-driven decision-making to monitor young learner progress and adapt interventions to meet individual needs (McIntosh & Goodman, 2016).

Similarly, teacher collaboration networks, where educators from different schools or departments share best practices and strategies for supporting young learners during transitions, have been shown to enhance the overall effectiveness of the transition process. As Hargreaves (1999) emphasises, simply working alongside one another is insufficient; genuine collaboration and open dialogue are crucial. Meaningful collaboration and collegiality are key to fostering educational change. Collaboration and communication are essential to managing horizontal transitions in the educational system. Through collaborative efforts among educators, families, and communities, young learners can experience smoother transitions with minimal disruption to their learning and emotional well-being. Effective communication ensures that all stakeholders are well-informed and engaged in supporting the young learner's adjustment to new learning environments. By fostering these connections, educational systems can better meet the needs of young learners and create a more inclusive and supportive transition process.

Social and emotional support

Social and emotional support during horizontal transitions can play an important role in how young learners adjust to new environments and maintain their academic performance. Additionally, emotional support systems help develop resilience, supporting young learners to cope with the challenges of transitioning without feeling isolated or overwhelmed.

Support systems that focus on social and emotional well-being can reduce the potential for disconnection, which often leads to academic decline or disengagement from school. According to the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), incorporating emotional learning strategies into school environments helps young learners

develop crucial skills such as self-awareness, self-management, and social awareness, which are essential during transitions.
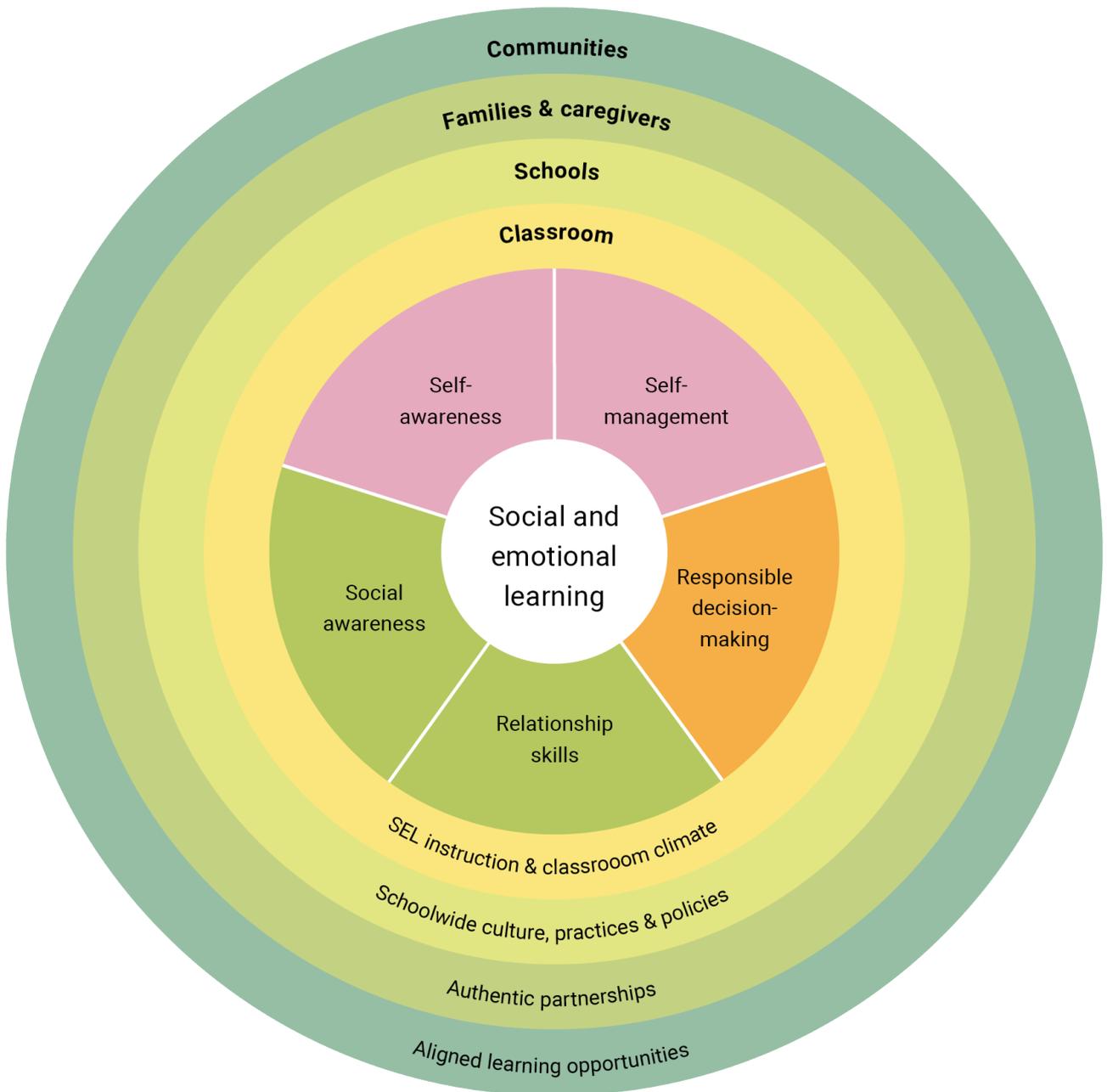
Source: Casel 2020

Peer and Teacher Support

One of the most effective forms of social support in educational transitions is peer support. Peer relationships offer a sense of belonging and shared experiences that can ease the stress of new environments. Peer mentoring programs, for instance, have been shown to positively impact young learners who are transitioning by providing them with role models

and a peer network that can answer questions, offer guidance, and create social bonds (Stapley et al., 2022).

Teachers also play a key role in creating an emotionally supportive environment. When educators are attentive to the emotional needs of young learners during a transition, they can create a sense of security and stability. Teachers who prioritise social-emotional learning (SEL) in their classrooms can help young learners manage their emotions, build healthy relationships, and stay engaged with their studies despite the changes in their environment (Jones & Kahn, 2018).

Family and community involvement

In addition to support from peers and educators, family involvement is a significant source of emotional security for young learners navigating horizontal transitions. When families are actively engaged in the transition process – communicating with teachers, offering reassurance, and maintaining open lines of communication – young learners are more likely to feel supported both at home and at school. Research by Eden et al. (2024) shows that young learners whose families are involved in their education tend to exhibit higher academic achievement and better emotional adjustment during transitions.

Communities also play a role in supporting young learners during transitions. Community-based programs, such as after-school activities, provide young learners with additional opportunities to build social connections and access emotional support networks, further buffering the potential stress of transitioning between schools or learning formats (Mahoney et al., 2005). Social and emotional support is a vital component in ensuring that horizontal transitions in the educational system are smooth and successful for young learners. Through the combined efforts of peers, teachers, families, and communities, young learners can develop the emotional resilience and social connections needed to thrive in new learning environments. Without adequate support, transitions may lead to feelings of isolation, anxiety, or disengagement. However, when properly supported, young learners are more likely to experience positive academic and emotional outcomes, ensuring long-term success in their educational journey.

6. Participation and learner-centred approaches

A young learner-centred approach recognizes that each young learner is unique and gives priority to young learners' needs, interests and experiences rather than strictly adhering to a standardised, one-size-fits-all, teacher-led model. This approach helps to welcome individual differences as a source of richness and as a starting point for teaching and educational action, considering that within this diversity young learners learn and adapt to new contexts. Furthermore, this approach allows us to listen to the voice of the young learners, to take care of their point of view, creating ample space for open discussion. Unfortunately, it is customary in educational work to take it for granted that we educators

know what is best for our young learners and evaluate them, because this is our job. We believe we know what they are capable of doing and what is best for them without asking. A young learner-centred model can encourage young learners to take more responsibility for their own learning and improve their motivation, strengthening personal resources during transitions and helping them develop the skills they need to cope with change.

This approach involves adapting instruction to different learning styles and needs of young learners. For example, it is possible to implement differentiated instructions and personalised learning plans to help young learners improve their autonomy and awareness of how they learn, helping to adapt to a new environment effectively. By allowing flexibility in how young learners demonstrate mastery of content, such as through project-based learning, portfolios, or assessments that reflect individual learning goals, teachers can create more inclusive environments that support all young learners during transitions (Tomlinson, 2017).

Finally, the young learner-centred approach focuses on the importance of creating a classroom environment that creates a sense of belonging and emotional safety. This is especially important during horizontal transitions, when young learners may feel uncertain or disconnected from the new environment. A welcoming and inclusive school environment helps ease the transition and helps young learners feel valued and understood as they adapt and acclimatise to their new environment.

Participation in the transition process

Student participation in decision-making and the learning process is another key component of successful transitions. When young learners are actively involved in shaping their educational experience, they develop a greater sense of ownership and agency, which can help them manage the challenges of moving between learning environments. Participation not only empowers young learners but also helps educators and administrators understand young learners' needs and preferences, allowing for better support during transitions (Eden et al, 2024).

One effective way to promote student participation during transitions is through student-led conferences or transition meetings. In these meetings, young learners, parents, and teachers come together to discuss the young learner's strengths, challenges, and goals, giving the young learner a voice in their educational journey (Eden et al, 2024). Bailey and Guskey (2001) point out that student-led conferences encourage young learners to actively engage in their own educational process. By discussing their progress, strengths, and areas for improvement directly with parents and teachers, young learners gain a stronger sense of responsibility and ownership over their learning journey, which can be especially beneficial during times of transition

It must be considered that one of the greatest risks of a transition, in our opinion, is that of losing one's identity or part of it. Consider a child facing vulnerabilities who,

despite great effort, works to discover and build their strengths. With each transition, this process can be disrupted, slowed down, or even undone. Similarly, think of an adult refugee, forced to leave their home, culture, and everything that is familiar. Having grown up in a certain environment that shaped their identity, they now face the challenge of adapting to a new culture, language, and people. Without a support network to guide them through this transition or a welcoming community to create a safe space in their new environment, there is a risk that they may lose important parts of their identity.

Peer collaboration and mentorship programs can enhance young learner participation during transitions. When young learners are encouraged to work together, whether through group projects or peer-led activities, they develop social skills and build relationships that help ease the stress of transitioning. Peer mentoring programs, where older or more experienced young learners guide those who are new to the school or classroom, have been shown to improve social integration and academic outcomes (Graham et al., 2022). These programs provide young learners with both academic support and a sense of community, making the transition process smoother.

The benefits of a learner-centred and participatory approach

In summary, implementing a learner-centred and participatory approach during horizontal transitions has several benefits. First, it increases engagement, which is particularly important during transitions when young learners may feel disconnected or overwhelmed. Engaged young learners are more likely to be motivated, participate actively in class, and demonstrate better academic outcomes. By focusing on student interests and involving them in their own learning, educators can help maintain engagement even during challenging transitions.

Furthermore, a learner-centred approach promotes the development of critical skills such as self-regulation, problem-solving, and adaptability, which are essential for managing transitions. When young learners are given the autonomy to make decisions about their learning and are supported in reflecting on their progress, they become more independent learners who can adjust to new academic environments with confidence (Evans & Boucher, 2015).

While autonomy and a learner-centred approach are important in transition processes, challenges arise due to inherent power imbalances in educational settings. It is important to keep in mind that young learners may not always have the authority to make decisions about their learning, as policies, school expectations, and curriculum standards often dictate certain aspects of their educational experience. Additionally, some decisions—particularly those involving transitions or support needs—are made by teachers, administrators, or parents who may feel they are acting in the young learner's best interest. This dynamic can limit young learners' agency, requiring educators to be mindful of these

constraints and strive to create opportunities for genuine choice and involvement within the structure of their roles.

Finally, this approach creates a sense of belonging and community within the school, which is crucial for successful transitions. Young learners who feel supported and connected to their peers and teachers are more likely to adapt positively to new environments. Research indicates that schools that emphasise student participation and a learner-centredapproach see lower dropout rates and improved social-emotional outcomes for young learners during transitions(Crosnoe, 2011). A learner-centred approach that promotes active student participation is essential in managing horizontal transitions in the educational system. By tailoring education to individual student needs and involving young learners in decision-making, schools can create a supportive environment that fosters academic success and emotional well-being. Encouraging student participation through peer collaboration, mentorship, and reflection activities helps young learners develop the skills needed to adapt to new environments and remain engaged in their education. Ultimately, this approach supports young learners in navigating the challenges of horizontal transitions with greater confidence and resilience.

Developing an educational network

A network facilitating information sharing among teachers, support staff, families, and young learners involved with a transfer student is essential for a smooth horizontal transition. This network can communicate and share details about the young learner's achievements, learning progress, and friendships.

Communication and coordination between schools are particularly important in the case of children with SEN, as different schools are likely to offer different resources and support. Effective liaison and coordination between schools and local authorities are vital, given the diverse policies on inclusive education, support, and funding across countries, local authorities, and schools.

In the London Borough of Newham, England, the SEN team facilitates a smooth transition by attending transfer reviews for young learners with EHC (Education, Health and Care) plans in the summer term prior to the young learner's admission. They meet with pupils with SEN and coordinate appropriate provision when a child with SEN changes schools (Little Ilford School, 2022). Student profiles are devised for all young learners on the SEN Register; these profiles are issued to teachers and teaching assistants so that they are aware of the needs of these young learners (ibid). Appropriate information sharing and coordination through such networks can support seamless horizontal transitions for pupils.

In some US schools, transition coordinators have been introduced to prepare young learners with disabilities for life after school. They have valuable resources and support smooth transitions for young learners with disabilities by linking them to resources within

and outside the community and school (Scheef and Mahfouz, 2020). In this way, the coordinators support smooth transitions between schools and from school to community.

Training programs for teachers, support staff and young learners

To develop a support system for transfer students, a training program is needed for all teachers, support staff, and volunteers. This program creates an understanding of the psychological challenges associated with transitioning to a new environment and the various barriers that such a transition presents. In these training programs, teachers and support staff should participate in role-playing and reflection exercises that focus on two key areas: (i) the challenges a young learner might face when changing schools, and, (ii) how they would want to be treated by teachers, peers, and support staff if they were in a similar situation.

In addition to understanding these difficulties, teachers and staff should explore the human and material resources available within the school and community that can support transfer young learners in precarious situations. They should contemplate specific support strategies such as individualised learning support, utilising local networks, offering pre-school during long holidays, and other concrete measures. Through such training, teachers and support staff can gain insights into facilitating a smooth 'horizontal transition' for each young learner, effectively utilising available resources in the school and community.

The Spanish government's National Institute of Educational Technologies and Teacher Training also places a particular emphasis on inclusive education, student diversity and intercultural education with the provision of professional learning programs for teachers (Brown et al, 2022). These programs focus on raising teachers' awareness of young learners' academic as well as social and emotional needs (ibid).

Such a training program could also be useful for children to prevent bullying of transfer students. In some cases, organising training or workshops for children to reflect on the difficulties faced by transitioning pupils can be beneficial. Through such opportunities, children can gain empathy for learners with different needs, foster positive friendships, and value their unique backgrounds and roots.

Conclusion

In conclusion, horizontal transitions in education are complex and require a coordinated approach to ensure young learners' academic, social, and emotional well-being. The case from southern Italy at the beginning of the chapter demonstrates the importance of building a collaborative network involving teachers, families, health professionals, and community organisations. This network successfully tailored a support system that improved the young learner's behaviour, reduced family stress, and maintained social connections. Schlossberg's transition theory highlights that resources such as coping strategies, support networks, and personal attributes play a key role in determining whether a transition is

positive or negative. Vulnerable young learners, including those with disabilities or displaced due to migration, are especially in need of personalised interventions to prevent disruption to their development and identity. Peer and teacher relationships are crucial, as they provide stability and a sense of belonging. Involving families and communities further strengthens the support system, ensuring a holistic approach to transitions. Open communication between stakeholders is essential to managing expectations and addressing challenges proactively, while professional development equips educators to better understand and support young learners through these changes. Ultimately, successful horizontal transitions are driven by a student-centred approach that recognizes individual needs and creates flexibility, emotional support, and inclusive environments. By engaging all stakeholders, schools can help young learners navigate transitions with confidence, resilience, and continuity in their personal and academic growth.

Local contexts

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=661#h5p-60

Closing questions to discuss or tasks

1. In what ways can peer support and teacher relationships reduce the stress of horizontal transitions, and what strategies can schools implement to cultivate these supportive relationships?
2. What factors should be considered when designing personalised educational plans during horizontal transitions, especially for young learners with complex needs or behavioural challenges?
3. How can educators and support staff ensure that vulnerable young learners—such as those with behavioural difficulties or special needs—receive personalised interventions during horizontal transitions without disrupting their development or sense of identity?
4. In the context of horizontal transitions, how can communication and collaboration between schools, families, and external organisations be improved to provide a

seamless and supportive experience for young learners, particularly those moving between different educational programs or systems?

Literature

Anderson, M. L., J. Goodman, and N. K. Schlossberg. *Counseling Adults in Transition: Linking Schlossberg's Theory with Practice in a Diverse World*. 4th ed. Springer Publishing Company, 2012.

Bailey, K., and T. R. Guskey. *Implementing Student-Led Conferences*. Corwin Press, 2001.

Blatchford, P. *Social Life in School: Pupils' Experience of Breaktime and Recess from 7 to 16 Years*. London: Falmer Press, 1998.

Bronfenbrenner, U. *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979.

Brown, M., H. Altrichter, I. Shiyan, M. J. Rodríguez Conde, G. McNamara, B. Herzog-Punzenberger, I. Vorobyeva, et al. "Challenges and Opportunities for Culturally Responsive Leadership in Schools: Evidence from Four European Countries." *Policy Futures in Education* 20, no. 5 (2022): 580–607. https://doi.org/10.1177/14782103211040909.

Cappello, S., D. Ferrel, P. Pallokosta, and I. D. Iturria. *Navigating Inclusive Educational Transitions for All*. All Means All Open Textbook, 2023.

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). "Fundamentals of SEL: What Is the CASEL Framework?," 2000. https://casel.org/fundamentals-of-sel/what-is-the-casel-framework/.

Crosnoe, Robert. *Fitting in, Standing out: Navigating the Social Challenges of High School to Get an Education*. Cambridge University Press, 2011. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511793264.

Demetriou, Helen, Paul Goalen, and Jean Rudduck. "Academic Performance, Transfer, Transition and Friendship: Listening to the Student Voice." *International Journal of Educational Research* 33, no. 4 (2000): 425–41.

Eden, Chima Abimbola, Onyebuchi Nneamaka Chisom, and Idowu Sulaimon Adeniyi. "Parent and Community Involvement in Education: Strengthening Partnerships for Social Improvement." *International Journal of Applied Research in Social Sciences* 6, no. 3 (2024): 372–82.

Evans, Miriam, and Alyssa Boucher. "Optimizing the Power of Choice: Supporting Student Autonomy to Foster Motivation and Engagement in Learning." *Mind, Brain and Education* 9, no. 2 (2015).

Evans, N. J., D. S. Forney, F. M. Guido, L. D. Patton, and K. A. Renn. *Young Learner Development in College: Theory, Research, and Practice*. 2nd ed. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-

Bass, 2010.

Fish, J. *Young People with Handicaps: The Road to Adulthood*. Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, 1986.

Galton, Maurice, Ian Morrison, and Tony Pell. "Transfer and Transition in English Schools: Reviewing the Evidence." *International Journal of Educational Research* 33, no. 4 (2000): 341–63.

Ginger, B., and J. R. Patton. "Transition and Students with Learning Disabilities: Creating Sound Futures." *Journal of Learning Disabilities* 29, no. 1 (1996): 7–16.

Goodman, J., N. K. Schlossberg, and M. L. Anderson. *Counseling Adults in Transition: Linking Practice with Theory*. 3rd ed. New York: Springer Publishing Company, 2006.

Graham, Michael, Ivan Wayne, Stephanie Persutte-Manning, Stephanie Pergantis, and Angela Vaughan. "Enhancing Student Outcomes: Peer Mentors and Student Transition." *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education* 34, no. 1 (2022): 1–6.

Hanewald, R. "Transition Between Primary and Secondary School: Why It Is Important and How It Can Be Supported." *Australian Journal of Teacher Education* 38, no. 1 (2013). https://doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2013v38n1.7.

Hargreaves, D. H. "The Knowledge Creating School." *British Journal of Educational Studies* 47, no. 2 (1999): 122–44.

Hashida, N. "The Development Process of the Inclusive Education Movement with Non-Disabled Allies: Focusing on Disability Equality Training in England." *Educational Studies in Japan* 18 (2024): 159–69. https://doi.org/10.7571/esjkyoiku.18.159.

Jones, Stephanie M., and Jennifer Kahn. "A Consensus on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development." In *The Evidence Base for How We Learn: Supporting Students' Social, Emotional, and Academic Development*. Aspen Institute, 2017.

Kinnan, S. "Migrant Children and Education." In *Inclusive Education and Society*, edited by Harada and Ito. Minerva Shobo, 2024.

Little Ilford School. "Autumn Newsletter," 2022. https://www.littleilford.newham.sch.uk/curriculum/departments/send.

Mahoney, Joseph L., Reed W. Larson, and Jacquelynne S. Eccles. *Organized Activities as Contexts of Development: Extracurricular Activities, After-School and Community Programs*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2005.

McIntosh, Kent, and Steve Goodmann. *Integrated Multi-Tiered Systems of Support—Blending RTI and PBIS*. London: The Guildford Press, 2016.

Menesini, E., and C. Salmivalli. "Bullying in Schools: The State of Knowledge and Effective Interventions." *Psychology, Health & Medicine* 22, no. sup1 (2017): 240–53. https://doi.org/10.1080/13548506.2017.1279740.

Scheef, Andrew, and Julia Mahfouz. "Supporting the Post-School Goals of Youth with Disabilities Through Use of a Transition Coordinator." *Research in Educational Administration and Leadership* 5, no. 1 (2020): 43–69.

Snozzi, Romana, Carmen L. A. Zurbriggen, and Christoph M. Müller. "School Transfers in

Special Education: Frequency, Direction, and Timing of Transfers Between Different School Settings." *European Journal of Special Needs Education* 39, no. 2 (2024): 249–64.

Spernes, K. "The Transition Between Primary and Secondary School: A Thematic Review Emphasising Social and Emotional Issues." *Research Papers in Education* 37, no. 3 (2020): 303–20. https://doi.org/10.1080/02671522.2020.1849366.

Stapley, E., R. Town, Y. Yoon, S. T. Lereya, J. Farr, J. Turner, N. Barnes, and J. Deighton. "A Mixed Methods Evaluation of a Peer Mentoring Intervention in a UK School Setting: Perspectives from Mentees and Mentors." *Children and Youth Services Review*, 2022. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2021.106327.

Tomlinson, Sally. *A Sociology of Special and Inclusive Education – Exploring the Manufacture of Inability*. London: Routledge, 2017.

Tsutsumi, H. *The Place of Intellectual Disability Education and Children in the Grey Zone*. The University of Tokyo Press, 2019.

Willis, J., S. M. Doutre, and A. Berg-Jacobson. "Study of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) Process and the Adequate Funding Level for Students with Disabilities in Maryland." San Francisco, CA: WestEd, 2019.

About the authors

Christine Carstens

Chris Carstens, based in Bremerhaven, brings extensive experience in teaching English and German, alongside certification as a trauma educator with a specialization in supporting children and young adults facing social and emotional challenges.

Francesca Mara Santangelo

Francesca Mara Santangelo is a pedagogist with expertise in disability, marginality, and Behavioral Neuroscience. Her research focuses on Special Education and Inclusion. As a musician and teacher trainer, she also works on designing and implementing early educational interventions coordinating networks of schools, institutions, families, and various stakeholders. Her professional experience combines solid expertise with a continuous commitment to promoting inclusive education and fostering neuropsychological well-being starting with children.

Nariko Hashida

Nariko Hashida is a Japanese educational researcher at Chiba University. She specialised in social education and lifelong learning and worked as a social education officer in a community learning centre. Her doctoral thesis was a study of learning activities for the inclusion of people with disabilities, based on fieldwork in Japan and the UK. She is the author of the book "Learning Activities to Develop a Sense of Agency around Disability Issues" (Akashi Shoten, 2024, in Japanese).

NAVIGATING INCLUSIVE EDUCATIONAL TRANSITIONS FOR ALL

Silver Cappello; Danielle Farrel; Paty Paliokosta; and Irati Sagardia-Iturria

---

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=453#oembed-1

Example Case

"I started attending a local mainstream primary school at the age of 4 ½.

Prior to my first day at school, my parents had to challenge the Education Department in order for me to obtain a place at the local mainstream Primary. At this point it was the Education Department's belief that my disability would be disruptive for the rest of the class. However, this was not the case. I excelled academically and reached the same milestones as my non-disabled peers.

By the time I was ready to transition to secondary school, the opinion of the Education Department had completely changed. They had previously questioned whether I could achieve academically. Having proved that I could, the Education Department was keen for me to remain in mainstream education. However, due to access barriers at the local mainstream secondary school, I decided with the support of my parents to move to the Special Education school which at the time was the only school of its kind to follow the mainstream curriculum, and this was where I obtained my qualifications.

From here I was supported to attend mainstream college for one day a week to assist me in deciding whether I felt this was the next step for me. I decided that it was, and after returning to mainstream education I went on to obtain a Higher National Diploma in Media Studies, before progressing to university, graduating with my Bachelor of Arts Honours degree in the same discipline.

Despite challenges in finding employment, after graduating I successfully transitioned into employment with the role as a Research Assistant at the university where I studied. During this time, I was presented with the opportunity to return to education and study for my PhD. I chose to do this and completed this chapter of my life in 2015 when I graduated with my PhD. Since then, I have established my own business and now successfully use my lived experience of disability to provide a range of services for individuals and families living with disabilities, businesses and employers seeking to be fully inclusive.

On reflection, I have achieved what I have due to my self-determination and resilience. However, if I did have Person-Centred Planning support sooner that focused on my dreams and aspirations and what support I needed to achieve this, I feel strongly that my educational transitions to date would have been far smoother. However, with the knowledge I now have around this I feel that this will be the case for my future transitions."

Dr Danielle Farrel, Managing Director, Your Options Understood (Y.O.U.)

[1]

Initial questions

In this chapter you will find the answers to the following questions:

1. In this chapter, we are using the term "disabled" rather than "individual with a disability" in accordance with the perspective of the social model of disability, as discussed by Oliver (1990). The social model of disability underscores the importance of recognising that disability is not an inherent characteristic of an individual but is, instead, a result of social and environmental barriers and attitudes. In this context, the term "disabled" serves as a reflection of this perspective. By using "disabled," we aim to emphasise the impact of societal factors and structures in shaping the experiences of individuals with disabilities. We acknowledge that language is a complex and evolving aspect of discussions surrounding disability, and we respect the diverse perspectives within the disability community. It is essential to note that the choice of terminology can be a matter of personal preference and cultural sensitivity. We encourage ongoing dialogue and reflection on the language we use in discussions of disability, with the utmost respect for the autonomy and self-identification of individuals with disabilities. Teachers and educators involved in transitions should be taking permission from the young people and their family for appropriate use of terminology that they feel describes them accurately.

1. Transition process and laying the groundwork for meaningful engagement among the team, families, and children.

2. Initial Meetings a couple of months before the academic year and enrolment: Families may get familiar with the school through events such as familiarisation days and pre-enrolment. These activities are part of the initial meetings that help families understand and feel at ease in the school setting. During this time, families can also enrol in school.

3. First Group Meeting and individual meetings with the family the first days of the academic year: The first meeting allows families to come together as a group and strengthen their ties to the school. Families gain insight into their child's daily experiences at school, including activities and interactions, during this meeting. It provides an opportunity to address any concerns or questions that families may have. On the other hand, the first individual meeting between families and educators is crucial. This meeting establishes a climate for communication and collaboration while emphasising the significance of the transition. It addresses issues such as physical school environment setup, maintaining a respectful distance, understanding the child's space and activities, and sharing critical information.

4. Preparing for the First Days of School: Careful planning is required for the first days of school. Teachers and educators must make sure they have the resources that they need to meet the needs of both children and families. Exchanging information during drop-off and pick-up times, leaving notes, and making regular phone calls all contribute to creating a good and comfortable environment for both children and families.

5. Creating Individualised Connections: To ensure that everything goes smoothly and effectively, it is essential to establish a strong emotional connection between the child and their reference caregiver, which should be as solid as the connection they have with their mother or father but adapted for the school environment. In order to create a secure and supportive school experience, thorough attention must be given to the child and their family. This involves careful planning and organisation of spaces and materials that can assist us in providing what they need. It is crucial to select play materials that cater to the pupils' interests and needs, ensuring that they are well-engaged. Similarly, the physical space should be arranged in a way that allows for a small space to be allocated for families.

6. Respecting Developmental Stages: Recognising children's developmental stages is critical. Some pupils may still require their baby bottle, while others may have transitioned or never used a bottle. It is critical to recognise, respect, and incorporate these differences into the transition process.

7. Providing a variety of areas: It is preferable to provide more than one space, allowing children who do not wish to remain in the classroom to move outside. This can also be a great opportunity for new families to meet in a relaxed and cheerful atmosphere, as well as for pupils who prefer to stay inside the room to do so. Furthermore, a special area can be created

to make families feel at ease in school. Placing a sofa, for example, can allow families to take a break from activities while remaining close to their children. This way, during transitions, children can stay in a familiar spot, and families can rest assured that they will find their child in that familiar spot, bringing a sense of calm and spreading a positive influence on the school environment.

8.   Reflection and adaptation: The transition process is not a one-size-fits-all approach. It requires conviction to interpret how each child and their family feel about the school environment. Finding signs of comfort and security, showcasing initiatives, remaining open to change, and addressing fears and needs without judgement are all part of it. As a result, assessing the transition process should be qualitative rather than quantitative. Understanding how the process unfolds, embracing moments of stillness and progress, and allowing for flexibility and adaptation are all part of the process.

Introduction to Topic

Transition etymologically refers to a change from one state or context to another. One generic definition could be the following:"Transitions are key events and/or processes occurring at specific periods or turning points during the life course" (Vogler et al., 2008: 1).

Key aspects

Overall, as the authors argue, the transition to school is a complex process that involves building connections, understanding each child's uniqueness, and fostering emotional security. It is a journey that requires careful planning, ongoing communication, and a deep respect for the emotional well-being of both children and families.

On the other hand, the educational organisation Penn State Extension (2020), related to horizontal transitions, explained how the process of transitioning from one activity to another within the early childhood classroom setting can present difficulties. Many toddlers struggle to switch activities as some children can be frustrated when they have to leave something they are enjoying or feel they are almost done. Other children may be confused or worried by transitions. This is usually due to a lack of structure. Other children may not understand why they are being asked to do something else, view the situation as unfair, or be unsure of what to do next. Children handle uncertainty differently. When transitions are unexpected or unclear, they may have frustrated anger, increased anxiety, and this may affect their day.

In this regard, these are some of the strategies that they provide in order to smooth activity transitions and avoid unexpected changes:

- Make a schedule: It is easier to deal with expected transitions than unexpected ones. Explaining the day's plans and providing reminders about what comes next could be beneficial. As the development of each child will be unique, visual schedules will also be helpful.
- Stick to the schedule but build in transition times: Following your schedule will help children develop routines and expectations. However, flexibility is also necessary in order to respond to children appropriately.
- Let people know when to switch: To reduce schedule confusion and surprises, use verbal and non-verbal cues to indicate when to move to a different activity. Provide warnings, incorporate instruments to signal the next activity, incorporate transition songs and so on.
- Pairs transition: Planning partner activities or asking a child who transitions well to help another child get ready could be another strategy. This should be framed as supporting rather than as a punishment for the child that is struggling with the transition.
- Think positive: Transitions are challenging, especially for young children who might struggle to understand your expectations. Experiencing frustration during transitions makes it more difficult for your children. Children often mirror your emotions. During transitions, children will pick up on your composure and appropriate behaviour and attitudes.

From early childhood to primary school

The Transition: A Positive Start to School Resource Kit (DET, 2017) was designed by the Victorian Educational department to provide current, research-based, and practical advice. This guidance is intended for early childhood professionals who work with children and families during the critical school transition period. This Kit comprises of six sections. The first section offers an overview of the significance of a positive transition to school, covering transition contexts and effective practices. Sections 2 through to 5 detail vital elements of successful transition strategies, such as fostering relationships, addressing equity and diversity, ensuring learning continuity, and planning for transitions. The final section, Section 6, outlines practical tools for supporting effective transitions, including the Transition Learning and Development Statement, alongside various assessment, and planning methods. These are some of the strategies that are provided for smooth school transitions:

- Foster respectful, trusting, and helpful relationships with children and their families.
- Establish mutually beneficial connections that actively encourage the exchange of pertinent information and its value.
- Create professional roles and collaborations that promote ongoing reflective practice.
- Recognise the agency of children and their role in transitions.

- Respect the cultural histories and heritage of all individuals involved in the transition process.
- Recognise the assets and abilities of all participants in transitions by setting high expectations and committing to fairness.
- Utilise approaches that are adaptable and flexible to the diverse family contexts within local communities.
- Provide appropriate and ongoing support to educators, teachers, children, and families.

In terms of relationships, Dockett and Perry (2005) participated in a special project, called 'buddy programs', in two schools in Sydney, Australia. 25 students studying to become teachers and 130 children in Year 5 took part. These programmes pair older students who are familiar with the school with new students who are just starting. It helps new students adjust and lets older students show they care about their school. They all attended special training days to develop communication skills, reflection, and community building skills. Through interviews, the researchers find out what concerns the new kids had and how they could help. These provided the basis for the development of 'training' experiences by the teacher education students and also the evaluation of the program.

Following with the same authors, they developed an instrument over a 20-year period, and it has been utilised in multiple ways in both research and practise in a number of regions. The Peridot Education Transition Reflection Instrument serves as an instrument for documenting and leveraging the findings of a school program evaluation, facilitating reflection on existing programs and the formulation of future ones (Dockett & Perry, 2022: 177-180). It relies on the four components outlined in the position statement: opportunities, aspirations, expectations, and entitlements. Each position statement comprises four tables illustrating four levels of achievement for each of the four key stakeholders: children, families, educators, and communities. This set of tables empowers partners to make informed assessments based on evidence for each of the constructs (see table 1, 2, 3, and 4 in appendix).

From primary to secondary education

An English research project explored the practice of a Transition Club with a sample of 38 students (Humphrey & Ainscow, 2006). It was a pilot project for a group of students who had underachieved in maths and literacy at the end of primary school. Data was collected through participant observations, questionnaires, and a focus group interview. Transition Club took place over a six-week period towards the end of the summer term (at the end of the last year of primary school). In each week students spent 3 days at the secondary school and 2 days at their primary school. This exploratory project was successful in providing students with a sense of belonging, helping them to understand the secondary school structure, and making learning fun. This practice revealed interesting

results highlighting what vulnerable student groups are concerned about. The study showed that new expressions of inclusive practice typically emerge in a collaborative situation rather than working alone. Furthermore, innovative educational practices can help in facilitating students' social and psychological adjustment to the new school with a sense of belonging, orientation, and enjoyment.

The 'STARS' research study, conducted at UCL and Cardiff University, aimed to understand how to facilitate a successful transition for children from primary to secondary school. Over the course of the study, approximately 2000 pupils from South-East England, UK were tracked during this transition. Information from pupils, parents, and teachers was collected to assess well-being, academic progress, and their experiences with school and relationships. The study established two key aspects of a successful transition: academic and behavioural engagement in school, and a sense of belonging. These were measured using the 'START' questionnaire completed by primary school teachers. Most children had initial concerns about moving to secondary school, which gradually lessened after starting. However, worries related to friendships, discipline, and homework took more time to subside. Friendships underwent significant changes during the transition. Parents were found to have insight into their children's transitional needs. Vulnerability to a poor transition was not linked to a single group of children; rather, various risk and protective factors influenced the outcome. Therefore, an effective approach to support pupils during transition might involve general strategies to address common concerns, with additional, personalised strategies for vulnerable individuals based on their specific needs. Primary and secondary schools employed different strategies to support children during the transition. Systemic strategies, like building connections between the two school levels, were effective at reducing school anxiety. Several secondary school practices promoted academic progress in Year 7. These strategies were well-received by teachers, suggesting their high acceptability. Furthermore, secondary schools implemented various practices to aid pupils in forming friendships, as this remained a persistent concern. The questionnaires, resources and the report of the research can be seen here.

From secondary education to further and higher education

In Spain, the Red SAPDU (2020) highlights a concerning trend where many students with SEN do not progress to higher education beyond compulsory schooling. Limited statistical data availability makes it challenging to compare various SEN student groups between non-university and university settings. Recent data indicates a significant drop in SEN students transitioning to university compared to those who enter high school, potentially due to the demanding educational journey they face. This gap emphasises the need for a transition guide to facilitate higher education access for SEN students. The Red SAPDU (2020) created a practical guide to aid departments, support teams, university services, and

various stakeholders in enhancing SEN students' access to higher education. The guide serves as a dynamic tool and should be regularly updated within the SAPDU Network.

The guide encompasses the following aspects:

- Support Structures in Universities: Nine out of ten services offer personalised guidance to SEN students, bridging communication gaps between students and faculty. They uphold legal rights, advise on best practices, and suggest improvements. Disability-specific recommendation guides are also available.

- SAPDU Network: Created in 2009, this network unites technical staff from disability support services in around 60 Spanish universities. It operates under Crue-Asuntos Estudiantiles, a sectoral commission of Spanish Universities. Working groups focus on topics like curricular adaptations, employment, mobility, communication, and ICT. The network fosters information exchange, best practices sharing, and collective decision-making.

- Transition, Access, and Welcome (TAA) Model: This model ensures smooth NEAE student transition to university. It involves support programs from pre-exam phase to successful university integration. Key elements include vocational pathway guidance, collaboration between support services and secondary schools, stakeholder involvement, and collaborative adaptation implementation during university entrance exams.

- University Entrance Exams: Adaptations for SEN students during entrance exams are determined with input from educational guidance departments and education administrations. These adaptations build on previous curriculum adjustments, ensuring fairness and accessibility.

- Welcome Process at the University: Before the start of the academic year, accommodations are made for physical accessibility and communication. Personal support, resource acquisition, academic support requests, and more are addressed.

- Support Services in the University: These services provide information, guidance, and advice on rights and resources. They collaborate with exam committees and process support requests. They offer advice on curriculum and assessment adaptations, provide individual tutoring, and promote inclusion through activities and awareness initiatives.

- Non-academic Tutoring Action Plan: Tutors offer support and guidance for the holistic development of students. They provide information, monitor academic progress, offer solutions, and facilitate transitions.

- Technical and Material Resources for Accessibility: These resources include an assistive products bank, virtual platforms, universal accessibility tools, and communication tools to ensure equitable education.

- Scholarships and Grants: Financial assistance is available for SEN students to facilitate their higher education journey.

- National and International Mobility: Universities offer resources for mobility, enhancing students' educational experience.
- Internship and Employability: Efforts are made to provide SEN students with opportunities for internships and enhance their employability prospects.

Involving family and ensuring effective coordination between administrative structures and services are essential for SEN student success. Overall, the guide aims to empower SEN students in their journey toward higher education, offering a roadmap for inclusivity and accessibility.

From secondary school and university to the employment sector

As the OECD (2022) states, the transition from education to the workforce is influenced by various factors, including the duration and quality of schooling, labour market conditions, economic environments, and cultural contexts. While some countries adhere to a traditional sequence where individuals complete their education before seeking employment, others have concurrent systems where education and employment occur simultaneously. Gender disparities in this transition are evident across different nations, with significant proportions of young women facing challenges in entering the labour force.

During periods of unfavourable labour market conditions, such as high unemployment rates, there is often an incentive for young people to prolong their education to acquire additional skills. This extended investment in education can serve as a strategic response to unemployment, contributing to future economic growth by aligning individuals with the skills demanded by the labour market. Moreover, providing support to employers through incentives to hire young people can facilitate smoother transitions from education to employment.

The absence of employment can have enduring consequences, particularly for individuals experiencing prolonged periods of unemployment or inactivity, leading to discouragement. Notably, young people not in employment, education, or training are a significant policy concern due to the negative impact on their labour market prospects and long-term social outcomes. For this reason, it is considered important to identify social and economic inequalities that sometimes are overlooked. Some of the policies or incentives that are carried out prioritise the need of employers over the well-being of the workers. Advocating for policies that prioritise equitable access to education and employment opportunities may address structural barriers. By embracing a more inclusive and socially conscious approach, we can create a fairer and more resilient economy that benefits everyone, not just some privileged ones.

An example of creating inclusive social economy business, as it is stated in GUREAK (2024): "GUREAK is a Basque group of companies which generate and manage steady work opportunities, suitably adapted, for persons with disabilities, with priority for people with intellectual disability in Gipuzkoa. It is a diversified group, mainly active in the industry,

services, and marketing domains". Throughout their commitment to social responsibility and inclusive practices, they strive to make a positive impact on both the economy and society.

→ *From mainstream school to special settings and vice versa*

Parents and educators should consider several parameters when planning such transitions, including:

● Individualised support to the specific needs and abilities of the child. This support might involve specialised teaching methods, individual education plans, emotional support, such as therapy, or counselling.

● Open, consistent, and constructive communication between parents, teachers, and the child is crucial. Regular meetings and updates can help address concerns and adapt the transition plan as needed with support from a transition support team.

Strategies should be in place to facilitate the child's social interactions. This may involve:

● peer support
● social skills training
● extracurricular activities.

Modifications and reasonable adjustments (Equality Act, 2010) may be necessary in mainstream or specialised settings to ensure that the curriculum is appropriate and aligned with the child's abilities and learning style.

The research that is currently being presented is situated within the research project 'Promoting a Culture of Participation in order to make both the Community and School for all.' It was carried out by the Zehar and Hazitegi research groups from Mondragon Unibertsitatea between the years 2020 and 2022. The aim was to encourage everyone in the centre to get involved and collaborate as a community. This also involved empowering children and young people to participate more actively in making decisions about the future and the community, creating a stronger sense of togetherness, and ensuring that nobody was feeling excluded. To help students move smoothly from one school level to another (from Infant Education to Primary Education; from Primary Education to Secondary education and between the three cycles of Primary Education), we looked closely at these transitions. We did this by talking to students (through participatory and engaging techniques), families (through questionnaires), and teachers (through semi-structured interviews), to understand what problems they face and how things can be made better. It was discovered that making an action plan for these changes could help reduce worries, adjust expectations, improve relationships between new students and teachers, give helpful guidance and information for families, and ensure good coordination throughout phases. Voluntary teachers, families, and researchers created a transition plan considering all children, family, and teachers' ideas. After the plan was put into action, the evaluation was

made again asking all children, their parents and their teachers about the actions that were carried out, their experiences, suggestions, and areas that needed improvement.

On the other hand, the Armenian study report (Bridge of Hope, 2015) examines the country's educational transition difficulties and potential practices from the viewpoints of teachers, parents, children and young people, specialised personnel, and other important stakeholders. It examines learners as they go from kindergarten through primary school, then to secondary and higher/vocational school, as well as additional learning options and jobs. It emphasised the crucial support needed for children, particularly those with disabilities and suggested strategies like:

● Appointing transition staff or 'liaison workers' in both the 'old' and 'new' schools to facilitate information exchange and ease the transition process.

● Identifying emotional, behavioural, developmental, or academic challenges by existing staff and conveying this information through an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or relevant documents.

● Completing and sharing IEPs before the transition.

● Organising meetings between upcoming students with disabilities, their guardians, and teachers who will be involved, potentially including home visits.

● Recommending trial/transition days for students to visit the new school, along with friends and family, for getting acquainted with the environment. Acknowledging the necessity for staff training, especially when the new school's staff requires support for specific identified issues.

Although various strategies and examples are provided for different and specific transition stages, given that transitions are continuous and are an ongoing process, it is believed that all strategies can be applied to each of the transitions, tailoring them to each specific one.

General approaches to facilitate educational transitions

It is important to explore various approaches that support transitions for children and young people across different age groups and stages. Bridging programs can be valuable in assisting students, young learners, and individuals as they navigate significant milestones in their educational journey or broader life experiences. However, when considering these programs and approaches, it is crucial to acknowledge and address the systemic barriers that may impede successful transitions, particularly for those at risk of marginalisation.

When examining individuals in transition, such as young children transitioning from early years to primary education or from home to early years settings, it is essential to adopt a holistic perspective. This entails considering socio-emotional interventions, academic support, effective utilisation of community resources, and multidisciplinary collaboration (Fabian & Dunlop, 2007; Pianta, Cox & Snow, 2007). For example, when working with

individuals, it is vital for teachers and educators to establish meaningful connections with relevant stakeholders, ask pertinent questions, and ensure the inclusion of diverse voices.

The concept of "voice" is particularly significant, recognising that very young children may not express themselves in conventional ways, but their needs are valid and must be attended to. Involving families and being mindful of linguistic, social, cultural, and heritage factors is crucial in promoting inclusive practices that involve co-production. Furthermore, in contexts where individuals may experience oppression or marginalisation, employing a relational pedagogy approach is vital (Doane, Hartrick-Doane & Varcoe, 2020; Woodrow & Staples, 2019). This involves equipping teachers and educators with the necessary tools to establish meaningful relationships, which in turn facilitate active listening, genuine co-production, and purposeful planning. These are inclusive practices that empower individuals who may otherwise be marginalised or oppressed.

Student and family voice

Understanding that participation is a key element in terms of inclusion, it is essential to place the voices of children and their families at the centre of the school community. Especially, during transition processes, listening, understanding, and taking into account their experiences, perspectives and identified improvement aspects will be crucial in order to design appropriate contexts for them.

Children and young people are active participants in their educational journeys. By incorporating the child's voice and perspective, the transition process becomes more child-centred. A method that acknowledges that children have unique and diverse ways of expressing their perspectives and experiences is the Mosaic approach. It is aptly described as "a mosaic- an image made up of many small pieces, which need to be brought together in order to make sense of the whole." Essentially, the Mosaic approach provides young children with various avenues to express their viewpoints, allowing them to communicate their thoughts using what has been aptly referred to as their "hundred languages" (Clark & Moss, 2005).

This approach aligns seamlessly with the concept of a "pedagogy of listening." A pedagogy of listening emphasises the importance of actively listening to children's thoughts and perspectives. It treats knowledge as something that is constructed, and provisional. In other words, it recognises that knowledge is not merely the transmission of a fixed body of information from adults to children but rather a dynamic and context-dependent process (Paliokosta and Kindness, 2011).

A key aspect of this pedagogy of listening is that it respects the individuality and uniqueness of each child's perspective. It does not seek to make all children the same or impose a uniform set of ideas. Instead, it recognises the diversity of experiences and viewpoints that children bring to the table. It is a way of understanding and valuing the individual voices and perspectives of children, acknowledging that these voices contribute

to the rich tapestry of experiences and knowledge. This approach not only ensures that the child's views are considered but also empowers the child to take an active role in their own transition (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005). The use of the Mosaic approach (Clark & Moss, 2005; Dahlberg & Moss, 2005) and a pedagogy of listening can significantly enhance effective educational transitions for children, young people and their families in the following ways:

● Understanding Individual Needs (Ade, A. R., and Da Ros-Voseles, 2010): The Mosaic approach, with its emphasis on valuing each child's unique perspective, allows educators and professionals to gain a deeper understanding of the individual needs, preferences, and strengths of each child. This insight is invaluable during transitions because it helps them tailor the transition process to the specific requirements of each child.

● Emphasising Continuity: Effective transitions often involve creating a sense of continuity and familiarity for children as they move from one setting to another. The pedagogy of listening ensures that the child's voice is heard and respected throughout the transition process. This continuity can reduce anxiety and provide a sense of security during the transition.

● Reducing Anxiety and Resistance: By actively involving children and their families in the transition process, potential anxiety and resistance associated with change can be reduced. When children feel that their voices are heard and their concerns are addressed, they are more likely to approach transitions with a positive and open mindset.

● Building Positive Relationships: Effective transitions are often facilitated by strong relationships between educators, professionals, and families. The pedagogy of listening promotes open and respectful communication. It encourages them to listen to parents' and children's concerns, ideas, and expectations. This collaborative approach builds trust and fosters positive relationships, which are essential for successful transitions (Clark & Moss, 2005).

● Supporting Special Needs and Disabilities: For children with special educational needs or disabilities, understanding their unique perspectives and needs is even more critical during transitions. The Mosaic approach allows educators to create targeted and individualised plans for such children, ensuring that they receive the necessary support and accommodations as they move into new educational settings.

● Ensuring Smooth Information Flow: The pedagogy of listening encourages a culture of open communication and information sharing among all stakeholders. This is crucial during transitions because it ensures that relevant information about the child's needs, preferences, and progress is effectively transferred between settings, preventing disruptions in the child's education.

The term student voice that is used above can also be illustrated through Hart´s (1992) ladder of participation that illustrates the different ways in which children and young people can participate.

Figure 1: Ladder of Participation

Degrees of Participation

Non-participation

8.
Child-initiated,
shared decisions
with adults

Children have the ideas, set up the project, and invite adults to join with them in making decisions.

Children have the initial idea and decide how the project is to be carried out. Adults are available but do not take charge.

7.
Child-initiated
and direcled

6.
Adult-initiated,
shared decisions
with children

Adults have the initial idea but children are involved in every step of the planning and implementation. Not only are their views considered, but they are also involved in taking the decisions.

The project is designed and run by adults but children are consulted. They have a full understanding of the process and their opinions are taken seriously.

5.
Consulted and
informed

4.
Assigned but
informed

Adults decide on the project and children volunteer for it. The children understand the project, and know who decided they should be involved and why. Adults respect their views.

Children are asked to say what they think about an issue but have little or no choice about the way they express those views or the scope of the ideas they can express.

3.
Tokenism

2.
Decoration

Children take part in an event, e.g. by singing, dancing or wearing T-shirts with logos on, but they do not really understand the issues.

Children do or say what adults suggest they do, but have no real understanding of the issues, OR children are asked what they think, adults use some of their ideas but do not tell them what influence they have had on the final decision.

1. Manipulation

Source: Hart (1992)

This view and participation can be ensured verbally and non-verbally as it recognises that not all individuals may express themselves in conventional ways. Nevertheless, all needs are valid and must be attended to. Various methods, such as visual representations in Social Stories (Gray & Garand, 1993) or alternative and augmentative means of communication for transition plans, can be used to understand and incorporate individuals' needs, desires, and aspirations during transitions. Moreover, to ensure the participation of both primary and secondary students in academic and social experiences, various participatory techniques are illustrated by Messiou (2012). These techniques can be effective in encouraging conversation with children.

The importance of acknowledging the student voice has been supported by practitioners, academics, and policy documents. Moreover, over the last decades it has gained attention due to the UN convention on the rights of Children (1989). The convention is the basis of the most complete statement of children's rights ever produced and is the most widely ratified international human rights treaty in history. As it is highlighted in this convention, every child has rights "without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status" (Article 2). All this work reinforces the rights of children to be heard and taken into account through Articles 12 and 13, which is a fundamental part of a child's transition journey.

Addressing transition challenges requires deploying strategies that consider the intersecting nature of various factors. Parental involvement also emerges as a key element in many interventions and should be integrated as an integral part of the process. Although international terminology may differ, the underlying principle remains the same: valuing the voices of individuals, embracing involvement, and promoting meaningful co-production, even for those who may be nonverbal (Egert et al., 2020). Involving families and being mindful of linguistic, social, cultural, and heritage factors is crucial in promoting inclusive practices that involve co-production.

- **Person-Centred Planning (Link)**

For all young people the transition from childhood to adulthood involves consolidating identity, becoming more independent, establishing adult relationships, and living a fulfilled life which may include employment, further education, or any other aspiration that an individual may have. However, for young disabled people and their families, transition can often become more challenging, as a result of disability, than for others.

Person-Centred Planning is a process of "continual listening, and learning, focussed on the person." Planning can support educational transition. For example, as a result of this process of removing barriers, focusing first on the dream and working back from a positive and possible future a Person-Centred Plan can help. Although there are different types of Person-Centred Planning a path is the most commonly used method when working with young people. A Person-Centred Planning path is a way of mapping out the actions required

along the way. It is also very good for refocusing an existing team who perhaps support a young disabled person or a young person from another marginalised group who are encountering problems or feeling stuck, and mapping out a change in direction. With this in mind O'Brien (1998) describes the Person-Centred path process as one that "celebrates, relies on, and finds its sober hope in people's interdependence" (O'Brien, 1998: 10). O'Brien continues by stating that "at its core, it is a vehicle for people to make worthwhile, and sometimes life changing, promises to one another" (O'Brien, 1998: 10).

It may be the case that an individual's Person-Centred Planning journey highlights that they may not be able to achieve every part of their dream. However, even if this is the case, the Person-Centred Planning process explores ways in which the individual's dream can be broken down to identify which aspects can be achieved.

An example which is often given in Person-Centred Planning training is if a young person had the aspiration of becoming an Airline Pilot. If this is not a realistic dream that can be achieved, then the Person-Centred Planning process can help to explore what it is about being a pilot that appeals to the young person. In exploring this further it might highlight that the person potentially associates the idea of being a pilot with wearing a uniform and helping people. Therefore, a positive outcome for the young person might not end up with them becoming a pilot but instead still working in the airport in a role that requires them to wear a uniform and to help people.

Person-Centred Planning also allows for questions to be asked in different ways, for example, "what is important to you and for you?" are often asked as the one question, when in reality they are two very different questions. Person-Centred Planning tools developed by Helen Sanderson can also be used to aid this process such as one-page profiles. These tools assist in gathering different perceptions of the individuals (Sanderson, 2023).

- • – **Self-determination in Person-Centred Planning (Link)**

Self-determination in Person-Centred Planning regularly goes hand-in-hand as often when an individual begins the Person-Centred Planning journey it becomes apparent that they have lost their identity and with it their self-determination. This could be due to external factors such as, but not exclusive to, a negative experience in education or negative interactions with their peers (Legault, 2017)

The Self-Determination theory (SDT) is "a broad theory of human personality and motivation concerned with how the individual interacts with and depends on the social environment" (Legault, 2017: 1). It is thought of as a metatheory in the sense that it is made up of several "mini-theories" which fuse together to offer a comprehensive understanding of human motivation and functioning. SDT is based on the fundamental humanistic assumption that individuals naturally and actively orient themselves toward growth and self-organisation. In other words, people strive to expand and understand themselves by

integrating new experiences; by cultivating their needs, desires, and interests; and by connecting with others and the outside world (Legault, 2017).

However, SDT also asserts that this natural growth tendency should not be assumed, and that people can become controlled, fragmented, and alienated if their basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are undermined by a deficient social environment (Legault, 2017). Considering this theory, self-determination works on the basis of individuals being continuously involved in social interaction that gives them purpose and is part of them leading a fulfilled life.

Relating this notion back to Person-Centred Planning and educational transitions, it could be argued that one of the reasons Person-Centred Planning exists is because the reality is that individuals from marginalised groups are often not involved with continuous social interaction and being connected with others in the outside world. The reality is that for a lot of people who are regarded to be in marginalised groups of society, Person-Centred Planning aims to change that by removing the barriers that being marginalised often brings, enabling the person to dream big and as a result of doing so often this means that the individual slowly gains their self-determination back. By doing so Person-Centred Planning can help individuals aspire to be all they can be. This in turn should be apparent in their educational transition.

There are various tools that can be used prior and in the early stages of Person-Centred Planning. These various tools are aimed at enabling the individual at the heart of the plan and those closest to them to think differently about their dreams and aspirations, who they have around them, how they build on that, what needs to change and many other factors. One of the tools that is often used to support an individual in thinking about who they have around to support them is a Circle of Support (see Figure 1). This tool enables people to start making connections and perhaps realise what connections they already have but had perhaps overlooked. Connections are important for everyone regardless of ability. One viewpoint of this importance is "When we seek for connection, we restore the world to wholeness. Our seemingly separate lives become meaningful."

- What does transition mean?
- What are the key aspects of successful transitions?
- How and why do educational transitions impact all aspects of our lives?
- Why are educational transitions important in order to address inclusion?
- Are there particular groups at risk of ineffective transitions?
- What are the barriers to successful educational transitions?
- How can school structures and practical activities tackle systemic inequalities?
- Are there theories that can explain the barriers to successful educational transitions?
- What might be some factors that would support teachers and educators in not being overwhelmed by this process?
- How does Person-Centred Planning, self-determination, and co-production relate to

school transition?
- What are practical ways to support effective educational transitions?

"Transitions are generally linked to changes in a person's appearance, activity, status, roles and relationships, as well as associated changes in the use of physical and social space, and/or changing contact with cultural beliefs, discourses and practices, especially where these are linked to changes of setting and in some cases dominant language. They often involve significant psychosocial and cultural adjustments with cognitive, social and emotional dimensions, depending on the nature and causes of the transition, the vulnerability or resilience of those affected and the degrees of change and continuity of experiences involved" (Vogler et al., 2008: 1).

Considering this definition as a starting point, it is acknowledged that transition processes have been studied in various disciplines, namely, anthropology, psychology, sociology, and education.

Nevertheless, in education, many authors have analysed educational transitions from different perspectives. Transition concepts are frequently used in specific ways, such as in terms of vertical and horizontal 'passages' (Kagan & Neuman, 1998). Vertical transitions refer to significant changes from one state or status to another and are frequently associated with 'upward' shifts such as from kindergarten to primary school, from primary to secondary and even, from one grade to another one. Horizontal transitions are less visible than vertical transitions and occur frequently. They refer to the everyday moves that children (or any person) make between different parts of their lives, such as going from home to school or from one care setting to another. These influence children's movement across space and time, as well as their entry and exit from institutions that affect their well-being (Vogler et al., 2008).

There was a time when it was thought that the child had to be ready to make the transition. This meant they had to gain some knowledge and skills before moving to the next level of education. The characteristics of child readiness were introduced by Piaget's theory of development (1936). Levels of cognitive development, maturity, and growth were used to determine what the child had learned. Later, research revealed that a kid's abilities were greatly underestimated, as they were not measured in different ways. This weakened his hypothesis in several ways. However, numerous teachers and educators still employ his idea to acquire a greater understanding of their students' cognition. This understanding of **child readiness** can be experienced as a barrier to ensuring successful transitions from an inclusive perspective, as each child and individual will have a unique developmental and learning process. Indeed, the context, which can be adjusted to better accommodate all children and situations, underscores the importance of discussing school and community readiness (Dockett & Perry, 2022).

Without change, there is no need for transition. This is why, during the transition processes, external and internal changes are experienced (Dockett & Perry, 2014). External

refers to context-related changes. These may be new people, peers and teachers, new ways of interacting, the types of activities they are engaged in and new physical surroundings. Nevertheless, these contextual changes also bring internal changes that refer to new roles, responsibilities, and identities to the individual that is experiencing the transition. Major life events can cause us to reconsider who we are and where we fit in the world. In this regard, transitions may be seen as an opportunity for growth, to build new relationships, develop skills and not as something negative. However, appropriate and supportive contexts must be created to enable such opportunities. They can be interesting processes for personal growth, building new relationships and developing skills, but as it was mentioned before, it will be crucial to build appropriate context and provide support to ensure positive transition experiences, as negative ones, can have a negative impact on social, emotional, and academic spheres.

In this regard, the terms continuity and discontinuity are key concepts in relation to change and transition. Continuity has become a major focus for transition policy, with calls to promote continuity and reduce discontinuity, advocate for strategies that encourage children's learning to continue, promoting lessons and experiences that build on what has come before (Dockett & Perry, 2022) and to avoid a dip in academic attainment (Jindal-Snape & Cantali, 2019).

Even if transitions can be understood as an ongoing process throughout our lives this chapter will focus on the vertical transitions as we have considered that these are key in every individual academic career. The importance of the horizontal transitions in each of them, although not specified, is recognised, and will be addressed in more detail in a separate chapter.

Description of a structural disadvantage

In the education system, a risk of exclusion is directly related to the transition from one academic year to another, because educational transitions represent a critical phase for many learners, especially for those who receive specific support, such as those with Special Educational Needs (SEN). Through the lens of inclusion, transitions represent sensitive phases in the school career in which more vulnerable groups of students seem to experience a higher risk of **marginalisation** (Humphrey & Ainscow, 2006), losing opportunities for participation and learning they experience in the passage from one school grade to the next.

By understanding that it is the context that creates these systemic barriers for learning and participation it is crucial to recognise they can lead to these unsuccessful transitions within the educational sector. Such barriers stem from inequalities in educational opportunities, such as limited access to inclusive classrooms depending on locality, lack of individualised support through education plans, and appropriate accommodations. International and local laws in various countries often mandate the provision of these

supports to ensure that individuals are included within their school environments and not just physically integrated (Lindsay, Wedell & Dockrell, 2020). These systemic factors significantly impact the smooth transition of individuals within educational settings, and it is important to address these factors understanding that every person has unique needs and approaches to learning. This necessitates a focus on equal opportunities and equity, prompting the need for changes and the development of provisions that enable individuals to access their entitlements.

For instance, a lack of appropriate curriculum and reasonable adjustments in primary schools can make the transition to secondary school challenging (Equality Act, 2010; 2014). Failure to identify and address individuals' needs, such as communication difficulties, early on can result in an unfulfilling educational experience and subsequent identification of emotional and behavioural difficulties during the transition to secondary education (Evangelou et al., 2003; Mandy et al., 2016). Limited support networks and lack of relationships with educators, families, other professionals and facilitators further compound these challenges (Coffey, 2013; McLeod, 2023). Thus, the establishment of multidisciplinary networks and support systems is essential in facilitating successful transitions. Teachers and educators cannot be expected to navigate these moments alone, as it is a systemic issue that requires sustainable practices to support both learners and stakeholders. In some contexts, access to expert input and use of technology is vital to ensure the creation of an inclusive learning experience. This involves enabling teachers and educators to implement augmentative support software, screen readers, and communication devices, promoting accessibility for children with diverse needs (Hersh, 2020). Additionally, equal distribution of services within geographical spaces and readiness of families to enter the educational system, including those from rural areas, must be taken into consideration. On the other hand, in some cases, the choice for the appropriate school placement is not always available. For example, some research data revealed that the way certain school systems operate undermine a variety of possibilities for young learners. For instance, the transition from lower to upper secondary school in Italy is connected with the first differentiation in different types of schools, some of them with a more academic-orientation and others with a more vocational orientation. The choice of the type of school at that stage can be a decisive moment in which more vulnerable groups experience marginalisation, in the sense that they enrol to a school which leads to underachievement or that reduces their expectation early on in their school career (Barban & White, 2011; Romito, 2014).

Discrimination, bias, and a lack of inclusive culture and understanding of diversity contribute to exclusionary practices and limit resource allocation. Unconscious biases, combined with limited resources, can lead to discriminatory practices that exclude individuals from meaningful educational experiences and transitions (Council for Disabled Children, 2015). It is important to challenge assumptions about learners' needs, the purpose of schooling and prior experiences to foster inclusivity. These considerations extend

beyond early years (Connolly & Gersch, 2016; Fontil et al., 2020) and primary education and apply to transitions from secondary education to higher education as mentioned above. Unconscious biases and inequalities related to financial status or opportunities continue to impact how decisions are made and how students' work is assessed, as well as decisions about their future.

For example, difficulties in transition can occur due to different backgrounds. An Italian study about immigrant children's transition to upper secondary school has shown that the final evaluations attributed by teachers to students at the end of lower secondary school were predictors of secondary school choice: the enrolment in gymnasium rather than in technical or vocational institute depended on the previous outcome (parental education level of education influenced the choice of school not of previous achievements). Immigrants had a significantly lower probability of enrolling in technical institutes and gymnasium compared with natives and second-generation students. Two possible explanations could be that 1) immigrants and their families had different ideas in terms of investing in education and 2) the choice of a type of upper secondary school was affected by poor and potentially biased counselling received by teachers during the last year of lower secondary school, who suggested the enrolment in a vocational or technical institute even if they had the same results as natives (Barban & White, 2011). Furthermore, another study conducted in two lower secondary schools in Milan has shown that teachers tend to suggest to the family with a low socio-cultural status a lower level for upper secondary school, justifying their reflections with the social background and students' life conditions. In the frequent cases where students' outcomes were not clearly located on one level, but between two levels, teachers' discussions focused on the cultural and economic resources of the families and not about peoples' skills (Romito, 2014). Some statistical data from Italian educational institutions clearly showed that pupils with lower results at lower secondary schools and disabled learners were over-represented in some types of job-oriented schools. For instance, data about disabled students showed a preference towards vocational institutes (6.9%) than technical institutes (2.3%) and gymnasium (1.4%). This means that the majority of them attend a vocational institute (47.2%), instead of a technical institute (32.7%) or a gymnasium (24.9%), even if at the end of the lower secondary school they can choose whatever type of upper secondary school (MI, 2020).

Campus readiness, including physical, emotional, and social accessibility, is crucial for individuals with intersectional needs who require accommodations and support to navigate the system. Higher education has a noticeable lack of representation for disabled students in this setting who tend to experience less favourable outcomes compared to their non-disabled peers. Disabled students are more prone to discontinuing their courses, and those who do complete their degrees often achieve lower academic results. For instance, in the 2016/17 academic year, a smaller percentage of disabled learners in the UK received a first or upper second-class degree compared to those without reported disabilities (Office for National Statistics: 2019). These disparities go beyond disability and to a wider area of

potentially marginalised groups; for example, the disparity in degree attainment between White UK-domiciled students and UK-domiciled ethnic minority (students at the first-degree level is commonly referred to as the 'ethnicity awarding gap.' This gap represents the difference in the percentage of White students receiving first or upper second-class degrees and the percentage of ethnic minority learners achieving degrees of the same calibre (UUK & NUS, 2019). Representation in learning experiences and curricula is vital for students to feel a sense of belonging and experience smoother transitions.

Employment transitions also pose challenges, as prospective employers may harbour negative judgments towards individuals who belong to marginalised groups (Bonaccio et al., 2022). Cultural and linguistic barriers further compound these challenges, particularly in diverse and turbulent times. These barriers can include ethnocentrism, stereotyping, psychological, language, geographical distance, and conflicting values. Bilingual learners' performance is influenced by their prior knowledge, and culturally sensitive questions should align with their familiarity with the subject matter. Culturally sensitive interaction and management strategies are crucial as cross-cultural transitions pose challenges, requiring individuals to learn new skills, resolve cultural tensions, and manage stress (Ward & Szabó, 2019). Children and their families from diverse backgrounds may face additional stressors, including normative and non-normative educational transitions, discrimination, financial vulnerability, and practical problems (Bradley, 2000; Hanassab, 2006; Lee & Rice, 2007; Li & Kaye, 1998; Lun et al., 2010; McGhie, 2017; Sawir et al., 2008; Sawir et al., 2012).

Considering these factors is essential throughout the educational journey, from early years to university and beyond.

We also need to think about when the transition journey should start. In Scotland there is often a debate around what age transition should be expected to begin, especially from secondary school.

Theoretical Frameworks and PPCT model (process, person, context, time)

Given the various systemic inequalities operating during transitions, teachers and educators may easily feel overwhelmed and think they have no control over external factors. These factors include government policies on inclusion or the treatment of underserved communities and populations at risk of marginalisation such as migrants, learners with diverse learning styles to give some examples. This could lead to disengagement and a belief that they cannot make a difference. Theoretical perspectives can help teachers and educators navigate this complexity, make sense of the factors involved, and maintain a sense of coherence. The process of educational transitions involves multiple theories and factors due to its complex nature.

In psychology, the ecological system (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) has been useful in understanding transitions and their significance for children. Children's development and learning are viewed in relation to factors and circumstances covering the micro to the

macro level in this model. This theory defines a transition as changes in activities, relationships, identities, and roles (Ballam et al., 2017). Bronfenbrenner stated that "an ecological transition occurs whenever a person's position in the ecological environment is altered as a result of a change in role, setting, or both" (1979: 26). This definition can be applied to educational transition as meaning that it describes the change experienced by individuals in the moment they enter or leave school or pass from one school grade into the next. It affects the learners' position in their ecological environment in the sense that by crossing social, academic, and procedural issues (Hargreaves, 1990) transition influences their psychological, social and intellectual wellbeing. In some cases, such transitions represent new possibilities, a time to grow academically, socially, and emotionally (Roeser, Eccles & Freedman-Doan, 1999). At the same time, the transition might be characterised by discontinuity in physical location, difficulties in relationships with teachers and alienation from peer groups (Ashton, 2008).

Whereas in sociology, one of the key concepts relating to transitions is considered Bourdieu's "social capital". The goal is to uncover the most deeply buried structures of different social worlds, as well as the mechanisms that tend to ensure either their reproduction or transformation over time (Bourdieu, 1973). Related to a bio-ecological framework, his work is particularly interesting in clarifying how events in the macro-system (societal and cultural norms that shape the development) and chrono-system (the role of the time affecting people's growth and change, including life and historical events) may impact individuals (O'Toole, 2014). This means that for example, some parents will have greater or less access to resources, opportunities, knowledge, and skills inside and outside their family to provide needed experiences to their children.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979) is a prominent one emphasising on the influence of various systems and stages on individuals during transitions. This is in line with the previous realisation that barriers or indeed facilitators to inclusive transitions which are systemic and intersectional (Fontil et al., 2020). Social constructivist theory highlights the importance of understanding learners within their sociocultural context (Bourdieu, 1973), emphasising the role of cultural responsiveness in creating successful transitions (Vogler et al., 2008). Limited social interactions and collaboration opportunities can hinder learners' understanding and adjustment during transitions. Creating a supportive and collaborative classroom environment that encourages peer interactions and scaffolding (Morcom, 2016) can help mitigate this barrier.

When considering educational transitions, it is essential to acknowledge other diverse theories at play. For instance, trauma response theory could also be considered, especially when learners have experienced difficult or traumatic situations that impact their journey (Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities, 2023). Taking these factors into account allows teachers and educators to create appropriate accommodations that support students effectively. Implementing trauma-informed practices, such as creating

safe and predictable environments and establishing trusting relationships, can support their adjustment and well-being during transitions.

Notwithstanding the above, in this chapter we are drawing heavily on Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory with cultural responsiveness theory. By understanding the multiple systems that shape a person's development, such as the microsystem (including individual needs and family), the mesosystem (interactions between different environments), the exosystem (indirect influences through discourses and language), and the macrosystem (cultural and societal influences), we can provide a comprehensive approach to educational transitions.

Cultural and social factors, including limited representation of students' cultural identities, can affect their sense of belonging and engagement. Culturally responsive teaching practices can address these factors and facilitate successful transitions.

By incorporating a sociocultural perspective and cultural responsiveness, we ensure that peoples' cultural backgrounds, experiences, and identities are valued and integrated into the transition process (Lam, 2014). Recognising the impact of various interventions and connecting the different systems through relational pedagogy fosters a supportive and inclusive environment for individuals during transitions and throughout their educational journey.

Some practical strategies and insights to navigate the complexities of educational transitions will be provided below to equip teachers and educators to better support learners in their transition experiences, fostering their holistic development and creating a positive and inclusive educational environment.

Particularly in the context of Bronfenbrenner's work, his framework on process, person, context, and time in facilitating positive transitions, is mostly found in his later work (Hayes, O'Toole & Halpenny, 2023). The most crucial aspect emphasised by Bronfenbrenner is the process, particularly the relationships involved. Strong relationships between stakeholders, students, and families are vital for successful transitions. The care, empathy, and understanding shown by adults towards children significantly impact their development. While various strategies and approaches exist, it is essential to remember that relationships underpin them all. Kindness and genuine concern for the well-being of learners creates a positive environment for successful transitions. Then, the person element recognises how factors like culture, disability, and socioeconomics can affect the transition experience (Aikens and Barbarin, 2008). For example, an autistic child starting in a new environment may find it particularly challenging (Stoner et al., 2007). Language differences between home and school can also complicate transitions. However, what is significant about Bronfenbrenner's work is that he does not solely attribute responsibility for support to the individual; it also lies within the context.

Considering the context is crucial. Building links between different systems, such as ensuring consistent support for an autistic child or embracing the linguistic and cultural diversity of students, can facilitate smoother transitions. It is important to create an

environment where individuals feel visible and represented, with resources and materials that reflect their identities and experiences. According to a key worker approach the same person should be meeting them at the door. Is this happening? Or in a primary setting, are linkages formed for the child who comes into an educational session with a different language than the one that is spoken and knows what to expect? Is this seen in a deficit way, that she does not speak English, for example, or is it seen in a far more culturally attuned way? Maybe the child does not speak English, but they do speak Russian and Romanian and other languages. Does the child see themselves when they come to the educational setting if they are visible? Are there dolls who look like them in the early childhood setting? Are there books in the primary setting or the secondary setting that talk about people who are like me and my family? Arguably, context is hugely important. Do we create linkages for people in their transition? Or do our structures erect disjuncture and difficulties for people to make those transitions?

Time is another factor to consider, and that can be your personal time, or it can be the more social historical piece. Personal time, such as a pupil's developmental stage, can influence the ease of transition. Younger children, for example, may find it harder to transition to primary school. Social-historical factors, such as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education, also play a role. Recognising the timing and adapting accordingly can help mitigate difficulties.

Continuity in relationships and strategies is important across educational stages, from early years to primary, secondary, and higher education. Using data-informed materials and providing early tutor support can be beneficial, especially for marginalised groups. Establishing and nurturing relationships can help address oppression and cater to individual needs, as advocated by Paulo Freire (1993).

Lastly, recognising that children do not exist in isolation but within families, communities, and cultures is crucial. Educational settings need to value and prioritise these wider relationships. Inclusive strategies for building connections with families should focus on fostering positive encounters rather than relying on specific methods or tools, it is important to someone now, and for the future. "It is not simply a collection of new techniques for planning to replace individual Programme Planning" (van Dam et al., 2008: 3). It is based on a completely different way of seeing and working. The journey of Person-Centred Planning is fundamentally about sharing power and community inclusion.

Key transition moments

As mentioned above, in this chapter we will focus on the following vertical transitions: from home to early childhood education; from early childhood education to primary education; from primary education to secondary education: from secondary education to further and higher education; from secondary school and university to the employment sector; and from mainstream school to special settings and vice versa.

➜ *From home to early childhood education*

This is a key transition because it is the separation of the children from their families. According to Bowlby's attachment theory (1969), which is supported by Peter Elfer's key person approach, cooperation between families and carers or educators is required to ensure secure contexts and facilitate settling (Elfer et al., 2012). Attachment theory supports the value of strong attachment/bond with a primary caregiver and later with the educators who care for them; this is critical to a child's transition and the need to feel secure in order to explore, learn and engage with their surroundings. Ensuring the individual needs of each child are responded to and that the child is supported in establishing a positive relationship with themselves should be prioritised. When children form a strong bond with educators, they are much more likely to feel safe, confident, included, and happy. Many scholars agree that adaptation is a process with a variable duration. It concludes when a child effectively copes with the separation from their primary attachment figures, which may include their mother, father, or grandparents. During this process, the child also takes on their new role as an early childhood student and becomes accustomed to their new physical, emotional, educational, and school environments (Fernández, 2016).

➜ *From early childhood education to primary school*

This change comes at a crucial juncture as it may contribute to future transitions and the child's socio-emotional development. It is a moment in which the discontinuity process is experienced because of various circumstances of personal, social, and academic growth. Children and their families experience feelings of loss of familiarity, concern, nervousness, or uncertainty related to new requirements as a primary student and their new role, not only for children but also for parents. However, it also represents personal, social, and academic stimulation (Niesel & Griebel, 2007). This is related to the differences between the two stages and the volume of changes that are faced in terms of discontinuities in new reference teachers, unfamiliar spaces, different time distribution and new teaching-learning approaches. A positive experience at this stage may affect their ability to reach their full potential and deal with future transitions (OECD, 2017a). In primary education, the learning process begins to be considered as a formal activity. There is evidence that a positive start to school is important for later social and educational outcomes (Davies & Troy, 2020). Children who start positively, may be better prepared to take advantage of the educational opportunities that come their way and develop successful friendships and social networks. In contrast, children who experience academic and social difficulties at the beginning of school are likely to continue to struggle throughout their school careers, and frequently into adulthood (Demirtaş-Zorbaz & Ergene, 2019).

➜ *From primary to secondary education*

According to research, for many pupils, the transition from primary to secondary education is an overwhelming process that requires adequate support (Bloyce & Frederickson, 2012). Adolescents, because of puberty, go through a variety of physical and emotional changes and challenges during this stage. Making the transition for many pupils involves not only adjusting to a new and larger physical environment, but also adapting to different school expectations, new ways of thinking, different teachers, learning in a variety of subject areas, and interacting with a larger number of peers. The ability of a learner to cope with these changes has a significant impact on how they feel about school and progress through secondary education (Hopwood et al., 2016). This can bring the emergence of anxiety processes affecting their self-esteem and academic motivation (Jindal-Snape et al., 2023).

➜ *From secondary education to further and higher education*

All educational transitions are important because they are times of change and potential uncertainty but the transition to post-compulsory education has an added risk and value because it is the first time when learners may decide not to continue their studies. When it comes to promoting equity in education systems and equal opportunities for all students, educational transitions from compulsory to post-compulsory education are crucial points and key components (Egido & Martínez-Novillo, 2020). Moreover, they can present a challenging time for young people with emerging expectations and conflict in terms of perceived independence both at home and in education. This is also a period of exploration when young individuals are shaping their identities, developing personal values, and contemplating future aspirations, often requiring support and guidance (Morris & Atkinson, 2018).

Educational pathways have changed and become more diverse and plural because of recent social changes such as school year extension, lifestyle diversification, and increased labour market flexibility. This "de-standardisation" does not, however, imply that institutional patterns and cultural values do not shape what is perceived as normal in each context and influence students' decisions. In terms of the construction and perpetuation of inequalities, this stage may mark the setting out of various paths based on different social values, resulting in a variety of life experiences and opportunities (Tarabini & Ingram, 2018).

Most education systems continue to differentiate between an academic stream that prepares people for university admission and a vocational route designated for students' training for the labour market once compulsory schooling is completed. Research has shown that this institutional divergence is associated with a class bias since family socioeconomic background may determine the course selected after completing compulsory schooling (Santos, 2023).

Transitioning to university education is seen as a significant challenge for them, involving changes in environment, instructors, and systems. This shift is both anticipated and feared.

For learners, moving from having familiar academic accommodations to the uncertainty of their use in university can be daunting. Lack of knowledge about the new educational system and its resources adds to concerns. The absence of transition measures can lead to difficulties and even dropouts for disabled students. Proper guidance during this stage is crucial, acting as a bridge between secondary and university education. It helps people develop adaptability skills, ensuring a successful integration into university studies and preventing potential failures and dropouts (CERMI, 2020).

➜ *From secondary school and university to the employment sector*

Transitioning from school to work can be challenging and result in unemployment. Early school dropouts are considered to have an impact on lower skills and educational attainment, making them more difficult to employ than their peers who stayed in school longer. In OECD countries, most people leave school between the ages of 20 and 24, but 13% of 15 to 19-year-olds have already dropped out. To ensure successful entry into the labour market, individuals must complete at least upper secondary education. Staying in school not only improves educational attainment but also develops skills necessary for a smoother transition into the workforce. As a result, identifying and supporting students who are at risk of dropping out will be necessary (OECD, 2017b).

The transition from university to work can cause feelings of professional uncertainty and a lack of coping, both of which are important factors in the mental health of young professionals. 'Practise shock' is a term used to describe the gap between two areas of knowledge (Geirdal et al., 2019). Studies on the transition from university to work have addressed learner identity, student engagement, the fit between higher education and the labour market, motivation, emotions, and approaches to learning (Izzo et al., 2022). The above study shows that the issue is complex and there are no clear and easily applicable solutions from a business, policy, or societal perspective.

➜ *From mainstream school to special settings and vice versa*

In some countries, special schools still operate as part of the education continuum and there is an evolving role of special schools in the context of educational inclusion for children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) where the traditional role of special schools as providers of segregated education is being challenged, with an advocated shift towards a partnership with mainstream schools to offer inclusive education (Allan & Brown, 2001; Department for Education and Skills DfES, 2004; Fletcher-Campbell, 1994; Gibb et al., 2007).

In the context of this, children may experience transitions from:

- **Mainstream Class to Special Class or Special School:**

'A student who has been in a mainstream class transitions to a special class within a mainstream school or a separate special school.' Concerns may involve the child's ability to adapt to a more specialised environment, the impact on friendships, and the tailored support available. Parameters to consider are the specific needs that drove the transition, the suitability of the new setting in addressing those needs, and the continuity of support.

- **Special Class to Full-time Mainstream Class:**

'A student who has been attending a special class in a mainstream school moves into a full-time mainstream class.' Concerns may include the child's ability to adapt to a larger class size, the pace and complexity of mainstream curriculum, and their social inclusion.

Parameters to consider include the provision of additional support within the mainstream class, modifications to teaching methods, and strategies for fostering social interactions.

- Special School to Special Class in Mainstream School:

'Some students with special educational needs start in a special school and then move to a special class within a mainstream school.' Concerns may revolve around the child's adjustment to a new, larger environment and interacting with a more diverse group of peers.

Parameters to consider include the level of support needed in the special class, alignment of the curriculum with the student's needs, and the transition's impact on the child's social development.

Each transition scenario above, and others that may not have been covered here, requires careful planning and consideration of the child's unique needs and circumstances. Parameters like individualised support, effective communication, and emotional well-being should be addressed to make the transition as successful as possible.

Ways of supporting key transition moments

In this section, we will describe various experiences of aforementioned vertical transitions, which will be presented in the following order again: from home to early childhood education; from early childhood education to primary education; from primary education to secondary education: from secondary education to further and higher education; from secondary school and university to the employment sector; and from mainstream school to special settings and vice versa.

- *From home to early childhood education*

As Febrer Bellostes and Jansà (2011) stated, the process of transition begins well before children actually start attending school. These are some of the key aspects that should be taken into account:

Explaining the next academic year School Plan: Educators plan in advance for the upcoming school year, often before the current year ends. Discussions with families and students take place during this planning phase to ensure a smooth transition. This includes the initial meeting with other families, during which the physical spaces and schedules of the school are established. "This meeting is critical for communicating the significance of the transition and we discover how truly necessary we are to each other" (Neill & Sanderson, 2012: 4).

- Co-production

Another useful approach is the so called "enabling co-design" (Curto & Marchisio, 2022) or simply co-design or co-production, where the purpose is to support individuals from marginalised groups and their families at an early stage in a life path with transitions without predictable and pre-selected options, but on the contrary, it allows people to live the life they would like, in a more complex and articulated way. This takes place as a right without conditions and by means of a global accompaniment of people in various aspects and transitions of their life, taking into account possible unforeseen events along the way, without something pre-established or rigidly predefined, but promoting empowerment for ensuring them the control of their existence with all the freedom of decision-making and the space to imagine their future (Barnes, 1990; Marchisio, 2019; Rappaport, 1977). In this way, there is no longer someone who directs and fits individuals into rigid and structured paths that others consider more suitable for them (Prinz, 2018). In fact, the educators' role changes radically from a care model, mainly based on reduced options and pre-packaged answers, offering instead a service in a dialogic process made up of different points of view, in which their opinion can represent only as a piece of advice or a suggestion, which is added to the other multiple possibilities in a common and shared decision-making process (Bianquin & Besio, 2021; Marchisio, 2019). The educator, rather than providing answers, has the task of asking questions to guide the process in support of their choices. Basically, there are two key questions: "Who decided this?" and "If it were me?" With the first, therefore, it is important to understand that choices are in individuals' hands, from the smallest to the most important, both in the short and long term. With the second question, on the other hand, it is possible to imagine a certain condition of life and to put oneself in the other's shoes when a decision needs to be made. Through co-design approach it is therefore possible to support individuals in their life project with different educational transitions, where they establish and build their aims in an articulated system of relationships, mapping

the network with and around them and their family, based on unpredictable situations and nonlinear paths (Marchisio, 2019).

- Circle of Support

If we refer back to the quote mentioned above, it indicates that we are all human and we all require support whether we are categorised as being from a marginalised group of society or not. Being human, we are all different, but in many ways, we are all the same. We are the same in that we all require connections and to feel that we have the support of others around us. In relation to **Circles of Support** illustrated in the diagram below, this method assists those from marginalised groups to identify who they have around them and how to build either on the Circle of Support they already have or to build a new one. Circles of Support are important in a child's transition because it helps them and those closest to them who they have around them. In doing this they can identify who is the best person to support the child at particular stages of transition and think about how to build on their circle of support.

Figure 2: Circle of Support
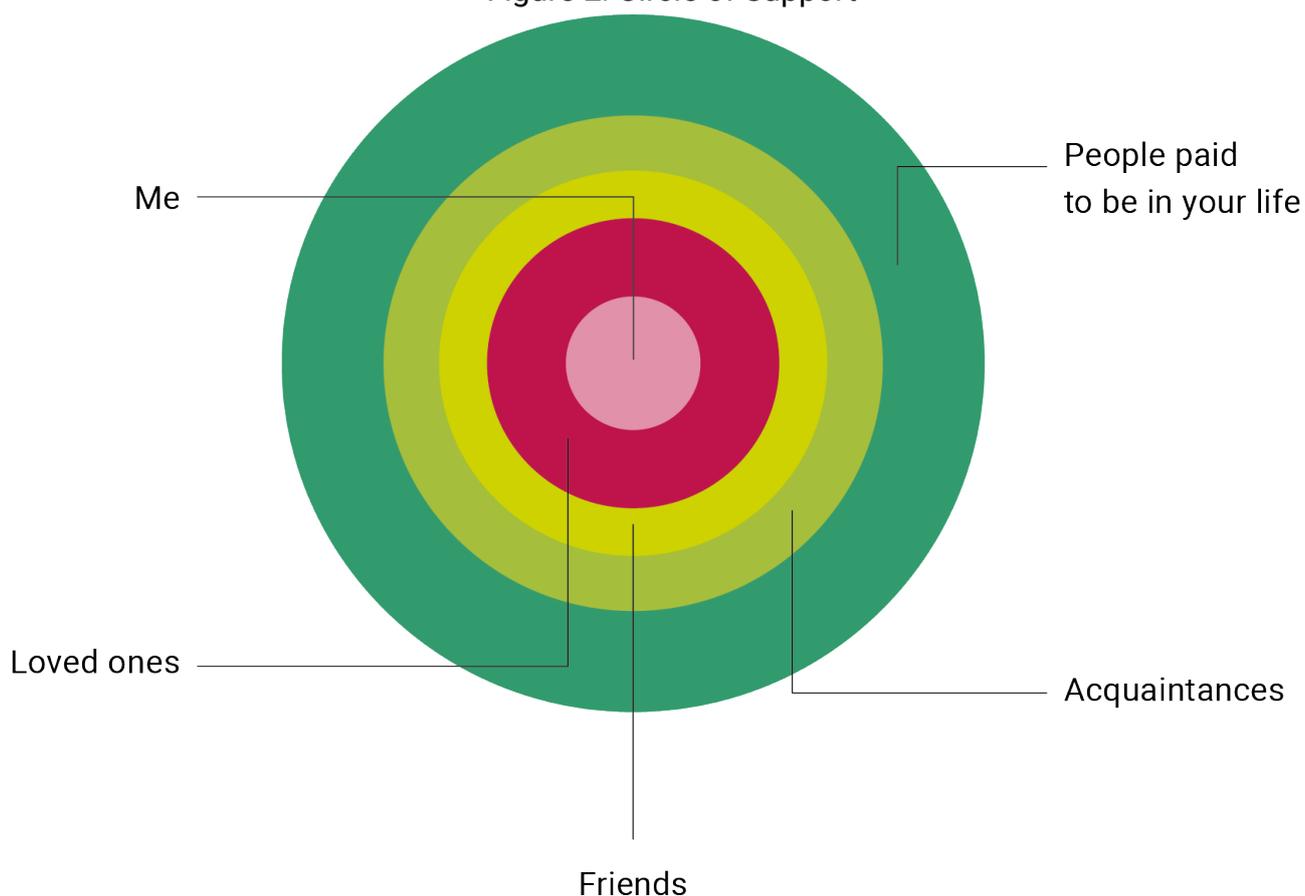
Source: Danielle Farrel based on Marsha Forest and Jack Pearpoint

The idea of a circle is both simple and ancient. It is the way that the first human beings decided everything about how they would live. A circle is simply a group of people who come together regularly with a common purpose, who think and talk together, then agree

and take actions that will further that purpose. It is based on humanity and human relationships, and on the way that a group of people working together can harness their mental and physical resources toward a common end. When a circle is built around a person who would otherwise tend to find themselves underestimated and excluded from society, the circle's focus can be turned onto challenging it's members to explore ways of enabling the person at its centre to reach their highest potential, to develop positive roles and relationships and to live the kind of life that makes most sense to them. It links the person up with others but also links everyone involved with each other. This is often the case when supporting individuals from marginalised groups to build a Circle of Support. Often people from those groups have dreams and aspirations as referred to earlier in the chapter, that without support would not be achieved or need to be reframed. Therefore, as a result of challenging the members of an individual's circle, it is opening up exploration of ways to assist the individual at the heart of it to achieve their dreams.

Most people build their own circles quite naturally and informally through their everyday lives. However, one issue that is common to many people who are from marginalised groups of society, is that they become socially isolated. Often people find that the only people consistently in their lives are close family or paid carers. This is indicated on the diagram provided and built upon through the suggested task at the end of this chapter.

When it is the case that an individual from a marginalised group is feeling isolated it becomes necessary to consciously build circles and connections with the person, because for some people connection does not occur easily or automatically.

Sometimes a circle can even begin with just the focus person and one other person making a commitment to work to build a Circle of Support around the person, however difficult that is, and however long it takes. This more 'intentional' work of building connections in order to overcome a person's social isolation is what is meant by a 'Circle of Support' (Neill & Sanderson, 2012).

Circles are very diverse. They must, by their nature, reflect much of the culture and values of the participants, who own the circle together. We do feel, however, that there are certain clear principles that are common among Circles of Support:

1. Purpose: Circles are drawn together by a common purpose and by motivations that are unique to each individual involved. Overall, the purpose of cultivating circles at scale is to build the capacity of our communities to include and welcome everyone.
2. People: People come to the circle to help build the life of the person and the strength of the community around them. Those closest to the person come because of their love or friendship for the person. Others come because they wish to create and expand community capacity. Some are invited because they can provide a useful service to the person or the circle, some are paid service providers.
3. Vision: Circles create a shared vision of the future based on what is learned about what is important to the person and who the person is. They find ways to move toward this

vision.

4. Capacity: Circles speak the language of capacity. They seek out their own capacities, the person's strengths and gifts, and the resources of the community and find ways to appreciate, value and use these gifts to the full.

5. Inclusion: Circles call to the values that lie deepest in our hearts and ask us to have the courage to express them. The circle is a space of respect and honesty. We keep working to earn the trust that enables this. Circles are a practical inclusion tool that expands the capacity of society to welcome and support all its members.

6. Listening: Everyone in the circle must have time to think, time to speak. The circle practices listening mindfully and with respect to create a soothing space where diverse opinions and knowledge can be shared.

7. Thinking: Circles create a thinking environment to think together about possibilities. Spending time together to think is far too rare in social care. When supporting a person's whole life, it is useful to spend a couple of hours thinking about its direction and quality.

8. Learning: The circle has a radical openness to learning; a preparedness to change anything and everything based on what is discovered during their interaction with the person and the world.

9. Power: The circle is founded with the aim of establishing 'power with' rather than 'power over.' An understanding of power and a sharing of roles and responsibilities helps us generate 'power to' and 'power within,' both in the circle and in the person at its focus (Neill & Sanderson, 2012).

In recent times Health and Social Care and the way services are designed and delivered have gone through lasting change in several areas of the world. Due to this, the potential for a reinvigoration of the idea of Circles of Support seems immense. Using the control over resources that personal budgets in health and social care offers to people, coupled with the practice of building a supportive network of allies around a person becomes a powerful mechanism for implementing change in that person's life, change in the way services interact with that person, and a fundamental change in the way communities receive and regard people who require long-term support. Circles are actually a deeply practical way of building social and community capital and of harnessing 'social productivity.' Circles of Support, coupled with personal budgets, have the potential to become powerful methods of delivering support for many more people, and not just disabled people, although this will require an investment of resources, commitment, and energy at many levels from the leadership of health and social care (Neill & Sanderson, 2012).

Local contexts

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=453#h5p-42

Closing questions to discuss or tasks

1. Think about your transitions' experience, could you reflect on key transitions important in your life, identifying main barriers and helpful strategies in these key moments?
2. Think about your students, could you reflect on key transitions important in their life?
3. Considering the Bronfenbrenner ecological system, can you apply this theory to broaden your understanding of relationships and how these can differ for marginalised groups?

Task for readers: Based on what you have learned about Circles of Support, draw your own Circle of Support and think about who you would have in each of the circles (loved ones, friends, acquaintances and people paid to be in your life). Once you have done this, cover up the 'friends' and 'acquaintances' circle. You should now only be left with the circle entitled 'me' which represents you, the 'loved ones' circle, which is for family and those closest to you, and the circle representing 'people paid to be in your life'. The purpose of doing this exercise is to represent that this is the reality for many individuals at risk of marginalisation that they only have loved ones and those paid to be in their life who are actively in their life. How does the prospect of this make you feel? The overall outcome of this exercise is to enable the reader to reflect on how they would feel if they were in that position, but also how in their professional role would they support those from marginalised groups to broaden their Circle of Support and think about how to get more of the right support around each individual.

Literature

Ade, A. R., and D. A. Da Ros-Voseles. "Using the Reggio Exhibit to Enrich Teacher Candidates' Perceptions of How Children Construct and Represent Knowledge." *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education* 31, no. 3 (2010): 222–31.

Aikens, N. L., and O. Barbarin. "Socioeconomic Differences in Reading Trajectories: The

Contribution of Family, Neighbourhood, and School Contexts." *Journal of Educational Psychology* 100 (2008): 235–51. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.100.2.235.

Ashton, R. "Improving the Transfer to Secondary School: How Every Child's Voice Can Matter." *Support for Learning* 23, no. 4 (2008): 176–82.

Ballam, N., B. Perry, and A. Garpelin. *Pedagogies of Educational Transitions: European and Antipodean Research*. Springer, 2017. http://www.springer.com/series/7601.

Barban, N., and M. J. White. "Immigrants' Children's Transition to Secondary School in Italy." *International Migration Review* 45, no. 3 (2011): 702–26.

Bethel, A., C. Ward, and V. H. Fetvadjiev. "Cross-Cultural Transition and Psychological Adaptation of International Students: The Mediating Role of Host National Connectedness." *Frontiers in Education* 5 (2020): Article 539950. https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2020.539950.

Bloyce, J., and N. Frederickson. "Intervening to Improve the Transfer to Secondary School." *Educational Psychology in Practice* 28, no. 1 (2012): 1–18.

Bonaccio, S., C. E. Connelly, I. R. Gellatly, A. Jetha, and K. A. Martin Ginis. "The Participation of People with Disabilities in the Workplace Across the Employment Cycle: Employer Concerns and Research Evidence." *Journal of Business Psychology* 35, no. 2 (2022): 135–58. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10869-018-9602-5.

Bourdieu, P. "Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction." In *Knowledge, Education and Cultural Change*, edited by R. Brown, 71–84. London: Batsford, 1973.

Bowlby, J. *Attachment. Attachment and Loss: Vol. 1. Loss*. New York: Basic Books, 1969.

Bradley, G. "Responding Effectively to the Mental Health Needs of International Students." *Higher Education* 39 (2000): 417–33. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1003938714191.

Bronfenbrenner, U. *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and by Design*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv26071r6.

Children, Council for Disabled. "Disabled Children and the Equality Act 2010 for Schools," 2015. https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk.

Clark, A. "Ways of Seeing the Mosaic Approach to Listen to Young Children's Perspectives." In *Beyond Listening: Children's Perspectives on Early Childhood Services*, 29–49, 2005.

Clark, A., and P. Moss. *Listening to Young Children: The Mosaic Approach*. Second. London: National Children's Bureau, 2011.

Coffey, A. "Relationships: The Key to Successful Transition from Primary to Secondary School?" *Improving Schools* 16, no. 3 (2013): 261–71.

Connolly, Micaela, and Irvine Gersch. "Experiences of Parents Whose Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Are Starting Primary School." *Educational Psychology in Practice* 32, no. 3 (2016): 245–61. https://doi.org/10.1080/02667363.2016.1169512.

Curto, N., and C. Marchisio. "Inclusion Processes for Persons with Intellectual Disability through Multiple Negotiation Networks." *Form@re-Open Journal per La Formazione in Rete* 22, no. 1 (2022): 229–44.

Davies, D., and M. F. Troy. *Child Development: A Practitioner's Guide*. 4th ed. The Guilford

Press, 2020. https://www.guilford.com/books/Child-Development/Davies-Troy/ 9781462542994.

Demirtaş-Zorbaz, S., and T. Ergene. "School Adjustment of First-Grade Primary School Students: Effects of Family Involvement, Externalising Behaviour, Teacher and Peer Relations." *Children and Youth Services Review* 101 (2019): 307–16. https://doi.org/ 10.1016/j.childyouth.2019.04.019.

Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. "Changing Futures Evaluation – Trauma Informed Approaches REA," 2023. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/ government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1148546/ Changing_Futures_Evaluation_-_Trauma_informed_approaches_REA.pdf.

Doane, J., G. Hartrick-Doane, and C. Varcoe. *How to Nurse: Relational Inquiry in Action*. 2nd ed. Springer, 2020.

Dockett, S., and B. Perry. "'A Buddy Doesn't Let Kids Get Hurt in the Playground': Starting School with Buddies." *International Journal of Transitions in Childhood* 1 (2005): 22–34.

———. "Continuity of Learning: A Resource to Support Effective Transition to School and School-Age Care." Australian Government of Education, 2014.

———. *Evaluating Transition to School Programs: Learning from Research and Practice*, 2022.

———. "Readiness for School: A Relational Construct." *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood* 34, no. 1 (2009): 20–26. https://doi.org/10.1177/183693910903400104.

Education, Department of and Training. "Transition: A Positive Start to School: Resource Kit," 2017. https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/childhood/professionals/learning/ Transition-to-School-Resource-Kit.pdf.

Egert, F., L. Forsman, L. Åberg-Bengtsson, and K. Palmerus. "Collaborative Professional Development during Transition from Preschool to School: A Systematic Literature Review." *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal* 28, no. 1 (2020): 97–116.

Egido, M. P., and J. R. Martínez-Novillo. "Transitions to Post-Compulsory Education in Madrid: The Weight of Political and Institutional Factors." *Papers* 105, no. 2 (2020): 183–209. https://doi.org/10.5565/rev/papers.2777.

Elfer, P., E. Goldschmied, and D. Y. Selleck. *Key Persons in the Early Years: Building Relationships for Quality Provision in Early Years Settings and Primary Schools*. 2nd ed. Routledge, 2012. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203804711.

Evangelou, M., B. Taggart, K. Sylva, E. Melhuish, P. Sammons, and I. Siraj-Blatchford. *What Makes a Successful Transition from Primary to Secondary School?* London: Department for Children, Schools & Families, 2003.

Extension, Penn State. "Transition Strategies for the Early Childhood Classroom." Better Kid Care, 2020. https://extension.psu.edu/programs/betterkidcare/news/transition-strategies- for-the-early-childhood-classroom.

Fabian, H., and A. W. Dunlop. "Outcomes of Good Practice in Transition Processes for Children Entering Primary School." *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal* 15, no. 2 (2007): 151–72.

Fontil, L., J. Gittens, E. Beaudoin, and I. E. Sladeczek. "Barriers to and Facilitators of Successful Early School Transitions for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders and Other Developmental Disabilities: A Systematic Review." *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders* 50 (2020): 1866–81. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-019-03938-w.

Freire, P. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. London: Continuum Publishing Group, 1993.

Geirdal, A., P. Nerdrum, and T. Bonsaksen. "The Transition from University to Work: What Happens to Mental Health? A Longitudinal Study." *BMC Psychology* 7, no. 1 (2019): 1–10. https://doi.org/10.1186/S40359-019-0340-X.

Gibb, K., D. Tunbridge, A. Chua, and N. Fredrickson. "Pathways to Inclusion: Moving from Special School to Mainstream." *Educational Psychology in Practice* 23, no. 2 (2007): 109–27. https://doi.org/10.1080/02667360701320770.

Government, United Kingdom. "Equality Act 2010," 2010. https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15.

Gray, C. A., and J. D. Garand. "Social Stories: Improving Responses of Students with Autism with Accurate Social Information." *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities* 8 (1993): 1–10.

GUREAK. "Who We Are?," 2024. https://www.gureak.com/en/who-we-are.

Hanassab, S. "Diversity, International Students, and Perceived Discrimination: Implications for Educators and Counselors." *Journal of Studies in International Education* 10 (2006): 157–72. https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315305283051.

Hargreaves, A. "Rights of Passage: A Review of Selected Research about Schooling in the Transition Years." Toronto: Report to Ontario Ministry of Education, Queen's Printer, 1990.

Hart, R. A. "Children's Participation: From Tokenism to Citizenship." Florence, Italy: United Nations Children's Fund International Child Development Centre, 1992.

Hayes, N., L. O'Toole, and A. M. Halpenny. *Introducing Bronfenbrenner: A Guide for Practitioners and Students in Early Years Education*. 2nd ed. Routledge, 2023. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315646206.

Hersh. "Technology for Inclusion," 2020. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373655.

Hope, Bridge of. "Education Transition for Children with Disabilities in Armenia," 2015. https://asksource.info/resources/education-transition-children-disabilities-armenia.

Hopwood, B., I. Hay, and J. Dyment. "The Transition from Primary to Secondary School: Teachers' Perspectives." *Australian Educational Researcher* 43, no. 3 (2016): 289–307. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13384-016-0200-0.

Humphrey, N., and M. Ainscow. "Transition Club: Facilitating Learning, Participation and Psychological Adjustment during the Transition to Secondary School." *European Journal of Psychology of Education* 21, no. 3 (2006): 319–31.

Huser, C., S. Dockett, and B. Perry. "Transition to School: Revisiting the Bridge Metaphor." *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal* 24, no. 3 (2015): 439–49. https://doi.org/10.1080/1350293X.2015.1102414.

Izzo, F., S. Mele, and M. Mustilli. "University to Work Transition: A Literature Review." *International Journal of Manpower* 43, no. 7 (2022): 1502–15. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJM-07-2021-0398.

Jindal-Snape, D., P. Bradshaw, A. Gilbert, N. Smith, and L. Knudsen. "Primary–Secondary School Transition Experiences and Factors Associated with Differences in These Experiences: Analysis of the Longitudinal Growing Up in Scotland Dataset." *Review of Education* 11 (2023): e3444. https://doi.org/10.1002/rev3.3444.

Jindal-Snape, D., and D. Cantali. "A Four-stage Longitudinal Study Exploring Pupils' Experiences, Preparation and Support Systems during Primary–Secondary School Transitions." *British Educational Research Journal* 45, no. 6 (2019): 1255–78. https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3561.

Kagan, S. L., and M. J. Neuman. "Lessons from Three Decades of Transition Research." *The Elementary School Journal* 98, no. 4 (1998): 364–79.

Lam, M. S. "A Sociocultural Approach to Children in the Transition from Home to Kindergarten." In *Transitions to School – International Research, Policy and Practice*, edited by B. Perry, S. Dockett, and A. Petriwskyj, Vol. 9. International Perspectives on Early Childhood Education and Development. Springer, 2014. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-7350-9_10.

Lee, J. J., and C. Rice. "Welcome to America? International Students' Perceptions of Discrimination." *Higher Education* 53 (2007): 381–409.

Legault, L. "Self-Determination Theory." In *Encyclopedia of Personality and Individual Differences*, edited by V. Zeigler-Hill and T. K. Shackelford, 1–9. Springer, 2017. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-28099-8_1162-1.

Li, R. Y., and M. Kaye. "Understanding International Students' Concerns and Problems." *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management* 20 (1998): 41–50. https://doi.org/10.1080/1360080980200105.

Liberman, J. "The Views of Some Adolescent, Non-Verbal Young People on a Process to Improve Intimate Care Practice in a Special School." Child Outcomes Research Consortium, n.d.

Lindsay, G., K. Wedell, and J. Dockrell. "Warnock 40 Years on: The Development of Special Educational Needs Since the Warnock Report and Implications for the Future." *Frontiers in Education* 4 (2020): 164. https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2019.0016.

Lun, V. M.-C., R. Fischer, and C. Ward. "Exploring Cultural Differences in Critical Thinking: Is It about My Thinking Style or the Language I Speak?" *Learning and Individual Differences* 20 (2010): 604–16. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lindif.2010.07.001.

Mandy, W., M. Murin, O. Baykaner, S. Staunton, R. Cobb, J. Hellriegel, S. Anderson, and D. Skuse. "Easing the Transition to Secondary Education for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder: An Evaluation of the Systemic Transition in Education Programme for Autism Spectrum Disorder (STEP-ASD)." *Autism* 20, no. 5 (2016): 580–90. https://doi.org/10.1177/1362361315598892.

McGhie, V. "Entering University Studies: Identifying Enabling Factors for a Successful Transition from School to University." *Higher Education* 73 (2017): 407–22. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-016-0100-2.

McLeod, C. "Overcoming the Barriers to Positive Transitions." *Nursery World*, 2023. https://www.nurseryworld.co.uk/features/article/send-overcoming-the-barriers-to-positive-transitions.

Messiou, K. *Confronting Marginalisation in Education: A Framework for Promoting Inclusion*. Routledge, 2012. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203121184.

Morcom, V. E. "Scaffolding Peer Collaboration through Values Education: Social and Reflective Practices from a Primary Classroom." *Australian Journal of Teacher Education* 41, no. 1 (2016). http://ro.ecu.edu.au/ajte/vol41/iss1/5.

Morris, R., and C. Atkinson. "The Role of Educational Psychologists in Supporting Post-16 Transition: Findings from Literature." *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 2018. https://doi.org/10.1080/02667363.2017.1411788.

Nations, United. "The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child," 1989.

Neill, M., and H. Sanderson. "Circles of Support and Personalisation," 2012.

Niesel, R., and W. Griebel. "Enhancing the Competence of Transition Systems through Co-Construction." In *Informing Transition In the Early Years: Research, Policy and Practice*. Open University Press, 2007.

O'Brien, J. "Person Centred Planning Key Features and Approaches," n.d.

OECD. "Towards Smooth Transitions from Early Childhood Education and Care to Primary School." *Starting Strong V: Transitions from Early Childhood Education and Care to Primary Education*, 2017. https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264276253-4-EN.

———. "Transition from Education to Work: Where Are Today's Youth?" *Education at a Glance 2022: OECD Indicators*. OECD Publishing, 2022. https://doi.org/10.1787/ebc79fca-en.

———. "Transition from School to Work: How Hard Is It across Different Age Groups?" *Education Indicators in Focus*, 2017. https://doi.org/10.1787/1e604198-en.

O'Toole, L. "A Bio-Ecological Perspective On Educational Transition: Experiences Of Children, Parents And Teachers." PhD Thesis, Technological University Dublin, 2014. https://doi.org/10.21427/D7GP4Z.

Perico E. Santos, A. "Managing Student Transitions into Upper Secondary Pathways." *OECD Education Working Papers*. OECD Publishing, 2023. https://doi.org/10.1787/663d6f7b-en.

Piaget, J. *Origins of Intelligence in the Child*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1936.

Pianta, R. C., M. J. Cox, and K. L. Snow. *School Readiness and the Transition to Kindergarten in the Era of Accountability*. *The Future of Children*. Vol. 17. 1, 2007.

Prinz, C. *Transforming Disability Welfare Policies: Towards Work and Equal Opportunities*. Routledge, 2018.

Rappaport, J. *Community Psychology: Values, Research, and Action*. Fort Worth: Harcourt, 1977.

Roeser, R., J. Eccles, and C. Freedman-Doan. "Academic Functioning and Mental Health

in Adolescence: Patterns, Progression, and Routes from Childhood." *Journal of Adolescent Health* 14 (1999): 135–74.

Sanderson, H. "Person Centred Planning Tools," 2023. https://helensandersonassociates.co.uk.

Sawir, E., S. Marginson, A. Deumert, C. Nyland, and G. Ramia. "Loneliness and International Students: An Australian Study." *Journal of Studies in International Education* 12 (2008): 148–80. https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315307299699.

Sawir, E., S. Marginson, H. Forbes-Mewett, C. Nyland, and G. Ramia. "International Student Security and English Language Proficiency." *Journal of Studies in International Education* 16 (2012): 434–54. https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315311435418.

Statistics, Office for National. "Disability and Education," 2019. https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/disability/bulletins/disabilityandeducationuk/2019.

Tarabini, A., and N. Ingram. *Educational Choices, Transitions and Aspirations in Europe: Systemic, Institutional and Subjective Challenges*. Routledge, 2018. https://www.routledge.com/Educational-Choices-Transitions-and-Aspirations-in-Europe-Systemic-Institutional/Tarabini-Ingram/p/book/9780367488123.

UK (UUK), Universities, and National Union of Students (NUS). "Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic Student Attainment at UK Universities: #Closingthegap," 2019. https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2019/bame-student-attainment-uk-universities-closing-the-gap.pdf.

Van Dam, T. et al. "Person Centred Planning: A Review of the Literature." Department of Ageing Disability and Home Care, 2008.

Vogler, P., G. Crivello, and M. Woodhead. "Early Childhood Transitions Research: A Review of Concepts, Theory, and Practice." Early Childhood Development, 2008. www.greenink.co.uk.

Ward, C., and Á. Szabó. "Affect, Behavior, Cognition and Development: Adding to the Alphabet of Acculturation." In *Handbook of Culture and Psychology*, edited by D. Matsumoto and H. S. Hwang, 640–92. New York: Oxford University Press, 2019.

Woodrow, C., and K. Staples. "Relational Approaches to Supporting Transitions into School: Families and Early Childhood Educators Working Together in Regional Chile." In *Supporting Difficult Transitions: Children, Young People and Their Carers*, edited by M. Hedegaard and A. Edwards, 131–52, 2019. https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/uwsau/reader.action?docID=5803050&ppg=144.

Local Literature

Barnes, M. *Utenti, Carer e Cittadinanza Attiva. Politiche Sociali Oltre Il Welfare State*. Trento: Erickson, 1999.

Bianquin, N., and S. Besio. "Orchestrare Azioni Di Sistema per Il Progetto Di Vita Della Persona Con Disabilità: Prefigurazioni Professionali Del Case Manager." *Italian Journal of*

Special Education for Inclusion 9, no. 2 (2021): 27−37.

CERMI. "Universidad y Discapacidad, Por Una Dimensión Inclusiva. Informe Del CERMI Estatal de Propuestas de Reforma Normativa En Materia de Inclusión de Las Personas Con Discapacidad En El Sistema Universitario," 2020. http://www.convenciondiscapacidad.es/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Universidad_y_discapacidad.pdf.

Febrer Bellostes, I., and E. Jansà. "Empieza La Escuela Infantil, Un Proceso de Familiarización." *Infancia: Educar de 0 a 6 Años* 129 (2011): 10−16.

Fernandez, R. "Acollearte. Planificación Del Periodo de Adaptación En Cuarto de Educación Infantil." *Revista Latinoamericana de Educación Infantil* 5, no. 2 (2016): 177−85.

Gennep, A. van. *Los Ritos de Paso*. Alianza, 2008.

Istruzione, Ministero dell'. "I Principali Dati Relativi Agli Alunni Con Disabilità – Anno Scolastico 2018/2019." MI – DGSIS – Ufficio Gestione Patrimonio informativo e Statistica, 2020.

Marchisio, C. *Percorsi Di Vita e Disabilità. Strumenti Di Coprogettazione*. Roma: Carocci, 2019.

Romito, M. "L'orientamento Scolastico Nella Tela Delle Disuguaglianze? Una Ricerca Sulla Formulazione Dei Consigli Orientativi al Termine Delle Scuole Medie." *Scuola Democratica* 2 (2014): 441−60.

Universidad, Red de Servicios de Apoyo a Personas con Discapacidad en la. "Guía de Buenas Prácticas Para La Transición, El Acceso y La Acogida Del Alumnado Con Necesidad Específica de Apoyo Educativo En Los Estudios Universitarios." Fundación ONCE, en colaboración con Crue-Asuntos Estudiantiles, 2020.

Glossary terms

Marginalisation: The state of being considered unimportant, undesirable, unworthy, insignificant and different resulting in inequity, unfairness, deprivation and enforced lack of access to mainstream power (UNDP, 1996:1) Marginalised populations are defined as groups and communities that experience discrimination and exclusion (social, political and economic) due to unequal power relationships across economic, political, social and cultural dimensions (Vaccine, 2011).

Person-Centred Planning: Person-Centred Planning means putting the needs of the individual, their views and feelings at the centre of planning their care and support.

It helps everyone involved listen to them and understand and respect what's important to them and how they want to live their life. Person-Centred Planning is a journey that removes the barriers that marginalisation often brings and enables people from those groups to dream big and identify ways and what they need to be in place to assist them in achieving their dreams and aspirations (Neill & Sanderson, 2012).

Circles of Support: Circles of Support are a way of helping an individual to identify those they have around them and in what capacity they can support them. This method of

support can assist someone in building a Circle of Support from scratch and making new connections or building on the support they already have. This way of support can be used when helping those from marginalised groups recognise what support they have and/or what support they need. However, everyone regardless of their background, social status, etc. could benefit from having a Circle of Support as this method is underpinned by being human and by being connected (Neill & Sanderson, 2012).

Child readiness: Readiness holds varying definitions for different individuals. Sometimes, it's linked to age or developmental stage. In other cases, readiness is assessed through checklists of skills and knowledge to determine what children should know before starting school. Moreover, certain interpretations of readiness highlight social and emotional aspects. However, the overarching theme in these viewpoints is the emphasis on the individual child and whether they have reached a specific point that signifies readiness (Dockett & Perry, 2009).

About the authors

Silver Cappello

Silver Cappello has accomplished a PhD in General Education, General and Social Pedagogy at the Free University of Bolzano-Bozen (Italy). He is qualified as primary school teacher with a specialisation as support teacher and he has worked as primary school teacher (mainly teaching second language), as assistant for people with disabilities, and as research assistant on different research projects at the Competence Centre for School Inclusion of the Free University of Bolzano-Bozen.

Danielle Farrel

Danielle Farrel has both lived and professional experience in the field of disability. She has a passion for changing the narrative for disabled people and those from other marginalised groups. Danielle graduated with her PhD from the University of the West of Scotland in 2015 and her thesis was entitled 'The 2012 Child Abuse Scandal: The Multifuctional Nature of Online Discourse'.

Paty Paliokosta

Paty Paliokosta is an Associate Professor in Inclusive Education at Kingston University and a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. With over two decades of experience in the field of special and inclusive education, my journey has been dedicated to promoting social justice and empowering diverse learners, particularly

those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEN/D). As an educator, inclusion manager, local authority advisor, researcher, and advocate she has actively contributed to shaping inclusive policies, leading innovative participatory research projects, and championing social justice within schools, local authority, higher education and the community. She leads the 'Inclusion and Social Justice' SIG and the 'Inclusivity, Anti-oppression and Underserved Communities' bidding network. Her full profile can be found here: https://www.kingston.ac.uk/staff/profile/dr-paty-paliokosta-730/

Irati Sagardia-Iturria

Irati Sagardia-Iturria after completing her studies at Mondragon Unibertsitatea (Spain) in Primary Education and specialising in Special Education, she adopted the principle of creating inclusive environments and processes as a core value in her life. Motivated by this, she decided to further her education by pursuing both a master's and a doctorate at the same university, with a focus on educational transitions and inclusive processes. This academic journey provided her with a unique opportunity to actively engage in a research project led by the Zehar and Hazitegi groups, which also forms the context for her thesis, following the purpose of generating and transferring knowledge in the field of innovation and intervention in inclusive education. Additionally, she has gained experience as a university lecturer across various modules, aiming to raise awareness of the importance of the healthy development of all children (emotional, social, cognitive, motor, and linguistic), and the role of the educational community in that development and creating inclusive contexts (the role of the teacher, organisation of time and space).

AN INTRODUCTION TO PERSON CENTRED PLANNING – AND ITS POTENTIAL FOR SCHOOLS

Andreas Hinz; Petra Elftorp; Sandra Fietkau; and Yuzhen Xu

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=665#oembed-1

Example Case

Example story 1

He made a difference

"Tow was an eight-year-old boy in China, diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and emotional behaviour disorders. He was very aggressive and often came into conflict with his classmates, even hitting other people at times. Students and parents were angry and complained to Tow's teacher.

Tow's parents were divorced, and he lived with his father and his grandparents. The father was unemployed, and his parenting style involved 'fist and violence.'

The grandmother took care of the whole family and was under a lot of pressure. She felt that her neighbours were unfriendly because of their unhappy family. She was also emotional and complained endlessly.

The school felt challenged in terms of Tow's education, while there was also tension in the community where Tow and his family lived. The school and the community sat together and talked about how to improve Tow's education and community life. They developed a plan with the boy and his family, by holding discussions two or three times a month. Multiple departments in the school and beyond worked together. For example, social workers and a psychologist visited the family; community workers communicated with the residents to develop their understanding and acceptance of Tow and his family. Medical doctors were also involved when needed. School teachers encouraged empathy and care from classmates and parents. They helped the boy to develop his interest in music and carried out positive behavioural interventions.

Thanks to the support from both inside and outside the school, over time, Tow's life greatly improved. He started to really enjoy coming to school and got along much better with his classmates.

In the neighbourhood, someone said, "Oh, his mother is not around, I would like to be his 'mother,' or to give him the love of a mother." Tow's family also made some changes. His father became more positive and tried to find a job; his grandmother felt the passion and friendliness of the people in the community, and established good relationships in her neighbourhood. As Tow grew, so did the teachers. Learning by doing, teachers constantly study and experiment with intervention methods, and they were inspired by Tow's progress."

Yuzhen Xu

Example story 2

A boy always said: I want to become a medical doctor!

"My name is Ines, and I'm a very lucky person because I had the chance to learn about Person Centred Planning and support circles, and I facilitated a lot of these circles during the last 30 years. I really must warn everybody because it's something you can be longing for, if you know how to do it, because it's a very essential thing. In a way, it's a key thing for feeling humanism in the world – and it is at the heart of inclusion. It's not a method I was operating, but when I heard about it, I was sure that I wanted to do things like this. To give you just one example:

There was a young man who, as a little child, already started to think about his future. He thought about 'What would I like to work as? I want to become a doctor, a medical doctor!' This is what he said. When he explained this to his mother it was a little bit special because he had Down's Syndrome, he had the 21st chromosome three times. However, in some cases, our societies seem to know what is possible and what is not! So, the mother felt all the time: 'Oh, how can I explain to him that this will never happen, and no university will accept him?' This was a big thing in the family.

It was a wonderful thing when he was a youngster that his mother told others: 'Oh, he always tells me he will be a medical doctor in the hospital. How shall I stop him from this stupid idea?' They built a circle around him. They had a meeting, and they did some Person Centred Planning. So, they gathered all their friends around and the people who facilitated these processes, they all knew that it's a gift if somebody has a certain dream. Very often you have to work to see what the dream is and here this young man was always talking about his dream.

The group had the challenge of finding out what the quality of this dream was and what lay behind all this. What does it mean for anybody to be a doctor, and especially for him, if he can express it? Maybe it means to be an important person, a helpful person. Maybe it means how to be dressed and to receive respect because of what he is doing and so on. So, the wonderful thing about this circle was that they were thinking in that way: Okay, we have to find a position for him, and create it, if it's not already existing, where he can have all the things he wants without going to university and studying medicine. And luckily, one of the friends sitting there, she knew somebody who knew somebody … and sometimes you need these types of relationships.

So, to make a long story short: The outcome of the whole thing was that he got a job in a clinic for people who lay in a coma. And yes, his role was wearing a white skirt, he was going into the rooms, filling with the disinfectant for everyone's hands. He ensured that everything was where it needed to be for when the beds were dressed. He was also allowed to sit at the beds of people and touch their hands, to talk to the people, to be soft with them, and to tell them some stories about what is going on outside. I could cry from being so moved when I relay this story.

Then he genuinely didn't miss any medical studies, and he never asked to go to university. He was happy being a relevant person in this context, and his dreams were fulfilled. Maybe one day he will be unhappy. Or maybe one day somebody will tell him that this clinic doesn't work anymore and so on. Then he will know that it's a wise thing to gather good people around you and talk about what you're longing for and then find relationships to help solve these problems. Find steps to bring it into the world if it doesn't already exist. Then the community will win, will gain a lot, and will change. I'm sure this is a win-win-win-situation. It certainly has been in this clinic. He will always be a winner if he does it this way. That's my story. This was one example with a person labelled as having a disability."

Ines Boban, Germany/Croatia, long-time activist for facilitation of Person Centred Planning

Initial questions

In this chapter you will find answers to the following questions:

- What are the basics of Person Centred Planning?
- What makes Person Centred Planning specific in relation to other forms of planning?
- What are the main principles of Person Centred Planning?
- What is the difference between Person Centred Thinking and Person Centred Planning?
- What are the areas, potentials, and challenges of Person Centred Planning?
- What theories could help explain why Person Centred Planning works?

Introduction to Topic

Person Centred Planning happens when a group of people come together, dream and gather ideas during one, or several, meetings. Mostly the planning is done with and for one person, which we refer to as the 'main person.' It can also be done for a group, a project, or systems – like schools. During the planning process, a collective vision is created on what a good life in society could look like and how it can be achieved together. The focus is on the strengths of the person, group or system and relies on a form of co-construction.

Person Centred Planning is interesting for several reasons, not least for teachers:

Firstly, it helps to start dialogues. Of course, teachers have lots of dialogues, but often about academic topics, or *about* children (with colleagues and parents) and perhaps not so much *with* children about their dreams and thoughts about the future, especially if they define themselves mainly as a teaching person and less as a learning supporter.

Secondly, Person Centred Planning promotes thinking outside the box as there is an emphasis on dreaming and developing new ideas in a safe space without judgement. As Person Centred Planning is independent from institutions, the place, or the institution should not limit reflections and ideas.

Thirdly, it helps to see the whole person and their future, not just past experiences or individual achievements. Person Centred Planning is – as the name suggests – centred on the person, not on some aspects relevant to school.

Fourthly, it helps to reflect on your own role as a teacher and your ideas and dreams for your future.

Finally, it may inspire you to look for opportunities to start Person Centred Planning

processes in schools – for students and perhaps even for the school itself, in a person centred context.

Key aspects

Basics of Person Centred Planning

In order to present the underpinning conditions for Person Centred Planning, we draw on Beth Mount's work as she identifies four central aspects. We refer to these as the four cornerstones of Person Centred Planning (Mount, 2014), as can be seen in Fig.1.

Figure 1: Four cornerstones of Person Centred Planning

Source: Own illustration adapted from Mount, 2014.

The first of the cornerstones is about *finding the gift* in the person. This is based on the idea that everyone is unique and has their own set of key interests and abilities. It is important to note that this is not about finding a hidden talent or 'superpower' within the person. The 'gift' does not have to be extraordinary; it can be a wish to help others, or to care for animals, for example. It is about finding out what 'makes someone tick,' or what makes someone smile in the morning. While some are very clear about their own strengths, interests, and dreams, many people need help from others to figure out what that is. In practice, there are many ways of exploring this with the main person. For example, you may ask a question such as '*What would an ideal day look like for you?*' Or: '*What are the things you think about when you feel really good?*' These types of questions are utilised to find out what the *gift in the person* is. In the school setting, perhaps you as a teacher could pay particular attention to the subjects or topics that a student is interested in, to explore that further.

The second cornerstone, *building relationships of commitment,* on the one hand focuses on people coming together for the Person Centred Planning; thinking together; coming up with ways of supporting each other. During the planning meeting, relationships are

deepened, or sometimes even just started. These relationships can be based on mutual interest, for example, during a planning meeting two people find out they are both big fans of the same soccer club and decide to watch games together at the weekends.

Also, these relationships can be based on mutual care and support, the interest in each other's well-being. For example, one person at the planning meeting agrees to accompany the main person to their doctor's appointments, making sure that the voice of the person is heard, and the person understands what the doctor says and wants.

On the other hand, the relationship aspect also focuses on *broadening the relationship circle.* Expanding the circle is a way of developing social networks of people and looking for people that are not yet part of the circle but could be helpful for what the circle is working on or could also benefit from being part of the circle. In a school setting, it could be something as simple as running a board games club at lunch time, to help broaden the social circle of a student – creating opportunities for students who share a similar interest to make new friends.

The third of the cornerstones is *asking for more from organisations*. This is about acknowledging that when there is a dilemma pr problem, it is not always an individual that should have full ownership of that problem. Often, issues can be structural and shared with other people in the same, or similar, settings. When structures are in place which lead to several people, or groups, experiencing difficulties, organisations should be asked how they can change or develop to support individuals, or groups, better. An example from a school setting is, there could be several students who have an issue with the school uniform policy, maybe because of a gendered dress code which makes them feel very uncomfortable. Rather than coming up with a workaround for one student at a time, we could be asking for more from the organisation, in this case the school! This may involve empowering the students to come together to influence and have a say in how we can make the school uniform policy more inclusive.

In other scenarios, it may also be a neighbourhood that could be 'asked to do more,' like in the case of Tow where the neighbours were instrumental to the solution of a difficult situation. Or it could be a medical clinic, as in the case of the boy with Down's Syndrome, where a bespoke solution led to a meaningful job where he could realise his dream.

The fourth cornerstone, Beth Mount refers to community: *finding assets and openings in communities, looking for places where people can thrive*. Or to paraphrase: '*digging into the social goldmines of community.'* With this fourth aspect, Beth Mount emphasises the need and potential for connection. Within communities, either local or distant, there is almost infinite potential, if we keep looking for it. Find people, explore places, look for groups, events and organisations to *find these openings* that create opportunities for people to lead a good life. Also, this cornerstone emphasises the need to look for a diverse group of people participating in Person Centred Planning. The more richness and variety, the bigger the connections into various places and communities will be so the main person, and the circle, can benefit. In case of a school, the *places in community* can be clubs or organisations that

would like to co-operate, for example, a sports club that offers its' training field to interested students, or a local bakery that offers their business to a group of students for a limited time in order to learn about production and sales from the actual process of producing and selling baked goods.

Different approaches to planning

In order to highlight what the essence of Person Centred Planning we are drawing comparisons with more traditional approaches to planning. In general, there are many different forms of planning. John O'Brien, one of the developing pioneers of Person Centred Planning, illustrated this very well in his publication from the 1990's, with the two images (Fig. 2 and Fig. 3).

Figure 2: Individual Program Planning
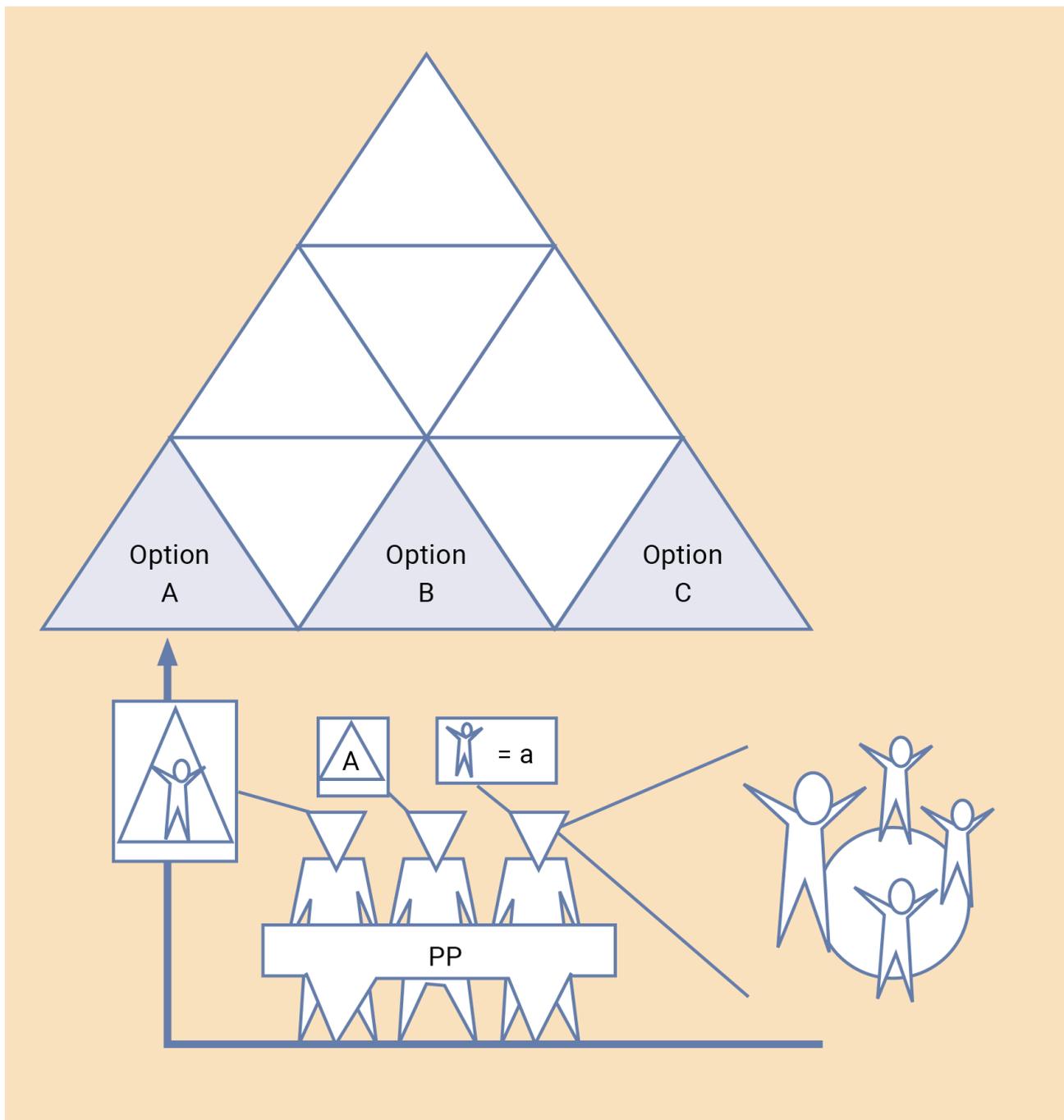
Source: O'Brien & Lovett, 1992: 8

In Figure 2 the idea of a more traditional approach of individual program planning is illustrated. There is a team of experts with specific knowledge and context sitting together, displayed here with triangle heads. They are triangles because this fits into the existing system of institutions and pre-existing options. Now, the task for the experts is to find out which existing option fits which person. These options are usually based on medical categories and especially on medical or psychological deficits. Here, quality is defined as being sure to decide on the best match between the person and the option. The power is, of course, in the hands of the professional experts, and the person is just an object of

their decisions. This demonstrates a hierarchy between the decision-makers and decision-recipients.

Figure 3: Person Centred Planning
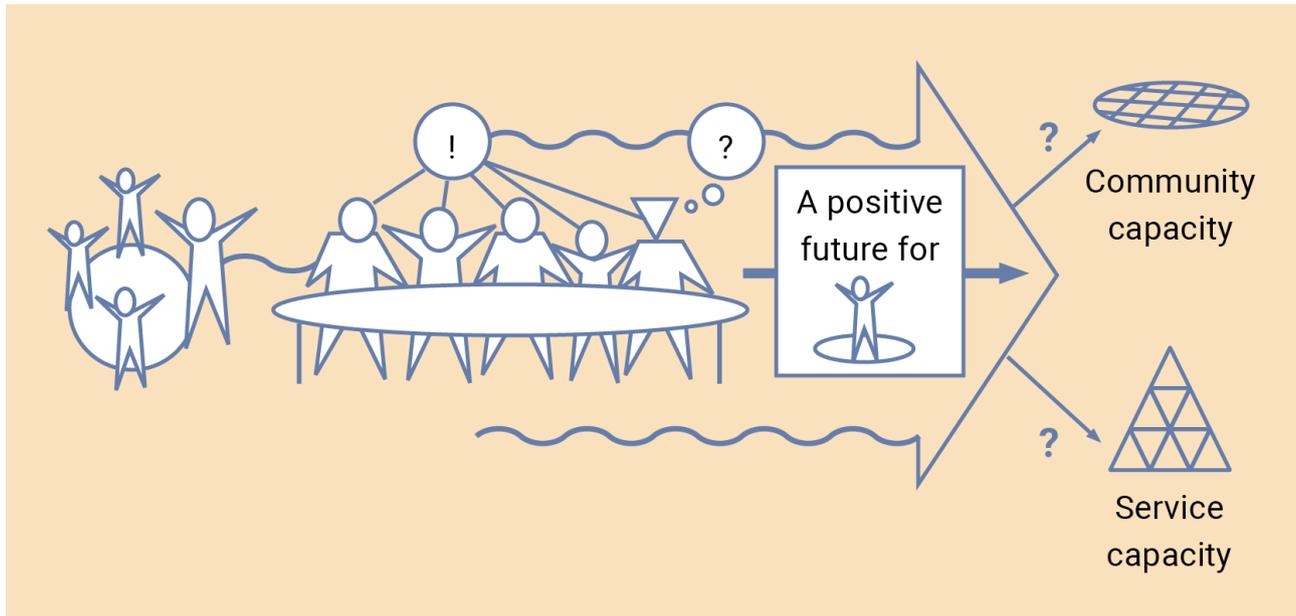
Source: O'Brien & Lovett, 1992: 9

Person Centred Planning (Figure 3) is based on quite a different way of thinking and making decisions. In Figure 3 there is a group of people sitting in a circle around a table, having round (or maybe egg shaped) heads. Sometimes there is also a professional expert involved, there is a big question mark in the thought bubble, to display a different way of thinking. This group consists of the person, maybe family members, maybe friends, maybe supporters, all of these diverse group members are experts in different ways. They create, reflect and plan a desirable future with, and for, the main person. This brings new challenges for institutions, especially for services, and for the community. However, it also offers a chance to grow inclusively. In this approach to planning, the main person is not an object but a subject and part of the planning process. In this way of planning, quality means something different than before: everyone has the chance to contribute and to participate in the planning process. This decentralises the power of the original decision-makers involved in the hierarchy. The power is in the whole circle, shared between everyone, not only among professional experts. These are two different examples of the planning processes that will display different results and have different consequence with a disparity in quality and power dynamics. This fits into four cornerstones:

1. You need to know about the gifts of a person to create a desirable future.
2. You build relationships within the support circle during this process.
3. You create new opportunities and challenge existing universities to be more inclusive and

4. You connect with communities.

Practices – Ways of Person Centred Planning

Person Centred Planning can be practised in different ways. However, there are some shared aspects which are outlined below. The two main ways to work person centred are *Person Centred Thinking and Reflecting*(sometimes called 'small ways' with less time and fewer people) and *Person Centred Planning* (sometimes called 'big ways' with a lot more time and more people involved).

Shared aspects

There are some aspects which feature across the whole spectrum of person centred practices, namely:

- **Thinking together.** The goal is to bring together all types of ideas from different people with different perspectives and backgrounds – maybe also ideas which seem a bit crazy at first!
- **Everyone's an expert.** People come together, sit together, have time together, and collect ideas. There is no professional expert who tells anyone what to do and how to do it – it is an open process where everyone is an 'expert' and there is no right or wrong. This requires an accepting and non-judgemental mindset.
- **Voluntary.** Person Centred Planning should be initiated freely by the main person – maybe with the support of others. There are no time limits or demands for when, where or what someone should do. It is always a personal decision if a person wants to be involved, when, with whom and where to do it. The main person also sets the agenda for the Person Centred Planning. Very often, it is about the future, how to live a good life, what to work as, with, where and with whom to live – all "great questions," which do not have simple and quick answers (Snow, 2015: 9).
- **Everyone in the circle matters.** Another aspect is that the perspective of the main person is crucial, but also the perspectives of the whole circle are important – as they are all 'thinking with' the main person.
- **Visualisation.** Almost all Person Centred Planning meeting use visual recording on posters. This is important for two reasons: It makes sense that the whole group can see and feed into the visualisation of what has been said – and the poster will be given to the main person afterwards if they want it. This is a way of making dreams visible. Also, visualisation through a poster slows down the process, so members of the circle have more time to think, to share ideas or develop fantasies without limitations. Every idea is valued, there is no competition surrounding ideas, for example, 'my idea is better than yours.' All ideas are welcomed and will have their place on the poster.

These are the main and shared aspects of Person Centred Planning.

Methods of Person Centred Thinking and Reflecting

The methods of Person Centred Thinking and Reflecting are sometimes referred to as 'the smaller ones,' as you can use them everywhere – in your school, with your team, in your classroom, at your workplace or elsewhere, for example, in your club or in your choir or wherever you are together with people. They can be helpful from a reflection viewpoint. There are hundreds of different examples, and you can find them on the homepage of Helen Sanderson, a councillor of the English government and many worldwide organisations (https://www.helensandersonassociates.com/person-centered-thinking-tools/).

Figure 4: The doughnut

The doughnut

Use judgement & creativity

Core responsibility

Not our responsiblity
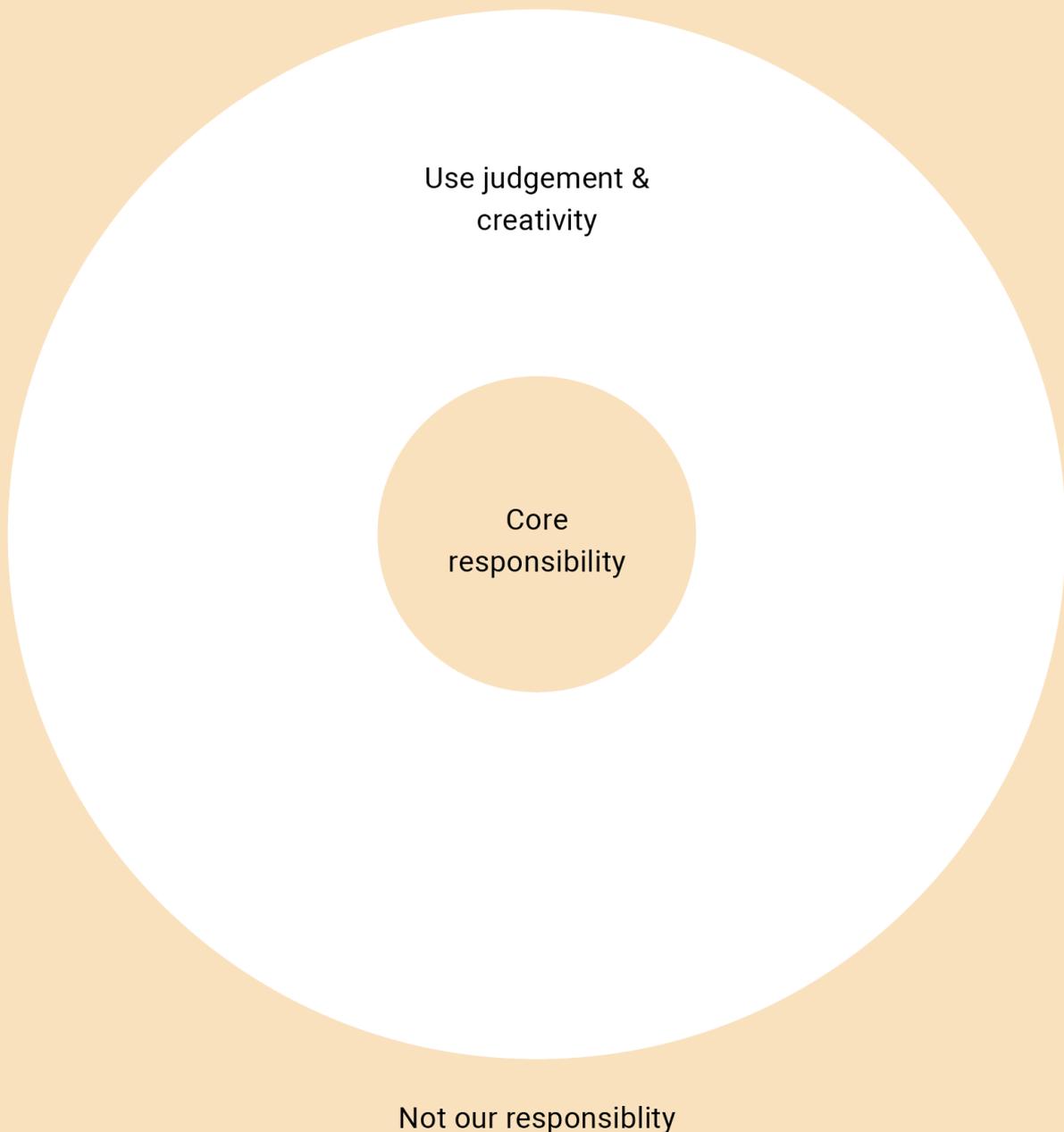
Created by The Grove Consultant International

Source: Helen Sanderson, n.d.

One example is called the doughnut – useful for reflections on responsibilities. You see three concentric circles. The inner one is about the core of someone's responsibilities – there you can write about your duties, things you *have to do*. The second one is about the *'nice to do'* area. If you have enough time and energy, it is nice to do certain things. The third

one is about the *'not my responsibility'* area. It's not your task to do that. Sometimes it can be helpful to make that clear for different people within a team who may be in the same situation. Who's responsible for that? Of course, you can talk about it without the poster, but it can be helpful to have this visualisation, to create a picture together. This can make it easier and more structured.

Figure 5: Sorting Important to/for

Sorting important to/for

Important to?   Important for?

What else do we need to learn/know?

Helen Sanderson Associates/FLCELP
Created by The Grove Consultante International
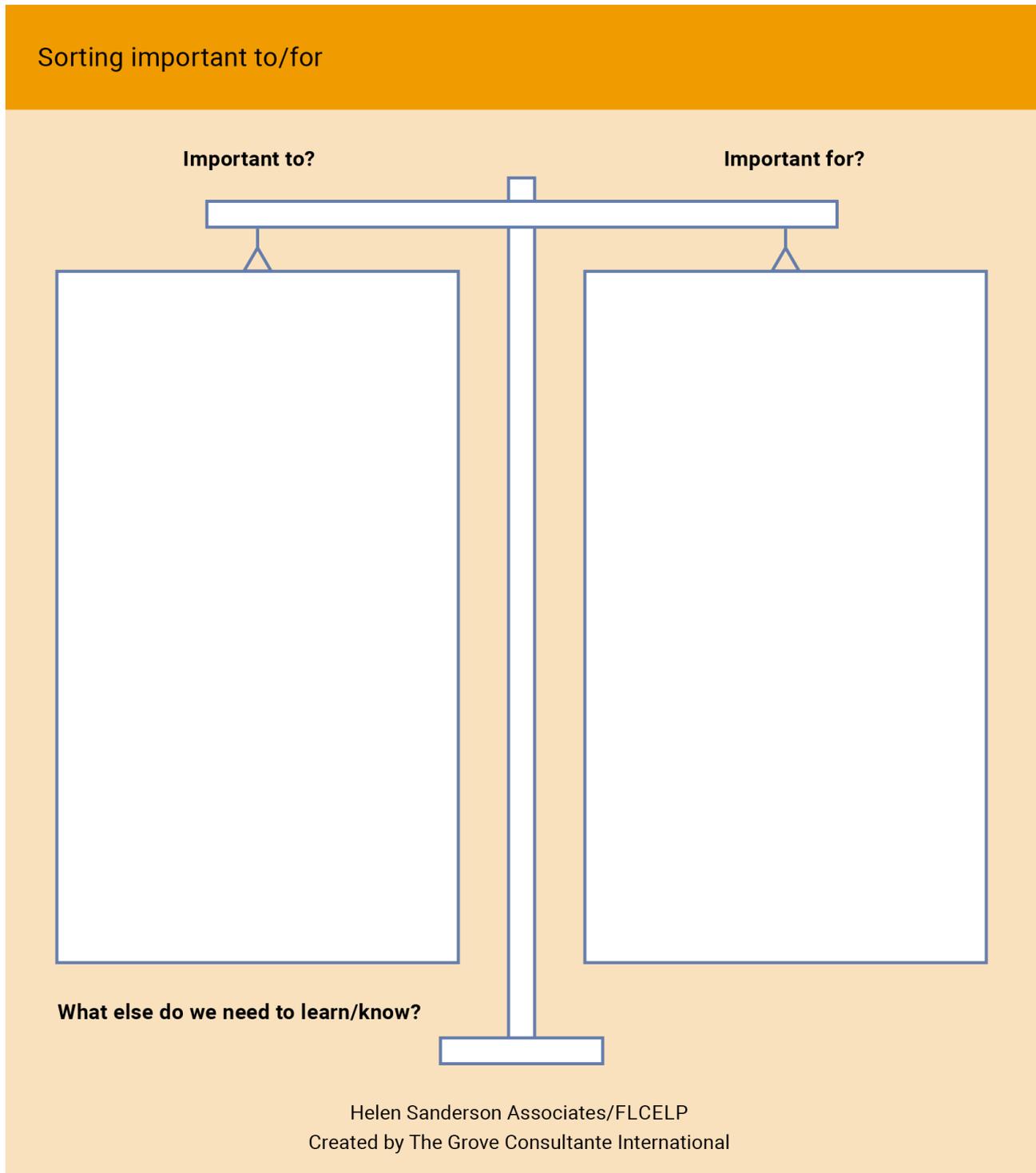
Source: Helen Sanderson, n.d.

Another example is called 'important to/important for.' Often people do not differentiate

between what a person thinks is important *to* them and what others think is important *for* the person. In institutionalised situations this could be quite contradictory. The poster helps to find out who means what and it helps to find items that overlap and items that dissent.

A common way to illustrate this is related to food – whereas a lot of people enjoy eating sweets or snacks – therefore it is important *to them*. A healthy diet including vegetables and fruits is considered important for the human body – therefore it is important *for them*. After adding important aspects on either side, a compromised solution should be developed together.

A third example helps to reflect on and increase inclusive processes in a group situation. This illustrates moving from just being present or in a situation, to being an active contributor in a situation (Figure 6).

Figure 6: From presence to contribution
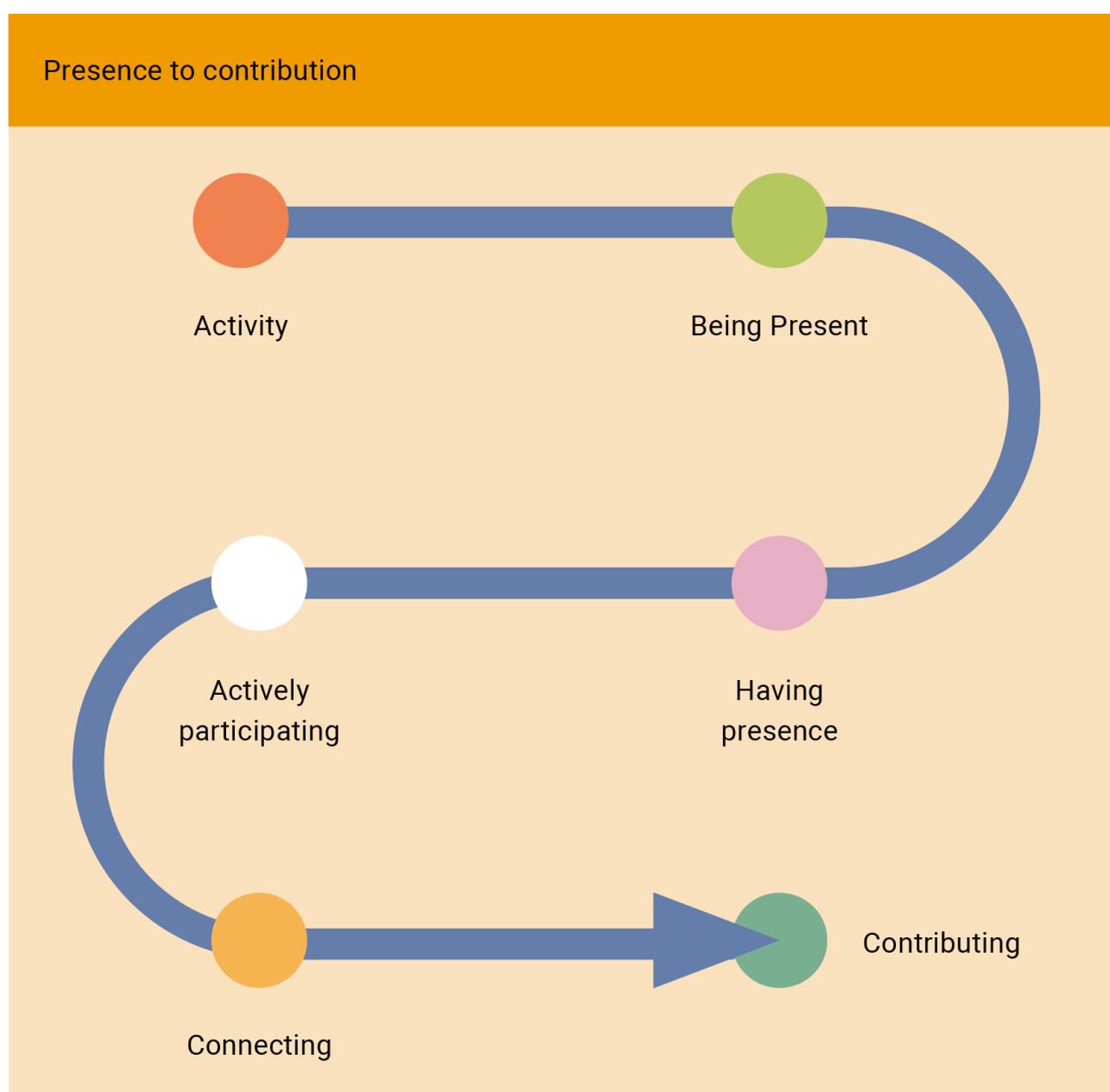
Source: Helen Sanderson, 2006

If there is a situation where someone is marginalised or isolated, you can sit together in your team, maybe with the parents, and you can think together about how to move from simple presence to more actively contributing to situations. There are several stages in between and different opportunities to participate, connect, and contribute.

These are just three examples of the 'small' ways of Person Centred Thinking and Reflecting. As mentioned before, there are many more available in publications and on the internet.

Ways of Person Centred Planning

In contrast to quicker, sometimes less complex ways of Person Centred Thinking and Reflecting, Person Centred Planning starts with a few preparatory questions and tasks:

- **Identifying a 'great question' / issue.** The main person is asked to phrase (or develop) the main question or issue that they want to work on with the support circle in the Person Centred Planning process. Sometimes, the facilitator will be involved in this first step. Person Centred Planning is a good way to jointly think about 'great questions.' As Snow (2015: 9) states

 "Great questions are the ones that refuse to be answered. They lead to deeper listening and better connection."

An example might be, that the question will not be about '*What do I like for dinner tomorrow?*', but maybe about '*Who will I be when I grow up?*' or '*Where shall I work?*' It is a big question that needs several people to think and plan together.

- **Relationship map.** Another important question to start with is '*Who is in my life?*' and '*Whom do I know?*' There are various templates for the *relationship map* with multiple concentric circles (see Figure7a). This can help the person to reflect on how important different people are in their lives. However, it can also be done on a blank piece of paper, by naming and writing down all the people that the person can think of.

Figure 7a: Circle of Friends of a High School Student

Source: Falvey, Forest, Pearpoint & Rosenberg, 2000:12
Figure 7b: Circle of Friends of a person with 'at risk'-Label
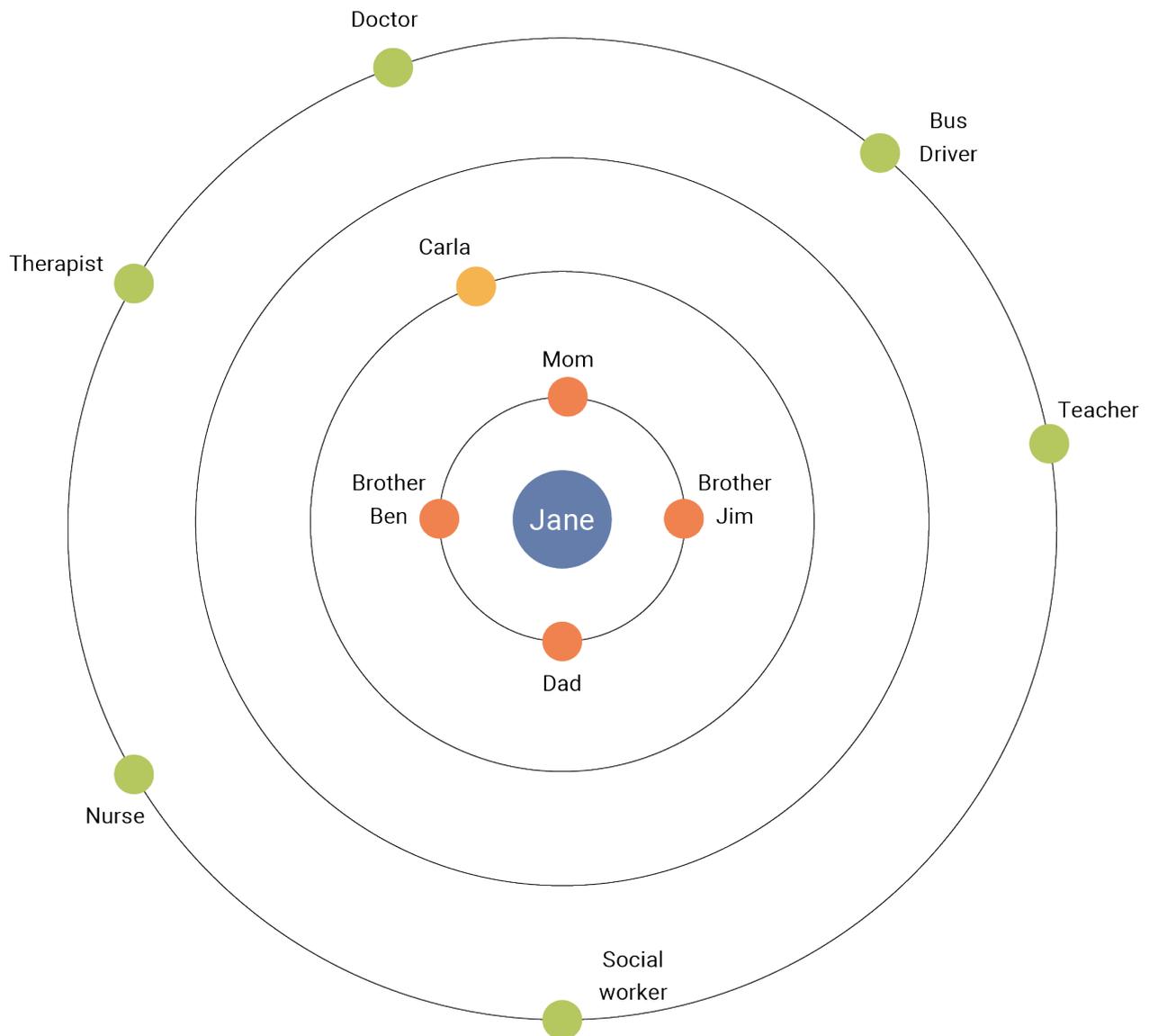
Source: Falvey, Forest, Pearpoint & Rosenberg, 2000: 13

As shown in the examples above (Figures 7a & 7b), there can be lots or just a few people in a person's life, depending on their current situation, their past or other reasons. It is important to try and gather all the names and then possibly also think about how to increase the circle, for example by 'borrowing'from people who are in the person's life and who do have a full relationship map.

As a second step, it is important to think about '*Whom do I want to participate in the planning?*' and'*Who will be invited?*' This decision will also be influenced by the 'great question' or issue which has been identified.

- **Setup.** The next preparatory task is to think about a good place for the meeting. It should be a setting that suits the main person and their needs. For example, it can be their favourite coffee shop that has a quiet second room, a room in a community centre, or also somebody's living room if that is what the person wants. In terms of setup, some thought should also be given to food, decoration, a centre piece in the

middle of the circle, music or other things that contribute to the wellbeing of the people present and to ensure that the planning meeting is a pleasant experience.

- **Facilitation.** Person Centred Planning is typically required to have two facilitators. One facilitator makes sure that everybody's voice is heard and that all people present in the meeting have a chance to contribute. Usually that is also the person who helps to prepare the planning meeting with the main person. The second facilitator is the graphic recorder. Their task is to ensure that everything being said and planned is depicted on the poster. Visualising the things that are happening during a planning meeting with symbols, pictures, and colours is useful to express and depict feelings or images of dreams. It also helps to spark creativity and imagination and leads to a different atmosphere than if things are 'just written down' on a flipchart.

There are different ways of Person Centred Planning. The two most well known are probably MAPS – like a treasure map – and PATH – like a path to the dream (O'Brien, Pearpoint & Kahn, 2012).

MAPS contains a set of questions to learn more about a person, their interests, strengths, gifts, dreams and needs. All questions are thought of together in the group to make sure that everybody can contribute their answers.

Figure 8: Example of a MAPS
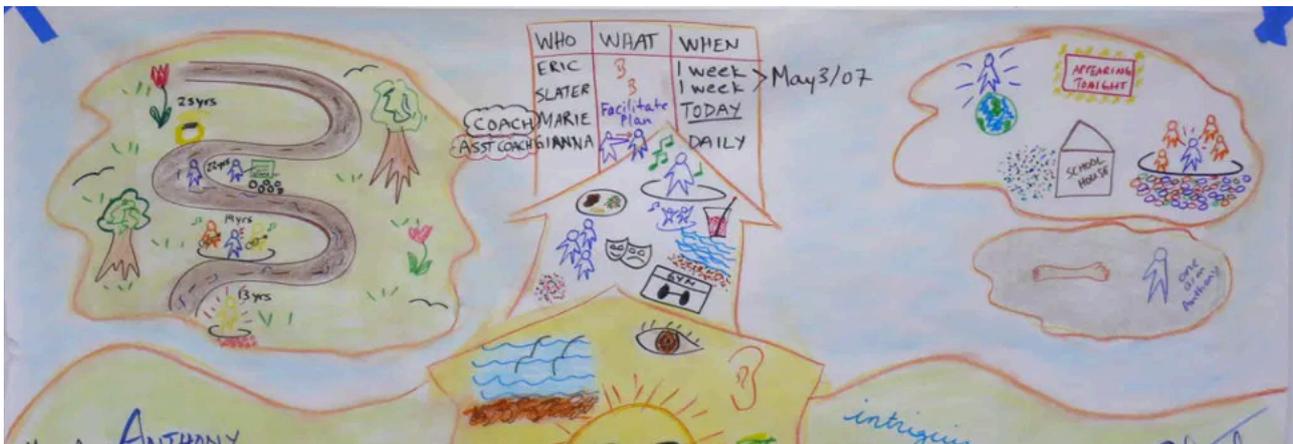
Source: https://inclusion.com/path-maps-and-person-centered-planning/maps_planning

PATH is used when there is a need to think about how to achieve big dreams and how to reach certain goals. It invites the planning group to plan, step by step, to think of what else, or who else, is needed to make progress and what the group needs to work towards the dream.

Figure 9: Example of a PATH

Source: https://inclusion.com/path-maps-and-person-centered-planning

Sometimes, neither MAPS or PATH are used in a meeting. Other times, in longer meetings for example, they may start with MAPS and then move on to a PATH planning afterwards (Hinz & Kruschel, 2013).

A Person Centred Planning meeting will very often leave lasting memories for everybody involved. Many people say afterwards that, for them, it was "an honour to be invited." When recalling some of the meetings that we taken part in, there are two aspects that will never be forgotten:

Gathering different ideas and dreams: During the Person Centred Planning process, all people present are invited to share their dreams and visions for the main person. In Sandra's example, which is mentioned below, it was a wonderful surprise both for the main person and the group to look at all the ideas gathered and to realise how diverse and inspiring they were. This variety can only be collected when taking time and planning with a group and not when thinking on your own. Margaret Wheatley says:

"We need time to think about what we might do and where we might start to change things. We need time to develop clarity and courage. If we want our world to be different, our first act needs to be reclaiming time to think. Nothing will change for the better until we do that" (Wheatly 2009:103).

Encouraging the main person by sharing their strengths and talents is done in MAPS. One of the first questions all the participants are asked is to think of the main person's strengths, talents or gifts. During one meeting, everybody was given some index cards to write down all the strengths they saw in the person. After they had written on the cards, they took turns to present their cards to the main person. It became visible, gradually, card by card, how much this meant to the person because with every single card the person sat more upright, became more present and smiled a bit more.

Challenges and misperceptions of Person Centred Planning

As with most things in life, Person Centred Planning comes with some challenges and there are some common misperceptions which this section addresses.

There are many Person Centred Planning projects, practices and publications connected to disability. This makes sense because for people labelled this way, it is much more difficult to leave traditional ways of institutionalisation and to step outside of their boundaries to create their own good life. Some people may say that Person Centred Planning *is* for people with a disability.

However, this would be a problematic limitation to the possibilities of Person Centred Planning. Jack Pearpoint, one of the pioneers in Person Centred Planning, "never thought that this work was about disability" (2011: 76). Person Centred Planning started in the field of marginalised people and their emancipation. It can be used for every person who is in a situation of not knowing how to move on. This method will work for any person needing support in developing new perspectives for their future and some help to find answers to some of life's "great questions."

Some people believe that Person Centred Planning aims to increase self-determination. Of course, it is an empowering process for the main person, but that is not the main aim. It is much more about being and feeling included in the community by using a systemic approach. There are always people around the main person involved. That is why it is not a peer-counselling approach but an approach with a support circle as diverse as possible. Although people of the same age and with similar experiences sometimes are extremely important for free association and for creating a positive dynamic.

"All means all" also relates to age. There is a wide spectrum of people who can benefit from Person Centred Planning – you could say from 5 to 85, as the following two examples demonstrate:

Where to go to school and be welcomed?

There was a five-year-old girl with speech difficulties, facing the challenge of starting school. Of course, she did not say 'I want Person Centred Planning,' but her mother heard about it and it seemed to be a chance for her, as the mother, to gain more confidence and support going to a primary school to enrol her daughter. At the end of the process, three 'best friends' offered to go with her to a school, in a confident and determined manner, and to explain to the principal what an opportunity it would be to have her daughter as a student in their school.

In this example, the main person is the five-year-old girl speaking seven words. Then, secondly, in a systemic understanding of person centredness, the parents, who were feeling powerless, can also be considered main persons.

> *Andreas' example –* ***How to have a good time until the end of life?***
>
> *My mother had decided to move into a senior's home in Germany for her last years. She didn't know what would happen there, she was non-verbal after a stroke. Institutionalisation was evident, starting with ignoring her personal wishes, for example, giving her coffee (which she hated) instead of tea (which she loved), switching on the radio to pop music (which she hated) instead of classical music (which she loved as a former piano teacher) etc… I felt the need for Person Centred Planning for her, or should I say also for me, as her legal guardian. We invited people from the family, the neighbourhood, friends, but no one from the institution, as we had no trust in them. We did something very strange: My mother wasn't there because she didn't feel well, so, we did it without her, which is usually not correct. If you work in a person centred way the main person should be there. However, that was our situation. Finally, right after the meeting, we read the ideas we had agreed upon to my mother and she squeezed my hand a little with her hand, which we interpreted as her consent.*

This example (Hinz, 2015) shows that in addition to the systemic approach, you also have to be flexible, to adapt to the situation, the context and the culture you are in. On the other hand, there are some principles which are really important, for example, not to plan without the main person. These must be followed and respected in order for Person Centred Planning to remain as open and powerful as it has been since its creation. That is why we introduced the four cornerstones at the beginning of this chapter.

After the Covid-19 pandemic, virtual meetings and gatherings have become more common. This might also be an option for Person Centred Planning, at least according to some facilitators and people who don't have much time or don't want to travel. Of course, online gatherings might be feasible if the other option is to not meet at all. It may also work for a follow-up meeting. For the main planning session though, when meeting for the first time and for establishing the support circle, we strongly encourage in-person meetings and believe in the power of people physically gathering in a room, just like Jana Zehle emphasises:

"At the same time, however, I would also like to emphasise that building and maintaining relationships requires a physical, concrete encounter that is created and experienced in dialogue in the sphere of interpersonal relationships and not in the digital realm of possibility or possibly with a digitally controlled counterpart" (Zehle, 2024: 17).

There are also other challenges to Person Centred Planning, which we look at briefly here:

One challenge is connected to the cultural context. In some societies, dreaming is not encouraged (during the day), and it may seem unthinkable to dream together with others – as could be seen in the example story of the boy who wanted to be a medical doctor. In some societies, talking about challenges openly may be seen as a weakness. For example, in Germany, there are often discussions before a Person Centred Planning meeting, reviewing if a person or a family really needs this and if they should rather solve 'their problems' themselves. Even the idea of who could be called 'a friend' differs from society to society. In some places, Person Centred Planning could be seen as something 'exotic.' In other societies, maybe in some parts of Africa, where the culture of Ubuntu is still alive, it may be more acceptable (Asante, 1997).

There are also many challenges for the people who facilitate Person Centred Planning:

- Their role is to make sure that each and every voice is heard and their ideas influence the process and the poster, for example when using MAPS or PATH (see above). On the other hand, no one should be put under pressure to say something and to contribute.
- Sometimes, complicated dynamics could arise. For example, the mother, the primary teacher, and the secondary teacher may compete to see who knows best how to protect and support the main person. Or it could be a family with divorced parents where the father is living apart from the rest of the family. If they meet during the planning, there could be tendencies of devaluing him by sarcastically saying: 'Wow, he has an idea – wonderful!' Or it could be difficult to find a gift in the person, especially if the perception of the circle members is that everything is difficult; everything is terrible; there are no people around; and that there is nothing they can do.

In this instance the facilitator's job is to reframe the situation as even the most terrible situation could have a potential for positive change. Therefore, facilitation is not easy, but it has tremendous potential. As Ines Boban (2007) once said, about the role of the facilitator: "You have to dance with the group!"

---

*Sandra's example – **Deciding on job opportunities***

About 10 years ago I was about to finish my academic education and began to wonder where my 'job path' would take me. I started having conversations with a lot of people, which resulted in many interesting, highly diverse ideas and recommendations. Looking at these possible next steps, I felt unable to find an answer to this question by myself. As I am also a facilitator for Person Centred Planning, the next thought was obvious: I will have Person Centred Planning for myself!

After finding a facilitator friend who agreed to host the meeting, I started with a relationship map and was amazed by the number of people I knew. The page was full of names. Then there was a major task of choosing who to invite to the planning meeting. In the end, there was a group of about 20 people coming together and thinking about my job path. It was great to learn all about what people thought I was good at and what their ideas were about what I could do next. Some of the things I had never thought of myself, so they were quite surprising (like using my interest in books and opening a bookstore). At the end, with the support of the group, I was able to decide, and we jointly developed a '10-year path' and dreamed of all the major steps that would happen in the next 10 years. Looking back, I still feel very empowered by the Person Centred Planning and even though I didn't look at the path too often, I lately realised that almost all of the things written there I accomplished. Maybe it is time for another Person Centred Planning?!?

Person Centred Planning in projects and systems

Until now within this chapter we mainly focused on person centred planning and their families as a systemic background. Person Centred Planning can be practised on different levels (Kruschel & Hinz, 2015). It is also suitable for entire systems, for example, a whole city on the way to inclusion. An example of this is the city of Wiener Neudorf in Austria who started a project to become more inclusive (Braunsteiner, 2016). First, they connected kindergartens with the primary school and the communal parliament, and children began to have a monthly hearing in parliament. The municipal government unanimously decided to commit itself to the values of inclusion. Some years later, they expanded this to the whole city, with areas that were meeting places for people, a better cycling system, a welcome

package for newly arrived migrants and lots more. Again, some years later, the steering group evaluated the development. Every planning stage was done using MAPS and PATH; the initial, the extended, and the reviewing processes. Many different people, from children to the elderly, were involved, and every time all of them dreamt of the most inclusive city they could imagine. Then they implemented lots of steps in the plan, many of them much earlier than planned.

Person Centred Planning can be a great support for projects, for groups, for clubs, for initiatives and for situations of any kind, for example with supported employment or community living. If there is a psychiatric ward to be closed in two years and all former patients transferred to their own flats with support, Person Centred Planning will be helpful (and has proven to be so in the past).

Person Centred Planning can be useful for the development of schools, especially if they do this in a participatory way and with inclusion as a 'North Star' (O'Brien, Pearpoint, & Kahn, 2010: 70-71) or 'Cruz del Sur' (in the Global South), to guide their work. There are some examples on how schools connect planning processes with the concept of the Index for Inclusion (Booth & Ainscow, 2011). Also MAPS and PATH fit as action plans with Mel Ainscow's contribution to phases of school development in the Index if they are adapted and made accessible for children. These posters can be presented to the public for weeks in the school building, which increases the potential of being realised (Boban & Hinz, 2015). Sometimes, schools use Person Centred Thinking posters to evaluate their school development. Also, a participatory action research project with a school in Iceland used these person Centred ways for planning (Jörgensdóttir Rauterberg & Hinz, 2024). Therefore, ways of Person Centred Planning fit with processes of organisational development on different levels, they were in fact adapted from them, as you can read below.

Person Centred Planning, a practical approach – and what about evidence and theory?

Looking back to when Person Centred Planning came about, the focus was on one person, with organisational development methods in the background.

Where did it all start?

Once upon a time, there was a woman called Marsha Forest who worked at York University in Toronto. She had read some wonderful poems by a young lady, Judith Snow, and then tried to invite her to the university to talk to the students. However, she found out that this young woman lived in a senior's home and she was totally shocked. How can it be that a young woman lives in a senior's home? One of the reasons was that her parents were not able to care for her anymore, to turn her over in bed, for example, at night.

Then Marsha started to think about how they could support Judith so she could live as she wanted, and not be forced to live in the senior's home. They started a circle, calling it first 'Circle of Friends,' and later they called it 'Circle of Support.' They asked several people to join, and they worked until Judith had her own flat and her own assistance there. They say this was the first person in Canada who had a personal budget and support. However, the story doesn't end there.

Some years later, Marsha Forest got a breast cancer diagnosis. This time, Judith was the one who said: 'Oh, let's meet again. Let's build a support circle and let's think about what can be done.' There were so many aspects to think about: Who cares for the cat? Who cares for the plants? Who cares for the fishes in the aquarium? Who goes every Friday to her mother to have tea together? Also, who's accompanying her to her next therapy session? So, they sat down and planned for this together. Unfortunately, this story has no happy ending because Marsha passed away in 2000. Nevertheless, she had a much better quality of life than she would have had without all the people supporting her. And what about Judith? She lived until 2015 – 35 years longer than doctors had predicted.

This story shows that the start of the whole development was a very practical one in Toronto during the 1980's (Pearpoint, 1990, 2011). People were caring for one another and supporting one another. From that starting point Person Centred Planning has spread worldwide to many countries and many different contexts.

Evidence

One of the strengths of Person Centred Planning is that it developed from practice and the way it has spread to many different parts of the world speaks to its success.

There are practitioners' networks established, primarily in the disability sector, which support the further development of practices. For example, after two big European projects (Lunt & Hinz, 2011; Niedeck, Lindmeier, & Meyer, 2015) the *New Paths to Inclusion Network* includes organisations of persons with disabilities, service-providers, universities and research centres, which aim to equip practitioners with the knowledge and skills necessary to respond to the individual needs of persons with disabilities.

Although primarily focused on people with (intellectual) disabilities, there is also empirical evidence to support the use of Person Centred Planning (Claes et al., 2010; Gray & Woods, 2022; Gregory & Atkinson, 2024; Holburn, 2002; Isvan et al., 2023; McCausland et al. 2022). However, it is challenging to fully capture the outcomes of Person Centred Planning in research as some outcomes tend to be difficult to measure. For example, how can we measure the impact of the main person fulfilling a dream, or getting closer to doing so? Or how can research capture the *'ripple effect'* on everyone in the support circle or the wider community? If we only measure employment attainment or active participation in formal learning or activities, important aspects related to human flourishing, wellbeing and quality of life get lost.

Theoretical alignments

While Person Centred Planning is not associated with one particular theory, we consider here some theories which help to further explain its success story, and why it works. The theories we have chosen to include are Carl Rogers' humanistic and person centred approach, Otto Scharmer's Theory U and Pierre Bourdieu's capital theory. There is of course potential to apply several other theories which we refer to very briefly afterwards. However, for the purpose of this chapter, we have focused on three theories which we consider to be particularly relevant.

Carl Rogers' (1961) person-centred approach has significant connections with Person Centred Planning, not only by name but also in relation to some core aspects which will be outlined shortly. Carl Rogers was an American psychologist who developed a theory from his therapeutic practice and research in the 1960's. However, Rogers went on to contribute more broadly to the field of education through his book *Freedom to Learn* (Rogers & Freiberg,1994).

Central to Rogers' humanistic and person-centred theory is the notion that we are all experts of our own lives, which is also at the heart of Person Centred Planning. It can often be challenging for professionals to step out of the role of 'expert' and try not to be the person with all the answers, not least for teachers who may identify as experts in their subject areas. Nonetheless, it is central that person centred work is grounded in the assumption that each person can make decisions about their own lives, albeit sometimes with the help of others. With this understanding of the person, it becomes essential that we listen to and support the person to dream.

Another assumption of Rogers' theory is that we are all inherently motivated to self-actualise, or to realise our potential. However, Rogers suggests that growth and self-actualisation rarely happen in isolation. For a person to grow, and to live their best life, there must be mutually optimistic, warm and understanding relationships. Again, this supports the use of the 'circle of support' in Person Centred Planning. Rogers goes on to explain that such relationships help to develop self-awareness, self-esteem and confidence in one's own decision making.

Another theory that could provide an explanation for why Person Centred Planning can be successful is Otto Scharmer's Theory U (2009).

Figure 10: Theory U
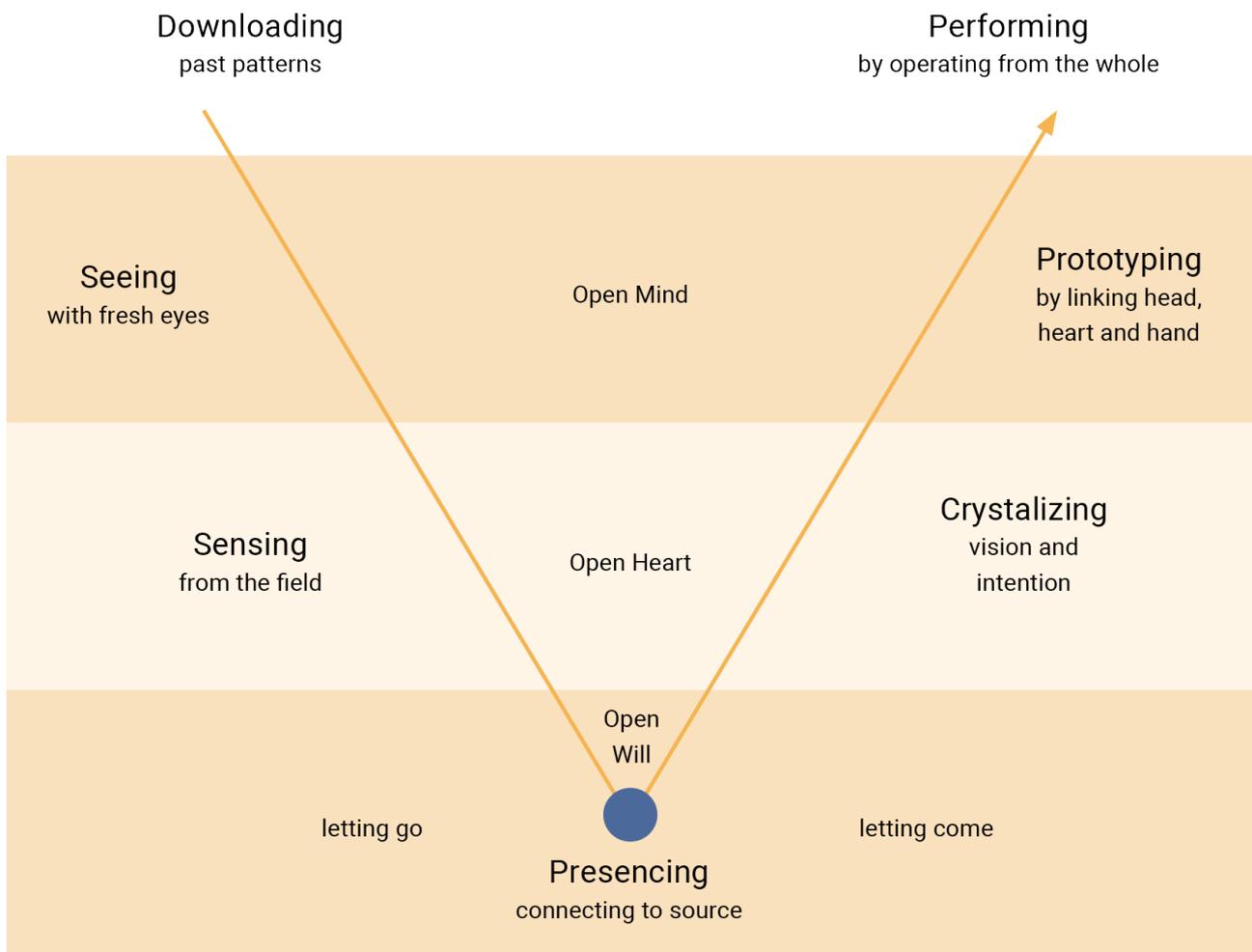
Own illustration according to Scharmer and Kaufer 2013: 22.

In his theory, Otto Scharmer introduces two different ways of dealing with problems or of answering questions. The most common way is called *downloading*, where we apply knowledge and experience from our past (*'past patterns'*) and try to solve issues based on that. It is relying on our current knowledge. From Scharmer's point of view this creates 'more of the same,' leading to typical results, reproducing well-known solutions.

Person Centred Planning, as we have mentioned, relies on a common process of creativity and generating ideas. This is what Scharmer refers to in his Theory U (*'performing – by operating from the whole'*). Instead of using existing knowledge and solutions, the first important step when faced with questions or issues is to let go of what we already know. He invites us to listen deeply, with an open heart, an open mind, and an open will. Instead of 'downloading,' people should be present and sensitive to collectively generating a culture of listening and awareness that enables new ideas and thoughts (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013). These new ideas are, in Scharmer's theory, "prototypes" (ibid: 21), new ideas and ways of trying to deal with the questions and challenges we are faced with. After the collective phase of listening and generating, we are then invited to start testing the prototypes, just like in PATH, when we think of goals and steps to achieve and then develop a plan of who will try what, when and with whom.

It's listening to each other, being open to new ideas, being open to whatever wants to be born out of this process and then, putting these ideas into practice, by testing if those are possible solutions or answers to the questions that we face. Due to this large overlap of thinking and theoretic aspects, Otto Scharmer's 'Theory U' has been used as a foundation for several projects implementing Person Centred Planning, for example the European Project "New Paths to InclUsion" (with capital U) and is widely used in that context (O'Brien & Mount, 2022).

Another theorist who never heard about Person Centred Planning but could, based on his ideas justify why it works, is the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. In his capital theory he distinguishes between different sorts of capitals which form the position of a person in society (Bourdieu, 1986). They are interconnected and characterised (1986: 241)

- "as *economic capital*, which is immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalised in the form of property rights;
- as *cultural capital*, which is convertible, on certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalised in the form of educational qualifications; and
- as *social capital*, made up of social obligations ('connections'), which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalised in the forms of a title of nobility."

If Bourdieu knew Person Centred Planning, he could argue that it is a process of increasing social and cultural capital in a very intensive way, because more people, more knowledge, and more connections with others are established through the Planning. People are more included in different contexts through the diverse group of the support circle and not just in 'one bubble.' Person Centred Planning has huge potential to support the main person to go through a process of growth. A person's situation has the chance to become much better than before and enables a better position in society, not automatically but potentially. It can sometimes be seen throughout a planning meeting that the main person is almost physically growing and starting to shine (as mentioned in the example with the index cards).

There are many more theorists who would be able to argue that Person Centred Planning works if they knew about it:

- Axel Honneth (1996) could say that Person Centred Planning is something like a 'bath' in recognition, especially on the level of solidarity between the main person and the support circle.
- Kurt Lewin (1951) would maybe say based on his Field Theory that going through person centred processes is enriching positive 'valences' in the field, which strengthen the person. They could also raise awareness for individuals who act as inspiring and supportive 'crystallisation cores,' as newer adapters of this theory would say (Burow, 1999).

- Uri Bronfenbrenner (1979) could argue that Person Centred Planning is an example of an intense 'proximal process,' contributing positively towards the development of the main person by increasing competency and buffering social connections.
- Riane Eisler would say based on her partnership-domination scale that Person Centred Planning is a way of practising a very partnership oriented, egalitarian communication and co-operation with equally valued and different persons in a circle, ideally far from any tendency of domination and suppression, "nurturing our humanity" (Eisler & Fry, 2019).
- Hartmut Rosa could argue, based on his Theory of Resonance (2019) that Person Centred Planning is a great example of intensive experiences of resonance. Especially in the MAP process where supporters tell the whole circle what they would miss if the main person would not exist, which is often an emotionally overwhelming situation, including being moved to tears (as the example from Germany shows).
- Hermann Haken (1988) developed the synergy theory and emphasises co-operation, co-ordination and complementarity among various elements of disorder in the system, so that various forces within the system can gather and form a joint force, then produce an orderly state and play the overall function. He could argue that Person Centred Planning is a great example for strengthening the connection in school and beyond, building the co-operation mechanism; ensuring orderly and effective collaboration, and taking the development of children as the starting point.

Our central message, which we hope you bring with you from reading this chapter, is the importance of seeing the whole person, and their future, and to recognise that you, as a teacher, can have a significantly positive impact on others by doing this.

If you want to learn more

Here are some good places to start:

Title / Topic	Available
Inclusion Press, Toronto, USA A website, co-directed by Jack Pearpoint & Lynda Kahn, with articles, books, videos etc. on Person Centred Planning and more, for people in education and community settings.	inclusion.com
Helen Sanderson Associates (HSA), UK A large collection of resources (reports, videos, books etc.) aimed at various settings, including schools. Many tools mentioned in this chapter are available for free here.	www.helensandersonassociates.com
Personalising Education – A guide to using person-centred practices in schools, by Sanderson, Goodwin and Kinsella, A collection of person-centred thinking tools and how you can use them in a school setting	https://www.swindon.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/10326/ personalising_education_-_a_guide_to_using_person-centred_practices_in_schools.pdf

HWB, an education website of the Welsh Government Several documents from 2015 available to download, related to working in Person Centred ways in schools and beyond. E.g. ● *Person-centred practice in education: a guide for early years, schools and colleges in Wales* ● *Person-centred reviews toolkit: guidance for education providers* ● *Developing as a person-centred organisation. Guidance for schools, colleges and nurseries on how to become more person-centred*	https://www.gov.wales/person-centred-reviews-guidance
Beth Mount's homepage, with many books, workbooks and artistic cards etc., available to download. Primary focus is on supporting people with disabilities.	https://www.bethmount.org
Inclusive Solutions, an organisation based in the UK that delivers facilitation of Person Centred Planning as well as training in facilitation etc.	https://inclusive-solutions.com

Netzwerk Persönliche Zukunftsplanung A network across German speaking countries on Person Centred Planning	www.persoenliche-zukunftsplanung.eu

Local contexts

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=665#h5p-56

Closing questions to discuss or tasks

- If you, as a teacher, was to implement one aspect of Person Centred Planning, what would that be?
- What could be the first step to make that happen?
- Thinking about your life so far – could you have benefitted from Person Centred Planning at some point?
- Thinking about your future – what could be a 'great question' for you to work on?

Literature

Asante, Shafik. *When Spider Webs Unite*. Toronto: Inclusion Press, 1997.

Boban, Ines. "Moderation Persönlicher Zukunftsplanung in Einem Unterstützerkreis – „You Have to Dance with the Group!"." *Zeitschrift Für Inklusion* 2, no. 1 (2007). http://www.inklusion-online.net/index.php/inklusion-online/article/view/180/180.

Boban, Ines, and Andreas Hinz. "Zukunftsplanung Und Schulentwicklung." In *Zukunftsplanung Als Schlüsselelement von Inklusion. Praxis Und Theorie Personenzentrierter Planung,* edited by Robert Kruschel and Andreas Hinz, 135–64. Bad Heilbrunn: Klinkhardt,

2015.

Booth, Tony, and Mel Ainscow. *Index for Inclusion: Learning and Participation in Schools*. Bristol: CSIE, 2002.

Bourdieu, Pierre. "The Forms of Capital." In *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, edited by John G. Richardson. New York City, NY: Greenwood, 1986.

Braunsteiner, Maria-Luise. "Implementing the Index for Inclusion for Inclusive Schools: A New Paradigm." *Open Online Journal for Research and Education* Special Issue #5 (September 2016). https://journal.ph-noe.ac.at/index.php/resource/article/view/324/365.

Bronfenbrenner, Urie. *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979.

Burow, Olaf-Axel. *Die Individualisierungsfalle: Kreativität Gibt Es Nur Im Plural*. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1999.

Claes, Claudia, Geert van Hove, Stijn Vandevelde, Jos van Loon, and Robert L. Schalock. "Person-Centered Planning: Analysis of Research and Effectiveness." *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities* 48, no. 6 (2010): 432–53.

Eisler, Riane, and Douglas P. Fry. *Nurturing Our Humanity: How Domination and Partnership Shape Our Brains, Lives, and Future*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.

Gray, Anthony, and Kevin Woods. "Person-Centred Practices in Education: A Systematic Review of Research." *Support for Learning* 37, no. 2 (2022): 309–35. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9604.12410.

Gregory, Richard, and Cathy Atkinson. "Young People's Views and Experiences of Person-Centred Planning: A Systematic Literature Review." *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs* 24, no. 1 (2024): 175–87. https://doi.org/10.1111/1471-3802.12623.

Haken, Hermann. *Synergetics – The Secret of Natural Success*. Translated by Dai Mingzhong. Shanghai: Shanghai Science Popularization Press, 1988.

Hinz, Andreas. "Zukunftsplanung Auch Im Alter?" In *Zukunftsplanung Als Schlüsselelement von Inklusion. Praxis Und Theorie Personenzentrierter Planung*, edited by Robert Kruschel and Andreas Hinz, 76–83. Bad Heilbrunn: Klinkhardt, 2015.

Hinz, Andreas, and Robert Kruschel. *Bürgerzentrierte Planungsprozesse in Unterstützerkreisen. Praxishandbuch Zukunftsfeste*. Düsseldorf: Selbstbestimmt Leben, 2013.

Holburn, Steven. "How Science Can Evaluate and Enhance Person-Centered Planning." *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities* 27, no. 4 (2002): 250–60. https://doi.org/10.2511/rpsd.27.4.250.

Honneth, Axel. *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, 1996.

İsvan, Nilüfer, Alexandra Bonardi, and Dorothy Hiersteiner. "Effects of Person-Centred Planning and Practices on the Health and Well-Being of Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities: A Multilevel Analysis of Linked Administrative and Survey Data." *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research* 67, no. 12 (2023): 1249–69.

Jörgensdóttir Rauterberg, Ruth, and Andreas Hinz. "Inclusion and Democracy – Two Sides of the Same Coin? Experiences of Participatory Action Research with Children in Iceland," 2024. https://www.beltz.de/fileadmin/beltz/downloads/ OnlinematerialErziehungswissenschaft/11_Joergensdottir_Rauterberg___Hinz.pdf.

Lewin, Kurt. *Field Theory in Social Science: Selected Theoretical Papers*. New York City, NY: Harper & Row, 1951.

Lunt, Julie, and Andreas Hinz. *Training and Practice in Person Centred Planning – A European Perspective: Experiences from the New Paths to Inclusion Project*. Stamford: Dalrymple and Verdun, 2011.

McCausland, Darron, Esther Murphy, Marie McCarron, and Philip McCallion. "The Potential for Person-Centred Planning to Support the Community Participation of Adults with an Intellectual Disability." *Journal of Intellectual Disabilities* 26, no. 3 (2022): 603–23.

Mount, Beth. *The Imaginative Journey: Pathway to Citizenship*. Toronto: Inclusion Press, 2014.

Niedeck, Imke, Bettina Lindmeier, and Dorothee Meyer. "Ein Blick Zurück Und Einer Nach Vorn – Die Bedeutung von Zukunftsplanungskursen Aus Sicht Der Teilnehmer*innen." In *Zukunftsplanung Als Schlüsselelement von Inklusion. Praxis Und Theorie Personenzentrierter Planung*, edited by Robert Kruschel and Andreas Hinz, 227–34. Bad Heilbrunn: Klinkhardt, 2015.

O'Brien, John, and Herb Lovett. "Finding A Way To Everyday Life – The Contribution of Person Centered Planning." Pennsylvania Office of Mental Retardation, 1992. https://thechp.syr.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/everyday.pdf.

O'Brien, John, and Beth Mount. "What More Is Possible?," 2022. https://inclusion.com/site/ wp-content/uploads/2022/10/What-More-is-Possible.pdf.

O'Brien, John, and Conny Lyle O'Brien. "Inclusion as a Force for School Renewal." Lithonia, GA: Responsive Systems Associates, 1995. https://www.academia.edu/31418393/ Inclusion_as_a_force_for_school_renewal.

O'Brien, John, Jack Pearpoint, and Lynda Kahn. *The PATH & MAPS Handbook: Person-Centered Ways to Build Community*. Toronto: Inclusion Press, 2010.

Pearpoint, Jack. *Behind the Piano*. Toronto: Inclusion Press, 1990.

———. *Interview*. Edited by John O'Brien and Carol Blessing. *Conversations on Citizenship & Person-Centered Work*. Toronto: Inclusion Press, 2011.

Rogers, Carl. *On Becoming a Person: A Therapist's View of Psychotherapy*. London: Constable, 1961.

Rogers, Carl, and Jerome Freiberg. *Freedom to Learn*. 3rd ed. New York City: Merrill, 1994.

Rosa, Hartmut. *Resonance: A Sociology of Our Relationship to the World*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2019.

Sanderson, Helen. "From Presence to Contribution," n.d. https://www.helensandersonassociates.com/presence-to-contribution/.

———. "Important to / Important For," 2022. https://www.helensandersonassociates.com/

wp-content/uploads/2022/09/importanttofor.pdf.

———. "The Doughnut," 2023. https://www.helensandersonassociates.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/The-Doughnut-Sort-fillable.pdf.

Scharmer, C. Otto. "Theory U: Leading from the Future as It Emerges." San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2009.

Scharmer, C. Otto, and Katrin Kaufer. *Leading from the Emerging Future: From Ego-System to Eco-System Economies*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler, 2013.

Wheatley, Margaret J. *Turning to One Another: Simple Conversations to Restore Hope for the Future*. 2nd ed. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2009.

Zehle, Jana. "'Der Mensch Wird Am Du Zum Ich' – Heilpädagogische Beziehungen Im Digitalen Möglichkeitsraum." *Heilpaedagogik.de Fachzeitschrift Des Berufs- Und Fachverbands Heilpädagogik e.V.* 3, no. 39 (2024): 13–18.

About the authors

Andreas Hinz

Andreas Hinz was a teacher. From 1999 to 2020 professor for Inclusive Education at Martin-Luther-University Halle-Wittenberg in Eastern Germany, from 1986 to 1999 member of a research team on 'integrative' school experiments in primary schools in Hamburg. Co-founder of a small inclusive hotel (barrier-free and with a mixed team of employees) in Hamburg, working since 1993. Active in Democratic Education since 2008, ten years cooperating with the Institute for Democratic Education at the Kibbutzim College for Education in Tel Aviv, joining lots of European and worldwide conferences of the Democratic Education movement. E-Mail: andreas.hinz@paedagogik.uni-halle.de.

Petra Elftorp

Elftorp, Petra; Dr., Associate Professor, lecturer and course director of a Masters in guidance counselling and lifespan development at University of Limerick in Ireland. Key research interests relate to inclusive practices, person-centred approaches and career development. E-Mail: petra.elftorp@ul.ie

Sandra Fietkau

Fietkau, Sandra; Dr., social worker, has been working on different projects promoting inclusive structures and societal development in the south of Germany for almost 20 years, researcher on support circles, more inclusive service settings

and social space development, also a facilitator for Person Centred Planning and convinced of the generative power of these forms of planning and getting together. E-Mail: mail@sandra-fietkau.de

Yuzhen Xu

Xu, Yuzhen; worked as an itinerant teacher in 2006, helping teachers to plan to profile and address the needs of students, and has chaired research programs on changes of special schools in the context of inclusive education, transition for the disabled children, etc. E-Mail: yzxu2003@163.com

PART III

SECTION 3: CREATING INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS AND PARTICIPATION

CREATING A FRAMEWORK FOR INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Deirdre Forde; Chris Carstens; Cynthy K. Haihambo; Ulla Sivunen; Claire O'Neill; and Alessandra Galletti

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=398#oembed-1

Example Case

"Example quote"

who, Institution, Country

Initial questions

In this chapter you will find the answers to the following questions:

1. Why are there perceived barriers in creating inclusive learning environments?
2. What needs to be addressed to make learning environments more inclusive?
3. What is the importance of culture in terms of linguistic minorities?
4. What is the importance of the curricular and sensory components of an inclusive learning environment?
5. Is it solely the teacher's responsibility to create an inclusive learning environment?

Introduction to the Inclusive Environment Framework

A group of teachers, advocates, researchers with diverse backgrounds, and other professionals worked collaboratively to design this chapter. It aims to answer some key questions about inclusive learning environments. The authors' varied backgrounds and experiences of different learning environments adds richness and complexity to the shared content.

In engaging with this chapter, the reader should be able to:

- Have an increased understanding of the dimensions of an inclusive learning environment.
- Identify some barriers and enablers to an inclusive learning environment.
- Consider an inclusive learning environment through the lens of the learner and, in particular, through the lens of a bilingual deaf learner and a neurodivergent learner.
- Identify ways in which the inclusive learning environment framework can be used to enhance professional practice and learner experiences.

This chapter follows a similar structure to other *All Means All Project* chapters, beginning with opening questions that set the stage for exploration. The main body then delves into core content, while closing questions prompt readers to engage in reflective practice and support their ongoing professional development.

While collaborating on this chapter, we each found that we needed different elements from our environment at different times, which made it challenging to decide what to prioritise. As we worked to condense the complexities of inclusive learning environments into a single chapter, the scope of our task became clear. Readers may notice some variations in the chapter's structure as we endeavoured to blend our perspectives on this multidimensional concept that lies at the heart of truly inclusive education. To simplify this complexity, we developed an inclusive environment framework, which we share here with the reader.

Figure 1. Inclusive Learning Environment Framework
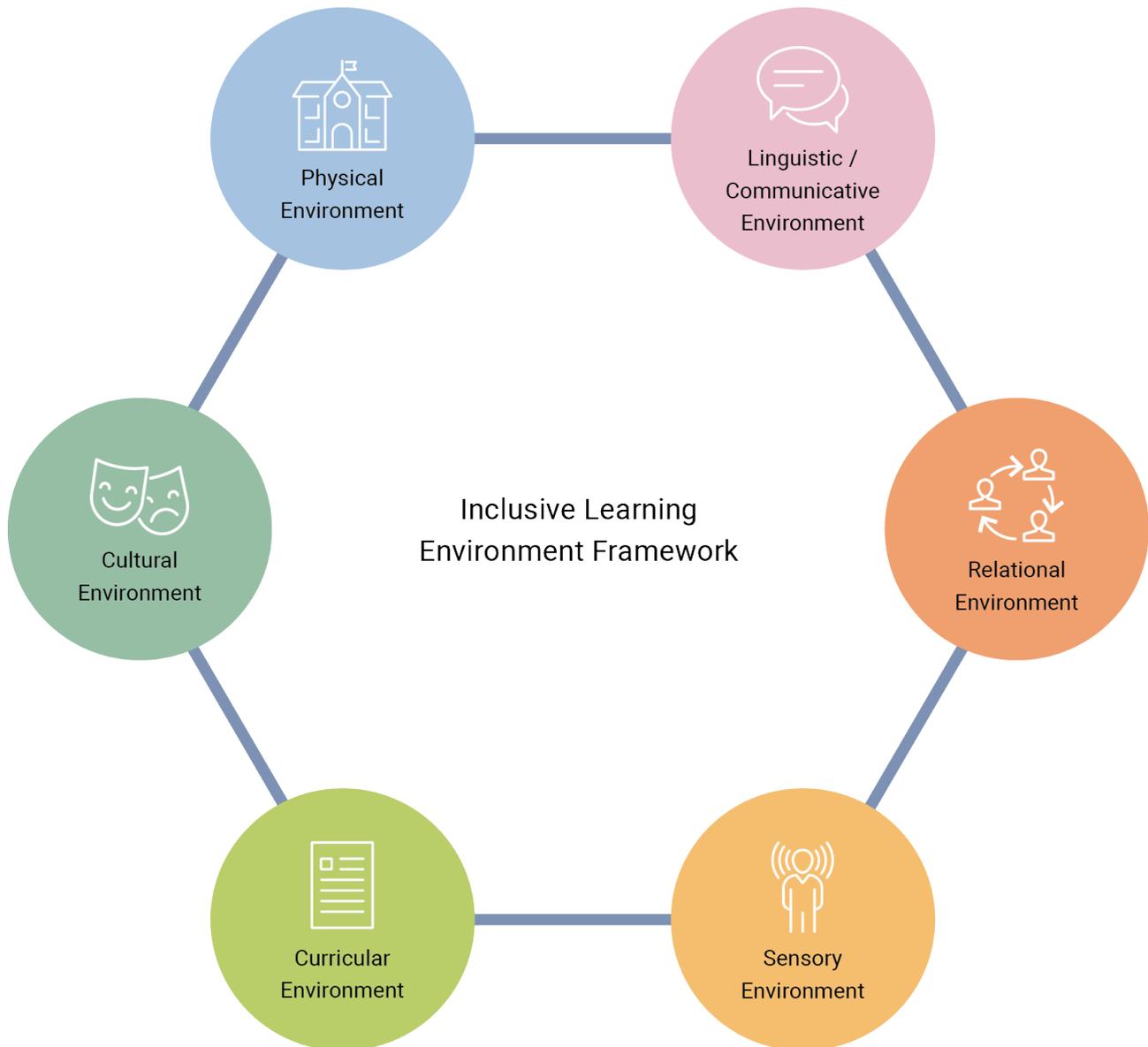
(O' Neill, C; Carstens, C., Forde, D; Gambetti A., Haihambo,C. and Sivunen, U.)

When collaborating on this chapter, it became apparent that a framework was necessary to provide structure to this vast topic and the myriad ideas that we wanted to include. We share it with the intention for it to be a tool for teachers to plan, design, evaluate, collaborate, and reflect upon inclusive learning spaces. The components of the framework are physical, cultural, curricular, sensory, relational, and linguistic / communicative [Figure 1].

The analogy of a floordrobe or a chairdrobe [Figure 2] is helpful in explaining why to use a framework (Hargreaves, 2019). A framework can organise a work process into a streamlined, visually appealing, and organised "wardrobe"; the different framework components operating like hangers and shelves, organising ideas, and communicating written information in a structured way. Moreover, the visual representation communicates

the interconnectedness of the six components, thus further emphasising the importance of fluidity of thought when conceptualising inclusive learning environments.

Figure 2. Using a Framework

From floordrobe → To wardrobe

Our thoughts on inclusive educational environments without a framework

Our content is more organised by using a framework
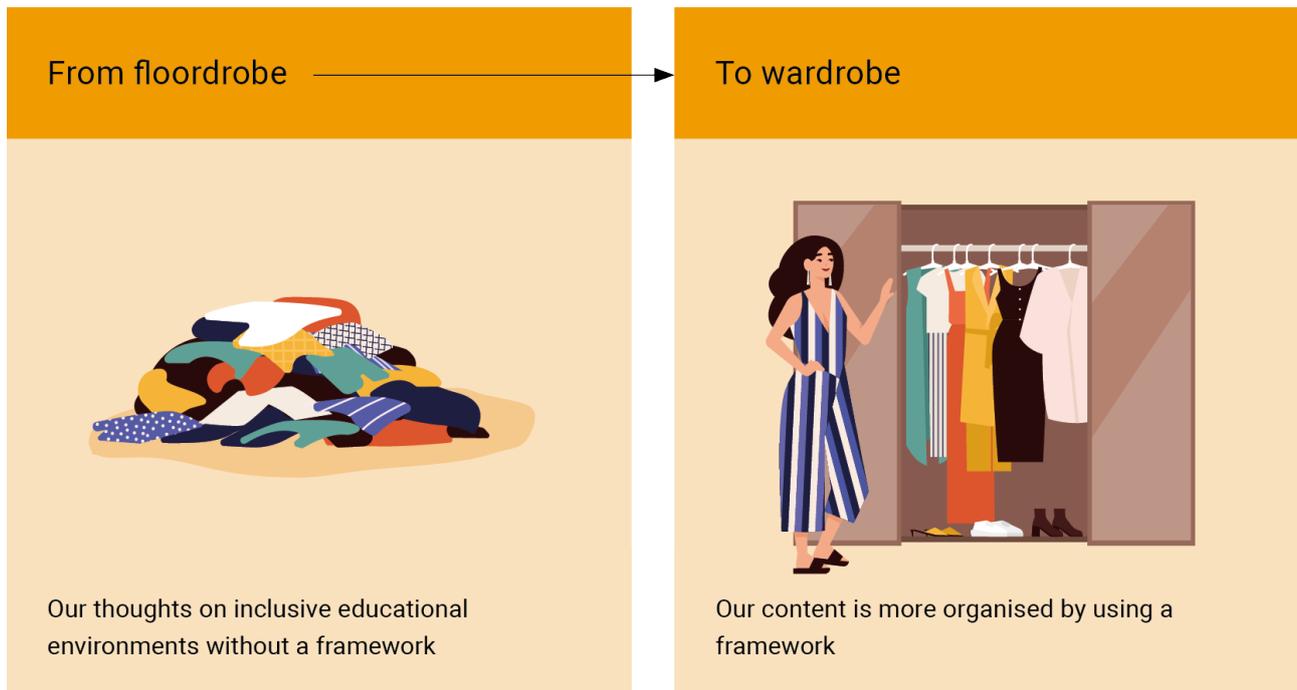
(O' Neill, C; Carstens, C., Forde, D; Gambetti A., Haihambo,C. and Sivunen, U.)

Our diverse writing group needed to create a flexible space that accommodated each member's individual differences, making the process of building an inclusive environment a kind of real-life case study. For instance, one author, whose neurodivergent thinking style and multilingual background influenced their approach, found visual representations helpful in organising collaborative ideas and information. Additionally, the group embraced significant linguistic and communicative diversity. To ensure accessible communication, we used signed language interpretation services, facilitating effective collaboration between a deaf author who uses Finnish Sign Language and the rest of the team, who do not use signed language. By adapting to each member's needs—such as providing visual supports and sign language interpretation—the group embodied the principles of Universal Design for Learning and Inclusive Pedagogy. This collaborative approach provided multiple means of engagement, representation, and expression, resulting in an accessible, equitable, and inclusive working environment for all.

Frameworks are valuable tools that, like effective learning environments, help to clarify, organise, and support the learning process. Some alternative frameworks are included in the **resources section** of the chapter. The framework is offered here as a flexible tool to be adapted depending on the user, purpose, and context. Please make it your own.

We now turn to the six components of the framework. While the *All Means All Project* identifies thirteen dimensions of diversity, a detailed exploration of each is beyond the

scope of this chapter. Instead, we focus on selected components through our own unique perspectives. We encourage the reader to use dimensions of diversity applicable to one's context, learning environment or learners, as an opportunity to operationalise and individualise the framework.

1. The framework has six components:
   a. Physical
   b. Cultural
   c. Curricular
   d. Sensory
   e. Relational
   f. Linguistic / Communicative
2. Suggested Uses:
   a. Plan
   b. Design
   c. Evaluate
   d. Collaborate
   e. Reflect
3. The framework is a living example of an inclusive environment in action.
4. The components are interconnected and non-hierarchical.
5. The framework is adaptable and flexible.
6. Other frameworks are available and may suit the reader's needs better.

Six components of the Inclusive Education Framework

Physical

The physical environment is conceptualised as a space that is socially produced through the interplay of objects, structures and actions (Aristarchi & Venini, 1985). School space is often perceived as a void by those who occupy it, something inherited and difficult to change, whose function is almost taken for granted: the theatre of the lesson, the still scenery of school life. Instead, it can be inhabited, adapted, transformed and made more compatible with the activities that take place there (even without making particularly onerous interventions). We can perceive it through our senses and interaction with the people and the furniture there. It can be smelled, touched, heard, seen, written on, scratched, soiled, stained, painted, moved, opened, closed, dressed, occupied, washed and covered. It can make one feel safe or in danger, sheltered or exposed, comfortable or uncomfortable. How a physical school space is designed and used can determine the extent of levels of participation and how successful social interactions are. In considering the processes of

inclusion and exclusion, school spaces can exude a sense of welcoming and warmth where participation is a possibility for everyone.

It can indicate how to be used based on its conformation (Gibson, 1979). Space can increase levels of well-being based on how well it meets the needs of the people using it, thus it has the power to influence levels of inclusiveness (Kaplan, 1983). A clear pedagogical idea can be shaped through space design (Weyland & Attia, 2015) and therefore, the classroom environment is considered important in terms of influencing students learning and achievement and student attitudes (Vasquez & Oury, 2010).

Space can give information about itself, communicating where the resources one needs are located, through wayfinding (Lynch, 1960). Space, depending on its use, can enhance autonomous enjoyment and increase the perception of well-being. Perceived well-being provides a good basis for being able to increase inclusive practices (Cohen, 1980). In addition to providing equal use for all, it can be set up to serve as an interface for inclusive learning practices to make them more effective (Saffer, 2007).

The implication of space in the generation of exclusion is a topic in the international architectural, pedagogical, sociological and political debate (D'Alessio, 2012). The design and organisation of space can be elements that foster inclusion because accessibility can create inclusion or exclusion, and society is responsible for the exclusion of categories of people due to the presence of barriers within public space: it is society that makes people disabled, it is society that must adapt to people and not vice versa (Lettieri, 2008).

The awareness of school leaders is important in order to achieve the possibility of adaptive adjustments on the space, but the whole school community can also participate in this sense (Weyland & Galletti, 2016). If the whole school is conceived and designed to offer different opportunities for use – in compliance with inclusive teaching methodologies it could include places to work in small groups, places to work alone, places for meeting with the teacher, places dedicated to well-being and relaxation, spaces to be able to take different positions, informal spaces for discussion, open laboratories where one can try out what one has learnt directly, spaces to be used 'autonomously' by students (Caprino et al., 2022). Proposing a differentiated school environment can provide a good basis for responding to different needs, making the necessary adjustments according to individual situations, through the use of furniture. Alternatively, even small adjustments based on the organisation of the classroom and the outdoor environment can serve as a means to raise awareness throughout the school in the future (Weyland & Galletti, 2022).

To a large extent, the classroom environment is considered important in terms of influencing pupils' learning and achievement, learner attitudes and their sense of belonging. The use of space by a teacher to ensure a sense of belonging is cultivated and whether learners are participating with their peers and fully engaged in learning is central to whether a child is included in a school or not.

In conclusion, when considering the inclusiveness of space, it is important to refer to the features of the actual people for whom this space needs to be inclusive. For the school,

a Universal Design approach can help lay the foundations for an inclusive welcoming. The next step will be to adapt the space to individual needs, for which designers and teachers can define an intervention strategy with a multidisciplinary approach, where barriers to participation need to be removed. Spaces with glass partitions communicating to the classroom, bookshelves with wheels, whiteboards and movable screens, informal seating, shared and illustrated rules of use, orientation signs, furnished atriums for small group activities outside the classroom, are some of the elements that can positively influence the school's possibilities for inclusive uses.

Cultural

In this component of the framework, we discuss inclusive school culture and the teacher's role and responsibility in creating diverse and inclusive cultural environments. International mobility and digitalisation have increased linguistic and cultural diversity, and societal change (Blommaert & Rampton, 2011), which can be seen also in schools. UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (Stenou, 2002) states, that we need cultural diversity, because it is a source of innovation, creativity and exchange. Cultural diversity is part of common heritage of humanity and we as educators should recognise and affirm it: "*As a source of exchange, innovation and creativity, cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature. In this sense, it is the common heritage of humanity and should be recognized and affirmed for the benefit of present and future generations*" (Stenou, 2002, p.4). For these reasons cultural diversity should be seen as an asset.

Inclusive school is about diversity of all people, including teachers and staff. When diverse learners see similar role models, they can identify with these adults and experience belonging to the school community as they are. All learners and adults get used to working with children and adults from a wide range of backgrounds. Diverse people create multicultural representations and cultural meanings that create a diverse and inclusive school culture with a sense of belonging.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of people with Disabilities (2006) emphasises the importance of diversity amongst the staff of a school: It states that in order to help ensure the realisation of this right,

"*State Parties shall take appropriate measures to employ teachers, including teachers with disabilities, who are qualified in sign language and/or Braille, and to train professionals and staff who work at all levels of education. Such training shall incorporate disability awareness and the use of appropriate augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication, educational techniques and materials to support persons with disabilities.*" (UNCRPD, Article 24)

An inclusive school reflects a democratic philosophy whereby all students are valued, educators normalise difference or diversity and a school culture reflects an ethic of caring and community (Baglieri & Knopf, 2004). Ideally, the school reflects the diversity of its

surrounding society, like a mirror. In moving towards inclusive education for neurodivergent children, the response to education requires stakeholders to address the deficit disability discourses which permeate the system. What is needed is a willingness to examine attitudes and to challenge the status quo and commitment to collaboration among all stakeholders (Forde, 2022). In order to address deficit-based cultures, schools must empower neurodivergent and other children with diverse background by accepting and celebrating their diversity in thinking, feeling and communicating rather than making them 'fit in' or shape them into meeting '*neuromajority*' or other majority norms. The Neurodiverse Paradigm, which is underpinned by a social model of disability is an alternative to deficit models of disability. It provides an inclusive and holistic world view that is welcoming of all kinds of minds and celebrates and values the differences inherent in humankind. Rooted in biodiversity and cultural diversity, the neurodiverse model recognises that different children need different support, and that society has a role to play in how 'disabling' a child's impairments are. In this domain, education is an essential catalyst for achieving change and representation of disability must be at the heart of transforming integrative approaches to more inclusive ones (Forde, 2022). There is no more powerful transformative force than education to build a better future for all (Baglieri & Knopf, 2004). With the mobilisation of a neurodiverse model of disability, which is a radically different model of practice and antidote to the medical model of disability, comes the possibility of disrupting the normative of the current system, to expand it and create social change for neurodivergent children, so that they can occupy the system as valued members (Forde, 2022). Indeed such activism could be expanded to include all difference in mankind and to disrupt the status quo, thus including not just neurodivergent children but all children who do not fit the 'norm'.

Curricular

As a student-teacher or a novice teacher, you probably have formed ideas about what a curriculum is. Most likely, you associate "curriculum" with the plan for academic content, including assessment. According to Stotsky (2012), *"a curriculum is a plan of action that is aimed at achieving desired goals and objectives. It is a set of learning activities meant to make the learner attain goals as prescribed by the educational system. Generally, it includes the subjects and activities that a given school system is responsible for. Moreover, it defines the environment where certain learning activities take place. Furthermore, curriculum defines what happens in any formal educational institution, and no school or university can exist without it. The concepts governing curriculum are dynamic in nature because of the changes that occur in everyday lives"* (p. XX).

The curriculum is broader than the formal document that comes from your education governing body and determines what to be taught and how it should be taught. It includes school cultures, the school spaces and approaches to teaching and learning. It includes

activism to address attitudes towards diversity and to address exclusion. It may also involve the active movements to decolonise curriculums so that children can see themselves reflected in its content. The curriculum in schools is supposed to enable all children to acquire knowledge and skills that will help them become independent, socially- and emotionally sound, adaptable and productive citizens of their communities and countries. Marsh and Willis (2009) view curricula as all the *"experiences in the classroom which are planned and enacted by the teacher, and also learned by the students" (p. XX)*. In this chapter, we describe curriculum as a plan of what should be learned and how it could be learned. It further entails who the learners are and how they can be enabled to learn through various means. We also consider who the facilitators of learning and socialization are and what values and attitudes they adopt to facilitate learning for all learners. The curriculum further entails the environment in which teaching and learning take place and how this environment is constructed and re-constructed to allow for creativity and diversity of learning and being.

We are writing this chapter from the perspective of inclusive education, with a deep belief that all children and young people can learn and should be enabled to learn irrespective of their diversity. Societies are diverse and so are schools. Learners in schools are different and so are their teachers. Some learners have typical needs and can perhaps learn through any curriculum presented to them. Others might have neurodiverse conditions that will require the teaching and learning environments to be adapted to suit their learning styles. Others could have sensory difficulties, social-emotional and behavioural difficulties, physical and cognitive disabilities. Some learners are gifted or talented in specific areas while others are from under-resourced families in which their most basic needs are barely met. Learners with migration histories might have experienced trauma; those from racial and religious minority backgrounds might be stigmatised and suffer emotional trauma and rejection. Learners who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender or Queer plus (LGBTQ plus) could experience repeated criticism, confrontation and labelling. Schools, through their curricula, have a responsibility to afford this diverse population of learners opportunities to experience belongingness, participate in learning and develop to their maximum potential, free from bias, ableism, prejudice, discrimination and stigmatisation. Please refer to the section on frameworks and ableism for a better understanding on the role of institutions of exclusion in schools and communities.

Most countries have adopted the learner-centered and competence-based curriculum models for their education systems. Unfortunately, academic achievement remains the most important measure and assessments remain rigid, without consideration for learner diversity. Learner-centeredness means child-centeredness. Child-centred means that the aspirations, potential and drive of each individual learner should be considered. Learners should be enabled to learn in the best way they can learn. An important part of learning is participation. We do know that learners are diverse with regard to physical, emotional, intellectual, linguistic, social, economic, sexual, racial, religious and personal development. Most curricular are developed for the typical learner and do not consider the diversity

of learners. Teaching and learning happen in average classrooms, based on the ideal assumptions of the conventional learner who, in accordance with typical development, lives in a family that loves them; have at least two nutritious meals a day; sleep on a relatively comfortable bed; come to school content and find happy classmates and teachers that are excited to engage the learners. We do know that this picture is flawed. Around the world, children are excluded from schools because of dis/ability, race, language, religion, gender, and poverty. It is the duty of the curriculum to reduce biases and inequities in education. This is despite various national and international legislation and conventions which suggest that education is a right of every child and that every child should receive education that is suitable to their needs. These include the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (1948), Salamanca Declaration (1997), the Convention of the Rights of the Child (1990), the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) and many others. Globally, these international conventions have been domesticated and local policies developed to propel inclusive education and ensure that no child or young person shall forfeit their right to education by virtue of their diversity. However, millions of children across the world experience school as a hostile environment in which they are expected to fit in. Students can feel excluded in an education system when learning through a curriculum that is not friendly to diversity. While it is primarily the responsibility of school principals to create and oversee the implementation of inclusive learning environments, teachers have a key role to play as they deal with children and young people on a day-to-day basis and have deep insights into their classroom and school dynamics. Teachers should respond to diversity in a manner that shapes learners' attitudes and influence their behaviours by addressing negative attitudes such as racism, stigmatisation and prejudice and rewarding good attitudes and behaviours. While policies at all levels of the education system can support and help create diverse learner friendly environments, curricula should be developed and adapted to suit the strengths and interests of learners in your class (Wood & Haddon, 2020,). An inclusive curriculum helps learners from diverse backgrounds feel relevant and valued as they feel more connected to the course material.

Learners feel more included and develop a sense of belonging within the school community when the curriculum reflects and celebrates their diversity. Moreover, when students leave their comfort zones and step out into the real world outside the perceived protective environment of school, they should be prepared to deal with other cultures and people from diverse backgrounds. An inclusive curriculum prepares them for this by exposing them early on to the different viewpoints, cultures and identities of people. It instils in students values such as open-mindedness, empathy and cultural sensitivity so that they are better able to adjust to different working environments. An inclusive curriculum incorporates the social and cultural aspects of the community it serves and includes locally relevant themes and contributions by marginalised and minority groups. By ensuring an adapted accessible curriculum, learners are enabled to succeed and are motivated to learn in a welcoming and safe environment.

Sensory

Figure 3. The Sensory Learning Environment
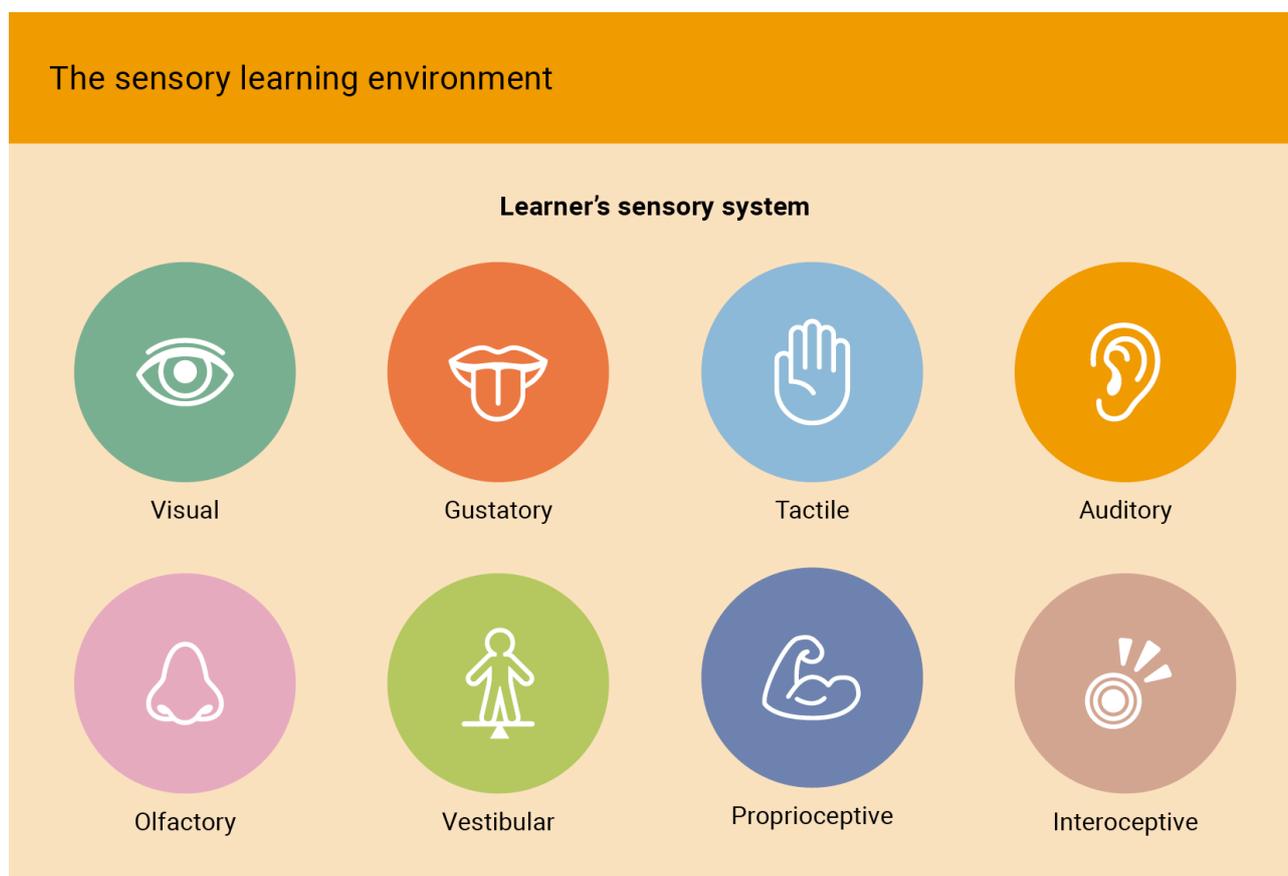
The sensory component of a learning environment has a significant impact on all its inhabitants and not only the learners. That being so, some learners, including (but not limited to) neurodivergent learners, may experience significant differences in how they experience the sensory environment. This interaction between the person and the sensory environment can impact not only learning, but also wellbeing. In this brief introduction to sensory environments, we will focus on neurodivergent users of the learning environment. We will also use the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to represent this information visually in diagrams and tables throughout the section. In addition, the resources section of this chapter includes a video related to this topic. It is important to note that this section is not offered as a comprehensive overview of sensory systems, processing, integration or regulation. That being so, Continuing Professional Development (CPD) from an Occupational Therapist (OT) with a neurodiversity-affirmative approach and a specialist in supporting sensory differences is highly recommended.

A Brief Overview of Our Sensory Systems

With that caveat aside, when supporting neurodivergent learners, we consider how the

educational environment interacts with eight main sensory systems. Rather than describing these systems in a text-heavy way, we have instead used the table below to summarise some key points. The table can be used as an evaluative and planning tool to consider how the sensory learning environment can influence inclusion or exclusion in your learning space.

Figure 4. Making sense of the Sensory Learning Environment
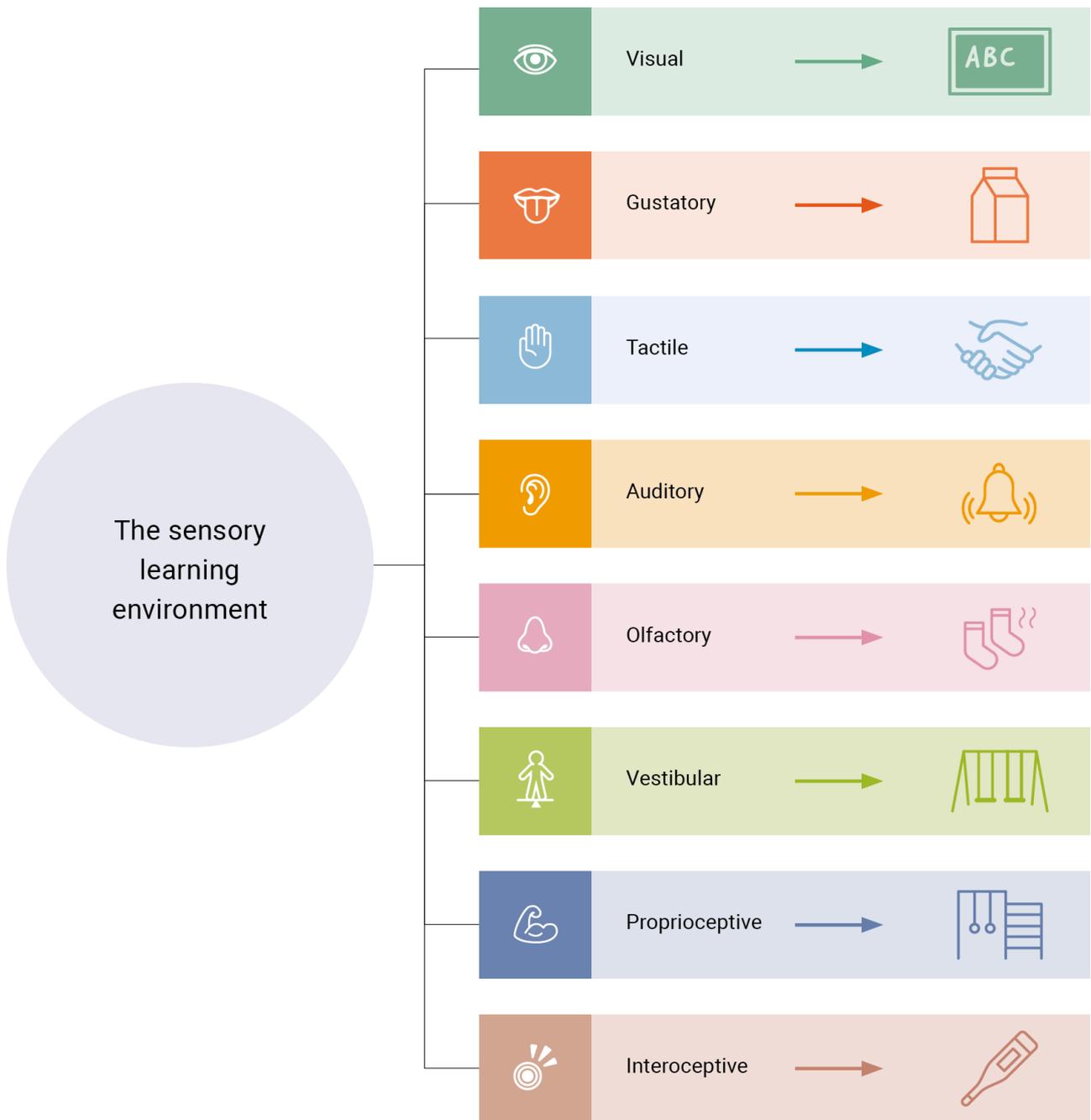
Table 1. An explanation of Figure 4

Sense	Where in Body	Consider in the Learning Environment
Visual Sight	Eyes	· Lighting · Displays · Colours · Patterns
Gustatory Taste	Mouth, tongue and throat	· Healthy eating initiatives, especially when they reward tasting foods. · Lunch time.
Tactile Touch	Skin tongue mouth	· School uniform · Textures in hands-on lessons · Messy play
Auditory Hearing	Ears	· Space at desk · Crowded areas · Physical activity
Olfactory Smell	Nose	· Lunch time · Perfume/Aftershave · Air fresheners · Cleaning product
Vestibular Balance	Inner ear	· Seating options · Physical activity involving this system.
Proprioception Movement Sense of body in space	Muscles, tendons, ligaments, and joint receptors.	· Movement · Movement breaks · Chores involving heavy lifting
Interoception Internal	Nerve receptors inside and outside body	· Body sensations attached to emotions · Appetite · Thirst · Body temperature · Itching · Pain · Illness · Sleepiness · Toileting

In looking to theorise the interaction between the person and the sensory environment, there are many different avenues to explore. For instance, Merleau-Ponty (1962) considers the body as a key to understanding of our relationship to the environment that our bodies and sensory systems are immersed within. Overtime, the realm of theorising the individual's

interaction with their sensory environment has become a focus for Occupational Therapists (Ayres, 1972; Schoen et al., 2019). More recently a new wave of writing is emerging from neurodivergent individuals that explores the lived experiences of the users of these sensory environments (Milton, 2012; O'Neill & Kenny, 2023). What is clear from synthesising these different perspectives is that neurodivergent learners experience the educational environment in a highly embodied way. For example, challenging sensory experiences in the learning environment are frequently reported by autistic people (O'Neill & Kenny, 2023). The interaction between a poorly considered sensory learning environment and neurodivergent sensory systems can lead to overwhelm, distress, exhaustion, and significant health difficulties, including BIMS (burnout, inertia, meltdown, and shutdown) (Phung et al., 2021).

In order to provide balance and not be overly deficit-focused, it is vital for us to share that inclusive learning environments can also offer experiences of sensory joy for all learners, including those who are neurodivergent. There is satisfaction in experiencing these occasions with learners. This reference to sensory joy, although effectively marketed by companies offering sensory products, is not as well researched. However, this topic is active and live in the folk knowledge within neuro-minority communities. The following is a mind map from one of our group members that represents the neurodivergent sensory joy they experience and observe in their educational environment.

Figure 5. Sensory Joy and Inclusive Learning

In practical terms what can we do as teachers to support learners who may experience the sensory environment of school in a different way?

- Firstly, include a sensory checklist in when completing environmental audits of your school and classroom. Ideally, a neurodivergent individual with some knowledge in this area would help assess the environment too. There are many checklists available and Gareth Morewood has developed checklists that incorporate learner voice (http://www.gdmorewood.com/author/gduser/).
- Get to know your learners and their sensory preferences and aversions. Some

neurodivergent learners may have an occupational therapy report with recommendations. If you get the chance to collaborate with an occupational therapist in considering the sensory needs of learners in the educational environment, seize it!

- Be understanding of the fact that sensory preferences, aversions and sensitivities can change over time. Many factors both micro and macro affect these changes. Stress, rest and illness are but a few of these factors.

- If a learner is telling you (by their words or in another way, their behaviour for example) that there is something in the sensory environment distressing them, please believe them. Please do not invalidate their experience, for example, by saying *"you'll get used to it"*. This type of invalidation can lead to learners not trusting their own sensory and body signals and this neither inclusive nor healthy.

- Be cognisant to create a low arousal environment. This can offer a retreat for a learner who is over stimulated.

- Please be sensitive, responsive and adaptive to the sensory needs of learners. In keeping with the principles of UDL, offer different sensory options in your classroom in the form of sensory toys, seating options and adjustable lighting and acoustics. Do not be overly-prescriptive with scheduled sensory breaks and sensory diets are not as inclusive as a person-led and flexible approach. A sensory break should not be offered as a reward and never withheld as a consequence.

Relational

Good relationships can have a deep impact on a child's self-esteem, belonging, social functioning, academic success and resilience (Dooley et al., 2012). There is a plethora of research which shows that a high relationship quality between teachers and learners is one of the most important and effective ways to promote development, both socially and in terms of learning and achievement (Allen et al., 2018; Holzerberger et al., 2019; Pianta et al., 2012; Roorda et al., 2011). Two psychological theories are frequently used to explain the importance of high-quality teacher-student relationships: the attachment theory and the self-determination theory (see glossary) (Pianta et al., 2003; Roorda et al., 2011). In order to feel socially included, students should experience schools as reliable places of learning and support, which in turn is based on the quality of their relationships with teachers and peers. This is even more important for students with special educational needs (SEND), who are often more exposed to isolation and victimization (Murray & Pianta 2007). When good relationships at school are lacking, children can see themselves as outsiders, isolated from the school environment (Skinner et al., 2014). The fragility of student-teacher relationships has been brought into question now that many European countries are being influenced by neoliberal policy discourses and are dominated by the values of self-interest, individualism, competition and comparisons (Hall et al., 2019). With education coming to be more closely linked to economic growth and global competitiveness, there is an increasing emphasis

on standardisation and out-comes based assessment, test-based accountability as well as corporate forms of school management. Thus, the tensions produced by the clash of conflicting philosophies that underpin inclusive learning environments and schools that narrowly focus on academic achievement over relationships means that while education is meant to be for all, education is becoming a commodity, a private good to be consumed. Neoliberal policy discourses shift the focus of teachers care away from students, as performative pressures on pupils and teachers are contributing to rather than ameliorating the marginalisation of pupils who do not fit the normative homogenous group of learners. Therefore, now more than ever, educators have a responsibility of care to all students and in Nell Nodding's words *"we should want more from our educational efforts than academic achievement and second, we will not achieve even that meagre success, unless children believe that they themselves are cared for and learn to care for others"* (1984).

The concept of care refers to concern for others, responsibility for a relational caring (Noddings, 2002, 2012) and teacher care is defined as teacher behaviours which enhance or maintain the quality of positive interpersonal relationships among teachers and students (Bieg, Backes & Mittag, 2011). Teachers must put care at the core. Strong relationships with teachers and support staff create the foundation for inclusive education. Schools play an important role in providing a safe, caring environment for children and building connections and relationships with trusted adults. Relationships are central to children's sense of belonging and well-being (Treisman, 2016). Promoting positive school staff relationships and supporting emotional well-being is paramount for teachers working to build deep relationships with students. One of the strongest predictors of stability and well-being, in young people, is the existence of at least 'one good adult' in their lives. Crosby (2016) emphasises that teachers can be a significant attachment presence for vulnerable students, a connection, who is safe and available to a child in their time of need. This good relationship can have a deep impact on a child's self-esteem, belonging, social functioning, academic success and resilience (Dooley et al., 2012).

The role of the teacher in creating an inclusive learning environment is of key importance. Within the traditional systems of school culture and structure it is still widely believed that the role of the teacher within the school context is to teach and evaluate certain subjects as well as the pupil's performance. There can be a lot of pressure to achieve certain objectives from the curriculum within a given time frame and this in turn can impact on other vital elements of successful and inclusive teaching. That however is only a fraction of what we need to be doing in order to truly make our schools inclusive. We would strongly argue that creating a welcoming and safe learning environment, is the foundation of any successful learning experience, enabling a child to participate and learn.

As demanding as the task of educating and caring for young learners may be, fortunately educators often have a lot of freedom in choosing our working methods, modelling and preparing content, or making changes to our work environment. This not only requires the critical reflection of our own presuppositions and biases but also the willingness to make

an active effort in redefining teacher-student relationships and challenging the status quo in order to promote social change.

Elements of successful teaching and inclusive education

In order for us to gain a general understanding of what successful and inclusive education entails, we want to introduce the four elements which Naukkarinen (2018) proposes of successful teaching and inclusive education:

1. Addressing the basic needs of the students
2. Applying group dynamic skills
3. A learner-centred approach to learning
4. Striving for on-the-job learning and school improvement

Arguably, considering point one: ***addressing the basic needs of the students***, children need infinitely more than having merely their basic needs met. According to Maslow's (1970) hierarchy of needs apart from the basic needs such as physiological needs and safety, children also require a sense of belonging and love, self-esteem and self-actualisation for them to really thrive. Being one of the most important attachment figures to interact with students on a daily basis, it is up to us to fulfil these needs on various levels (Naukkarinen, 2018).

The nature of a group within a learning environment is an important factor in order for children to develop social skills and learning, motivate them and help them form their own concept of self. Understanding a group's specific dynamic, ***applying group dynamic skills, and*** assessing its emotional nature are responsibilities which ultimately fall to the teacher. The sense of home and belonging cannot solely stem from a space itself but also from the relationships, rules and boundaries of the people within it. Essentially home is where your heart is. Getting to know and respect the other group members with their individual needs, learning to take others' perspective for the sake of better understanding them and feeling seen and validated as an individual, are equally important factors to feeling at home and welcome in a learning environment.

Balancing a heterogeneous group of individuals can be very challenging and overwhelming at times and often requires a certain skillset and amount of leadership (Naukkarinen, 2018). This does not however have to indicate an authoritarian and more traditional approach but is more about fostering a culture of showing respect, giving responsibility and encouraging critical thinking within the group. Especially the feeling of being taken seriously and being validated are aspects which are of great importance to young learners and are experiences which many of them remember and apply to other situations in later life.

Being validated, respected and represented are also vital and overlapping elements of a ***learner-centred approach to learning***. We need to be representing the children's lived experiences, their family backgrounds and topics which are relevant to them in everyday life so that their identity is validated in an inclusive school environment. In order to achieve that we need to give learners more autonomy and responsibility concerning school culture and classroom environment, and curriculum and subject matters. Of course, there needs to be a framework for these choices, but it is still often the prevailing practice to exclude children from these decisions and processes completely when we should be letting them take ownership of their learning and develop learner agency. This frequently makes it difficult for children to relate and engage (Naukkarinen, 2018).

In the beginning it may feel unfamiliar to hand over responsibilities and control to the rest of the group, especially since the traditional perception of the role of the teacher is often associated with authority, working alone and being solely responsible for the wellbeing and development of a group of young learners. While we will admit that it takes relationship building, group work and practice, we can promise that relinquishing some of that control and collaborating with the students on relevant factors of school culture eventually does pay off.

Figure 6. Principles of learner-centred instruction

Learners' knowledge and experiences are validated.

Learners acquire strategies for learning inside and outside of the classroom.

Content of instruction is relevant to the learners' needs and interests.

Learner-centered instruction

Classroom tasks challenge learners and promote higher-order thinking skills.

Learners make choices about content and classroom activities.

Learners' first language and culture are viewed as a resource for learning.

Classroom interactions and tasks represent how language is used in the real world.

based on Parrish (2019)

For us to successfully fulfil the requirements of inclusive learning mentioned above, it is of primary importance that we are willing to **strive for on-the-job learning and school improvement** (Naukkarinen, 2018). Learning and improvement are terms which might suggest that there are workshops to be visited or scientific literature to be read in order to meet expectations and become better versions of ourselves. While those are of course valid approaches they are not always mandatory for moving towards our goal. A democratic school culture, collaborating with children and parents, cooperating with colleagues and actively reflecting upon our own belief systems are elements to incorporate into our everyday practice which can go a long way. Essentially, we invite you to reflect on and

question your belief systems, to be explorative and curious and ideally let others accompany you on that journey.

Importance of teachers to be reflective and reflexive

Many people would consider teaching as being a calling more than simply a job. It undoubtedly has a huge impact and might arguably be one of the professions with the most potential to actually enact change – offering young learners' inspiration, a positive outlook and encouragement to actively participate in society (Jones, 2009). Hansen (2001) indicates that it should be viewed as more of a 'moral practice' while Fullan (2013) additionally proposes that this moral purpose cannot go without "the skills of change agentry".

That being said, ironically, in most parts of the world, school culture still remains a traditional and somewhat hierarchical work environment in which people tend to hold on to their familiar belief systems and find it hard to free themselves from conventional perspectives to actively promote social change. We limit ourselves by preserving structural and cultural features of school organisation, frequently making school a very inflexible environment unable or unwilling to adjust to the individual's needs.

Reasons for this are possibly teacher's defensive routines, retaining prevailing practices because they offer a sense of safety and control and thus undermining critical evaluation and constructive discourse (Naukkarinen, 2018). Being responsible for a group of young learners can be daunting to say the least and it is understandable for us to gravitate towards authoritarian approaches at times – essentially often restaging our own childhood experiences in school. The thought of relinquishing control or even power can be very unnerving because notions such as classical reward-punishment solutions for example are something familiar for us to hold on to. If we want to strive to fulfil Naukkarinen's fourth element of successful teaching and inclusive education as mentioned above, it is imperative that we are inquisitive and willing to establish a new learning relationship between teachers and students since otherwise a constructive discourse becomes impossible.

So, how is it possible for us to implement Naukkarinen's fourth element to strive for improvement and become explorative and more open minded? A good aspect to start off with is critically reflecting upon our biases, our mindsets, values and belief systems. A task which is more complex than it might seem especially since reflection alone is not sufficient unless it is put into action. We need to be willing to make necessary changes and apply and incorporate them into our understanding of the world and our role within the microcosm of school. Mezirow (1991) suggests, that teachers need to be engaged in critical reflection of their experiences, which in turn leads to a perspective transformation: *"Perspective transformation is the process of becoming critically aware of how and why our assumptions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand, and feel about our world; changing these structures of habitual expectations to make possible a more inclusive*

and integrated perspective; and, finally, making choices or otherwise acting upon these new understandings" (Mezirow, 1991, 167).

As heterogenous as our learners may be – due to the implementation of inclusive school systems all the more so – teachers are still more often than not part of a majority group. Being subconsciously biased and having prejudices or presuppositions about others is human even for the most open minded among us. Suttie (2016) suggests four steps to reflect upon and fight our own biases including **the cultivation of awareness**, **working to increase empathy and empathic communication**, **practicing mindfulness and loving-kindness** and **developing cross-group friendships in our own lives**.

Psychologically prejudices often serve the purpose of making quick judgement of a group or situation thus helping us make decisions and react accordingly. It is a part of human behaviour which we cannot simply shake. Our biases become a problem if we are not **aware** of them or their impact upon others: "*Teachers are human and therefore influenced by psychological biases, like the fundamental attribution error, when we assume that others who behave in a certain way do so because of their character (a fixed trait) rather than in response to environmental circumstances*" (Suttie, 2016). Especially learner's behaviours which are perceived as problematical or children who are frequently referred to as "difficult" are often sending a clear message and may be displaying a very rational reaction to very inappropriate circumstances.

Empathy in this case refers to our willingness to take another person's perspective. That itself is not always an easy matter and requires us to develop an understanding for our student's backgrounds, communities and their everyday life. We need to actively communicate and learn more about each other in order not to be blinded by our own stereotypical views. Not only does this help forge a more profound bond with our students but it certainly has a huge impact on school culture in general.

Practicing **mindfulness** in our job and everyday routines undoubtedly helps us better manage our own emotions and stress levels thus impacting our reactions to certain situations in the classroom. Suttie (2016) goes on to suggest that decreasing stress levels of teachers can also indirectly reduce their bias additionally to having a positive influence on their wellbeing.

Developing cross-group friendships outside the workplace does not only have a positive effect upon our relationships within the classroom but can also have a great effect upon a community as a whole. It is of vital importance for us to understand that neither our school nor our students exist within a vacuum but are closely linked to their surrounding environments and communities which makes it all the more important for us to reach out thus decreasing our prejudice towards outgroup members. Additionally, this is a major part of the teacher as a role model and can have contagion effects on our students and how they perceive the world since young learners are much more likely to do what we do than to do what we tell them to (Suttie, 2016).

As important as awareness and reflection on us may be, the positive changes that

teachers from minority cultures can bring to a school environment are well documented. Not only can teachers of minority groups serve as role models but also as advocates helping students identify and make a connection between their lived experiences in school and at home (Pellegrino, Bransford & Donovan,, 1999). Villegas and Irvines (2010) found that teachers from ethnic minority groups, for example, managed to successfully establish helpful bridges to learning for students who might have otherwise remained disengaged from schoolwork. Such culturally-relevant practices, if used widely in schools, hold potential for reversing the persistent racial/ethnic achievement gap. Here too the awareness and reflection however are not enough and the presence of teachers of minority groups alone is not sufficient to change a school's climate. They need to be willing to draw upon their own lived experiences working with and educating students and colleagues alike (Villegas, Strom, & Lucas, 2012).

Linguistic and Communicative

Inclusive multilingual education

In this chapter we discuss inclusive education from the view of linguistic and communicative environment, that consists of multilingual learners, linguistic minorities, and accessible communication, especially for the deaf and hard-of hearing (DHH) learners.

Every school is a rich language and communication environment with its diverse people, traditions, and cultures in a globalised world. Open discussions about the diversity of individuals and their diverse needs, the visibility of diverse people, among pupils and the staff, in the school environment is essential also from this point of view. Discussions about language awareness and linguistically responsive classroom pedagogy have become a permanent part of the normative framework of basic education (Piippo et al., 2021.). When we talk about minority and multilingual learners, we automatically approach the subject from the perspective of multilingual education in the field of pedagogy and language education. The school is a key institution for language socialisation (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2012), which gives teachers, educators and curriculum work a central role when building spaces for participation and language learning. Inclusive methods, materials, and digital environments in the learner's first or heritage language, especially in small minority languages, can support the development of individual's multiliteracies and well-being. Media, digital learning materials and interpreting services as examples of resources are good tools to promote multilingual learners and young people's linguistic agency, participation, and access to their first language(s).

A minority/heritage language speaker or signer must learn the majority language in order to succeed well in the society. Using the student's own linguistic resources contributes to the learning of other languages and multiliteracies. Inclusive multilingual education consists of managing learning environments in a way that supports learners' language learning and linguistic-cultural identity also in their first/heritage languages. It can mean,

for example, collaborative teaching, peers, and adults using the same minority/heritage language, translanguaging, using multilingual media materials, teaching each other and linguistically sensitive curriculum planning (more examples and solutions for teaching are described in the chapter "Language Learning for All").

Linguistic accessibility in learning environments and values for communication

There has been more awareness about accessible information and communication, especially during the COVID-crisis due to the visibility of signed language interpreting, and the growing number of subtitles and multilingual information in the media. Linguistic accessibility and linguistic-communicative environment are a kind of umbrella concepts that applies to many different groups of users. Below we give some examples of different user groups and solutions to apply also in learning environments.

Most people communicate through an auditory-oral-modality and traditionally services and education have been built around this way of communicating. For visually oriented people, such as deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) learners, as well other diverse learners' multiple use of semiotic resources is important for accessing information and communication. For example, deafblind people communicate in a tactile way and therefore information should also be carried in tactile mode.

Simplified language is useful for people with cognitive challenges or for immigrants and second language (L2) learners making language more readable. For DHH people, visual and multimodal communication, language concordant communication, signed language or text-based interpreting and translation services removes communication barriers, supports learner's multiliteracies and their participation.

There is plenty of normative expectations about a language and its norms. One example of norms concerns distantism, which constructs the ideal human being "*as a rational and literate being, whose sensual engagement with the world is through eyes and ears*" (Pennycook, 2018: 71). However, deaf, deafblind, and neurodivergent learners often use more semiotic resources and multimodal means creatively such as gestures, touch, and drawings in addition to language (De Meulder et al., 2019; Snoddon, 2022). Snoddon and Paul (2020) argues that access to a language should be framed as a health need especially with DHH learners in their early years, because language deprivation causes deleterious effects on cognition and emotional development. Language deprivation often occurs among those DHH children who were not offered a signed language (Snoddon & Paul 2020). Also, The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) supports the recognition of DHH children's right to a signed language.

For hard of hearing learners who use spoken languages and benefit from hearing aids, learning environments can be designed in many ways to create a better listening environment. Sound-absorbing structures and many technical solutions make listening easier for these learners, and a better listening environment is more comfortable for all

other learners too. There are various hearing solutions that can build a better hearing environment in class or at school. Traditionally there have often been arrangements on optimal listening conditions, but constant dependency on the learner's weaker sense can be stressing for the DHH learner (Kiili & Pollari, 2012) causing hearing fatigue. Visual methods, speech-to-text, or national sign language interpreting services are very important and needed for the DHH learner but serve also peer-to-peer communication in a way which is not dependent on the degree of hearing.

Interpreting services are vital ways to make communicative situations more equal and accessible when thinking about the participation of all minority language speakers or signers, especially from the view of DHH people who use a signed language of their country. Interpreting service grants access to contents, gives diverse learners a chance to understand given information also in group level, express themselves with confidence and to build relationships with other people.

Access to interpreting services varies greatly from country to country. In the Nordic countries, for example, interpreting service is free of charge for users with disabilities. In Finland and Norway, public interpreting service for persons with disabilities is planned to be always available, both at school, at work, or in free time, and for studies or work abroad. Interpreting service can be delivered between a national sign language and national or other spoken language, or as speech-to-text-interpreting, and other more specified ways.

In an inclusive education and learning environment, both spoken and signed languages are seen as equal languages, as well all other diverse learner's use of appropriate means and formats of communication that diverse learners might use, which requires various measures.

When discussing linguistic and communicative environments in schools, all learners benefit from a learning environment where communication and interaction is multimodal. Educators should therefore explore the means and tools available to ensure accessibility of the environment and communication.

Conclusion

Often the focus in school lies on the perceived responsibility of changing the learner or the content and curriculum, not so much on modifying the learning environment or reflecting upon ourselves. Our approach to these situations often lacks reason, since we would hardly change, much less become irritated at a plant for failing to grow but would try to devise ways to adjust the environment in which it is growing. That responsibility ultimately falls to us as teachers being the primary attachment figures for our students and key figures within the school context as well as playing an important role in bridging the gap between school and society as a whole. Achieving that goal requires the willingness to question our values and belief systems, taking other's perspective and constantly striving to improve

school, making it a more welcoming and safer place for all of us. Teachers committed to fostering inclusive learning environments will listen to neurodivergent professionals and neurodivergent learner voices when conceptualising, designing, planning, using, and evaluating sensory spaces and places (Neilson, 2021). Actively building a school environment which provides a sense of belonging and feels like home is not only essential for our own wellbeing but also for that of our students. Meeting all those requirements is undoubtedly a major challenge, it is however one which we do not have to face alone. It is important for us to redefine teacher-student relationships and invite parents and other stakeholders to actively participate in the journey. School is often a microcosm which excludes the environment that surrounds it. If we manage to make schools more welcoming and open places for everybody that will not only have a positive impact on the learning environment itself but in turn can be an important factor in making a change in society altogether.

Local contexts

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=398#h5p-26

Closing questions to discuss or tasks

- What is your personal definition of an inclusive learning environment? In considering this question, think about the vital components of an inclusive learning environment.
- Please take one of the other 13 dimensions of diversity. Use this as a lens to explore the inclusive learning environment framework.
- Compare the framework used in the chapter with some other conceptual frameworks that you are familiar with.

Literature

Allen, K., Kern, M.L., Vella-Brodrick, D. *et al.* What Schools Need to Know About Fostering School Belonging: a Meta-analysis. *Educ Psychol Rev* **30**, 1–34 (2018). https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-016-9389-8

Arnaut, K., Blommaert, J., Rampton, B., & Spotti, M. (2016). *Language and superdiversity*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

Ayres, A. J. (1972). *Sensory integration and learning disabilities*. Los Angeles, CA: Western Psychological Services. [Google Scholar] Cohen S., (1980). Aftereffects of stress on human performance and social behavior: A review of research and theory. "Psychological Bullettin", Vol. 88.

Baglieri, S., & Knopf, J. H. (2004). Normalizing Difference in Inclusive Teaching. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 37(6), 525-529

Bieg, S., Rickelman, R.J., Jones, J.P., & Mittag, W. (2013). The role of teachers' care and self-determined motivation in working with students in Germany and the United States. *International Journal of Educational Research.* Vol. 60, 27-37

Blommaert, J., Rmanton, B. (2011). Language and superdiversity. *Diversities.* Vol. 13, No. 2

Crosby, S.D., (2015). *Evaluating Trauma-Informed Educational Practices With Trauma-Exposed, Female Students*. Wayne State University Dissertations. Paper 1436.

De Meulder M., Kusters A., Moriarty E., d Murray J. J. (2019). Describe, don't prescribe: The practice and politics of translanguaging in the context of deaf signers. *Journal of Multilingual & Multicultural Development*, 40(1), 892–906. https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2019.1592181

Dooley, B. & Fitzgerald, A. (2012). *MyWorld Survey: National Study of Youth Mental Health*. Headstrong & UCD School of Psychology, Dublin.

Farahar, C. (2022). 19 Autistic identity, culture, community, and space for well-being. The Routledge International Handbook of Critical Autism Studies. Perspectives from School. International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 18(14), 7670.

Fullan, M. (2013). The New Pedagogy: Students and Teachers as Learning Partners. *University of Toronto LEARNing Landscapes | Vol. 6*, No. 2, 23-29.

Gentil-Gutiérrez, A., Cuesta-Gómez, J. L., Rodríguez-Fernández, P., & González-Bernal, J. J. (2021). Implication of the Sensory Environment in Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder:

Gibson, James J. (1979). The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Hall, R., & Pulsford, M. (2019). Neoliberalism and primary education: Impacts of neoliberal policy on the lived experiences of primary school communities. *Power and Education*, 11(3), 241-251. https://doi.org/10.1177/1757743819877344

Hansen, D. T. (2001). Exploring The Moral Heart of Teaching: Toward A Teacher's Creed. New York. Teachers College Press

Hargreaves, A. (2019). Teacher collaboration: 30 years of research on its nature, forms, limitations and effects. *Teachers and Teaching*, *25*(5), pp.603–621. https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2019.1639499

Holzberger, D., Praetorius, AK., Seidel, T. *et al.* Identifying effective teachers: The relation between teaching profiles and students' development in achievement and enjoyment. *Eur J Psychol Educ* **34**, 801–823 (2019). https://doi.org/10.1007/s10212-018-00410-8

Jones, B.D. (2009). Motivating Students to Engage in Learning: The MUSIC Model of Academic Motivation. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, Vol. 21*, No. 2, 272-285.

Lynch K. A. (1960). *The image of the city*. MIT Press, Cambridge, 1990.

Kaplan S. (1983), A model of person-environment compatibility. *"Environment and Behavior"*, Vol. 15, N. 3, Maggio 1983. Sage Pubblication

Marsh, C.J., & Willis, G. (2009). *Curriculum: Alternative Approaches, Ongoing Issues (4th ed.).* Pearson.

Maslow, A. H. (1970). Motivation and Personality (2nd ed.). New York. Harper & Row.

Neilson, S. (2021) *"Autistic Imaginaries of Architectural Space: The World from an Autistic Lens"* [Photography] (Exhibited at La Biennale di Venezia, Venice (2021).

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1962). *Phenomenology of perception* (Vol. 22). London.

Mezirow, J. (1991). Transformative dimensions of adult learning. San Francisco, CA. Jossey-Bass.

Milton, D. (2021). Current issues in supporting the sensory needs of Autistic people.

Mogren, A. M. (2019). How Nature Impacts the Social, Emotional, and Sensory Needs of Students on the Autism Spectrum.

Muljadi, J., Defiana, I., & Faqih, M. Sensory Design: Working and Community Place for Adult with Autism Spectrum Disorder in Surabaya.

Murray, C., & Pianta, R. C. (2007). The Importance of Teacher-Student Relationships for Adolescents with High Incidence Disabilities. Theory into Practice, 46, 105-112. https://doi.org/10.1080/00405840701232943

Murray, D., Lesser, M., & Lawson, W. (2005). Attention, monotropism and the diagnostic criteria for autism. Autism, 9(2), 139-156

Naukkarinen, A. (2018). Teacher's responsibility in implementing inclusive education. In Saukkonen, S. & Moilanen (Eds.), Vastuuseen kasvaminen ja kasvattaminen. Turku. Studies in Education.

Noddings, N. (1984). *Caring: A feminine approach to ethics and moral education.* University of California Press.

Ochs, E. & B. Schieffelin (2012). The theory of language socialization. In the book of Duranti, A., Ochs, E., & Schieffelin, B. B. (2011). *The Handbook of Language Socialization*. Malden MA. Wiley Blackwell 1-21.

O'Neill, C., & Kenny, N. (2023). "I Saw Things through a Different Lens…": An Interpretative

Phenomenological Study of the Experiences of Autistic Teachers in the Irish Education System. *Education Sciences.* 13. 670. 10.3390/educsci13070670.

Parrish, B. (2019). Teaching Adult English Language Learners: A Practical Introduction Paperback (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

Pellegrino, J. W., Bransford, J. D., & Donovan, M. S. (Eds.). (1999) How People Learn: Bridging Research and Practice. National Academies Press.

Pennycook, A. (2018). Posthumanist Applied Linguistics. *Applied linguistics, 39*(4), 445-461. https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amw016

Phung J, Penner M, Pirlot C and Welch C (2021) What I Wish You Knew: Insights on Burnout, Inertia, Meltdown, and Shutdown From Autistic Youth. *Front. Psychol.* 12:741421. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2021.741421

Pianta, R. C., Hamre, B., & Stuhlman, M. (2003). Relationships between Teachers and Children. In W. M. Reynolds, & G. E. Miller (Eds.), Handbook of Child Psychology: Educational Psychology (Vol. 7, pp. 199-234). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

Pianta, R.C., Hamre, B.K., Allen, J.P. (2012). Teacher-Student Relationships and Engagement: Conceptualizing, Measuring, and Improving the Capacity of Classroom Interactions. In: Christenson, S., Reschly, A., Wylie, C. (eds) Handbook of Research on Student Engagement. Springer, Boston, MA. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-2018-7_17

Piippo, I., Ahlholm, M. & Portaankorva-Koivisto, P. (2021). Koulun monet kielet: lähtökohtia, kehityskulkuja ja tulevaisuuden näkymiä: Plurilingualism in the school: starting points, developments, and prospects. *AFinLA-teema, 13*, 4.

Roorda, D. L., Koomen, H. M. Y., Spilt, J. L., & Oort, F. J. (2011). The Influence of Affective Teacher–Student Relationships on Students' School Engagement and Achievement: A Meta-Analytic Approach. *Review of Educational Research,* 81(4), 493-529. https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654311421793

Schoen, S. A., Lane, S. J., Mailloux, Z., May-Benson, T., Parham, L. D., Smith Roley, S., & Schaaf, R. C. (2019). A systematic review of ayres sensory integration intervention for children with autism. *Autism Research*, *12*(1), 6-19.

Seamon, D. (2014). Merleau-Ponty, perception, and environmental embodiment: implications for architectural and environmental studies. *Carnal Echoes: Merleau-Ponty and the flesh of architecture*.

Skinner, E., Pitzer, J., & Brule, H. (2014). The role of emotion in engagement, coping, and the development of motivational resilience. In R. Pekrun & L. Linnenbrink-Garcia (Eds.), *International handbook of emotions in education* (pp. 331–347). Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group.

Snoddon, K., & Paul, J. J. (2020). Framing Sign Language as a Health Need in Canadian and International Policy. *Maternal and child health journal, 24*(11), 1360-1364. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10995-020-02974-8

Snoddon, K. (2022). Writing as Being: On the Existential Primacy of Writing for a Deaf Scholar. *Qualitative inquiry, 28*(6), 722-731. https://doi.org/10.1177/10778004211073071

Stenou, K. (2002). UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity: a vision, a conceptual platform, a pool of ideas for implementation, a new paradigm. *Cultural Diversity Series*, 1(3).

Stotsky, S. (2012). *The death and resurrection of a coherent literature curriculum: What secondary English teachers can do.* Rowman & Littlefield Education.

Suttie, J. (2016). Four Ways Teachers Can Reduce Implicit Bias. https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/four_ways_teachers_can_reduce_implicit_bias

Triesman, K. (2016). *Working with Relational and Developmental Trauma in Children and Adolescents.* Routledge.

UNESCO (1994). *The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education*. Paris: UNESCO.

UNESCO. (2007). *UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity 2 November 2001*. https://doi.org/10.1163/ej.9789004164543.1-760.78

United Nations (2006). Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. *Social Development Issues – Disability, Article 24 – Education*. Accessed at: https://social.desa.un.org/issues/disability/crpd/article-24-education

United Nations (1948). *UN General Assembly, Resolution 217A (III), Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, A/RES/217(III) (December 10, 1948)

Villegas, A. M., & Irvine, J. J. (2010). Diversifying the teaching workforce: An examination of major arguments. *The Urban Review, Vol 42,* No. 3, 175-192.

Villegas, A. M., Strom, K., & Lucas, T. (2012). Closing the racial/ethnic gap between students of colour and their teachers: An elusive goal. *Equity & Excellence in Education, Vol. 45,* No. 2, 283-301.

Weyland, B., & Galletti A. (2022). Learning environment applications (lea), a European research project to spread the practice of participatory design processes for school spaces, between pedagogy architecture and design. *16th International Technology, Education and Development Conference,* 07-08 March 2002, Online.

Wood, M., & Haddon, N. (2020). *Secondary Curriculum Transformed.* Routledge.

Local literature

Aristarchi A. Q., Venini L. (1985), Problemi di psicologia ambientale, in Castelli Fusconi C., Lo spazio del bambino. Ricerche e contributi interdisciplinari in tema di psicologia ambientale. Milano: Franco Angeli.

Caprino F., Chipa S., Galletti A., Moscato G., Orlandini L., Panzavolta S. (2022). **Quando lo spazio include. *Progettare ambienti di apprendimento inclusivi. "L'integrazione scolastica e sociale". Vol. 21, n. 1. Trento: Erickson.***

D'Alessio S. (2012). *Integrazione scolastica and the development of inclusion in Italy: does space matter?* "International Journal of Inclusive Education".

Lettieri T. (2013), *Geografia e Disability Studies: spazio, accessibilità e diritti umani* , «Italian Journal of Disability Studies. Rivista Italiana di Studi sulla Disabilità», VOL. 1, n. 1.

Kiili, J., & Pollari, K. (2012). *Hei, kato mua!: Vuorovaikutus ja hyvinvointi kuurojen ja huonokuuloisten lasten elämässä*. Lapsiasiavaltuutetun toimisto.

Saffer D. (2007). Design dell'interazione. **Creare applicazioni intelligenti e dispositivi ingegnosi con l'interaction design. Pearson**

Vasquez A., Oury F. (2010). L'organizzazione della classe inclusiva. **La pedagogia istituzionale per un ambiente educativo aperto ed efficace. Trento: Erickson.**

Weyland B, Attia S. (2015). Progettare scuole. Tra pedagogia e Architettura. Milano: Guerini scientifica.

Weyland B., Galletti A. (2018). Lo spazio che educa. Generare una identità pedagogica per gli ambienti dell'infanzia. Bologna: Junior.

Weyland B., Galletti A., LEA Learning Environment Application, sviluppo di un gioco per la progettazione e l'appropriazione degli spazi della scuola, finalizzato and includere i bisogni di tutti, Pubblicazione volume del Convegno "Didattica e inclusione scolastica – Inklusion im Bildungsbereich. Emergenze educative. Neue Horizonte", BU Press;

Weyland B., Galletti A. (2016). Organizzare gli spazi e i tempi della scuola inclusiva, in Ianes D., Cramerotti S. Dirigere scuole inclusive, strumenti e risorse per il dirigente scolastico. Trento: Erickson.

Resources

A video on sensory supports: https://t.co/1LwEjXwkWX

A basic guide to the eight sensory systems discussed in the chapter: https://sensoryhealth.org/basic/your-8-senses

Gareth Morewood's Sensory Checklist for Schools – http://www.gdmorewood.com/resources/sensory-checklist-for-schools/ (Accessed, 16th September, 2022)

About the authors

Deirdre Forde

Dr. Deirdre Forde is a distinguished lecturer in Inclusive Education at Maynooth University. With a background as a qualified primary teacher and a chartered child and educational psychologist, she brings extensive experience from various educational settings and psychological services to her role. Deirdre's research and teaching interests are diverse and encompass areas such as

disability and the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion within educational and societal contexts. She is particularly passionate about amplifying children's voices, advancing relational education, and shaping policies related to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI). Her work is dedicated to fostering inclusive environments that acknowledge and celebrate diversity.

Christine Carstens

Chris Carstens, based in Bremerhaven, brings extensive experience in teaching English and German, alongside certification as a trauma educator with a specialization in supporting children and young adults facing social and emotional challenges.

Cynthy K. Haihambo

Cynthy Kaliinasho Haihambo Ya-Otto is a teacher-educator at the University of Namibia. Her teaching and research areas are in Educational Psychology and Inclusive Education.

Ulla Sivunen

Ulla Sivunen is a doctoral researcher at the University of Jyva ̈ skyla ̈ (Finland), focusing on media use, multiliteracies, and linguistic agency among young deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals using signed languages, primarily Finnish Sign Language. Throughout her career, she has worked as a teacher, lecturer, in NGOs, and in the media. This diverse experience and being as a member of a minority group, the deaf community, has provided her with a broad perspective and deep expertise in her research areas.

Claire O'Neill

Claire O'Neill is a writer and researcher with a background in education. Her research focuses on Neurodiversity and Neurodivergence. Core principals of the Neurodiversity paradigm and Universal Design inform her research, writing and approach to education.

Alessandra Galletti

Alessandra Galletti is working as an educator in a secondary school, focusing on supporting students with learning difficulties. In addition to her

role in education, she founded an association on Autism in Südtirol, GRETA. Her broader work centers on rethinking school spaces to ensure they are functional and inclusive, fostering a sense of well-being for teachers and students alike. She collaborates with educators, administrators, and designers to promote a culture of inclusivity in schools. By adopting a multidisciplinary approach, she integrates diverse expertise to create solutions that address the needs of the majority of users effectively.

PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN LEARNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Carlos Moreno-Romero; Ines Boban; Maryam Mohammadi; Shichong Li; and Silvia Dell'Anna

---

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://book.all-means-all.education/ ama-2025-en/?p=653#oembed-1

Imagine a learning experience where young people become interested and engaged in their community's nutritional well-being. Imagine a project where young people build a Zen Garden for their community to enjoy. Imagine a setting where young people make use of restorative to help their peers solve their conflicts through non-violent communication, active listening and restorative questions. These are some examples that point to the importance of involving young people in decision-making within their communities and their learning experiences.

Example Case

"As a student at the Participatory School, a humanistic, democratic school, we were always encouraged to explore new topics through a project-based learning method. From a young age, we undertook individual projects on subjects that interested us, examining them from multiple perspectives and deepening our understanding. During secondary school, we embarked on a collective project that involved community participation. The school proposed several topics, and we chose to focus on the issue of malnutrition among children in our country.
Our first step was to conduct thorough research on malnutrition and its significance. We discovered that the prevalent form of malnutrition in our country is due to a lack of essential vitamins and minerals. Understanding this, we recognised the need to learn about the effects

and consequences of vitamin deficiencies. Each of us researched one or two specific vitamins and shared our findings with the group. We knew that we needed to be well-informed to raise awareness and drive change.

To involve the community, the first step was to ask all students and their parents to participate in comprehensive blood tests to measure vitamin levels. Over two months, nearly 150 families took part, allowing us to analyse their blood tests and identify common deficiencies. Our research indicated that given the economic conditions, simple dietary changes like drinking a glass of milk and eating two eggs daily could help address these deficiencies.

Next, we needed to disseminate our findings to children, their families, and schools. We attempted to collaborate with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education to implement new policies in schools, but not all efforts were successful. Therefore, our plans changed, and we had to develop a new initiative to raise awareness. Realising the importance of trust, we decided to engage well-known artists, actors, and singers in our awareness campaign. These public figures were photographed with a glass of milk, and their images were displayed in a large photo exhibition and shared on their social media, reaching a wide audience.

We also expanded our efforts by sharing our project with similar groups in other cities, aiming to raise awareness nationwide. The project has since grown into a larger online initiative where people across the country share nutritious recipes and food tips.

Currently, I have stepped back from direct participation in the project, allowing others to take over. What I have learned is that scaling a project does not require the original members to remain in control or be actively involved until its completion, and it was one of the principles that the school wanted us as students to learn. Stepping aside from a project that you have started and witnessing others continue allows the project to thrive and achieve its main objectives, such as the principle of participation, more effectively."

Baran Yousefi, former student of a democratic school in Tehran, Iran

The example above comes from the Participatory School in Tehran, Iran. It is important for readers to understand that, while this school provides an extraordinary and inspiring example of participatory education, it is not representative of the broader educational landscape in the country. The innovative practices and values at this school stand out as a unique model, differing significantly from the more conventional approaches found in many other schools in Iran.

The Iranian Ministry of Education does not recognise the Participatory School, although it has demonstrated significant achievements. It aims to promote a variety of educational methods, rather than endorsing a single official approach, across the country. It seeks to

inspire change by offering alternative models of education that prioritise participation and diversity in learning methods.

<div style="background:pink;">

Initial questions

In this chapter you will find the answers to the following questions:

1. What are the guiding principles/concepts for meaningful participation of children and youth in learning and community development?
2. What hinders the participation of children and youth in learning and community development?
3. How do we facilitate the participation of children and youth in learning and community?
4. What are the possible next steps for students and teachers?

</div>

Introduction to Topic

In today's rapidly changing world, children and youth are often positioned as passive recipients of education rather than active participants. However, there is growing recognition of the importance of engaging young people in both their learning and the development of their communities. This shift moves beyond traditional classroom boundaries, positioning children and youth as essential contributors to societal progress.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) emphasises that young people have the right to participate meaningfully in decisions that affect them. Consisting of 54 articles and ratified by 196 countries, the UNCRC defines children's participation as an "ongoing process that includes information-sharing and dialogue between children and adults, based on mutual respect, where children learn how their views and those of adults are considered and shape the outcome of such processes" (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2009).

This means fostering environments where their voices are not just heard but are actively considered and integrated into outcomes that shape their lives. In both educational settings and broader community contexts, participation is a robust process that empowers children and youth to take ownership of their learning, build leadership skills, and contribute to creating more equitable and just societies.

To see school as the ivory tower of learning would be limiting. The title of the chapter

contains the term 'community development', clarifying the importance of extending action to the whole society. Full and meaningful participation transcends the walls of a classroom. It reaches outward to integrate knowledge and other perspectives and contribute politically, socially, and culturally so that children and youth can truly assert themselves and perceive themselves as citizens.

In this chapter, we explore the guiding principles that promote meaningful participation of children and youth, examine the barriers that hinder their engagement, and discuss strategies to foster their active involvement in learning and community development. Through examples and case studies, we will illustrate how, when empowered to make decisions and engage in collaborative processes, young people can transform their roles from passive learners to active changemakers – active with full children's rights.

By drawing on theoretical frameworks and practical case studies, we aim to uncover the transformative potential of child and youth participation. This chapter seeks to challenge traditional power dynamics between adults and children, advocating for an egalitarian approach to education and community development. Whether through student-led initiatives, participation in decision-making, or collaborative community projects, we will highlight the many ways in which children and youth can be powerful agents of change when given the opportunity.

Participation in action: principles, power dynamics, and areas for development

What do we mean by "participation of children and youth in learning and community development"?

Baran's example highlights how children's roles can shift dramatically when given the opportunity to participate actively. No longer confined to the traditional role of a student passively absorbing information, Baran took part in a community research project, where she contributed her knowledge to address real-world issues. Through her involvement, Baran not only demonstrated her ability to acquire scientific knowledge but also played a crucial role in improving her local community. She became an active agent of her own learning, shaping the process and outcomes of her educational experience.

By examining Baran's story, we challenge the conventional stereotypes of children as passive learners. Instead, we emphasise that learning extends beyond the classroom and occurs wherever children are no longer restricted. Children like Baran can be active participants in both their education and community development, initiating projects and contributing meaningfully to societal change.

Addressing power imbalances and recognizing children's agency

The persistent power imbalance between adults and children has long limited the participation of young people in important decision-making processes (James, 2007). However, recent work in the sociology of childhood aims to dismantle these power dynamics. Scholars are now focusing on demystifying the relationships between children and adults, advocating for the recognition of children's capabilities and their right to participate actively in various settings (Mayall, 2013).

As awareness of children's potential continues to grow, it is crucial to adopt a balanced approach that neither underestimates or overestimates their abilities. Children and youth should be seen as competent individuals whose contributions deserve fair recognition and integration into broader social structures. By embracing this balanced perspective, we can create more equitable and inclusive environments where the voices of children and youth are not only heard but also valued. This shift paves the way for a more just and participatory society, where young people play a central role in shaping their communities and futures.

It is the responsibility of teachers, along with their broader network of stakeholders, to critically analyse potential risks and boundaries in any participatory process, ensuring that no harm is caused to students or their communities. This should be done collaboratively with students, as it is essential to equip them with the skills to identify and understand these risks. Teachers must be especially mindful of issues such as privacy and data protection, particularly when projects involve online presence or public platforms. For example, safeguarding personal information and implementing measures such as comment restrictions on social media platforms can help protect students from negative exposure. This process of risk assessment should be ongoing, responsive to the specific context, and always prioritise the well-being and safety of students, ensuring that participation remains a positive and empowering experience.

The rationale for promoting children's and youth's participation

There are numerous benefits to adopting a holistic approach to youth participation, which ultimately leads to stronger engagement in community development. Firstly, involving young people in decision-making and conflict resolution has enhanced their moral reasoning skills (Kohlberg, 1985). This process helps youth become more aware of their rights and responsibilities while also reducing school bullying – a behaviour often stemming from power imbalances both within and outside school settings (Gribble, 2016).

Furthermore, when children and youth are actively involved in creating agreements, it promotes the development of positive and functional boundaries, which are closely tied to inhibitory control (Juul, 2001). This involvement strengthens their sense of belonging to the school community (Hope, 2012), fostering a deeper commitment to their own learning, reducing anxiety, and facilitating autonomy and self-regulation (Anderman, 2002).

In addition, when young people are seen as key contributors to school management, their argumentative skills and academic performance tend to improve (Bouché Peris, 2003; Day et al., 2009). It further contributes to the establishment of a participatory leadership culture, where everyone – students, teachers, and community members – develop the tools needed to influence their surroundings positively (Louis et al., 2010). Such experiences encourage young people to value diversity and cultivate a sense of social responsibility (Bruyere, 2010), while providing practical lessons in rights and responsibilities (Danner & Jonyiene, 2012).

Youth participation also plays a critical role in fostering citizenship skills. Learners who advocate for individual and collective rights develop empathy, political literacy, and an increased sense of responsibility for their actions (Hope, 2012). Prud'homme (2014) supports this view, noting that involving young people in decision-making and conflict resolution related to their education can promote respect for diversity and encourage greater civic engagement. These experiences empower youth and enhance their critical thinking, preparing them to be thoughtful and engaged citizens.

Moreover, children and youth have demonstrated their capacity to be active citizens in various ways (Loader et al., 2016). In Scotland, for example, young people are granted the right to vote at 16, a rare policy that significantly increases their political engagement (Huebner, 2021). This reform has given Scottish youth the confidence to express themselves in traditionally adult-dominated spaces. Schooling plays a crucial role in shaping these early voting behaviours, enabling young people to challenge power imbalances and address social inequalities. Research shows that early voting experiences in Scotland have led to higher voter turnout in subsequent years (Dinas, 2012; Huebner, 2021), underscoring the importance of democratic education in fostering long-term political engagement.

In conclusion, engaging children and youth in their learning and community development lays the foundation for their future contributions to society. Starting with small, meaningful changes, youth can be empowered to take control of their lives and participate more actively in shaping the world around them.

Key areas of participation for children and youth in learning and community development

Children and youth can engage in various areas of participation that foster their role in learning and community development. These areas include:

- **Knowledge construction and critical reflection:** Youth participate in critical discussions and research, collaborating with adults or independently, as seen in movements like Philosophy for Children and Citizen Science for Kids.
- **Political power and decision-making:** Initiatives such as Children's Parliaments and lowering the voting age (e.g., in Ireland) empower children to influence local and

school-level governance.

- **Community contribution and social engagement:** Programmes like Self-Directed Service Learning and the Learning City Model promote the integration of learning with community service and engagement.
- **Tailoring education and learning participation:** In democratic schools like Freie Schule Leipzig (Germany) and Summerhill (UK), children shape their learning by negotiating timetables and curricula, using tools like Learning Contracts and peer tutoring.
- **Cultural initiatives and expression:** Youth-led projects, such as radio stations, journals, and intergenerational learning programs, provide platforms for self-expression and cultural collaboration.
- **Space design and environmental planning:** Children collaborate (if needed with architects and planners) to create spaces that meet their needs, such as designing playgrounds or reorganising classrooms.

In these areas, participation must be ethical and meaningful, ensuring that children's voices are respected and supported to engage effectively in issues affecting their lives.

Barriers to participation and strategies for empowering children and youth in learning and community development

Navigating power dynamics: ensuring equitable participation in education

The relationship between teachers and students in traditional educational settings is often shaped by power imbalances. Teachers are typically seen as the sole bearers of knowledge, while students are viewed as passive recipients. This creates a hierarchical structure where students have little control over their learning experiences. In specific social contexts, teachers' knowledge, along with their embedded authoritarian positions, can appear oppressive to children as students, resonating with an inequality that manifests in the power dichotomy.

The philosopher Michel Foucault (1982) famously argued that "knowledge is power," a concept that applies to the teacher-student relationship. In many classrooms, teachers' control over knowledge reinforces their authority, limiting students' agency. Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1970?) took this idea further, critiquing traditional education systems where teachers act as oppressors and students are merely passive learners. However, teachers represent the system and society as a whole and do not just act as oppressors on their own initiative.

Freire (1970) advocated for a "liberatory" approach to education – one that empowers students to recognise their own potential and make meaningful contributions. In this model, teachers act not as authoritarian figures, but as facilitators who guide students in shaping

their learning experiences. By shifting away from hierarchical structures, we can create a learning environment that fosters genuine participation and collaboration.

In democratic schools, learning is seen as a collaborative process. Rather than being arranged in a pyramid, where teachers sit at the top and students at the bottom, democratic schools operate more like interconnected circles (see Figure 1). Each "circle" consists of participants—students, teachers, and community members—working together as equals. This approach decentralises power and encourages shared responsibility in decision-making.

Figure 1: From traditional to democratic and inclusive education – or: from Power over to Power with
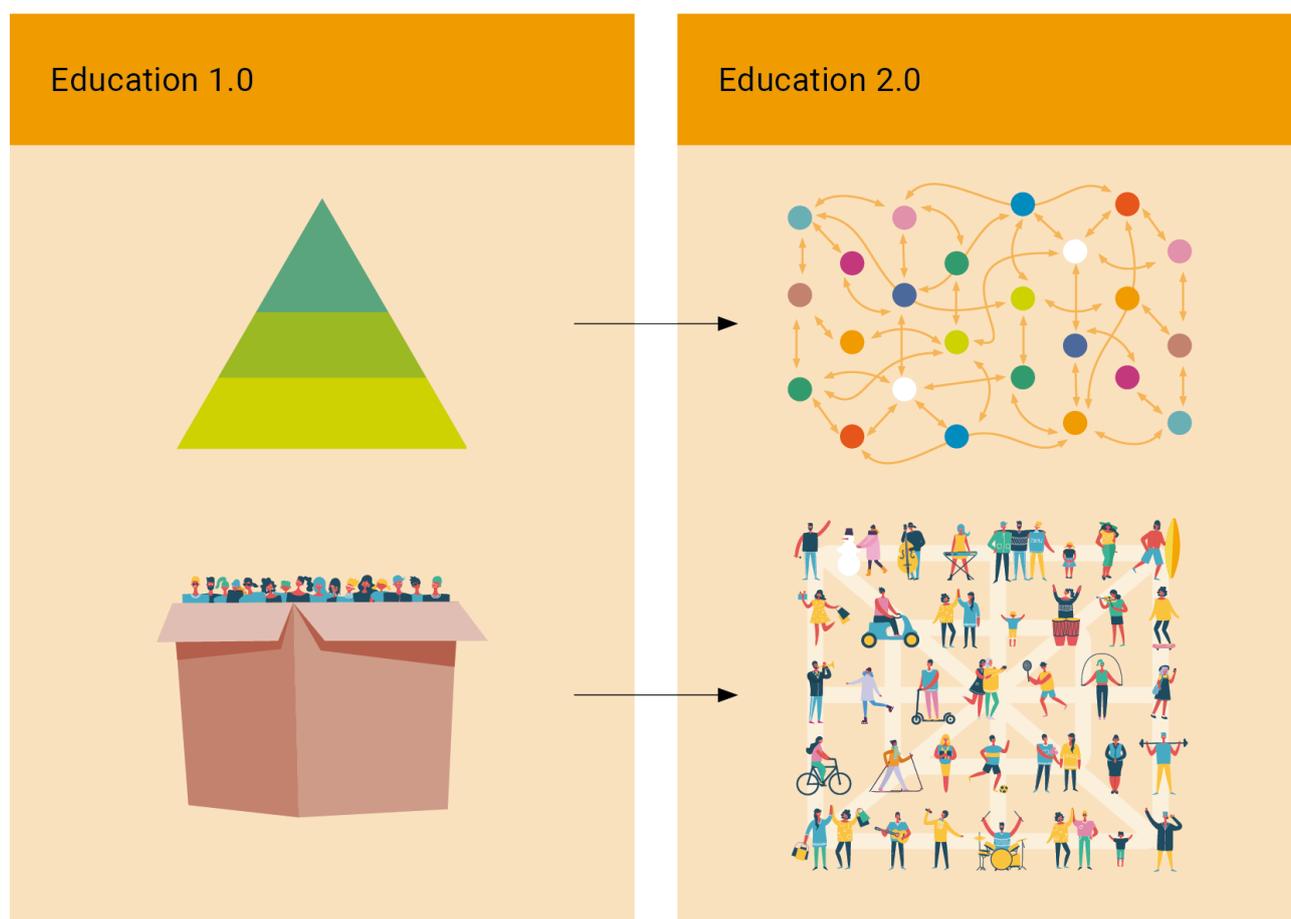
Based on: Hecht, 2017, slide 31

Similarly, starting with the identification of student-teacher power disparity, teachers and other practitioners can then tailor their strategies accordingly to empower children and youth through their learning in school and engagement in community development, which, in turn, can positively influence the ways learners become agents of learning, making changes to their learning in school alongside teachers. As children and youth are regarded as active participants in their own learning by taking part in curriculum decision-making,

teachers and other adults become facilitators, rather than superior or dominant leaders of children's and youth's participatory learning.

In addition to addressing the general power imbalance between teachers and students, educators must also be mindful of the power dynamics arising from differences in gender, sexual orientation, economic, social, and cultural background, class, dis/ability, race, languages, health, age, pregnancy and early parenthood, belief, religion (or lack thereof), biography, and appearance. These differences often intersect, shaping the way individual students experience education and access opportunities. It is crucial for educators to ensure that representation reflects this diversity, creating spaces where underrepresented minorities can express their voices without placing the burden on individual students to represent 'their' minority group. Schools must create an inclusive environment that promotes equitable participation by actively addressing these imbalances, ensuring that the experiences of marginalised students are acknowledged and valued, and that structures are in place to support their contributions to learning and community development.

Having real decision-making power

Involving learners in decision-making processes within conventional schools comes with certain risks, particularly when their participation is limited to surface-level involvement. Often, schools allow students to express their opinions on pre-determined topics, but these topics are carefully controlled, giving students little real power to influence decisions (Taylor & Percy-Smith, 2008). This creates a "passive participation" model, where young people are consulted or represented, but their ideas are easily manipulated or shaped by adults (I'Anson, 2013). In such models, students may feel they are being heard, but their contributions rarely result in meaningful changes. This can limit their ability to generate new ideas and force them to conform to decisions favoured by social pressure or the school's pre-existing agenda (Hecht, 2010; Thornberg, 2010).

On the other hand, Huang (2014) argues that schools need to address the contradictions between promoting a participatory approach and the societal structures they exist within. Many schools claim to encourage student involvement, but their practices often reflect the hierarchical and undemocratic structures of the larger society. This can either alienate students from participating in real decision-making or prompt them to question the inequities and power imbalances around them. When young people recognise these contradictions, it can empower them to challenge social hierarchies and outdated systems that limit their ability to fully engage as equal participants in both their schools and communities.

Ways of change – needs for (un)learning/changing the narrative to shape the future

Changing the future requires changing the stories we tell ourselves, as these narratives shape and structure our mindsets (Korten, 2015). Many of the dominant narratives we encounter sound like: "Hurry up, be quick, and meet the standards!" or "Time is money, so be fast and efficient!". These narratives drive much of how we live our lives today. But by reflecting on their impact, we can begin to explore alternative stories, such as: "Time is life, and it's meant to be shared." This shift in thinking can transform how we structure our daily lives, marking the start of an unlearning process.

In education, this unlearning involves decolonising schools and moving away from serving the needs of corporations that position today's children as future workers (Black, 2010). It requires abandoning standardised curricula, hierarchical relationships, and training programmes focused on skills suited for the global economy rather than local or regional needs. Instead, education should emphasise community-driven, place-based learning, moving away from the idealised notions of "development" and urban consumer culture (Norberg-Hodge, 2019).

A critical step in this unlearning process can be found in concepts like "Deschooling Society" (Illich, 1999) and Freire's "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" (1970). These approaches emphasise recognising the structures that restrict participation and limit learning. Furthermore, critical psychology (Grotelüschen, 2005; Holzkamp, 1995) highlights two distinct modes of learning: defensive and expansive, both of which can be applied to inclusive education.

Defensive vs. expansive learning: A compass for education

The defensive mode is what many children and youth experience within conventional school systems, where they are focused on managing frustrations and stress, simply trying to survive within the institution (Figure 2). This type of learning, unfortunately, becomes their default as they leave school and enter the world. In contrast, the expansive mode – rare in most schools but a basic human right (as enshrined in Articles 12 and 24 of the UNCRC) – is characterised by moments of deep engagement and self-directed inquiry. Here, learners are free to explore self-chosen topics, allowing their curiosity to flourish. This process nurtures both the mind and the soul, offering opportunities to grow beyond the constraints of defensive learning.

Figure 2: Compass for inclusive education
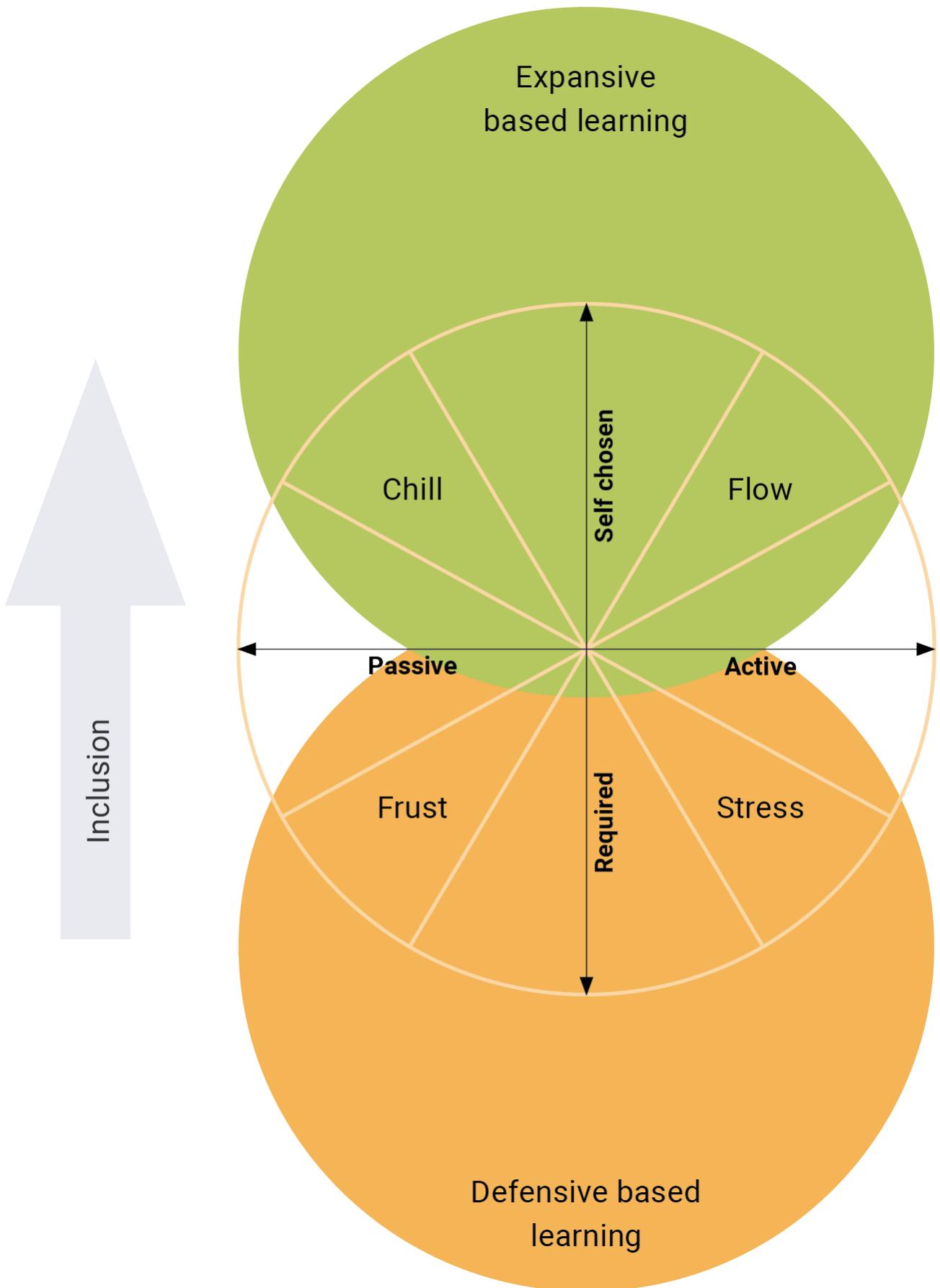
Source: Boban & Hinz, 2012: 71; own translation

The future of inclusive education lies in expanding opportunities for this kind of expansive learning, while reducing defensive learning environments. It is essential that we reflect on how our own educational experiences have shaped our expectations – of ourselves and others – and recognise the importance of creating spaces for expansive learning, especially in schools.

The role of expansive learning in life and community

The contrast between defensive and expansive learning is not limited to schools – it is crucial throughout our lives. It begins in early childhood and continues through years of schooling. However, it needs to extend beyond the classroom, so that everyone can become active participants in their local and global communities. As shown in the earlier examples, engaging in expansive learning can lead to fundamental changes in how we interact with the world, particularly when addressing contemporary ecological, economic, and social challenges.

This shift in the narrative also requires rethinking the popular phrase "It takes a village to raise a child". In today's world, we need to transform this into "It takes children to raise the village (or community)". This means moving away from the adultist perspective (Flasher, 1978) that views children as incomplete or not yet capable, and instead recognises them as competent experts of life. Citizenship is not something to be earned, but a right every person is born with.

Unlearning ageism and embracing children's participation

One of the key elements in changing this narrative is to unlearn ageism – the belief that children are incomplete beings who need education to become "real" members of society. This mindset denies the inner potential of children and youth, limiting their ability to participate fully in decisions that affect their lives. In fact, research shows that even newborns are learners, filled with awareness and empathy (Wagenhofer, 2015). Therefore, it is time to recognise and nurture the inner richness of each child, ensuring that this potential is maintained as they grow into youth.

In a project to develop all-day schools in Germany (based on the Index for Inclusion; Booth & Ainscow, 2011), many adults initially doubted the capacity of younger children to participate in school development. While students in grade 4 of primary schools were seen as competent and capable, these same students were viewed as too young and overwhelmed when they transitioned to grade 5 in secondary schools. This inconsistency reveals a common logic in schools, where students are constantly seen as 'not yet competent' until they reach the next level (Hinz et al., 2013). However, this view is increasingly challenged, especially by the democratic participation of children, even in kindergartens.

Unlearn to have *power over* – change the story to other ways of being powerful

The means by which we view the idea of power hinders the participation of children and youth. Some alternatives such as those from the Global South (Brown, 2018; Just Associates, 2006; Ryland, 2024), create spaces by focusing on the 'inner power'. The example of the participatory school in Tehran describes the role of power in different contexts (see Figure 3):

- inner power in all of the members; when they start to use it, it becomes synergistically a
- power with others, to think about the changes they need in the place, because it is obvious that something has to become better than it was. So, they create the
- power for specific processes, not changing everything, but raising awareness for and together with companions on key issues, taking over in situations that first seem to be quite powerless – especially where others try all the time to be dominant and have
- power over what is going on and keep it in their hands. This means that now we learn that it is possible to find ways to use power in a different way.
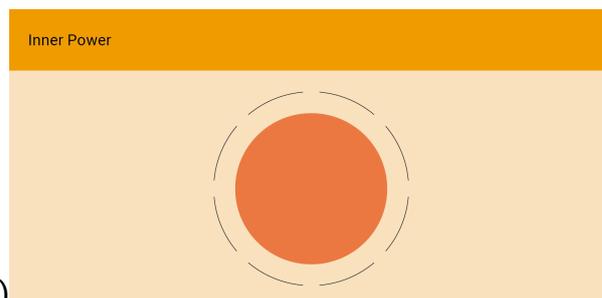
Figure 3: Four ways of power (own figure)
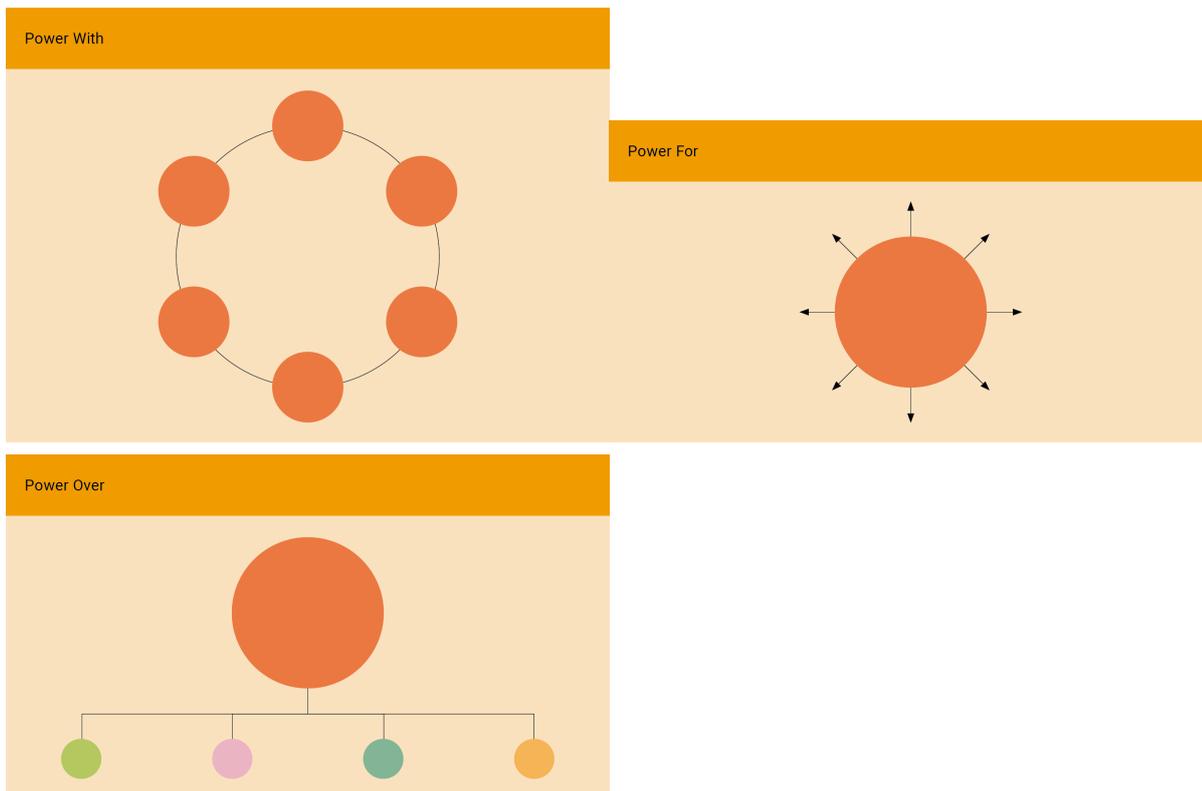
Everything begins with the aspect of the 'inner power' – something only individuals can minimise or maximise. Once this 'inner power' appears, and finds an expression, it can become a 'power for' others too, and when shared, it may become a 'power with' for common engagement purposes for a better future related to ecological and social topics of our time. Finally, there is a 'power to' realise essential changes.

In a democratic education model, children and youth are no longer seen as passive objects shaped by curriculum designers, architects, or city planners. Instead, they are active participants – subjects in their own right – who bring expertise and creativity to the table. This shift moves participation from being a "nice-to-have" opportunity granted by adults to a fundamental right guaranteed for everyone (Jörgensdóttir Rauterberg & Hinz, 2025). In democratic schools, such as those illustrated by Hecht (2017), the traditional power dynamic of "education 1.0" – where adults hold power over students – is replaced by "education 2.0", where students, teachers, and the community share power and work together for collective learning and development in a "partneristic" way (Eisler, 2001).

This approach is reflected in projects like the Inclusive Neighborhood Children's Parliaments in India (Kersting, 2018) and the Barefoot College in Rajasthan, where children and youth take on leadership roles in their communities. These examples demonstrate how shared power – power with – can lead to more inclusive and democratic processes in both education and community development. As we continue to explore ways to promote child and youth participation, these models provide a roadmap for moving away from hierarchical power structures toward more collaborative, empowering forms of engagement.

Unlearn hierarchical schooling – learn to develop learning places in a participative process

Janusz Korczak once said: "To repair the world is to repair education". In a time when schools face teacher shortages and solutions often involve increasing class sizes or cutting parts of the curriculum, it is more urgent now than ever to rethink the role of teachers. The traditional model, where teachers hold power over their students and simply transmit knowledge, must give way to a more participatory approach.

Figure 4: The transmitting and the connecting role of teachers
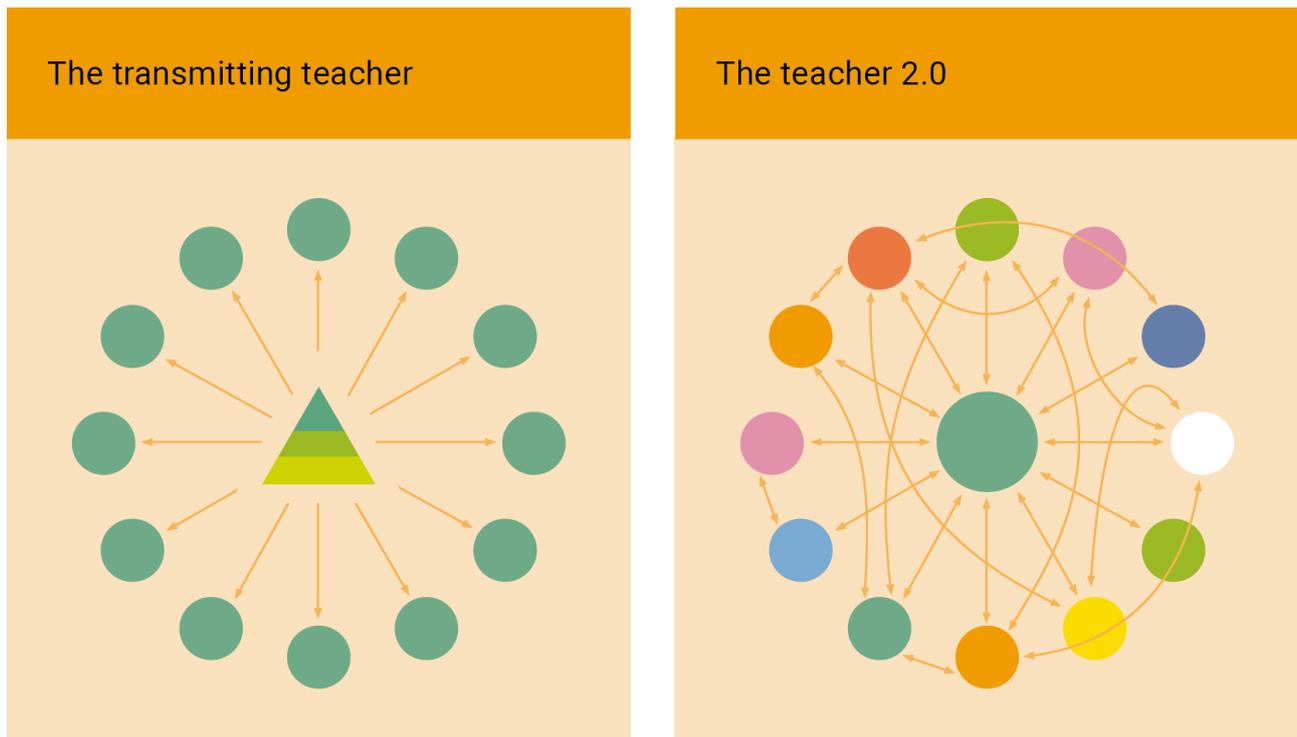
Based on Hecht, 2017, slide 51

In the old model (illustrated on the left side of Figure 4), teachers control the flow of knowledge and shape students to fit their own ideas, much like filling them with information to match a set standard. However, the right side of the diagram demonstrates a more inclusive role for teachers, where each person (teachers and students alike) become both a learner and a teacher. This shift marks the beginning of what Korczak described as the proper repair of education, where learning is not hierarchical but collaborative and shared.

This concept of shared learning is reflected in the idea of the "Four Teachers" (illustrated in Figure 6). These four learning forces—teachers, learners, peers, and the environment—need to be integrated into learning spaces to bridge the gap between education and democratic processes. By doing so, we create fertile ground for genuine learning in a humanistic and participatory way. In the face of today's global challenges—ranging from climate change to cultural erosion – this transformation is not just idealistic, but necessary.

To truly repair the world, we need to unlearn the models of corporate globalisation that have shaped education for the needs of the global market. These models prioritise standardisation, competition, and economic goals over the well-being of local communities. Instead, we must create spaces where people engage in addressing local issues and develop solutions that reflect the needs of their own environments. As Helena Norberg-Hodge (2019) argues, "local is our future", and empowering communities to take control of their own education systems is a key step in this direction.

A good example of how this can be achieved comes from the film "Power to the Children" by Anna Kersting (2018), which portrays children and youth in India taking control of their communities' future. By establishing children's parliaments and electing their own ministers, these young people are not only standing up for their rights, but they are also creating lasting change in their communities. They are addressing issues like environmental degradation, standing against social injustices, and implementing practical solutions—such as reducing plastic waste, conserving water, and promoting recycling.

This kind of participatory action demonstrates the transformative potential of empowering young people to take part in shaping their own futures. When children and youth are given real opportunities to engage with their communities, they are not just learners but leaders, activists, and agents of change.

Unlearn the "boxes" of traditional education: embracing localities and place-based learning

As Helena Norberg-Hodge (2019: 55) asserts, "Societies in both the Global North and South would benefit enormously from a shift away from corporate-tailored curricula towards diverse forms of place-based learning". Instead of adhering to outdated models that prepare students for a corporate-led, competitive economy, Education 2.0 must be tailored to the unique environments, cultures, and local economies of each region. This shift promotes local sustainability by emphasising regional agriculture, traditional architecture, and decentralised, low-tech solutions for meeting basic needs.

For years, community organising has been a key element of democratic engagement, and can serve as a powerful model for Education 2.0. Community organising teaches people how to bring about social justice and ecological sustainability – critical lessons that schools should also embrace (Meier, Penta & Richter, 2022; Penta, 2007). By adopting these principles, schools can become part of place-based learning circles, focusing on solving local challenges while fostering active student and community participation. This holistic approach would empower learners to move beyond seeing themselves as "victims of the market" (Kumar & Haworth, 2022) and instead become active agents in reshaping their environments.

The concept of the "Education City"

If a city chooses to adopt the model of an Education City, it first unlearns the traditional idea of separate, isolated "little boxes"—an idea that more fitting to the industrial age, when hierarchical structures reduced complexity. Instead of this old model, the Education City embraces interconnected circles of learning, encompassing the classroom, the community, and the world (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Learning 2.0: Children and youth in classroom, community and the world
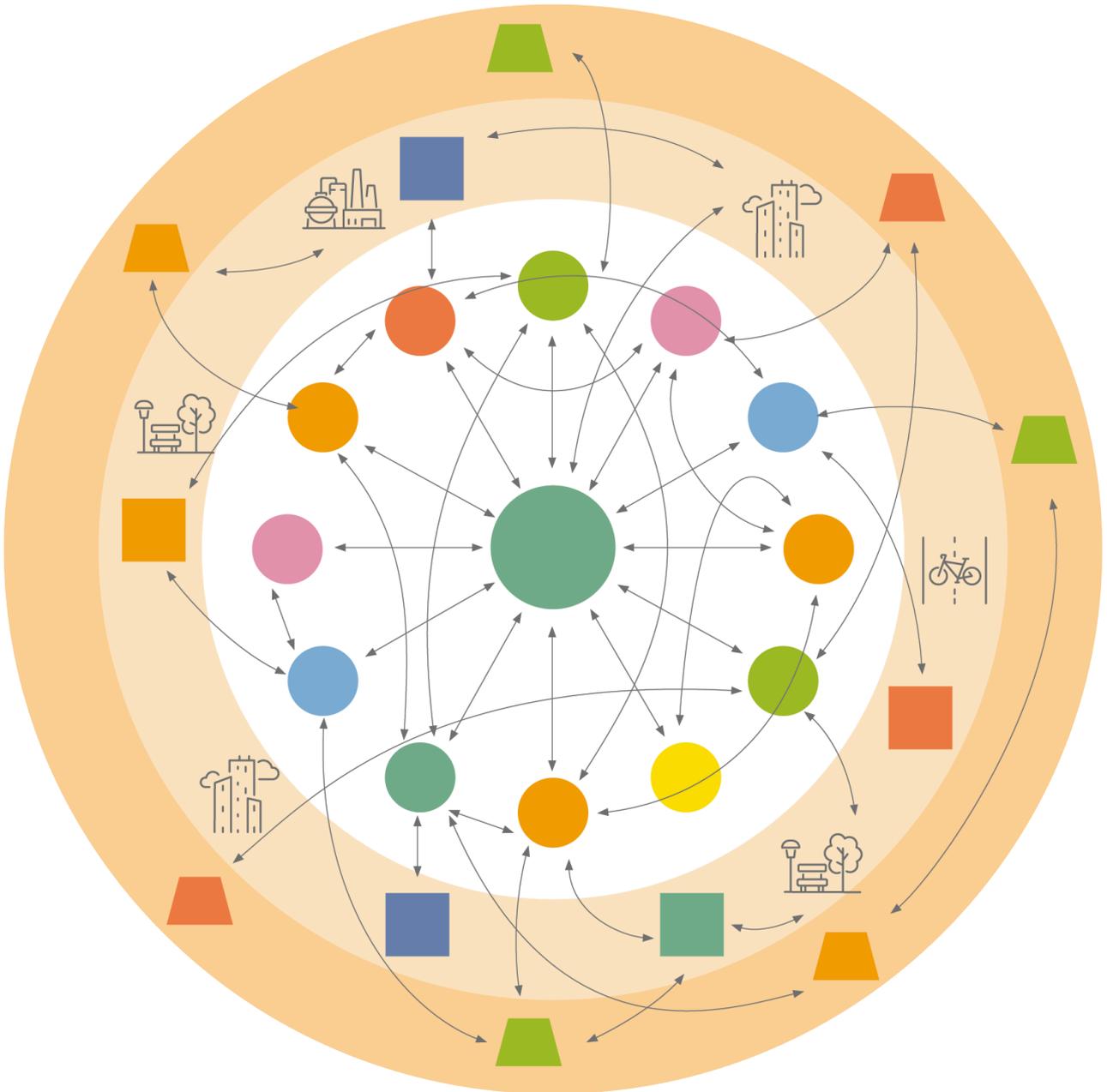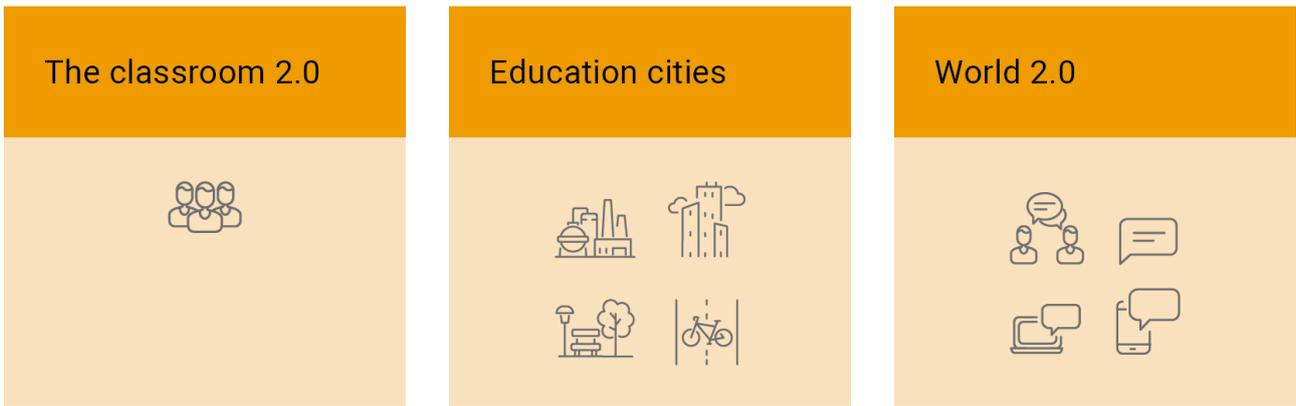
Based on Hecht, 2017b, slide 56

In an Education City, all members of the community – mayors, citizens, teachers, and

students – are responsible for fostering learning in these circles. As described by Schwartzberg and Dvir (2012), this concept introduces the idea of the Four Teachers as shown in Figure 6:

1. The first teacher is individuals' interaction with significant adults throughout their lives.
2. The second teacher is the experience gained through peer group interactions over time.
3. The third teacher is the environment itself, where learning happens through connection with the world.
4. The fourth teacher is the individual, who learns through the choices they make in their own life.

Figure 6: Four teachers ()

The First Teacher

Significant Adults

The Fourth Teacher

I myself

The Second Teacher

Group of Peers

The Third Teacher

The Environment
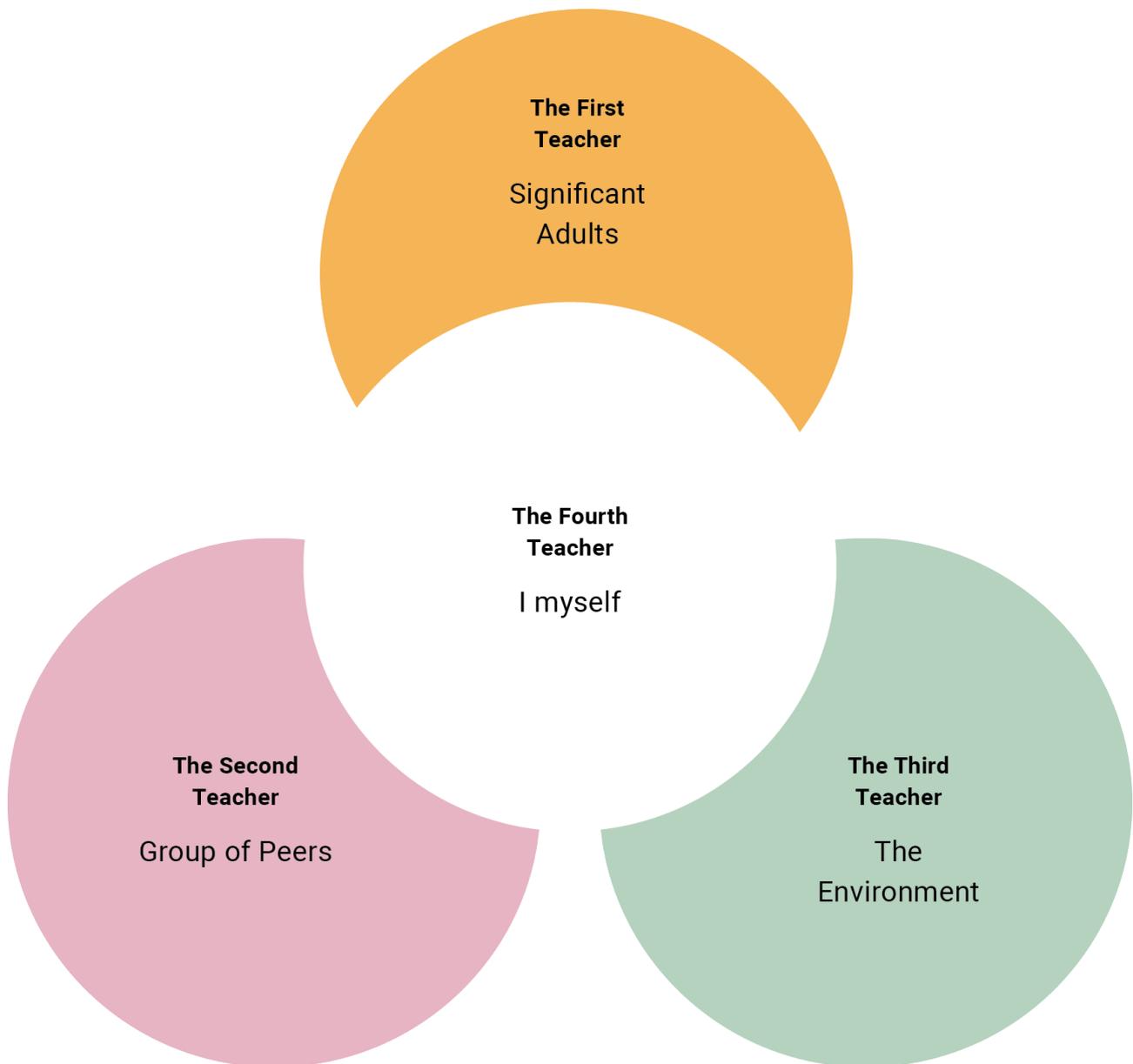
Based on Schwartzberg & Dvir, 2012, 12

By embracing these Four Teachers, an Education City shares power in a participative way with children and youth, making learning a collective responsibility. But what does it mean for a city to "take responsibility" (Schwartberg & Dvir 2012: 12) for learning?

Taking responsibility for democratic education

In an Education City, the entire community takes responsibility for supporting democratic education and the development of all its residents in a humanistic and sustainable way. This means that all resources – whether educational, environmental, or social – are dedicated to the growth and well-being of everyone in the city. An ongoing dialogue about education is also be maintained, constantly evolving and adapting to promote twenty-first-century learning (Schwartzberg & Dvir, 2012).

Figure 7: The urban art of mixing colours

Such a city thrives on what can be called circle power. It moves away from the rigid, pyramidal structures of the past and embraces the dynamic, sometimes chaotic, processes of curiosity and creativity. This is not about simply reforming education by widening the traditional triangle into a neat square, rather the Education City unfolds like a flower, with multiple spheres of learning interwoven in a beautiful and complex system (see Figure 7).

In this model, citizens are encouraged to think and act outside the boxes of conventional

education. By reducing the old patterns of hierarchical power, the Education City makes room for a more inclusive and democratic Education 2.0, where everyone, students, teachers, and community members alike, work together to create a better future. As the examples in this chapter will illustrate, moving beyond the old educational models is essential if we are to repair both our minds and the world we live in.

Life, after all, is time—and that time should include moments of both flow and reflection.

Examples of participation of children and youth in learning and community development across countries

The transition of learning processes for children and youth to enhance their potential to participate as much as possible differs from place-based. Therefore, it makes sense to highlight some examples of ways in which more shared powers can be found in various countries.

Children and youth's participation in school management

The democratic participation of children must be considered from the viewpoint that all freedom is finite, and must also be viewed in relation to the coexistence and safety of everyone in the educational environment. Thus, in the global context of the lack of opportunities for student participation in school decisions, school self-government aims to fulfill the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1990), which highlights the urgency of supporting processes that allow children to develop and freely express their own opinions (Articles 12-15), and promoting spaces for children's participation in decision-making on matters that affect them (Articles 12, 23, and 31).

In this sense, overcoming the paradox of instructing about democracy within non-democratic school structures and practices (Bridges, 1997; Stevenson, 2010), free and democratic schools[1] implement regular meetings framed within the body of the Assembly or Parliament and involving the school community, to decide on relevant issues for their coexistence such as school agreements, curricular topics, workshops to offer, graduation requirements, field trips and travel, visits to the school by experts, etc.

The ground agreements that govern such meetings are respect towards each other and turn-taking, taking others seriously while trying to understand the degree of truth they hold, and defending one's own thinking without attacking others. Similarly, democratic schools share with Apple and Beane (1995) that "democratic planning is not about making

---

1. See the European Democratic Education Community for further examples of the implementation of democratic principles within learning environments www.eudec.org

use of the right to vote, but about the convergence of different points of view and the search for a balance between particular interests" (p. 25). In this regard, the role of the adult transforms from being a teacher (in charge of making learners learn something) to becoming a facilitator that scaffolds and supports young people's guided appropriation of democratic practices. Within this setting, young people participate in the Assembly on equal terms with adults; that is, they have the same rights and responsibilities, having a voice and a vote.

Additionally, two of them are elected by the school community or volunteer themselves to manage and implement the Assembly's agenda and note-taking. The recurring dynamic of these meetings is that someone makes a proposal or raises an issue and argues their reasons or motivations, and all voices are listened to and taken seriously, aiming at reaching an agreement or consent from the school community. In some cases, the adoption of a rule or decision is decided by voting, adopting the position of the majority; however, although the decision of the majority is assumed, what is actually discussed is a long-term consensus, as almost any rule can be revoked. From the perspective of school-culture building, the Assembly's role needs to be understood in terms of scaffolding and guided participation and appropriation (Rogoff, 2003), where "more competent participants" in school community meetings share with others appropriate discursive tools, such as how to participate, speak, request the floor, and listen actively to others.

Similarly, some schools have adopted the *sociocratic method* with the aim of being able to hear all voices and going beyond majority rule, emphasising the common good, responsibility, and the consequences of decisions made. In a nutshell, sociocracy has four main principles: consent, circle process, open election, and double-link. This democratic governance method is implemented mostly in Dutch democratic schools. Yet it has extended to other parts of the globe, promoting an "inclusive and equitable way of decision-making, as collective decisions are made through the consent of everyone involved" (Osorio & Shred, 2021: 3). Within this approach, each circle makes sure that every voice is heard, while being represented in wider circles by community-elected representatives (Plesman, 1961).

The negotiated integrated curriculum and the 20% proposal

A negotiated integrated curriculum invites teachers and curriculum developers to involve students by asking about their concerns and using these topics to shape learning possibilities and teaching methods (Beane, 1997). This approach is closely related to the "curriculum of life" (Portelli & Vibert, 2002), focused on the students' individual, social, cultural, and political contexts and concerns in education. According to O'Grady and

colleagues (2014), the concept and practice of curriculum negotiation/integration in learning lies on several key assumptions:

- Schools need to become true learning organisations, not merely obligatory societal institutions that view students from a deficit perspective.
- A negotiated/integrated curriculum should be holistic and flexible, and encourage collaboration between teachers and students to tackle various themes and issues, including local and specific concerns related to the student, school, and community.
- Students can gain empowerment through genuine learning opportunities they choose, helping them answer the universal questions: Who am I? And what is my place in society?
- Teachers shall be respected as professionals knowledgeable about their subjects, students, and teaching skills.

On the other hand, the 20% Proposal, which emerged from the Democracy and Education conference held in Strasbourg in 2016, suggests that 20% of a school's curriculum should be dedicated to learners-initiated learning activities based on their interests, concerns, and ideas. The main goal is to foster a more participatory, inclusive, and democratic learning environment by embedding democratic principles into the educational experience. For Hannam (2023), some of the key points of the proposal are:

- Student Participation: Allocate 20% of school time to activities that actively involve students in decision-making processes, including student councils, participatory budgeting, or class meetings where students can voice their opinions and help shape school policies and practices.
- Curriculum Content: Integrate democratic education into 20% of the curriculum by living core values such as civic education, human rights, social justice, and critical thinking.
- Teaching Methods: Implement pedagogical approaches that promote democratic values, including collaborative learning, project-based learning, and other methods that encourage student autonomy, critical inquiry, and respectful dialogue.
- School Culture: Foster a school environment that models democratic principles, creating a culture of respect, inclusion, and equity, where all members of the school community – students, teachers, and staff – are encouraged to participate and contribute.
- Community Involvement: Engage the broader community in the educational process, meaning that schools could partner with local organisations, parents, and community members to provide students with real-world democratic experiences and opportunities for civic engagement.

- Evaluation and Adaptation: Continuously evaluate the effectiveness of democratic education initiatives and adapt them as needed, involving gathering feedback from students and other stakeholders and using it to improve democratic practices within the school.

Some of the European experiences where learner-initiated projects have been accommodated (to flexible curricula, promoting autonomy and responsibility through independent research projects and personalised learning plans, and allowing them to focus on their interests and questions through self-directed learning, beyond the 20% of the timetable) are Summerhill School (UK), Escola da Ponte (Portugal), Ørestad Gymnasium (Denmark), Institut Beatenberg (Switzerland), Freie Schule Frankfurt (Germany), Evangelische Schule Berlin Zentrum (Germany), Big Picture Learning Schools (the Netherlands), and Pestalozzi School (Austria), among others.

In sum, the 20% proposal emphasises the importance of creating educational spaces where democratic values are not only taught but also practised. By dedicating a significant portion of the curriculum and school activities to learners' initiatives, the proposal aims to prepare them to become active, informed, and responsible citizens.

A case study: the Participatory School in Tehran

Since 2005, rooted in the principles of humanistic education, the Participatory School in Tehran stands as a unique and transformative example of how a democratic, child-centred approach can foster active participation in learning, despite the broader socio-political challenges within the country. Despite encountering numerous challenges, this school initiative has persevered, establishing itself as the largest independent research effort in the field of children's and adolescent education in Iran, operating autonomously from the Ministry of Education for nearly two decades.

Drawing on "Humanistic Education" (Yousefi & Yousefi 2014) the Participatory School places a particular emphasis on participation involving children, adolescents, families, and the broader community. Participation, in this context, refers to the active involvement of individuals in collective decision-making processes. It underscores the importance of collaboration and dialogue among students, teachers, families, educational planners, and the local community. Decisions within this framework are not imposed unilaterally but are instead the result of collective deliberation facilitated through active participation. (In the chapter on Utopias, there is more information about the Participation school in Tehran and the closely cooperating Peace school in Toronto).

The Travelling Educator project started among the middle class in the 13 Aban region.

It was initiated to address the need for a more inclusive approach to education. The focus was not only on children, but also on engaging the entire community.

The 13 Aban plan aimed to create a participatory process where men, women, children, and families could recognise their abilities, broaden their perspectives, and utilise available resources. This approach helped individuals break free from limitations, experience personal growth, and unlock their talents. The project's success continues because it empowered individuals to believe in themselves and actively participate in various areas. For example, women now hold weekly book reading sessions in public libraries, covering topics like psychology, education, family management, and parenting. Over time, their interests expanded to include poetry and literature.

As the 13 Aban project integrated education into people's lives, it sparked new connections, revealed aspirations, and helped individuals identify skills to meet their needs. There was an emphasis on independence for participants, ensuring sustainability. In a region with many needs, empowering community groups and fostering their independence is vital, contributing to the project's longevity of over two decades.

Supported by residents, various initiatives emerged, including the Local Kitchen Women's Cultural Association, the Fabric Book Cooperative, and youth and fathers' groups, sustained by a non-governmental organisation. The Local Kitchen promoted healthy eating patterns, providing nutritious snacks for children and encouraging plant-based foods. The Women's Cultural Association supported children's education through reading sessions, training courses, workshops, and kindergarten library support. After nearly 20 years, members saw themselves as responsible for children's well-being.

One of the project's most remarkable aspects was its continuity and growth. By adopting an open and inclusive approach to education, we learned that our work should extend beyond children alone. The project "Make a Wish for Our Land" aimed to prepare students for possible future migration (within or outside the country) by teaching them that life is organised differently in other communities than in their familiar environment. It thus facilitates later integration and participation. The project focused on fostering a sense of belonging and increasing awareness of cultural diversity within Iran. They aimed to explore the different ethnic groups in the country by organising trips to experience various cultures, foods, customs, and dialects across different regions. The belief was that understanding one's environment would lead to greater responsibility as a citizen.

The follow-up project, Khorshid Mardom involved travelling across the country, reading books, and exploring local capabilities and regional characteristics. Participants

documented their experiences through video and voice recordings and shared their findings about local foods and cultures on social media.

Rural and urban place-based community learning of young citizens

Aiming at changing the *rural* phenomenon of exodus to the slums of the cities, Sanjit Bunker Roy founded the Barefoot College in Tilonia (Rajasthan) in 1972, where one could become a "barefoot engineer," a "barefoot doctor" or a "barefoot teacher," meaning not to walk in shoes into the cities but to stay "barefoot" in the villages. Because of their success, 'Barefoot College International' now "was founded to address the needs of the most remote and marginalised communities around the world … by empowering rural women as agents of change, through a variety of localised education and skills development programmes" (Barefoot College, 2023: 14).

As these programmes address 14 of the 17 UN-SDGs, learners can integrate them in order to experience how collaboration works with underrepresented rural communities globally. Supporting learners "to sustainably address their most pressing challenges … including climate change, food insecurity, gender inequality, and lack of access to education and economic opportunity" (ibid.) as main issues, learners develop "tools (…) to redress the balance of power and shift it back to rural and indigenous people, (…) combating climate change, breaking gender barriers and protecting traditional ways of life" (). For instance, some training experiences included training women of the dalit caste to repair motors for water pumps or build sun-collecting lighters. Building knowledge and skills in the low technology sector is attractive to young learners, as well as being useful and relevant to their communities. Indigenous knowledge is no longer ignored but instead seen as valuable to build on 'ecoversity'.

The Green schools that started in Bali (Indonesia) and the 18 United World Colleges (UWC) with learners from 120 countries who engage in environmental sustainability and nature conservation, creating links between rural places and cities around the world. An exemplary urban learning setting is the UWC in the divided Bosnian city of Mostar, where 8th-grade learners can choose to take their music lessons as band sessions in the Mostar Rock School (MoRS), consolidating it as an example of community change to more peaceful resonance impulsed by children and youth (Boban & Božić, 2023). Furthermore, the "Education Cities" initiative defines their work as "a campus for all". In the words of Yasuaki Sakyo, Dean of Shibuya University (Tokyo), "when we looked down at the city from above, we imagined how exciting it would be if Shibuya became a university. We envisioned the entire city functioning as one university where everyone could enjoy campus life all their lives. It definitely fired our imaginations" (2012). Permaculture concepts like the 'eatable city' or the 'transitional towns' like in Sydney invite all living place members to share responsibilities and powers for more partnerism to be experienced.

What can be done? – Taking action when revolution seems out of reach

As the previous section has shown, many forms of participation by children and young people in learning and community development require fundamental changes in schools and society. As these changes are so profound, they may feel beyond the reach of an individual teacher or educator, often leading to a sense of inertia. The question, therefore, arises: if systemic revolution is not on the horizon, what can be done in the here and now?

Build networks

Change often starts small, like a plant that needs a seed to grow. A starting point can be forming networks with allies who share similar goals, for example, students, parents, fellow teachers, school administrators, local government officials, or community members. Together, you can amplify your efforts and push for change more effectively. Networking with other initiatives that align with your vision will also provide opportunities to exchange ideas, strategies, and support, allowing your efforts to align in the same direction.

Familiarise yourself with the legal framework

While it may seem tedious at first, having a solid understanding of your country's educational laws and policies can be a powerful tool. Knowledge of the legal framework allows you to navigate perceived limitations. For instance, when facing resistance from superiors or administrative bodies, you can ask for the legal basis of their objections and consult with legal experts if necessary. This approach ensures that your actions are grounded in law, providing you with the confidence to pursue innovative pedagogical practices.

Take calculated risks

In some social contexts, it might be more effective not to seek permission in advance but to act in accordance with the law and, when necessary, explain your actions retrospectively. If your initiatives are pedagogically sound and legally defensible, you can argue that your actions were justified within the framework of child-centred education. This approach empowers educators to take bold steps while staying within the boundaries of what is legally permissible. As mentioned above, ensure the safety of students and avoid online exposure of individuals.

Conclusion

The participation of children and youth in learning and community development can take

many forms and be influenced by varying degrees of freedom, depending on the context. As this chapter has illustrated, participation is not a one-size-fits-all concept but a multifaceted process that adapts to specific cultural, political, and social environments. For instance, promoting participation under authoritarian regimes may be more challenging and even subversive than in democratic settings. Yet, in every context, participation has the power to disrupt established power dynamics, shift hierarchies, and redistribute influence in a way that prioritises collective decision-making ("power with") over top-down control ("power over").

Empowering children and youth requires confronting not only the structural limitations imposed by conventional educational systems but also the deep-rooted beliefs and societal attitudes that view children as incomplete, immature, or incapable of contributing meaningfully. So, in any case there is a potential not to damage the "inner power" of children and youth by adultism (Flasher, 1978) so that they can express themselves their "power for" what they are longing for. In many schools, teachers, parents, and policymakers still uphold hierarchical power dynamics, assuming that asymmetry between adults and children provides protection and continuity. However, today's complex world demands an educational shift towards self-awareness, co-constructed learning, and shared leadership. By rethinking how we structure learning environments and redefining the roles of children and adults, we create spaces where young people can assert their agency and actively shape their futures.

As this chapter has shown, participation is both a deeply personal and collective process. It begins with the opportunity for self-expression, recognition of one's abilities, and the possibility to be heard and understood. Participation may be part of a more significant, radical transformation aimed at overturning the educational status quo – such as revising curricula, rethinking teacher training, or involving young people in political decision-making at higher levels. It may manifest in small yet meaningful acts of everyday engagement, such as giving children more autonomy in the classroom, allowing them to pursue projects of their own interest, or involving them in community decisions. These acts may seem minor, but they chip away at entrenched beliefs and gradually lay the foundation for more significant systemic change.

The examples throughout this chapter underscore the importance of networking and collaboration. Teachers, parents, local leaders, and community members can all serve as facilitators of change, providing the fertile ground where participation can take root and grow. However, the process of participation is reciprocal: it not only "takes a village to raise a child", but also "takes children to help develop the village". Their contributions – cultural, social, political, and intellectual – bring new perspectives that enrich the entire community.

Ultimately, to enable participation at all levels, it is necessary to engage in the revolutionary act of unlearning. This means letting go of tradition-oriented narratives that limit the potential of children and youth and embracing new, creative approaches to education and community building. By reimagining the role of young people as active

participants in their own learning and community development, we take an essential step towards creating more inclusive, democratic, and participatory societies.

Local contexts

> *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*
>
> *https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=653#h5p-54*

Closing questions to discuss or tasks

- **Power dynamics in education:** Reflecting on the examples of democratic schools and participatory learning models, how do traditional power dynamics in schools (teacher-student relationships) inhibit meaningful participation? What steps can be taken to shift these dynamics toward more equitable power-sharing?
- **Cultural and contextual considerations:** How does the cultural and political context of a society influence the way participation of children and youth is approached? For example, how might efforts to promote participation in a democratic country differ from those in a more authoritarian regime?
- **Small and large-scale participation:** The chapter highlights both small acts of everyday participation and significant, systemic reforms. In your view, what could be a small step and a large-scale horizon in your situation?
- **Unlearning hierarchical structures:** The concept of "unlearning" traditional hierarchical structures was discussed in the chapter. What are some of the challenges educators and communities might face in "unlearning" these practices? How can they begin the process?
- **Legal frameworks and participation:** The chapter emphasises the importance of familiarising educators with legal frameworks to navigate barriers to participation. How can knowledge of the law empower teachers, students, and communities to push for greater participation in schools?
- **Participation beyond school walls:** How can participation in learning extend beyond

the classroom to foster community development? Can you think of any local or global examples where youth have successfully contributed to social, environmental, or political change in their communities?

Literature

Anderman, Eric. (2002). School effects on psychological outcomes during adolescence. Journal of Educational Psychology, 94(4), 795-809.

Apple, Michael., & Beane, James. (1995). Democratic Schools. Virginia, US: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Beane, James. (1997). Curriculum integration. Designing the core of democratic education. NY: Teachers College Press.

Black, Carol (2010): Schooling the World. The White Man's Last Burden. Lostpeoplefilms. URL: https://carolblack.org/schooling-the-world

Boban, Ines & Hinz, Andreas (2012). Individuelle Förderung in der Grundschule? Spannungsfelder und Perspektiven im Kontext inklusiver Pädagogik und demokratischer Bildung. In: Solzbacher, Claudia, Müller-Using, Susanne & Doll, Inga (Hrsg.). Ressourcen stärken! Individuelle Förderung als Herausforderung für die Grundschule. Köln: Wolters Kluwer, 68-82

Booth, Tony & Ainscow, Mel (2011): index for inclusion. Developing learning and participation in schools. Bristol: CSIE

Bouché Peris, J. Henri. (2003). Educar para un nuevo espacio humano – perspectivas desde la antropología de la educación. (Educating for a new human space – Perspectives from anthropology of education). Madrid: Dykinson.

Bridges, David. (1997). Personal Autonomy and Practical Competence: Developing politically effective citizens. En Education, Autonomy and Democratic Citizenship: Philosophy in a Changing World. London and New York: Routledge.

Brown, Brené (2018): Dare to Lead. Brave Work. Tough Conversations. Whole Hearts. London: Random UK

Bruyere, Edmund. Bernard. (2010). Child participation and positive youth development. Child Welfare, 89(5), 205-220.

Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No.12, The Right of the Child to be Heard, CRC/C/GC/12, July 2009, para 3., https://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/AdvanceVersions/CRC-C-GC-12.pdf .

Danner, Stefan, & Jonyniene, Zivile. (2012). Participation of children in democratic decision-making in kindergarten: experiences in Germany and Lithuania. Socialinis Darbas / Social Work, 11(2), 411-420.

Day, Christopher., Sammons, Pam., Hopkins, David., Harris, Alma., Leithwood, Ken., & Gu, Quin., Brown, Eleanor., Ahtaridou, Elpida., Kington, Alison. (2009). The impact of school leadership on pupil

Dinas, Elias. (2012). The Formation of Voting Habits. Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties, 22(4). https://doi.org/10.1080/17457289.2012.718280

Eisler, Riane (2001): Tomorrow's Children: A Blueprint For Partnership Education In The 21st Century. New York City: Basic Books.

Flasher, Jack (1978): Adultism. Adolescence, 13(51), 517–523

Foucault, Michel. (1982). The Subject and Power. Critical Inquiry, 8(4). https://doi.org/10.1086/448181

Grotelüschen, Anke (2005): Expansive learning: benefits and limitations of subject-scientific learning theory. European Journal on Vocational Training No. 36, 15-20

Hannam, Derry (2023) The 20% proposal for schools, a modest proposal. Progressive Education

Hecht, Yaacov. (2010). Democratic Education: A Beginning of a Story. Tel Aviv: Developing a Culture of Innovation Company Ltd.

Hecht, Yaacov (2017): Democratic Education. The missing piece of the democratic puzzle. Powerpoint from the IDEC 2017. Tel Aviv: Unpublished

Holzkamp, Klaus (1995): Lernen. Subjektwissenschaftliche Grundlegung. Frankfurt/Main: Campus

Hope, Max. (2012). The importance of belonging: learning from the student experience of democratic education. Journal of School Leadership, 22, 733-750.

Huang, Viola. (2014). Laying the Foundations for Democratic Behavior – A Comparison of Two Different Approaches to Democratic Education. Journal of Unschooling and Alternative Learning, 8(15), 29-68.

Huebner, Christine. (2021). How Young People in Scotland Experience the Right to Vote at 16: Evidence on 'Votes-at-16' in Scotland from Qualitative Work with Young People. Parliamentary Affairs, 74(3). https://doi.org/10.1093/pa/gsab017

Illich, Ivan (1999): Deschooling Society. London: Times Educational Supplement

James, Allison. (2007). Giving Voice to Children's Voices: Practices and Problems, Pitfalls and Potentials. American Anthropologist, 109(2), 261–272.

Jörgensdóttir Rauterberg, Ruth & Hinz, Andreas (2025): Children's participation in inclusive and democratic development in a school in Iceland – from granting to guaranteeing children's rights. International Journal of Inclusive Education (i. p.)

Juul, Jesper. (2001). Your Competent Child: Toward New Basic Values for the Family. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux.

Kersting, Anna (2018): Power to the Children. A Documentary. Berlin: Anna Kersting film production. URL: : http://www.powerto thechildren-film.com/

Kohlberg, Lawrence. (1985). The just community approach to moral education in theory and practice. En Moral Education: Theory and Application. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Korten, David C. (2015): Change the Story, Change the Future. A Living Economy for a Living Earth. Oakland, CA: Berrett-Koehler

Kumar, Satish & Howarth, Lorna (Eds.) (2022): Regenerative Learning: Nurturing People and Caring for the Planet. City: GLOBAL RESILIENCE PUBLISHING

Loader, Brian. D., Vromen, Ariadne., & Xenos, Michael. A. (2016). Performing for the young networked citizen? Celebrity politics, social networking and the political engagement of young people. Media, Culture and Society, 38(3). https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443715608261

Louis, Karen. S., Leithwood, Kenneth., Wahlstrom, Kyla. L., & Anderson, Stephen. E. (2010). Investigating the links to improved student learning: Final report of research findings. St Paul: University of Minnesota Press.

Mayall, Berry. (2013). A History of the Sociology of Childhood. Institute of Education Press.

Meier, Tobias; Penta, Leo & Richter, Andreas (Hrsg.) (2022): Community Organizing: Eine Einführung. Weinheim: Beltz

Norberg-Hodge, Helena (2019). Local is our Future. Steps to an Economics of Happiness. East Hardwick, VT: Local Futures.

O'Grady, Emmanuel., O'Reilly, John., Portelli, John., & Beal, Candy. (2014). Putting the Learner into the Curriculum, not the Curriculum into the Learner: A Case for Negotiated Integrated Curriculum. International Journal of Pedagogical Innovations, 2(2), 51–63.

Osorio, Marianne. & Shread, Charlie. (2021) Sociocracy in Schools: a research by Wondering School. Holistic Education Review, 1(2). Retrieved from https://her.journals.publicknowledgeproject.org/index.php/her/article/view/1455

Penta, Leo (Hrsg.) (2007): Community Organizing. Menschen verändern ihre Stadt. Hamburg: Edition Körber-Stiftung

Plesman, Jan. (1961). The Werkplaats: Children's Community. A grand experiment with children in progressive education as experienced and interpreted by a participant.

Portelli, John.P. & Vibert, Ann. (2002). A curriculum of life, Education Canada, 42 (2), 36-39.

Prud'homme, Marc-Alexandre. (2014). No school left undemocratic: experiencing self-government in a free school. Journal of Unschooling and Alternative Learning, 8(16).

Rogoff, Barbara. (2003). The cultural nature of human development. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ryland, Naomi (2024): unlearn macht. In: Jaspers, Lisa; Ryland, Naomi & Horch, Silvie (Eds.): unlearn patriarchy. Berlin: Ullstein, 271-288

Schwartzberg, Yael & Dvir, Ron (2012): The Story of the Three (Four) Teachers. White Paper. URL:

Stevenson, Nick. (2010). Critical pedagogy, democracy, and capitalism: Education without enemies or borders. Review of Education, Pedagogy & Cultural Studies, 32(1), 66-92.

Taylor, Marilyn., & Percy-Smith, Barry. (2008). Children's participation: Learning from and for community development. International Journal of Children's Rights, 16(3), 379-394.

Thornberg, Robert. (2010). School democratic meetings. Pupil control in disguise. Teaching and Teacher Education, 26(4), 924-932.

UNICEF (1990) Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Wagenhofer, Erwin (2015): Alphabet – Angst oder Liebe? (alphabet – fear or love?). DVD. Aschaffenburg: Pandora Film

About the authors

Carlos Moreno-Romero

Charlie's academic and professional journey spans across disciplines: philology (BA), anthropology (MA), and education (PhD). In 2019, he funded a democratic school (Suvemäe) within a public school (Tallinna Kunstigümnaasium) in Estonia, where he worked as head of studies until 2024. Furthermore, he has researched various topics (Educational Commons, Democratic Education and Social Justice, Nation-State Formation and Education) within the framework of Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020-funded projects. He currently works as a consultant on democratic education, self-directed learning, media literacy, and fostering social justice through education.

Ines Boban

Once teacher in so called Integration-Classes at a comprehensive school (Reformschule Hamburg Winterhude), from 2002 until 2017 researcher and lecturer for Inclusive Education at the Martin-Luther-University Halle-Wittenberg.

Maryam Mohammadi

Maryam Mohammadi holds a master's degree in painting and brings 17 years of teaching experience as the Executive Director of the Participatory School in Iran. The school fosters a humanistic approach to education, focusing on alternative methods that emphasise active participation from children, parents, and teachers to promote the holistic development of young learners.

For years, Maryam and her colleagues have worked to build an inclusive environment where all students, regardless of their background or abilities, can thrive. Addressing

individual needs, they help students cultivate self-awareness, confidence, empathy, and a deeper understanding of themselves and the world.

Shichong Li

Shichong Li is a PhD candidate at the University of Leeds, UK, with a research focus on the Left-behind Children (LBC) in China and their agency in peer relationships. Her work challenges the dominant narrative of LBC's vulnerability and emphasises the importance of LBC's relational agency in peer relationships within and beyond the school setting. Holding a master's degree in curriculum and instruction from Southwest University, China, she has contributed to research projects on teacher training, an experience that has significantly shaped her current PhD research. She advocates for incorporating children's perspectives into teacher training programs to support diverse learners better.

Silvia Dell'Anna

Silvia Dell'Anna is a postdoctoral researcher in inclusive education, working at the Free University of Bozen/Bolzano. Her primary research areas include the evaluation of the quality of school inclusion, the design of inclusive teaching strategies, and the prevention of educational poverty, underachievement, and early school leaving.

SELF-DETERMINATION IN LEARNING

Karen Buttigieg; Zeynep Karaosman; and Ludovica Rizzo

🖥️ *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://book.all-means-all.education/ ama-2025-en/?p=447#oembed-1*

Example Case

"Riverside Primary School prides itself on its long-standing teaching traditions, emphasising discipline and good grades in the national standardised exams. Isaac is an eight-year old student at Riverside, who is on the autism spectrum[1]. He is a bright and curious child, full of potential. However, his unique abilities are not recognised or nurtured. The classroom is

---

1. It is worth noting that discussions around language and terminology related to disability can be complex and at times controversial. One key aspect of this debate is the distinction between disability-first language and person-first language. Disability-first language refers to using terminology that places the disability or condition as the primary identifier, e.g. 'autistic boy'. Advocates of disability-first language argue that it acknowledges and embraces disability as an integral part of a person's identity and promotes a sense of pride and empowerment within the disabled community. On the other hand, person-first language emphasises the individual before the disability e.g. 'boy with autism' or 'boy on the autism spectrum', as is being used in this case study. Proponents of person-first language believe that it recognises the person beyond their disability, emphasising their humanity and individuality. It is essential to acknowledge that preferences regarding language and terminology can vary among individuals and communities. Some individuals and disability advocacy groups may strongly advocate for one approach over the other, while others may have different perspectives based on their personal experiences and cultural backgrounds. There is a growing recognition of the importance of centering the voices and perspectives of disabled individuals themselves in shaping the language used to describe and discuss disability. It is crucial to listen and respect their preferences and choices regarding how they wish to be referred to, as they are the experts of their own experiences. Ultimately, the goal should be to promote inclusivity, respect, and dignity when discussing disability-related topics. Engaging in ongoing dialogue, being receptive to diverse perspectives, and staying informed about evolving language norms can contribute to creating an inclusive and respectful environment for all individuals.

filled with rows of desks, and the teacher stands at the front, while students listen passively. For Isaac, this rigid structure poses numerous challenges, including issues with his need for movement. The lack of opportunities for independent decision-making leaves him feeling frustrated and disengaged. He desires to explore his unique interests, but the curriculum offers little flexibility or choice. Isaac's love for dinosaurs, for instance, is never acknowledged or incorporated into his learning experience. Such frustration is often translated into behaviour that is often labelled as problematic and disruptive."

If you put yourself in Isaac's shoes how does this affect the way you feel about school and how it is preparing you for your future?

Initial questions

In this chapter you will find the answers to the following questions:

1. What is self-determination in learning?
2. What are the three basic psychological needs that support self-determination in learning?
3. How can educators promote self-determination in their students?
4. How can educators facilitate more autonomous forms of motivation at schools?
5. What are the effects of rewards, feedback and other external events on intrinsic motivation?
6. How can we use rewards to support students` autonomy rather than undermining it?
7. Why is it important to provide our students the opportunity to make choices that enable them to partially determine their learning path?
8. What teaching and learning methods (or strategies) are best able to nurture the autonomy, competence and relatedness needs of a wide spectrum of human differences?
9. How can the conditions placed within the context enhance or hinder the self-determination process of our students? And how can they affect their well-being?

Introduction to Topic

Wehmeyer (1992) proposed that self-determination revolves around "the attitudes and abilities required to act as the primary causal agent in one's life and to make choices regarding one's actions free from undue external influence or interference" (p. 305). Exercising autonomy in decision-making is an important aspect of typical human development, fostering mutual benefits for both the individual and society at large. Ryan and Deci's (2017) Self-Determination Theory (SDT) posits that individuals possess an inherent inclination for personal development, the establishment of connections within their communities, making meaningful contributions to these communities, as well as overcoming obstacles within their surroundings.

Self-determination in learning regards learning as a personal journey for each individual. It recognises the learner as an active participant in their own learning process, driven by intrinsic motivation to actively engage in the learning experience. When self-determination is present, learners have the autonomy and capability to make choices regarding their learning and set their own learning objectives. They take initiative in acquiring the new knowledge and skills necessary to achieve their goals, and they possess the ability to self-assess their progress in relation to their set objectives.

In essence, self-determination in learning entails an individual's capacity to control and regulate their own learning process. This involves taking ownership of their learning goals, making informed decisions about learning strategies, and persevering in the face of challenges that may arise along the way. By embracing self-determination, learners become active agents in their own educational journeys, empowering themselves to shape their learning experiences and ultimately achieve their desired outcomes.

According to SDT, there are three basic psychological needs that support self-determination in learning and facilitate growth and include; autonomy, competence, and relatedness. These needs are termed basic because they are universal to human nature and transcend all cultures, age groups, and abilities.

The Three Basic Psychological Needs for Self-Determination

The need for autonomy

Autonomy as defined in SDT refers to voluntary behaviours, and the need for control and choice in the actions and decisions that individuals take in their lives, including the ability to take direct action in one's learning process (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Of the three basic psychological needs, the concept of autonomy is often the one that is most easily misinterpreted. It is important to clarify that autonomy does not imply a need to act independently and not rely on others for assistance or guidance. On the contrary, it emphasises the ability to willingly and autonomously seek help from others and engage in collaborative efforts (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

It is also important to acknowledge that being autonomous does not imply an absence of demands or rules. Rather, autonomy involves adhering to rules when they are personally endorsed and congruent with one's values and beliefs (Deci & Ryan, 2000). For example, in the context of physical education classes, students willingly wear training shoes because they understand the meaningful explanation behind the requirement – training shoes help to prevent injuries during sports activities.

Lastly, SDT argues that simply removing external constraints does not automatically grant individuals autonomy. In classroom settings, merely eliminating constraints without providing students with meaningful goals or missions would result in chaos. Therefore, being autonomous in SDT is about the legitimacy of the rules and the restraints as well as the internalisation of the values involved.

The need for competence

Competence refers to the need for mastery and achievement in learning tasks (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Humans are driven by a fundamental psychological need to seek effectiveness and capability in the activities that they are engaged in. However, the level of challenge presented by tasks plays a crucial role in determining one's sense of competence. When tasks are overly challenging, to the point where the student feels a sense of failure right from the beginning, their perception of competence decreases (Deci & Ryan, 2000). On the other hand, students can be disinclined to complete a task if this is too easy or lacks sufficient challenge.

SDT emphasises that competence is not just about achieving a desired outcome but also about experiencing growth and progress. Therefore, the feeling of competence is enhanced when the tasks are optimally challenging for students and match their existing skills (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

The need for relatedness

Relatedness refers to the need for social connectedness and support from others (Ryan & Deci, 2017). It refers to the deep-seated desire to establish meaningful connections and relationships with others. Humans thrive on a sense of belonging, a sense of being part of something bigger, of a community. One aspect of relatedness stems from the experience of being cared for and supported by others (Deci & Ryan, 2000). In the educational context, when students perceive genuine care and concern from their teachers about their well-being and academic progress, it fosters a sense of connection and trust. Such nurturing environments make students feel valued and appreciated, leading to enhanced motivation and engagement in their learning journey (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Thus, teachers who demonstrate empathy, understanding, and responsiveness to their students' needs create a conducive atmosphere where relatedness flourishes.

Relatedness is also fostered through opportunities for students to contribute and

collaborate within a group setting. Actively engaging in group tasks allows students to benefit from the diverse perspectives and expertise of their peers, and gain mutual support, promoting a sense of shared goals and cooperation. It is important to emphasise that relatedness is not solely limited to students. The extent to which teachers experience a sense of relatedness themselves is dependent upon the quality of relationships they cultivate with their students (Klassen et al., 2012).

Key aspects

The importance of self-determination in learning

Self-determination in learning is important for all students as it empowers them to take greater responsibility and control over their educational journey, leading to increased engagement and motivation. When students are actively involved in shaping their learning experiences, they invest more effort and persist more in the face of obstacles. The skills that they develop such as goal setting, problem-solving and decision making, enable students to be more independent and active in their learning (Agran et al., 2008). A number of studies in this field have highlighted various positive outcomes of fostering self-determination in learning such as enhanced self-esteem (Deci et al., 1981), improved student well-being (Cheon et al., 2014) and better academic performance (Van Lange et al., 2012).

In educational contexts with standardised curricula and high-stakes exams, teachers often perceive efforts to cultivate self-determination as a waste of time (Parrish et al., 2024). However, investing time in promoting students' autonomy pays off significantly. It leads to students setting more ambitious goals, demonstrating perseverance in the face of challenges, and acquiring essential self-regulation skills like time management. This increased self-directedness and autonomy in learning, results in a deeper understanding of the content, as learners start connecting new knowledge that they are acquiring at school with their prior experiences (Garrison, 1997). Thus, there is a shift in responsibility from the teacher to the learner, with regard to learning, where the teacher becomes more of a mentor who can support and guide the learner to improve academic performance.

Regrettably, individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities often encounter limited opportunities for exercising personal choice and decision-making and may have limited control over the circumstances that significantly impact their day-to-day existence (Cottini, 2016; Wehmeyer, 1996). Nevertheless, various studies provide evidence of the importance of self-determination skills for such individuals. Such studies include, but are not limited to the following:

- When students with autism are provided with opportunities for choice-making, problem behaviours are reduced whilst adaptive behaviours increase (Reinhartsen et

al., 2002).

- Teaching a self-regulated problem-solving process to students with severe disabilities enables them to achieve various educationally relevant goals (Palmer et al., 2004).
- Students with learning disabilities but high self-determination were twice as likely to be employed than those with low self-determination (Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1997).
- Students with cognitive disabilities and high self-determination were significantly more likely to live independently (Wehmeyer & Palmer, 2003).
- Providing choice opportunities as an intervention to reduce problem behaviour in students, resulted in significant reductions in such behaviour (Shogren et al., 2004).

Additionally, there is a positive correlation between self-determination and IQ, but IQ is not a predictive factor of the level of self-determination that a student can reach, particularly for students with disabilities (Wehmeyer & Garner, 2003).

Teaching which promotes self-determination can also benefit teachers. Educators who engage in workshops specifically designed to enhance their skills in promoting autonomy support (compared to teachers in a control group) not only demonstrate a higher level of autonomy-supportive teaching, but also report a greater sense of satisfaction in their teaching, a stronger passion for teaching, increased teaching efficacy, and reduced emotional and physical exhaustion after teaching (Cheon et al., 2014). This reinforces how teachers can experience significant professional advantages by embracing self-determination in learning.

Motivation in Self-Determination Theory

SDT defines motivation as the driving force behind human actions and the reasons why a person engages in specific behaviours. It also suggests that motivation can take different forms, depending on the level of self-determination involved (Deci & Ryan 2008). One of these forms is intrinsic motivation which arises from a genuine interest, or alignment with one's internal values. Conversely, extrinsic motivation represents a different type of motivation, one driven by external forces such as rewards and punishments.

When individuals with authentic or intrinsic motivation (self-authored or endorsed) are compared to those who are merely externally controlled, the former typically display more interest, excitement, and confidence. These qualities in turn manifest both as enhanced performance, persistence, and creativity (Deci & Ryan, 1991; Sheldon, Ryan, Rawsthorne & Ilardi, 1997), as well as heightened vitality (Nix, Ryan, Manly & Deci, 1999), self-esteem (Deci & Ryan, 1995), and overall well-being (Ryan, Deci & Grolnick, 1995). Remarkably, these positive effects persist even when individuals have the same level of perceived competence or self-efficacy for the particular activity (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

In SDT, intrinsic motivation represents the most self-determined form of motivation. When an activity is intrinsically motivating, students engage in it willingly, driven by genuine

interest and enjoyment, rather than engaging to receive some external reward or avoid punishment. While intrinsic and extrinsic motivation might seem diametrically opposed, there is another important distinction within these types of motivation. SDT differentiates, therefore, between autonomous and controlled motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2008).

Autonomous motivation stems from internal sources and can be subdivided into identified, integrated and intrinsic motivation. In this case, individuals are driven by a sense of personal relevance or integration of the activity with their core values and identity. On the other hand, controlled motivation, which can be subdivided into external and introjected motivation, is derived from feelings of pressure either from within oneself or the external environment. In controlled motivation, individuals engage in actions not because they genuinely want to, but because they feel obliged or coerced.

Figure 1: Autonomous vs. Controlled
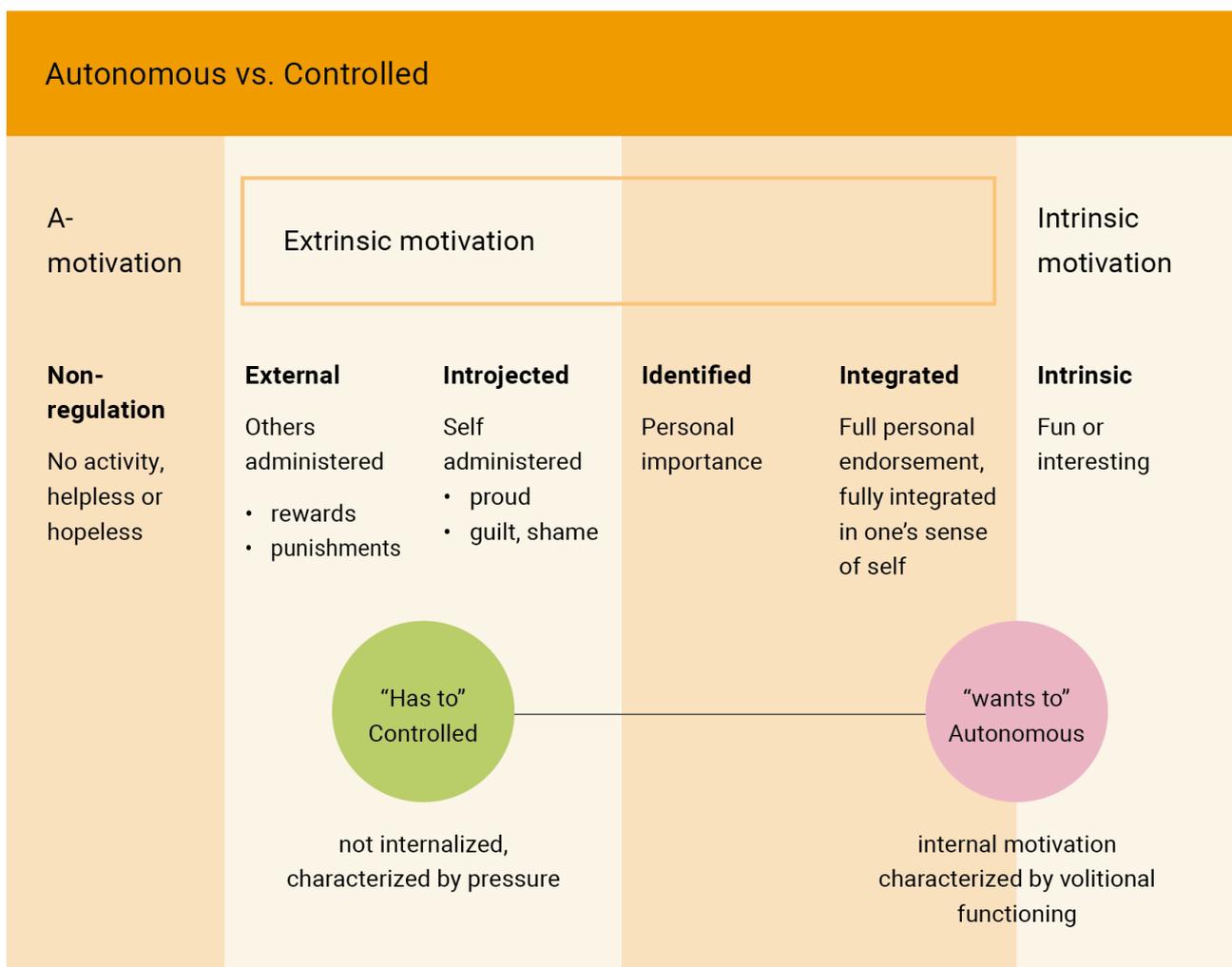
Source: Adapted from Self-Determination Continuum by Ryan & Deci (2000)

Figure 1 illustrates the taxonomy of different forms of motivation in SDT. Ryan and Deci (2008) created the Self-Determination Continuum by dividing motivation into six categories of regulatory styles – from the least motivational to the most motivational. At the far left of the self-determination continuum is A-motivation which means not having the intention

to act. According to SDT, a-motivation results from not valuing an activity (Ryan, 1995), not feeling competent to do it (Bandura, 1986), or not expecting it to yield a desired outcome (Seligman, 1975). In a learning environment, therefore, we can assume that our students would be a-motivated to engage in an activity or a task when they are not convinced of the outcome of the activity/task or when it is too hard for them to achieve it.

Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, covers the continuum between a-motivation and intrinsic motivation, varying in autonomous level. External regulation refers to the least autonomous form of extrinsic motivation and includes behaviours performed to meet and satisfy an external demand. A typical example would be a student who does their homework regularly to avoid punishment or studies hard to get good grades to get rewarded by their parents. Although the behaviour is intentional, it is still controlled and regulated by an external source. A second type of extrinsic motivation is introjected regulation which refers to taking in the cause of the action but not fully accepting it. This involves behaviours that are performed to avoid guilt and anxiety or to get recognition from others and maintain feelings of worth. A student who spends lots of time working on their classroom presentation in order to feel more respected, or avoid the risk of being laughed at by their classmates, could be an example of introjected motivation. Although it includes relative self-control and it is internally driven, introjected regulation is still considered as controlled by external sources and therefore is not autonomous. Thus, in some studies, external regulation (being interpersonally controlled) and introjected regulation (being intrapersonally controlled) have been combined to form a controlled motivation composite (e.g., Williams, Grow, Freedman, Ryan & Deci, 1996) (as cited in Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Identified regulation refers to the more autonomous and less controlling form of extrinsic motivation. Identification means when the person performs a behaviour because they consciously and personally value the goal of the action rather than doing it because they feel obliged to. For instance, a student studies hard for the SAT exam because gaining access to college is important to this student. In this example, gaining access to college is a personal and self-selected goal and is therefore relatively autonomous although the behaviour is extrinsically motivated. Alternatively, this differs to the student believing that their parents would be disappointed by not getting into a college (i.e., introjected regulation) or as a personal choice if their parents were pressuring them (i.e., external regulation). The most autonomous form of extrinsic motivation is integrated regulation, which refers to the congruence of behaviour with one's own values and needs. In other words, it is a form of motivation when a person has fully embraced the reason for action after examining the cause and necessity of it. While the behaviour is not performed because it is interesting or fun, integrated regulation is valued and experienced as autonomously motivating.

Lastly, at the far right of the continuum, intrinsic motivation is the act of doing something out of interest and is therefore considered to be highly autonomous. In some studies, identified, integrated, and intrinsic forms of regulation have been combined to form an autonomous motivation composite (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Ryan and Connell (1989) tested the formulation that these different types of motivation, with their distinct properties, lie along a continuum of relative autonomy. They investigated achievement behaviours among school children and found that external, introjected, identified, and intrinsic regulatory styles were intercorrelated according to a quasi-simplex pattern, thus providing evidence for an underlying continuum. Furthermore, differences in the type of extrinsic motivation were associated with different experiences and outcomes. For example, the more students were externally regulated, the less they showed interest, value, and effort towards achievement and the more they tended to disown responsibility for negative outcomes, by blaming others such as the teacher. Introjected regulation was positively related to expending more effort, but it was also related to feeling more anxiety and coping more poorly with failures. In contrast, identified regulation was associated with more interest and enjoyment of school and with more positive coping styles, as well as with expending more effort (as cited in Ryan & Deci, 2000).

The attitudes and skills needed for self-determination in learning

Mithaug and colleagues (1998) describe self-determination as a set of abilities that empower individuals to:

- know and express their interests, needs and abilities;
- set their own expectations and goals in order to meet these interests and needs;
- make choices, decisions and plans;
- act to realise their projects;
- evaluate the consequences of their actions;
- modify their actions and plans in order to achieve their desired goals.

The cultivation of self-determined behaviour relies on personal skills – such as the capacity to make informed choices, set goals, and self-monitor one's actions. Additionally, the environment plays a crucial role in facilitating the implementation of these behaviours (Cottini, 2016). Therefore, a lack of self-determination may result from inadequate capacities to perform self-determination skills, either from inappropriate opportunities to develop, acquire or employ these skills, or both (Mithaug et al. 1998). This implies the need to address the causes of low levels of self-determination, attaining to define appropriate interventions to improve them. Taking this into account, the development of skills and attitudes for self-determination begins before children enter the school system and continues into adulthood (Sands & Doll, 1996), and it is essential to foster and enhance this process by creating a supportive school context.

To nurture self-determination, schools must devote attention and effort to the development of intrapersonal, metacognitive and social skills among students. By doing so, students can gain a deep mastery of these skills, ensuring that they have the tools to shape their own paths successfully. This investment in students' self-determination skills

will empower them to make meaningful choices, set purposeful goals and take charge of their own educational journey, and ultimately, their lives beyond the classroom.

Intrapersonal Skills

Intrapersonal skills play an important role in fostering and enhancing the self-determination of every student. In order to make informed and responsible decisions, and to navigate a self-directed learning journey, it is essential to develop a deeper understanding of oneself. This understanding encompasses knowing your true aspirations, identifying meaningful goals, recognising the strategies and resources at your disposal, and mastering the art of using them effectively. Self-awareness and self-management become the compass that guides students in building a harmonious relationship with the environment, and in turn, unlocks the full potential within each individual (Rose, 2016).

Accepting and valuing the self

Accepting and valuing the self is one of the basic components that provide a foundation for acting in a self-determined way. It involves acquiring awareness of one's internal states, preferences and resources, and recognising their value on a personal and community level. It is not limited to "I see myself and I like what I see", but also encompasses the feeling of possessing a "unique worth". Students' experiences in school have a strong impact on the image they possess of themselves, and the significance they attach to different aspects of themselves. Effective methods to foster self-acceptance may include discussing with pupils the meaning of the term, providing examples of how self-accepting self-talk can be applied in difficult situations, and designing activities that enable students to become more aware and appreciative of their own positive qualities (Bernard et al., 2013).

Awareness of personal learning strengths, weaknesses, preferences and needs

Evaluation of the self is another important competence that enables self-directed learning (Patterson et al., 2002). Students who develop self-awareness recognise their strengths and weaknesses, and use this understanding to effectively shape and direct their own learning journey, making informed choices. Students acquire this knowledge by interacting with the school environment (Jonassen and Land, 2012), therefore it is essential to provide them with the opportunity to discover different aspects of themselves, to explore several ways of learning and fields of interest, and to develop the ability to proactively act accordingly. It is essential to enable them to communicate their preferences and prioritise their needs, whilst also evaluating their current status in relation to learning goals.

Knowing options, supports and expectations

Individuals differ in the extent to which they act according to personal beliefs, values,

interests and abilities (McClelland, 1985). The degree to which learners act in behaviours that align with the perceived self depends on several factors. In addition to acquiring self-awareness, it is necessary to develop the abilities to read the context and identify available choices and opportunities for personal growth, as well as difficulties that may be encountered and sources from which one may seek support in times of uncertainty (Snowden, 2002).

Teachers, in addition to peers, play an important role in fostering resilience, supporting students on social and emotional issues for learning, helping them proactively manage the discomfort inherent in risky tasks, being reflective and moving forward in self-determined learning.

Knowing what is important on a personal level

Since self-determination is also defined as the process through which individuals manage and direct their lives towards meaningful goals for their existence, being aware of what is important on a personal level is one of the preliminary steps that enable them to pursue these goals (Deci & Ryan, 2012). This knowledge derives from an acquired deep awareness of one's potential, resources and aspirations – ascribed to a personal level – and from an analysis of the interaction with contextual factors, which can decline further paths of development based on how they hinder or facilitate the pursuing of the person's intentions and needs.

Risk-taking

Being willing to take risks plays an essential role in theories of motivation, and is a fundamental competence for actualising the process of self-determination. Risk-taking can be defined as engaging in adaptive learning behaviours (sharing tentative ideas, asking questions, trying to do and learn new things) that put the learner at risk of making mistakes or appearing less competent than others (Beghetto, 2009). Learning, like other areas of life, involves uncertainty and, therefore, a degree of risk (Byrnes, 1998). Students are often reluctant to jump into the learning process because they fear failure, a bad grade, negative teacher judgement, or devaluation by peers.

In a school system based on the one-size-fits-all approach, students generally tend to converge on one right way to complete a task or master a skill, thereby reducing overall achievement (Magableh & Abdullah, 2020). However, taking risks and accepting challenges, especially when these arise from personal inclinations and aspirations, motivates the student to not only engage more in the learning process, but also to perform better. A continuous recalibration of learning goals is necessary to overcome any knowledge gaps, acquire new thinking tools, define what is important to the individual, and develop metacognitive skills that will also serve well to self-direct one's own education (Bembenutty et al., 2013).

Persistence

One of the competencies closely related to self-determination is perseverance, defined as the ability to maintain commitment to a goal despite challenges. This skill represents a fundamental component in the development of adequate resources aimed at ensuring the achievement of long-term educational and formative goals.

Like resilience, perseverance depends on both internal and external resources and emerges through a dynamic interaction between the individual and their environment (Malaguti, 2016; Swanson et al., 2013). Consequently, analysing environmental contexts is crucial to identifying and addressing factors that can either foster or hinder the development of this skill. This reflection is particularly significant within the framework of self-determination. Contexts that satisfy the three basic psychological needs proposed by the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) — autonomy, competence, and relatedness — exert a substantial positive influence on perseverance (Vansteenkiste et al., 2004).

The pursuit of intrinsic rather than extrinsic goals in learning facilitates a deeper understanding of content, stronger concept acquisition, and greater long-term persistence (Vansteenkiste et al., 2006). Conversely, the introduction of rewards for activities that are already intrinsically motivating, such as the use of controlling language, or the presence of external factors such as rigid deadlines or surveillance, can undermine the need for autonomy, leading to reduced persistence and enjoyment of the activity (Vansteenkiste et al., 2006).

Self-determination and perseverance are deeply interconnected. When students are empowered to act in alignment with their authentic selves, pursue their own interests, values, and goals, and feel competent, they are more likely to overcome academic challenges and exhibit greater perseverance in achieving their objectives.

Emotional control

Emotional control and self-determination are also closely interconnected. Firstly, emotional control represents an essential metacognitive skill that plays a crucial role in the self-determination process. The ability to manage one's emotions and regulate behavior allows students to effectively channel the available resources towards achieving their set goals.

In parallel, self-determination enables an autonomous path of emotional self-regulation, particularly when individuals freely choose goals that align with their personal values. Unlike controlled situations, this approach enhances positive outcomes, including personal growth, the fulfillment of psychological needs, well-being, healthy relationships, and prosocial behaviours (Benita, 2020). Moreover, providing students with opportunities for choice enhances dopamine release, which not only encourages positive emotional responses but also boosts focus, memory, and motivation (Sousa, 2010).

Planning and metacognition

One crucial aspect of self-determination is effective planning and metacognition, which involves setting educational goals based on personal interests, abilities, and needs, as well as effectively monitoring progress. This section explores the key abilities and skills needed for successful planning and metacognition in the pursuit of self-determination.

Setting and modifying educational goals

To begin the process of setting educational goals, individuals need to embark on a two-step journey. Firstly, it is essential to engage in self-reflection, recognising personal interests, passions, strengths and talents as outlined in the previous section. This self-reflection helps in identifying specific educational needs and areas for growth (Travers, et al., 2015). Secondly, armed with this self-awareness, individuals can translate their interests, abilities, and needs into concrete and achievable educational goals. These goals should be measurable, realistic, and aligned with long-term aspirations. By following this process, individuals can effectively set educational goals that are meaningful and conducive to their personal development. Moreover, individuals need to eventually be able to demonstrate dedication and ownership towards their chosen educational goals, understanding the importance of personal investment in goal attainment. Cultivating a sense of responsibility for one's own learning journey further empowers individuals to take control of their education and shape their own educational path (Baxter, 2007).

Flexibility in goal setting is also an important aspect of self-determination. Individuals must recognise that goals need to be reassessed as circumstances change. Personal growth, shifting interests and unforeseen challenges may necessitate the modification or refinement of goals to align with the new reality. Seeking feedback from mentors or educators can provide valuable guidance in the process of goal modification, ensuring that adjustments are made in a strategic and informed manner. Embracing flexibility in goal setting, allows individuals to adapt to evolving circumstances and maintain relevance in their pursuits (Wrosch, et al., 2003).

Breaking down goals into small steps, tracking progress and modifying action plans

Breaking down goals into manageable small steps is a fundamental strategy for achieving self-determination. This approach helps individuals avoid feeling overwhelmed and enables them to maintain focus on making consistent progress. Prioritising tasks and setting timelines for completion further aids in effective goal management. Utilising tools such as to-do lists, planners, or digital apps provides a structured approach to organise and track progress, fostering a sense of accomplishment and motivation throughout the journey.

Engaging in self-reflection, self-assessment and tracking progress are important for pursuing self-determination as it allows for identification of areas for improvement and

the necessary adjustments to strategies and actions (Loman, et al., 2010). Additionally, celebrating achievements along the way serves as positive reinforcement, fuelling motivation to continue striving towards set goals (Geller, 2016). Identifying areas for further growth empowers individuals to set new goals and continuously challenge themselves. Proactively revising action plans in response to unexpected deviations ensures that learners maintain focus, stay motivated, and confidently navigate through challenges, ultimately propelling them closer to their goals and fostering self-determination.

Active participation in decision-making and accessing resources and support

Active involvement in decision-making related to educational goals and advocating for personal preferences and needs is a fundamental aspect of self-determination (Deci & Ryan, 2012). Identifying and accessing resources such as textbooks and online materials to enhance the learning experience is equally crucial for fostering self-determination. Moreover, seeking guidance and support from teachers, mentors, family members or peers becomes essential when facing important decisions or challenges. Developing effective communication skills plays a vital role in expressing needs and seeking assistance effectively. By actively engaging with resources and seeking support, individuals can maximise their opportunities for learning, growth and success (Barron, 2006).

Knowledge and adaptation of learning strategies

Possessing knowledge of various learning strategies not only enhances understanding and retention of information, but is also a key driver of self-determination. This is due to the ability to make use of different strategies based on the specific task at hand and allows individuals to optimise their approach for better learning outcomes (Schmeck, 2013). Reflecting on the effectiveness of these strategies and being open to making adjustments when necessary fosters continuous improvement and skill development. By possessing a repertoire of learning strategies and actively evaluating their efficacy, individuals can become more efficient and effective learners (Hattie & Donoghue, 2016).

Willingness to attempt challenging tasks

The willingness to attempt challenging tasks involves embracing a growth mindset by recognising that taking on difficult tasks can lead to personal and skill development (Dweck, et al., 2014). Such a mindset allows the learner to adopt a positive attitude towards learning and overcome the fear of failure. By stepping out of their comfort zones and pushing their boundaries, individuals cultivate resilience, perseverance, and a sense of achievement. This willingness to embrace challenges ultimately empowers them to expand their capabilities and enhance their self-determination (Ryan & Niemiec, 2009).

Interpersonal skills

Interpersonal skills are ways of interacting with others which make it easier to communicate effectively, both verbally and non-verbally. Interpersonal skills are essential for self-determination. They help learners cooperate and work with other learners while engaging in goal-directed and autonomous behaviour (McCornack, 2019). These skills include but are not limited to:

- Establishing and maintaining relationships with others involves building connections with peers, teachers, and others in the learning environment. It requires effective communication, active listening, empathy, and understanding of different perspectives.
- Seeking or offering support and help when necessary involves recognising when assistance is needed and being willing to seek or offer help. It fosters a culture of support and collaboration.
- Conveying information and expressing oneself clearly and effectively involves communicating thoughts, ideas, and information clearly and concisely by using appropriate language, tone, and non-verbal cues.

- Working collaboratively with other learners toward a common goal involves effectively working as part of a team, contributing ideas, listening to others, and collaborating towards a shared objective.
- Being able to negotiate to reach an agreement or compromise with others involves engaging in constructive dialogue and negotiation to find common ground and reach agreements or compromises.
- Actively listening to others and understanding their perspectives involves giving full attention to others, focusing on understanding their message, and demonstrating empathy.
- Resolving conflicts constructively involves addressing conflicts or disagreements in a positive and constructive manner. It includes active listening, empathy, and finding mutually agreeable solutions.
- Identifying social cues (both verbal and nonverbal) to understand how others feel involves recognising and interpreting social cues to understand others' emotions. It requires empathy and sensitivity.
- Demonstrating empathy and compassion involves understanding and sharing the feelings of others, and showing care and support.

Promotion of self-determination in learning in the classroom

Teachers, as the primary adults who interact with learners in school settings, play a significant role in fostering self-determined motivation. Teachers who support autonomy

can foster self-determined motivation in their students (Reeve, 2006). This conclusion has been reached across various educational levels, including primary school (Ryan & Grolnick, 1986), high school (Trouilloud et al., 2006), and university (Williams & Deci, 1996). This equally applies to students with severe behavioural problems (Savard et al., 2013). Regardless of the level of education or the difficulties students encounter, teachers adopting an autonomy-supportive teaching style significantly contribute to cultivating greater self-determined motivation in their students. Furthermore, these benefits appear to be consistent across cultures, as similar findings have been observed in non-Western cultures such as Russia (Chirkov & Ryan, 2001) and China (Hardré et al., 2006).

Educators can promote self-determination in their students by fostering an environment that supports autonomy, competence, and relatedness. This can be achieved through various strategies as will be shown in the following subsections. These include, but are not limited to, offering choices and flexibility in learning tasks, providing opportunities for students to engage in self-reflection and goal-setting, and creating a supportive and collaborative learning community. Additionally, educators can also provide feedback and praise that supports students' sense of competence and progress towards their learning goals. All of this requires the provision of space and time for the teacher to engage in continuous self-reflection.

Wehmeyer et al. (2012) provided evidence that using the Self-Determined Learning Model of Instruction over two years significantly improved the self-determination of high school students with cognitive disabilities when compared to a one-year intervention. This highlights the importance of more sustained efforts to promote self-determination as opposed to time-limited interventions.

Autonomy

Autonomy refers to the need to feel that one is acting out of a sense of volition and self-endorsement (Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013). As we have discussed above, autonomy in SDT does not mean that there are no rules, constraints or requirements for students in their learning environment. Chaos will be inevitable in such a classroom setting where all the constraints and rules are taken away. Students need legitimate commands and restraints that they can internalise. Involving our students in the process and allowing them to take ownership of their learning environment can be a way to create a set of rules that students will autonomously and willingly follow.

SDT argues that the way teachers engage with their students (autonomy-supportive vs. controlling) is one of the most decisive factors affecting the classroom climate. In classrooms, where autonomy is supported, teachers provide students with opportunities, choices and options to encourage them to take initiative and responsibility for directing aspects of their own learning. It is important to underline that these opportunities should align with, and be relevant to, students´ needs, interests and assignments. On the other

hand, controlling teachers tend to monopolise learning materials, and pressure students to think and behave in a particular way without considering the needs of the students (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991).

Table 1:Teacher Behaviours Shown Empirically to Be Autonomy-Supportive, and Those Shown to Be Controlling

Teacher behaviors that promote autonomous motivation	Teacher behaviors that promote controlled motivation
• Listening to students • Making time for students' independent work • Giving students an opportunity to talk • Acknowledging signs of improvement and mastery • Encouraging students' effort • Offering progress-enabling hints when students seem stuck • Being responsive to students' comments and questions • Acknowledging students' experiences and perspectives	• Monopolizing the learning materials • Providing students too little time to work independently on solving problems • Telling students answers without giving them an opportunity to formulate them • Making demands and directives • Using controlling words such as should and have to Using directed questions as a way of controlling the flow of conversation

Source: Based on: Reeve, J., & Jang, H. (2006) Self Determination Theory, Basic Psychological Needs, in Motivation, Development, and Wellness (Ryan & Deci, 2017)

According to SDT, students with disabilities have the same basic psychological needs (autonomy, competence, relatedness) as all other students. Therefore, teacher involvement in learning or behaviour change, although it might be well intended, must respect and foster students' autonomy. Focusing merely on the outcome and putting on more pressure can be especially strong when it comes to students with disabilities. This can lead to a risk of disengagement. Instead, promoting autonomy and self-determination rather than training and management based on external control, ultimately brings more adaptive developmental outcomes.

It is also important to mention that when teachers are autonomy-supportive, they understand students' needs and perspectives. In this way, teachers can realise when their students need relational and competence support. Therefore, autonomy-supportive teachers typically support the other two basic psychological needs.

Providing choice

To effectively instil choice-making skills, it is necessary to integrate systematic and

structured opportunities for students to select options that align with their individual preferences in their daily routines (Lohrmann-O'Rourke & Gomez, 2001).

Lohrmann-O'Rourke and Browder (1998) provided recommendations for conducting preference assessments for students with disabilities, which include the following elements:

- Offering repeated opportunities for students to make choices.
- Conducting trial assessments in the actual environment where the choices are available, combined with careful observation of the students.
- Administering repeated assessments over multiple days to gauge consistency in preferences.
- Periodically assessing preferences over time to capture any potential changes.
- Presenting choice stimuli in a format that students can easily understand, such as using pictures or actual items.
- Allowing students to directly select their choices by touching, picking up, or pointing to the desired option.
- Presenting choices in a paired format, limiting the options available for selection.

In their article on choice-making, Shevin and Klein (1984) emphasised the importance of integrating choice-making opportunities throughout the school day. They identified five key factors for maintaining a balance between student choice and professional responsibility:

1. Integrating student choices as an initial step in the instructional process.
2. Increasing the number of decisions the student can make within a given activity.
3. Expanding the range of domains in which students can make decisions.
4. Increasing the significance of the choices made by students in terms of risk and long-term consequences.
5. Maintaining clear communication with students about areas where choices can be made and the boundaries within which those choices can be exercised.

According to Kohn (1993), schools have the potential to offer students meaningful choices in academic areas, such as involving them in decisions regarding what, how, and why they learn. Although offering students choices in learning demands additional commitment and effort from teachers, it is justifiable to do so, such as allowing students to work individually, in small groups, or as a whole class, and providing alternatives for seating arrangements during their work (Kohn, 1993).

Using appropriate language and demonstrating patience

The language used to promote autonomous choice-making should be informative, non-

pressuring, and supportive. Threats, rewards, or punishment should not be used to motivate self-determining behaviour.

Demonstrating patience is a vital aspect of fostering student autonomy. It involves maintaining a calm demeanour while waiting for students' input, initiative, and willingness to participate in learning activities. Patience allows students the necessary time and freedom to overcome any initial barriers, explore and manipulate learning materials, ask questions, retrieve information, set goals, evaluate feedback, formulate and test hypotheses, monitor and revise their work, recognise the need to start afresh, adjust problem-solving strategies, revise their thinking, monitor progress, pursue their own direction, reflect on their learning and progress, and work at their own pace and natural rhythm (Reeve, 2016).

It is understandable why teachers may find it challenging to maintain patience due to factors such as time limitations and high-stakes testing. However, the importance of patience from a motivational standpoint stems from a genuine appreciation for student autonomy and an acknowledgement that cognitive engagement and learning processes require time to unfold effectively.

Providing rationales for tasks

Engaging students in a dialogue about the purpose of their learning and the rationales behind certain tasks is often overlooked when implementing choice in the classroom. Simply telling students that they must learn something for their own benefit or for reasons centred around the teacher is likely to restrict student self-determination. According to Deci and Chandler (1986), offering learners a rationale for their activities enhances motivation and engagement.

Responding to students' needs and interests

It may seem evident, but it is often observed that teachers deliver the curriculum content in a way that lacks stimulation and thus fails to nurture children's innate curiosity. This includes an overreliance on rote learning instead of engaging in enriching educational tasks. Consequently, teachers are encouraged to design educational activities that are authentic and meaningful to children, fostering their natural desire to learn. It thus becomes important to inquire more about students' interests and preferences.

Considering the students' perspective is crucial for self-determination in learning. By engaging in perspective-taking, teachers develop increased empathy and a deeper understanding of students' motivational strengths, leading to classroom environments where students' internal motivations guide their engagement. When lesson planning overlooks students' perspectives, educational outcomes become less optimal.

Teachers can start lessons with a conversation that fosters perspective-taking, demonstrating openness and a genuine willingness to invite, seek, and incorporate

students' input and suggestions into the lesson plan and its execution. Naturally, the teacher's responsiveness to students' input and suggestions is crucial. Therefore, the teacher should be prepared to integrate their ideas, provided they align with the learning objectives.

Fostering curiosity and intrinsic motivation

Curiosity emerges when students encounter an unexpected gap in their knowledge (Silvia, 2008). It is fulfilled when students engage in exploratory behaviour to acquire the necessary information to bridge that knowledge gap. This process of exploration, often referred to as engagement, leads to knowledge expansion, learning, and increased expertise. In the classroom, teachers can nurture students' curiosity through various approaches, such as posing thought-provoking questions, creating suspense regarding upcoming content (Abuhamdeh et al., 2015), and encouraging students to explore new activities (Proyer et al., 2013). In addition, teachers can foster students' intrinsic motivation by presenting the learning activity as a chance for personal growth, skill enhancement, building closer relationships with others, or making constructive contributions to their community (Vansteenkiste et al., 2006).

Dealing with barriers and negative emotions

It is important for teachers to be attentive when they sense something is amiss with a student, keeping an eye out for the various internal and external barriers to motivation. When negative feelings arise, they should be acknowledged, and when the right moment arises, teachers should enquire about the student's experiences in a supportive and non-judgmental manner so that the student does not feel defensive. By actively listening, teachers can gain a deep understanding of the challenges the student may be facing and more effective collaboration.

While the significance of learning and organisational skills is widely recognised, teachers often overlook the potential impact of emotion-management skills. Failures, particularly those perceived as unjust, often trigger intense emotions such as anger, envy, sadness, or anxiety. In their attempt to cope with these emotions, students may employ strategies that provide temporary relief but are detrimental in the long run, such as devaluing the importance of the subject they failed in, denying the failure and its implications, unjustly blaming others for their failure, or disregard helpful feedback from teachers (Skinner & Wellborn, 1997).

In such situations, teachers can help students develop more constructive coping strategies by drawing from cognitive-behavioural approaches like acceptance and commitment and mindfulness training (Greenberg & Harris, 2012). These approaches can help students cultivate resilience, acceptance of failure, and a mindful awareness of their emotions, leading to healthier and more productive responses to setbacks.

Addressing negative emotions in the classroom, especially anger and resentment, can be a challenging task. However, teachers who recognise and validate students' negative emotions have a better chance of diffusing them (Reeve, 2016). This approach not only helps in achieving the immediate goal of alleviating negative emotions but also contributes to the long-term goal of establishing a stronger connection with students.

Competence

Providing appropriately challenging activities and ongoing scaffolding

Teachers can enhance students' need for competence by presenting them with appropriate challenges to pursue within a supportive and accepting environment that allows for mistakes and failures (Keller & Bless, 2008).

Scaffolding, which refers to the support and guidance provided by teachers to help students in the learning process, is also powerful. Through clear and explicit instructions, modelling desired behaviours and skills, and gradually reducing support, teachers enable students to gain competence and confidence in independent learning. This gradual release of responsibility fosters a sense of mastery and self-efficacy.

Providing informative feedback

To further promote students' sense of competence and autonomous motivation, it is essential to provide them with frequent informational feedback as they work towards their objectives. According to Hattie and Timperley (2007), the primary objective of feedback is to minimise the gap between students' current performance and their expected performance. Tangible information about their current performance, coupled with guidance towards achieving their goals, can bridge this gap effectively. Research suggests that such feedback should be specific, non-comparative, focusing primarily on positive aspects, and aligned with a constructive success theory (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). It is preferable for some of this feedback to be informal and verbal, rather than formal or written, occurring naturally as the teacher moves around the classroom or briefly checks in with students (Assor, 2016).

Relatedness and Collaborative Learning

Teachers play a pivotal role in addressing students' need for relatedness by providing them with opportunities to engage in communal social interactions. They can provide the space for learning within groups and for planning, implementing, and evaluating collective actions. In such groups, students engage in socially responsible forms of regulation as the other members of the group model various learning strategies and provide motivational support.

Peer support

Peer support is an essential aspect of creating a supportive learning environment. Teachers can teach students how to provide and receive feedback effectively, recognise appropriate moments to seek feedback, and understand how to offer feedback that supports and enhances the learning process without diminishing the recipient's self-esteem or social status (Assor, 2016).

Relatedness between students and teacher

Establishing positive relationships between students and teachers is equally important. One effective approach is scheduling individual meetings with students, which becomes feasible during cooperative work since teachers are not required to divide their attention among other students. During these meetings, the teacher can dedicate time to discussing students' values, needs, and interests. In this context, students feel a strong connection with their teacher because the focus is on their preferences and emotional well-being, rather than solely on their grades.

Interestingly, teachers who report higher levels of relatedness with students are more likely to experience positive outcomes, such as improved emotional well-being, compared to those whose connections are primarily with their colleagues (Klassen et al., 2012). This highlights the importance of establishing positive relationships with students and the significant impact they can have on both teachers and students. There is a chapter on Relationships in inclusive education in this book for those seeking further information on this topic.

Factors beyond teaching that influence self-determination

School curricula or materials are often not prepared to be intrinsically motivating or made to be particularly meaningful or relevant to students' daily lives or purposes. Many educational systems and schools have become extremely focused on a very narrow set of cognitive goals that neglect students' different interests, talents, and psychological and intellectual needs.

Student motivation is also closely linked to teacher motivation and well-being. When teachers face limited professional autonomy and pressure to achieve specific outcomes, they may resort to more controlling motivational strategies. Teachers worldwide often face considerable pressure within school systems, which can restrict their ability to foster self-determination in the classroom. When teachers themselves lack the necessary autonomy, competence, and sense of relatedness in their profession, their capacity to promote student autonomy and effective learning is diminished. Through a combination of research findings, Brenner (2022) revealed that by fulfilling teachers' autonomy needs they are more likely to be more motivated, provide meaningful reasons for tasks, use less controlling methods in

the classroom, involve students more, provide opportunities for student choice, and offer support. This highlights the significance of supporting teachers' autonomy to encourage practices that enhance students' self-determined motivation.

Additionally, it is also important to always keep in mind that schools are not isolated and that children come to school already with a baggage of experiences and factors that are affecting them. One key factor relates to the family and home setting. If families embrace values of self-determination, such as openness and discussion, students are more likely to be receptive to self-determination in the classroom. On the other hand, if home life and parenting are controlling, students may struggle when encountering opposing beliefs and values at school (Grolnick et al., 1997). Families also exist within the larger context of culture and society, and sometimes also microcultures. These shape their belief systems and values, particularly regarding the roles of specific groups of people. For example in many societies, children are seen as having a much lower expertise than adults, leading to their voices being perceived as less important.

Example case revisited

Riverside Primary School has undergone a remarkable transformation in its approach to education, placing a profound emphasis on fostering self-determination in learning. Among the thriving students in this new environment is eight-year-old Isaac, who is on the autism spectrum. This forward-thinking school has veered away from traditional teaching methods that focused solely on discipline and standardised exam scores.

The classroom at Riverside has been completely redesigned to promote active engagement and individualised learning. Isaac now finds himself in a vibrant and flexible learning space that accommodates his need for movement, enabling him to fully participate in classroom activities. This small but crucial adjustment has made an immense difference in Isaac's learning experience.

One of the pivotal changes at Riverside is the integration of student autonomy and choice. Isaac is now empowered to make decisions about his learning journey, allowing him to delve deeply into his passionate interest in dinosaurs while also learning core subjects like mathematics. This autonomy has sparked a newfound enthusiasm in Isaac, and his eagerness to learn and explore is now understood and appreciated.

Previously, Isaac's behaviour was often labelled as problematic and disruptive. However, with the shift in approach at Riverside, it has become evident that his behaviour was merely a sign of his intense curiosity and yearning for knowledge. The school now recognises and nurtures his unique abilities, celebrating his individuality rather than suppressing it.

If you put yourself in Isaac's shoes how does this affect the way you feel about school and how it is preparing you for your future?

Conclusion

This chapter has delved into the concept of self-determination in learning, exploring the three basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The attitudes and skills needed for fostering autonomy and motivation in students' learning journey have also been uncovered, whilst also acknowledging that factors beyond teaching, such as students' home environment and cultural influences, can impact self-determination.

Self-determination in learning considers learning as a personal journey and argues that learners should take ownership of their own learning process and take initiative in shaping their learning experiences. This involves being an active participant in setting their learning goals, making informed decisions about their own learning strategies and being determined to achieve their desired outcomes despite the challenges that may occur during the learning process.

Incorporating the principles and strategies discussed in this section can lead to transformative experiences for students, igniting their intrinsic motivation and passion for learning. Empowering students to take ownership of their learning journey ultimately prepares them to navigate challenges and thrive in their educational pursuits and beyond. Isaac's experience at Riverside Primary School, for instance, is a good example highlighting the transformative power of fostering self-determination in learning. By creating an environment that values autonomy, competence, and relatedness, Riverside has enabled Isaac to thrive and embrace his unique interests and abilities. The school's emphasis on student choice, flexible learning spaces, and supportive relationships has empowered Isaac to take ownership of his education and shape his own learning journey. This shift in approach has not only improved Isaac's engagement and motivation but has also challenged traditional notions of teaching and learning. The example case serves as a powerful reminder of the importance of self-determination in education and its potential to unlock the full potential of every student.

In conclusion, self-determination in learning is a crucial aspect of education that empowers learners to take control of their own learning process. It involves the fulfilment of three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. By promoting self-determination in the classroom, educators can create an environment that nurtures students' intrinsic motivation, engagement, and overall well-being. It is important for teachers to provide opportunities for students to make choices, set goals, and engage in self-reflection. This fosters students' intrapersonal, metacognitive, and interpersonal skills, enabling them to make meaningful choices, set purposeful goals, and take charge of their own education. Ultimately, self-determination in learning benefits both students and teachers, leading to increased engagement, motivation, and satisfaction in the educational journey.

Local contexts

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=447#h5p-4

Closing questions to discuss or tasks

- Think about a time when you were highly motivated to learn something. What factors contributed to your motivation?
- What do you think self-determination means in the context of learning, and why might it be important for students to have control over their learning process?
- In what ways do you think providing choices to students can impact their learning and engagement?
- How do you think different learning needs (e.g., those of students with autism) should be accommodated to promote self-determination in the classroom?

Pick three to four of the following tasks:

Reflecting on the Example Case:

- If you were a teacher at Riverside Primary School, what strategies would you implement to further support Isaac's self-determination in learning?
- How would you handle a situation where a student's interests, like Isaac's passion for dinosaurs, are not part of the standard curriculum?

Personal Application:

- Reflect on a recent learning experience. How did autonomy, competence, and relatedness play a role in your engagement and success?
- Identify one area in your learning or teaching where you can apply the principles of self-determination. What specific actions will you take to enhance autonomy, competence, or relatedness?

Strategies for Teachers:

- What are some practical ways teachers can provide meaningful choices to students in their daily routines?
- Discuss how you can use positive and informative feedback to boost students' sense of competence and motivation.

Overcoming Barriers:

- Think about potential barriers to promoting self-determination in the classroom. What strategies can you use to address these barriers?
- How can teachers manage and respond to students' negative emotions effectively to

support their self-determination?

Evaluating Impact:

- How do you think fostering self-determination in learning impacts long-term student outcomes, such as their career choices and personal development?
- Discuss how self-determination theory can be applied beyond the classroom, in real-world situations and lifelong learning.

Literature

Abuhamdeh, S., M. Csikszentmihalyi, and B. Jalal. "Enjoying the Possibility of Defeat: Outcome Uncertainty, Suspense, and Intrinsic Motivation." *Motivation and Emotion* 39 (2015): 1–10.

Agran, M., M. Wehmeyer, M. Cavin, and S. Palmer. "Promoting Student Active Classroom Participation Skills Through Instruction to Promote Self-Regulated Learning and Self-Determination." *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals* 31, no. 2 (2008): 106–14. https://doi.org/10.1177/0885728808317656.

Assor, A. "An Instruction Sequence Promoting Autonomous Motivation for Coping with Challenging Learning Tasks." In *Building Autonomous Learners*, edited by W. Liu, J. Wang, and R. Ryan, 153–68. Singapore: Springer, 2016.

Barron, B. "Interest and Self-Sustained Learning as Catalysts of Development: A Learning Ecology Perspective." *Human Development* 49, no. 4 (2006): 193–224.

Baxter Magolda, M. B. "Self-Authorship: The Foundation for Twenty-First-Century Education." *New Directions for Teaching & Learning* 109 (2007).

Beghetto, R. A. "Correlates of Intellectual Risk Taking in Elementary School Science." *Journal of Research in Science Teaching* 46, no. 2 (2009): 210–23.

Bembenutty, H., A. Kitsantas, and T. J. Cleary, eds. *Applications of Self-Regulated Learning Across Diverse Disciplines: A Tribute to Barry J. Zimmerman*. IAP, 2013.

Bernard, M., A. Vernon, M. Terjesen, and R. Kurasaki. "Self-Acceptance in the Education and Counselling of Young People." In *The Strength of Self-Acceptance: Theory, Practice and Research*, edited by M. E. Bernard, 155–92. Springer Science + Business Media, 2013. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-6806-6_10.

Brenner, C. "Self-Regulated Learning, Self-Determination Theory and Teacher Candidates' Development of Competency-Based Teaching Practices." *Smart Learning Environments* 9, no. 3 (2022).

Byrnes, J. P. *The Nature and Development of Decision-Making: A Self-Regulation Model*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1998.

Cheon, S., J. Reeve, T. Yu, and H. Jang. "The Teacher Benefits from Giving Autonomy Support During Physical Education Instruction." *Journal of Sports and Exercise Psychology* 36 (2014): 331–46.

Chirkov, V., and R. Ryan. "Parent and Teacher Autonomy-Support in Russian and U.S. Adolescents: Common Effects on Well-Being and Academic Motivation." *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 32 (2001): 618–35.

Cottini, L. *L'autodeterminazione Nelle Persone Con Disabilità: Percorsi Educativi per Svilupparla*. Trento: Erikson, 2016.

Deci, E., and C. Chandler. "The Importance of Motivation for the Future of the LD Field." *Journal of Learning Disabilities* 19, no. 10 (1986): 587–94.

Deci, E. L., R. J. Vallerand, L. G. Pelletier, and R. M. Ryan. "Motivation and Education: The Self-Determination Perspective." *Educational Psychologist* 26, no. 3–4 (1991): 325–46. https://doi.org/10.1080/00461520.1991.9653137.

Deci, E., J. Nezlek, and L. Sheinman. "Characteristics of the Rewarder and Intrinsic Motivation of the Rewardee." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 40 (1981): 1–10.

Deci, E., and R. Ryan. "Self-Determination Theory." In *Handbook of Theories of Social Psychology*, 1:416–36. 20, 2012.

———. *Self-Determination Theory: A Macrotheory of Human Motivation, Development, and Health*. Guilford Press, 2008.

———. "The 'What' and 'Why' of Goal Pursuits: Human Needs and the Self-Determination of Behavior." *Psychological Inquiry* 11, no. 4 (2000): 227–68.

Dweck, C., G. Walton, and G. Cohen. "Academic Tenacity: Mindsets and Skills That Promote Long-Term Learning," 2014.

Garrison, D. "Self-Directed Learning: Toward a Comprehensive Model." *Adult Education Quarterly* 48, no. 1 (1997): 18–33. https://doi.org/10.1177/074171369704800103.

Geller, E. S. "The Psychology of Self-Motivation." *Applied Psychology: Actively Caring for People*, 2016, 83–118.

Greenberg, M., and A. Harris. "Nurturing Mindfulness in Children and Youth: Current State of Research." *Child Development Perspectives* 6, no. 2 (2012): 161–66.

Grolnick, W., Deci, E., and R. Ryan. "Internalization Within the Family." In *Parenting and Children's Internalisation of Values: A Handbook of Contemporary Theory*, edited by J. Grusec and L. Kuczynski, 135–61. New York: Wiley, 1997.

Hardré, P., Chen, C., Huang, S., Chiang, C., Jen, F., and L. Warden. "Factors Affecting High School Students' Academic Motivation in Taiwan." *Asia Pacific Journal of Education* 26 (2006): 189–207.

Hattie, J., and G. M. Donoghue. "Learning Strategies: A Synthesis and Conceptual Model." *Npj Science of Learning* 1, no. 1 (2016): 1–13.

Hattie, J., and H. Timperley. "The Power of Feedback." *Review of Educational Research* 77 (2007): 81–112.

Jonassen, D., and S. Land. *Theoretical Foundations of Learning Environments (2nd Ed.)*. New

York: Routledge, 2012.

Keller, J., and H. Bless. "Flow and Regulatory Compatibility: An Experimental Approach to the Flow Model of Intrinsic Motivation." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 34 (2008): 196–209.

Klassen, R., Perry, N., and A. Frenzel. "Teachers' Relatedness with Students: An Underemphasized Component of Teachers' Basic Psychological Needs." *Journal of Educational Psychology* 104 (2012): 150–65.

Kohn, A. "Choices for Children." *Phi Delta Kappan* 75, no. 1 (1993): 8–20.

Lohrmann-O'Rourke, S., and D. Browder. "Empirically Based Methods to Assess the Preferences of Individuals with Severe Disabilities." *American Journal of Mental Retardation* 103, no. 2 (1998): 146–61.

Lohrmann-O'Rourke, S., and O. Gomez. "Integrating Preference Assessment Within the Transition Process to Create Meaningful School-to-Life Outcomes." *Exceptionality* 9, no. 3 (2001): 157–74.

Magableh, I. S. I., and A. Abdullah. "On the Effectiveness of Differentiated Instruction in the Enhancement of Jordanian Students' Overall Achievement." *International Journal of Instruction* 13, no. 2 (2020): 533–48.

Malaguti, E. "Educatori, Insegnanti e Giovani: Il Ruolo Della Scuola e Dei Gruppi Educativi Pomeridiani Nella Promozione Di Processi Di Resilienza e Di Inclusione." *L'Integrazione Scolastica e Sociale* 15, no. 1 (2016): 11–24.

McClelland, D. "How Motives, Skills, and Values Determine What People Do." *American Psychologist* 40, no. 7 (1985): 812.

McCornack, S. A. *Reflect & Relate: An Introduction to Interpersonal Communication (4th Ed.).* Bedford/St. Martin's, 2019.

Mithaug, D., Wehmeyer, M. L., Agran, M., Martin, J., and S. Palmer. "The Self-Determined Learning Model of Instruction: Engaging Students to Solve Their Learning Problems." In *Making It Happen: Student Involvement in Educational Planning, Decision-Making, and Instruction*, edited by M. L. Wehmeyer and D. J. Sands, 299–328. Baltimore, MD: Brookes, 1998.

Palmer, S., Wehmeyer, M., Gibson, K., and M. Agran. "Promoting Access to the General Curriculum by Teaching Self-Determination Skills." *Exceptional Children* 70 (2004): 427–39.

Parrish, A., Noels, K. A., and X. Zhang. "Self-Determination Across the Secondary-School Years: How Teachers and Curriculum Policy Affect Language Learners' Motivation." *The Language Learning Journal*, 2024, 1–19. https://doi.org/10.1080/09571736.2024.2352576.

Patterson, C., Crooks, D., and O. Lunyk-Child. "A New Perspective on Competencies for Self-Directed Learning." *Journal of Nursing Education* 41, no. 1 (2002): 25–31.

Proyer, R., Ruch, W., and C. Buschor. "Testing Strengths-Based Interventions: A Preliminary Study on the Effectiveness of a Program Targeting Curiosity, Gratitude, Hope, Humor, and Zest for Enhancing Life Satisfaction." *Journal of Happiness Studies* 14 (2013): 275–92.

Reeve, J. "Autonomy-Supportive Teaching: What It Is, How to Do It." In *Building Autonomous*

Learners, edited by Liu W., Wang, J. and R. Ryan, 129–52. Springer, 2016.

———. "Teachers as Facilitators: What Autonomy-Supportive Teachers Do and Why Their Students Benefit." *Elementary School Journal* 106 (2006): 225–36.

Reeve, J., and H. Jang. "What Teachers Say and Do to Support Students' Autonomy During a Learning Activity." *Journal of Educational Psychology* 98, no. 1 (2006): 209–18.

Reinhartsen, D., Garfinkle, A., and M. Wolery. "Engagement with Toys in Two-Year-Old Children with Autism: Teacher Selection Versus Child Choice." *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities* 27, no. 3 (2002): 175–87.

Rose, T. *The End of Average: How to Succeed in a World That Values Sameness*. Penguin UK, 2016.

Ryan, R., and E. Deci. "Self-Determination Theory and the Facilitation of Intrinsic Motivation, Social Development, and Well-Being." *University of Rochester*, 2000.

———. *Self-Determination Theory: Basic Psychological Needs in Motivation, Development, and Wellness*. The Guilford Press, 2017.

Ryan, R., and W. Grolnick. "Origins and Pawns in the Classroom: Self-Report and Projective Assessments of Individual Differences in Children's Perceptions." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 50 (1986): 550–58.

Ryan, R., and C. Niemiec. "Self-Determination Theory in Schools of Education: Can an Empirically Supported Framework Also Be Critical and Liberating?" *Theory and Research in Education* 7, no. 2 (2009): 263–72.

Sands, D., and B. Doll. "Fostering Self-Determination Is a Developmental Task." *The Journal of Special Education* 30 (1996): 58–76.

Savard, A., Joussemet, M., Pelletier, J., and G. Mageau. "The Benefits of Autonomy Support for Adolescents with Severe Emotional and Behavioral Problems." *Motivation and Emotion* 37, no. 4 (2013): 688–700.

Schmeck, R. R. *Learning Strategies and Learning Styles*. Springer Science & Business Media, 2013.

Shevin, M., and N. Klein. "The Importance of Choice-Making Skills for Students with Severe Disabilities." *Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps* 9, no. 3 (1984): 159–66. https://doi.org/10.1177/154079698400900301.

Shogren, K., Faggella-Luby, M., Bae, S., and M. Wehmeyer. "The Effect of Choice-Making as an Intervention for Problem-Behaviour: A Meta-Analysis." *Journal of Positive Behaviour Interventions* 6, no. 4 (2004): 228–37.

Snowden, D. "Complex Acts of Knowing: Paradox and Descriptive Self-Awareness." *Journal of Knowledge Management* 6, no. 2 (2002): 100–111.

Swanson, H. L., Harris, K. R., and S. Graham. *Handbook of Learning Disabilities*. Guilford Press, 2013.

Travers, C. J., Morisano, D., and E. A. Locke. "Self-Reflection, Growth Goals, and Academic Outcomes: A Qualitative Study." *British Journal of Educational Psychology* 85, no. 2 (2015): 224–41.

Trouilloud, D., Sarrazin, P., Bressoux, P., and J. Bois. "Relation Between Teachers' Early Expectations and Students' Later Perceived Competence in Physical Education Classes: Autonomy Supportive Climate as a Moderator." *Journal of Educational Psychology* 98 (2006): 75–86.

Van Lange, P., Krunglanski, A., and E. T. Higgins. *Handbook of Theories of Social Psychology*. Sage Publications, 2012.

Vansteenkiste, M., Lens, W., and E. L. Deci. "Intrinsic Versus Extrinsic Goal Contents in Self-Determination Theory: Another Look at the Quality of Academic Motivation." *Educational Psychologist* 41, no. 1 (2006): 19–31.

Vansteenkiste, M., Simons, J., Lens, W., Sheldon, K. M., and E. L. Deci. "Motivating Learning, Performance, and Persistence: The Synergistic Effects of Intrinsic Goal Contents and Autonomy-Supportive Contexts." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 87, no. 2 (2004): 246–60.

Wehmeyer, M. "Self-Determination and the Education of Students with Mental Retardation." *Education and Training in Mental Retardation* 27 (1992): 302–14.

Wehmeyer, M., and N. Garner. "The Impact of Personal Characteristics of People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities on Self-Determination and Autonomous Functioning." *Journal of Intellectual Disabilities Research in Intellectual Disabilities* 16, no. 4 (2003): 255–65.

Wehmeyer, M., and S. Palmer. "Adult Outcomes for Students with Cognitive Disabilities Three-Years After High School: The Impact of Self-Determination." *Education and Training in Developmental Disabilities* 38, no. 2 (2003): 131–44.

Wehmeyer, M., and M. Schwartz. "Self-Determination and Positive Adult Outcomes: A Follow-Up Study of Youth with Mental Retardation or Learning Disabilities." *Exceptional Children* 63, no. 2 (1997): 245–55. https://doi.org/10.1177/001440299706300207.

Wehmeyer, M., Shogren, K., Palmer, S., Williams-Diehm, K., Little, T., and A. Boulton. "The Impact of the Self-Determined Learning Model of Instruction on Student Self-Determination." *Exceptional Children* 78, no. 2 (2012): 135–53.

Williams, G., and E. Deci. "Internalisation of Biopsychosocial Values by Medical Students: A Test of Self-Determination Theory." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 70 (1996): 767–79.

Wrosch, C., Scheier, M. F., Carver, C. S., and R. Schulz. "The Importance of Goal Disengagement in Adaptive Self-Regulation: When Giving Up Is Beneficial." *Self and Identity* 2, no. 1 (2003): 1–20.

About the authors

Karen Buttigieg

As a science educator, Karen Buttigieg is committed to advancing *Bildung*-oriented, transformative, and inclusive pedagogies within neoliberal contexts through research and practice. She believes in inclusion and the provision of quality education to every child and young person and strive to develop educational practices that are not only effective but also accessible to all learners. This conviction guides her approach to teaching and academic research. Karen is also an activist for women's rights and disability issues, trying to raise awareness, influence policy, and implement practices that bring about positive change towards equality and inclusion.

Zeynep Karaosman

Zeynep Karaosman is a Palestinian-Syrian queer, feminist and peace activist and a teacher. She was born and grew up in Turkey. She studied English Language Teaching(BA) at Anadolu University and English Language&Literature at Istanbul Aydin University. After 8 years of teaching English in Turkey, she moved to Germany in 2020. She is currently a student in the Turkish language teaching department at the University of Essen and has been working as an Inclusion Assistant at a secondary school for 3 years. Apart from her teaching profession, she has been doing queer, feminist activism. She is also one of the founders of *Palestinian and Jews for Peace* activist group. Considering teaching as a political act, she advocates for anti-bias education for everyone.

Ludovica Rizzo

https://orcid.org/
0009-0009-2371-5870

Ludovica Rizzo holds a Master's Degree in Primary Teacher Education from the University of Salento (Italy). She has been awarded a scholarship for a PhD Programme of National Interest in Teaching & Learning Sciences: Inclusion, Technologies, Educational Research and Evaluation. Her research field is twice-exceptionality, differentiated instruction for gifted and twice-exceptional students, personalisation of teaching and learning processes and educational technologies.

DEMOCRATIC SCHOOLS: HOW THEY WORK AND WHY THEY ARE COOL

Halil Han Aktaş; Abdellatif Atif; Andreas Hinz; and Konstantin Korn

---

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=419#oembed-1

Example Case

The backbone of Democratic schools

"This is an example of our experience from a democratic School in Hadera. When the school was established in 1987, there was no clear educational programme. We came with 'a stomach-ache and ideas.' It was clear from the beginning that there was no obligation for the students to participate in anything. Everything is free and they can choose whatever they want to do. There were some lessons that we offered, but they were not compulsory. There were playgrounds with a football field and a basketball court, and there were Art Centres, where they could go and draw. There were also areas where the students could complete an internship, for example, with a blacksmith or a hairdresser.

Then we also said, okay, we offer the students all of this, but what else can we do? So, then we said, okay, we'll help them obtain the tools they need to do whatever they want to do. We noticed that the power dynamic between us and the students really decreased because we were not in charge of lessons that are part of a compulsory program, we were not in charge of the overall discipline, but there was a discipline committee. So, what else can we do?

Then the students began to verbalise their thoughts and feelings about certain scenarios that were happening in their lives. For example, a five-year-old comes and says, "my friend, he always wants to decide what we're playing, and he's calling me bad names. And I'm not sure I want to be his friend." Another example is, let's say an eight-year-old will come and say, "My

parents told me that it's very important to learn maths and English. And if I don't take these classes, they will take me out of the school. I don't want to go to those classes." Also, a 12-year-old comes and says, "I have a boyfriend and he wants us to kiss and I don't know if I want to kiss. I'm not sure." Finally, some kids might say, "I really like computers and I'm good at computers and my father works with computers. However, I started playing guitar and maybe I would like to be a musician, and not work with computers."

Then we understood that it's not just about doing whatever you want, it's your choice; choose your friend, you're free to choose. It's not as simple to decide what you want to do for the rest of your life. There's a whole big range of questions here, and that's the place we are needed because before you understand what you want to do and enjoy it, you must build an inner self and understanding of what your values are, not moral values. What is important for me when I make decisions? Then I decide what things are most important to me, for example, friendship, play whatever I want to play, be connected to my boyfriend because I like him, or to say, okay, I don't want to kiss you. Also, what is the most important thing for me to build my point of view about the person instead of only listening to what's around me. A point of view that considers my parents, my culture, my neighbourhood, and not just what's popular with my friends. This is a large inner piece that needs to be built and it's not easy to build it. That is where mentoring came in and this is why mentoring began to be the most essential part of our work.

This is why mentoring became the backbone of our practice. However, there was also another layer in mentoring. Mentoring is one of the best ways to apply human rights. If we want to apply human rights then mentoring is the best place where you say whatever you think is important, you think about the main areas to you and then we discuss it. I really want to listen to it. I really want to see what is important to you. I also want to see and listen not just to what you say or do, but to what's behind it and what's under it. I really want to make your existence visible. I want you to be safe. I want you to feel sure. I want you to be open. These are your human rights. That's children's rights. This can all occur through mentoring. This is why mentoring, in my opinion, is the backbone of democratic education."

Dror Simri, teacher, psychologist, mentor and mentoring supervisor in Hadera Democratic School and at Kibbutzim College for Education Tel Aviv, Israel

The need for more democratic schools

Traditional systems of education and schools are linked to the idea of measuring and grading children[1] by more or less the same standards. Therefore, it tends to divide young

---

1. In this chapter, we use the term "children" in the sense of the Convention for the Rights of Children (UN 1989), which contains children up to the age of 18. Alternatives would have been to say "students", "pupils" or "learners" but we prefer a term which has a holistic view on the whole person and is not fixed on a specific role, being in danger of ignoring other

people into groups of successful, or unsuccessful, based on predetermined definitions, and associates these statements with chances in their future life. These decisions are not fair and not grounded on their actual performance, highlighting the misleading nature of neoliberal output-oriented (meritocratic) orientation. They are, in fact, more linked to socio-economic backgrounds, structures of discrimination, and societal power relations. Therefore, they can't be inclusive. Most of the time, traditional systems of education and schools are also defining what and how to learn through fixed curricula. Those fixed standards are defined by experts, influenced by societal power relations, and linked to dominant wisdom. Therefore, marginalised wisdom, individual interests, needs, and desires are likely to be ignored. Prescribed curricula therefore stand against the ideas of inclusion and anti-discrimination. It is not by accident that the lyric 'We don't need no education' from Pink Floyd's 'Another Brick in the Wall' has widespread and enduring appeal among young people across various generations.

Initial questions

- How to overthrow structural disadvantages for inclusive education?
- How do democratic schools solve those structural problems?
- How could traditional education be influenced by democratic schools to work on those disadvantages?

Introduction to Topic: what idea could stand behind democratic schools?

Imagine a school where everyone can decide what to learn, when to learn, where to learn, how to learn, and with whom to learn. That's very close to the definition of democratic education from the European Democratic Education Community (EUDEC, 2005). These schools exist in many countries, and they are quite successful.

Imagine a school which has no classes, no grades, no fixed timetable, no fixed curricula,

---

aspects. The only exceptions are students at university or when the traditional role of students is in focus. The same way the term "teachers" could be problematised – and replaced by "learning assistants", "learning supporters" or others. A wide field of reflection…

no fixed subjects. However, this school has a space for activities. It has lots of ateliers, maybe for music, for art, for theatre, for languages, for anything you could imagine.

There, children have the chance to be subjects of learning instead of objects of teaching. Or in the words of the German critical psychologist Klaus Holzkamp (1995, p. 558): It's leaving the "defensiver Lernweisen" (defensive mode of learning) where you primarily react to the impulses of others, mostly adults, building strategies to survive in school. Instead, it is moving to an "expansive mode of learning" where you can go delve as deeply or as broadly as you want into a subject matter. So, you become responsible for your own learning and you get support from others.

Some time ago, I saw a video from the famous jazz bass player Avishai Cohen and his new trio. There was a woman, born in 2000 playing the drums, her name is Roni Kaspi.

She played the drums in such a fascinating, virtuosos, and complex way that I immediately thought she must have been in a democratic school and have been able to learn and practice drums during her whole school time. I was right; she grew up in a democratic school, and later she attended a conservatory and went on to learn the drums.

So, reflecting the vision of such a different school – maybe this vision could be a dream school, or it also could be a nightmare school – it depends on your perspective.

Key aspects

What are the basic principles of Democratic Schools?

Following Yaacov Hecht (2017), one of the international pioneers for democratic education, it is clear that every democratic school, of course, is different. If there are two the same, one of them has stopped thinking! However, there are four basic principles, and we will give you an overview of these four principles (see Fig. 1). Later in this chapter, we will discuss these in more detail.

Figure 1: Basic principles of Democratic Schools

Dialog
relations

Democratic
community

Contentbased
human right

Personalized
learning
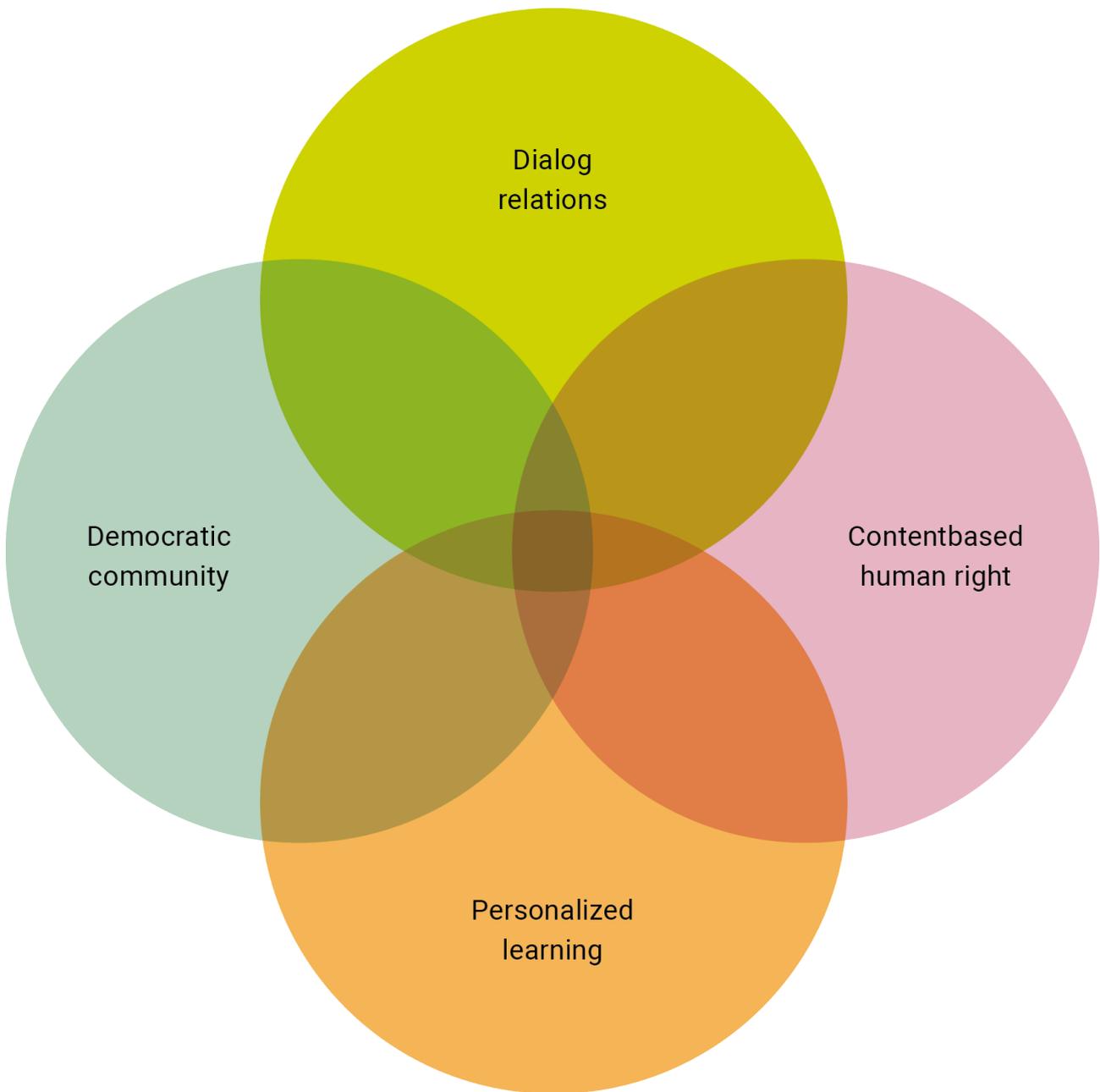
Source: Hecht, 2017

Dialogic Relations

Dialogic relations are the basis of everything in Democratic schools. There are practices of a partnership culture instead of a domination culture (Eisler, 2000democratic; Eisler & Fry, 2019). There are no people – traditionally mostly adults – who tell others what to do and how to do it. Instead of that, there is a culture of talking on the same eye-to-eye level. So, they try to reduce or to eliminate adultist tendencies. They practise what Martin Buber (1999) called a "ich-du-Beziehung" (me-you-relationship). In this, there is a holistic view of the whole child. It's not just focused on some 'mathematics problems' as the exclusive

aspect. So, in dialogic relations the whole person is in focus, and how the whole person thinks about who he or she is.

In this context, we see the heart of dialogic relations in mentoring (see the chapter about mentoring). Every child chooses a mentor, usually for a year. It is not the task of the mentor to say what the child should do or how they should behave. This understanding is not about case-management or strategic support for carriers. Instead, it is about thinking together with the child about who the child is, and in many situations, there are some "unconscious backstages" (Goffman, 2010), that are bringing the child to some decisions and the child doesn't realise it – and here the task of the mentor is to ask if the child wants to think about it, always showing respect for the child. Of course, the decisions still belong to the child. It is not about taking away the decision or taking away the power of the child. This task is quite challenging, especially for pedagogues, because many of them are used to taking over, to guide children and teach them something. Therefore, dialogic relations has mentoring at the heart of it.

Personalized Learning: Individual and collective learning

From our perspective, personalised learning is based on a balance of individual freedom on the one hand and the formation of a common social space on the other. Personalised learning doesn't mean that every child gets an individual programme of work for the next week or month, like in an open-plan office where no collaboration is needed. There is a lot of space for collaboration with others. So, the idea is a connected combination of collective learning and individual learning based on the free will of everyone.

For example, a 15-year-old boy could be extremely interested in black holes, and maybe there is an eight-year-old girl who hears about that and says: Oh, that's also interesting for me. Then maybe there is someone 17 years old who also joins the group. So, there is a constant change and supplementation of autonomous and common interdependent situations. That's what personalised learning means.

By collective learning, we don't mean to learn in a collective; we mean learning as a collective. A common misconception about collective learning is that everybody should learn the same things at the same time, in a uniform way. Learning as a collective is not just about collaboration between individuals to explore and learn about specific topics. It is more or less learning as a group, for example, to solve conflicts or to support someone or something as a group. If you learn how to solve a conflict as a group, it is not just through collaboration, you have to learn how to inquire about a solution as a group also. Therefore, the solution changes, if members change and the group – the collective – has to find new solutions that fit all. Therefore, you grow not just as individuals, but also as a collective. Another example would be if a group of children learns how to support members and assures this support not just through some other group members but as a collective.

Democratic community

Almost every democratic school has a school assembly, and it works under the principle of "one person, one vote," based on the equality for everyone, like in the former motto of the ANC in South Africa: "one man, one vote." The school assembly makes every important decision connected to the school. Also, before collective decision-making, there will be a lot of dialogue, or controversial discussion, paying attention to diversity with different perspectives, different opinions, and different interests. One thing is very clear to us: the majority in the school assembly are children. That changes the power structures. However, there is the question of how to decide democratically – by majority, by consensus, or maybe by "sociocratic consent" (Owen & Buck, 2020 , p. 11) which means 'good enough for now, safe enough to try'.

The school assembly is supported by some committees. There are a lot of different committees. Most democratic schools have a financial committee, some may have a committee for journeys, a committee about juridical questions, a committee about staff, and some may have more. Children make up the majority within these committees, supported by adults as facilitators. The role of the adults is to make sure that every child – even the young ones – understand what's going on. It's not about taking the power away from children.

For example, if one child is extremely interested in the finances of a school and learns a lot about that in mathematics, they also get an opportunity to learn about it through life experiences in the school. Whereas in most state schools, children must learn some mathematical techniques without the connection of life experiences. However, here it is really connected to life in the school. This creates a wonderful opportunity to learn so much in mathematics. Another example is, in the committee about staff, one big question is about hiring and firing adults. Children also make up the majority in this committee. So, in many democratic schools the question of 'is it true that children could decide about hiring and firing of adults?' The answered is 'Yes, of course.' However, it never happens because if there is an adult who offers something for learning and nobody chooses it, this adult will start to reflect about what's going wrong. So, there is no need to fire someone.

Another aspect of the democratic community is that there is no fixed timetable. Every child decides their own timetable. They decide how many lessons per week they want to take (often around ten), and which lesson they want to have. Indeed, the cliché of boys playing football for years (and "doing nothing all day," a documentary film by Hentze, 2015) can be a reality in some cases. So, a big question could arise about the patience of parents: How long are they able and/or willing to wait until, for example, a child starts to learn how to write. Mentoring is also an important part of this.

There is also another aspect that we believe is important: boring time. At a conference, children from democratic schools shared their experiences: *Oh, it was always interesting, there were always interesting things going on*. A former student of a democratic school

reacted with the question: *Really? So, something went wrong. If you never had a boring time, you never had the chance to find out what's really really important for you. And what's really really interesting to you. You need boring times.* To make it a bit clearer: It was not about being bored like in many state schools, where every Tuesday at 10.30 you have to be interested in biology – and if you are not, that's boring, one could say 'cold boredom', because you are forced to be there. Boring time in a 'warm' sense is a time where you wait to find out what's really important to you. It is 'warm' because you can finish it when you have found out what is really, really interesting to you for the next time(Boban & Hinz, 2016).

Content based in Human rights

The fourth basic principle is that the content is based on human rights and especially on children's rights. They are formulated in the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC; UN, 1989) which is based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) that children are human beings, having human dignity, and human rights.

There are three aspects in human rights education (Gerber, 2011; CoE, 2018; CoE 2020, 19; Tibbits & Sirota, 2023, 54; UN, 2011). One is "learning about human rights" which involves acquiring information and knowledge. The second is about "learning through human rights" which aims at learning processes themselves by accepting and basing them on human rights – for example, the right for leisure or the right to play, also in secondary school age children. The third is "learning for human rights," which is about attitudes and actions. This could be a tricky one because it could be a starting point for being influenced in a manipulative way by adults: *You have to do something for human rights*. Also, of course, that would be dangerous because manipulation is an excellent adultist strategy.

The consensus behind this topic is that it is not only about information and knowledge about democracy, but also about the preparation for life in society following school. A lot of questions arise from this. One of them is, how far the influence of parents and their idea for a *'good future' of* their child can be accepted (Macleod, 2023: 355). Another is about how to be critically aware of any discrimination considering the *"long and ugly history of racist and sexist discrimination in the provision of education to children"* (Macleod, 2023: 354), additionally questions about classist and other aspects of discrimination (Haruna-Oelker, 2022) – and no one is free from these.

There is also another important discussion – different human rights can be in conflict with each other. For example, is it a violation of children's rights to force them to go to school? Or is it a human right to go to school? Or both? The answers to these questions are quite different (Graner, 2023).

Interim conclusion – core aspects of democratic and inclusive schools

From our perspective, it would be functional that schools become places with such a high

potential and attractiveness that everyone loves to be there and has the chance to fall in love with learning.

At this point it makes sense to think about the connection between democratic and inclusive schools. Both seem to be highly linked:

- Both are based on children's rights.
- Both are radical approaches, so – despite the all-inclusive and democratic rhetoric – they are not part of the mainstream.
- Both are fighting against discrimination, marginalisation, and othering.
- Both highlight the "beauty of difference" (Haruna-Oelker, 2022).
- Both build on participation.
- Both aim on a balance of individual learning and a common creation of a social space.
- Both try to make children – or better – keep children as subjects of learning.

Democratic education without inclusive education stays selective, inclusive education without democratic education stays hierarchical (Simri & Hinz, 2021; Hinz, 2023). Therefore, one without the other is neither democratic nor inclusive. They are linked inseparably if they have any transformative claim.

Why Democratic schools now?

Why do we need democratic schools now? Although the answer might sound theoretical, it addresses concrete and interconnected difficulties where both democracy and education find themselves. We think that democratic schools have the potential to keep democratic and educational projects alive and vivid.

Regarding the crisis of democracy, political debates seem to be replaced by market calculations and planning. According to this logic, political contestations are useless, and thus we should only focus on practical and realistic financial economics (Mouffe, 2013). Words such as, critic, revolt, change or progress that have drawn the democratic horizon of Europe for the last centuries seem to be replaced by one word, which is: consensus and conflict foreclosure (Mouffe, 2005). The promise behind that is a foreclosure of political (often labelled as violent) discourse. However, an attentive look at this may be able to show its hidden politics and uncover the damaging results it may have for the democratic project inside and outside of schools (Atif, 2021).

We can see this concretely in the context of our interest here, the one of schools. Many right-wing parties seem to use this logic of the market to introduce politics under the excuse of being politically neutral and end up being very political against many groups. Take for instance the refusal of sexuality education in Ontario under the slogan *Maths not masturbation!* (Bialystok et al., 2020) or the refusal of teaching the history of slavery in Brazil by the movement that its name represents its claims, School Without a Party

(Oliveira, 2022), or how in Germany the right-wing party 'Alternative for Germany' could not find a better way to present its position towards education than a movement called *Neutral schools*. Such movements use this logic of political neutrality to negate the rights of many social groups that find themselves in unjust situations. According to this, populist movements argue that schools should abandon the emancipatory project and aim at schools that are exclusively interested in the development of productive skills, lifelong learning, and productivity.

We consider that democracy, as the current rise of authoritarianism in several countries shows, is not a guaranteed state. Instead, it is a project that needs to be protected and defended (Hinz, Jahr, & Kruschel, 2023). The protection of democracy can be done through democracy, which reveals and keeps the core of democracy alive. This core is the assumption that once we move from our private spaces to those of living together, our projects are meant to be different and contrasting, and that this is not a limit for democracy but the reason why it is needed. By accepting this situation and trying to deal with it, we can keep the democratic horizon possible. In such moments of being able to dialogue, decide, contrast, argue, and articulate, we can be at the heart of democracy rather than closing it with projects that present themselves as post-political.

It is in these contemporary elements and factual characteristics of the relation of schools with their economic and political context that we look at democratic schools as an emergent necessity to both defend the democratic and educational projects. As presented before, democratic schools are built on the principles of democracy, equality and they are primarily concerned with leveraging them. Democratic schools function through an encouragement of questioning, debating, and articulating. While in traditional schools these may seem like only ideals that are not constantly pursued, democratic schools put them at the centre, from the very format of classroom setting until assessment and evaluation are organised around the principle of debate and freedom. Hence, children in schools have the right to choose what and how they want to learn, and for democratic purposes, they are even encouraged to think about their needs to articulate the demands of their communities.

In an age where the ultra-prioritisation of learning is an input-output process, the reasons for the existence of democratic schools may seem alien to what schools should be. Nevertheless, a closer look at recent developments in educational theory shows how much the principles of democratic schools are making their way back to the conception of how traditional classrooms should function. Theoreticians such as Snir (2017), Ruitenberg (2010), and Atif (2023) argue for schools open to the acceptance of a state of contingency where every social activity finds itself and that reflectively, schools should offer spaces where children and adults can articulate political and identitarian differences instead of preaching them.

In the discourse about democratic education, there are two main aspects of fundamental criticism of the international democratic community on traditional education, which both

constitute structural violence (Ram, 2009). They can contribute to sharpening the understanding of democratic education (see Fig. 2).

Figure 2: Two main changes from traditional to democratic education
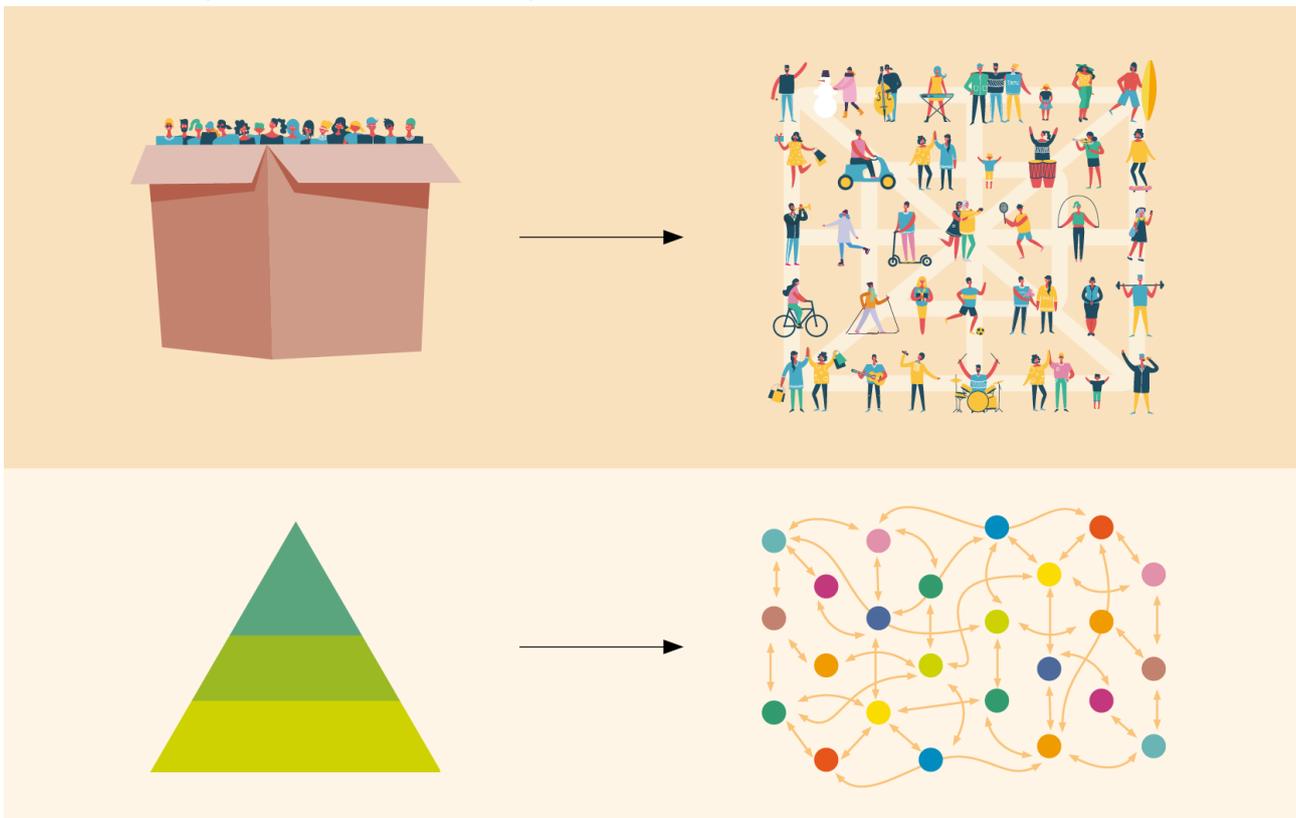
Source: Hecht 2017

First, there is the construction of two parts of constantly changing and expanding world knowledge, symbolised as a flexible bubble. In traditional education, experts put a box in it by defining a fixed curriculum. This makes knowledge important, which is included and makes excluded knowledge unimportant[2]. So, it does not accommodate the individual areas of strength of every individual person. If an individual is extremely interested in windsurfing, traditional education will exclude this from the 'important knowledge' into leisure time. In contrast, a democratic school will fully accept this as part of the uniqueness and the areas of strength of this person. So, the knowledge of the whole world is potentially important for individuals as well as for society in general.

Second, in the box of the fixed curriculum, there isn't just a box but a pyramid. This means that traditional education constructs a few excellent, many mediocre, and even more weak students by measuring them all with the same hurdles. Students have to climb over them for the next level of education – with all the well-known organisational procedures. Democratic education criticises this logic of pyramids fundamentally and replaces it by a system of

---

2. These decisions are highly linked to power relations in society and thereby tend to exclude marginalised knowledge, for example from wisdom from minorities or about discrimination (Kress, 2022).

connected circles on the same level which – again – contain individual and collaborative learning processes in the sense of personalised learning (see above).

These two main criticisms of traditional education get even more importance since nowadays, education is increasingly being approached with a market-oriented view, undergoing a commodification process where economic outputs in education are preferred over the holistic development of individuals due to the influence of neoliberal ideologies (Apple, 2004; Hill & Kumar, 2008). Standardised tests and accountability measures, which are used to discriminate among students to reach these economic outputs and are assumed to enhance efficiency, are being criticised for transforming education into a test preparation process. As such, education is reduced to measurable outputs and productivity through a reductive approach, stripping it of creativity and broad societal, cultural, and ethical dimensions. It seems that structural violence in traditional education is being increased by neoliberal approaches.

How do democratic schools function?

In this part we focus on the four basic principles from mentioned earlier in this chapter, again by deepening, concretising, and making them more specific.

How to build dialogical relationships in democratic schools?

To understand how a democratic school operates, it is helpful to begin with the concept of dialogical relationships in these schools and how they are established. By 'dialogical relationships', we refer to interactions where both parties engage directly with each other, communicate face to face, eye to eye, knee to knee, and meet on equal grounds (Freire, 2005; Rietmulder & Marjanovic-Shane, 2023). From this viewpoint, the first step is recognising children as genuine parts of school communities. This can be initiated by offering positive channels of communication and showing genuine respect to all members actively participating in the school. The goal is to shape a space where everyone's voice is valued. This means building learning environments that emphasise these principles, and turning schools into places where collective and inclusive decision-making processes thrive, thus giving the authorial agency to children for their learning (Neill, 1960).

A practical example of this is 'sociocratic circles.' These are essentially self-directed, voluntarily formed, semi-autonomous groups that come together for decision-making (Strauch & Reijmer, 2018; as showcased in the documentary "school circles" by Osório & Shread, 2018). Imagine a scenario where a group of children voluntarily assembles because they have identified a challenge within the school and want to address it together.

Here is an example from a particular democratic school in Turkey.

The adults posited that fostering children's participatory skills might be enhanced by offering them hands-on experiences in settings akin to school councils. Consequently, a platform was established where these young minds met weekly to deliberate on pertinent

school matters. However, as time passed, these elementary-aged pupils felt the weekly gatherings to be excessively recurrent. They began to find these sessions monotonous, often engaging in discussions devoid of any accompanying activities to enliven the experience. This sentiment led them to initiate a sociocratic circle dedicated to evaluating the structure and frequency of the school council meetings. Within this circle, many questions and suggestions surfaced: "Could we possibly reduce the frequency of these meetings? What if we incorporated engaging games at the onset of each session?" After these deliberations, they envisioned a reformed model of the school council and proceeded to present their proposals to the broader school council. Upon careful consideration and discussions, the collective consensus emerged: "Indeed, a shift is required. Let's change it to bi-weekly meetings and infuse a gaming element at the start. The objective would be to foster warmth and enjoyment before transitioning to the more serious discussions." Implementing this revised approach proved successful, resonating well with the children.

This entire excerpt epitomises a scenario where children, by amalgamating diverse perspectives, actively shaped their school life. Another option could be to organise the whole school in sociocratic circles. In the documentary, there is an example from the Netherlands (see fig. 3).

Figure 3: Circle-structures of the sociocratic school De Frije Ruimte
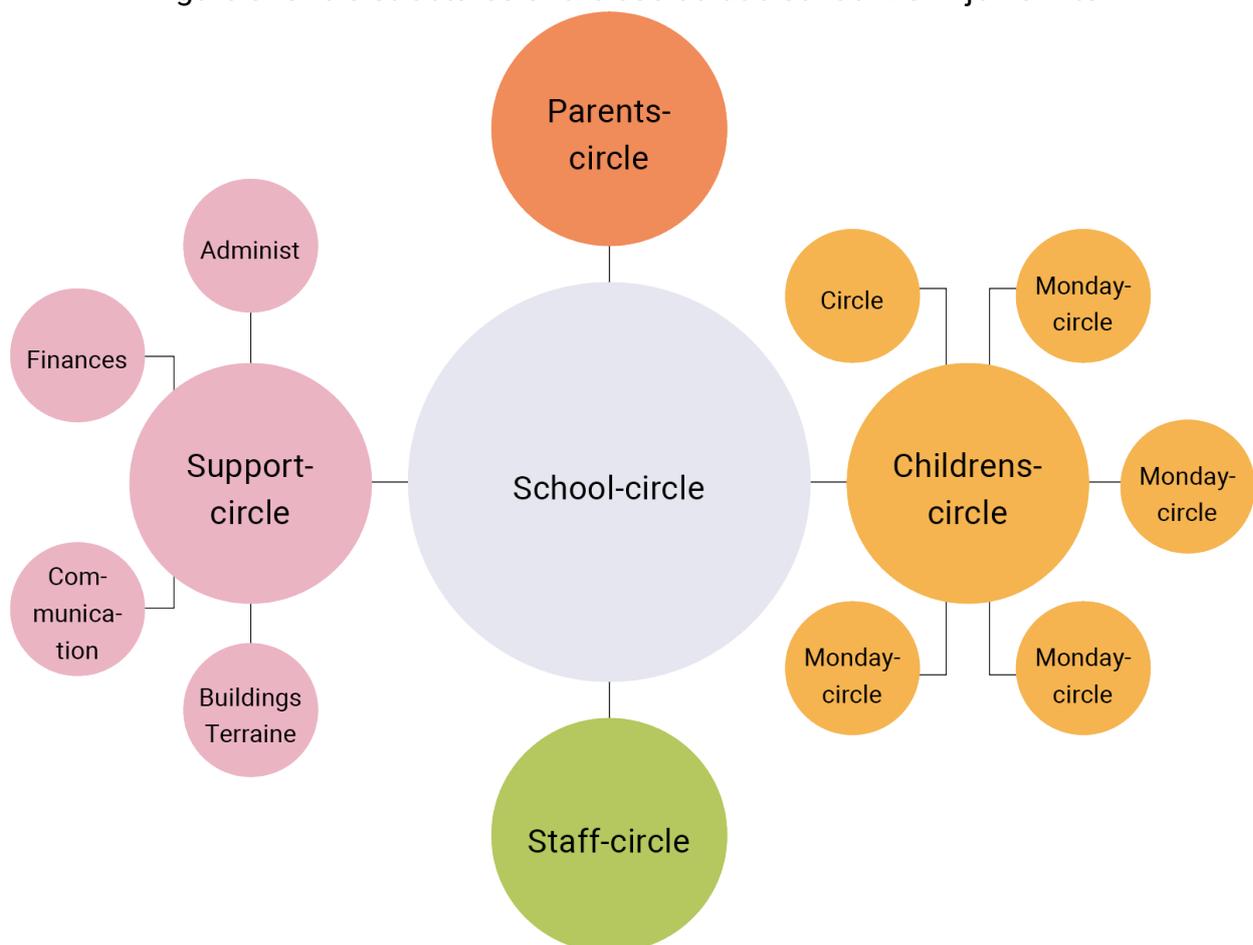
Source: Boban & Hinz, 2020a, 189, taken from the film of Osório & Shread, 2018

The central school circle with members of all groups in this school is connected to other circles: the children's circle (connected to age-oriented group circles every Monday), the staff circle (called the learning facilitator-circle), and the support circle (again connected to circles about administration, finances, buildings and terrains, and communication). Children have access to most of the circles except those for parents and staff. All circles are connected by two (children by three) members who care about the flow of information between them all. Also, they all have specific procedures and roles for talking and decision-making.

For democratic schools to thrive, it is vital to embrace dialectical thinking. Essentially, when we reflect on schools, we are looking at diverse communities brimming with varied beliefs, interests, needs, and viewpoints. If we solely rely on the premise that one person should guide the school's direction, we risk overlooking these rich differences. Rather than that narrow approach, it is beneficial to adopt a dialogical mindset. This means understanding and valuing the range of voices and perspectives present in our school communities. Instead of sidestepping challenges or disagreements, it is about creating a safe environment for children in school to freely participate in decision-making and collaboratively address issues (McDonnel, 2014).

To foster such an open environment, it is essential to factor in the social and emotional aspects of learning (Cohen, 2006). For example, before any productive discussion can take place, there is a need for trust among participants. When trust exists, it paves the way for mutual respect. We also need to create rooms and opportunities for children to actively listen to their peers. Active listening allows for constructive conversations, fosters collaboration, and recognises diverse viewpoints. For these dialogues to truly resonate, participants need to feel confident in themselves, be in touch with their emotions, and be equipped to share their thoughts and listen to others in group settings (Read, 2021).

Another key point is the importance of joyful learning (Waterworth, 2020). For learning to be truly engaging, children need to have the autonomy to shape their educational journey (Freire, 2005; Griffiths, 2012). To successfully do this, children also need certain skills and attitudes, like critical thinking, setting goals, regulating their own progress, and taking initiative. These attributes empower children to steer their educational path. Moreover, when disagreements arise, it is these very skills that enable children to articulate their ideas, present alternate views, or stand up for their beliefs (Dobozy, 2007; Slater, 1994). These social and emotional elements are crucial in democratic schools. Without them, any rights or opportunities we offer children might only be symbolic, appearing good on paper but not truly realised in the actual school environment.

How to organise learning in democratic schools?

Delving into the etymological roots of certain concepts can illuminate the potential pathways that can be adopted in democratic schools. The term "democracy" is borrowed

from the Greek, consisting of 'demos'—representing the people of a shared territory, although in ancient Greece, this did not include women, children, or slaves—and 'kratos,' which signifies the power or capacity to govern. Bringing these together, democracy encompasses a collective of individuals striving for individual and mutual growth. When examining the term "curriculum," its origin traces back to the Latin word 'currere,' suggesting a journey or perhaps an individual's unique trajectory. The curriculum, at times, is perceived as rigid and predetermined; yet, it can be approached with flexibility – for example the National Curriculum of Iceland – which permits learners to engage with it selectively or even bypass it entirely (Carr, 1998; Hinz, 2024). For instance, instead of being accepted as a predetermined blueprint of the experiences to take place at the school, curriculum can be defined as "a set of events, either proposed, occurring, or having occurred, which has the potential for reconstructing human experience" (Duncan & Frymier, 1967:183). Merging these ideas, a democratic curriculum embodies the spirit of communal living, emphasising collective progress by elevating each member's individual growth. These concepts can be viewed as complementary. An offer-based curriculum, influenced by members of the school community can be designed and implemented in democratic schools.

When planning learning in democratic schools, it is beneficial to start with the childrens' previous experiences by considering child-centred curriculum perspectives (Brough, 2012). Why? When we bring these children together, our goal is to foster connections among them. To do this effectively, we need to be familiar with their past experiences, interests, and needs. By using this knowledge as our foundation, we can shape the learning in democratic schools, focusing on integration as a key element of curriculum design (Beane, 1997). This approach is what gives these schools their unique and meaningful learning atmosphere. In such environments, the individual benefits and collective well-being are aimed to merge seamlessly. As children achieve their personal social-emotional goals, they naturally become more cooperative, understanding, and respectful — qualities at the heart of democratic schools. Keeping these factors in mind is invaluable when organising learning in such settings.

In democratic schools, it is also essential to blend both the humanities and science for a well-rounded education. This is not just about broadening knowledge; it is about nurturing both intellect and empathy in children (Dewey, 1930). Democratic schools are not just about academic growth. They are communities where children are encouraged to connect and thrive harmoniously together. Of course, the social and emotional learning components of these schools are vital. To genuinely prepare children for the broader democratic society, we need diverse activities that nurture a range of skills. In a democratic school, the goal is to grow individuals who can keenly observe and analyse their surroundings and, using that understanding, offer fresh insights to their community; thus, a holistic approach touches on both their emotional and intellectual capacities (Ricci & Pritscher, 2015). Therefore, a "curriculum" in democratic schools should give equal weight to the humanities, arts and sciences. It is about fostering a complete, balanced learning experience for every child.

However, it is worth noting that the way democratic schools handle the curriculum may change in their own contexts, and there are democratic schools that do not employ a specific curriculum intentionally.

In planning lessons for democratic schools, using tools like mind maps or curriculum matrices can be beneficial to allow us to visualise the links between academic subjects and the effects of how we handle them on both a child's intellect and emotions. Unlike traditional schools, where the primary focus may be a teacher passing on knowledge, in democratic settings, we recognise that everything we do elicits reactions in children, both mentally and emotionally. So, it is essential to be conscious of our teaching actions and their broader impacts on children. By understanding this, we can tailor our approach to nurture not just academic skills, but also emotional and social well-being.

In democratic schools, valuing diverse viewpoints is essential, reflecting our unique experiences and backgrounds. It is not just about harmony; disagreements, or dissent, have a place too (Matusov & Marjanovic-Shane, 2015). These varied experiences can often become powerful learning moments. So, while mutual respect is crucial, so is acknowledging the importance of dissent. However, as adults, we have a task to ensure children feel safe when expressing their opinions. If we are not careful, disagreements can become destructive. It is our responsibility as adults to create a safe space where children can discuss differing views openly and without harm, with the help of support and guidance (Orzel, 2013).

In traditional schools, students often find themselves sitting and listening to teachers, essentially in a state of stillness. They do not actively engage or decide their learning path; they are mostly passive, enduring what might feel like a "cold boredom." However, a democratic school offers a different approach. Instead of this passive learning, children are given opportunities to navigate their school experiences, whether they be joyous or filled with conflict, and they learn from these lived experiences (Davids & Waghid, 2019). It is about allowing them to voice their views and actively participate in the school environment. Drawing from the German educational approach, 'arbeitsplan' or weekly planning tools can illustrate how children can be given autonomy over their learning. By implementing such behavioural-contract tools that encourage self-assessments, we can empower children to shape their educational journey as active participants and organise learning democratically (Pass, 2007). Without such mechanisms, our aspirations for democratic education might fall short. Simply telling kids, "you decide your learning," can be overwhelming if they lack the tools or understanding of how to go about it. However, by creating semi-structured methods, we may assist them, much like mentoring. Importantly, this reshapes the teacher's role. Instead of being mere information dispensers, teachers in democratic schools become connectors, linking children in a myriad of ways, a significant shift in role (fig. 4). Plus, children get the unique opportunity to reflect on their learning since they have played a pivotal role in it. Engaging with adults about these processes becomes more meaningful

because children can draw on their direct experiences. They can witness their growth and navigate learning using these benchmarks.

Figure 4: Transmitting and connecting role of the teacher
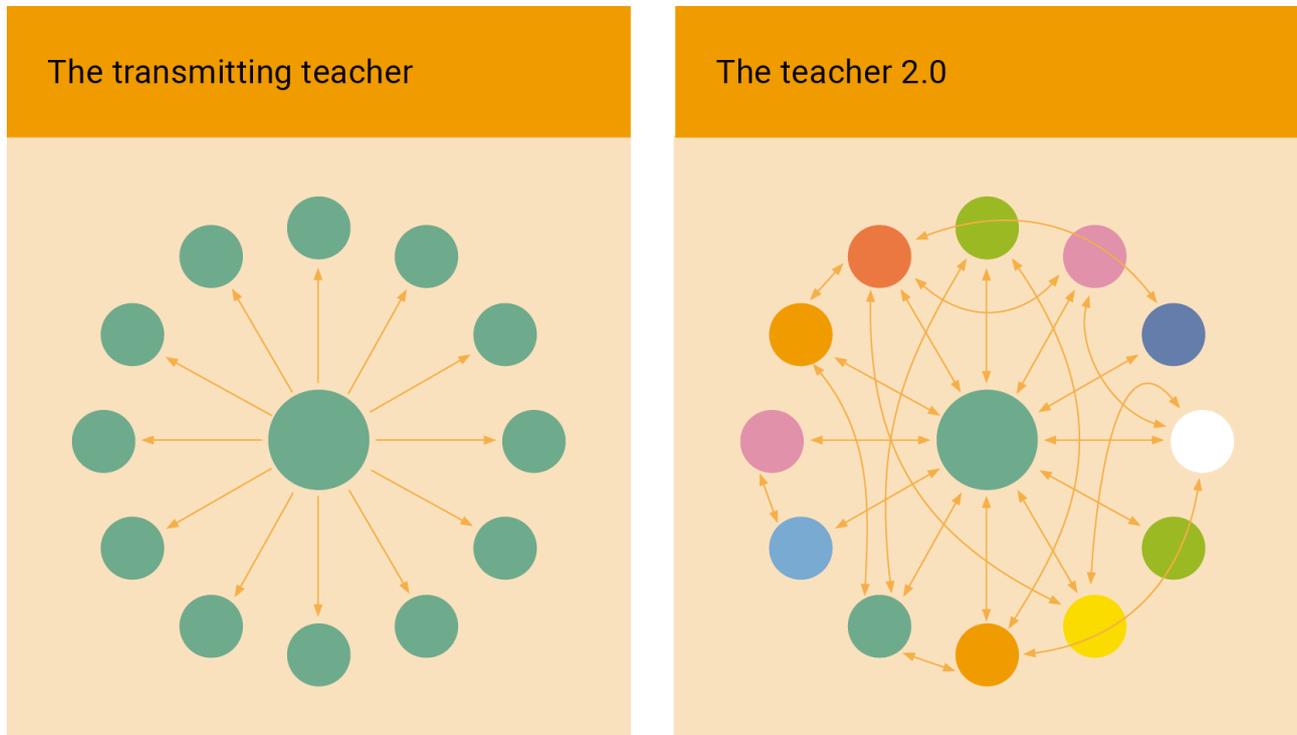
Source: Hecht, 2017

Also, portfolios or learning progress reports are effective tools to organise learning and create democratic spaces for dialogic assessments and feedback in democratic schools (McDonnell & Curtis, 2014). These documents making progress visible for children, they can check what they have learned, and how they learnt it. They can reflect on whether it was difficult or simple. Otherwise, it is just a task to be completed for grading. However, by using this strategy we can enrich evaluation through authentic feedback that strengthens learning. Therefore, it is important to give them a chance to reflect on their learning progress. Also, strategies like the "black market of knowledge" are good examples (Boban & Kruschel, 2015).

The black market of knowledge is a social space in which ideas, topics, and children's learning are exchanged. They present whatever they want. It may be something they worked on, or they have experienced. This was an idea that some children, brought to the school assembly, and later it was used by student teachers within teacher education (in the Kibbutzim College Tel Aviv, where foreign visitors practised it together with the students).

Such experiences inherently foster a deeper alignment between individual and collective learning endeavours. For instance, following an event like the "black market of knowledge", some children might gravitate towards the presenter, forming a cohesive group. This group might then pursue diverse learning pathways originating from their own interactions. In this

context, the children's own interests, skills, and needs naturally shape the trajectory of the learning journey, encompassing all facets such as activities and topics. Importantly, this dynamic is not dictated by an external force determining the worthiness of knowledge.

How to develop a democratic school community?

Schools function as complex social entities. They are far from being uniform spaces; instead, they welcome diverse people groups. Thus, for the establishment of a democratic community, it is essential that we recognise and address the varied needs of children. By crafting mechanisms that highlight these diverse needs and cater to them, we lay the foundational aspect of democratic schools.

Moreover, the essence of democratic schools is to offer room for children, educators, and the entire school community to foster autonomy (Taylor, 2017). A common misconception is that autonomy is something that can simply be handed from one individual to another. However, in reality, it is an attribute that grows through lived experiences and social interactions (De Jaegher & Froese, 2009). When children engage in activities, the culmination of those experiences contributes to their cognitive, emotional, and social growth. This engagement and growth through experiences stand central to forming a democratic ethos within the school environment. Committees, for instance, showcase an effective way of distributing power amongst members and collaboratively experiencing it in the school setting.

For instance, the Alpha School in Toronto (Canada) practises a juridical committee. The meetings are organised like a court if there are some children breaking a rule. So, a group of, most of them quite young, children sit together, and just one adult acts as a facilitator, making sure that each and every child is able to understand what was said before and what the case is about. The adult doesn't influence the content of the meeting or the verdict of the court. In almost every case the verdict is not about punishment but about restorative actions.

Consequently, the objective is to allocate roles to individuals, specifically allowing children to assume responsibility for their surroundings. Integrating the broader community, or the vicinity in which the school is situated, is pivotal. This might involve inviting external individuals to the school or planning outings for the school community. Such initiatives are vital because they facilitate the transference of outside experiences into the school setting. Furthermore, they aid children in understanding the societal norms and codes prevalent in their communities. Ultimately, our goal is to cultivate individuals who are deeply cognisant of the societal fabric they inhabit and reflect on it. Thus, facilitating experiences beyond the school's boundaries can be quite beneficial.

Another example is from some state schools in the eastern part of Germany during the implementation of the all-day school; though it is not explicitly a democratic school, they were on the way to democratisation. The facilitators from the university asked them to include one person from outside of the school on to the steering group for school development, in

addition to children, parents, teachers and other staff. Some of these people had wonderful ideas and practices. One school thought about inviting the mayor, maybe also for strategic reasons, and some had real difficulties in finding someone whom they could include in the steering group. However, in general, it is a good example showing that the connection between the school and the environment or the community around the school is much more intensified. At the end of the day, children are individuals, some of whom might be the mayor in the future. Therefore, supporting them to observe these environments is important.

Concluding on the topic of participation within school environments, the concept "participation" can sometimes be elusive. To clarify, we might consider specific examples of how participation manifests in these settings. For example, when a collective of children take on a decision-making role in school, this is a clear indication of participation. Similarly, if a group of children, perhaps through a school council framework, independently resolve an issue, that too is a form of participation. Another instance might be when children proactively set discussion topics for future council meetings, or initiate new ideas, or even voice their disagreement on a proposed idea, saying "this doesn't resonate with us." All of these scenarios exemplify participation.

We can envision participation through these lenses. Feedback mechanisms are equally vital, whether it is from children to teachers, teachers reciprocating, parents to teachers, or even children giving feedback to parents. This significance stems from the fact that it represents mutual observation, active listening, and ongoing communication, establishing a dialogue-centric relationship. Keeping such modes of participation in the forefront can offer clarity on the essence of participation and its implementation in democratic schools.

Here is a final example, from a school in Iceland which is not an explicitly democratic school, but one with a strong democratic tradition and continuous developments over the years (Jörgensdóttir Rauterberg & Hauksdóttir, 2024). Some children had this idea: "Oh, we don't have enough space and time to talk about some social things. So, we need a new subject in the plan for the next school year." They brought it to the children's council and later to the school council. During a visit, the vice principal said: "Yes, they asked for that and we will give it. But we didn't tell them until the end of this school year. In the next school year, there will be a new subject in the plan."

So, that's an example that includes flexibility in curriculum and a huge influence of children in it (Jörgensdóttir & Hinz, 2024).

How to define common goals based on human rights education?

Democratic schools are based on human rights essentially; therefore, they have the common goal to strengthen Human Rights Education (HRE). HRE focuses on the realisation of human and especially children's rights and has been a growing field since the 1990's with a big growth in publications (Tibbitts & Sirota, 2023: 56). The most widespread definition is given by the UN in the Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training, Art. 2 (1)

(UN, 2011: 3): "Human rights education and training comprises of all educational, training, information, awareness-raising and learning activities aimed at promoting universal respect for and observance of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and thus contributing, among other things, to the prevention of human rights violations and abuses by providing persons with knowledge, skills and understanding, and developing their attitudes and behaviour, to empower them to contribute to the building and promotion of a universal culture of human rights." As said earlier, three aspects are included: Learning about, through, and for human rights (UN, 2011, Art. 2, 2) and they have an immense impact on learning and teaching.

Internationally, HRE is linked to diverse efforts "to overcome colonialism, the aftereffects of authoritarian governments, structural problems related to poverty, gender inequality, discrimination and interethnic conflict" (Tibbitts & Fritzsche, 2006: 5). In some countries it is also linked "with local and national efforts to fight racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and the extreme right" (Tibbitts & Fritzsche, 2006: 6). Critical comments, from the Global South, say, there is an "unacknowledged conceptual diversity and ambiguity" (Keet, 2006:1).

Following Bajaj's (2011: 491) analysis, three main ideological backgrounds can be differentiated:

- HRE for Global Citizenship – aiming for a new global political order with more equality,
- HRE for Coexistence – aiming for healing and reconciliation after brutal oppression and crimes against specific groups, like indigenous peoples in Canada or elsewhere, and
- HRE for Transformational Action – with "radical politics of inclusion and social justice" (ibid.).

This picture of approach does not mean that HRE is in practice everywhere. On the contrary, HRE is still only partially implemented. As the research by UNICEF (2015) shows, 11 out of 26 countries have implemented HRE (more specifically: children's rights) into their school curricula. In seven countries, implementation only took place in parts, and in 15 countries not at all (UNICEF 2015: 8). There is still no international entitlement for HRE, and therefore, there is no linear connection from signing the convention on children's rights to the implementation in classrooms. Also, the implementation in teacher education is important, but it is not realised systematically anywhere (UNICEF 2015: 9). Therefore, it is not surprising that in 2010 "HRE is still not widespread, especially in schools" (Gerber, 2011: 247). Nevertheless, good examples exist, for example, in Iceland, "human rights and democracy" are one of six pillars in the National Curriculum (MESC, 2011: 14-22; Hinz, 2024).

One interesting aspect of this field is that almost every literature emphasises the growth of democratic practices and ideas. This begins "in small places, close to home – in the neighbourhood, school, college, factory, farm, or office" (CoE 2020: 403). Some good examples of this are in India where more than 500,000 "inclusive neighbourhood children's

parliaments" are in place where all children of the neighbourhood automatically belong; they themselves decide about the topics and the actions, and they are supported by an adult facilitator (Boban & Hinz, 2020b). This is more than being asked to tell the parliament of the city or the state about needs and wishes once a year, as in many countries.

It is very often stated that this is a long-term process, and it is never finished, and never perfect. Sometimes it is criticised that it needs changes because it is "western-centred and 'top-down'" (Tibbitts & Sirota, 2023: 58). For example, the role of teachers must change from a declarationist approach to a dialogical approach (2023: 58). However, a reflection of the existing power relations in schools is hard to find, except when a transformational action approach is used with its "radical politics of inclusion and social justice" (Bajaj, 2011: 491). Bajaj writes that with this approach, which is a "critique of power and unequal power relations (local, national, global)," is needed (2011: 491). Otherwise, the research results regarding the very low expectations of children about their influence in school could be validated. With this approach, HRE is quite close to any other transformative and emancipatory learning, "associated with critical pedagogy and Paulo Freire" (Tibbitts & Sirota, 2023: 57). The methodologies can be described as "justice-oriented, decolonising, experiential & activity-centred, problem-posing, participative, dialectical, analytical, healing, strategic thinking-oriented, goal-and action-oriented" (Tibbitts & Sirota, 2023: 57).

It is obvious that the understanding of HRE as a call for transformative actions is very close to the approach we stand for. Schools practising democratic education consequently have a much easier task ahead to abide by children's rights. For schools on the way to more democratic practices, it is much more contradictory to practise democratic processes in a hierarchical system without balanced power relations. Nevertheless, connecting learning to human rights is a continuing challenge for every school.

One material for the support of HRE is Compass, published by the Council of Europe (CoE, 2002, 2020) and translated into 30 languages, supplemented by Compasito for children from 7 to 13 with 40 activities (CoE, 2007, 2009). These materials want to support accessibility to HRE (CoE, 2020: 26) with a European perspective (CoE, 2020: 29). The heart of the material are 58 activities in 20 global themes for the reflection of human rights and taking action, surrounded by introductions about human rights and approaches to HRE. The "pedagogical basis" is explained in detail (CoE, 2020: 32-36). This includes, among others, "HRE must let young people decide, when, how, and what topics they wish to work on" (CoE, 2020: 33), and the role of teachers has to change to a "facilitator, guide, friend, or mentor, not one of an instructor" (CoE, 2020: 33). Nevertheless, there is no reflection about power relations in school. Instead, you, as a facilitator, friend, or mentor (see above) "need to be very clear in your own mind about what it is you want to achieve; you need to set your aims. Then you can go on to choose an activity that is relevant to the topic you wish to address, and which uses a method that you and the young people will feel comfortable with" (CoE, 2020: 48). Friend, facilitator, mentor? This sounds quite contradictory, here the teacher still seems to be the instructor, setting the frame – and within that frame children are more

or less free to decide about their learning, and about human rights. Is this democracy? It seems to be not less than or more than a step towards democracy in a structurally non-democratic institution.

All the content in schools based on human rights is, of course, connected with an anti-discrimination and inclusion approach. It is no coincidence that a lot of democratic schools are part of social movements for peace, for reasonable living, for ecological survival, and/or for a better future. Democratic schools are, in most cases, no idyllic bubbles far away and at the margins of society. Power structures might recreate themselves in democratic schools, so it requires investing time and effort to prevent it (Wilson, 2015).

Therefore, as a final comment on this principle, there is a big need for reflection of power relations. There will always be a big difference between the principles and the realities of societies, and of course, democratic schools are part of society. Hence, it is important to reflect again and again on what a school, or a group, can decide autonomously and what is already decided by others.

What are the specific challenges for democratic schools?

You might think that democratic schools are perfect, but we don't think that. They are not perfect at all. There are some specific challenges for democratic schools.

In the realm of educational discourse, there is a palpable debate concerning the children's composition in certain democratic schools, which might show **elitist and exclusive children's body** characteristics. Central to this debate is the representation of varying social groups within these institutions. Sometimes it is observed that children from more privileged backgrounds often have a heightened presence in these schools. Intriguingly, some of these institutions took shape during what is known as the 'second wave' of democratic schools, a period intertwined with the aspiration to craft 'islands' within the broader conventional school framework (Hecht, 2011). These 'islands', in certain cases, are cited as practising what some term 'elitist democratic education'; essentially, they impart democratic values and practices predominantly to children stemming from affluent socioeconomic strata (Sant, 2019). However, it is crucial to note that not all schools fall under this critique. For some, the demographic characteristics of their geographic location play a defining role. Yet, for others, it is the predispositions and financial capabilities of the parents that is changing the situation. Such parents, with more substantial means to invest in their children's education, exhibit a proclivity towards enrolling their children in private institutions, which sometimes includes democratic schools. This trend has roots in the 'school choice' philosophy—a perspective that may compartmentalise education into distinct categories like 'good' and 'bad' schools, offering the liberty of choice to a select demographic, undermining the ethos of fostering educational establishments that champion democratic values for the collective welfare.

Furthermore, the broader structural landscape of the state's educational system holds

influence. In general, it depends on the rigidity of the state school system. If there is a high rigidity and state schools have big problems with a lot of children, there will be a high percentage of children in democratic schools who have been in state schools, and they changed to democratic schools (Hecht, 2011). Hence, democratic schools could be seen as a good place for children, who had some difficulties in a traditional learning environment or in state schools. For these children, democratic schools could be islands that they can feel secure, that they can feel comfortable in.

There can also be some **parents of children with disabilities** who may have doubts about democratic schools. Some of them may fear their child could get lost due to the 'big freedom' in democratic schools. They may assume the responsive structures their child may need are not there and, therefore democratic schools are not a good solution or perspective for their children. However, democratic schools of course are very able to put structures around a child, for example, they could start with a group of children who are close to that child, and they could think together about how they can establish a good situation for this child through dialogic relations. So, it is not about getting lost in freedom but about creating structures through democratic communities.

There might also be challenges about the **diverse cultural backgrounds** of teachers, children, and parents linked to the exclusivity of the children's body. Especially, if these backgrounds affect the way of the 'right' and 'common way' of communication. As communication is so important for democratic schools, it is a special issue. There are rules of communication that are different in different cultures. Therefore, there are also different understandings of democratic ways to solve conflicts and interact with each other. For instance, most Germans find it disrespectful if they are interrupted. Therefore, they believe, in a 'good' and 'democratic' conversation, no one interrupts each other. To understand this, you must first know about it. In the German language some important words, mostly the verb, are located at the end of the sentence. So, you must listen to the end of the sentence to understand each other. However, this is not the case for many other languages. The structure of sentences is different, and therefore it is not disrespectful to skip the end of the sentence and jump right to the important subject. That's one example of how the way of communicating interferes with the way of understanding how 'good democracy' works. Another example is, in Turkish, it is a practice to overlap when speaking, and it is considered normal and polite to do this. What we want to show with these examples are that we don't want to reproduce the dominant use of language and the discrimination within it. However, instead to practise cultural sensitivity in democratic schools, there has to be a precise look at the practice of communication and reflection about it. Practices of talking are so deeply anchored inside us, it is difficult to question and reflect on their roots. This is highly demanding for democratic schools, because dialogic relations are so much the basis for all that is happening inside these schools.

As we can see, democratic schools are not the perfect way to deal with every problem, but they have one big advantage, democratic schools are always in a mode of change.

They are more likely to find the challenges of exclusive children's bodies, diverse cultural backgrounds, and establishing special structures for children who need them easier. They can handle it within their ritualised way of changing instead of first creating change management.

There are many different models of democratic schools and their view of the **role of adults and the wider community**. Some might argue that adults are just there to wait for the children to come up to them and want to learn or get something, like in the Sudbury Model. Others argue they should offer specific things and be more interactive with the children about what could be learned, like in a common social space. We don't want to judge which way is better, we just want to highlight there are different ways to practise that aspect in democratic schools. What's important is the knowledge about the different connections to the community that are implied by different views of adults. Sometimes schools really benefit from the experience of parents. They might transfer their knowledge to the school settings and share their expertise. Through this, they may support children to find their interests and what to learn, but this may also cause some difficulties if not handled well.

In a particular instance from Turkey, a school was established through the initiative of a group of parents. This co-operative school had a foundational ethos: the incorporation of democratic governance. The intent was clear: children should actively engage in the decision-making processes within the school. However, having been the driving force behind the establishment of this institution, parents viewed themselves as the primary stakeholders or the owners of this educational establishment from time to time. As such, they felt entitled to influence areas like the instructional methods, curriculum, and other core aspects of the educational process. This proactive involvement sometimes took on a domineering tone, leading to challenges. The underlying issue was a presumption among some parents that their insights were superior to those of trained teachers.

In discussions surrounding such situations, it is important to remember the professional background of teachers. Teachers undergo specific training and possess extensive expertise in their domain. Regrettably, there are times when this expertise is overlooked or underestimated. However, it is also heartening to acknowledge instances where their contributions are recognised and valued. Regardless, it remains undeniable that they are hands-on professionals in their field. Their role, therefore, requires respect. As efforts intensify to embed democratic values in school environments, it is crucial to emphasise inclusivity. This encompasses the well-being and participation of **all of the members** of the school community, from the children to the teachers and parents and other staff. Thus, fostering respectful and considerate relationships becomes integral. To foster an enriched learning environment, it is necessary to carve out spaces and opportunities for educators to engage in mutual learning, thereby cultivating a tradition of continuous professional enhancement (Blick über den Zaun, 2011). Such initiatives not only augment teachers' competencies but also chart a progressive trajectory for their professional journeys. Equally vital is the role of educational institutions in enlightening their surrounding communities

about the intricate nature of quality education. By doing so, they can nurture an informed community, fostering greater understanding and support for the educational process (Kim & Bryan, 2017). To encapsulate it, the essence of dialogic relationships is not confined solely to the dynamic between children and educators. It extends to encompass all stakeholders – be it parents, teachers, or children, essentially every individual, both young and old, involved in the educational journey.

Democratic schools may also face criticism for potentially embodying **neoliberal and individualistic values** in their educational approach. It is worth noting that in numerous democratic societies, neoliberalism either dominates or is steadily gaining ground in the education sector. While some democratic schools push back against this trend, others seem to embrace it. From an analytical standpoint, there are two core challenges with neoliberalism when viewed through the lens of inclusivity. The first issue stems from how neoliberalism conflicts with the ethos of greater participation and self-expression as envisioned by democratic schools. In the neoliberal paradigm, self-expression is geared towards optimising individual productivity within society and its economic structure. This angle risks misinterpreting the personalised learning ideal, aligning it more with the development of individual human capital than with genuine personal and civic growth. The second concern revolves around the neoliberal perspective on democracy and its seeming indifference to the principle of inclusion. Under this model, one's inclusion hinges on their economic productivity. Take, for instance, the realm of human resources, where there is a belief that diverse teams boost creativity and productivity. Here, inclusion appears to be a byproduct of economic benefit — you're included because of the added value you bring, not necessarily because it's a fundamental right (Boban & Hinz, 2017).

What can we do then?

While a multitude of concepts and examples surrounding democratic schools exist, one might wonder, "What steps should I take?" Amidst the plethora of ideas and seemingly flawless models, it is crucial not to be daunted. Remember, no democratic school sprang into existence instantly. This underscores that there is a role for you to play, even if it begins as a modest stride, always keeping the grand vision in sight. A pivotal point to embrace is the understanding of democracy not as a static ideal to replicate but as an ongoing journey of democratisation. It is about amplifying participation, championing inclusion, and continuously challenging societal norms and conventional boundaries.

Diving deeper, consider the dynamics among the three neighbouring households. They, like any close-knit community, might encounter disputes. Confronting these differences, they might engage in intense dialogue, but eventually, harmony is restored. Just as with democracies or our daily interactions, the essence is not an external facade but lies in our interpersonal exchanges. It is not a plateau you achieve and then rest; it is a continuous endeavour.

Crafting a democratic school is essentially a journey where community members actively shape and redefine themselves and their collective identity through their shared experiences over time. The fruits of this journey manifest as more deliberate decisions, practices, and engagement within the community occurs. Central to this idea is the belief that autonomy is not just handed over; it emerges from experiences and in turn, shapes them. These experiences are deeply intertwined with the other core principles of a democratic school. Emphasising the foundation for such experiences, growth involves immersing individuals in certain experiences consistently. Moreover, this growth thrives in relationships guided by specific frameworks. Within the democratic school framework, growth is perceived holistically. Such growth takes root in a community engaged in continuous self-reflection, utilising tools and methods that prompt particular experiences at just the right moments. This suggests growth is a timely process, underscoring the need for patience within the community. This understanding stresses a step-by-step learning evolution and highlights the importance of diverse learning avenues vital for holistic skill development. From this vantage point, the sustainability of these shared experiences is pivotal for genuine growth. As these structured experiences accumulate, paired with guided relationships, it paves the way for the evolution of both individual members and the larger community, and their autonomy and heteronomy.

Every educator, each institution, and perhaps each human being has the potential to embark on the path toward a more democratic educational setting. Democratic schools across the globe did not just appear; they were crafted and continue to evolve. For those aspiring to absorb insights from these schools and integrate aspects into their conventional settings, initiating change could be as straightforward as addressing an existing minor challenge, something already recognised as an inconvenience by peers. The thought could be, "This has become bothersome. Why not rectify it democratically?" An excellent starting point might be the 'index for inclusion' (Booth & Ainscow, 2002, 2011). This index presents an expansive list of questions, beginning with hundreds and escalating to thousands, none of which have a single answer. The purpose is to foster collective introspection and dialogue within the educational community, offering a plethora of queries related to the school's culture, policies, and practices. The emphasis is not on seeking perfect solutions, but rather on discerning beneficial and manageable subsequent steps. At the heart of the index lies the dual aim of diminishing obstacles to both participation and learning, seamlessly intertwining the ideals of inclusion and democracy.

In wrapping up, numerous entry points exist for embarking on this journey. Regrettably, a universal, one-size-fits-all approach remains elusive. The solution should align harmoniously with the unique attributes of each school, the educational milieu, and the encompassing community.

That said, structured methods to foster school growth and professional evolution for educators do exist. For instance, the chapter on continuing personal development offers guidance on collaboratively addressing prevalent inclusion challenges alongside

colleagues. Should personal growth be your focus, the chapter discussing diverse teaching staff and role models might serve as an insightful foundation. For those inclined towards initiating more extensive transformations within their institutions, there are two chapters about school administration and about implementation of a democratic policy in different parts of this open access material.

Local contexts

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=419#h5p-43

Closing questions to discuss or tasks

To teacher-candidates/students

- Which teaching style of your professors/lecturers do you like? Why? How do they interact with you and your fellow students? Which element is dialogic?
- Which method of learning fits for you and which doesn't? Why? Which form of learning is this? Individual, collaborative, in a group, etc.
- In which situation did you learn the most about inclusion / about democracy? Who (teacher, peers, yourself) had which role there? Why was that situation possible? What would have made it impossible? Identify the specific aspect that made it impossible and turn it upside down!

To teachers

- What is a problem you and your colleagues could easily face?
- Which question of the index for inclusion surprised you?
- What really annoys you at your school?
- What is the most attractive aspect of a democratic school for you?
- What aspects of human rights education are already part of your practice? What aspects do you wish would be a part of it?
- Where do you give your children space for change in your school?
- How and where are parents and other community members involved in your school?
- How do you give feedback to your children about their learning process? How do children give feedback to you?

Literature

Apple, Michael W. "Creating Difference: Neo-Liberalism, Neo-Conservatism and the Politics of Educational Reform." *Educational Policy* 18, no. 1 (2004): 12–44. https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904803260022.

Atif, Abdellatif. "Instrumentality after Radical Lack, Education, and Populism as Co-Prosthetic." *Ars Educandi*, no. 18 (2021): 129–42.

———. "Instrumentality as Co-Prosthetic after Radical Negativity: An Ontological Discursive Study of the Articulation of Education with Populism and Instrumentality." PhD Thesis, Free University of Bozen/Bolzano, 2023.

Bajaj, Monisha. "Human Rights Education: Ideology, Location, and Approaches." *Human Rights Quarterly* 33, no. 2 (2011): 481–508.

Beane, James A. *Curriculum Integration: Designing the Core of Democratic Education*. New York: Teachers College Press, 1997.

Bialystok, Lauren, Jessica Wright, Taylor Berzins, Caileigh Guy, and Em Osborne. "The Appropriation of Sex Education by Conservative Populism." *Curriculum Inquiry* 50, no. 4 (2020): 330–51.

Boban, Ines, and Andreas Hinz. "Das Ringen Um Inklusion Und Entwicklungen Mit Dem Index." In *Arbeit Mit Dem Index Für Inklusion. Entwicklungen in Weiterführenden Schulen Und in Der Lehrerbildung*, edited by Ines Boban and Andreas Hinz, 15–49. Bad Heilbrunn: Klinkhardt, 2016.

———. "Inklusion Zwischen Menschenrechten Und Neoliberalismus Und Die Bedeutung Für Das Leistungsverständnis." In *Leistung Inklusive? – Inklusion in Der Leistungsgesellschaft. Band I: Menschenrechtliche, Sozialtheoretische Und Professionsbezogene Perspektiven*, edited by Birgit Lüthje-Klose, Mai-Anh Boger, Benedikt Hopmann, and Phillip Neumann, 39–47. Bad Heilbrunn: Klinkhardt, 2017.

———. "Kinderparlamente in Indien – Ein Beispiel Für Die Konsequente Partizipation von Kindern an Der Gestaltung von Welt." In *Inklusion Und Partizipation in Schule Und Gesellschaft. Erfahrungen, Methoden, Analysen*, edited by Ines Boban and Andreas Hinz, 369–82. Weinheim/Basel: Beltz Juventa, 2020.

———. "Soziokratie Als Form Gemeinschaftlicher Entscheidungsfindung." In *Inklusion Und Partizipation in Schule Und Gesellschaft. Erfahrungen, Methoden, Analysen*, edited by Ines Boban and Andreas Hinz, 178–91. Weinheim/Basel: Beltz Juventa, 2020.

Boban, Ines, and Robert Kruschel. "„Thinking Outside the Box" – Produktive Irritationen Durch Ein Internationales Kooperationsprojekt." In *Herausforderung Inklusion – Theoriebildung Und Praxis*, edited by Irmtraud Schnell, 313–21. Bad Heilbrunn: Klinkhardt, 2015.

Booth, Tony, and Mel Ainscow. *Index for Inclusion. Developing Learning and Participation in Schools*. Bristol: CSIE, 2011. www.eenet.org.uk/resources/docs/Index%20English.pdf.

Brough, Chris Jane. "Implementing the Democratic Principles and Practices of

Student-centred Curriculum Integration in Primary Schools." *Curriculum Journal* 23, no. 3 (2012): 345–69. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585176.2012.703498.

Buber, Martin. *Ich Und Du*. Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1999.

Carr, Wilfred. "The Curriculum in and for a Democratic Society." *Curriculum Studies* 6, no. 3 (1998): 323–40. https://doi.org/10.1080/14681369800200044.

Cohen, Jonathan. "Social, Emotional, Ethical, and Academic Education: Creating a Climate for Learning, Participation in Democracy, and Well-Being." *Harvard Educational Review* 76, no. 2 (2006): 201–37. https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.76.2.j44854x1524644vn.

Council of Europe. *Compasito. Manual on Human Rights Education for Children*. 2nd edition. Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2009. eycb.coe.int/compasito/pdf/Compasito%20EN.pdf.

———. *Compass. Manual for Human Rights Education with Young People*. 2nd updated edition. Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2020. https://rm.coe.int/compass-eng-rev-2020-web/1680a08e40.

———. *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture: Context, Concepts and Model (Vol. 1)*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2018.

Davids, Nuran, and Yusef Waghid. "Democratic Education and Deliberative Freedom: A Defence of Co-Learning." In *Democratic Education and Muslim Philosophy*. Cham: Palgrave Pivot, 2019. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-30056-2_1.

De Jaegher, Hanne, and Tom Froese. "On the Role of Social Interaction in Individual Agency." *Adaptive Behavior* 17, no. 5 (2009): 444–60. https://doi.org/10.1177/1059712309343822.

Dewey, John. *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education*. New York: The MacMillan Company, 1930.

Dobozy, Eva. "Effective Learning of Civic Skills: Democratic Schools Succeed in Nurturing the Critical Capacities of Students." *Educational Studies* 33, no. 2 (2007): 115–28. https://doi.org/10.1080/03055690601068279.

Duncan, James K., and Jack R. Frymier. "Explorations in the Systematic Study of Curriculum." *Theory Into Practice* 6, no. 4 (1967): 180–99.

Eisler, Riane. *Tomorrow's Children: A Blueprint for Partnership Education in the 21st Century*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000.

Eisler, Riane, and Douglas P. Fry. *Nurturing Our Humanity. How Domination and Partnership Shape Our Brains, Lives, and Future*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2019.

European Democratic Education Community. "What Is Democratic Education?," 2005. eudec.org/democratic-education/what-is-democratic-education/.

Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. 30th anniversary edition. New York: The Continuum International Publishing, 2005.

Gerber, Paula. "Education about Human Rights. Strengths and Weaknesses of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training." *Alternative Law Journal* 36, no. 4 (2011): 245–49.

Goffman, Erving. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. London: Penguin, 1990.

Graner, Henning. "Demokratiepädagogik Oder Demokratische Schule?" In *Democratic*

Education Als Aufgabe von Schule Und Hochschule, edited by Gabriele Kulhanek-Wehlend, Sabine Hofmann-Reiter, Harald Knecht, Stefanie Wagner, Oliver Wagner, Evelyn Süss-Stepancik, and Ruth Petz, 165–71. Wien: Lit, 2023. www.lit-verlag.de/media/pdf/27/73/5c/ 9783643511324VCrSlsEponvNA.pdf.

Griffiths, Morwenna. "Why Joy in Education Is an Issue for Socially Just Policies." *Journal of Education Policy* 27, no. 5 (2012): 655–70. https://doi.org/10.1080/ 02680939.2012.710019.

Gutmann, Amy. *Democratic Education*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999.

Haruna-Oelker, Hadija. *Die Schönheit Der Differenz. Gemeinsam Anders Denken*. München: btb, 2022.

Hecht, Yaacov. *Democratic Education: The Beginning of a Story*. Roslyn Heights, NY: AERO, 2011.

———. "Democratic Education: The Missing Piece of the Democratic Puzzle," 2017.

Hentze, Margarete. "Freistunde. Doing Nothing All Day," 2015.

Hill, David, and Ravi Kumar. "Neoliberalism and Its Impacts." In *Global Neoliberalism and Education and Its Consequences*, edited by David Hill and Ravi Kumar. London: Routledge, 2008.

Hinz, Andreas. "Inklusive Bildung in Isländischen Vor- Und Pflichtschulen Am Beispiel Der Stadt Reykjavík." In *Inklusive Bildung in Island. Grundlagen – Erfahrungen – Reflexionen*, edited by Andreas Hinz, Ruth Jörgensdóttir Rauterberg, Robert Kruschel, and Nico Leonhardt, 32–47. Weinheim: Beltz Juventa, 2024.

———. "Inklusive Und Demokratische Bildung – Überlegungen Zur Intersektionalen Revitalisierung Der Inklusionsdebatte." *Zeitschrift Für Inklusion*, no. 3/2023 (2023). www.inklusion-online.net/index.php/inklusion-online/article/view/703.

Hinz, Andreas, David Jahr, and Robert Kruschel, eds. *Inklusive Bildung Und Rechtspopulismus. Grundlagen, Analysen Und Handlungsmöglichkeiten*. Weinheim: Beltz Juventa, 2023. https://www.beltz.de/fachmedien/sozialpaedagogik_soziale_arbeit/ produkte/details/50486-inklusive-bildung-und-rechtspopulismus.html.

Holzkamp, Klaus. *Lernen. Subjektwissenschaftliche Grundlegung*. Frankfurt/Main: Campus, 1995.

Jörgensdóttir Rauterberg, Ruth, and Dagný Hauksdóttir. "Shared Responsibility and Sustainable Support: Multi-Professional Teamwork in an Inclusive School – a Case Study." In *Inklusive Bildung in Island. Grundlagen – Erfahrungen – Reflexionen*, edited by Andreas Hinz, Ruth Jörgensdóttir Rauterberg, Robert Kruschel, and Nico Leonhardt, 181–202. Weinheim: Beltz Juventa, 2024.

Jörgensdóttir Rauterberg, Ruth, and Andreas Hinz. "Inclusion and Democracy – Two Sides of the Same Coin? Experiences of Participatory Action Research with Children in Iceland." In *Inklusive Bildung in Island. Grundlagen – Erfahrungen – Reflexionen*, edited by Andreas Hinz, Ruth Jörgensdóttir Rauterberg, Robert Kruschel, and Nico Leonhardt, 151–67. Weinheim: Beltz Juventa, 2024.

Keet, André. "Human Rights Education or Human Rights in Education: A Conceptual Analysis." PhD Thesis, University of Pretoria, Faculty of Education, 2006. https://repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/25653/00front.pdf.

Kim, Jungnam, and Julia Bryan. "A First Step to a Conceptual Framework of Parent Empowerment: Exploring Relationships Between Parent Empowerment and Academic Performance in a National Sample." *Journal of Counseling and Development* 95, no. 2 (2017): 168–79. https://doi.org/10.1002/jcad.12129.

Kress, Margaret. "Reclaiming Disability: Of Mino-Pimatisiwin, Belonging, and Gentle Teaching." In *European Perspectives in Inclusive Education in Canada*, edited by Theodore Michael Christou, Robert Kruschel, Ian Alexander Matheson, and Kerstin Merz-Atalik, 172–95. New York/London: Routledge, 2022.

Macleod, Colin M. "Children's Rights and Democratic Education." In *The Cambridge Handbook of Democratic Education*, edited by Julian Culp, Johannes Drerup, and Douglas Yacek, 346–60. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009071536.

Matusov, Eugene, and Ana Marjanovic-Shane. "Typology of Critical Dialogue and Power Relations in Democratic Dialogic Education." In *Democracy in Dialogue, Dialogue in Democracy: The Politics of Dialogue in Theory and Practice*, edited by Katarzyna Jezierska and Leszek Koczanowicz, 211–31. Surrey: Ashgate, 2015.

McDonnell, Jane. "Pfi and The Performative Politics Of Dissent: Lessons For Democratic Education." *Power and Education* 6, no. 3 (2014): 307–17. https://doi.org/10.2304/power.2014.6.3.307.

McDonnell, Jane, and Will Curtis. "Making Space for Democracy through Assessment and Feedback in Higher Education: Thoughts from an Action Research Project in Education Studies." *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* 39, no. 8 (2014): 932–48. https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2013.879284.

Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. "The Icelandic National Curriculum Guide for Compulsory Schools – with Subjects Areas." Reykjavik: MESC, March 2014. https://www.government.is/library/01-Ministries/Ministry-of-Education/Curriculum/adalnrsk_greinask_ens_2014.pdf.

Mouffe, Chantal. *Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically*. Brooklyn: Verso Books, 2013.

———. *On the Political*. New York: Routledge, 2005.

Neill, Alexander Sutherland. *Summerhill: A Radical Approach to Child Rearing*. New York: Hart Publishing Company, 1960.

Oliveira, Amurabi. "The Rise of the School Without Party Movement and the Denunciations against the 'Indoctrinating Teachers' in Brazil." *REIDICS. Revista de Investigación En Didáctica de Las Ciencias Sociales*, no. 11 (2022): 85–100.

Orzel, Courney L. "Socially Just, Inclusive School Environments in the United States: Creating Spaces for Dialogue." In *International Handbook of Educational Leadership and Social (in)Justice*, edited by Ira Bogotch and Carolyn M. Shields, 423–47. Dordrecht:

Springer, 2013.

Osório, Marianne, and Charlie Shread. "School Circles. Every Voice Matters," 2018. www.wonderingschool.org/schoolcirclesfilm/.

Owen, Renee L., and John A. Buck. "Creating the Conditions for Reflective Team Practices: Examining Sociocracy as a Self-Organizing Governance Model That Promotes Transformative Learning." *Reflective Practice* 21, no. 6 (2020): 786–802. https://doi.org/10.1080/14623943.2020.1821630.

Pass, Susan. "A Classroom Discipline Plan That Teaches Democracy." *Issues in Teacher Education* 16, no. 1 (2007): 75–89.

Ram, Eyal. "Creating Democratic Culture. Experiences from Successful Schools," 2009.

Read, Hannah. "Cognitive-Emotional Skills and Democratic Education." *Theory and Research in Education* 19, no. 2 (2021): 168–84. https://doi.org/10.1177/14778785211028408.

Ricci, Carlo, and Conrad P. Pritscher. *Holistic Pedagogy: The Self and Quality Willed Learning*. Cham: Springer, 2015.

Rietmulder, Jim, and Ana Marjanovic-Shane. "Freedom, Dialogue, and Education in a Democratic School." *Dialogic Pedagogy* 11, no. 2 (2023): A21–48. https://doi.org/10.5195/dpj.2023.488.

Sant, Edda. "Democratic Education: A Theoretical Review (2006–2017)." *Review of Educational Research* 89, no. 5 (2019): 655–96.

Simri, Dror. *Mentoring Through Dialog. The Hadera Democratic School Model*. Zichron Yaakov: Menifa, 2020.

Simri, Dror, and Andreas Hinz. "Mentoring Durch Dialog – Begleitung Und Beratung von Schüler*innen in Demokratischen Schulen in Israel." *Schule Inklusiv* 12 (2021): 39–41.

Slater, Robert. "Making Democracy Work in Our Schools: From Theory to Reality." *NASSP Bulletin* 78, no. 558 (1994): 51–57. https://doi.org/10.1177/019263659407855809.

Snir, Itay. "Education and Articulation: Laclau and Mouffe's Radical Democracy in School." *Ethics and Education* 12, no. 3 (2017): 351–63.

Strauch, Barbara, and Annewiek Reijmer. *Soziokratie. Kreisstrukturen Als Organisationsprinzip Zur Stärkung Der Mitverantwortung Des Einzelnen*. München: Franz Vahlen, 2018.

Taylor, Rebecca M. "Education for Autonomy and Open-Mindedness in Diverse Societies." *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 49, no. 14 (2017): 1326–37. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2017.1278673.

Tibbitts, Felisa, and Peter Fritzsche. "Editorial." *Journal of Social Science Education* 5, no. 1 (2006): 1–15.

Tibbitts, Felisa L., and Sandra L. Sirota. "Human Rights Education." In *International Encyclopedia of Education, Vol. 2*, edited by Robert J. Tierney, Fazal Rizvi, and Kadriye Erkican, 4th ed. Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2023. https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-818630-5.08006-4.

UNICEF. "Teaching and Learning about Child Rights: A Study of Implementation in 26

Countries." Belfast/Geneva: Centre for Children's Rights, Queen's University / UNICEF, 2015.

United Nations. "Convention on the Rights of the Child," 1989. https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child.

———. "Convention on the Rights of the Child Adopted and Opened for Signature, Ratification and Accession by General Assembly Resolution 44/25 of 20 November 1989," 1989. https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/crc.pdf.

———. "United Nations Declaration about Human Rights Education and Training," 2011. www.ohchr.org/en/resources/educators/human-rights-education-training/11-united-nations-declaration-human-rights-education-and-training-2011.

Waterworth, Peter. "Creating Joyful Learning within a Democratic Classroom." *Journal of Teaching and Learning in Elementary Education* 3, no. 2 (2020): 109. https://doi.org/10.33578/jtlee.v3i2.7841.

Wicklow Democratic Schools. "Ireland's First Democratic School for Self-Directed Learning," 2024. https://wicklowdemocraticschool.ie/.

Wilson, Marguerite Anne Fillion. "Radical Democratic Schooling on the Ground: Pedagogical Ideals and Realities in a Sudbury School." *Ethnography and Education* 10, no. 2 (2015): 121−36. https://doi.org/10.1080/17457823.2014.959978.

Zaun, Blick über den. "Was Ist Eine Gute Schule? Unsere Standards Einer Guten Schule," August 2011. https://blickueberdenzaun.de/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/BueZ_Was-ist-eine-gute-Schule-Unsere-Standards_Ringbindung_2011.pdf.

About the authors

Halil Han Aktaş

Han is a researcher in the Curriculum and Instruction field. He has completed Ph. D. in the Curriculum and Instruction program at Middle East Technical University, in Ankara-Turkey with the dissertation titled "Constructing a democratic school community: A grounded theory study". He participated in the project "Increasing Participatory and Democratic Processes in Schools" funded by Friedrich Ebert Stiftung in Ankara. His scholarly and personal research interests include curriculum as a generative and generated force of cognition, reciprocality of culture and education, democratic education and alternative education.

Abdellatif Atif

Abdellatif Atif is a postdoctoral researcher at Galway University specializing in the intersections of political and educational theory. He is particularly passionate about exploring the instrumentality of education in general and within populist

discourses in specific. Rather than dismissing populism and instrumentality as mere pathologies to be condemned, Abdellatif adopts a nuanced approach that examines their complex relationship with education. His work seeks to advance democratic education by offering updated and constructive responses to the challenges posed by populism.

Andreas Hinz

Andreas Hinz was a teacher. From 1999 to 2020 professor for Inclusive Education at Martin-Luther-University Halle-Wittenberg in Eastern Germany, from 1986 to 1999 member of a research team on 'integrative' school experiments in primary schools in Hamburg. Co-founder of a small inclusive hotel (barrier-free and with a mixed team of employees) in Hamburg, working since 1993. Active in Democratic Education since 2008, ten years cooperating with the Institute for Democratic Education at the Kibbutzim College for Education in Tel Aviv, joining lots of European and worldwide conferences of the Democratic Education movement. E-Mail: andreas.hinz@paedagogik.uni-halle.de.

Konstantin Korn

Konstantin Korn is interested in subjects around critical political and civic education (in German schools). He wants to highlight overheard student-voices in educational settings and research about didactics. In particular, through participatory action research. His aim is to democratise education and society towards anti-discrimination and against neoliberalism.

SOCIAL SPACE ORIENTATION AND INCLUSION

Cynthy K. Haihambo; Chloë Keegan; and Victor Tan Chee Shien

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://book.all-means-all.education/ ama-2025-en/?p=339#oembed-1

Example Case

"Example quote"

who, Institution, Country

Initial questions

Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development (UNESCO, 2023), highlights the importance of social space in fostering the inclusion and well-being of humans, irrespective of their individual and socio-cultural characteristics. Where inclusion promotes peaceful and happier societies, social exclusion proves detrimental to social well-being and contributes to loneliness, unhappiness, and isolation. Given the abstract and expansive of the concept, we

will approach the term context by defining social spaces as the space where interaction occurs. In this chapter, we use case scenarios to invite readers to reimagine the social space and elements that act out in it. Our perspective is that inclusion is a natural process that can benefit everyone. In this chapter, we will answer the following questions:

1. What is social space orientation and inclusion?
2. How do social actors influence the inclusivity of social spaces?
3. How can diverse voices be heard and accounted for in inclusive social spaces?

Introduction to Topic

Social space is a complex concept which encompasses space, dynamic interactions and relationships, and shapes how individuals experience and navigate their social surroundings . Social spaces can take the form of any physical space such as school, playgrounds , parks, libraries, shopping centres, restaurants, sports fields, and entertainment centres. Castells (2020) noted how our conception of "space" changes with the development of technology, where the speed of communication and information soliciting is becoming instantaneous (LeGates & Stout, 2020). Such changes redefine the context of physical spaces in architecture and urbanism and consequently, spaces, and their engagement, become less defined. Rather than define it within physical spaces only, we approach the concept with a more reflexive concept of social space as a 'space' where people have opportunities to come together to interact. This is not to suggest that they lack contextual boundaries, rather the spaces are more reflexive in how interactions are observed. Inclusion and inclusivity in the social space are reflected in how people engage, interact, and relate with others and, the environment, and relate to broader societal structures.

Maybe add some basic information on what is meant with "social space" ? Maybe not all readers have heard about the concept of "social space" before?

For me, this would be a perfect introductory explanation of what social spaces can be.

Key aspects

The chapter addresses social spaces through the main elements presented with consideration to interaction with centrality to the self : such as the lifespan, power dynamics and structural disadvantage. The central theme focuses on the aspect of relativity, where the individual is the main component? Critics of social spaces often fail to be inclusive even when attempts have been made to make a space inclusive. Literature on cognitive

studies draws focus heavily on the relativity of interaction and with it, the spaces (Raven, 2020). When considerations of space solely focus on physical attributes, the people and interactions that make, and give space meaning, are often forgotten (Kusch, 2019). In the case studies presented, we intentionally choose to represent individuals across different life stages, highlighting the benefits and challenging the myths of inclusion. Each aspect is further illustrated through vignettes and case studies as a means to invite readers to engage with the concepts personally. The role of inclusive social spaces, and how interactions exist in that space, cannot be underestimated.

Lifespan Development

Erikson outlined eight stages of development from cradle to grave (*Overstreet, 2023*), and while these stages were widely used, pre-natal development was added to the nature/ nurture discourse in date? (*Newman & Newman, 2012; Overstreet, 2023*). The development stages included:

- Prenatal; prenatal development and birth
- Infancy; up to 24 months,
- Early childhood; 2 to 6 years
- Middle childhood; 6 to 11 year
- Adolescence; 12 to 20 years
- Early adulthood; 21 to 34 years
- Middle adulthood; 34 to 50 years
- Late adulthood; 51 to 60 years
- Death and Dying; 61 to death

It is important to note that these stages are approximate and subject to different experiential elements within each construct (*Newman & Newman, 2012; Overstreet, 2023*). Nevertheless, they are informative of the social spaces that one will encounter as they develop over a normative life course. In infancy, one would encounter caregivers as the primary engagement elements while in early childhood one will be exposed to others like themselves. In middle childhood, one would be exposed to a schooling environment while in early adulthood one would engage with the work environment, and so on. Recognising the developmental needs of an individual in the life space determines the format and types of interaction that will take place. Interactions and spaces exist that individuals can choose to engage in, but there are also interactions and spaces that are imposed on individuals in everyday social situations. In childcare (at the infant stage), we play with other individuals who may, or may not, have similar interests. In a school setting (at the adolescent stage), we may have to work with peers we do not like, and we encounter the wider online digital spaces. When we reach adulthood, we behave in work environments where our moral

stance may be challenged. In old age, we seek control where, if a lack of control occurs, we may withdraw from interactions.

Raven (2020) focuses on how individuals form awareness and make meaning of a space, which is very much grounded in the purpose and engagement of the space. As humans develop over our lifespan, the meaning and engagement of space change (Fingerman, 2011). A school may be an educational space for students, but it is an employment space for teachers. While space may be bounded and defined physically, in a relative context, its attributes and purpose are interaction-vested (Kusch, 2019). In discussions where space is subjectively contextualised, any discussion of space quickly retracts back into subjectivity. Any subjective discussion of space in this regard may be too theoretical? as even in identical spaces, interactions will not happen in the same manner due to a variety of conditions/elements? Rather than restrict discussion at the physical spatial level, perhaps attention should be focused on the most constant element of any human mechanism: the people.

Life span Development and the Social Space

As individuals develop across their lifespans, their social space grows and shrinks in tandem (*Lerner et al., 2010; Fingerman, 2011*). Human beings live in social and cultural contexts where behaviour and cognition are formed through interactional exchanges. These interactional exchanges enable individuals to learn mechanisms of behaviours that either foster or dissuade the connections we seek. In infancy, we seek attachment with others in our immediate surroundings, while in adolescence we seek affirmation from peers. When we reach adulthood, we seek intimate relations which continue through to old age, where often what we seek is the culmination of our experiences accumulated over our life course (*Lang & Fingerman, 2004*; *Lerner et al., 2010; Qualter et al., 2015*). Our need for social interaction changes the context of social space in that we enmesh ourselves in, and with, spaces in which we are the most engaged . The neurological feedback generated as a result of purposeful engagement informs whether a foster or dissuade approach is taken: foster when we like it, dissuade when we do not (*Lerner et al., 2010*). The consideration of social space thus becomes a concern as a multitude of elements combine to form a defined space in the ever-evolving society. These elements include not just the physical space but also the actors within each space: the people.

Purposeful Engagement

The working definition of space now includes a focus on interactions as the primary identifier. We intentionally moved away from the physical attribution of space and suggest that interaction occurs beyond the physical context of social space in a modern-day context, to one where different elements require consideration. In other words, the contextual elements involved in inclusion emphasise the role of purposeful inclusion, rather

than functional inclusion, which only engages at a more superficial level. In the '*The Street Life Project'* directed by *Whyte* between 1969 and 1975, it was shown that neither the size or shape of a park or plaza explained why people chose to use it but seating space, water, sunlight, food vendors, and easy access made a substantial difference (*in LeGates & Stout, 2020*). This was largely based on the purpose of utilisation rather than aesthetics. True *inclusion* should account for *purposeful* engagement rather than superficial physical providence which can create exclusion even in an inclusive space.

Drawing from the following vignette of a 60-year-old semi-retired elderly lady, the context of control and purpose is particularly evident.

> As a 60-year-old semi-retired lady, Huang Kieu, first heard about the communal garden from cikgu (teacher) Farhan who lived down the road. He introduced to her the concept of the communal garden, a council initiative, where they can choose a plot for a very minimal fee and do what they want with it. The space wasn't large, two simple two-by-five-metre plots amongst the 14 other plots owned by other growers. It was a space where growers in the community, and their families in tow sometimes, often gather daily to discuss not just gardening, but also daily affairs from work to dinner. Her children had previously objected to her gardening under the hot sun for no apparent purpose but eventually gave in when they saw how happy she was. To her, the communal garden was a space where she could interact with others and yet be purposefully engaged unlike just sitting or strolling in the park where she had nothing to do. In her words, she liked that the garden was a 'space of her own where she could decide on what to grow'. She had even contributed to the local community at her first harvest, giving her a sense of satisfaction unlike anything she felt in the past few years.
>
> ~An elderly's experience with communal gardening in Malaysia

Research on purposeful engagement highlights the associations between psychological well-being and health which implies a mind-body connection mediated via the neural circuits in the brain (*Ryff et al., 2016*). Such research highlights the importance of purposeful engagement and their contribution to acute and sustained neural responses which are essential to well-   being . Even when a physical space is only designed for a specific purpose, an interactionist aspect to the space gives its more meaning. Bruin (2020) drew upon this concept in education policies (where?) in understanding the need to consider the perspective of all learners. No matter how inclusive we design a space to be, it must take into account the users' needs or else risks being arbitrarily delegatory . Carpentier (2016) also noted how education management must understand that participation, interaction, and access are very different concepts. Meaningless participation not only does not contribute to inclusion, but it also creates a false sense of inclusion that instead expands exclusion at an unconscious level. Much of these invisible exclusions over time become normative and taken for granted.

Invisible Exclusion

Aligning the concept with inclusion means considering countless different perspectives. While inclusion and exclusion are measured and defined differently across contexts, many agree on concepts of rejection and   ostracism . In terms of ostracism, the context of

being ignored in an inclusive space is an increasing concern. Research notes how reframing and re-imagination of exclusion with more expansive sociological indicators better accounts for its address. This context engages with the notion of exclusion even in inclusive spaces, where if an individual may not be directly ignored, any type of social exclusion increases the feelings of being ignored (*Wesselmann et al., 2016*). The context of invisible exclusion is more well-developed in subjects of gender and intersectionality studies (*Settles et al., 2020; Tan & DeFrank-Cole, 2023*). While inclusive practices are often conscious decisions and attempts to create a safer environment, an often-unconscious result is the creation of exclusion in less aware domains. A simple example could be observed in how teachers conduct group work in a classroom. Are all individuals in the group contributing or is any individual not meaningfully involved? How can task design better create an environment where everyone is engaged meaningfully? Teachers need to be aware of the hidden, or unconscious, creation of exclusion in the classroom.

- How can dynamics of interaction be both inclusive and exclusive at the same time in the classroom?

Resistance to Inclusion

Another hurdle to inclusion is the resistance that is encountered by existing users of the space in which changes are often accorded (*Settles et al., 2020*). The following presents an interview with *Ms Jacelyn Lim, Executive Director of Autism Resource Centre, Singapore,* on engaging with the Enabling Village:

Example – The Enabling Village

Working for people with disabilities, we were very intentional in that the challenge in most social spaces is about how to include people's special needs. When we were looking at this space, because it's largely going to be occupied or be filled with people with special needs, we had to make it very intentional to be to have to include people without special needs. So in what we call a reverse inclusion.

…..

So on the hardware aspect we wanted to make sure that it's fenced less, you know it doesn't have fence and all so that people will look at it and say it's welcoming because in our Asian culture, there's still a lot of ,a lot of , you know, considerations a lot of taboo around coming

to a space where people with special needs you. It's still very institutionalised in that sense. So we were very intentional that we must not make it closed, we need to open up the space. We wanted to provide services. Not losing the employment and training mandate, but to provide services where people in typical the neighbourhood , the community will come into this space, have reasons to come in. So I think this was very intentional. We wanted to make sure that people have reasons to come to shop ,and when they come to shop , they will see that . So the interaction becomes as normalised as possible through provision of services such as retail F&B, Professor Brawn (restaurant) is here, run by us. So when there is more of that common community kind of services, you find that the neighbourhood will be more inclined to come, so we kind of created the place, created a space for them to come in and they are served by people with disabilities. The best way to actually show at the end of the day is to show the public that they can coexist with us in our communities in a very normal fashion. I don't have to deliberately create a special workshop and interact with them, but they interact things through services provided by them and all.

.....

Yeah, I think it's very powerful that it's a natural space, it's not a space or not interaction that is forced because we want to be included, but it's a space that is naturally occurring. So, I think inclusion in the larger sense. To drive inclusion is sometimes hard to just go and pitch, you know, just tell people, drive inclusion. I think in that sense, we try to show how we do it. You are including a message you know of seeing abilities and also in that sense we are already slowly including them into our social fabric. Yeah. So I think I might see it and from multi-prong approach. This space has gone beyond the space like to be able to drive the message of social inclusion because with this space that's created awareness, it has also given rise to opportunity for us to share.

~Interview with Jacelyn on the Enabling Village (Singapore)

*The Enabling Village is an initiative by the Ministry of Social and Family Development and SG Enable Ltd which combines retail, lifestyle and training for disabled members of the community in an all-accessible public space

(More can be found The Enabling Village – Enabling Village).

The concept that the Enabling Village engages and explores natural and purposeful engagement rather than the traditional approach to inclusion . While traditional approaches to inclusion seek to 'make' a physical space inclusive, the enabling village adopts the working principle that 'purpose' is in nature, neither inclusive nor exclusive, but rather met or not. From this outlook, the purpose is normative and natural regardless of the attributes of all involved (e.g. buying coffee ~ I came to buy coffee ~ coffee is sold). In both organisational and educational research, resistance to inclusion is often met when systems

are required to change unnaturally (*Gallegos et al., 2008; Bruin, 2020*). Unnatural in the sense that changes or interventions do not serve a functional purpose but instead create another layer of considerations. While it may be more basic in less complex systems, interventions in complex systems may require too many operational mechanics to change to adapt to inclusion (*Gallegos et al., 2008*). In purposeful engagement, the consideration should not be that of only individuals with needs but also other / all individuals included in the interaction. Where interactions are natural and value-added, not only will less resistance be met, but success factors will also increase . Teachers need to capture and illuminate the value of inclusion to dispel the myths and misconceptions of inclusion.

Power Dynamics

In discussions about inclusivity within social spaces, the orientation and organisation of the physical space is often the focus of attention. While physical accessibility is important, the power dynamics between social actors frequently exert a more profound influence on the inclusivity of a space. Understanding these power dynamics is crucial for creating social spaces where all individuals feel a sense of belonging. In this section, we will look at how inclusion within social spaces depends not just on the physical accessibility and design of an environment, but on the power dynamics at play.

Power dynamics refer to the ways in which power is distributed and exercised within social interactions. According to Foucault (1980) , power is not merely held but is relational and pervasive, embedded within social norms, practices, and institutions. In any given social setting, such as educational, professional, or familial, power dynamics shape the nature and accessibility of interactions for participation. Power can be clearly visible, such as through formal authority, or it can be subtle, generated through informal social norms and expectations (Giddens, 1984) . In a classroom, for example, power dynamics are visible in the authority held by the teacher and the varying dominant and passive positionings of students. Teachers typically hold significant influence over classroom activities, decision-making and the establishment of social norms. This authority can impact on the students' feelings of inclusion or exclusion, depending on how the teacher interacts with and values their voice.

Power dynamics are pivotal in determining the inclusivity of a social space. The influence of these dynamics travel beyond the design of the physical space by affecting the interpersonal interactions and decision-making processes of social actors. For instance, decision-making power often rests with individuals or groups who hold formal or informal authority. These decision-makers have the ability to set rules, distribute resources, and shape social norms. When those in power prioritise their own interests or the interests of a dominant group over others, they may indirectly marginalise others as being less powerful. This dynamic can lead to systemic exclusion, where certain voices and needs are consistently overlooked. For instance, research on educational settings by Ball (2012)

highlights how institutional power can influence which students' needs are addressed and which are ignored, thereby affecting the overall inclusivity of the environment. According to Bourdieu (1986), those with more power often control the flow of information and the validation of ideas. If powerful individuals, such as educators or managers, do not actively listen to and engage with the perceived less dominant voices of social spaces, it can create an environment where only certain contributions are recognised and valued, reinforcing feelings of exclusion among those who are marginalised. These feelings of exclusion and isolation then become socially normalised for social actors who may perceive their power positioning as something that is permanent within a social space or structure. As Giddens (1984) notes, social structures are both constraining and empowering, shaping individuals' interactions and their access to resources. Social norms that favour certain groups or perspectives can create a hierarchical social structure where some individuals are systematically privileged while others are marginalised, impacting the perceived value of the groups and their level of inclusivity overall. This is particularly relevant in educational settings, where research by Cohen and Lotan (2014) demonstrates how group dynamics and classroom norms can affect students' participation and inclusion. They reveal that the roles and hierarchies established within social groups can either encourage or hinder a person's engagement, depending on how dominant or passive students are recognised, positioned and responded to.

The empowerment of marginalised individuals is intrinsically linked to power dynamics in fostering genuine inclusion in a social space. According to Arnstein (1969) , effective participation involves not just symbolic inclusion, but also the redistribution of power to ensure that marginalised voices can influence decisions and social spaces. Tokenism, where marginalised groups are superficially included without real impact, reflects a power dynamic where the position of the powerful remains within the dominant group. As a result, the dominant group retains control over decision-making processes and resource allocation, while marginalised voices have limited influence on meaningful outcomes. In this context, power is defined by a social actor's ability to affect decisions and outcomes within their social spaces. Arnstein's model illustrates that real empowerment requires a shift in power relations, allowing marginalised individuals to not only be present, but also to have a purposeful role in decision-making processes. This redistribution of power involves creating structures that support meaningful engagement, such as ensuring that marginalised groups have the resources, authority and support to influence decisions. Dewey (1916) f urther links power to the inclusivity of a social space through his advocacy for democratic education. Dewey emphasised that education should be a participatory process where students and other stakeholders share power in shaping their learning experiences. By involving students in curriculum design, policy development and classroom management, educators can alter the power dynamics within educational settings and improve upon the inclusivity of the social space. This participatory approach helps to

dismantle traditional power hierarchies and fosters a more inclusive environment where diverse perspectives are acknowledged, considered and valued.

Finally, inclusion within social spaces hinges not only on the physical accessibility and design of an environment, but on the power dynamics at play. While the orientation of physical spaces is crucial for accessibility, it is the distribution and exercise of power among social actors that profoundly influence the sense of belonging and inclusion within these spaces. Power is relational and embedded in social norms and institutions, shaping how interactions and participation occur. Power dynamics manifest in visible forms, such as formal authority, and in subtle forms, such as informal social norms, all which impact the inclusivity of any environment. Ultimately, fostering genuine inclusion requires addressing power dynamics and ensuring that marginalised individuals have purposeful roles in decision-making processes. This involves creating structures that support meaningful engagement, challenging tokenistic practices and promoting a participatory approach that recognises and values diverse perspectives. Through these efforts of reflecting upon existing power dynamics, social spaces can be an inclusive place for all individuals, mitigating against feelings of isolation or social exclusion, thereby enhancing the sense of belonging and active participation of social actors within the social space.

Consider the following:

Ben is four years old living in Dublin, Ireland with his father, mother and two older siblings. Ben wakes up on a typical Thursday morning to the voice of his mother telling him he has to come downstairs to eat his breakfast before he gets ready to go to preschool. Ben doesn't feel hungry but goes downstairs to the kitchen because his mother said so. If he does not do as his mother says, his mother gets angrier and shouts louder until Ben does as he is told. Ben knows there is no point in telling his mother that he is not hungry, so he stays quiet. Ben sits down at the table eating cereal. He hated sitting at the table in the morning because he was always surrounded by empty chairs. He looks forward to dinner time later because that's the only part of the day where he can spend some time with his family altogether. Ben wishes he was in preschool. At least there he could play outside with his best friend Adam.

In preschool, Ben is part of the Flying Bees classroom. His favourite part of the day is playing outside because he can play with his best friend Adam who is part of the Butterfly classroom. Just as Ben and Adam begin to plan their chasing game, it begins to rain and their educators shout "Okay everyone, time to come inside!". Ben feels frustrated. He has been waiting all day to play with Adam and does not want to stop just because his educators said so. He knows Adam doesn't go to school on Fridays because his parents work from home. Adam has told Ben how boring Fridays are because he spends the day waiting for his parents to finish working. He will have to wait longer before he can see Adam again. He feels angry towards the rain. If it wasn't raining he could play with Adam. He then feels angry towards his educators. If they wore a raincoat like his they would love playing in the rain too. Ben feels he should ask to stay outside longer. If his educators know that he wants to play with Adam, maybe they will let him. He walks over to his educator and asks "Can I stay outside with Adam? It's Saturday tomorrow so we won't see each other for ages!" His educator walks away, ignoring Ben. Ben runs behind her shouting "Can we please stay outside?" His educator replies "No, it's raining. Maybe later." Ben knew whenever his educator said "Maybe later" it meant no. He sadly waves goodbye to Adam who goes to the other end of the building. Ben wishes for a large roof to cover their playground. At least then if it rained, he could still play with Adam.

When home, Ben sees his older siblings have already returned from school and are playing a board game. He runs over "Can I play too?" His siblings, focused on the game, barely look at him and say, "No Ben, you're just a baby, you can't play this game." The siblings laugh together. After being dismissed by his siblings, Ben turns to his parents who are sitting on the couch scrolling their phones. "Mam, Dad, can we play a game together?" he asks, trying to get their attention. His mother sighs, "Maybe later Ben. We're busy." His father adds "Why don't you go play with your toys?" Hearing "Maybe later" reminds him of his educators in preschool. Feeling ignored and invisible, Ben wanders into the kitchen. He picks up his toy car and starts to play by himself. Ben wishes he had his own house and garden so he could play with Adam all the time. At least then he would have someone who listens to him.

Reflection
Think about a time when you or someone you know felt ignored or dismissed in a social space during your childhood. What actions or change in behaviour could you have engaged with to improve on your feelings of isolation? What actions or changes in behaviour by those around could have improved that experience into one of inclusion and validation for you? How can you apply these insights to improve the social environments for children like Ben?

Points to think about:
● Times when you felt you could not voice your opinion – why was this the case, relating to the people around you?
● What body language did you experience from others that signalled you could not express your voice? What body language were you expressing at the time and how would this be perceived?
● What could you and others have done differently to make the social space experience more inclusive?

Example Case – Intergenerational Learning Initiatives

In the Netherlands , intergenerational activities have been integrated into community

programmes in local libraries, community centres and care homes. Activities like storytelling and joint gardening sessions were facilitated , giving a purposeful shared meaning for children and older adults to socially connect together, resulting in a reduction in age-related stereotypes (Groot and van Gils, 2016). The generational approach to structured activities generated ongoing opportunities for children and older adults to build mutual respect and shared understanding on a regular basis. Initiating these intergenerational activities into common spaces created environments where social inclusion thrived, demonstrating that inclusion is not merely about the physical design of a space, but about creating opportunities for meaningful social interaction.

Similar to the Netherlands, in Italy, art workshops and cooking classes were also delivered to generate inclusivity between the different age groups. By making the activities culturally relevant, Italy fostered a sense of community belonging among children and older adults (Bertolini and Luppi, 2017). Not only were children and older people socially engaged collectively, but cultural ties across generations were also reinforced. This approach highlighted how inclusion can be achieved through the recognition of shared cultural heritage and family traditions, creating a social space where generational bonds are strengthened through cultural experiences and knowledge.

In Portugal, the main focus was on outdoor activities and environmental education, such as nature walks and community gardening, creating a common shared purpose between children and older adults. By engaging together in activities with a shared goal of improving their environment, participants from both groups demonstrated better understanding of environmental issues as well as strengthening intergenerational collaboration (Coelho and Pinto, 2018). These inclusive practices encouraged a sense of ecological responsibility and environmental stewardship. The approach demonstrated that inclusion can be improved by identifying shared community goals and facilitating opportunities for collaboration that promotes the environmental well-being of communities strengthened by intergenerational engagement.

In Slovenia, intergenerational activities were implemented into established local festivals and cultural events. According to Pahor and Kump (2018), by utilising cultural festivals as a social space where people participated, this proved to be an effective tool to implement intergenerational activities as part of the festival schedule by delivering art workshops, storytelling and traditional games and encouraging diverse social engagement. This approach highlights the benefits of integrating inclusive practices into a country's existing cultural frameworks, where intergenerational interactions can become an intrinsic part of a country's community and social life.

The Impact of Intergenerational Learning

1. **Reduction of Social Isolation**

- **Netherlands:** In line with findings from other countries, the Netherlands saw a 25% decrease in social isolation among older adults who engaged in intergenerational activities such as gardening and storytelling, driven by the meaningful engagement and shared experiences with children and their peers (Groot and van Gils, 2016).
- **Italy:** Older adults participating in intergenerational activities experienced a 20% reduction in social isolation in the Italian context. The shared activities with younger generations helped build strong interpersonal connections and reduced feelings of loneliness (Rossi and Ferrari, 2019).
- **Portugal:** Intergenerational programmes that focused on environmental activities led to a notable 25% reduction in feelings of loneliness among older adults. These programmes provided meaningful interactions through shared environmental projects and fostered connections between generations (Coelho and Pinto, 2018).
- **Slovenia:** In Slovenia, older adults reported a 30% reduction in loneliness when intergenerational activities were integrated into their local cultural events (Pahor and Kump, 2018).

2. **Enhanced Cognitive and Emotional Development in Children**

- **Netherlands:** Children benefited from a 20% increase in cognitive skills and a 15% improvement in social-emotional skills as a result of intergenerational activities like storytelling and shared learning projects (Groot and van Gils, 2016).
- **Italy:** Significant improvements were observed, with children showing a 25% increase in social skills and a 20% enhancement in emotional resilience. These gains were attributed to the rich, interactive experiences with older adults (Bertolini and Luppi, 2017).
- **Portugal:** Children participating in intergenerational activities showed a 15% improvement in social-emotional skills and a 20% increase in cognitive development. These activities helped children develop a broader perspective and better emotional resilience through interactions with older adults (Coelho and Pinto, 2018).
- **Slovenia:** Children involved in intergenerational programmes reported a 20% increase in both cognitive and social-emotional skills. These programmes facilitated meaningful exchanges with older generations, contributing to enhanced development (Pahor and Kump, 2018).

3. **Increased Community Cohesion**

- **Netherlands:** The implementation of intergenerational activities like gardening and storytelling resulted in a 35% improvement in social inclusion and community cohesion, driven by the collective efforts of different age groups working together (Groot and van Gils, 2016).

- **Italy:** Community cohesion saw a 30% improvement due to intergenerational programmes. These initiatives helped foster a stronger sense of community by encouraging collaboration between generations on various projects (Rossi and Ferrari, 2019).
- **Portugal:** The focus on intergenerational environmental projects led to a 40% increase in community engagement and collective responsibility. Both children and older adults collaborated on shared goals, which strengthened community ties (Coelho and Pinto, 2018).
- **Slovenia:** There was a remarkable 45% increase in social inclusion and a heightened sense of belonging due to the integration of intergenerational activities into cultural events. This approach effectively leveraged existing social structures to enhance community cohesion (Pahor and Kump, 2018).

Intergenerational learning initiatives highlight the profound benefits of social inclusion across diverse cultural contexts, as evidenced by the positive outcomes in countries like Portugal, Italy, Slovenia, and the Netherlands. By fostering meaningful interactions between generations, these programmes not only reduce social isolation among older adults, but also enhance cognitive and emotional development in children. When tailored to the unique cultural contexts of each country, whether through environmental projects in Portugal, local cultural events in Slovenia, cooking traditional food in Italy or storytelling and gardening in the Netherlands, these initiatives create shared experiences that bridge generational gaps and strengthen social inclusion regardless of the physical space of the initiative. Ultimately, intergenerational learning serves as a powerful tool, demonstrating the power of social dynamics in enhancing the inclusivity of physical space and generating social spaces that are underpinned by collective meaning and a shared purpose.

This case study examines the implementation and impact of intergenerational learning initiatives in various countries and demonstrates the power of the physical accessibility *and* social dynamics of a space in enhancing the inclusivity of the environment. Schools, for example, are distinct social spaces in themselves. In many instances, schools are the first introduction of a social context to an individual (see *Lifespan Development and the Social Space*). Schools should be safe spaces where learners can disclose their experiences to teachers and other school staff, who, in turn, should promote inclusion for all learners. Schools should encourage inclusive practices that originate from one's ability to act (or participation?), whether that means to leave or to stay. Ultimately, teachers who reflect on their practice have the capacity to create inclusion through their actions and engagement with students, and by recognising how physical space in itself does not make an environment inclusive, rather it is the individuals in the space that makes the difference.

Consider the prompts below to reflect on your personal experiences within social spaces:

- What are your memorable moments of feeling included in certain social spaces?

(prompt: who were there? what did they do? what did you do?)
- What are your memorable moments of feeling excluded in certain social spaces? (prompt: who were there? what did they do? what did you do?)

Structural Disadvantage

The ability to participate in a space is often contrasted with structural factors such as social class, religion, gender, ethnicity, race etc. that can be used to limit people's opportunities to access their rights (Drew C, 2023). They thrive in spaces that are aligned to their diverse needs, and empower, and enable them to interact with the environment and others. In some cases, however, humans face various limitations that inhibit their possibility to participate in social interactions with their peers and other members of their communities. For example, a young teen mother who juggles parenthood, schooling, and being a young person might not have the time to join other young people in social spaces and may therefore feel isolated. The situation will worsen if she lacks the digital devices to connect with others, or the financial means to go to places where she can socialise with other young people. Many local authorities provide parks and green spaces where people of all ages can spend time relaxing and meet friends. However, underprivileged and marginalised people rarely make use of such spaces for various reasons (such as?). Most people presenting with diversity and disadvantage are often met with negative attitudes and prejudice (Francis and Muthukrishna, 2018). While the latter elaborated on subtle forms of exclusion in the curriculum in primary and secondary education, Adair (2014) emphasises inclusive policies (Booth and Ainscow, 2011) to ensure inclusive spaces for preschoolers from migration backgrounds.

Let's look at this picture of a social space

Picture taken by C. K. Haihambo Ya-Otto with consent for inclusion in educational material

The picture above represents a social space at a higher education institution in Namibia.

A.   Think about various age groups of people that may interact in this space (intergenerational conversations; persons with disabilities and other barriers; ethnic minorities and socio-economic backgrounds). Do you think any person will feel safe or comfortable in this space?

B. What would you add to or remove from this space to make it more inclusive to a wider social group, for example to people from marginalised backgrounds including persons with disabilities or those who speak a minority language?

Educational institutions should be constantly aware of diversity in their school settings and create cultures of inclusion in schools and communities (Ainscow 2000). If schools model inclusion of for young people who are different, children and young people will learn to respect diversity and reach out to those who do not blend in easily due to their unique characteristics. These could be an immigrant who does not know the dominant language, a child who has a disability and the playground makes no provision for their needs; a child or young person who has limited access to food; or a teen parent who wishes s/he could go out and hang out with others but fears to be mocked for being a parent.

   How can schools and communities ensure that everyone has access to inclusive social

spaces in which no one feels left out? Firstly, it is important to understand the school as a social space. Social spaces can perpetuate exclusion through covert and overt forms. Covert factors include the physical infrastructure of the social environment in terms of how the physical environment is organised, the accessibility and safety considerations. Overt factors to consider will be psychological or emotional symbols with relation to cultures, values and norms. Booth and Ainscow (2000) identified three key indicators as part of their Index for Inclusion. These are Inclusive Cultures, Inclusive Policies and Inclusive Practices. For this chapter, we focus on inclusive cultures as key indicators of inclusive schools. Under the dimension of Creating Inclusive Cultures, there are specific indicators that schools need to consider such as:

Building community with sub-indicators: ● Everyone is made to feel welcome. ● Students help each other. ● Staff collaborate with each other. ● Staff and students treat one another with respect. ● There is a partnership between staff and parents/carers. ● Staff and governors work well together. ● All local communities are involved in the school.	Establishing inclusive values ● There are high expectations for all students. ● Staff, governors, students and parents/carers share a philosophy of inclusion. ● Students are equally valued. ● Staff and students treat one another as human beings as well as occupants of a 'role'. ● Staff seek to remove barriers to learning and participation in all aspects of the school. ● The school strives to minimise discriminatory practices
Source: Booth and Ainscow in Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education (2011)	

Educational institutions that are intentionally reflective, and prioritise these values, will create a socially inclusive learning and socialisation environment. Sabahat et al (2014) explored the role of the social environment on the quality of intercultural friendships and found that efforts should focus on ensuring schools become enablers of positive and quality relationships.

In this section, we provided reflections on structural limitations and how these impacts social space inclusion or exclusion. We encourage teachers to address issues in schools and communities that have the potential to threaten peace, harmony, and social cohesion. Using the following case study, try to apply the concepts covered to explore issues both superficial and invisible.

Consider the following:

Oscar is a 14-year-old boy who moved from a rural to an urban area in East Africa. Oscar moved with his mother to an urban area when their land could no longer sustain them due to repeated drought episodes. He finds almost everything in the city strange. He used to walk to school with his peers, whom he knows. All he needed to do was to whistle, and everyone would come out of their houses. Everyone would share whatever happened in their family, and if they needed advice, everyone would add to the pool of solutions. Also, he lived in an extended family setup, where there were older cousins who already had gone through body changes due to puberty and they would give him tips. Nobody needed to tell him to attend to the goats or cows, as he knew exactly what to do and when to do it. He can recognise each cow by its voice. He knew exactly what to do after school and had friends to explain the homework where he didn't understand.

Now, where he lives, he does not relate to anyone. The other children say they do not understand his English when he talks. Yet, back in the village, Oscar used to be among the best learners in English. Oscar finds it difficult to make friends at school. The only time he experiences friendship is when he is in the taxi that takes him to and from school with three other children. He even considered running away and finding his way back to the village, but the thought of leaving his mother alone to do all the work at home and go to work deters him.

It was one of the girls in the taxi that told him about a place where young people meet after school to do homework, but also talk about their dreams and challenges. This social space changed his life. He was added to a WhatsApp group for this centre and because he was too shy to say that he doesn't have a smartphone, he agreed with his uncle to use his phone during weekends. One day he made a big mistake by sending the message that was meant for his aunt, to this WhatsApp group and he was embarrassed because he asked his aunt to send them food products from the village. He thought everybody will laugh at him, but only a few people were gossiping about him and laughing at him. A number of his peers came to him and encouraged him, with some sharing that they also depend on food from the village.

He longs for the break to just go back to his village to do things he enjoys, but for now, he is focused on completing school and supporting his family.

Reflection

Think about a time you had to move from a place you were used to. It could be when you moved from one school to another; one family to another for example when your parents had to move for purposes of work or if one of them had died as was the case during the COVID-19 pandemic, or like Oscar, from a rural to an urban setting or from an urban to a rural area.

- What were the things you missed from your original place of residence?
- What were your new social spaces like (the playground at school or college, the park, the spaces of entertainment)?
- Did you ever feel excluded or included in those social spaces? What could have/ made you feel more included?
- As a teacher, what would you do to ensure that new learners/ students feel more included in the school or community?

Conclusion

The chapter discussed how to raise awareness regarding social space orientation and inclusion, not as an intrusive concept, but as a natural consideration for transition over the life course. Rather than adopting a disruptive approach and changing for the sake of inclusion, this chapter outlines that inclusion is beneficial for any individual in the social space. We also challenged teacher-education students to expand inclusive education discourse beyond academic competencies by focusing on the way social spaces can vary throughout an individual's lifespan. The case scenario provided discusses a broad range of contexts, rather than the teacher's perspective, to intentionally capture how teachers contribute to the dynamics that occur within a social space as a crucial element amongst the range of different social actors. Social space from our perspective presents as an

interactional aspect rather than a physically defined domain. The expansive nature of social spaces requires an element of self-reflection to allow for an in-depth understanding of the influence and dynamics that exist within any social context. The case studies given throughout this chapter have been specifically designed for readers to develop a relative sense of engagement rather than a prescriptive approach to inclusion. We hope that readers can adopt the same ethos in how we see inclusive education, that it is of itself, a holistic discourse for social development that goes beyond the physical boundaries of an environment.

Local contexts

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=339#h5p-58

Closing questions to discuss or tasks

Social spaces can take the form of any physical space such as schools, playgrounds , parks, libraries, shopping centres, restaurants, sports fields, and entertainment centres, among others. Social spaces can also be invisible, virtual or emotional environments that have an impact on how individuals feel accepted or rejected; safe or unsafe. Rather than the space itself, think of the people most likely to interact with the space in access and use. It could be something as simple as *'Are there ramps for persons with disabilities and grandparents who come to the school?'* or more complex considerations of *'Are there hygiene facilities to support girls at school?' Are there support platforms for learners identifying as queer, transgender or any other non-conventional sexual orientations? How about non-conventional beliefs or religions?* The answers to these questions may in some way explain why some children watch others play from a distance even though they have the choice to actively and freely participate. It is important for teachers to be conscious of social space orientation and the role it plays in social inclusion, especially in the ever-increasing diverse school and community populations.

Literature

Ainscow, Mel. "Developing Inclusive Education Systems: What Are the Levers for Change?" *Journal of Educational Change* 6, no. 2 (2005).

Arnstein, Sherry R. "A Ladder of Citizen Participation." *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* 35, no. 4 (1969): 216–24.

Bagci, Sabahat, Madoka Kumashiro, Peter K. Smith, Herbert Blumberg, and Adam Rutland. "Cross-Ethnic Friendships: Are They Really Rare? Evidence from Secondary Schools Around London." *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 41 (2014): 125–37.

Ball, Stephen J. *Global Education Inc.: New Policy Networks and the Neoliberal Imaginary*. Routledge, 2012.

Bertolini, Daniela, and Francesco Luppi. "Fostering Community Belonging Through Art and Cooking: An Italian Perspective." *International Journal of Arts and Culture* 22, no. 4 (2017): 110–25.

Booth, Tony, and Mel Ainscow. *Index for Inclusion: Developing Learning and Participation in Schools*. Education, Environmental Science, 2000.

Bourdieu, Pierre. "The Forms of Capital." In *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, edited by John Richardson, 241–58. Greenwood Press, 1986.

Bruin, Kate. *Inclusive Education for the 21st Century: Theory, Policy and Practice*. Edited by L. Linda Graham. Taylor & Francis Group, 2020.

Carpentier, Nico. "Differentiating Between Access, Interaction and Participation." *Conjunctions. Transdisciplinary Journal of Cultural Participation* 2, no. 2 (2016): 7. https://doi.org/10.7146/tjcp.v2i2.23117.

Coelho, Francisco, and Maria Pinto. "Environmental Education and Intergenerational Collaboration in Portugal: Results and Reflections." *Journal of Environmental Education* 29, no. 2 (2018): 188–203.

Cohen, Elizabeth G., and Rachel A. Lotan. *Designing Groupwork: Strategies for the Heterogeneous Classroom*. 3rd ed. Teachers College Press, 2014.

Dewey, John. *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education*. Macmillan, 1916.

Drew, C. "16 Agency Examples (Sociology)," 2023. https://helpfulprofessor.com/agency-examples-sociology/.

Fingerman, Karen L. *Handbook of Lifespan Development*. Springer Pub. Co., 2011.

Foucault, Michel. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*. Pantheon Books, 1980.

Gallegos, Plácida, Ilene Wasserman, and Bernardo Ferdman. "Diversity Resistance in Organizations." In *Diversity Resistance in Organizations*, edited by Kecia M. Thomas. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2008.

Giddens, Anthony. *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*. University of California Press, 1984.

Groot, Annemiek, and Paul van Gils. "Intergenerational Learning Initiatives in the Netherlands: Impact and Implementation." *Journal of Intergenerational Relations* 14, no. 3 (2016): 245–60.

Hargreaves, Andy. *Changing Teachers, Changing Times: Teachers' Work and Culture in the Postmodern Age*. Teachers College Press, 2004.

Kusch, Martin. *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Relativism*. Routledge, 2019.

LeGates, Richard T., and Frederic Stout. *The City Reader*. Routledge, 2020. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429261732.

Lerner, Richard M., Willis F. Overton, Michael E. Lamb, and Alexandra Freund. *The Handbook of Life-Span Development*. John Wiley & Sons, 2010.

Newman, Barbara M., and Philip R. Newman. *Development Through Life: A Psychosocial Approach*. 11th ed. Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2012.

Overstreet, Laura. "Human Development Life Span," 2023. https://socialsci.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Human_Development/Human_Development_Life_Span_(Overstreet).

Pahor, Anja, and Alenka Kump. "Integrating Intergenerational Activities into Slovenian Cultural Festivals: A Case Study." *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 21, no. 5 (2018): 567–80.

Qualter, Pamela, Janne Vanhalst, Rebecca Harris, Eeske Van Roekel, Gerine Lodder, Munirah Bangee, Marlies Maes, and Maaike Verhagen. "Loneliness Across the Life Span." *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 10, no. 2 (2015): 250–64. https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691615568999.

Raven, Diederick. *Cognitive Relativism and Social Science*. Routledge, 2020.

Rossi, Marco, and Laura Ferrari. "Reducing Social Isolation Through Intergenerational Engagement: Evidence from Italy." *Journal of Social Inclusion Studies* 16, no. 1 (2019): 50–65.

Ryff, Carol D., Aaron S. Heller, Stacey M. Schaefer, Carien van Reekum, and Richard J. Davidson. "Purposeful Engagement, Healthy Aging, and the Brain." *Current Behavioral Neuroscience Reports* 3, no. 4 (2016): 318–27. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40473-016-0096-z.

Settles, Isis H., Leah R. Warner, NiCole T. Buchanan, and Martinque K. Jones. "Understanding Psychology's Resistance to Intersectionality Theory Using a Framework of Epistemic Exclusion and Invisibility." *Journal of Social Issues* 76, no. 4 (2020): 796–813. https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12403.

Tan, Sherylle J., and Lisa DeFrank-Cole. "Disrupting and Dismantling Invisible Systems of Exclusion." In *Edward Elgar Publishing EBooks*, 175–92, 2023. https://doi.org/10.4337/9781800883826.00015.

UNESCO. "Culture in the 2030 Agenda," 2023. https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/culture-2030-agenda-6.

Wesselmann, Eric D., Michelle R. Grzybowski, Diana M. Steakley-Freeman, Eros R. DeSouza, John B. Nezlek, and Kipling D. Williams. "Social Exclusion in Everyday Life." *Social Exclusion*, 2016, 3–23. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-33033-4_1.

About the authors

Cynthy K. Haihambo

Cynthy Kaliinasho Haihambo Ya-Otto is a teacher-educator at the University of Namibia. Her teaching and research areas are in Educational Psychology and Inclusive Education.

Chloë Keegan

https://orcid.org/
0000-0001-9759-6370

Dr. Chloë Keegan is a Lecturer in the Froebel Department of Primary Education and Early Childhood in Maynooth University. With over a decade of experience in the early childhood sector as a researcher, lecturer, educator, content developer, and early childhood specialist, Chloë's passion lies in conducting qualitative research directly with young children and advocating for children's voices to be heard and reflected in policy and legislation. Her research has explored how power dynamics, educational structures, and shared environments between adults and children shape children's participation through her Doctor in Philosophy (Ph.D) in Education entitled "It's Like a Baby Jail!' The impact of regimented daily routines on children's participation in early childhood education". Chloë has led national and international campaigns and initiatives as an outdoor and nature specialist in early childhood education, contributed to Ireland's alignment with international practices, particularly for outdoor play, policy and provision, and is conducting research to inform national Irish policy and guidance for children and adults with disabilities.

Chee Shien Tan

Victor Tan Chee Shien has over ten years of experience in special education and is a trained counsellor and educational psychologist. He recently received his Associate Fellowship in higher education from the University of Stirling. His research interests include special education, higher education, and international mobility (ORCID: 0009-0006-3403-4649).

INCLUSIVE PLAY: NORM CREATIVE APPROACHES TO TRANSFORM INTEGRATIVE PLAY TO INCLUSIVE PLAY

Deirdre Forde; Sebastian Nemeth; Dean Vaughan; and Georga Dowling

---

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=367#oembed-1

Example Case

This is an example from a Danish school:

"It is a regular school day in a school-class for children between 8 – 9 years old. Thilde, one of the children, has just started in the class, as she moved from another school. After having their lunch, they are all sent out to the playground. Thilde asks her new classroom teacher if she (the teacher) is also joining the class outside. The classroom teacher replies "No, but Helle (another teacher) is outside at the school playground."

Thilde makes it out the door and not that long after, another child approaches the classroom teacher while holding Thilde's hand. Thilde is visibly crying. The classroom teacher asks Thilde "Why are you crying?" and Thilde explains that she couldn't find any adults and it was very noisy outside. The classroom teacher reaches for Thilde's hand and takes her, outside to the playground. Here on the other side of the building, in the shade of canopies, a few of the adults are standing. The classroom teacher explains: "There's always an adult present here." And Thilde nods. Helle, one of the other adults, goes to the playground with Thilde and participates in a free play-activity by the sandpit. The bell rings and Thilde goes back inside.

The next break Thilde is outside again, and she is looking around for an adult. The adults outside have changed to another group and there is no one she recognizes. A few minutes later, one of the children comes into the teacher's room with Thilde, looking for her classroom

teacher. Thilde is crying and the classroom teacher once again shows her where the adults are standing, then tells her, that there's always adults around here, and no one is leaving her alone. Then the classroom teacher leaves Thilde at the playground. After this, Thilde is no longer observed participating in play at the playground, she walks around the corner of the play-area and for a few weeks has little to no interaction with any of the adults."

Initial questions

There are several questions that we pose to unpack what is happening within the scenario above.

1. What is play?
2. What is inclusive play?
3. How might a teacher foster inclusive play?
4. How can we create a culture of inclusion and participation?
5. What are the effects of exclusion from play on children?

Introduction to Topic

Play has been at the heart of children's learning for many years and the learning potential rooted within play in terms of social and cognitive abilities is routinely recognised by scholars and theorists from around the world (Ginsburg, 2007; Hayes, 2013; Hayes & Filipovic, 2018; Moore & Lynch, 2018). Understanding that children have individual needs, views, cultures, and beliefs that deserve to be listened too (UNCRC, 1989), is imperative to ensure children develop positive self-identities (NCCA, 2009).

The notion of inclusion should not be viewed in isolation, but together with autonomy, participation, rights and listening to the voice of children (Clark & Moss, 2005; Lundy, 2007). The concept that knowledge is socially constructed is integral to the notion of a children's rights-informed approach to participation (Lundy & McEvoy, 2012). Children's meaningful and authentic participation is fostered through the implementation of rights-based approaches (Byrne & Lundy, 2019) that are responsive to the increasingly diverse cultural and social worlds we live in (French & McKenna, 2023; O'Toole, Walsh & Kerrins, 2023). Teachers are constantly adapting to the ever-changing landscape of their classroom

and the needs of each diverse group they teach (Brennan, 2012; French & McKenna, 2023). Children learn these skills through a playful environment (Hayes, 2013; Hayes & Filipovic, 2018; NCCA, 2009). Play, and especially inclusive play, is a vehicle to meaningful participation for children (Hayes, 2013).

Key aspects

What is play?

Play is the highest stage of the child's development at this time; for it is a freely active representation of the inner . . . It produces, therefore joy, freedom, satisfaction, repose within and without . . . (Froebel, 1885: 30)

Anthropologists have studied play throughout the centuries and there has been evidence of children telling stories, playing games, and dancing in the most primitive of eras (Flood & Hardy, 2013). Plato was a big believer in the value of children's play and even offered advice to mother's on promoting playful approaches at home (Flood & Hardy, 2013). Plato also believed that the experiences children had in early childhood have a lasting impact on their final development leading into adulthood. Friedrich Wilhelm Froebel and his philosophies have not only contributed to the development of many play-based programmes globally but through his gifts and theoretical workings he exemplifies investigative and experiential play opportunities while maintaining the theme of unity within his philosophy (Bruce et al, 2019). Unity in the sense of play practices that cater for the wide variety of needs within our education settings (Bruce et al, 2019; Froebel, 1885).

Defining Play

There are several definitions and understandings of play. Play has been at the heart of children's learning for years and open to interpretation and scrutiny from many theorists' perspectives (French, 2018; Pyle & Danniels, 2017). Therefore, it is extremely difficult to narrow the philosophy of 'play' into one succinct definition.

Play-based learning has been described as a teaching approach involving playful, child-directed elements along with some degree of adult guidance, and scaffolded learning objectives (Weisberg, Hirsh-Pasek & Golinkoff, 2013). It is moulded in Vygotskian and Froebelian theory where a socialist approach to teaching and learning is encouraged and teachers facilitate new ideas and knowledge within a modelled and purposeful framework of play (Vygotsky, 1987). Rather than offering a universal definition, contemporary literature on play and play-based learning draws on multiple perspectives regarding its complexity (Bubikova-Moan, Hjetland & Wollscheid, 2019), which includes, but is not limited to: play and whether play-based approaches translate into meaningful learning for children (Brooker, Blaise & Edwards, 2014), the content within play and distinguishing between different play types (Vorkapić & Katić, 2015), the importance of role-play (Bonilla-Sánchaz et al., 2022),

the role of the adult during play (Hayes, 2013; Loizou & Loizou, 2022; Pyle & Danniels, 2017), compatible assessments (Pyle & DeLuca, 2017; Pyle et al, 2022) and what we will explore throughout this chapter; inclusive play (Danniels & Pyle, 2022).

For the purpose of this chapter, we are looking at inclusive play through the lens of the classroom and the school community. What does inclusive play look like in the classroom and how can we promote it within our teaching pedagogy?

Inclusive Play

When inclusion is being considered within a classroom there are two main schools of thought: academic inclusion and community inclusion (Goransson & Nilholm, 2014). That is how we, as teachers and educators, support the inclusion of children with diverse needs on an academic level and on a community level. Viewpoints and understandings of this differ greatly within the teaching communities (Danniels & Pyle, 2021). Kruse and Dedering (2018) posit that differing views of the conceptualisation of inclusion leads to the implementation of alternate inclusive teaching strategies. Now, with more and more children with diverse needs attending mainstream school (Gottfried & Kirksey, 2019) teachers need to unpack what their understanding of inclusion means.

Play is espoused as a sacred right of childhood, as a way in which young human beings learn to be happy, mentally healthy human beings (Cannella, 2008). Inclusion refers to the social justice principle that all children, including children with disabilities, belong to the school community and are entitled to share in all the social and academic opportunities a school has to offer (Fleisher & Zames, 2001). An inclusive environment where equality is upheld and diversity respected is fundamental to supporting children to build positive identities, develop a sense of belonging and realise their full potential (DCYA, 2016).

There is a necessity to provide opportunities for all children to thrive through the promotion of positive identities and abilities, the celebration of diversity and difference and the provision of a participative culture and environment (Ministry of Education, 2017; NCCA, 2009). Thus, research shows that it is imperative that play, as a social opportunity afforded to children, underlines the right of every child, regardless of their ability or culture, to participate, in a way which ensures that their sense of identity is affirmed, so that all children can be happy and healthy mentally (Bruce et al, 2019; Flood & Hardy, 2013; French, 2018; Moore & Lynch, 2018). There are three fundamental components that we believe need to be present within an inclusive classroom: a desire to ensure children's rights are upheld (UNCRC, 1989), the need for children's voices and agency to be central to the curriculum (Ministry for Education, 2017; NCCA, 2009) and the culture of the classroom to be one that embodies inclusivity (DCYA, 2016).

Frameworks that support inclusivity in the classroom

A dialogical framework

Throughout this chapter we will dissect different frameworks. We will begin by reviewing inclusive play through the lens of a dialogical framework (Alexander, 2020) while placing children's voices, right, and agency at the centre of their learning (NCCA, 2009; UNCRC, 1989). A dialogic framework utilises the power of talk to allow children and teachers to unpack and make sense of the topic they are discussing (Mercer & Hodgkinson, 2008). Through dialogue and communication, the children are making sense of the world around them (Alexander, 2020; NCCA, 2009) and the teachers are learning how the children understand and disseminate the information (Alexander, 2020). This sparks an interest in learning (Mercer & Hodgkinson, 2008), higher-order thinking (NCCA, 2009), encourages social and emotional skills through democratic engagement (Alexander, 2020) and empowers life-long learning (Mercer & Hodgkinson, 2008). This coupled with the use of a multimodal curriculum allows for jointly constructed knowledge within a classroom setting (Alexander, 2020; Mercer & Hodgkinson, 2008).

Play can be self-directed, child-led, child-centred or guided by an adult, but the critical importance of these approaches is that the child is at the centre of the learning experience (Baker, Le Courtois & Eberhart, 2023). Teaching, especially in early years education has shifted from a traditional didactic form of teaching where the teacher stands at the top of the classroom to a more holistic and inclusive dialogical approach where children's agency is respected and valued (Tovey, 2016). Dialogical perspectives originate from the idea that knowledge can be co-created, ideas developed, and misunderstandings overcome through teacher and student collaboration (Alexander, 2020). Developing this agency in a learning context fosters important attitudes and values towards learning such as motivation and self-regulation (McClelland & Cameron, 2011). Play allows children to experience agency in their learning through "participation, willingness, and endorsement" (Baker, Le Courtois & Eberhart, 2023:373). Learning through a dialogical framework is a playful process where children have agency to be active participants in their learning journey (Hirsh-Pasek & Golinkoff, 2011).

We argue, for the purposes of meaningful inclusion, this dialogical framework needs to be expanded to include the parents/guardians of the children. Their funds of knowledge will allow for a deeper understanding of the needs of their child and could, therefore, enhance the child's learning. We also believe, for the purposes of inclusion, that dialogue could be interpreted as communication. The spoken or written word are not the only vehicles through which children communicate their thoughts and understandings to us (Clark & Moss, 2011). Children also communicate through drawings, facial cues, and expressions. Therefore, for the purposes of this chapter, to conceptualise the concept of 'dialogue' and reframe it to meaning 'communication' would be more inclusive.

The capabilities approach

The capabilities approach highlights people's capabilities and functioning's (Nussbaum and Comim, 2014). It emphasises differences and builds on the understanding that difference is part of human diversity (Reindal, 2009; Reindal, 2016). Difference is not something to ignore, instead it is something to highlight through a capabilities lens. By acknowledging what children are capable of, ensures that strategies can be put in place to support these developing capabilities with human dignity (Unterhalter & Walker, 2007). This allows teachers to provide inclusion within their classroom. By acknowledging capabilities, and using this knowledge to implement strategies, teachers can support inclusion within the classroom. The capabilities approach encourages teachers to look beyond merely the physical capabilities but also uncover the broader holistic diverse needs of the children (van Engelen, 2021). Inclusive play involves children meaningfully participating socially, emotionally, and physically in all activities undertaken within the classroom (van Engelen et al., 2021). The necessity to focus on a broader holistic view of children with diverse needs in play is pivotal for teachers to look beyond the physical environment as the only barrier to inclusive play (van Engelen et al., 2021).

Making play inclusive can provide enhanced opportunities to build upon sensory, motor, language, relationships, coping and emotional skills (Fjøftoft, 2001). Through the exploration of social situations and self-expression children learn to understand the world around them (NCCA, 2009). Ensuring all children are included in these play activities helps children to unpack feelings and emotions and understand social norms (van Engelen et al., 2021), thus encouraging children to connect on an emotional level (French, 2018; Hayes, 2007). When play is made inclusive it encourages a social play culture to exist. The capabilities approach encourages teachers to highlight that social and attitudinal barriers can impact on inclusivity in spaces where physical inclusion exists (Barron et al., 2017). Being aware of these dynamics means that teachers can question the normative culture of their classroom on a structural level (Nussbaum & Comim, 2014).

There are tensions between inclusion strategies and marginalisation strategies and the prevalent strategy tends to be one that is deemed the cultural norm within the school (Berg, 2013). Berg (2013) uncovered another tension when examining teachers' narratives on inclusion. This is the variance between the individual beliefs of teachers and the collective 'agreed' response to inclusion within a school.

According to Nussbaum and Comim (2014), capabilities are the actual possibilities to realise and gain access to functionalities in life. Capabilities within our approach in inclusive play refer to the actualised possibilities for accessing and participating freely and fully in play.

By viewing a child's position through a capabilities lens, helps to identify how the child can be supported through play within the classroom, ensuring that no child becomes marginalised or misdirected from the normative playfield. Not because they are not invited

into play, but perhaps because they do not have access to the capabilities, that are required from the structures formed around the normative playfield.

Children's right to play

The elusive nature of play makes it difficult to conceptualise succinctly (Bonilla-Sánchez et al, 2022; Danniels & Pyle, 2022; Hayes, 2013; Loizou & Loizou, 2022; Pyle & Danniels, 2017; Pyle & DeLuca, 2017; Pyle et al., 2022). What is agreed upon however, is the learning potential rooted within playful approaches in quality educational settings (French, 2023; Hayes, 2013). Even at a young age, children have a pre-dispositioned preparedness to learn (NCCA, 2009) and this cognitive cycle and learning stems from generating knowledge from the world around them and experimenting with various ideas and concepts that allow children to explore their own identity (Tovey, 2016).

Children have a right to play and explore the world around them (Brooker & Woodhead, 2013; Lester & Russell, 2010; Paya Rico & Bantula Janot, 2021). Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the child (UNCRC) states that every child has the right to *"rest, leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts"* (CRA, 2010: 29). Play has transitioned from an informal activity to pass the time to an educational mechanism through which to drive meaningful learning (Tovey, 2016).

There is a direct correlation between Article 31 of the UNCRC, the right to play, and the general comment on the rights of children with diverse needs issued by the United Nations (UN) where it highlights full inclusion and playful approaches as a means of children with disabilities to feel included and respected no matter what the setting (CRA, 2010).

Lundy's (2007) model of participation for conceptualising Article 12 includes four key elements: space, voice, audience, and influence. Bae (2012) posits that to ensure Article 12 is upheld teachers need to provide more than the tokenistic choice for children. Instead, they need to create relationships through deep and meaningful communication strategies for and with the children. She believes that this transparent communication between the teacher and the children will create a "democratic atmosphere that will enhance participation" (Bae, 2012: 66). We argue that this *'transparent communication'* needs to continue to the wider community of the classroom and include the main stakeholders that advocate for the child (their parents/guardians).

We propose that the main outcomes of inclusive play for children are an increase in their autonomy, agency, rights, and participation. Therefore, increasing an inclusive culture within the group, and elevating the sense of belonging, and well-being through peer-to-peer relationships and genuine involvement within a group can support inclusion. Hence, the need for inclusion to be viewed through an academic lens and a community lens are imperative for inclusive teaching strategies to have a genuine impact.

This leads to unravelling another layer of inclusion: children's right *in* play. There is a

plethora of literature relating to children's rights to play and the need for play within an educational setting as a vehicle to enhance learning and meaning making for children (CRA, 2010; Lester & Russell, 2010; Lundy & McEvoy, 2012). However, we argue that for children to have the right to inclusive play the discourse on children's rights *in* play needs to be explored.

Children's rights *in* play

Play is publicised as being an optimal learning context for typically developing children, however, discussions around play and our more diverse learners are progressively negative (Danniels & Pyle, 2021). Some children with more diverse needs may choose to engage in more solitary play and less cooperative play than their peers (Lagerlöf, Wallerstedtand & Pramling, 2022; Olsen et al., 2019). If children do not have the capabilities to engage in more co-operative play, then their right *to* play is still upheld but their right *in* play is not.

Children who exhibit social isolation, may not be as accepted into peer-to-peer friend groups within the classroom (Kasari et al., 2011). Furthermore, children with English as an additional language tend to make fewer friendships in native English classes when not afforded the opportunity to engage *in* playful 'children's talk' (Lagerlöf, Wallerstedtand & Pramling, 2022). The way some children with diverse needs play may differ from a typically developing child and these needs should be noticed, discussed, and utilised as funds of knowledge to further support all children (Barton, 2016; Messier, Ferland & Majnemer, 2008). The capabilities of children to interact, make friends, and socialise with their peers may be hindered due to their diverse needs. Therefore, the opportunity *to* play may be available to them, but their experience *in* play is not inclusive.

They may not understand the concepts of some imaginative play games, they may not be able to comprehend the dialogue within the play scenario they are embarking on. The role of the teacher is imperative here to investigate the capabilities and emergent capabilities of the children and to scaffold them. This scaffolding will encourage the inclusion (not just integration) of children with diverse needs on both an academic and a community level (Goransson & Nilholm, 2014; Olsen et al., 2019). The role of the teacher will be explored later in this chapter.

We advocate that at a classroom and practical level, teachers and educators who consider the rights of children *to* play and*in* play will provide a more inclusive classroom environment.

Factors affecting inclusivity

Social norms and power dynamics *in* play

In examining play through the lens of ableism (capabilities) often social inequalities develop unconsciously and most people have the privilege of benefiting from ableist systems

that have evolved of and for the majority (Goodley, 2014). In the early childhood setting 'friendship play' is positioned as a possibility for everyone (Watson, 2018). Friendship and playing with friends are considered phenomena that naturally take place when children gather. It takes for granted the coming together of children so that play often develops unconsciously as a social opportunity for those who are able (have the capabilities) to participate without any barriers.

Young children actively draw on normalising discourses around their own and others' identities and the homogenous group (Watson, 2018). They adjust their behaviours and observe the behaviour of others around them and can decide whether or not they might be the same (Watson, 2018). According to Watson, sanctioned discourses in the classroom contribute powerfully to the way children come to understand themselves. They also assist them in identifying differences in the classroom.

There are many power relations visible within children's friendship play, this can sometimes go unnoticed, as friendship play is often uninterrupted and seen as 'innocent' (Grieshaber and McArdle, 2010). Power dynamics are often at play as children negotiate where they belong within a group. Leaders will emerge, some more able to take other children's opinions and suggestions on board than others. Children make sense of the world through play and their competencies become visible as they engage in friendship play. Thus, children who are in the normative group are at an advantage and thus friendship play can work to conceal how children use play to position themselves more powerfully, often to the unconscious detriment of others (Watson, 2018).

The role of the educator is extremely important in friendship play to ensure that exclusionary practices do not go unnoticed (Weisberg et al., 2013). The notion of a teacher intervening is often at odds with the concept of children being able to navigate their own play. We totally acknowledge that there is a fine line here. We are not suggesting that teachers dominate friendship play, instead however monitor it to ensure that any unconscious exclusionary practices do not become the norm within the culture of a class.

Children may also need support to join a group and build those peer-to-peer friendships. Teachers can monitor and support those children to enable them to build these emerging competencies through role modelling, and by being their partner in play. When a child is partnered with a teacher, this is seen as a coveted position, and more of his/her peers may be interested in joining in their play then. This elevates the image of the child, builds social connections and enhances inclusivity in play (NCCA, 2009).

The social, emotional, and physical environments influence inclusivity within play

Inclusive classrooms have demonstrated positive learning outcomes for children, including high levels of academic performance, social skills, language competency, and a greater acceptance towards children with diverse needs (McDonnell & Hunt, 2014). However, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, typically developing children and more diverse learners

have different needs that must be met (Watson, 2018). The social and physical environment of the play area have been highlighted as influential factors in catering for a more inclusive environment. It is important that although play areas are typically created with developing children in mind, consideration must be given to these aspects to promote inclusion within the classroom (Danniels & Pyle, 2022). The physical mobility and accessibility of all students is imperative. Access to all learning materials and areas within the room is a primary concern, from a physical aspect. However, if the social and emotional environment is not inclusive and meeting the needs of the children, accessibility is immaterial. This is evident in the example at the beginning of the chapter.

Thilde had access to the playground, but she did not engage in play within the playground environment. That is why it is so important to review the social and emotional aspects of the environment before the physical one. If the other elements are not there then inclusion may not exist at all.

Before creating a space for inclusive play to flourish, we must consider how we are going to first create a culture of participation that is crucial in the implementation of inclusive play (Casey, 2010). Practitioners of play can create vibrant playful environments that are visually stunning and encompass key learning centres for play to happen. However, we must always consider the needs of individual children in our settings.

Teachers' skills, knowledge, attitude, and understanding of inclusive play environments

The landscape of classrooms has altered dramatically since the 1990's, as discourses, policies and social attitudes changed and the inclusion of students with additional needs in education began. A number of key events accelerated these discourses: the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (UNESCO, 1994) which encouraged governments to review how they respond to the diverse needs of students; the Education for All movement (UN, 2000) as it attempted to overcome inequalities within the educational systems, and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN, 2006) as it recognised the rights of all children to be included and receive the individual support they may require throughout their education. These not only altered the landscape of the classroom but also the competencies, skills, and knowledge that teachers needed to ensure their diverse students progressed within their classes. The notion of inclusive play as a vehicle to achieve the necessary learning outcomes for their students became well documented (Grieshaber & McArdle, 2010).

The European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education specifies that teachers not only need to have the appropriate understanding, knowledge and skill set, but they also need to have certain values and attitudes to effectively work within inclusive settings (Borg et al., 2011). Also, the diverse range of students' needs alter year on year. Thus, teacher training is still evolving to incorporate new skills and competencies that teachers need to succeed in the ever-changing diverse environment.

We posit that there are several elements that inclusive environments require to ensure they thrive. These include teachers who are willing to embrace collegiality and collaboration to enhance their knowledge and understanding of diverse learning abilities, nurture an inclusive school culture, and a willingness to reflect on and review our biases to ensure they are grounded in research.

Embrace collegiality and collaboration to enhance their knowledge and understanding of diverse learning abilities:

The word collaboration has its origin in "colabre or co-labor," which refers to working together (Welch, 1998: 121). That notion of pooling resources together among professionals who have shared values and where a positive interdependence exists allows for inclusive learning environments (Snell, Janney and Elliot, 2005).

Nurture an inclusive school culture:

A school culture is a set of collective understandings (Carrington & Elkins, 2002), based on shared values (Noddings, 1992), with a common goal (Welch, 1998). A school culture that also embodies inclusivity ensures that biases are unpacked ethically (Palaiologou, 2014), diversity is celebrated (Kruse & Dedering, 2018), and collegiality and collaboration are inclusive and valued (Carrington & Elkins, 2002).

Why inclusion is so important

When inclusive strategies are not enforced the negative outcomes can be detrimental to all children. Therefore, inclusive strategies promote a positive self-image for all children and increase the self-efficacy for all children (Carrington & Elkins, 2002; Noddings, 1992). It creates a community that accepts and celebrates differences and ensures that developing and emergent capabilities are scaffolded (van Engelen et al., 2021). Noticing and acknowledging the signs of stress and anxiety in children is imperative to supporting them to accomplish a task they are concerned about. Children learn at an early age how to attract the attention of an adult. This tends to involve loud noises or gestures, signalling the need for support. However, stress and anxiety are not always visible through these gestures (French, 2018). Ensuring that children can self-express, and if they remain in control this does not hold less value or not get a response from teachers.

If Thilde, in our example at the beginning, had been expressing herself and her experience with abandonment through crying it would garner the attention of a teacher. This is a response that needs to be dealt with as it is challenging the normative play. However, in this scenario Thilde does not respond in that manner but she is in a position of stress and anxiety. However, it is not disturbing the normative play scenario and Thilde does not get any support to help her bridge the gap to socially participate within the play scenarios in the playground.

Thilde has no practice with these social norms, and she is not given any 'training wheels' or support to help her develop these capabilities.

Putting on the training wheels

For a more inclusive play environment to exist, and for children to step into the field of play confidently and competently, we argue that there might be an incentive to put on the '*training wheels,*' and design didactical and pedagogical approaches towards play-competence. As the teacher creates a safe community (Lundy, 2007) and co-constructs a culture with the children, important relationships are formed (French, 2018; Hayes, 2007). This allows the teacher the perspective of resonating with the child and encouraging them to experience a connection with the world around them, by putting themselves into or stepping into the world around them (Pope, 2017). Those steps resonate with the field the person wishes to practice, transforming both the field as well as the person's experience and skills in some way. These steps into play require engagement from the teacher who is teaching the child, but it also requires a spark, an engagement, a willingness to resonate with the rest of the playgroup from the child's perspective (Baker, 2018). If the child sees no way into this culture or if they cannot mirror themselves even slightly within the activity at hand, the educator's planning failed to create that spark.

Prior to the child putting on the training wheels there is a requirement that there is trust and safety between the child and the teacher. The experience, and reflection on the experience, is dependent on both the trust between the teacher and the child and also the trust the child has in his/her owns experience. Once this trusting collegial and honest community is established the continuity of this becomes central for inclusion to thrive and competency levels to increase.

Didactic and pedagogical strategies towards creating environments where inclusive play can thrive

Teacher Observation and Reflection as a vehicle to creating inclusive play environments

To create a collaborative and inclusive play environment we must first observe children at play. A distinctive feature of observations is the ability to obtain 'live' data on the spot, so teachers are not trying to remind themselves what had happened after the event occurred (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). The ability to observe and reflect on the observations is a skill all teachers need to acquire. Through observation teachers can create a holistic view of the child's habits, social interactions, needs and capabilities, to inform a collaborative, collegial, transparent, dialogue between the whole team of teachers, outside agencies, parents, and the children themselves (Conn, 2014).

This skill allows teachers to pause and process their observations. Through reflection teachers can theorise and create strategies, environments, and play scenarios to support competencies recognised and scaffold emergent competencies (Moon, 2006).

This can only happen when teachers are frequently acting on their observations and

amending the play environment in a meaningful way to suit the children. Creating a classroom environment that is fluid and changes to suit the needs of the child allows their voices and interests to be visible within their classroom. Applying these simple strategies of observation and reflection ensures our practice is informed by 'live' data that creates positive play scenarios for children and ensures their competencies are central to the environments they play in.

Accessing children's voices to inform inclusivity within the classroom

For the purposes of inclusive play, we propose that two participation models be used in conjunction with one another to improve inclusivity within the classroom: Lundy's model of participation (Lundy, 2007) and Clark and Moss's mosaic approach (2005).

Lundy's (2007) model provides a way of conceptualising a child's right to participation, as laid down in Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989). Lundy explores participation through four lenses that have a rational chronological order: space, voice, audience, and influence.

Figure 1: Lundy's Model of Participation (2007).
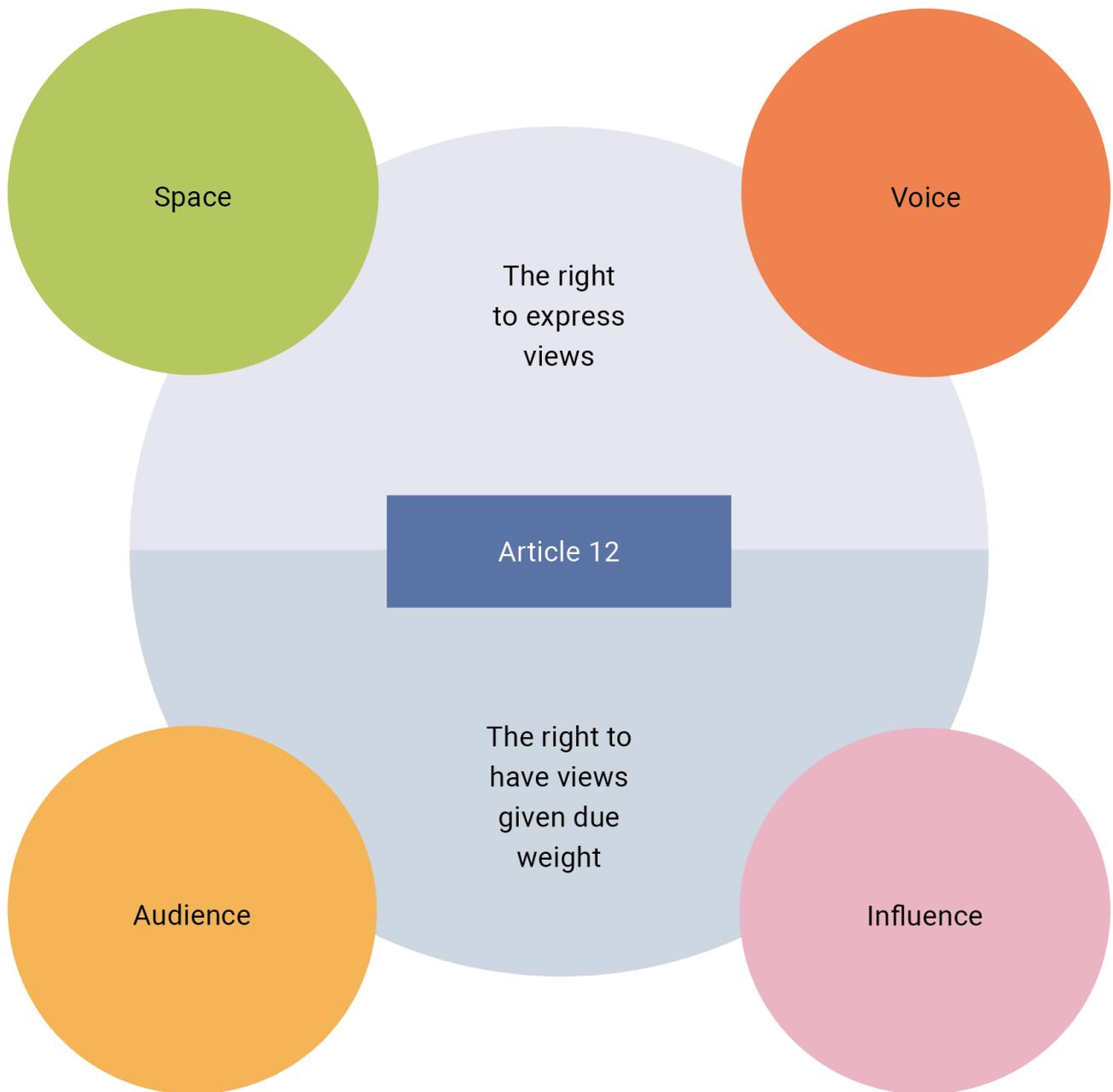
Source: Lundy (2007)

Here she is proposing that teachers give children safe, inclusive opportunities to form and express their views and opinions. This 'space' allows their opinions to be formed. Children then must be facilitated to express these views. The children's 'voice' needs to be heard. These opinions and views then need to be listened to. This is where the 'audience' (the teachers) listen to these views. Then, finally the views and opinions must influence change.

The 'space' is created to form opinions. Then the 'voices' of the children are accessed. The 'audience' listens with a view to allowing change in practice to occur. The opinions of the children 'influence' changes in practice (Lundy, 2007).

Clark and Moss's (2005) mosaic approach fits nicely into Lundy's (2007) accessing the voices of children section.

Figure 2: A depiction of Clark and Moss's Mosaic Approach (2005).
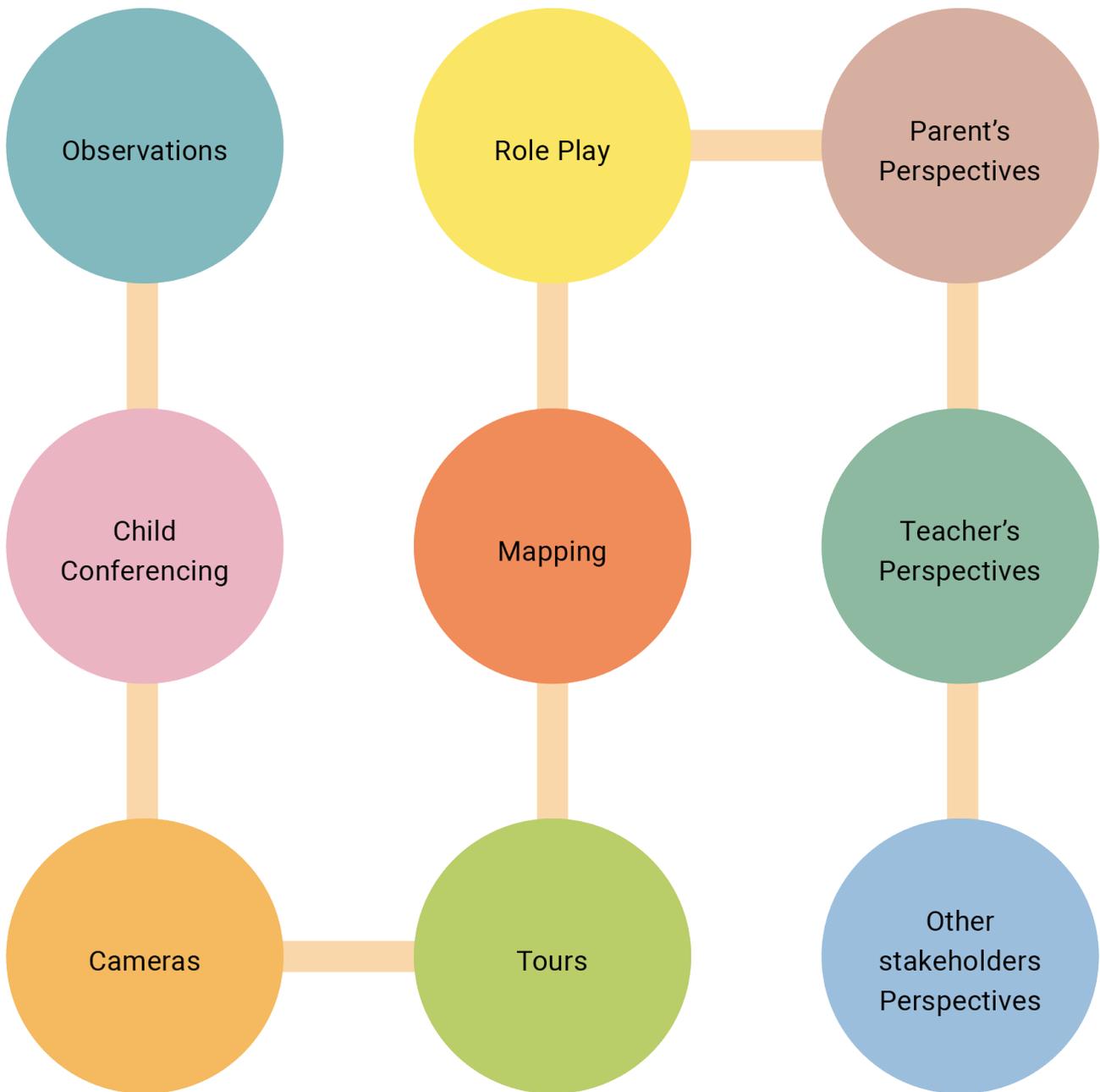
Source: Clark and Moss (2005)

Clark and Moss (2005) use multiple mediums to access children's voices. We discussed earlier in their chapter about broadening the term 'dialogue' to include other forms of communication. This Mosaic approach fits directly into this concept.

Observations are used, as mentioned earlier in this chapter. Child conferencing is gathering a small number of children together to talk to them about a particular topic. There are some key points to note: a place that is familiar to the children will ensure they are relaxed, there are some strategies that can be used to ensure all voices are heard (the use of a puppet, ask each child a different question), and where possible record it so that it can be used as a reflection tool (Clark & Moss, 2005).

Using cameras as a tool to access children's voices explores giving the children cameras and asking them to take photos of (whatever the topic you want to explore), for example,

'What do you like playing with in the classroom?' Then you can use the photos as a tool of reflection and dialogue with the children (Clark & Moss, 2005).

By creating role play scenarios for the children this allows them to act out real-life experiences. This encourages problem solving and higher order thinking and creates a safe space for children to give their opinions and feelings about a situation (Clark & Moss, 2005).

Tours and mapping both afford children the opportunity to express their thoughts and opinions through art and drawing. Children can go on a 'tour' of their room or their school or community and take pictures or draw areas that mean something to them. The children can create a 'map' of something using their drawings or photographs they took to express their opinion about an area in the room or how they feel in a space. Drawing can be considered as being in the same field of expression as play and speech (Bland, 2012). Children can learn to communicate through drawing, build a sense of trust, and develop fundamental skills for learning which help them feel included (Anning & Ring, 2004). This can be an important tool for those children who have limited or poor language skills as it is inviting and draws on the emotional side of a child's wellbeing (Pope, 2017). Children can use drawings as a map through which to build on their own narratives of what is included in their drawings. In essence, it serves as a medium for emotion, where words, thoughts, and opinions can be expressed in a way other than words.

Clark and Moss (2005) also discuss reviewing parents, teachers, and other stakeholders' perspectives. We discussed the importance of this open, honest, collegial, relationship earlier in this chapter and the relevance of the 'funds of knowledge' (Velez-Ibanes & Greenberg, 1992) that all parties can bring to ensure that a holistic image of the children is established.

We propose that the integration of these strategies into a classroom environment increases children's rights, autonomy, and participation. It creates a framework for inclusive play and inclusive learning to exist.

Reflecting on our original example at the beginning of the chapter:

If these frameworks were explored with Thilde the teachers could gain valuable insights from Thilde about how she felt in the outdoor yard during play time. This information could inform their actions and would have afforded them the opportunity to support Thilde to have a more inclusive experience in the outside play spaces in the school. This would also support the teachers to highlight some of her capabilities and work on supporting her emergent capabilities.

Implementing the capabilities approach within a classroom

In our opinion, the capabilities approach can be used as a framework to support inclusion in play within the classroom. It is rights-based, holds the dignity of the child as a cornerstone and values difference.

Information gathering and relationship building:

To utilise the capabilities approach through a communicative framework within a classroom the starting point would be collaborative, transparent dialogues between the teacher and the parents/guardians. These reciprocally respectful conversations would be a vehicle to share relevant information for the good of the child. This becomes the foundation of a meaningful relationship, where the rights and dignity of the child are at the centre. Then the teacher would use a multimodal technique to gather information about the capabilities and needs of the child, with the child. This can be done through the use of the mosaic approach (Clark & Moss, 2005) and Lundy's model of participation (2007). Collaboration with other professionals and colleagues would further enhance the knowledge base and ensure a holistic view of the child was used to inform inclusive strategies.

Capabilities of the child:

When the information is gathered, a holistic picture of the child is visible to the teachers. A child's developing capabilities can be used to support inclusion into peer groups and meaningful play.

Supports to be put in place:

Support systems to ensure capabilities are utilised and can be put in place.

Reflect and review:

Remembering that this is a snapshot in time and these capabilities may be developing capabilities and may alter over time. New supports will be necessary as the supports in place work.

The role of the teacher

The importance of questioning the 'norm'

Within this chapter we have used the word '*normative*' frequently. We discussed normative playing fields, and normative culture. We looked at inclusive play through a '*normative*' lens to unpack what this looks like for more diverse learners. We argue that a major role of the teacher is to question '*normative*' ways of doing, thinking and being. We argue that by questioning the 'norm' teachers are saying they are willing to change and alter their practices. Reviewing Lundy's model (2007) suggests the audience needs to want change to occur for the child's '*voice*' to '*influence*' their learning environment. Therefore, an important role of the teacher is to question '*normative*' practices and advocate for change. We posit that the ability to constantly alter our environment, practices, and approaches to suit the needs of our ever-changing diverse students is paramount to the composition of a good teacher.

When we reflect on our example at the beginning of the chapter, we saw Thilde putting her faith in the teacher's ability to alter '*normative*' practice. We saw the negative impact it had on Thilde when the teacher did not do this. Thilde was creating her own '*space*', for her '*voice*' to be heard, then Thilde's '*audience*' did not listen and therefore her voice did not

'*influence*' change. This meant that Thilde's experience in the yard was not one of inclusion and the teachers missed an opportunity to support inclusive play.

Another important point is that for Thilde, in this example, to find help required that she had the capability of even asking for help when expressing her position of stress. Thilde found a way to voice her concern, in part through another, possiblymore communicative child, but her concerns were not met directly. Thilde was expressing that her developing or emerging capabilities were not strong enough yet and she needed help to step into this '*normative*' playground. Had the Lundy model and the mosaic approach been used here in conjunction with the capabilities approach then these developing capabilities would have been acknowledged, and strategies could have been put in place.

Finally, this throws up another nuance that we discussed at length within this chapter. Teachers' attitude to play and what their role is within play. We discussed the difference between children's rights *to* play and children's rights *in* play and how the role of the teacher becomes one of observer, facilitator, and sometimes a participant of play with the children to ensure that children's rights *in* play are met.

In the example at the beginning of this chapter the teachers stood separately in a particular spot in the yard. They did not engage in play with the children and did not step in to support play with the children. It would be fair to assume that their view of their role was within a supervisory capacity. The children's rights *in* play were not reviewed nor did they appear to be a concern for them. Therefore, we argue that for teachers to support children's rights *in* play they need to review their position and impact on play. The value of play should be paramount for teachers to ensure they support these rights for children.

Had the teacher's questioned this '*normative*' role within the playground then the lack of inclusive play could have been addressed and Thilde's experience in the yard may have altered dramatically. Play as a position to explore the normative, to challenge what the child already knows and to push boundaries, values, and practice as an attempt to work into and reproduce the normative is an important part of the role of a teacher. Sommer et al (2020) argue that the kind of pedagogy that favours guiding children's imaginative play and negotiating while playing, in kindergarten helps them to step into the school system, and in this chapter the argument is, that this kind of play encourages the children to practice social skills. This also supports children within primary school to include each other and gain access to a broader collection of social capabilities (Sommer et al., 2020).

The reconceptualisation of the role of the teacher

As teachers we have an innate desire to help children learn. To learn through exploration, reflection and presenting broad horizons. To learn math, languages, and science; why the world is the way it is, to learn about morals and ethics. However, for children to learn there needs to be a trusting and collegial relationship between them and the teachers in their class.

Therefore, we posit that we as teachers implement the strategies put forward in this

chapter to encompass inclusive play into our practice and to reinforce play as both a formal and informal learning possibility acknowledging the capabilities, and developing capabilities, of each child.

We believe the conceptualisation of the role of the teacher should be viewed through four lenses:

- The lens of an entrepreneur. The entrepreneur is constantly questioning the 'norm' by consistently creating and recreating new ideas, practices, and methods of doing things.
- The lens of a detective, constantly observing and working out the children's capabilities and competencies. A detective who questions the experiences of every child in every play scenario, accessing their voices and identifies clues to highlight participation, inclusion whilst recognising marginalisation and exclusion.
- The lens of a coach who values the structure and elements of inclusive play. A coach who is willing to participate in play, to ensure that children's rights *to* play and *in* play are met. A coach who encourages relationships between social skills and play skills, in a safe and trusting environment to elevate all children's capabilities to encourage participation in all activities.
- The lens of an active participant. Looking at a classroom as an active participant instead of a facilitator allows you to see the classroom as the children see it. By being an active participant, it allows you to co-construct a play culture, participate in play scenarios, and therefore co-create the values of inclusive play within the classroom. Active participants can encourage all voices to be heard, to be valued and to influence change.

Local contexts

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=367#h5p-15

Closing questions to discuss or tasks

Reviewing the example at the beginning of the chapter. How do you think you would answer the following questions?

- By implementing the capabilities approach in our example above with Thilde heading out to the classroom what would you have done differently?
- What do you think her capabilities were?
- What supports do you think she needed to scaffold her integration into play in the yard?

Reviewing your practice and pedagogy:

- What methods would you use to access your students' voices through the mosaic approach?
- How would you implement Lundy's model of participation within your classroom?
- How would you ascertain your students' capabilities?

Creating a collegial and inclusive culture in the classroom:

- What is your view of inclusive play?
- How do you value inclusive play?
- What 'normative' behaviour could you question within your school?
- How could you bring other teachers on this journey with you?

Inclusive play and your part in it:

- What is your understanding of inclusive play?
- How can you participate in play to ensure your student's rights *to* play and their rights *in* play are met?

Literature

Alexander, R. *A Dialogic Teaching Companion*. Routledge: Taylor and Francis Group, 2020.

Alliance (CRA), Children's Rights. "The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child," 2010.

Anning, A., and K. Ring. *Making Sense of Children's Drawings*. Open University Press: New York and England, 2004.

Bae, B. "Children and Teachers as Partners in Communication: Focus on Spacious and Narrow Interactional Patterns." *International Journal of Early Childhood* 44, no. 1 (2012): 53–69.

Baker, M. "Playing, Talking, Co-Constructing: Exemplary Teaching for Young Dual Language Learners Across Program Types." *Early Childhood Education Journal* 47 (2018): 115–30.

Baker, S. T., S. Le Courtois, and J. Eberhart. "Making Space for Children's Agency with Playful Learning." *International Journal of Early Years Education* 31, no. 2 (2023): 372–84.

Barron, C., A. Beckett, M. Coussens, A. Desoete, N. Cannon Jones, H. Lynch, M. Prellwitz, and D. Fenney Salkeld. "Barriers to Play for Children and Young Persons with Disabilities." *DeGruyther Open*, 2017.

Barton, E. E. "Critical Issues and Promising Practices for Teaching Play to Young Children with Disabilities." In *Handbook of Early Childhood Special Education*, edited by Brian Reichow Brian A. Boyd, Erin E. Barton and Samuel L. Odom, 267–86. Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2016.

Berg, K. "Teachers' Narratives on Professional Identities and Inclusive Education." *Nordic Studies in Education* 33, no. 4 (2013): 269–83.

Bland, D. "Analysing Children's Drawings: Applied Imagination." *International Journal of Research & Method in Education* 35, no. 3 (2012): 235–42.

Bonilla-Sánchez, M. D. R., M. A. García-Flores, I. Méndez-Balbuena, J. G. Silva-González, and E. V. Ramírez-Arroyo. "The Benefits of Role Play in the Development of Drawing in Preschool Children." *Frontier Psychology*, 2022.

Borg, G., J. Hunter, B. Sigurjonsdottir, and S. D'Alessio. *Key Principles for Promoting Quality in Inclusive Education*. Brussels, Belgium: European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2011.

Brennan, C. "Learning to Play and Playing to Learn." In *Early Childhood Education and Care*, edited by M. Mhic Mhathuna and M. Taylor, 161–67. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 2012.

Brooker, L., M. Blaise, and S. Edwards. *SAGE Handbook of Play and Learning in Early Childhood*. SAGE Publications Limited: Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore, Washington DC, 2014.

Brooker, L., and M. Woodhead. *The Right to Play (Volume 9)*. The Open University with the Support of Bernard Van Leer Foundation, 2013.

Bruce, T., P. Elfer, S. Powell, and L. Werth. *The Routledge International Handbook of Froebel and Early Childhood Practice: Re-Articulating Research and Policy*. Routledge; Taylor and Francis Group: London and New York, 2019.

Bubikova-Moan, J., H. N. Hjetland, and S. Wollscheid. "ECE Teachers' Views on Play-Based Learning: A Systematic Review." *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal* 27, no. 6 (2019): 776–800.

Byrne, B., and L. Lundy. "Children's Rights-Based Childhood Policy: A Six-P Framework." *The International Journal of Human Rights* 23, no. 3 (2019): 357–73.

Cannella, G. S. *Deconstructing Early Childhood Education: Social Justice and Revolution*. Peter Lang Publishing: New York, 2008.

Carrington, S., and J. Elkins. "Comparison of a Traditional and an Inclusive Secondary School Culture." *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 6, no. 1 (2002): 1–16.

Casey, T. *Inclusive Play: Practical Strategies for Children from Birth to Eight*. Sage Publications, Limited, 2010.

Child (UNCRC), United Nations Convention on the Rights of the. "United Nations Rights of the Child," 1989.

Children, Department of, and Youth Affairs (DCYA). *Access and Inclusion Model (AIM)*. Dublin: Government Publications, 2016.

Clark, A., and P. Moss. *Listening to Young Children: The Mosaic Approach*. 2nd ed. Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2011.

———. *Spaces to Play: More Listening to Young Children Using the Mosaic Approach*. National Children's Bureau. Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2005.

Conn, C. *Autism and the Social World of Childhood: A Sociocultural Perspective on Theory and Practice*. Routledge: London and New York, 2014.

Curriculum, National Council of, and Assessment (NCCA). "Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework." Dublin: NCCA, 2009.

Danniels, E., and A. Pyle. "Inclusive Play-Based Learning: Approaches from Enacting Teachers." *Early Childhood Education Journal* 51 (2022): 1169–79.

———. "Promoting Inclusion in Play for Students with Developmental Disabilities: Kindergarten Teachers' Perspectives." *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 2021.

Education, Ministry of. "Te Whāriki Early Childhood Curriculum." Crown: New Zealand, 2017.

Fjøftoft, I. "The Natural Environment as a Playground for Children: The Impact of Outdoor Play Activities in Pre-Primary School Children." *Early Childhood Education Journal* 29, no. 2 (2001): 111–17.

Fleisher, D. Z., and F. Zames. *The Disability Rights Movement: From Charity to Confrontation*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001.

Flood, E., and C. Hardy. *Early Childhood Education & Play*. Dublin, Ireland: Gill and McMillan Limited, 2013.

French, G. *The Time of Their Lives: Nurturing Babies' Learning and Development in Early Childhood Settings*. Ireland: Barnardos, 2018.

French, G., and G. McKenna. "Literature Review to Support the Updating of Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework." NCCA: Ireland, 2022.

Froebel, F. *The Education of Man*. Boston: J. S. Cushing and Co., 1885.

Ginsburg, K. R. "The Importance of Play in Promoting Healthy Child Development and Maintaining Strong Parent-Child Bonds." *American Academy of Pediatrics* 119, no. 1 (2007): 182–91.

Goodley, D. *Dis/Ability Studies: Theorising Disablism and Ableism*. New York and London: Routledge, 2014.

Göransson, K., and S. Nilholm. "Conceptual Diversities and Empirical Shortcomings – A Critical Analysis of Research on Inclusive Education." *European Journal of Special Needs Education* 29, no. 3 (2014): 265–80.

Gottfried, M. A., and J. J. Kirksey. "General Education Teachers' Math Instructional Practices in Kindergarten Classrooms with and Without Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities." *Teaching and Teacher Education* 77 (2019): 309–20.

Grieshaber, S., and F. McArdle. *The Trouble with Play*. New York and London: Open University Press, 2010.

Hayes, N. *Early Years Practice, Getting It Right From The Start*. Dublin: Gill Education, 2013.

———. "Perspectives on the Relationship Between Education and Care in Early Childhood." Dublin: National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2007.

Hayes, N., and K. Filipovic. "Nurturing 'Buds of Development': From Outcomes to Opportunities in Early Childhood Practice." *International Journal of Early Years Education* 26, no. 3 (2018): 220–32.

Hirsh-Pasek, K., and R. M. Golinkoff. "The Great Balancing Act: Optimizing Core Curricula Through Playful Pedagogy." In *The Pre-K Debates: Current Controversies & Issues*, edited by Walter S. Zigler Edward, Gilliam and W. Steven Barnett, 110–16. Baltimore, MD: Brookes Publishing Co., 2011.

Kasari, A., C., Locke, J., Gulsrud, and E. Rotherham-Fuller. "Social Networks and Friendships at School: Comparing Children With and Without ASD." *Journal on Autism Development Disorder* 41 (2011): 533–44.

Kruse, S., and K. Dedering. "The Idea of Inclusion: Conceptual and Empirical Diversities in Germany." *Improving Schools* 21, no. 1 (2018): 19–31.

Lagerlöf, C., P., Wallerstedt, and N. Pramling. "Participation and Responsiveness: Children's Rights in Play from the Perspective of Play-Responsive Early Childhood Education and Care and the UNCRC." *Oxford Review of Education* 49, no. 5 (2022): 698–712.

Lester, S., and W. Russell. "Children's Right to Play: An Examination of the Importance of Play in the Lives of Children Worldwide." The Hague, The Netherlands: Bernard van Leer Foundation, 2010.

Loizou, E., and E.K. Loizou. "Creative Play and the Role of the Teacher Through the Cultural-Historical Activity Theory Framework." *International Journal of Early Years Education* 30, no. 3 (2022): 527–41.

Lundy, L. "'Voice' Is Not Enough: Conceptualising Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child." *British Educational Research Journal* 33, no. 6 (2007): 927–42.

Lundy, L., and L. McEvoy. "Children's Rights and Research Processes: Assisting Children to (In)Formed Views." *Childhood* 19, no. 1 (2012): 129–44.

McClelland, M. M., and C. E. Cameron. "Self-Regulation and Academic Achievement in Elementary School Children." In *Thriving in Childhood and Adolescence: The Role of Self-Regulation Processes*, edited by Lerner R. M., Lerner, J. V., Bowers, E. P., Lewin-Bizan, S., Gestsdottir, S. and J. B. Urban, 133:29–44. New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development. Jossey-Bass: Wiley, 2011.

McDonnell, J., and P. Hunt. "Inclusive Education and Meaningful School Outcomes." In *Equity and Full Participation for Individuals with Severe Disabilities: A Vision for the Future*, 155–76, 2014.

Mercer, N., and S. Hodgkinson. *Exploring Talk in School: Inspired by the Work of Douglas Barnes*. 1st ed. London: SAGE Publications Limited, 2008.

Merriam, S. B., and R. S. Grenier. *Qualitative Research in Practice: Examples for Discussion*

and Analysis. 2nd ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass: A Wiley Brand, 2019.

Messier, F., J., Ferland, and A. Majnemer. "Play Behavior of School Age Children with Intellectual Disability: Their Capacities, Interests and Attitude." *Journal of Developmental and Physical Disabilities* 20, no. 2 (2008): 193–207.

Moon, J. A. *Learning Journals: A Handbook for Reflective Practice and Professional Development*. 2nd ed. New York and Canada: Routledge, 2006.

Moore, A., and H. Lynch. "Understanding a Child's Conceptualisation of Wellbeing Through an Exploration of Happiness: The Centrality of Play, People, and Place." *Journal of Occupational Science* 25, no. 1 (2018): 124–41.

Nations (UN), United. "Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities," 2006.

———. "World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal, 26 – 28 April to Boost Drive for Education for All," 2000.

Noddings, N. *The Challenge to Care in Schools: An Alternative Approach to Education*. New York: Teachers College Press, 1992.

Nussbaum, M.C., and C. Flavio. *Capabilities, Gender, Equality: Towards Fundamental Entitlements*. Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Olsen, K., Croydon, A., Olson, M., Jacobsen, K.H., and E. Pellicano. "Mapping Inclusion of a Child with Autism in a Mainstream Kindergarten: How Can We Move Towards More Inclusive Practices?" *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 23, no. 6 (2019): 624–38.

O'Toole, L., Walsh, G., and L. Kerrins. "A Consultation with Babies, Toddlers and Young Children to Inform the Updating of Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework (NCCA, 2009)." National Council for Curriculum and Assessment: Ireland, 2023.

Palaiologou, I. "'Do We Hear What Children Want to Say?' Ethical Praxis When Choosing Research Tools with Children under Five." *Early Child Development and Care* 184, no. 5 (2014): 689–705.

Paya Rico, A., and J. Bantula Janot. "Children's Right to Play and Its Implementation: A Comparative, International Perspective." *Journal of New Approaches in Educational Research* 10, no. 2 (2021): 279–94.

Pope, J. "Beyond Basic 'Minding': Adopting Ecological, Evidence-Based Approach to Promoting Children's Well-Being and Developing Child Health Advocacy with Early Childhood Undergraduate Students." *Children's Research Digest* 4, no. 2 (2017).

Pyle, A., and E. Danniels. "A Continuum of Play-Based Learning: The Role of the Teacher in Play-Based Pedagogy and the Fear of Hijacking." *Early Education and Development* 28, no. 3 (2017): 274–89.

Pyle, A., and C. De Luca. "Assessment in Play-Based Kindergarten Classrooms: An Empirical Study of Teacher Perspectives and Practices." *The Journal of Educational Research* 110, no. 5 (2017): 457–66.

Pyle, A., DeLuca, C., Wickstrom, H., and E. Danniels. "Connecting Kindergarten Teachers' Play-Based Learning Profiles and Their Assessment Practices." *Teaching and Teacher Education* 119 (2022).

Reindal, A. M. "Discussing Inclusive Education: An Inquiry into Different Interpretations and a Search for Ethical Aspects of Inclusion Using the Capabilities Approach." *European Journal of Special Needs Education* 31, no. 1 (2016): 1–12.

Reindal, S. M. "Disability, Capability, and Special Education: Towards a Capability-Based Theory." *European Journal of Special Needs Education* 24, no. 2 (2009): 155–68.

Snell, M. E., and R. Janney. *Collaborative Teaming*. 2nd ed. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., 2005.

Sommer, T. E., Tighe, L. A., Sabole, T. J., Chor, E., Chase-Lansdale, P. L., Yoshikawa, H., Brooks-Gunn, J., Morris, A. S., and C. T. King. "The Effects of a Two-Generation English as a Second Language (ESL) Intervention on Immigrant Parents and Children in Head Start." *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 52, no. 3 (2020): 63–73.

Tovey, H. *Bringing the Froebel Approach to Your Early Years Practice*. 2nd ed. London and New York: Routledge, 2016.

United Nations Educational, Scientific, Cultural Organization Ministry of Education, and Science (UNESCO). "The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education, World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and Quality," 1994.

Unterhalter, E., and M. Walker. *Amartya Sen's Capability Approach and Social Justice in Education*. New York and England: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007.

Van Engelen, L., Ebbers, M., Boonzaaijer, M., Bolster, E. A. M., van der Put, E. A. H., and A. T. Bloemen. "Barriers, Facilitators and Solutions for Active Inclusive Play for Children with a Physical Disability in the Netherlands: A Qualitative Study." *BMC Pediatrics* 21, no. 1 (2021): 1–13.

Velez-Ibanez, C. G., and J. B. Greenberg. "Formation and Transformation of Funds of Knowledge Among U.S.-Mexican Households." *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 23, no. 4 (1992): 313–35.

Vorkapić, S. T., and V. Katić. "How Students of Preschool Education Perceive Their Play Competences – An Analysis of Their Involvement in Children's Play." *CEPS Journal* 5, no. 1 (2015): 111–30.

Vygotsky, L. S. *The Development of Scientific Concepts in Childhood*. Edited by R. W. Rieber and A. S. Carton. Translated by N. Minick. Vol. 1. The Collected Works of L.S. Vygotsky. New York: Plenum Press, 1987.

Watson, K. "Disrupting Friendship Play Discourses in Inclusive Early Childhood Education." *Contemporary Issues in Early Education* 20, no. 3 (2018): 253–64.

Weisberg, D. S., Hirsh-Pasek, K., and R. M. Golinkoff. "Guided Play: Where Curricular Goals Meet a Playful Pedagogy." *Mind, Brain, and Education* 7, no. 2 (2013): 75–150.

Weisberg, D. S., Zosh, J. M., Hirsh-Pasek, K., and R. M. Golinkoff. "Talking It Up: Play, Language Development, and the Role of Adult Support." *American Journal of Play* 6 (2013): 39–54.

Welch, M. "Collaboration: Staying on the Bandwagon." *Journal of Teacher Education* 49, no. 1 (1998): 26–37.

About the authors

Deirdre Forde

Dr. Deirdre Forde is a distinguished lecturer in Inclusive Education at Maynooth University. With a background as a qualified primary teacher and a chartered child and educational psychologist, she brings extensive experience from various educational settings and psychological services to her role. Deirdre's research and teaching interests are diverse and encompass areas such as disability and the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion within educational and societal contexts. She is particularly passionate about amplifying children's voices, advancing relational education, and shaping policies related to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI). Her work is dedicated to fostering inclusive environments that acknowledge and celebrate diversity.

Sebastian Nemeth

Sebastian Nemeth teaches social education at VIA University College in Denmark. With a specialization in the philosophy of social education, he is actively involved in the Research Centre for Management, Organisation, and Social Sciences. Sebastian's work focuses on norm-critical perspectives in youth pedagogy, demonstrating his passion for exploring and addressing issues of diversity and inclusion. Beyond his academic pursuits, he enjoys engaging in creative projects and sharing his insights through various publications and podcasts, he has been involved with the LGBT+ in Denmark and is reward-winning for creating safe and meaningful spaces for youths and women in boardgame and roleplay communities across Denmark.

Dean Vaughan

Dean Vaughan is an experienced primary school teacher in Ireland. He holds a Bachelor of Education, Master of Education and Postgraduate Diploma in Leadership & Management. Dean has spent most of his teaching career in the infant classroom where he is passionate about playful approaches to teaching and learning and works closely with student teachers as a research supervisor and part time lecturer in teaching training colleges. Throughout his M.Ed, he recognised a communication for all approach which focused on inclusive practices through Play in the classroom.

Georga Dowling

Georga Dowling is a Lecturer in Early Childhood Education in the Froebel Department in Maynooth University, Ireland and an experienced practising Early Childhood Educator. Her research interests include accessing the voices of young children from birth, examining their participation within their learning journey, inclusive teaching practices and innovative qualitative research designs. She is an advocate for children's rights, quality early childhood education and children's participation in their education. She has co-authored several chapters on these research topics.

INCLUSIVITY IN OUTDOOR EDUCATION

Beausetha Juhetha Bruwer; Victor Tan Chee Shien; and Maria Moscato

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=635#oembed-1

Example Cases

"When my grandfather passed away a few years ago, he was nearly 100 years old. When he shared stories about his childhood, I was amazed and thought, "Really? You did that? That's unbelievable."

Ellen Beate Hansen Sandseter, Queen Maud University College of Early Childhood Education, Norway

"I remember how we played on my grandfather's farm as a child. We used to jump off huge rocks and land in a dry riverbed, I can still feel the soft sand under my feet. We would climb on huge rocks and pretend they were the aeroplanes we saw above us, taking us to a strange land where we could play all day."

Beausetha Bruwer, University of Namibia, Namibia

"Growing up in the concrete jungle of Singapore, my connection with the outdoors was very much associated with a sense of adventure. I caught spiders at the cemetery, the few places that actually had greeneries, and fishes in the drainage in my own little adventures. Those little 'adventures' led my curiosity in understanding the world around me even now."

Victor Tan Chee Shien, University of Stirling, UK

In this chapter you will find the answers to the following questions:

1. What is the purpose of Outdoor Education?
2. How can Outdoor Education be inclusive?
3. What to prepare for Outdoor Education?

Introduction to Topic

Reflecting on Outdoor Education (OE) reveals its significance as a fundamental educational necessity, rooted in the philosophies of influential thinkers like Locke, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Fröbel, Montessori, and Dewey, who advocated for fostering individual autonomy from early childhood (Bortolotti, 2014). Extensive national and international literature supports OE as a multifaceted approach, recognising the outdoor environment as an active and essential component of the educational experience (Farné, Bortolotti, Terrusi, 2018).

Outdoor activities can be understood at multiple levels. At its most basic, it involves teaching activities typically done in a classroom but conducted outside with minimal environmental interaction. At a deeper level, they enhance learners' understanding of their environment through direct engagement. At its most profound, it is a pedagogical approach that uses the outdoors as a rich, experiential setting for authentic learning across various domains (Kelly et al., 2022). Learning outside the classroom significantly benefits learners' overall curriculum learning. Learners who struggle in traditional indoor classrooms often thrive in outdoor settings, as they tend to be less distracted and more focused. The hands-on and interactive nature of outdoor activities, combined with regular breaks, helps maintain learners' engagement (Kelly et al., 2022). This stimulates both emotional and cognitive processes, creating ideal conditions for the development of metacognition.

Inclusion remains a central aspect of OE, with outdoor settings being particularly effective in fostering welcoming, cooperative, and supportive environments, thus promoting positive social interactions. Being in natural settings helps build a sense of community, strengthens feelings of belonging and respect, and deepens connections to life and the environment, nurturing an ecological mindset (Bortolotti, Schenetti & Telese, 2020; Brodin, 2009). However, inclusion in OE presents significant challenges, such as ensuring that

activities are appropriate for the diverse needs of learners and balancing adventure and unpredictability with safety (Rickinson et al., 2004). In this regard, research highlights the crucial role of educational intentionality in obtaining positive results from OE programmes. In this context, teacher training is vital: teachers must acquire both an open and flexible professional posture and specialised skills to design and manage outdoor activities to guarantee that educational practices are impactful, inclusive and secure. Additionally, parental involvement is crucial for the success of outdoor educational experiences. Parents need to be well-informed and engaged in the educational processes, recognising the benefits and opportunities these experiences can offer their children (Epstein, 2018).

Considering these foundational principles and the intricacies involved, this chapter will explore key aspects that underscore the wide-ranging benefits of OE in shaping well-rounded, environmentally aware, and socially responsible individuals. These key aspects highlight the teacher's vital role in fostering a safe, inclusive, and enriching outdoor learning environment that promotes the holistic development of learners.

Key aspects

Purpose of Outdoor Education and Why It is Inclusive

John Dewey (1916/2004) particularly advocated for education as a liberating and democratic process, rather than a passive activity controlled by authority figures. Dewey posited that human adaptation to the environment is characterised by active engagement rather than simplistic conformity. He argued that just as 'life' is not a passive existence but a mode of action, the 'environment' either stimulates or inhibits this activity. Consequently, education occurs indirectly through environmental interaction. Hunt (1995) elaborates on Dewey's distinction between 'primary experience' – the initial, unprocessed encounter – and 'secondary experience', which emerges from reflection, lending clarity and meaning to these encounters. These principles form the foundation of OE, which posits that meaningful learning begins with the bodily engagement of the learner in an environment. This involves practical activities and reflective moments, during which learners, often guided by a teacher, strive to comprehend and derive meaning from their experiences.

This approach delineates the distinction between Outdoor Learning (OL) (synonymous with Experiential Learning) and OE (equivalent to Experiential Education). OL primarily focuses on acquiring practical skills and knowledge, often tied to specific objectives. While all learning is experiential to some degree, it is not always intentionally designed as such. Conversely, OE involves deliberate learning design through two key elements: crafting experiences for learners and facilitating these experiences through reflective practices. Dahlgren and Szczepanski (2005) observe that whilst experiences are inherently specific and contextual, reflection is crucial for transmuting these experiences into knowledge. They assert that OE, with its unique characteristics and identity, possesses significant potential

to enhance meaningful learning. This potential is realised when there is a conscious educational awareness guiding the process. Consequently, OE centres on targeted educational interventions that explore both learning and individual identity formation. These interventions assist individuals in discovering and developing their personalities, transcending mere participation in activities. Additionally, OE fosters an environment where living and growing are intertwined, facilitating learning through a dialectical process in which each moment contributes to the whole. By taking education beyond the confines of traditional school walls, OE promotes a holistic vision of learning. In this paradigm, direct environmental experiences play a pivotal role in personal development. OE aids individuals in forming a worldview that informs their interpretation of both their own lives and the world at large (Chistolini, 2016; Wattchow & Brown, 2011).

Mortlock (1987) and Loynes (2002) emphasise the importance of the "inner journey" in OE. The inherent unpredictability of outdoor experiences cultivates adaptability and enables learners to uncover their personal capabilities. OE should be viewed holistically, integrating not only rational, functional, and practical elements but also perceptual experiences that foster personal growth. Hopkins and Putnam (1994) identify three key elements in OE: 'self', 'others', and the 'natural environment'. The **self** focuses on individual development through adventurous activities. The **others** concern the cultivation of group cooperation and effective social structures. The **natural environment** presents myriad challenges, enabling participants to augment their knowledge and understanding of nature. Brodin (2009: 100-101) notes that the authors "highly stress the value of OE primarily as a learning resource. They emphasise leadership, team-building and problem-solving as some of the benefits. Knowledge and awareness of nature will grow at the same time as the participants get physical challenges." In essence, OE transcends the mere act of venturing outdoors; it primarily concerns an openness to perceptions and sensations that 'exceed the threshold' (Mazza, 2018). This facilitates new connections between self, others, and the world (both organic and inorganic), delineating a learner-centred educational model of a highly relational nature, in which environmental and social contexts play crucial roles (Waite, Bølling, & Bentsen, 2016).

Once again, the crucial distinction between **Experiential Learning** and **Experiential Education** within the realm of OE comes to the fore: Experiential Learning, on the other hand, encompasses processes where the individual internally assimilates and reflects upon experiences. In this paradigm, learning and debriefing can occur within the learner's mind, without necessarily requiring external articulation or shared discourse. Experiential Education, on the other hand, with which OE is more closely aligned, necessitates that learning be externally expressed and collectively shared (Joplin, 1995). This public dimension is paramount in OE: what constitutes 'experience' is not merely the isolated event itself, but rather the synthesis of personal cognitive processes with public acknowledgement and validation of the experience. This distinction is pivotal, as it underscores a core tenet of OE: the emphasis on collective learning and shared meaning-

making. In OE, experiences are not solely processed individually but are brought into a communal space for discussion, analysis, and integration into a broader understanding.

In essence, the alignment of OE with Experiential Education highlights its commitment to collaborative learning, shared reflection, and the development of collective understanding. This approach not only enriches individual learning experiences but also contributes to building a more inclusive and interconnected educational environment, moving beyond mere individual competitiveness towards a more holistic and socially conscious form of education. OE, therefore, represents education in, about, and for the environment, aiming to ensure learners' autonomy of action and relationships, capable of attributing meaning to both their context and the role played by individuals and communities within it (Quay & Seaman, 2013).

Immersive engagement with the real world and the strategic utilisation of the environment as an educational resource foster a continuous learning process rooted in mutual support. This approach is facilitated by innovative methodologies, such as Problem-based Learning (PBL) and Collaborative Teamwork. Consequently, it broadens educational horizons and cultivates essential skills for addressing global challenges, thereby shaping informed citizens and resilient communities. In this context, OE transcends the boundaries of a mere educational method, evolving into a life philosophy that actively promotes authentic participation. Open spaces emerge as powerful catalysts for nurturing a sense of belonging, fostering cooperative relationships, and encouraging mutual assistance. These elements collectively contribute to positive socialisation among individuals and groups (Brodin & Lindstrand, 2006; Gair, 1997; Magnusson, 2006). It represents a paradigm shift in educational philosophy, recognising the intrinsic link between personal growth, community development, and environmental engagement. This approach in OE addresses the need to transcend what Biesta (2006) terms **learnification** – the tendency to view learning and education as predominantly individualistic processes aimed at creating high-performing actors in a competitive system. Instead, OE, through its emphasis on shared experiences and public reflection, promotes education as a process of mutual construction and recognition, fostering holistic human development. Thus, OE not only enhances the learning experience but also contributes to the development of a more inclusive and interconnected society.

Recent evidence-based studies (Mitchell, 2013) elucidate the intrinsic connection between inclusive education and OE. Both paradigms emphasise the crucial relationship between individuals and their environmental context, aiming to promote environmental, relational, and social sustainability. In this framework, inclusion is conceptualised not as an end goal but as an ongoing process that permeates various spheres of an individual's life, including educational institutions, family environments, and broader social contexts (Booth & Ainscow, 2011). Inclusive education extends beyond the mere removal of learning barriers and anti-discrimination efforts. It actively seeks to engage all learners, valuing and enhancing diversity. This perspective transcends the traditional dichotomy between

'normal' and 'special', adopting a holistic approach that promotes full, active participation of all individuals in authentic contexts (Florian & Beaton, 2017; Pedone, 2021).

These principles seamlessly align with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UN, 2015), which underscores the importance of harmonising economic growth, environmental conservation, and social inclusion. This approach aims to meet present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own (WCED, 1987). Implementing these principles necessitates a profound cultural shift in educational contexts, requiring continuous reflection and intentional transformation (Bufalino & D'Aprile, 2021). OE can play a pivotal role in facilitating this transformation through its emphasis on environmental connection and interaction.

Let us pause and reflect

- What is your idea of Outdoor Education?
- What role can local communities and natural environments play in education?
- How do you think the surrounding environment can influence learning?

Engagement with the Environment

Example

"I remember a cool spring morning when our Civics teacher announced we'd be going on a tour around the town. I thought to myself, "Wow, no school!"… and happily went home. The day after, the adventure began with a visit to the Poggiodiana Castle. As we approached the ruins, our teacher told us stories of Saracens and Spaniards landing in Sicily, making us imagine what life was centuries ago. Then we moved to the orange groves just outside town (oranges are really important to us!). Tasting an orange straight from the tree, with its sweet juice refreshing me, was pure joy. One of the most fascinating experiences was visiting a historic print shop, where we watched traditional printing and understood the importance of spreading written culture. We joined an urban botany workshop at the municipal Villa, surrounded by the scents of Mediterranean plants. We learned to identify different plant

species and their role in the local ecosystem. Each discovery was a small victory. I went home with a deep sense of belonging to my land and joy for the wonders I had discovered. Thinking back, I can still feel the profound gratitude for where I grew up".

Maria Moscato, Italy

In essence, OE aims to foster learning through concrete experiences and reflections in authentic contexts. This approach extends beyond the mere transfer of learning to natural, cultural, and social environments, encompassing several key aspects:

- The concept of extending the learning space beyond traditional boundaries.
- The construction of connections between sensory experiences and theoretical content.
- A focused attention on context, viewed as both place and space, serving as both object and subject of the educational process (Center for Environmental and OE, 2004, cited in Szczepanski, Malmer, Nelson & Dahlgren, 2006).

Higgins and Nicol (2002) emphasise that spaces outside the school can serve as invaluable educational environments, promoting cooperative and personalised learning. This is achieved through the intentionality of teachers who adapt training opportunities to local specificities and diverse learning styles. OE does not simply relocate the classroom outdoors; rather, it aims to create a dynamic interaction between emotions, actions, and thoughts. This approach fosters learning that values curiosity and continuous discovery, creating a holistic framework that guides the teacher's intentional action toward leveraging the unique characteristics of the surrounding environment. It avoids the fragmentation of information, instead promoting an integrated and in-depth exploration of themes. Utilising outdoor educational experiences, mediated by relationships and shared reflection, stimulates the use of all senses and creates a learning climate particularly suited to content best assimilated outside school walls. This facilitates the integration and enrichment of the curriculum in an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary manner, supporting both individual and community, personal and social development (Zanato Orlandini, 2020).

OE firmly links the learning process with real experiences, relationships, events, and conditions provided by the environment. This approach aligns with the intrinsic values of Place-based Education (PBE), which allows for the exploration and appreciation of the cultural and natural characteristics of territories, transforming them into laboratories for personal and social growth (Brown, 2008). As Sobel (2004) highlights, PBE emerges as a response to the lack of attention to local environments in many schools. It underscores

the importance of local communities and natural environments in encouraging practical and respectful learning and forming responsible citizens and democratic communities. This involves identifying learning contexts within one's local geography – be it a portion of nature, a part of the city, a park, or a square – that are proximate, accessible, practicable, and generally free and available (Perfetti, 2023). Through the active engagement of local citizens, community organisations, and environmental resources in school life, it activates a generative dialectic that brings education back into the community and involves the community in education.

In summary, rather than being confined to studies of distant places, this approach utilises the community and its surroundings as a starting point for teaching subjects such as language, mathematics, social studies, and science. This helps to enhance academic performance, strengthen learners' bonds with their community, increase appreciation for the world, and encourage active engagement in society. Ultimately, it promotes the improvement of community and environmental quality (Gruenenwald & Smith, 2008).

Let us pause and reflect

- How can a place-based educational approach affect the development of values and skills related to responsible citizenship and active social participation?

Benefits of Outdoor Education

Example

At the school camp conducted annually, learners are split into fixed mixed-gender teams of 8 for the week long event. At age fourteen, the physical difference between males and females was becoming increasingly obvious. A few teams started to express concerns that having more girls on their team would put them at a disadvantage. While I usually encourage learners to manage group dynamics on their own, I recognised this as an important teaching moment. I brought the class together for an open discussion about the possible tasks they might encounter during the camp, emphasising that the camp's goal is to develop

interpersonal skills like teamwork, leadership, and situational problem-solving, which require a diverse set of skills and aptitude rather than a bulldozing mentality.

"It's crucial to have a diverse set of skills for any task, rather than assuming that having all boys or all girls on a team offers any advantage. Just like in real-life situations, we won't always have all the answers, and that's okay. We should recognise this, not as a weakness, but as an opportunity to seek help from others, regardless of who they are. Everyone has different abilities and strengths, regardless of height or gender. After all, I don't see Gal Gadot (Wonder Woman) or Henry Cavill (Superman) here, do you?"

Following this discussion, the group were asked to break out and reflect on their individual and collective strengths.

Victor Tan Chee Shien, University of Stirling, UK

The scenario above captures how outdoor spaces can serve as an effective teaching context by offering authentic and critical learning opportunities. The teacher in the scenario used the annual outdoor school camp to create awareness among his intermediate group of learners about gender diversity and sensitivity. Thus, OE is more than just imparting knowledge outside of traditional in-class learning, it is all-encompassing in promoting growth and development on many levels. Learners who participate in outdoor activities improve their problem-solving skills, gain useful knowledge through real-world experiences, and become more resilient in the face of adversity (Cenić et al., 2023). Through OE, learners get a unique opportunity to deepen their knowledge and comprehension through hands-on experiences outside of the classroom. These outdoor experiences allow learners to understand concepts in diverse ways, such as through listening, taste, touch, sight, and smell, as well as through aesthetic, emotional, intellectual, physical, and spiritual experiences (Neville et al., 2023; Stavrianos & Pratt-Adams, 2022). When classrooms or outdoor play areas are designed to meet each learner's sensory, motor, behavioural, social, and emotional needs, they enhance and broaden growth opportunities (Brodin, 2009).

Play activities are crucial for learners of all ages to explore and understand themselves while developing essential physical traits for overall health and well-being. Risky play, for example, is a novel approach to introducing OE. According to E. Sandseter (personal interview, March, 2024), risky play involves learners intentionally taking risks to challenge themselves, test their limits, and explore their capabilities. This type of play is often physical and exciting due to its unpredictability, though it carries the risk of injury or accidents. The benefits include the thrill and range of emotions it provides, from exhilaration and fear to sadness if hurt. Learners are naturally drawn to risky play because it elicits positive, thrilling emotions. Successfully managing these risks can lead to a strong sense of mastery

(Sandseter, 2009). Risky play greatly benefits learners' learning and development, offering valuable experiences and fostering emotional growth.

The learner must always be prioritised as the central focus. Therefore, understanding their backgrounds, as well as the conceptions and misconceptions they bring to the learning environment, is essential for optimising OE outcomes (Neville et al., 2023). The same as in classroom teaching, not all learners will participate in the same activities during OE. Thus, the teachers will need to use their knowledge of the learners to tailor tasks, promote inclusion, and encourage learner autonomy. According to Neville et al. (2023), this approach will enable learners to make and act on choices that positively impact their lives, helping them independently recognise the benefits of OL.

Parker (2022) identifies several key benefits of integrating OE for learners. Recognising these benefits in relation to individual learners' needs can help teachers choose the most suitable outdoor activities for their learners. These benefits include Health and Well-being, Children's Physical Development; Mental Health; Social-Emotional and Cognitive Development; Academic Benefits; Behavioral Improvements; and Enhanced Memory.

Health, Wellbeing and Children's Physical Development

According to Parker (2022), OE can generate numerous health benefits for learners participating in outdoor programmes. These benefits include improved air circulation, higher oxygen levels, better sleep, and increased Vit D exposure to sunlight. Increased vitamin D levels are also linked to improved bone health, cardiovascular health, and more effective insulin regulation. Harper (2017) agrees that time spent in natural environments provides substantial health benefits, such as physiological improvements, quicker recovery from mental fatigue, injury, and illness, increased life satisfaction, and improved stress management. To counteract the growing prevalence of hypokinetic diseases like obesity and diabetes and address sedentary habits caused by increased screen time, it is advisable to encourage active outdoor activities in children.

Mental Health

Parker (2022) notes that children with access to greener environments display lower aggression and violence and experience less mental stress. Simply viewing nature has been found to reduce physiological stress responses, increase interest and attention, and decrease feelings of fear, anger, or aggression. Accordingly, Harper (2017) reports that, through the incorporation of outdoor activities, children from vulnerable backgrounds, such as those from disadvantaged neighbourhoods or who have experienced homelessness, abuse, or substance use, also showed improvements in well-being and resilience.

Social-emotional and Cognitive development

In addition to physical benefits, OE supports learners' social, emotional, and cognitive development by enhancing creativity, problem-solving skills, independence, and confidence. Regular exposure to natural environments boosts children's cognitive abilities, and children with, for example, Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) show better concentration and rate their experiences more positively outdoors compared to traditional classroom settings (Parker, 2022). Additionally, OE promotes inclusion, teamwork, and social skills development among learners by fostering high levels of participation and collaboration. It is particularly beneficial for learners with learning difficulties, enhancing their community presence, active participation, and competence. Group work in outdoor settings encourages intimate interactions, team building, and collective goal achievement (Stavrianos & Pratt-Adams, 2022). Furthermore, outdoor environments provide diverse learning opportunities that help children form ideas, values, and environmental consciousness from a young age. Activities like environmental games can motivate learning by sparking interest and addressing knowledge gaps (Stavrianos & Pratt-Adams, 2022).

Academic Benefits

Parker (2022) finds that learners who engage in OE programmes outperform their peers in various assessments, including math and science. Furthermore, these learners exhibit higher attendance rates compared to those not involved in OE. Cenić et al. (2023) also highlight research suggesting that spending time in nature positively influences learners' cognitive functions and their interest in learning. Interaction with nature enhances collaboration and problem-solving skills while simultaneously boosting learners' happiness, well-being, and motivation. These benefits can lead to increased classroom engagement, potentially improving overall learning achievements. This evidence underscores the importance of integrating natural elements into the educational process as a valuable factor in supporting cognitive development and learner education.

Behavioural Improvements

OE can significantly improve school attendance and provide a sense of achievement for children with emotional or behavioural disabilities, counteracting the negative effects of repeated failure in traditional educational settings. Its strength lies in creating inclusive activities that accommodate all children, allowing them to participate at their own pace (Stavrianos & Pratt-Adams, 2022). Learners who find traditional classroom settings challenging may greatly benefit from personalised OE experiences. Instead of struggling with motivation, confidence, attention, or social skills in the classroom, these learners can

develop these skills through OE. They often thrive and even take on leadership roles during hands-on outdoor activities (Parker, 2022).

Enhanced memory

The memory of the context and experience of OE can be more impactful than the specific educational content intended to be taught. According to Parker (2022), for some learners, the memorable aspects of the visit, such as the sounds, sights, or even objects like pebbles, are as significant as the factual details learned at the location.

Teachers can adapt their methods to be more inclusive by using natural contexts and local places in their teaching. This approach incorporates a variety of skills, equipment, and experiences, ensuring that all learners, regardless of their differences and abilities, can participate and benefit from outdoor learning.

Challenges in Outdoor Education

Despite the advantages of OE, several challenges impede its implementation. A significant obstacle is the stigma that OE is not considered "real" teaching, which affects its adoption (Parker, 2022; Stavrianos & Pratt-Adams, 2022). Effective implementation of OE necessitates extensive planning and coordination to meet educational objectives. Teachers play a crucial role in shaping and evaluating the effectiveness of educational methods, including OE. From the teacher's perspective, this involves planning and organising field activities, adapting teaching strategies and resources, and managing learner groups. Teachers are essential for the successful execution of OE, as they must ensure learner safety, motivate learning, and maximise the benefits of the outdoor experience. They need to be knowledgeable in their subject areas while being adaptable to changing conditions and learner needs during outdoor activities (Cenić et al., 2023).

An interdisciplinary approach to education supports the holistic development of learners by fostering creativity, curiosity, and self-confidence, with the integration of various fields of knowledge being a central aim of holistic learning. Outdoor activities play a pivotal role in this process by allowing learners to connect theoretical knowledge with practical experiences in a natural or urban setting. Thus, incorporating these activities into the teaching process is essential but challenging (Cenić et al., 2023).

Parker (2022) notes that teachers may lack confidence in outdoor teaching due to limited experience and knowledge. They encounter challenges such as restrictive curriculum demands, insufficient time, and a lack of inspiration or structure. Broader issues, including work pressure, excessive responsibilities, and fatigue from frequent educational changes, also impede OE. Additional barriers include concerns about losing control, health and safety issues, inadequate administrative support, traditional teaching perspectives, and inflexible schedules. Furthermore, parents may resist OE, particularly for children with special needs,

due to concerns about external judgments regarding parenting and fears about potential harm to their children (Harper, 2017).

Neville et al. (2023) further note that opportunities for OE are often limited by an emphasis on evidence-based outcomes and standardised testing, which narrows the curriculum and prioritises test preparation. Its implementation is also influenced by school interests, teacher expertise, and the quality of pre-service teacher training, but is constrained by time limits, strict learning objectives, and unfamiliarity with outdoor teaching.

To address these challenges, OE should be recognised by all stakeholders as a legitimate method to expand curriculum resources. Clear examples of curriculum integration are essential to encourage teachers to adopt this approach and promote learner success. The recognition would increase institutional support and drive teachers' training.

Preparation for Outdoor Education

Teacher training

As Wolf, Kunz and Robin (2022) point out, OE is becoming increasingly relevant in formal school education due to the benefits found in terms of teaching practice and the well-being of teachers and learners. However, the effective implementation of this approach is hampered by the lack of specific training for teachers.

An interdisciplinary curriculum, on which OE is based, requires a systematic dialogue between different disciplines and methodologies, which cannot be improvised in a purely experiential context. In this regard, Zanato Orlandini (2020) highlights the importance of an intentional educational approach rather than mere casual exposure to the natural environment as the main source of learning. The author warns against considering the outdoor experience alone as a guarantee of meaningful learning since mere contact with the external environment is not enough to gain an in-depth understanding of natural and cultural phenomena. The design of quality OE experiences must be carefully planned, taking into account the specificities of the environmental context and the needs of the learners.

From an operational point of view, OE is expressed through the action of the teacher, who translates into practice their intentionality, vision, values and implicit curriculum. By doing this, the teacher creates a mix of skills and personal traits that do not consist of a simple sum of disconnected elements but must be understood in holistic and global terms, forming a structured and multidimensional whole of effectiveness. The teacher must not only use knowledge and skills but also take responsibility for their work to adapt, innovate, integrate different knowledge and manage complexity. Educational action goes beyond technique: it is a meeting point where theory, practice and reflection illuminate each other and find concrete application. A holistic model of professional competencies

therefore includes not only knowledge and skills but also attitudes and values essential for the development of professional identity (Pedone, 2021).

For these reasons, teacher training for OE must be characterised in a holistic and multidimensional way, including an in-depth preparation that covers the pedagogical, value, and practical attributes of outdoor teaching.

Let us examine some of its aspects:

- **Importance of beliefs and training needs**: Farnè and collaborators (2018) state that the difficulties in achieving quality education are not always linked to structural limitations, but often derive from the lack of adequate tools or skills. It is therefore crucial to focus on teachers' primary training needs, which may be hidden behind secondary training needs. If, for example, teachers experience difficulties in integrating OE with standard curricular requirements or in adapting outdoor activities to learners' different skill levels, these secondary needs may reflect a lack of training in instructional differentiation strategies. This suggests a primary training need: adequate preparation in the design and personalisation of outdoor educational activities. It is critical that OE training includes not only specific techniques for outdoor teaching but also ways to integrate these experiences with the curriculum and tailor them to the needs of learners, ensuring inclusive and effective activities.

- **Developing Positive Attitudes and Personal Outdoor Experiences**: Teachers' attitudes towards OE play a crucial role in the success of training, as their dispositions and perspectives significantly influence their approach and willingness to adopt innovative educational methods (Nicol, Higgins, Ross, Hamish & Mannion, 2007). The literature highlights that teachers who demonstrate greater openness to OE often have significant and positive personal experiences outdoors. These experiences can help develop an 'outdoor dimension' that is essential for effective OE implementation. Positive outdoor experiences help teachers:

  - Understand and appreciate the value of OE.
  - Assess risks more effectively.
  - Build confidence in their abilities to meet challenges.

These factors are fundamental for developing a positive attitude towards OE, as they allow teachers to recognise and value the pedagogical sense of adventure and risk-taking (Farnè et al., 2018; Wolf et al., 2022). To convey a positive attitude towards the environment to learners, teachers need to feel comfortable outdoors. They must be able to assess and manage risks, ensuring safe and positive experiences. One effective way to develop these skills is to include training courses in external environments in both the initial and ongoing preparation of teachers. This approach allows teachers to directly experience the activities they will propose to learners, thereby:

- Enhancing their comfort level in outdoor settings.
- Improving their risk assessment and management skills.
- Developing a deeper appreciation for the educational potential of outdoor spaces.

Moreover, this hands-on approach to teacher training can also support education for sustainable development, which should integrate outdoor experiential techniques (Nicol, Rae, Murray, Higgins & Smith, 2019). By experiencing OE firsthand, teachers are better equipped to:

- Design and implement effective OE experiences.
- Integrate OE principles into their overall teaching practice.
- Foster a sense of environmental stewardship in their learners.

Fostering positive attitudes towards OE through personal outdoor experiences should be a core component of teacher training programmes. This approach not only enhances teachers' skills and confidence but also contributes to the broader goals of environmental education and sustainable development.

- **Integration of Pedagogical and Content Skills**: Training for OE must combine in-depth knowledge of pedagogical content with specific skills for outdoor teaching. Dyment, Chick, Walker and Macqueen (2018) emphasise that it is essential to be able to translate disciplinary knowledge into effective teaching practices. In this context, the 'knowledge quartet', which includes the transformation of knowledge into teaching modalities, the connection between themes and the coherence of lessons (Rowland, Huckstep & Thwaites, 2005), is particularly relevant. In the context of teaching, specialist professional knowledge must include not only the domain of the subject (a fundamental element) but also a general understanding of teaching and learning methodologies (general pedagogical knowledge). In addition, as described by Shulman (1987), it is crucial to possess what is called 'knowledge of pedagogical content' – i.e., the competence to convey content effectively to learners. This model implies that teacher training for OE must not be limited to mastery and transmission of content, but must instead also include skills in the design and management of outdoor educational experiences, along with a wide range of knowledge regarding curricular structures, teachers' legal responsibilities and other related issues.

- **Development of Flexibility and Adaptation Skills**: Outdoor teaching requires a level of flexibility and adaptation that goes far beyond that required in traditional educational settings. Outdoor environments, with their variable and unpredictable conditions, pose unique challenges that require teachers to adapt quickly and effectively. This ability to

adapt is crucial to take advantage of learning opportunities that may emerge unexpectedly and to respond appropriately to environmental changes and learners' needs (Greenwood, 2013). To prepare teachers for these challenges, OE training must include hands-on exercises and simulations that reflect the real-world conditions in which they will operate. Through such experiences, teachers can exercise their ability to handle unexpected situations, make quick decisions, and take advantage of the learning opportunities that the external context offers. These exercises should be designed to simulate various scenarios, from adverse weather conditions to the need to adapt activities to different group dynamics, allowing teachers to develop strategies for dealing with uncertainty and change.

- **Reflective Skills and Critical Approach to Teaching Practice**: To build a professional profile of this type, it is essential to approach training as a shared journey of discovery, where each teacher is encouraged to adopt a research perspective on their professionalism, embracing reflective thinking. This reflection is not an end in itself but arises from the continuous dialogue between theory and practice, enriched by the comparison with colleagues (Clayton, Smith & Dyment, 2014). Reflective practice is a dominant concept in teacher education and is widely applied in initial education programmes (McGarr & McCormack, 2016) and in-service teachers in many parts of the world (Harford & McRuaric 2008; Nizet, 2016). During the training process, teachers must be guided to critically reflect on their experiences, evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching strategies and identify areas for improvement. Critical reflection is not just an occasional practice, but an ongoing process that involves analysing the feedback received, self-analysing one's practices, and modifying strategies in response to experiences in the field. Such reflection helps teachers develop a deeper understanding of the dynamics of outdoor teaching and improve their ability to respond effectively to daily challenges. To integrate critical reflection into initial training, it is helpful to include activities such as guided discussions, reflective journals, and peer feedback sessions. These tools help teachers explore their experiences and draw meaningful lessons that can be applied in the future. In addition, the support of experienced mentors and participation in communities of practice can provide additional opportunities for reflection and professional growth.

Blenkinsop, Telford and Morse (2016) have identified five key areas of reflexivity that are particularly useful when thinking about OE:

- The **teacher's self-analysis**: Questions such as "How am I improving my understanding of this context?" or "Why do I choose to do X instead of Y right now?" help to explore personal motivations.
- **Focus on learners**: Both as individuals and as a group, with reflections such as "What did I notice today?" or "What is the next logical step for their learning?".

- **Co-reflection**: Involving learners, parents and other teachers to obtain different perspectives.
- **The role of the environment**: Considering questions like "How has the place influenced our practices?" or "Have I been able to integrate the natural environment?".
- **The broader learning community**: Assessing how school infrastructure and cultural systems support or hinder outdoor work and what traditions or metaphors are emerging.

To get the most out of OE experiences, reflection should go beyond simply checking lesson results. Exploring these areas helps teachers improve their practice with a deeper, more mindful approach (Neville, Petrass & Ben, 2023). Effective teacher training for OE requires a comprehensive approach that addresses not only practical skills but also pedagogical knowledge, attitudes, and reflective practices. This holistic approach ensures that teachers are well-equipped to deliver meaningful and impactful outdoor educational experiences, fostering both their professional growth and the holistic development of their learners.

Let us pause and reflect

- What do you think would be the main benefits of Outdoor Education for teachers?
- What is the importance of critical reflection for a teacher practicing Outdoor Education?
- How can a holistic approach to teacher training improve the quality of Outdoor Education?

Risk management

For any educational activity, planning and preparation are necessary to make the best of the lesson. Lessons outdoor, or OE are no different for risk management. As with any lesson preparation, the learning objective and the learner's needs are the focus. Where an authentic experience carries with it some level of risk, thus, preparations to control the risk are inevitable, similar to any form of material or planning preparation required for any type of lesson. A common misunderstanding with outdoor lessons is that they are high-risk activities disregarding learners' safety. These misunderstandings do not account for the purpose of the learning and the value that these experiences can bring to maximise learning. Risk is a real concern, but research has shown that risk aversion has negative

consequences in development across all stages (Dickson & Gray, 2012; Paulsen et al., 2012). While not promoting risk-taking in itself, it is important to consider the value of the learning experience in which omission of all risk is simply impossible.

Example

It is a warm day, too hot to sit in a kindergarten class for deaf and hard-of-hearing learners. The teacher took the learners to a nearby park from the school premises. Before the walk to the park, the teacher showed the learners pictures of different local transport, discussed the signs with the learners, and asked them to spot how many different transports they saw on the walk. Learners were taught to recognise signs and make use of available traffic infrastructures to ensure their own safety. The key to the lesson is to build an able learner that can traverse the environment safely in a controlled activity.

Beausetha Bruwer, University of Namibia, Namibia

The scenario presented above highlights the value of the experience over the risk involved. While there are inherent risks to a guided walk to the park, the value of the learning experience presents in that learners cannot avoid the risk associated with transit forever. There is value in risk, which must be controlled by the teacher, similar to any lesson preparation. Teachers employing OE concepts must engage with risk management as part of their lesson preparation to reduce risk. These preparations usually comprise a risk assessment document and an eventual consent form for participants. Clear and specific risk management documentation can be used to convince stakeholders, such as school management and policymakers, of the value of the outdoor lesson despite the risk involved (if any). Parents and participants are important stakeholders in education that need to be engaged as part of education. Not only are parents custodians of their child's participation, but youth-adult participants can also be engaged in pre-activity through a well-designed consent form (David et al., 2001).

Risk is often an obstacle and an element prevalent in any form of outdoor activity. In risk management, Attarian (2012) identified different types of risk: in 'risk', 'inherent risk', and 'perceived risk'. Risk in this context refers to the possible degree of harm or danger that may be encountered during an activity (may not be specific to only outdoor lessons). Inherent risks are risks that are unavoidable as part of the learning activity (e.g. running activity and falling). Perceived risk used here refers to the awareness of the activity conductor

in spotting the possibilities and dangers associated with the activity. The challenge with teachers then, is to strike a balance between risk and inherent risk to not compromise any aspects excessively, while being aware enough to spot perceived risk to conduct the activity safely. Taking risk management seriously involves keeping perceived risk high and reducing risk factors via a variety of methods.

Risk and Perceived Risk

Risk, or risk factors, are factors of instances where some form of harm may be present in an activity. As different regions and sources define and work with terms and explanations differently, the chapter refers to ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) as the base reference for ease of discussion. ISO 31000 defined risk in risk management as "the effect of uncertainty on objectives, whether positive or negative" (ISO, 2018; p. 2). In their working definition, Risk is expressed in terms of risk sources, potential events, their consequences and their likelihood. When preparing for a lesson outdoors, teachers need to be conscious of the risk (source and event) and the severity of the risk (consequence). The frequency or likelihood of it occurring is another factor for consideration in the scope of the matter. Where risk factors are controlled by managing source, event, and likelihood, perceived risk engages with the awareness of risk that may otherwise not be prepared for. The ISO statement specifically included the phrasing of uncertainty in their statement to capture the emphasis of preparation and awareness to avoid, as much as possible, the degree of uncertainty in any learning activities. Attarian (2012) specifically noted that risk and risk factors should be lowered where possible but the perceived risk of the teachers should be kept high so as to maintain the reflexivity to assess variables related to changing circumstances that are in the nature of outdoor lessons.

Inherent risk

The context of inherent risk refers to risks that are inherent to specific activities. Any activity comes with its own set of inherent risks that may sometimes be severe and unavoidable. In activities where there are water elements or take place close to water bodies, risk will be present and would be something to plan for. In cases, however, where swim/water literacy is the learning objective, removing the element of water defeats the practical consideration of swim/water literacy. Drawing from Kolb (1984), Harris and Bilton (2018) highlighted the affective benefits of active experimentation even in abstract subjects like history. Where the risk element is part of the learning experience, teachers then have to balance the merit of the activity with the learning objectives. It is important, however, not to mistake complacency with the acceptance of inherent risk. Using the same example of swim/water literacy, risk reduction actions or considerations of the depth of water compared to the learner's height, a lifeguard being present, or teachers/learner's ratio are just some considerations that could be set in place that do not affect the learning experience.

The use of a risk assessment form is often used as documentation to demonstrate the risk assessment, the risk reduction, and the personnel responsible are communicated and set in place. The purpose of the form is an important piece of communication for teachers and anyone involved in the activity to clearly communicate the task, the risk involved, and the individual responsible for supervising the risk. A well-prepared form can also be used for beginning teachers, who might have limited experience with the activity, to identify risks that they might have otherwise not been able to. Due to the nature of activities conducted outdoors, there may be times when an immediate decision needs to be made. At such times, rather than rely on human response, which may vary with emotional and contextual elements, it would be more effective to trigger prepared protocols as indicated on risk forms to ensure safety plans are followed.

Risk Analysis

There are several ways that risk assessment can be conducted. The most common would be through a systematic approach followed by a well-crafted risk form.

Look at the example[1] below that demonstrates how the risk form should contain key addresses and information.

The following risk form was used for a science lesson in a general education school in Singapore. The lesson was crafted for learners to experiment with the growth of cucumbers, watermelon, and lady fingers under different controlled conditions to determine the best conditions for growing these plants.

Learning Objectives include:

− Recognising that the different mixtures of oil and fertilisers have different effects.
− Different types of plants require different conditions to allow for the best conditions.
− Pathway of growth following natural weather conditions (sunlight, rain, plot size).

---

1. No risk form will be able to cover all considerations and contexts, teachers should adapt and use any tools reflectively to best meet your needs and considerations.

*Be specific. Dates are important to indicate how recent the risk assessment was done and if any risk factors changed

*Be specific. A rough image is used here for reference. Having an actual picture of the venue would provide greater clarity

Document number: **********	Evaluator: **********	Date: DD/MM/YY
Risk Assessment Area: (specific name and location of the identified venue)		

Step 1: Identity the Location / activity

Describe location:
school garden
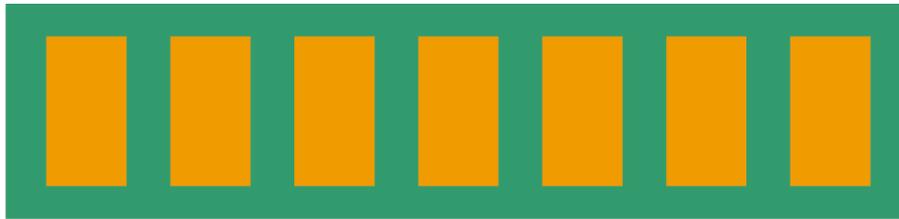
Describe activity:
Comparing growth rate of different types of plants by controlling soil composition Students to mix different amount of regular soil and fertilizers in ratios to determine the most optimal ratio for plant growth. Watering for plants will also be controlled using beakers.

Step 2: Identify WHO may be at risk by activities within this area

Participants:
2E4 - 32 students
Other Relevant personnel:
******** Teacher Assistant (Name the person instead of indicating the title)

*Be specific. Describe the task with details instead of being generic

*Be specific. Number of participants and the name of the staff so that the staff knows its him/her

*in case you have not got the point yet... be specific

Describe the task
to be carried out

Describe the
ideation of the
risk

Steps 3: Identify the hazards, risks, and rate the risks			
Main activity: (Main task)	Area: (specific location)	Risk: (descriptive of risk and likelihood)	Risk control: (action steps taken to reduce risk againstrisk pertioned
Planting in separate plots using prepared soil mixtures	Around the plot	Uneven path may lead to students tripping and falling. (2) (3) Overcrowding leading to tripping and falling. (2) (3)	Contact facilities to patch up potholes Scheduling students alternately
Working with gardening tools	Gardening shed Around plot	Students may cut themselves on gardening tools (2) (2)	Provide garden gloves for student use Set a work bench for measuring task

Provide a risk
score and a
frequency score

Describe the
action step to be
taken to reduce
risk
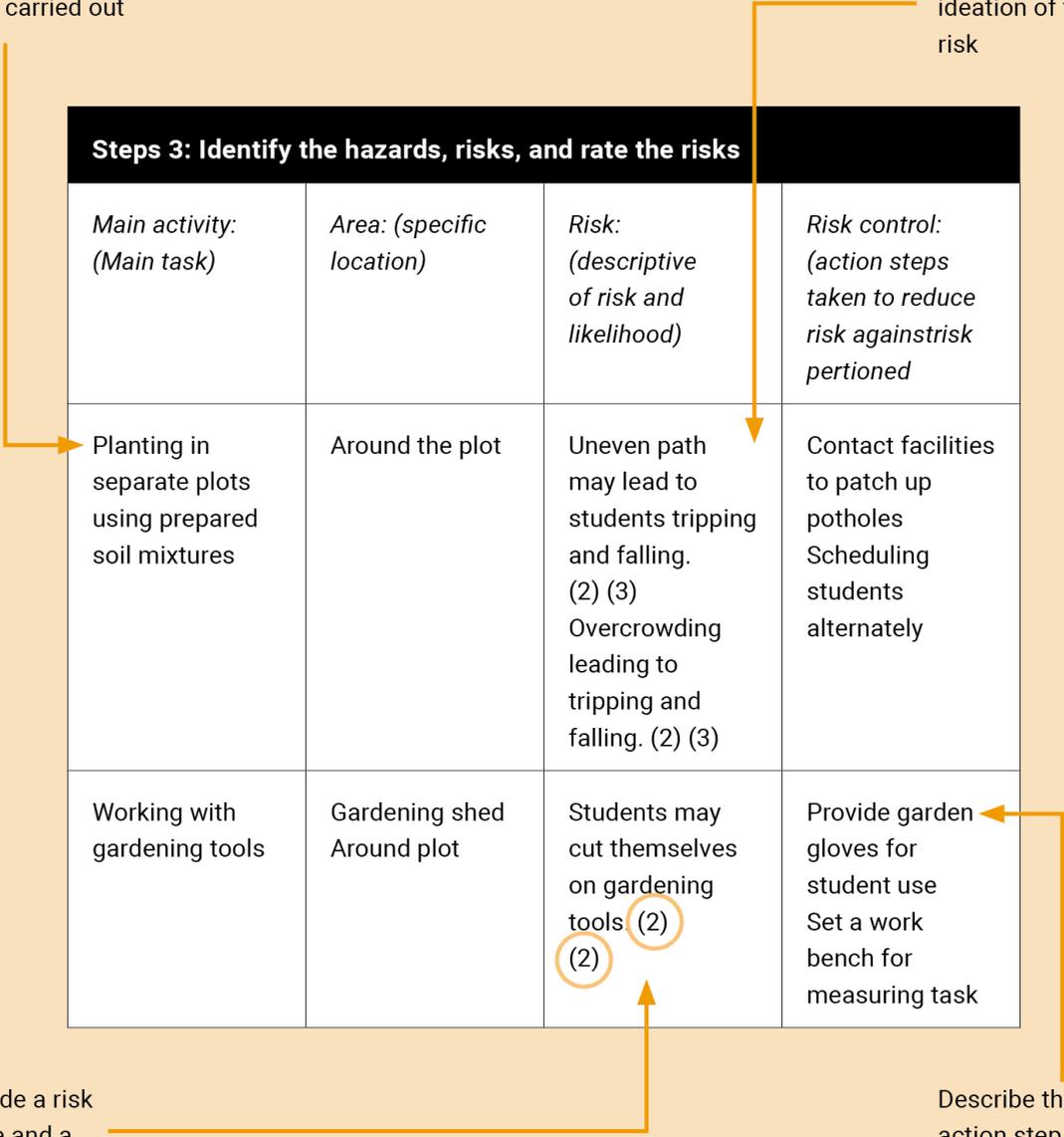
For a reviewer to acknowledge the
risk assessment (optional but highly
recommended)

Step 4 Documentation Review by Supervisor

Reviewer: John
Reviewer signature: John C
Date: dd/mm/yy

Step 5: Implement RECOMMENDATIONS

If any: (who, what, where)
Inform the gardener the start and end date of the activity FYI basis.

Step 6: Monitor and review the risk controls/Physical structure

Next review date: dd/mm/yy
(It is important to monitor risk controls and review risk assessments regularly.
If the venue or activity substantially changes a new risk assessment may be
needed.)

Indicate the next date of
review where necessary

Any other
recommendation
by the reviewer.

It is important for the form to be as easy to read as possible for others to understand it. A definition of the indexes used will clarify the matrix used.

Severity Risk Score Description	
Insignificant 1	No injuries, incur low financial loss, low environmental impact
Minor 2	Injuries requiring first aid treatment, incur low financial loss, low environmental impact.
Moderate 3	Injuries require medical treatment or may lead to disability (e.g. lacerations, burns, stains, minor fractures, dermatitis, deafness, work - related upper limb disorders), incur high financial loss, high environmental impact.
Major 4	Serious / intensive injury (e.g. amputation, major fractures, multiple injuries, acute poisoning and fatal disease), incur major financial loss, severe environmental damage.
Catastrophic 5	May result in death or large number of serious injuries, incur huge financial loss, environmental disaster.

Particularly quantitative index such as risk and likelihood.

Likelihood	
Unlikely (1)	Unlike to occur but possible
Seldom (2)	Not likely to occur but possible
Occasional (3)	May occur in time
Likely (4)	Quite likely to occur in time
Catastrophic 5	Expected to occur frequently

Risk level Tabulation		
9-10	Extremely High Risk	Terminate the activity if additional control measures do not lower the Risk Level.
7-8	High Risk	High-risk levels must be reduced to at least Moderate Risk before activity commences.
5-6	Moderate Risk	Risk control measures should not be overly dependent on personal protective equipment or appliances.

The risk assessment was carried out systematically, following a pre-designed risk form. There are different ways that risk assessment can be carried out, including even more advanced forms of risk assessment that can include learners in a reflective exercise or co-assessor. Salmon et al. (2014) analysed 1014 leading outdoor activity injuries and near-miss incidents and found that the elements most frequently involved in incidents were hazardous terrain (50.20% of all incidents), participant unsafe acts (29.78%) and teachers' judgement errors (29.59%). In the activities that they identified, the greatest number of injuries occurred in activities such as Free time (90.3% of all injuries), Ball sports (90.0%), Initiatives (91.1%) and Weapons (100%). The value of educating participants carries with it a level of risk prevention as they were noted as the second largest risk contributors, at the level almost even with instructors. It could also be observed that although Boating accounted for 53.9% of injuries, fatalities were recorded at 4, indicating that low injuries are not necessarily associated with severity. In that sense, responsibility for risk is not just for instructors or designers. It would be noted, however, that participants need to be at a relatively high cognitive level to engage in the activity.

Let us pause and reflect

- How can learners be involved in a risk assessment process?
- What value or perspective can they bring to a risk assessment?

Parent Engagement

Consent

Consent forms are another important preparation that teachers need to prepare to effectively engage important stakeholders, such as parents. We previously discussed the context of risk aversion, which carries with it a whole host of developmental issues for learners in their developmental years to adulthood (Paulsen et al., 2012). Parents are gatekeepers of participation, as they hold the right to withdraw their child's participation, particularly in the OE context where risk is often associated with. Parents are also important partners in the learning journey of a child, not just gatekeepers. There are two forms of consent: active and passive. **Active** consent refers to consent that requires permission for participation, while **passive** consent refers to requiring a signed form for activity omission (Spence et al., 2015). In passive consent, an information sheet would be provided instead

of a consent form. Traditionally, passive consent forms tend to have the least effect on participation due to a myriad of reasons (Blom-Hoffman et al., 2008; Spence et al., 2015). The context, however, may be subjective to the respective region's regulation on consent for types and formats of activities due to concerns with passive consent violating the rights of parents who may not have received proper notification (Blom-Hoffman et al., 2008). Consent form formats may vary and are often available widely online. In the context of inclusion and engagement, we would instead focus on the information sheet as an engagement tool to increase participation.

Information Sheet

Research has shown that consent forms contribute little to the active engagement of parents in the learning experience of a child (Fletcher & Hunter, 2003; Blom-Hoffman et al., 2008). Kraft et al. (2020) found that even prior to consent forms, 67% of parents have already decided whether to enrol their child or not. The research was consistent with prior research conducted by Grady et al (2017), where they too identified that parents' engagement does not change significantly between an elaborated consent form and a short one. Their research highlighted a key point in engaging parents in education, that continuous engagement has more efficacy than relying on consent forms to increase participation. Not omitting the usefulness of information sheets in engaging parents, a well-made information sheet can increase participation, and thus inclusion, by providing information that can inform parents of the value of a learning experience. Particularly when parents may have inhibitions towards outdoor activities, which have often been mis-associated with risk. In a report on Reporting to Parents in Primary School, Hall et al. (2008) found that schools that use newsletters to engage with parents report the highest parent satisfaction. One of the schools within the research employed bi-weekly newsletters where parents reported high confidence and comfort in the school's approach and interventions (Hall et al., 2008: 99). For an information sheet or newsletter to be effective, there are key elements that must be included. Key elements to include in an information sheet include: Why, When, Where, and What. Participation is the basis of inclusion before any manner of intervention can work. The intention is not simply to inform but to engage parents across a range of different engagement levels to foster participation so that the learning experience can be maximised.

Information sheet example

Indicate how an activity contribute to the learning objective (*Why*)

The date or duration of the activity (*When*)

This is an example of one of the documents organisations need to ensure safeguarding and child protection is at the heart of their activities.

Use this example to write a document that reflects the safeguarding and child protection needs of the children/young people your organisation works with. The document should also align with other safeguarding and child protection policies, as well as key organsational policies, procedures and standars.

Example form

Day/date(s) of activity [if it is a regular activity you could list the day of the week and time it takes place]:

Location:

Type of activity/what the child or young person will be doing:

The venue that the activity is taking place (*Where*)

The specific task involved (*What*)

Source: https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/templates/example-consent-form

Why	Informing parents of the value of the activity and how it contributes to the child's growth. It is important to indicate how the activity contributes to the child's growth.
When	The date and duration of the activity provide clarity in the event where travel accommodations need to be made.
Where	Where the activity is taking place can also inform parents of the array of items that may be associated with the venue. Particularly in the event where parents have to prepare any additional items that are not included in the activity preparation. It is important to note that parents should not be tasked with preparing necessary equipment for the activity to be conducted.
What	The specific task that is required of the student. This prepares the parents to be aware of any physical consideration they might feel is necessary to provide to their child.

Let us pause and reflect

- If you were a parent, would you prefer a consent form or an information sheet?
- If you were a parent, what type of information would you look out for in an information sheet/consent form?

The way we presented OE in the chapter invites readers to approach OE not as a peculiar form of education but as a benefit-driven one. The value of any education approach lies in the benefits that it can bring. OE can be a subject in itself or a natural context that we engage with to maximise learning. Effective preparation in forms of risk management and information sheets can alleviate concerns and resistance that are often falsely associated with OE. As teachers, we all know how difficult it is to make lessons 'fun' to keep learners engaged. With OE, we are inversely presented with inherently fun activities that we need to maximise the 'educational' aspects. Learning is natural and fun; let us try to keep it that way.

Local contexts

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=635#h5p-32

Closing questions to discuss or tasks

- As a future teacher, what kind of skills and knowledge do you think you may need to be

prepared for Outdoor Education?

- Thinking about your context, how would you involve the local community and natural environment in your teaching? Why?
- Think about an example of effective educational use of risk in an outdoor setting. How would you manage it?
- From your standpoint, what are the most important benefits of Outdoor Education in terms of inclusivity?
- How would you make Outdoor Education applicable to learners at all phases?

Literature

Attarian, Aram. (2012). Risk Management in Outdoor and Adventure Programs. Human Kinetics.

Biesta, Gert J. J. (2006). Beyond Learning: Democratic Education for a Human Future. Paradigm.

Blenkinsop, Sean, Telford, John, & Morse, Marcus. (2016). A surprising discovery: Five pedagogical skills outdoor and experiential educators might offer more mainstream educators in this time of change. Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning, 16(4), 346-358. https://doi.org/10.1080/14729679.2016.1163272

Blom-Hoffman, Jessica, Leff, Stephen S., Franko, Debra L., Weinstein, Elana, Beakley, Kelly, & Power, Thomas J. (2008). Consent Procedures and Participation Rates in School-Based Intervention and Prevention Research: Using a Multi-Component, Partnership-Based Approach to Recruit Participants. School Mental Health, 1(1), 3–15. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12310-008-9000-7

Booth, Tony, & Ainscow, Mel. (2011). Index for Inclusion: Developing Learning and Participation in Schools. Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education.

Brodin, Jane, & Lindstrand, Peg. (2006). Inclusion of children in outdoor education: Learning in Motion. Report I. Stockholm Institute of Education. https://www.su.se/polopoly_fs/1.75640.1328875902!/menu/standard/file/TKH_43.pdf

Brodin, Jane. (2009). Inclusion through access to outdoor education: Learning in Motion (LIM). Journal of Adventure Education & Outdoor Learning, 9(2), 99–113. https://doi.org/10.1080/14729670903004340

Brown, Mike. (2008). Outdoor education: Opportunities provided by a place-based approach. New Zealand Journal of Outdoor Education, 2(3), 7–25. ISSN (print):1176-9149

Bufalino, Giambattista, & D'Aprile, Gabriella (2021). Heirs to the future: Towards a new

pedagogical culture of human development and sustainability. Formazione & Insegnamento, 19(1), 60-71. https://doi.org/10.7346/-fei-XIX-01-21_05

Carnegie-Dielhenn, Tina. (2022). "Balanced" risky play in the outdoors and Forest Schools in the early years. In Sandra Chistolini (Eds.), Outdoor Education. Muoversi nello spazio mondo tra creatività, avventura, responsabilità (pp. 151-157). Franco Angeli.

Cenić, Dragan S., Milosavljević Đukić, Tatjana B., Stojadinović, Aleksandar M., & Spasić Stošić, Ana D. (2023). Outdoor Education: Perspectives of Teachers and Students in the Context of School in Nature as an Innovative Approach in Education. International Journal of Cognitive Research in Science, Engineering and Education, 11(3), 497–510. https://doi.org/10.23947/2334-8496-2023-11-3-497-510

Clayton, Kathleen, Smith, Heidi, & Dyment, Janet. (2014). Pedagogical approaches to exploring theory-practice relationships in an outdoor education teacher education programme. Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education, 42(2), 167-185. https://doi.org/10.1080/1359866X.2014.894494

Dahlgren, Lars O., & Szczepanski, Anders. (2005). Outdoor Education: Literary Education and Sensory Experience. An Attempt at Defining the Identity of Outdoor Education. Linköping University.

David, Miriam, Edwards, Rosalind, & Alldred, Pam. (2001). Children and School-based Research: "informed consent" or "educated consent"?. British Educational Research Journal, 27(3), 347–365. https://doi.org/10.1080/01411920120048340

Dewey, John (2004). Democracy and Education. An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education. Dover Publications. (Original work published 1916).

Dickson, Tracey J., & Gray, Tonia. (2012). Risk Management in the Outdoors : a Whole of Organisation Approach for Education, Sport and Recreation. Cambridge University Press.

Dyment, Janet E., Chick, Helen, Walker, Christopher T., & Macqueen, Thomas. P. (2018). Pedagogical content knowledge and the teaching of outdoor education. Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning, 18(4), 303–322. https://doi.org/10.1080/14729679.2018.1451756

Epstein, Joyce L. (2018). School, family, and community partnerships. Preparing educators and improving schools. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429494673

Fletcher, Anne C., & Hunter Andrea G. (2003). Strategies for Obtaining Parental Consent to Participate in Research*. Family Relations, 52(3), 216–221. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3729.2003.00216.x

Florian, Lani & Beaton, Mhairi. (2017). Inclusive pedagogy in action: Getting it right for every child. International Journal of Inclusive Education, 22(8), 870–884. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2017.1412513

Gair, Nicholas P. (1997). Outdoor Education: Theory and Practice. Cassell.

Grady, Christine, Touloumi, Giota, Walker, A. Sarah, Smolskis, Mary, Sharma, Shweta, Babiker, Abdel G., Pantazis, Nikos, Tavel, Jorge, Florence, Eri., Sanchez, Adriana, Hudson, Fleur, Papadopoulos, Antonios, Emanuel, Ezekiel, Clewett, Megan, Munroe, David, &

Denning, Eileen. (2017). A randomized trial comparing concise and standard consent forms in the START trial. PLOS ONE, 12(4), e0172607. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0172607

Greenwood, David A. (2013). A critical theory of place conscious education. In Robert B. Stevenson, Michael Broady, Justin Dillon & Arjen Walks (Eds.), International handbook of research on environmental education (pp. 93-100). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203813331

Gruenewald, David A., & Smith, Gregory A. (2008). Place-Based Education in the Global Age: Local Diversity. Routledge.

Hall, Kathy, Conway, Paul F., Rath, Anne, Murphy, Rosaleen, & McKeon, Jacinta. (2008). Reporting to Parents in Primary School: Communication, Meaning and Learning. National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA).

Harford, Judit, & MacRuairc, Gerry. (2008). Engaging Student Teachers in Meaningful Reflective Practice. Teaching and Teacher Education, 24, 1884-1892. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2008.02.010

Harper, Nevin. J. (2017). Outdoor risky play and healthy child development in the shadow of the "risk society": A forest and nature school perspective. Child and Youth Services, 38(4), 318−334. https://doi.org/10.1080/0145935X.2017.1412825

Harris, Richard, & Bilton, Helen. (2018). Learning about the past: exploring the opportunities and challenges of using an outdoor learning approach. Cambridge Journal of Education, 49(1), 69−91. https://doi.org/10.1080/0305764x.2018.1442416

Higgins, Peter, & Nicol, Robbie. (2002). Outdoor Learning in Theory and Practice. In Peter Higgins & Robbie Nicol (Eds.), Outdoor Education. Authentic learning in the context of landscape (pp. 3-14). Kisa. https://www.docs.hss.ed.ac.uk/education/outdoored/oe_authentic_learning.pdf

Hopkins, David, & Putnam, Roger. (1994). Personal growth through adventure. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315067537

Hunt, Jasper S. Jr. (1995). Dewey's philosophical method and its influence on his philosophy of education. In Karen Warren, Mitchell Sakofs, & Jasper S. Jr. Hunt (Eds.), The Theory of Experiential Education. A collection of articles addressing the historical, philosophical, social and psychological foundation of Experiential Education (pp. 23-32). Association for Experiential Education https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED385423.pdf

ISO. (2018, July). ISO 31000:2018. ISO. https://www.iso.org/standard/65694.html

Joplin, Laura. (1995). On defining experiential education. In Karen Warren, Mitchell Sakofs, & Jasper S. Jr. Hunt (Eds.), The Theory of Experiential Education. A collection of articles addressing the historical, philosophical, social and psychological foundation of Experiential Education (pp. 15-22). Association for Experiential Education. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED385423.pdf

Kelly, Orla, Buckley, Karen, Lieberman, Lauren J., & Arndt, Katrina. (2022). Universal Design

for Learning – A framework for inclusion in Outdoor Learning. Journal of Outdoor and Environmental Education, 25(1), 75–89. https://doi.org/10.1007/s42322-022-00096-z

Kraft, Stephanie A., Porter, Kathryn M., Duenas, Devan M., Sullivan, Erin., Rowland, Maya., Saelens, Brian E., Wilfond, Benjamin S., & Seema K. Shah. (2020). Assessing Parent Decisions About Child Participation in a Behavioral Health Intervention Study and Utility of Informed Consent Forms. JAMA Network Open, 3(7), e209296. https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2020.9296

Loynes, Chris. (2002). The generative paradigm. Journal of Adventure Education & Outdoor Learning, 2, 113-125. https://doi.org/10.1080/14729670285200221

Magnusson, Magnus. (2006). Inclusion of young persons in outdoor education. Learning in Motion. Report II. Stockholm Institute of Education. https://www.buv.su.se/polopoly_fs/1.48829.1320917350!/TKH_44.pdf

McGarr, Oliver, & McCormack, Orla. (2016). Counterfactual mutation of critical classroom incidents: implications for reflective practice in initial teacher education. European journal of teacher education, 39(1), 36-52. https://doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2015.1066329

Mitchell, David. (2013). What Really Works in Special and Inclusive Education. Using evidence-based teaching strategies. Routledge.

Mortlock, Colin. (1987). The Adventure Alternative. Spirit of Adventure Foundation.

Neville, Ian A., Petrass, Lauren A., & Ben, Francis. (2023). Cross disciplinary teaching: A pedagogical model to support teachers in the development and implementation of outdoor learning opportunities. Journal of Outdoor and Environmental Education, 26, 1-21. https://doi.org/10.1007/s42322-022-00109-x

Nicol, Robbie, Higgins, Peter, Hamish, Ross & Mannion, Greg (2007). Outdoor Education in Scotland. A Summary of Recent Research. Scottish Natural Heritage and Learning and Teaching Scotland. https://www.docs.hss.ed.ac.uk/education/outdoored/nicol_et_al_oe_scotland_research.pdf

Nicol, Robbie, Rae, Ann, Murray, Rosa, Higgins, Peter, & Smith, Heidi. (2019). How can Initial Teacher Education tackle "Super-wicked" Problems? Scottish Educational Review, 51(1), 17-29. https://www.pure.ed.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/190747050/nicol_et_alSER2020SuperWicked.pdf

Parker, Luke. (2022). Outdoor Learning, A Pathway to Transformational Learning? Or Another Educational Gimmick? International Journal for Cross-Disciplinary Subjects in Education, 13(1), 4600–4611. https://doi.org/10.20533/ijcdse.2042.6364.2022.0565

Paulsen, David J., Carter, R. McKell., Platt, Michael L., Huettel, Scott A., & Brannon, Elizabeth M. (2012). Neurocognitive Development of Risk Aversion from Early Childhood to Adulthood. Frontiers in Human Neuroscience, 5. https://doi.org/10.3389/fnhum.2011.00178

Quay, John & Seaman, Jayson. (2013). John Dewey and Education Outdoors: Making Sense of the "Educational Situation" through More than a Century of Progressive Reforms. Sense. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6209-215-0

Rickinson, Mark, Dillon, Justin, Teamey, Kelly, Morris, Marian, Choi, Mee Young, Sanders, Dawn, & Benefield, Pauline. (2004). A review of Research on Outdoor Learning. NFER and King's College.

Salmon, Paul M., Goode, Natassia., Lenné, Michael G., Finch, Caroline F., & Cassell, Erin. (2014). Injury causation in the great outdoors: A systems analysis of led outdoor activity injury incidents. Accident Analysis & Prevention, 63, 111–120. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aap.2013.10.019

Shulman, LeeS. (1987). Knowledge and teaching. Foundations of the new reform. Harvard Educational Review, 57(1), pp. 1–22. https://people.ucsc.edu/~ktellez/shulman.pdf

Sandseter, Ellen Beate Hansen. (2009). Characteristics of risky play. Journal of Adventure Education & Outdoor Learning, 9(1), 3–21. https://doi.org/10.1080/14729670802702762

Sobel, David. (2004). Place-based Education: Connecting Classrooms & communities. Orion.

Spence, Suzanne, White, Martin, Adamson, Ashley, & Matthews, John N. S. (2015). Does the use of passive or active consent affect consent or completion rates, or dietary data quality? Repeat cross-sectional survey among school children aged 11-12 years. BMJ Open, 5(1), e006457–e006457. https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2014-006457

Stavrianos, Alexandros, & Pratt-Adams, Simon. (2022). Representations of the Benefits of Outdoor Education for Students with Learning Disabilities: A Thematic Analysis of Newspapers. Open Journal of Social Sciences, 10(6), 256–268. https://doi.org/10.4236/jss.2022.106020

Szczepanski, Anders, Malmer, Karin, Nelson, Nina, & Dahlgren, Lars O. (2006). Outdoor Education – Authentic Learning in the Context of Landscape Literary education and sensory experience. Perspective of Where, What, Why, How and When of learning environments. Interdisciplinary context and the outdoor and indoor dilemma. https://skoven-i-skolen.dk/sites/skoven-i-skolen.dk/files/filer/PDF-filer/andersszczepanski_0.pdf

Rowland, Tim, Huckstep, Peter, & Thwaites, Anne. (2005). Elementary teachers' mathematics subject knowledge. The knowledge quartet and the case of Naomi. Journal of Mathematics Teacher Education, 8, 255-281. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10857-005-0853-5

United Nations General Assembly, Transforming our world. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, A/RES/70/1. https://www.refworld.org/legal/resolution/unga/2015/en/111816

Waite, Sue, Bølling, Mads, & Bentsen, Peter. (2015). Comparing apples and pears? A conceptual framework for understanding forms of outdoor learning through comparison of English Forest Schools and Danish udeskole, Environmental Education Research, 22(6). https://doi.org/10.1080/13504622.2015.1075193

Wattchow, Brian, & Brown, Mike. (2011). A pedagogy of place: Outdoor education for a changing world. Monash University Publishing.

Wolf, Christina, Kunz, Patrick, & Robin, Nicolas. (2022). Emerging themes of research

into outdoor teaching in initial formal teacher training from early childhood to secondary education – A literature review. The Journal of Environmental Education, 53(4), 199-220. https://doi.org/10.1080/00958964.2022.2090889

World Commission on Environment and Development (1987). Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future. https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/5987our-common-future.pdf

Local Literature

Bortolotti, Alessandro. (2014). Metodi "fuori soglia". In Roberto Farné & Francesca Agostini (Eds.), Outdoor Education. L'educazione si-cura all'aperto. Edizioni Junior.

Bortolotti, Alessandro, Schenetti, Michela & Telese, Veronica. (2020). Outdoor Education as potential inclusive approach. A research into Kindergatens of Bologna Municipality. Italian Journal of Special Education for Inclusion, 8(1), 417-433. https://doi.org/10.7346/sipes-01-2020-29

Chistolini, Sandra (2016). Pedagogia della natura. Pensiero e azione nell'educazione della scuola contemporanea: Asilo nel bosco, Jardim Escola João de Deus, Outdoor education. Franco Angeli.

Farnè, Roberto, Bortolotti, Alessandro & Terrusi, Marcella. (Eds.). (2018). Outdoor Education. Prospettive teoriche e buone pratiche. Carocci.

Mazza, Stefano. (2018). Non aprite quella porta! Divagazioni sull'Outdoor Education. In Cristina Birbes (Ed.), Outdoor Education: Sguardi interpretativi e dimensioni pedagogiche (pp. 21-40). Pensa Multimedia.

Nizet, Isabelle. (2016). Le développement de compétences professionnelles par des enseignants en exercice: le cas de l'évaluation des apprentissages. Éducation et francophonie, 44(2), 109-125. https://doi.org/10.7202/1039024ar

Pedone, Francesca. (2021). Includere per apprendere, apprendere per includere. Formazione e sviluppo professionale inclusivo degli insegnanti. Pensa Multimedia.

Perfetti, Simona. (2023). Pratiche educative per i servizi di prima e seconda infanzia. L'Outdoor Education e la dimensione inclusiva. Annali online della Didattica e della Formazione Docente, 15(25), 541-555. ISSN 2038-1034

Zanato Orlandini, Orietta. (2020). Outdoor Education. Riflessioni su alcuni paradigmi che la rappresentano. Studium Educationis, 1, 9–18. https://doi.org/10.7346/SE-012020-02

About the authors

Beausetha Juhetha Bruwer

Beausetha Bruwer, instructor of inclusive education, deaf education, and

sign language. Experiences as a teacher of deaf children and as a teacher and sign language interpreter trainer at college and university level. Her key areas of research interest include, among other things: language education, early literacy and language acquisition/ development for deaf learners, sign language linguistics and practices, Deaf culture, mother tongue education, multilingual education, early childhood inclusive practices, play pedagogy, outdoor pedagogy, and teacher preparation for inclusive practices.

Chee Shien Tan

Victor Tan Chee Shien has over ten years of experience in special education and is a trained counsellor and educational psychologist. He recently received his Associate Fellowship in higher education from the University of Stirling. His research interests include special education, higher education, and international mobility (ORCID: 0009-0006-3403-4649).

Maria Moscato

Maria Moscato is deeply passionate about democratic human development and global citizenship. During her academic journey, she has specialised in Methodologies of Teaching and Special Education, concentrating on critical areas such as Inclusive Education, Outdoor Education, participatory and transformative processes, teaching strategies, and the professional development of teachers and educators. Her extensive experience as an educator, teacher trainer, and workshop facilitator for prospective teachers has further enriched her profile. Throughout her doctoral studies, she has had the opportunity to contribute to research and projects focused on Inclusive Education and inclusive strategies.

THE MAGIC OF INCLUSION: TRANSFORMATIVE ACTION FOR SUSTAINABILITY EDUCATION

Sofia Ahlberg; Patricia Kennon; and Katarina Rončević

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://book.all-means-all.education/ ama-2025-en/?p=381#oembed-1

Example Case

Open-Ended Example Case: the "fishbowl" as a pedagogical tool for inclusivity

"You may not have time to read the essay in its entirety, so here's an example of a classroom activity that can give the experience of inclusion-oriented education for sustainable development. First and foremost, it is a method for dialogue designed to offer all participants a sense of active engagement in a discussion, no matter how much or how little they verbally contribute. The actual topic is less important than the formal struggle of the conversation. It is known by some as the "socratic dialogue" but it is more commonly referred to as the fishbowl activity. The set-up is simple enough. The instructor ensures that there are enough people to make two circles, one inner and the other outer. While participants in the inner circle share their responses to a question, those on the outer circle are asked to listen closely without speaking. They are encouraged to take notes and jot down any ideas that spring to mind as they listen to the discussion. One of the remarkable outcomes following such a "fishbowl" discussion is that participants all report having been in an active discussion even if they were in the outer circle whose members did not speak. In one such activity set-up, secondary-school students were asked to share their experiences after reading a short story by Julius Lester called "The Child". Students were asked to share their impressions of having been surprised on learning

something new about how race can be described. An open-ended question that is grounded in experiential learning is more likely to bring to the surface the many assumptions that students have regarding a certain subject. Even when people aren't sharing their own experiences, they nevertheless learn about their own assumptions and habits of thought while listening to other people speaking. The inner circle, by contrast, experiences a heightened sense of being heard by a silent audience. They gain a sense of shared responsibility and responsiveness for the discussion. The "fishbowl" activity becomes a powerful pedagogical tool for interrogating what is often taken as the norm."

who, Institution, Country

Initial questions

In this chapter you will find the answers to the following questions:

1. What is sustainability?
2. Why does inclusion matter in this context of sustainability?
3. What reflective exercises can the reader complete as a bridge into competencies?
4. What is the role of the educator in this context?
5. How can we look beyond the impossible: Why does magic matter?

Introduction to Topic

This chapter explores the question of the intersection between sustainability and inclusion and how the pedagogical approaches of sustainability education and inclusive education can be dove-tailed. The chapter provides impulses for reflection for teachers as well as concrete examples for implementing inclusive teaching practices.

Firstly, let us offer a word about the authors of this chapter. The collective "we" used throughout the chapter refers to a collaboration of three quite different scholars each with their own interests and passions. The plurality of our perspectives as researchers and activists is respected in this use of the first-person plural. Also, our cultural diversity, while not explicitly mentioned in the text, informs the discussions that were part of the writing process. Each of us is based on a different campus and works on a different

professional area of academia and activism and so our choice of "we" is an open cross-pollination of multiple voices and ideas rather than the result of a convergence. In this chapter we combine theory and praxis, drawing from our expertise in and out of the classroom, on and off campus. When planning the chapter, we have been guided by an overarching question: what is missing, who is excluded? With that said, it may be that some readers feel we have made assumptions that do not reflect their circumstances, knowledge or experience. We invite readers to get in touch with any questions or comments you may have, especially if you feel we have overlooked or misunderstood your perspective. Above all, it is our hope that this chapter may serve as one of many departure points for collective thinking around inclusion-oriented education for sustainability (ESD). This cannot be achieved without creating connections between different individuals, cultures, fields and institutions, breaking down hierarchies and disciplinary silos while still respecting the autonomy of research.

Key aspects

Sustainability

We want to start by offering a short background to this rather slippery topic of sustainability. Human welfare in the context of an intact environment was first discussed on an international political level at the first UN Conference on the Environment in Stockholm in 1972. In the same year, the Club of Rome's report "The Limits to Growth" was published. This report discusses the topic of sustainability in considerable detail. With the Brundtland Report in 1983, the United Nations General Assembly formulated a worldwide program or recommendations for action that sharpened the international discussion on sustainability or sustainable development. Among other things, it emphasised the linkage of environmental and developmental issues, as well as inter- and intragenerational equity, all the while taking into account the global perspective. With the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio in 1992, the model of sustainable development, which gives equal importance to the economic, environmental, and social dimensions, was finally recognised internationally: "The right to development must be fulfilled so as to equitably meet developmental and environmental needs of present and future generations." Relevant milestones and frames of references for the international community with regard to sustainable development were then established following Millennium Development Goals in 2000, which were the result of the Johannesburg Conference in 2002 and the Rio Conference in 2012. More recently, the United Nations subsequently adopted the Agenda 2030 with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The SDGs are characterised by their universality. This is to say that they hold all countries accountable in a global partnership that subscribes to a shared understanding of values.

The 17 goals of the SDGs are based on the following guiding principles (also known as the 5 Ps): People – Planet – Prosperity – Peace – Partnership.

The objective of the SDGs is – besides protecting planetary boundaries – also to ensure inclusion and equality for every person. Significantly, this is not just about holding to account, and safeguarding the rights of marginalised groups in the implementation of the SDGs, although this is obviously an important part of it. It is above all about empowering all people, including marginalised groups, to enable active participation in sustainable processes on all levels.

The question is, why does inclusion matter in the context of sustainability? First of all, it should be emphasised at this point that sustainability not only includes the ecological dimension. Social justice is a core element that contributes to the need to break down global power structures at the community level in order to enable equal opportunities for all in a healthy, just, and sustainable environment. Questions relating to how closely the environment and peace are intertwined can be clearly demonstrated by current global crises, be it the Covid-19 pandemic, the loss of biodiversity, or wars such as the war in Ukraine. The effects of these global crises are visible in almost all regions of the world, and they include famines as well as energy shortages. Peace cannot be guaranteed without attending to the environmental crisis.

However, who are we referring to when we talk about inclusion? And what does "All means All" mean in the context of sustainability? With inclusion, we are oriented towards

diversity: all people, regardless of socio-economic background, cultures, individual abilities or disabilities, age, religion, gender, sexual orientation, and so on. Nonetheless, we also mean the inclusion of nature and animals. Consequently, when we talk about inclusion, we understand diversity as a principle of inclusion. In other words, we argue that inclusion should be understood as a process that creates a context free of discrimination. It is a context that empowers everyone to actively participate in questions to do with sustainability. A key element of ensuring inclusion is, quite simply, participation of all. However, there are structural challenges that often tend to hamper participation of all in societal processes. Therefore, the need for cultural, society-wide change is becoming more necessary. Here, education plays a major role with "the importance of building capacities to enable learners to think, reflect more critically about actions, understand and respect diversity with strong beliefs and actions rooted in social justice, equity and participation" (Joon & Roncevic, 2015:35). On the one hand, there is a need for inclusion in education so as to ensure "a sense of change where something excluded or omitted is now being included in the system" (O´Donohue & Roncevic, 2020:20). On the other hand, there is also the need to strengthen inclusion through education. A pedagogical answer can be found in the concept of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), also Goal 4 in the SDGs, requires us to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. With Goal 4.7 of the SDGs, ESD and Global Citizenship Education, two approaches are highlighted.

In particular, ESD is about equipping all learners with the competences (for example critical thinking, system thinking,empathy) they require in order to meet the uncertainties that global challenges present, and will continue to present in the future, in a sustainable manner. To ensure inclusion in general with ESD, implementation of this approach is urgently needed. Unfortunately, for the most part, these two concepts (ESD and inclusive education) are discussed separately and from different perspectives. Indeed, there is a research gap in linking the development of a common perspective of both,and there is also a lack of documented practical experiences with inclusion-oriented ESD (Rončević & Rieckmann, (In Press); Rončević & Schulz, (In Press); Vierbuchen & Rieckmann, 2020; Böhme, 2019). We, therefore, want to encourage inclusive education and ESD to   be thought of and implemented together from the very beginning. Inclusive education naturally also refers to people with special (learning) needs. Here, special educational approaches are also used to ensure access for people with different modes of accessibility to ensure that all learners receive the best educational support according to their individual (learning) needs. In concrete terms, this means, for example, that learning opportunities and learning materials must have a certain flexibility so that they can be adapted according to individual needs.

Sustainability means meeting the needs of the present in such a way that the opportunities of future generations are not restricted. Sustainability considers the three dimensions − economically efficient, socially just, and ecologically viable − on an equal

footing. It is important to emphasise, that sustainability can only succeed if it is achieved with, and for all people.

Reflective exercise for the reader as a bridge into competencies

Our first intention was to share best practices of how to incorporate inclusion-oriented ESD in the classroom. In the early stages of writing, however, we grew a little uncomfortable about sharing exercises and activities without knowing more about the social contexts, positions, and even geographical locations of the reader. Inclusion can never be based on a one-size-fits-all model. So, we decided against sharing exercises that could turn out to be ineffective or possibly counter-productive in educating teacher-trainees in some contexts. Instead, we will offer a set of reflective exercises for teachers or trainees aimed at discovering and identifying the thoughts and belief systems that might shape inclusion-oriented ESD. While we will speak more specifically out of our own discipline-specific fields of research later in this chapter, for this exercise we would like you to consider your own subject or field of expertise by reflecting on a set of questions. Please jot down your answers to the following prompts on a sheet of paper or using any digital writing device:

- What can you imagine yourself teaching? It may be a subject or a topic that interests you that you would like to bring to the classroom.
- Name two to three important learning outcomes you aim to provide when you are designing a lesson for this topic of interest.
- What happens if you come up with something that isn't officially recognised as needing to be taught or currently not considered important enough to be taught? How would you translate it into something more recognisable?

It is necessary to think more self-reflexively about what it is exactly that we teach if we want to understand how to make what it actually offers students more inclusive. The questions above are tangential to the matter of inclusivity. This is because what is essentially being asked of the teacher is what would they strive to include in a classroom situation that was not already required of them. It is a matter of acknowledging that inclusivity begins with the teacher's reflections on what is missing in the classroom. The prompts above direct the educator to reflect on what is important to them and others about their subject. They may discover new aspects of the content, theory, and practice of teaching this subject that are relevant beyond their field. This is also an opportunity to build a new vocabulary for communicating with the broader community on what they do in the classroom. This is a way that the input of educators helps to ensure that education avoids becoming inert or fixed.

   Importantly, the foregoing prompts for self-reflection also help to situate educators and learners in their learning environment. An inclusive approach to sustainability education

means that educators and learners work together, that they welcome all ages and socio-cultural groups. In order to envision alternative futures, it is necessary to facilitate multi-vocal contributions of all participants across educational systems. For such encounters to happen in an open and inclusive way, both educators and learners need to practice deep listening. The following exercises can be used as a starting point in any educational situation. Their aim is to develop a sense of agency, identity, and meaning through engagement with us and with the world. It is also an exercise in making visible what may otherwise be hidden, including aspects of our habitat. The age range of learners for this exercise encompasses both secondary school students as well as their teachers.

Becoming aware

To do this exercise you will need 3-5 minutes. No tools are required. Look around the classroom or the space where learning takes place. Take your time. Become aware of the place, the furniture, and the way it is arranged. Where is the light source, either natural or artificial? There may be several. Spread your awareness to include other teachers and learners who share this space with you. Where are they seated in the room? And are there sentient beings other than humans in this place? Can you see or hear something of the natural world? Are any non-human creatures visible from where you are? What about organic matter and other life forms? Has any of the outside come inside? Once educators and learners have developed a habit of awareness regarding the educational environment that they inhabit, it may be possible to turn our thoughts to how we communicate this to the wider community in a broad and encompassing way.

A sense of belonging

Sustainability education is about developing caring relations with both the human and the non-human world. A necessary insight for this is to achieve a sense of being a member of the environment one cares for rather than an external agent tasked with caring. This means moving beyond "humanist stewardship frameworks and their implicit human exceptionalist assumptions" (Taylor, 2015:1449).

Instructions: we recommend that participants write anonymously, for example, by using Padlet as in the following sample student responses, or via journaling that may or may not be anonymous. The **conversation prompt** is: "What I learned from living things: share a time when you learned something memorable from non-human life." In the same way that inclusion can be understood to encompass the non-human as well as everything beyond the human, it is also the case that an inclusion-oriented approach to sustainability education is mindful of future generations. Educational spaces can design a more just, sustainable, and joyous future marked by principles of diversity and inclusion. The following exercise may be useful in reflecting over one's own relationship with future generations of humans. **Instructions**: to do this exercise you will need 10-15 minutes, pens and paper.

Design a message to posterity of what you think your current habitat communicates to strangers. Please only use shapes, shades, patterns, and doodles. You can choose to design a message of caution and warning, or a welcoming and cheerful message. Jagged, spiky, knotted shapes may suggest threat and harm, but what shapes suggest a loving, welcoming greeting from our century? These exercises may guide educators and learners in finding out how we view ourselves and how we invite others into our educational space.

The role of educators as agents of change

Now let us consider how educators might engage with and enact knowledges into actions in their practice. We are consciously using the plural term for knowledges and actions in order to represent the diverse forms of embodied, individual, and collective knowledges as well as conscious and unconscious beliefs, attitudes, values, and judgments that inform the design and carrying out of educational experiences. Educators can play a transformative role as agents of change for implementing inclusion and sustainable development education at local, national, and transnational levels: in the teaching and learning community of the classroom; in the social and cultural community of the early-years setting, school or university; in their own society; and in systems of intercultural exchange and engagement with global citizenship. The educator possesses a powerful opportunity in their everyday practice to enact an inclusive and environmentally sustainable pedagogy which is rooted in principles of care, the uniqueness of each learner, the interconnectedness of humanity and our ecological environments, the integrity of nature in its own right, the rights of each learner, and the rights and needs of each culture, especially indigenous and marginalised groups. It is crucial for sites of formal teaching and learning, such as the institutions of the school and university, as well as informal educational spaces and educational partnerships to recognise and respond to both the individual learning and educational needs of each learner as well as to local and global environmental, economic, and cultural challenges.

Although there are many competing understandings of sustainability education and inclusive education, education at the intersection of these domains involves highlighting local and/or global social injustices and inequities with a view to motivating individuals and groups to work towards a different future, based on a more equitable, sustainable, and just vision of human and ecological worlds (Bryan et al., 2009). The overarching concern of inclusive sustainability education aims towards a re-organisation and re-imagining of human and non-human relations within ecological, economic, and cultural environments for supporting all people and the natural world in the current contemporary moment, as well as in and for the future. Since the nexus of inclusive education and sustainability education within educational contexts is not always named or defined, it is important for student teachers and teacher educators to collectively centre educational practice which

prioritises equitable, inclusive, and environmentally and culturally sustainable relationships in all contexts of teaching and learning.

As part of our invitation to student teachers and teacher educators to incorporate this model of inclusive sustainable development education into your practice, we draw on Marilyn Cochran-Smith and Susan Lytle's theory of practice that conceptualises teaching for equity and social and environmental justice as being far more than the development of skills, strategies, and teaching methodologies. Their framework of 'inquiry as stance' is neither a top-down nor a bottom-up theory of action, but an organic and democratic one that positions practitioners' knowledge, practitioners, and their interactions with students and other stakeholders at the center of educational transformation. Actually, living and enacting the mission statements of educational institutions, especially third-level institutions, is vital in order to recognise and empower educators' agency and all learners' equity of participation within the classroom as well as outside the classroom. An understanding of both the educators' and learners' own lives and lived experiences as well as the potential of collective action and intersectional and intergenerational solidarity are needed.

We encourage you to reflect on your beliefs, attitudes, agency, advocacy for inclusive education and sustainable development education, your professional partnerships, and your relationships with parents and families in this regard. Change towards a culturally and ecologically-sensitive inclusive sustainability education needs to happen at individual, institutional, and community levels and educators need to connect key ideas of inequality and inequitable distribution of resources with conceptions of justice, recognition, and emancipation at the level of each individual learner's educational needs, local cultural and ecological contexts of discrimination, disadvantage and privilege, and global contexts of challenges such as climate justice, poverty, hunger, quality education for all, gender equality, responsible consumption and production, sustainable cities and communities, and peaceful societies. Bringing together inclusive education and sustainability education offers a crucial intervention for an educational practice which is capable of acknowledging and analysing oppressive and discriminatory educational, ecological, and cultural systems as well as the dynamic interaction of knowledges and actions to confront and transform these systems.

In their everyday practice, educators at all levels must negotiate and navigate curricula and contexts in disciplinary-specific as well as interdisciplinary ways. Key to this professional decision-making and series of educational actions is the educator's relationship with what can be called 'Big C' Curriculum and 'little c' curriculum. Curriculum with a 'Big C' involves the explicit and standardised concepts, contents, and skills which are informed by local and national learning outcomes, educational benchmarks, assessments, and standards. 'Little c' curriculum encompasses the 'hidden curriculum', the day-to-day interactions with learners, and the myriad of implicit teaching and learning modes and systems which the institution of schooling implicitly presumes and inculcates, for example, dress codes, the privileging of certain languages over learners' home languages, gender norms, the normative assumption of ableist physical teaching and learning materials and

environments. Both the 'Big C' and 'little C' involve conscious and unconscious normative structures, power relationships, privileges, inclusionary, and exclusionary practices. Just as the 'Big C' curriculum might assume a Eurocentric bias or ethnocentric worldview in supposedly 'objective' content in History or canons of literature around particular communities, histories, and knowledges, the 'little C' curriculum is similarly biased towards maintaining the hegemony of particular norms, individuals and groups while disenfranchising marginalised learners and groups who are neurodivergent, indigenous, working-class, migrants, etc. A socially- just, environmentally-just, and change-oriented teacher is one who recognises that no teaching is neutral (Freire, 1970) and who is committed to critical pedagogy, critical literacy, sustainable and inclusive teaching and learning, democracy, and democratic practice. Educators' acknowledgment and affirmation of the diversity of lived experiences and environmental contexts that they, as well as each of their students, bring into the classroom are key for enabling educators to link real-world issues and challenges, and to make teaching and learning authentic and meaningful.

The letter 'C' also brings us to the importance of educators' own competencies, which are vital for equipping them to act as agents of change at local and global levels, and to culturally and environmentally respond to the needs of their diverse learners, their educational, economic and social contexts, their local and national Curricula, and their own daily interpretation and enactment of curricula. There are many national and international systems and programmes of educator competencies but in our collective perspective, the following three competencies are particularly important for equipping and empowering educators' capacity and confidence to implement inclusion-oriented sustainability education: creativity; collaboration and deep listening; and systems thinking (the ability to deal with complexity). Creative Scotland defines creativity as 'the capacity to generate ideas; things that have value to the individual. Looking at things with a fresh eye; examining problems with an open mind; making connections; learning from mistakes and using the imagination to explore new possibilities' (2013: 55). Creativity supports the development of the pedagogical expertise of student teachers, including subject-specific pedagogical content knowledge such as play-based pedagogy in the teaching of Mathematics or a place-based pedagogy in the teaching of Geography, as well as empowering learners to more fully participate in and have equitable access to learning. We would urge educators in all educational levels and sectors to incorporate these professional values and actions into their own practice as well as incorporating a diversity of opportunities for learners to develop their own creativity and imaginative agency. Educators' own creativity and the fostering of learners' creativity take on even more urgency due to ongoing and new challenges and crises that the human and nonhuman worlds are facing.

The second competency which is vital for designing and implementing an inclusive model of sustainability education involves the importance of collaborations and deep listening between all educators, learners, and stakeholders in eacheducational setting and sector as well as across educational settings and sectors. Meaningful and reciprocal

partnerships and collaborations are crucial. Early-years practitioners, primary-school teachers, secondary-school teachers, teacher educators and all of their diverse educational settings must be regarded as equal and valued sites and producers of knowledge by academia and academics around sustainability education for creating and maintaining successful and cross-sectoral links policy, teaching, learning, research, and lived experience. Deep listening — an ongoing practice of suspending self-oriented, reactive thinking, and opening one's awareness of the unknown and unexpected —is a powerful tool for enabling more authentic and shared understandings and consensus across differences and diversities of learners and their economic, social, and ecological contexts. Through deep listening, we can affirm, motivate, and empower others as well as ourselves, build trust and goodwill, learn and exchange new ideas and alternate perspectives, work through conflict, make it safe for us all to equally and equitably participate in education, and transform human and nonhuman relationships. The third competency of systems thinking is linked with the importance of deep listening as both competencies require a readiness for recognising and respecting complexity. While systems thinking can mean different things to different people, systems thinking generally involves a sensitivity to the dynamic complexity and intersectionality of identities, cultures, and ecologies and calls for compassion, courage, curiosity, clarity, and a commitment to enacting change in ways that benefit all stakeholders. It requires a shift in mindset from the linear to the circular, a willingness to see a situation or problem more fully, and acknowledgements that educators and learners are interrelated, that human and nonhuman worlds are interconnected, and a respect for the legitimacy and diversity of multiple interventions to social, political, and ecological challenges. Bringing creativity, deep listening, and a systems-thinking mindset together in educational practice can offer possibilities for different futures which can sustain and affirm the needs and diversity of learners, contexts, and planetary boundaries alike.

In order for student teachers to develop these three competencies and for educators in all settings to authentically and meaningfully enact the values and actions of inclusive sustainability education, all disciplines, subject areas, and levels of education must embrace and play their individual and collective roles. No discipline or level of education (early years, primary, secondary, third-level, adult education, community education etc.) is exempt from engaging with and enacting the values and transformative actions of inclusive sustainability education. There can be pervasive normative assumptions that inclusive sustainability education is more 'naturally' relevant or applicable for some subjects such as Geography while it can be perceived as irrelevant or inapplicable to subjects such as Drama Education or PE Education or 'too complex' for young learners in early years settings. Such norms and normative knowledges can be embedded in neo-colonialist and conservative power relationships, binaries, and histories of cultural and ecological hierarchies. Many student teachers arrive at their engagements with sustainability education and inclusive education from an ethnocentric place, taking neurodivergent, classist, and ableist norms and European 'superiority' for granted and believing that their viewpoint is both the best

and 'common sense'. Educational theorists such as Douglas Bourn advise student teachers and teacher educators to deconstruct issues and events and consider them from a range of perspectives in order to develop a 'sense of global outlook' or 'global mind-set' which understands the viewpoints of others. Educators need to develop competencies which empower themselves as agents of change and which support their learners to view the human and nonhuman world through diverse lenses. Challenging ethnocentrism and the associated normative regimes of ableism, racism, sexism, and homophobia, and incorporating multiple perspectives into teaching and learning are intrinsic elements of an inclusive sustainability education pedagogy. Creativity and dialogic methodologies such as deep listening and systems thinking are key tools for recognising, naming and fighting oppression and inequities at both a local and a global level and for responding to the needs of contemporary learners, communities, and ecological environments as well as the needs of future human and nonhuman generations.

Magic Matters – looking beyond the impossible

Magic is often thematized as the inexplicable extension of some individual's influence. The form of magic that interests us is much more along the lines of discovering possibilities through the concerted action of collaborative and inclusive groups.

Along with promoting principles of care, the classroom is also a place for provoking a critical perspective on what is or is not possible, especially when dealing with wicked problems and powerful adversaries. It is often a matter of deciding when to employ rational principles based on standards such as precedent or so-called business as usual, and when to seek alternatives. This is acutely relevant in our time considering that schools play a very important role in educating citizens of an uncertain future who will need to be climate aware and capable of adapting to rapidly changing circumstances. At the same time, global decision-making bodies are showing that they cannot effectively turn the climate crisis around via rational argument and strategic planning, and this is despite impressive scientific and technological development over the last few decades. The environmental crisis is literally a case of shapeshifting on a planetary scale and to address it another type of knowledge is required, one that cannot be measured against key performance indicators that do not register the pace and degree of change taking place. We call for the magic of inclusion in the sense that no line of enquiry is omitted simply because it seems impossible or irrational or does not fulfil some established criteria of feasibility. A starting point for understanding what is magical about inclusion-oriented ESD is to remind readers that when people collaborate widely on climate action using methods and motives that conventional knowledge deems impossible and irrational, change happens, previously indiscernible ways forward (or back) become visible and viable. This has been proven most spectacularly by Greta Thunberg. Her FridaysForFuture, and other such global movements of climate activism, are manifestations of action at a distance, a key definition of magic. In this case,

an individual or collective speech goes beyond its immediate audience so that it moves listeners or readers who are far away, sometimes becoming a call to action.

As we know, learning always involves change. When a student gains an insight, masters a concept or acquires a new skill, they do not just become better equipped at dealing with reality, as well they become capable of creating their reality. Moreover, when collaborative and literacy skills are built into everything they learn, then they are able to enlist others in creating worlds they can share. We see the climate crisis as a specifically pedagogical challenge insofar as all responses should involve learning very new ways of being in the world and of living equitably with others. More specifically, in the present context it is as much about unlearning and dropping harmful habits and practices as it is about taking on new ones. The kind of learning that must face climate crisis means comprehending new ways of seeing the human and other-than-human so as to grasp new methods for mutual survival while letting go of other, less sustainable and thus counter-productive ways. It is about broadening and deepening the vocabulary we use for defining and invoking spaces of creative and inclusive practices. Pedagogy changes people in a process that can be likened to shapeshifting as it shifts our boundaries and expands what we believe is possible. At stake is the kind of knowledge acquisition that requires students to pass through liminal and transformative experiences to make real discoveries about themselves and their world. This is what Rudine Sims Bishop means when she speaks of "sliding doors" that readers find in books that they "have only to walk through in imagination" to find themselves responding to actual or possible worlds. Sims Bishop notes these doors can be mirrors as well by which readers learn about themselves and their own worlds. We will say more about that in relation to children's literature. For now, we want to point out that an inclusion-oriented practice towards educating for sustainability emphasises dealing with realities as they are rather than denying them. It also fosters the equally real capacity to imagine different future realities and new ways of collaborating with others.

Collaboration with others requires communication and the ability to share vocabularies and literacies widely. No matter where in the world you are teaching, you will find that language proficiency is an educational goal built into the curriculum. Literacy and language proficiency are important for preparing students to become participants in democratic processes and actively contribute to sustainable communities. Even if you are not teaching languages or literature, we argue that the practice of creative writing as a path towards improving literacy helps forge inclusive approaches to sustainability education. Creativity is a means of welcoming diversity since it is often aimed at discovering aspects of one's world, of oneself and of others that reveal a wealth of possible relationships that might otherwise be excluded or overlooked. Creativity can include improvisation, a focus on listening, as well as a spontaneous call, and response as a way of engaging with expression. Creativity is about getting outside of one's preconceptions and assumptions and learning instead new ways of seeing and responding to diversity. We are passionate about using creativity to develop literacy because this helps remedy the problem of uneven participation

in classroom activities due to varying literacy levels. Naturally, there is a continuation of this benefit after schooling when literacy is a basis for improved participation in society. Creativity has to do with a spirit of adventure in collaboration that can draw on a plurality of voices – one's own as well as others' – for developing relations between diverse beings and bodies. Sustainability education is about bringing creativity together with the courage needed to work with others in imagining alternative ways of living in communities. However, to ensure that these communities are inclusive, it is necessary for all to contribute throughspeaking, reading and writing.

Courage is a focus in many creative exercises that help overcome the fear of looking stupid in the eyes of others. And this is a key element of collaborative creative endeavour. Improvisation is one way of encouraging students to develop trust and the ability to respond to others in a way that is similar to ensemble theatre performance. The following variation on the collaborative writing game called *exquisite corpse* helps students overcome the fear of expressing themselves creatively. It succeeds in this because they are riffing on words and phrases that they did not personally come up with. In this version of the game, the teacher shares with the class the final sentence from a novel or a text that the group is studying. One student then begins the activity by writing a sentence or a phrase beginning with the last four words of that sentence and folds the paper to hide what they have written. Then, before passing the paper over to a fellow student, they write the last four words of their sentence on a new line which the next person now has to complete. They then repeat the process with the folding of the paper and beginning a new line with their final four words for the next student to complete, and so on. This activity can also be done online using a private message function. In this case, students each receive the four prompt words from the teacher and then send their sentence back one at a time to the teacher who will send the final four words to the next student. The teacher is responsible for collecting all the contributions and distributing the words to the next student until all have made their contribution. The body of writing that emerges at the end of this activity becomes a wonderful joint creation that often provokes wonder and curiosity. When the teacher reads it out loud, with the lines of each participant sutured via the repetition of four words, the result is often heartwarming and beautiful.

Similarly to the empowering potential of creative writing and creative self-expression, children's and young adult literature can provide a powerful and transformative space for exploring identities, norms, power relationships, and human-nonhuman relationships. Stories offer opportunities for affirming ourselves and our understanding of our place in our world as well as engaging with diversity and alternative ways of being and doing in non-hierarchical ways for building reciprocal learning and respect. In Rudine Sims Bishop's inspiring framework about the potential of literature for young people to create a celebration of belonging as well as difference, fiction and nonfiction can operate as "windows, offering views of worlds that may be real or imagined, familiar or strange. These windows are also sliding glass doors, and readers have only to walk through in imagination to become part of

whatever world has been created and recreated by the author. When lighting conditions are just right, however, a window can also be a mirror" (Sims Bishop). We would invite you to consider which picture books, films, short stories, poems, novels etc. in your own personal life have acted as windows and doorways into another way of thinking and being and which have acted as mirrors which consolidate and reflect your own experience, perspective, and identity. We would also encourage you to reflect about what kinds of literature you have selected in your professional role as educator and might you select for bringing into your learning community and your educational practice. Who is recognised, privileged, and centred in these works? Whose voices and perspectives are normalised in these works and who is absent or neglected or erased? What kinds of conscious and unconscious biases are involved regarding social and economic systems and issues of class, race, age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity, and disability? What kinds of ideas, beliefs, values, and knowledges are being consciously and implicitly taught and learnt regarding human-nonhuman relationships, ecologies, and global environmental challenges?

Children's and young-adult literature as well as the wider area of arts-based approaches can open up and support safe imaginative spaces for educators and learners alike to reflect and collaboratively explore diversities of voices, traditions, identities, contexts, and perspectives while also inviting us to consider our realities and lived experiences and to imagine new possibilities and alternatives. Visual narratives such as picture books, comics, graphic novels, films, animation, and illustrated nonfiction offer rich and enriching potential for developing different learners' linguistic capacities and visual literacy skills while building learners' environmental agency and engagement with ecological issues as well as social, cultural, political ideas. Learners at all educational levels can interact with children's and young-adult literature to inspire their own creative and investigative projects around their own family histories, their local communities, and their understandings and participation in human-nonhuman relationships, for example, creating guidebooks about their heritages which recognise and centre indigenous and marginalised knowledges, keeping a naturalist's notebook which enacts and advocates for care and a commitment to sustainability. Educators and learners might collaboratively explore works of activism, political speeches, guerrilla theatre, hip hop activism, culture jamming, and associated genres as well as create their own activist works such as letter-writing to political and community leaders, petitions, advocacy journalism, and social-media campaigns around issues of economic, ecological, and cultural concern to them, their families, and communities such as sustainable consumerism, discriminations against minority groups, the circular economy, enabling the human rights of all learners, etc. Literature for young people, and by young people, can act as an immersive and accessible springboard for place-based embodied learning and projects around investigating the histories, stories, languages, needs, cultures, and heritages of local, national, and global communities.

Conclusion

Our world is facing complex challenges such as unprecedented loss of biodiversity, climate crisis, geopolitical conflicts. Democracy is also at risk due to increasing populism in some regions of the world. Society-wide transformations are needed to ensure stability together with sustainability. Education needs to be part of these changes which will include transformative inclusion-oriented ESD. An inclusion-oriented ESD prepares the young generation – regardless of socioeconomic and cultural background, (dis)ability, race or sexual orientation – for current and future challenges and enables them to deal with their impacts. Such an approach may result in the participation of all learners in the struggle for a more sustainable future. In this chapter we have offered new orientations for educators and student teachers to begin to incorporate inclusion-oriented principles within the formal school system and beyond. We highly recommend that educators start the process in a way that suits them. This could be through classroom activities, extracurricular activities or subject design with the aim of enabling all learners to actively work through sustainability questions. In uncertain times like these, the focus should be on taking stronger action, opening up spaces for young learners to identify alternative, sustainability-oriented actions and, above all, try out new approaches. In order to realise this ambitious approach, we call for an openness in our educational practices to help facilitate the unprecedented and perhaps inexplicable change that our times call for. This is what we mean by the magic of inclusion.

Local contexts

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=381#h5p-23

Closing questions to discuss or tasks

1. How would you like to begin adapting your teaching practices along an inclusion-oriented sustainability education?

2. Where do you see the first concrete opportunities for connection to your daily teaching practices? Is it your subject?

3. What do you need for your teaching?

Literature

Bamber, Philip. *Teacher Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship: Critical Perspectives on Values, Curriculum and Assessment*. London: Routledge, 2019.

Bertling, Joy G. *Art Education for a Sustainable Planet: Embracing Ecopedagogy in K-12 Classrooms*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2023.

Bishop, Ruth Sims. "Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors." *Perspectives* 1, no. 3 (1990): ix–xi.

Böhme, L. *Politische Bildung Für Schülerinnen Und Schüler Mit Sonderpädagogischem Förderbedarf. Perspektiven Globalen Lernens an Förderzentren*. Frankfurt: Wochenschau-Verlag, 2019.

Bourn, Douglas. "Teachers as Agents of Social Change." *International Journal of Development Education and Global Learning* 7, no. 3 (2016): 63–77.

Boyle, Christopher, and Kelly-Ann Allen, eds. *Research for Inclusive Quality Education: Leveraging Belonging, Inclusion, and Equity*. New York: Verlag, 2022.

Bryan, A., and S. Drudy. "Social Justice Education in Initial Teacher Education: A Cross Border Perspective: A Report for the Standing Conference on Teacher Education North and South (SCoTENS)," 2009.

Cochran-Smith, M., and S. L. Lytle. *Inquiry as Stance: Practitioner Research for the Next Generation*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2009.

Davies, Ian, Ho Li-Ching, Dina Kiwan, Carla L. Peck, Andrew Peterson, Edda Sant, and Yusef Waghid, eds. *The Palgrave Handbook of Global Citizenship and Education*. London: Palgrave, 2018.

Elliott, Sue, Eva Ärlemalm-Hagsér, and Julie Davis. *Researching Early Childhood Education For Sustainability*. London: Routledge, 2020.

Filho, Walter Leal, ed. *Encyclopedia of Sustainability in Higher Education*. Cham: Springer, 2020.

Freire, Paolo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. London: Penguin, 1970.

Haalder, Santoshi, Shakila Dada, and Rashida Banerjee, eds. *The Routledge Handbook of Inclusive Education for Teacher Educators: Issues, Considerations, and Strategies*. London: Routledge, 2023.

Haggstroem, Margaretha, and Catarina Schmidt, eds. *Relational and Critical Perspectives on Education for Sustainable Development: Belonging and Sensing in a Vanishing World*. Cham: Springer, 2022.

Huggins, Valerie, and David Evans. *Early Childhood Education and Care for Sustainability*.

New York: Routledge, 2018.

Karaarslan-Semiz, Gulizz, ed. *Education for Sustainable Development in Primary and Secondary Schools: Pedagogical and Practical Approaches for Teachers*. Cham: Verlag, 2022.

Karrow, Douglas D., and Maurice DiGiuseppe, eds. *Environmental and Sustainability Education in Teacher Education*. New York: Springer, 2021.

O'Donoghue, Rob, and Katarina Roncevic. "The Development of Education for Sustainable Development: Materials for Inclusive Education in South African Curriculum Settings." *ZEP: Zeitschrift Für Internationale Bildungsforschung Und Entwicklungspädagogik* 43, no. 1 (2020): 20–26. https://doi.org/10.25656/01:20444.

Raluca Gh. Popescu, Cristina. *Handbook of Research on Building Inclusive Global Knowledge Societies for Sustainable Development*. Hershey, USA: IGI Global, 2022.

Rončević, Katarina, and Depeeika Joon. "Global Citizenship Education: Towards an Inclusive Society?" In *Disability and International Development: Inclusion in Education for Sustainable Development*. Unknown: Unknown, 2015.

Rončević, Katarina, and Marco Rieckmann. "Education for Sustainable Development and Inclusive Education: A Systematic Literature Review." *In Review*, 2022.

Rončević, Katarina, and Lea Schulz. "Inklusive Kulturen in Schule – Digital Und Nachhaltig? Die Rolle Der Schulleitung." *In Review*, 2022.

Saúde, Sandra, Maria Albertina Raposo, Nuno Pereira, and Ana Isabel Rodrigues. *Teaching and Learning Practices That Promote Sustainable Development and Active Citizenship*. Hershey, PA: IGI Global, 2020.

Scotland, Creative. "What Is Creativity? A Source of Inspiration and Summary of Actions from Scotland's Creative Learning Partners," 2013. http://www.creativescotland.com/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/21394/Scotlands-Creative-Learning-Plan-2013-v-d4.pdf.

Siraj-Blatchford, John, and Ingrid Pramling. *Education for Sustainable Development in the Early Years*. London: Taylor & Francis, 2023.

Taylor, Neil, Frances Quinn, and Chris Eames, eds. *Educating for Sustainability in Primary Schools: Teaching for the Future*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2015.

United Nations. "Report of the United Nations Conference On Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992," 1992.

Vare, Paul, Nadia Lausselet, and Marco Rieckmann, eds. *Competences in Education for Sustainable Development: Critical Perspectives*. New York: Springer, 2022.

Vierbuchen, M.-C., and Marco Rieckmann. "Bildung Für Nachhaltige Entwicklung Und Inklusive Bildung: Grundlagen, Konzepte Und Potenziale." *ZEP: Zeitschrift Für Internationale Bildungsforschung Und Entwicklungspädagogik* 43, no. 1 (2020): 4–10.

About the authors

Sofia Ahlberg

Associate Professor Sofia Ahlberg is Vice Dean at the Faculty of Languages, Uppsala University, with responsibilities for education and public engagement. Her research is in the intersection of literary studies and pedagogy. She is the author of Teaching Literature in Times of Crisis (Routledge, 2021) and Magic, Literature and Climate Pedagogy in a Time of Ecological Crisis (Bloomsbury, 2024).

Patricia Kennon

Dr Patricia Kennon is an Associate Professor in children's and young-adult literature and youth culture at Maynooth University, Ireland. She is the General Editor of The International Journal of Young Adult Literature, and the Secretary of NAES (the Irish national section of the European Society for the Study of English). Her research interests include global citizenship education, power and childhood, and inclusive education.

Katarina Rončević

Katarina Rončević has more than 10 years of experience in education for sustainable development and inclusive education and has been working on whole school approaches. Since 2019 she works for Greenpeace Germany in the education team and is a PhD Student at the University of Vechta(Germany). Katarina is a member of the international ESD Expert-Net and CO-Founder of The Turquoise Change e.V.

PART IV

SECTION 4: FOSTERING STUDENT WELL-BEING AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH

UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND BEHAVIOURAL DIFFICULTIES

Julia Bialek; Chris Carstens; Cynthy K. Haihambo; and Francesca Mara Santangelo

---

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://book.all-means-all.education/ ama-2025-en/?p=449#oembed-1

Initial questions

In this chapter, you will find the answers to the following questions:

- What are possible causes for SEBDs?
- What are the societal pitfalls for children exhibiting SEBDs?
- What are efficient approaches and resources?

Example Case

Let's look at this case from somewhere in Southern Africa.

Maria is 14 years old. She is a high performing learner, among those that were recommended

by all the teachers to become a student leader in her grade nine year. Then COVID-19 started and took away her grandmother, and two weeks after that, her mother and father. She had to grow up instantly and take charge of her three younger brothers. Although they stay with an aunt in the homestead they shared with their mother and grandmother, things have changed a lot. Her grandmother used to get up early in the morning, wake them up and prepare porridge for them before they went to school. Their aunt is a security officer who mostly works at night and only comes home after Maria and her brothers have left for school. She has to set the alarm on the phone, which belonged to her mother, wake up the young learner and make sure they get something to eat. She also makes sure that they are properly dressed, and their books are all in order. At least, when they come from school, their aunt would have prepared lunch. All she needs to do is clean the house, supervise the children's homework and prepare dinner. Only then can she start with her own homework. Maria's teachers are noticing that she is becoming less involved in school activities and her grades are dropping. She also does not spend time with other girls her age. Some teachers say she is moody and withdrawn. Her peers however decided to go to her house every Saturday to help with the shopping, do laundry and cook meals for the whole week so that she doesn't need to cook every evening. She appreciates this a lot, but deep down, she just wants her mother and grandmother back.

Questions and tasks to reflect and discuss:

- *Do you think Maria is showing signs of Social-Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD)?*
- *If you were Maria's teacher, what would you make of Maria's behaviour?*
- *How would you go about helping Maria improve her grades?*

Cynthy K. Haihambo, University of Namibia, Namibia

Introduction to Topic

The well-being of children in any given society depends largely on the ability of change agents in their environment to enable them to be adaptable, emotionally intelligent and self-sufficient individuals who can live a content life. Schools are therefore expected to be responsive to the needs of all learners and enable them to experience a sense of belonging and success, regardless of the difficulties they may experience. The starting point for this responsibility is to understand children through their developmental stages and challenges. Social-emotional difficulties are widespread, for example the World Health Organisation posits that about 40 million people across the world are described as being affected by conduct-dissocial disorders (WHO, 2019) characterised by persistently disruptive behavioural problems, which may present as antisocial or impulsive behaviour. Individuals with social-emotional and behavioural difficulties struggle regarding mental, sensory,

physical, communication and/or social-emotional abilities and capabilities (www.southampton.gov.uk/schools-learning/send-local-offer/intro-send/send-conditions/semh/). Some of these behaviours can be linked to certain diagnoses; however, many are influenced by a range of factors including; the home environment, the school setting, teacher-learner relationships, socio-economic backgrounds and stressors in society.

Children with social and emotional difficulties often find themselves confronted with exclusion and ostracisation. Firstly, it is important for us to understand the motivation behind the behaviour both as an expression of underlying needs and difficulties. Social-emotional difficulties should explore the wider context of a child's environment including the emotional, social and societal influences. This raises the question of what different experiences learners need in their environment to develop different behaviours. Secondly, we will identify the educational tools and strategies designed to help teachers dealing with learners presenting with SEBD. We will explore real educational experiences across different countries to facilitate our understanding of social-emotional and behavioural difficulties. Finally, we will conclude the Chapter with recommendations for teachers on how to care for the wellbeing of learners.

Key aspects

Defining SEBD

According to Zhang and colleagues, Social Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD) are described as behaviours or emotions that deviate so much from the socially defined norm that they interfere with the child's own growth and development and/or the lives and wellbeing of others (Zhang et al., 2013). The term Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties is an umbrella term and covers a complex range of divergent behaviours which can be extremely challenging for young learners, their caregivers, and educators. In particular, they have been associated in childhood with increased risks of educational underachievement, teenage pregnancy, substance abuse, unemployment, and are also predictive in adulthood of outcomes like delinquency, mental health difficulties, and social marginality (Wren et al., 2022). There is evidence that SEBDs are influenced by various bio-psychosocial factors such as gender, age, and family income level, and an increasing number of children with such difficulties live in settings characterised by social, economic, and cultural disadvantage (UKG, 2015). For example, Maria, a previously high-achieving learner, faced a dramatic life change due to family loss and subsequent caregiving responsibilities, putting her at risk for academic and social challenges that may be interpreted as SEBD.

Regarding social-emotional difficulties, a distinction is made between so-called internalising and externalising forms of expression. Internalising difficulties are characterised by anxiety, somatisation, and depression (Grubert, 2016, p. 3; Scherreiks and

Schwalbe, n.d., p. 4). Internalising symptoms are often less noticeable to outsiders but can lead to a high level of stress for the affected young learners affecting their socioemotional development, and severely impairing their participation in learning. In the context of anxiety and depression, this can manifest itself in a variety of physical and psychological symptoms, including suicidal behaviour (ibid). In Maria's case, her withdrawal from social interactions and school activities could be seen as an internalising response to her overwhelming responsibilities and the profound loss she experienced.

Externalising difficulties, on the other hand, are much more visible to the outside world. This category includes attention and social behaviour disorders, whereby the latter is usually referred to as behaviour that violates social norms, e.g. through aggressive, impulsive or oppositional behaviour (Mingebach, 2018, p. 5).

The described manifestations make it clear that there is a large variety of SEBDs which we can frequently – knowingly or unknowingly – encounter. It is important to underline at this point that the educational intervention must aim at managing the behaviour the child is presenting with, and not with changing the child her/himself. We will elaborate on how to achieve this, including various methods and case studies, in the following chapter.

Childhood development and attachment needs

Social emotional development in early childhood is closely related to the attachment process and to the development of the stress-regulation system (Kain et al., 2020, p. 31). According to Bowlby, attachment is an emotional bond that connects people across time and space. (Bowlby, 1969). Children develop a strong bond with those who are in close proximity to them, and who provide a 'secure base' when they are scared or distressed, even if they are not in the same place at that moment.

The need for attachment is one of the basic human needs. We are unable to survive without attachment. In situations where an infant feels insecure, the emotional connection with the attachment figure helps the infant to self-sooth and regulate his/her emotions, thus creating a secure attachment. Responding consistently and sensitively to the infant's needs is important and infants who are securely attached explore objects in the safety of the caregiver's presence. Safety in attachment is therefore necessary for learning and development. Through attachment we develop the ability to control our own emotional state, so that we learn to deal with situations that trigger feelings such as fear, anger, sadness, etc. (Kain et al., 2020, p. 32).

Babies are unable to self-regulate but rather need an attachment figure to co-regulate them. This means that caregivers support the baby's self-regulation in situations where the child's stress level increases. Therefore, it is necessary for the caregiver to recognize the cause of the increase in stress and respond to it promptly and sensitively (Kain, et al., 2020, p. 32). Caregivers must also be able to regulate children's stress and emotions. In order to do this, they must have first learnt how to manage their own emotions and stress levels.

The autonomic nervous systems of people influence each other. A calm and well-regulated person unconsciously sends out emotions via facial expressions, eye contact, muscle tone, sweat production, and signals of safety, which are also unconsciously picked up by other people to calm their own system. Likewise, the signals of stress in another person can also cause their own stress level to rise (Levine, 2011). This is a challenging task for parents, as stress and emotional distress of the child initially cause their own stress levels to rise.

Consistent co-regulation is crucial for social and emotional development: the process of co-regulation (between caregiver and infant) allows the infant to regulate her/himself. According to Schore, this is one of the main mechanisms of early childhood (Schore, 2001) (Kain et al., 2020, p. 33). Without this, the nervous system becomes overstimulated leading to unregulatable emotions and resulting in stressful behaviours labelled as challenging by others. The real challenge is borne by the children who face a difficult situation in several respects. They do not have caregivers who are available to them as a "safe haven" in difficult situations, and are incapable of managing their own emotions. Their failure to respond appropriately to difficult behaviour, provokes angry or aggressive responses which may be compounded by a stressful environment for which they feel unable to control. Consequently, they may substitute strategies that provide them with a sense of control and safety. This can result in very specific behaviours that compensate? for the lack of emotional regulation? cannot be changed by cognitive explanations, "if – then" interventions or so-called "consequences", as these interventions do not consider the underlying lack of regulatory strategies.

Every person finds their own ways and needs different things to feel safe. Here are some examples:

A seven-year-old pupil tried to be in constant contact in different ways. She was constantly checking in or just talking in class. She often sought physical closeness to her teacher and wanted to sit in front of her and hold her hand. If the teacher refused, she took every opportunity to come to the front. She liked to look for misbehaviours of the other pupils so that she could run to the teacher and tell her about it. In other situations, she felt the need to check every few minutes if what she was doing was right.

Her behaviour was understood as "seeking attention" and was responded to by ignoring her efforts as much as possible so as not to make her feel successful with her strategies. The goal, of course, was to get her to stop these behaviours. The result was different. She repeated these behaviours because the need for security had been reinforced. This behaviour must be understood by teachers as a form of communication if they are to give her what she needs: the feeling of being seen, the certainty of being safe with her teachers, after several very insecure life experiences in early childhood in her family.

The second example shows a different behavioural strategy, which was developed through the experience of domestic violence.

An eight-year-old boy showed great difficulties in concentrating, he was constantly in a state of movement, his reactions were very impulsive and with a high level of aggression.

In addition, he had great problems learning the content which was taught. He was given the diagnosis of ADHD. On closer observation, however, it became clear that the boy had no problem with a lack of attention, quite the opposite. He was able to pick up everything that was going on inside the classroom, every conversation between two pupils, every movement, every emotional change in individual pupils, he perceived every need of each individual pupil. And even things outside the classroom, in the corridor, on the school grounds, he was extremely aware of. If something happened somewhere that was perceived as threatening by his highly activated and not well-regulated nervous system, he left his seat and ensured that the situation could be brought under his control through behaviour that was judged as aggressive from the outside. Since the detection of potential dangers and the reaction to them required his entire capacity, he hardly had any capacity left for the subject matter and was perceived as inattentive, unfocused and impulsive. (Julia Bialek, Counsellor in different schools)

Questions and tasks to reflect and discuss:

- How can understanding a child's need for safety shift a teacher's approach to classroom behaviour?
- How might recognizing the root causes of behaviour help create a supportive learning environment?

These are just two examples, to which many more could be added, which highlight how forms of expression described as SEBD arise out of a dynamic that is always related to experience. One underlying developmental dynamic was described here, yet, a multitude of possible causes could be summarised under the term SEBD from attachment research, developmental psychology, neurobiology and various other fields.

Young learners' problems with the system?

The importance of a strong relationship between learners and teachers has been widely acknowledged (ref?). Research has underlined some fundamental differences between teachers' and young learners' points of views: for example, teachers may attribute behavioural difficulties to young learners' personality, their lack of motivation or disruptive nature, or family problems. Meanwhile young learners complain about unfair treatments, prejudiced attitudes and lack of empathy or listening capabilities and they may exhibit difficult behaviours to resolve problems (Spera and Wentzel, 2003; Cooper and McIntyre, 1993).

A study (Cefai and Cooper, 2010), that sought the views of secondary school students exhibiting SEBDs in Malta, has identified five main themes which represent barriers to learning, well-being and inclusive education:

- Poor relationships with teachers; in which young learners perceive a lack of understanding and support, or feel humiliated and inadequate when teachers ignore them. The lack of connection may prevent them talking about their emotions or problems;
- Sense of unfairness and injustice; especially when young learners are identified by, and labelled for, their own behaviour and sometimes punished for their peers' misbehaviour;
- Sense of oppression and powerlessness; young learners may not feel they have a right to a voice their opinion, leading to feelings of alienation and disengagement from the system;
- Unconnected learning experiences; due to boring and unrelated to real-life situations and curricula;
- Exclusion and stigmatisation; due to teachers' inability to understand young learners' social and emotional needs. Young learners become vulnerable and stop believing in themselves, and disengagement emerges as a self-protective mechanism.

Negative perceptions of young learners can also pose barriers to young learners hindering not only personal development, but the entire learning process. In the next section, we will identify factors which can enhance educational strategies and facilitate inclusion.

Methods and strategies for an education for all

Teachers

Co-regulation, Externalisation

Forming stable relationships within the school setting is crucial to the development and education of young learners. These relationships provide stability, safety, and co-regulation, all of which are essential for effective learning. Building these connections goes beyond being reliable and trustworthy; it requires a genuine acceptance and appreciation of students, regardless of any challenging behaviours they may present with. Such behaviours often serve as coping mechanisms developed in response to previous traumatic experiences or difficult challenges, and should not be viewed simply as problems to be resolved. For learners presenting with SEBDs, addressing these behaviours requires an understanding of their root causes, including family dynamics and home environment, values, and any past traumas. Observing and gathering insights into each learner's background respectfully and empathetically helps foster a deeper connection and trust, forming a foundation for effective support. This approach enables teachers to respond not only to behaviours but also to the underlying needs of each learner (Zimmermann, 2017, p. 23).

Co-regulation

If children do not have the experience of being calmed by their parents in a situation

of stress, or negative emotions, they do not learn to regulate their nervous system and emotional situation hence they must learn to co-regulate in adulthood. Co-regulation is the process by which adults support the child's emotional regulation during situations of stress and strain thus ensuring the regulation of emotion and the activation of the sympathetic nervous system to a more desirable state?. The transfer of this regulation into a self-directed ability is one of the main tasks of childhood and the prerequisite for learning social skills (Kain et al., 2020, p. 33).

How can teachers support the regulation of young learners:

1. Recognise the alarm signals that occur when the stress system is activated;
2. Remain calm themselves and radiate calmness;
3. Identify the causes of stress, show understanding, find words together for what has happened and what is needed, offer alternatives such as short breaks, exercise, etc.

It has also proven to be very helpful to get close to the learner more often, to make "soft" eye contact, i.e. to look at them in a friendly manner and with as little confrontation as possible, as a direct gaze can very quickly appear threatening. We would also recommend going on walks with young learners who are experiencing distress. Any kind of interaction or mundane activity which can happen side-by-side, (rather than directly facing each other) is much less confrontational.

Externalisation

The externalisation approach, developed by Michael White and David Epston (White and Epston, 2009), states that 'it is not the person or the relationship that is the problem, but the problem that is the problem' (White and Epston, 2009, p. 57). This approach separates the problem from the person allowing the person to take control over their life. The following questions may bring about a more productive outcome rather than focusing on the individual. When did the problem start, was it always there, in what situations was it problematic, what is the goal of the problem, what positive things could the problem have in mind for the person?

This approach reduces feelings of shame and guilt and enables the person and those around them to act together in a differentiated way and to change the problem together.

Beyond general trauma-informed principles, which are safe and resonate with young learners with SEBDs, there are a few "life hacks" that can be very helpful when working with these students. The general idea is to make yourself as unthreatening as possible. It is also important to bear in mind that, for young learners with SEBDs, anything can be perceived as threatening, particularly as they are often navigating an unknown environment which is not tailored to their needs. Small details such as personal space, direct eye contact or sudden sounds and movement can feel unsafe or threatening, even though you may have the best intentions.

My go-to are mundane everyday tasks and activities which allow us to move around each

other in our space and while giving us something to do, also allow room for conversation. One of the young learners I worked with frequently exhibited violent and aggressive behaviour when he was triggered or generally overwhelmed with things going on around him. While he and I were trying to navigate everyday life in school with this additional challenge we quickly found that he had no strategy to deal with this feeling of overwhelm and unwind in a safe and healthy manner which did not include harming himself or others. This made him feel extremely ashamed and self-conscious since he felt he had no control of his actions and felt misunderstood. He would often hang back and be apprehensive of going home and so he would spend a lot of time following me around school after hours watching me do the everyday chores, such as washing up, wiping the tables down or making copies for the next day. The company of me or my colleagues seemed to soothe him and while he stayed in the background, he began to take an interest in what was going on around him. With time he became bolder and would ask for me to give him tasks to help out and soon enough he learned to make copies, do the dishes and his personal favourite was hoovering the carpets in our classroom. He started taking pride in these tasks and was very particular about them being done correctly. It became obvious that these things were helping him decompress as he had some co-regulation, mild exercise and a sense of achievement. We began to incorporate these strategies into our class routine, and he learned to express that he needed to unwind and ask whether he could go and hoover the carpets. Now, having someone vigorously hoovering the carpet while you are working is not as distracting to most people as you would expect and the other children were unphased by it, knowing to keep their distance while he was cleaning since it was his way of relieving pressure. Of course some of my colleagues needed some getting used to this newfound strategy since admittedly it is quite unorthodox. To me it was an absolute life saver since we had finally found something that worked and which he responded well to and on top of that proved to be very useful. (Christine Carstens, teacher)

Questions and tasks to reflect and discuss:

- Have you developed specific strategies working with young learners exhibiting SEBDs?

- What are situations in which these methods or strategies could be useful?

- Do you require resources, support or further information in order to apply the aforementioned strategies?

- How can everyday tasks and routines serve as tools for helping young learners manage overwhelming emotions and find a sense of control and achievement?

Parents

Collaboration between families and teachers

Even though there are many contributing factors, it's safe to say that parents and caregivers are key players in the development of young learners. They are experts when it comes to their children, and yet they are often disregarded or excluded by the system. Having a stable and trusting relationship with a teacher is of vital importance, especially as children cannot be viewed in isolation from their families and backgrounds.

Parents or caregivers, especially of young learners who are exhibiting SEBDs, may face many challenges and are often subjected to the judgement of others. That being said, we are fully aware of the limits of teacher training, and some may not feel well-equipped for the task at hand. The collaboration we are referring to here, however, does not necessarily require extensive training or specific qualifications. Rather, it focuses on building relationships with the young learners and understanding the contextual factors which impact their learning/education.

If you feel self-conscious or are not quite sure how to get started, active listening is a quick and simple approach which can be easily incorporated into your practice. This approach also works well with parents. For example, teachers tend to talk a lot, and we would recommend giving parents more time to tell their stories which may be helpful in identifying the difficulties facing the young learner in the home environment. An 80/20 percent ratio is ideal . When speaking with the parent or caregiver, be attentive, ask questions, validate their feelings and try to learn everything about the family situation. Not only does this build a deeper understanding and trusting connection with them, but, it includes them in the process and hopefully empowers the parent to make changes to support their child? (Zimmermann, 2017, p. 75).

I would like to give you a relatable example of an encounter that I had with a mother which happened to be one of the many stories that stuck with me. So, this mother's son was transferred to my group at the age of 16 after having been expelled from numerous schools. For reasons of anonymity, I won't give you an exact number but it was in the double digits. The mother had a reputation of being what most people might refer to as "difficult". Due to her own biography and her experiences concerning the education of her son, she had many negative associations with the educational system, child protective services, institutions and people in general. She was apprehensive of leaving her flat at all and had isolated herself and her son completely. In doing so it seemed that she herself had become a barrier to her son's development and was depriving him of many opportunities he could have had otherwise.

So, I made it my priority to go and visit them in their home regularly. Luckily my school's policy worked in my favour as visiting every family in their home once a year is a mandatory requirement. These visits aren't meant to be any kind of examination but are merely another chance to get a different perspective and form a connection. It took many phone calls and a lot of convincing for her to agree to me coming over. Also, I made a point of explaining and describing to her, in great detail, what exactly would happen during the visit and what to expect. So I literally told her:" I'm going to ring your doorbell, you will let me in and tell me where to sit and that's exactly where I'll be. I won't touch anything, check for dust or otherwise

invade your personal space. If you have a cup of coffee for us, that's lovely and if not that's also fine." That seemed to put her mind at ease a little and when I visited her, I was very careful to stick precisely to what we had previously agreed on.

When we finally sat together on the couch in her living room, the appearance of the flat made it obvious that she was struggling. I kept my thoughts to myself, however. This visit was meant to be about establishing a relationship and not berating her or giving her unsolicited advice about her living situation. I simply let her talk and as it turned out she had so much that she wanted to get off her chest. Feelings about being misunderstood, unjustly treated or simply the perception of being abandoned by the school system. Many school and institutional representatives had initially contacted her and made grand promises about wanting to work with her son. Usually however, a couple of months after these conversations, she would receive a call, telling her that she and her son were no longer wanted and that he was being expelled from this or that school for varying reasons. At some point she had given up on trusting the educational system altogether.

I let her talk and vent about her experience for the entire time that I was there, listening and observing. Then, when it was time to go, I remember us, standing in the door frame together and her asking me out of the blue when I would be back. That was the moment I realised that I had a foot in the door. I asked her when she wanted me to be back, and she suggested that I come back at the same time the following week. From that moment onward our visits became a regular thing which she began to look forward to and our relationship slowly progressed. It was obvious that I alone did not have the expertise or resources to support that woman, I could however install a support system of experts who did. So, with each visit, little by little, I would begin to make suggestions and offers as to how we could improve her and her son's situation and because of the relationship we had built she was able to agree to them.

There were several aspects of her situation that needed to change – for legal, medical or other reasons, which were non-negotiable. Instead of confronting her with that however I would always make sure to give her options to choose from which made the entire procedure more respectful and much less invasive, giving her a sense of control over the process. When presenting her with options I, again, would go into much detail about what would happen at which time and what exactly to expect. Eventually it was even possible for me to bring other people into the equation. She didn't trust those people but was prepared to accept them into her personal space because she trusted me, and I had told her it would be alright.

Her son is no longer attending our school, not because he got expelled, but because he graduated. He is now enrolled in a training programme for young adults preparing them for the job market. His mother is a lot more stable now than she used to be. She has moved to a different apartment, has taken up a job and actively seeks help when she feels that she needs to. Her and I are still in contact, and I receive a Christmas and birthday card every year. I personally see this case as a success and believe that it shows that relationships between teachers, learners and their families go a long way. It wasn't so much about having

specific qualifications or being an expert in anything in particular. It was about reaching out to somebody and making a connection. (Christine Carstens, teacher)

Questions and tasks to reflect and discuss:

- Are there examples where you can include active listening in your performance at school?

- How could you structure a support system in similar cases where you are from?

- What are resources available to you to help you collaborate with parents successfully?

- How did the teacher's approach of consistent visits, active listening, and offering choices in the example above empower the mother to trust the school system again and support her son's path to success?

Peer education

<u>The importance of peers in the process</u>

Peers play an important role in influencing the behaviour and values in the peer group (McWhirter, 2013). Young people form peer clusters which can be a good or bad influence. If the influence is negative, it can jeopardise efforts made by the school. However, if the peers share positive values, schools can identify, and mentor learners in peer support strategies that could have lasting, positive impacts on the wellbeing of the young learner, the peers and the teachers.

According to a guide by Pennsylvania State University (2018), compared to teachers, young learners are better able to understand the life experiences of their peers. This is not unsurprising given the generational difference. In other words, children can relate more to the experiences of their peers. Issues such as your culture, language, socioeconomic background, or being subject to gossip or being excluded from a friend group are important to young people. Children should therefore be allowed, and empowered, to step into the peer support structures to help manage the dynamics of childhood Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD) more generally. Schools should not only promote positive peer relations and social-emotional development through prevention and intervention initiatives, but should also engage in teaching and modelling diversity-sensitive peer engagements and peer support. These initiatives may include efforts in two interrelated areas. One is the creation of a positive school environment that promotes belongingness and acceptance, which in turn builds social-emotional skills (this will be covered in more detail in the next topic). The second one is the creation of peer support groups and activities that promote positive and inclusive interactions – these can reduce the marginalisation of those who struggle with forming social relations, or managing emotions due to genetic, neurological and/or socio-ecological factors.

Let's look at this Case Scenario.

A 12-year-old boy somewhere in Asia was fascinated by online games which he played since early childhood. He could easily access these games through his smart phone and was a pro. These games involved challenges, and if one played till the end and managed the challenge, you got awarded an online medal which you could print and hang on your wall. The boy played a certain game every day and received 13 medals in two weeks. He introduced the games to his friends, and they started competing for medals. It became a status thing in the peer group to have the most medals. Sometimes they played the whole night until they overcame the challenge and got the medal. The challenges became more and more complicated, and he managed to complete them all. There was one more game left to receive the award of an overall hero. He was leading with medals and told his friends that he was going to become the hero. One of his friends showed the game to his teacher and the teacher discovered that the challenges were becoming more dangerous and weird. The teacher also discovered that the final medal actually required the player to kill himself to become a hero. At that moment, the boy alarmed the teacher that they had to go to his friend's house because he was sure the friend would do whatever the game told him to do because he really wanted to become a hero. Unfortunately, it was too late! By the time the police and emergency services made it to the house, the hero had no pulse! (Cynthy K. Haihambo)

Questions and tasks to reflect and discuss:

Why was it important for the boy to achieve the medals?

• Is it normal behaviour for children of this age?

How could the dilemma of losing children in these types of games be prevented at:

• Family/ Community Level?
• School Level?

The development of peer support groups can assume various formats. One common format is delivering a workshop on peer support and at the end asking for volunteers who would like to be trained in peer support. Children can therefore develop agency to not only speak up and speak out, but also to represent themselves and others. Another format is to create a culture of care, openness, and friendliness in which mistakes and imperfections are viewed as stepping-stones and not as punishable offences. In this environment, there should be safe disclosure and support procedures as well as horizontal relationships between learners and teachers, learners and learners, teachers and teachers, teachers and communities (Jansson, 2012). Modelling these kinds of relationships enables spontaneous peer support because children feel comfortable and safe to share information and develop their own support systems (as previously seen in the Case Study of Maria presented in

the introduction of this chapter). Many schools have peer counsellors who are trained in active listening, problem identification, positive feedback and who to tell when someone needs support. From our experience, the peer support method has a number of important components: a) ensure young learners in this role have continuous support, affirmation and rewards and b) teachers are key facilitators in this process and should monitor the wellbeing of children at all times.

Positive peer culture

Developed by Vorrath and Bendtro (1985), Positive Peer Culture (PPC) aims to give children and young people the opportunity to support each other and in doing so, allows them to experience and develop their own strengths and skills. In PPC, regular group meetings are organised and attended by the young people themselves but in the presence of a specialist, who maintains a low profile. Each person in the group is given the opportunity to talk about the difficulties they are currently facing and the group then chooses which topics to work on and suggests up ideas for solving the difficulties based on their own experience. This approach has proven to be very effective as it empowers the young people to resolve issues through group communication, conflict resolution strategies, self-efficacy and social behaviour.

Learning environments

Creating safe spaces in school

Learning environments are crucial when working with learners from our target group. Creating a safe space within a school can be challenging particularly as school buildings are often designed for academic purposes, and may not appear as a welcoming and safe environment. On the other hand, a positive learning environment is essential for working effectively with young learners who struggle with social and emotional regulation. This extends beyond just the physical building and includes cultivating a culture of empathy, respect, and support through consistent interactions, clear communication, and predictable routines that help young learners feel secure. Often, school systems emphasise changing the learner, frequently through categorisation or diagnosis, or focus primarily on curriculum content. Shifting some of this focus toward adapting the learning environment can be transformative, fostering a setting where young learners feel understood and included (Naukkarinen, 2018).

Building and customising a workspace that meets the needs of the young person also presents an opportunity to bond and form authentic working relationships, especially as everyone is working towards a shared goal. When young learners are involved in designing and personalising their classroom – whether through creativity in layout, painting, or choosing resources – they feel a sense of ownership and pride. This sense of autonomy often translates into greater respect for the space and can reduce tendencies toward vandalism, a frequent issue among young learners with challenging behaviours. By creating safe, welcoming, and adaptable learning environments, teachers can significantly enhance SEBD young learners' ability to regulate emotions, focus on tasks, and engage with peers

and learning materials. For many SEBD young learners, feeling secure in their environment is a prerequisite for meaningful participation and academic progress. When young learners have access to spaces that accommodate their sensory needs, or a private retreat to decompress, they are better equipped to manage overwhelming emotions and re-engage with the class when they're ready. Additionally, involving young learners in personalising the classroom fosters a sense of ownership and belonging, reducing feelings of alienation or distrust. As a result, these environments empower young learners to be more active, collaborative, and invested in their learning, positively influencing both their social and academic development.

I personally have a strong dislike for school buildings and can only sit on an uncomfortable chair under a fluorescent light for so long. So, I greatly enjoy remodelling classroom spaces with learners because I too benefit greatly from it. Remodelling my current classroom however was a big undertaking because we wanted to include a new building structure into the available space. This was a necessity because the room had become too small and confining for the group it was supposed to house. So, we needed to get creative in order to use all available space. By chance I remembered a conversation I had the previous year with Frank Müller, the initiator of this project. He had mentioned a Swiss company that produced custom-built beehive like structures that can be vertically bolted up against a wall giving each learner an individual honeycomb as a safe space. They are lined with felt which forms a protective barrier against outside noise (great for learners with sensory issues) and have little collapsible chairs and tables so you can either sit down and work or cuddle up with a cup of tea and a blanket when you feel overwhelmed.

When I told my group about the idea, they were thrilled with it even though for legal reasons it wasn't something we could build ourselves. What we could do however was design it digitally and of course sort out the necessary funding. We were amazed to actually find a private foundation that was prepared to finance our idea and contribute three-quarters of the sum necessary and especially the young learner could not believe that a group of strangers they had never met before were willing to support them with such a huge amount of money. When our own beehive was finally set up, we had a small celebration which even the head of department and the press attended. It was a very proud moment for the group to be able to present their design to the public. Since its instalment the structure has changed the group dynamic greatly because the learners now have the option of withdrawing when they feel overwhelmed, need some space or simply want to work in peace. They still take great pride in our classroom and enjoy showing it off to the occasional visitor. (Christine Carstens, teacher)

Questions and tasks to reflect and discuss:

- Are you efficiently using the space available to you and your group?
- Are there safe spaces available for young learners?
- Have you taken sensory issues, which are often associated with SEBDs, into account?
- On what level do you believe safe spaces would impact young learners' performance?

Classroom management and differentiated teaching

<u>Helpful adjustments</u>

At this point, the need to use educational methods and strategies which allow all young learners to achieve academic success, and to consolidate the personal and social skills useful for realising themselves, in life is evident. It seems useful here to speak of didactic differentiation understood as "a basic methodological perspective capable of promoting significant learning processes for all the young learners present in the classroom, aimed at proposing targeted educational and didactic activities, designed to meet the needs of individuals in an educational climate in which it is customary to approach the didactic work in different ways" (D'Alonzo, 2016, p. 47). In the essay The differentiated classroom: responding to the needs of all learners (Tomlinson, 1999), Tomlinson suggests implementing a methodology guided by general principles such as: scheduling activities

that respect the needs and timing of young learners, creating small flexible work groups, constant monitoring and verification of the results obtained and of the young learners' perception of the work carried out. In particular, he suggests distinguishing across three areas:

- Differentiate the content; i.e. the knowledge and skills that the young learner will have to master with experience and competence, using written and oral communication, non-verbal language, the use of images and multimedia files, and therefore of IT tools;
- Differentiate the knowledge-building process; planning the functional activities to acquire the knowledge and distinguishing the learning phases;
- Differentiate the expected product; by favouring that the young learner demonstrates in an original and adequate way to the person, that they are able to competently activate their knowledge in significant and demanding activities (Castoldi, 2012, p. 190).

The distinction of these three areas therefore requires, alongside careful planning by each teacher, an in-depth knowledge of each young learner and their characteristics, passions and interests, abilities and potential. This lays the foundations of differentiated teaching and makes it possible to develop motivation and curiosity on the part of the young learners, presenting them each time with new challenging but possible and accessible tasks, from the simplest to the most complex.

D'Alonzo (D'Alonzo, 2016, p. 97-103) identifies practical suggestions to guide the action of didactic differentiation, which we deem useful to summarise:

- Organise the classroom environment by choosing elements that can be diversified; using the classroom flexibly, including the arrangement of desks and chairs, based on educational needs and choices. The use of visual signs (billboards, posters, images) which can enrich the walls of the classroom, reminding everyone of the rules to follow, shared objectives, daily steps to achieve, is particularly useful.
- Design with clarity; the objectives, tasks, phases and ways of working by answering the questions: what do I want the young learners to learn? How to know that they have learned it? How will I design teaching and assessment to support learning? (Wiggings and McTighe, 1998).
- Promote the social construction of learning; promote community experiences and the common good, alongside the personal experiences such as improving the sense of belonging, active participation and motivation, and reducing behaviours considered to be challenging.
- Provide more differentiated activities; respecting the different learning styles and times of the pupils and offering alternatives that satisfy the different needs.
- Emotionally involve; create an educational relationship based on trust and mutual support. Involve young learners in choosing the rules to be respected in the classroom

and in planning activities and tasks to be performed.

Incorporating all of the above in your daily lessons at school may seem overwhelming at first – even more so in a group of young learners presenting with SEBDs. The chances of the groups you will face in the field being homogenous enough to work on the same tasks is near zero, so it is unavoidable for you to make some adjustments. The key is to find something reliable that works for you and the group of young learners you work with.

Personally, I often struggle being organised and keeping up with small details for example – I happen to have a young learner who is on the autism spectrum who excels in these tasks however and enjoys nothing more than crossing points off to-do lists and writing evaluations. That is of course a win/win situation, since we achieve our shared goal of keeping organised and the child can make a meaningful contribution. Generally, I have had the experience that apart from a clear structure which needs to be present within the classroom in whichever way works best for you (visualisation, organised and accessible materials, flexible seating arrangements), the tasks themselves are crucial. In order for young learners to emotionally engage, tasks have to be meaningful and relatable (i. e. they need to understand why they are doing what they are doing). Merely working on differentiated materials or tapping menus on a tablet holds no merit and may quickly result in frustration. If possible, I would always favour a complex problem-based approach which is easier than you may think since in a public school with a group of young learners you never fall short of real-life problems which require solving on various levels.

In my case a good example would be an event my group had voted on hosting a couple of years ago. Since many of the children themselves have migrational backgrounds, topics such as migration and deportation were always close to their hearts and often a matter of discussion in our class. During one of these discussions the children realised that the political stakeholders making decisions in these matters, more often than not, have never actually met the people on whose behalf they are deciding. So, in an effort to change that, the children suggested inviting the politicians in question to an event they wanted to host in one of the refugee camps nearby. It was decided that it should be a party for adults and children alike, so that everybody could meet up and have a good time. So, we began to put together the event which required funding, food, drinks, activities, invitations and permits. During this process the fact that the children were so very heterogeneous and many of them were often academically challenged due to SEBDs or other difficulties that they may have been facing, became secondary because we quickly realised that every one of them had their own unique set of skills which made them invaluable to our undertaking. The children who were structured and good with numbers took responsibility for the organisation, children who were experienced with household duties were in charge of food and drinks, others with many siblings got busy planning activities for our young visitors, pupils who were physically able were in charge of setting up the location and others with a political interest accompanied me on my mission of inviting the local politicians (which turned out to be a mission indeed!).

The children quickly realised that the usual structural disadvantages and differences which are quite prominent in regular school life, suddenly became secondary as all of us worked towards a common goal.

The event turned out to be a huge success with the number of visitors ranging somewhere around 100 and even a handful of local politicians showing their faces – something the children were extremely proud of since they didn't believe anyone would show up or be interested in what they had to say. With this event we also managed to make a fair sum of money which we intended to donate to charity completely. To our surprise the charity however refused to accept the entire sum and insisted on our group keeping half of it because the students had worked so hard and deserved a reward. We took a vote on what to do with the money and it was unanimously decided that we would buy two armchairs for our classroom for us to have a safe space to sit and chat. This event was one of many which considerably changed the group dynamic because not only did the group get to experience self-efficacy and agency, they also came to understand that every group member had a specific skill set, which even though admittedly not always useful within a school context, is often indispensable when it comes to tackling the real world. Needless to say that behavioural issues were almost non-existent during this project.

Now obviously you cannot spend your school days planning events, however there are many problems and situations to be dealt with inside and outside of school. Problems which are authentic and have many levels and different tasks, offering opportunities to you and your pupils to collaborate to reach your shared goal.

Questions and tasks to reflect and discuss:

- Are you emotionally involving young learners in your lessons?

- What is necessary for you to do so?

- How can meaningful tasks be constructed in order to educate young learners?

Conclusion

Young learners with SEBDs, as well as their parents and caregivers, face numerous challenges adapting to the rules and regulations across various societal structures. They are often misunderstood or rejected especially when the reasons for their behaviours are not visible at first glance, and require a deeper level of connection, understanding or even expertise. A gap often exists separating them from the rest of society which only deepens when they are repeatedly confronted with failure or punishment within school contexts. Schools may risk reproducing feelings of disconnection or misunderstanding among young learners, but they also possess the skills and knowledge to bridge the gap by exploring different approaches and avenues to supporting to young learners. There

are many methods and strategies which teachers and other staff can utilise, but at the core of this approach is a positive attitude and deep understanding of their difficulties. When working with young learners who present with SEBDs, it is crucial to not only have an open mind, but also the willingness to educate oneself on the topic in order to gain get a better understanding of how best to manage their needs, and to find the suitable resources and approaches to enable the young learner to thrive. We have listed a handful of approaches in this chapter nevertheless, a plethora of possibilities exist to support and educate young learners in school. Developing the skills and mindset to support young learners with SEBDs is a life-long process, and ideally not a journey that should be embarked on alone. Resources are limited, but remember there are many people researching, working and advocating for this specific group of young learners and multiple opportunities exist to share knowledge and practice. Networking and connecting with others and striving to work in multi professional teams, while difficult, can be enormously rewarding. Remember to be patient and understanding, not only with the young learners, but also with yourself, and don't hesitate to reach out and connect with others.

Local contexts

Closing questions to discuss or tasks

- How can specific background knowledge be conveyed to teachers and people in the field?
- How can this background knowledge and research be efficiently implemented into everyday school life?
- How to network and use existing resources as an efficient support system?

Literature

Bowlby, John. *Attachment and Loss: Vol. 1. Attachment*. New York: Basic Books, 1969.
Castoldi, Mario. *Valutare a Scuola*. Roma: Carocci, 2012.
Cefai, Carmel, and Paul Cooper. "Students without Voices: The Unheard Accounts of Secondary School Students with Social, Emotional and Behaviour Difficulties." *European Journal of Special Needs Education* 25, no. 2 (2010): 183–98. https://doi.org/10.1080/08856251003658702.

Cooper, Paul, and Donald McIntyre. "Commonality in Teachers' and Pupils' Perceptions of Effective Classroom Learning." *British Journal of Educational Psychology* 63, no. 3 (1993): 381–99.

D'Alonzo, Luigi. *La Differenziazione Didattica per l'inclusione: Metodi, Strategie, Attività*. Trento: leGuide Erickson, 2016.

Grubert, Jan. "Depressionen Und Ängste Bei Schüler_innen." Potsdamer Zentrum für empirische Inklusionsforschung, 2016. https://www.uni-potsdam.de/fileadmin/projects/inklusion/PDFs/ZEIF-Blog/Grubert_2016_Depressionen_und_%c3%84ngste_bei_Schueler_innen_v1.pdf.

Kain, Kathy L., Stephen J. Terrell, and Peter A. Levine. *Bindung, Regulation Und Resilienz: Körperorientierte Therapie Des Entwicklungstraumas*. Translated by Christian Campisi. Junfermann Verlag, 2020.

Levine, Peter A. *Sprache Ohne Worte*. Kösel-Verlag, 2011.

Mingebach, Tobias. "Ätiologie Und Behandlung Externalisierender Störungen Im Kindesalter," 2018.

Naukkarinen, Aki. "Teacher's Responsibility in Implementing Inclusive Education." In *Vastuuseen Kasvaminen Ja Kasvattaminen*, edited by S. Saukkonen and Moilanen. Turku: Studies in Education, 2018.

Scherreiks, Lisa, and Anna Schwalbe. "Internalisierende Auffälligkeiten in Der Schule Erkennen." Potsdamer Zentrum für empirische Inklusionsforschung, 2019. https://www.uni-potsdam.de/fileadmin/projects/inklusion/PDFs/ZEIF-Blog/Scherreiks_und__Schwalbe_2019_InternalisierendeAuff%c3%a4lligkeiten.pdf.

Schore, Allan N. "The Effects of Early Relational Trauma on Right Brain Development, Affect Regulation, and Infant Mental Health." *Infant Mental Health Journal* 22, no. 1–2 (2001): 201–69. https://doi.org/10.1002/1097-0355(200101/04)22:1<201::AID-IMHJ8>3.0.CO;2-9.

Spera, Christopher, and Kathryn R. Wentzel. "Congruence between Students' and Teachers' Goals: Implications for Social and Academic Motivation." *Italian Journal of Educational Research* 39, no. 4–5 (2003): 395–413.

University, The Pennsylvania State. "With a Little Help from My Friends: The Importance of Peer Relationships in Social-Emotional Development," 2018. https://prevention.psu.edu/news/with-a-little-help-from-my-friends-the-importance-of-peer-relationships-for-social-emotional-development/#:~:text=Key%20Findings-,Peer%20relationships%20provide%20a%20unique%20context%20in%20which%20childrenlearn%20a,%2C%20exclusion%2C%20and%20deviant%20peerprocesses.

Vorrath, Harry H., and Larry K. Brendtro. *Positive Peer Culture*. 2nd ed. Chicago, IL: Aldine Pub. Co., 1985.

White, Michael, and David Epston. *Die Zähmung Der Monster: Der Narrative Ansatz in Der Familientherapie*. 6th ed. Heidelberg: Carl-Auer Verlag, 2009.

Wren, Yvonne, Elisa Pagnamenta, Fiona Orchard, Timothy J. Peters, Alan Emond, Kate Northstone, Lindsay L. Miller, and Sue Roulstone. "Social, Emotional and Behavioural

Difficulties Associated with Persistent Speech Disorder in Children: A Prospective Population Study." *JCPP Advances*, 2023.

Zhang, Junhua, Ning Lu, and Jianhua Zhang. "A Review of the Relationship between Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD) and Sleep Disturbance." *Sleep Medicine* 14 (2013): e314–15. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sleep.2013.11.772.

Zimmermann, Doris. *Traumatisierte Kinder Und Jugendliche Im Unterricht*. Weinheim: Beltz, 2017.

About the authors

Julia Bialek

Julia Bialek is working as a research assistant at the University of Bremen in the "All Means All!" project. She is a pedagogist, has a degree in special education, and has been working in the field of trauma-sensitive education for many years. She teaches this topic at the university, in training courses for educational professionals, and works as a trauma therapist.

Christine Carstens

Chris Carstens, based in Bremerhaven, brings extensive experience in teaching English and German, alongside certification as a trauma educator with a specialization in supporting children and young adults facing social and emotional challenges.

Cynthy K. Haihambo

Cynthy Kaliinasho Haihambo Ya-Otto is a teacher-educator at the University of Namibia. Her teaching and research areas are in Educational Psychology and Inclusive Education.

Francesca Mara Santangelo

Francesca Mara Santangelo is a pedagogist with expertise in disability, marginality, and Behavioral Neuroscience. Her research focuses on Special Education and Inclusion. As a musician and teacher trainer, she also works on designing and implementing early educational interventions coordinating networks of schools, institutions, families, and various stakeholders. Her professional experience combines solid expertise with a

continuous commitment to promoting inclusive education and fostering neuropsychological well-being starting with children.

CHILDREN'S WELL-BEING IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Anne Piezunka; Büşra Gündeş Orman; Mahvand Sahranavard Espily; Tracy McElheron; and Deirdre Forde

---

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=629#oembed-1

Example Case

Child Profile and Initial Observations and Perceptions

"Fatima, a 6-year-old girl, joined the kindergarten class at Harmony Elementary. She recently moved from Syria. Sarah Garcia, her teacher, observed that she seemed quiet and hesitant to participate in activities. Fatima struggled with English, making communication with peers and teachers difficult. She often played alone during break time and showed inconsistent academic performance, leading teachers and classmates to assume she was uninterested or having trouble adapting to her new environment."

Reflection Question: What do you think about Fatima's situation? How is the Fatima's case related to the topic of children's well-being? If you were the teacher, what would you do?

Initial questions

- How can we define and understand the concept of children's well-being?
- In what ways can we account for individual differences in children's well-being?
- How can we effectively identify and assess children's well-being?
- What factors influence children's well-being, and how can educators actively support it?
- What role does national policy play in promoting and safeguarding children's well-being?
- How can schools create environments that foster children's well-being?
- How do teachers contribute to the development and maintenance of children's well-being?
- How do peers and families shape children's well-being, and what are their unique contributions?
- How can children be encouraged to take an active role in shaping their own well-being?

Introduction to Topic

Reflection activity:

- How do you define well-being?
- How do you define children's well-being?
- How do you define children's well-being in schools?
- What has informed your knowledge about children's well-being?

Since the 1960s, the topic of "well-being" has received more attention in public discourse and more recently, the specific situation of children has also been given greater consideration. Ben-Arieh (2014) points out that the understanding of children's well-being has changed over time from that of well-becoming to well-being, and from a risk to a positive perspective. In terms of the legal background, the United Nations Convention on Child's Rights (UNCRC, 1989) plays an important role – it specifies various aspects of children's well-being and has also been ratified by 196 countries. The Convention on the Rights of the Child is increasingly employed as a framework for shaping policies aimed at enhancing children's well-being. It seeks to integrate the right to protection with the rights to autonomy and development. Article 29 highlights the concept of the evolving child and frames well-being as development, emphasising the importance of fostering the child's personality, talents, and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential. Similarly, the child's right to freedom of expression (Article 13) underscores the importance of respecting

children's perspectives, granting them the freedom to seek, receive, and share information and ideas of all kinds. This demonstrates the right of children to be heard and have their views considered in matters affecting them.

In general, there is no consensual understanding on how to define children's well-being (cf. Minkkinen, 2013: 547; see also O'Hare & Gutierrez, 2012: 614; Mashford-Scott et al., 2012: 235). A number of examples are listed below:

- **Focusing on existential dimensions** of children's well-being, UNICEF (2023) takes into account five domains of child well-being: "Survive and Thrive, Learning, Protection from Harm, Safe and Clean Environment and Life free from Poverty". Within the domains, they use indicators such as "child marriage", "basic hygiene" or "child poverty".
- "From a **child rights perspective** well-being can be defined as the realisation of children's rights and the fulfilment of the opportunity for every child to be all she or he can be" (Bradshaw et al., 2007).

- **Focusing on educational settings**, Konu and Rimpelä (2002) argued that four needs should be taken into account in schools (adapted version of Allardt's theory of welfare) such as "having, loving, being and health status". An example of "having", would be "how do you like the school yard?", whereas "loving" could represent educational relationships. For the domain of "being", this would consist of their academic development.

Existing definitions, such as the ones above, differ in terms of the domains of life they focus on, including the conceptions of the good life on which they are based, and the level of expectations formulated. In this respect, it depends on the spatial and temporal context, e.g. whether the focus is on the current life situation or on factors that will increase well-being in the future (cf. Mashford-Scott et al., 2012). Furthermore, conceptions of well-being differ in terms of how the child is perceived: For example, whether they are perceived as active agents of well-being.

The next step is to introduce the Structural Model of Child Well-being (SMCW), which will be used as a working definition. We will also discuss what child well-being means from a holistic perspective.

Key aspects

Structural Model of children's well-being

Figure 1: Structural model of children's well being

Source: Minkkinen, 2013

As mentioned above, there are different understandings of child well-being. In the following, we present Jaana Minkkinen's structural model of child well-being. We have chosen her model as there are clear references to the UNCRC and it includes Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory (1981) as well as the work of Vygotsky. For example, Minkkinen emphasises the role of the child as "a constructive, social actor in his or her own life and as an agent in society" (Minkkinnen, 2013: 553). In addition, she highlights the impact of the different dimensions or concepts on children's well-being.

In defining children's well-being, Minkkinnen (2013) lists four dimensions, which interplay with each other:

1. **"Physical well-being** comprises health, the absence of disease, and proper physical functionality" (Minkkinen, 2013: 550). In this regard, Minkkinen takes into account that the prerequisites such as their general health status differ between children, and that they have an impact on their current well-being.
2. **"Mental well-being** concerns the positive mental situation of the child. It refers to mental health and the absence of psychiatric disorders and includes both emotional and cognitive well-being." (Minkkinen, 2013: 550).
3. **"Social well-being** refers to a positive situation between the child and the people in his or her life" (Minkkinen, 2013: 551).
4. **"Material well-being** implies a positive material situation in the child's life. It relates to having sufficient nourishment, housing and other material items that are normally elements in the standards of living in the society and culture surrounding the child" (Minkkinen, 2013: 551) .

In addition, Minkkinen (2013) describes four circles which have an impact on children's well-being (see Figure above):

- **"Subjective action** refers to the internal and external activities engaged in by the child that produce well-being for him or her" (Minkkinen, 2013: 552). It relates to concrete activities such as thinking, speaking or playing" which may an impact on current well-being or have a positive influence on future well-being.
- **"Circle of care** refers to those people interacting with the child face to face and their physical, cognitive, emotional, and material support for the child" (Minkkinen, 2013: 554). It emphases how individuals can have a significant impact on children's well-being. This could be relatives such as parents, peers, medical professionals, people from the neighbourhood and teachers, and those who are jointly responsible to take care of the respective children.
- **Structures of Society** "refer to the way in which social order and cooperation concerning children are organised in society, namely by institutions such as the family, childcare, healthcare, education (…), and the laws and conventions which regulate the functional requirements of these institutions" (Minkkinen, 2013: 555).
- **Culture** refers to "all kinds of human and societal activity, and pervades every circle in the model" (Minkkinen, 2013: 555).

Minkkinen's structural model of well-being takes into account different dimensions of well-being and illustrates how these dimensions interact. In addition, it highlights the idea of the child as an active agent. However, it also identifies different circles that can have an impact on children's well-being.

Children's well-being in educational settings

————————————————

Reflection activity:

- Why is it important for teachers to feel responsible for the well-being of their students?
- What options do teachers have with regard to the well-being of their students?

————————————————————

With regard to children's well-being, O'Toole and Simovska (2022) point out that 'it makes little sense to talk about children's cognitive or academic progress without also assuming their personal, social and emotional well-being, or vice versa' (p. 25), in other words, both dimensions are intertwined. It would therefore be short-sighted to view well-being only as a means towards promoting cognitive achievement. It should also be clear that cognitive performance can also have an impact on well-being. In this respect, both well-being and wellbeing need to be considered.

Well-Being from an inclusive perspective

————————————————

Reflection activity:

- What does children's well-being mean from an inclusive perspective?

————————————————

If we look at the structural model of child well-being from an inclusive perspective, it is evident that the concept of well-being—and how it is experienced—varies greatly from child to child, as their unique circumstances shape what is achievable for them. As Minkkinen pointed out, the prerequisites for well-being are not universal and depend on individual factors. For instance, a child with a chronic illness will have a different understanding and experience of well-being compared to a child without such an illness or disability. In this context, well-being cannot be uniformly defined, as the goals and benchmarks for one child's health and quality of life may differ significantly from those of another.

Theoretical background to children's well-being

This sub-chapter explores key theories essential to understanding children's well-being, and focuses on child development, attachment theory, and resilience theory. These theories provide a comprehensive framework for examining how various factors, including relationships, environments, and personal attributes, influence the growth and well-being of children.

Child Development

Child development is an intricate and dynamic process through which children grow, learn, and acquire the essential skills necessary for living in society. This process is multifaceted, encompassing physical, cognitive, emotional, and social domains, each of which plays a crucial role in a child's overall well-being (Britto et al., 2016; Fattore et al., 2006). During early childhood, particularly the first five years, children undergo rapid brain development, with neural connections forming at an astonishing rate (Britto et al., 2017). These early experiences significantly influence cognitive abilities, emotional regulation, and social interactions (Housman, 2017; Kagitcibasi et al., 2001). According to Jaana Minkkinen's Structural Model of Child Well-being, these early experiences, and the broader environment, are critical in shaping the child's development, linking to the subjective actions of the child—their thoughts, emotions, and activities, which directly contribute to their sense of well-being (Minkkinen, 2013).

The environments in which children are raised, including the quality of their relationships, the stimulation they receive, and their access to adequate nutrition, profoundly shape their developmental trajectory (Bradley & Corwyn, 2008; Britto et al., 2016; Britto et al., 2017). Minkkinen emphasises the Circle of Care, which includes those individuals – such as family, peers and teachers – who directly interact with the child and provide physical, cognitive, emotional, and material support. This circle forms a crucial foundation for the child's growth, ensuring a stable and nurturing environment that promotes healthy development. A nurturing and supportive environment that provides consistent love, intellectual stimulation, and physical care sets the stage for healthy growth and development (Britto et al., 2017). Within this Circle of Care, parents and caregivers play a pivotal role in mediating the impact of external risk factors, such as marginalisation, deprivation, and disadvantages, on a child's outcomes. Parental knowledge, attitudes, behaviours, and resources significantly influence a child's development (Bornstein et al., 2022).

Moreover, societal structures, as described in Minkkinen's model, are integral to children's well-being. Schools, in particular, represent a key component of the societal frame, offering structured opportunities for learning, social interaction, and access to resources that support children's development. Schools not only provide education but also foster environments where children can develop social skills, build relationships, and experience a sense of belonging. Through the societal frame, schools help shape children's experiences and opportunities, serving as a bridge between the immediate support offered by the Circle of Care and the broader cultural values and norms.

Encouraging parents to contribute to early childhood development and minimise inequality and disadvantage is a key national and worldwide public policy priority (Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, 2023; Government of Ireland, 2019). By ensuring children have access to supportive environments – whether through family, community, or schools – we lay the groundwork for long-term well-being,

resilience, and success in life (Bakermans-Kranenburg et al., 2005) thus ensuring children become agentic citizens of society. This approach aligns with Minkkinen's emphasis on children's roles as "constructive social actors" in shaping their own lives and their ability to engage with society (Minkkinen, 2013).

Attachment Theory

Attachment theory, developed by John Bowlby and later expanded by Mary Ainsworth (Bretherton, 1994) , offers a comprehensive framework for understanding the critical role of early relationships in a child's life. According to the theory, the bond formed between a child and their primary caregiver is foundational to the child's emotional and social development, shaping the child's potential to learn and thrive (Guerrero, 2021; Pallini et al., 2016; Raby et al., 2012). This attachment bond, established in the early years, serves as the blueprint for future relationships. Secure attachment, characterised by a caregiver's consistent responsiveness and sensitivity, fosters a sense of safety and trust in the child, enabling them to explore their environment with confidence and form healthy relationships throughout life. Within Minkkinen's model, these secure relationships are integral to the Circle of Care, directly impacting the child's subjective actions and sense of well-being.

Conversely, insecure attachment, which may result from inconsistent, neglectful, or unresponsive caregiving, can lead to difficulties in managing emotions, forming relationships, and maintaining self-esteem (Lewis et al., 2000; Priddis & Howieson, 2012). Disorganised attachment, often associated with experiences of trauma or neglect, poses even greater challenges, leading to deep-seated issues with trust, fear, and emotional instability (Green & Goldwyn, 2002; Skibniewski-Woods, 2017; Wilkins, 2012). The attachment style that a child develops in these formative years profoundly impacts their ability to build and maintain relationships, handle stress, and navigate social situations. Therefore, fostering secure attachments through attentive and responsive caregiving is crucial for promoting social, emotional, behavioural, and educational well-being in early and later childhood.

Resilience Theory

Resilience theory describes the capacity of individuals, particularly children, to adapt positively to adversity, stress, or trauma (Masten, 2018; Masten & Barnes, 2018). Central to this theory, resilience is viewed as a dynamic process influenced by a combination of internal and external factors such as individual characteristics, family dynamics, and broader social environments. Resilience involves the ability to self-regulate, solve problems effectively, maintain a positive self-concept, and access supportive relationships. These aspects align closely with Minkkinen's concept of subjective actions, as children actively engage in problem-solving and develop coping mechanisms.

The development of resilience is largely facilitated by protective factors that mitigate

the impact of adverse experiences (Rutter, 1985; Rutter, 2012). These protective factors are closely linked to the Circle of Care – supportive relationships with caregivers, positive experiences within the educational system, and a cohesive, caring community (Werner, 1996). Schools, as part of the societal frame, also play a crucial role in fostering these protective relationships, helping children to develop resilience by providing a safe and structured environment for growth and learning.

Conclusion

The concepts of child development, attachment theory, and resilience theory are deeply interconnected, collectively highlighting the critical importance of nurturing environments in promoting children's well-being. Healthy child development is fundamentally dependent on the presence of secure attachments, which provide the emotional foundation necessary for children to explore their world, form meaningful relationships, and develop a sense of self-worth (Masten, 2001). These secure attachments, in turn, are instrumental in fostering resilience, enabling children to face challenges with confidence, adaptability, and perseverance.

When children are supported through the Circle of Care, consisting of strong, stable relationships and positive developmental experiences, they are more likely to thrive, even in the face of adversity. This interconnectedness underscores the need to ensure that children grow up in environments that foster secure attachments, support healthy development, and build resilience. Such environments, influenced by societal structures like schools and guided by cultural values, contribute to children's immediate well-being and lay the groundwork for lifelong mental, emotional, and social health.

By nurturing these foundational aspects, we contribute to the development of resilient, well-adjusted individuals who are capable of contributing positively to society, ultimately leading to a more resilient and healthy community as a whole.

Indicators of children's wellbeing

Internationally, there has been a plethora of well-being assessment instruments designed to determine levels of at least one feature of children's well-being. However, in reality, the practical application of these instruments is inadequate for the purpose of actually teaching in the classroom. In terms of data collection for example, UNICEF must rely on the accessibility, and availability of, data when assessing the status of child well-being across different countries (UNICEF, 2023). Furthermore, while the data provides invaluable, if not complete insight into the implications of events on children's well-being, it does not produce contextual information which educators can use in the here and now.

Within the broader use of well-being measurement instruments, social indicators are key, as they gather data relating to health, safety, feelings of love and happiness, successful social relationships, access to learning and development opportunities, and material or

economic necessities. Indeed, Ben-Arieh and colleagues (2014) argue that the general concept of well-being represents a conceptual framework that merges empirical studies and normative assessments while also bridging policies and research. For instance, The Good Childhood Index (UK) was developed by The Children's Society in 2010 as part of their well-being research programme and is still in use today. It measures the well-being of children aged eight years and over. The Index is made up of a five-item measure of overall life satisfaction using the Modified Students Life Satisfaction Scale – a single item measure of happiness relating to life as a whole – and finally, a series of questions about well-being in ten key areas of children's lives. These areas include: family, friends, health, home, appearance, time use, the future, money and possessions, school, and amount of choice. While this provides important information, there is little practical guidance for the educator on how to understand the thoughts and feelings of children they work with on a daily basis.

Traditionally, well-being measurement instruments, rather than supporting children's current levels of well-being, are very much problem-based and deficit-focussed as they are tasked with providing information to tackle what are seen as potential future problems such as mental health disorders, obesity, or anti-social behaviour (Liddle & Carter, 2015; Tisdall, 2015). For example, the New Economics Forum, a think tank that offers innovative ways of looking at future investment and economies, discusses measuring children's current levels of well-being meaningfully to inform policies which will promote future economic stability (Lawlor et al., 2009). These types of well-being measurement approaches are seen as valuable, particularly in the fields of politics and economics, in terms of both assessing current interventions and informing funding and planning for future ones (Qvortrup, 2009). Such well-being measurement scales construct the child in terms of being a human becoming future adults whose potential physical and social demands on society must be managed by addressing what is 'lacking' within her/his current context, rather than as a human being – a competent and agentic social actor with inalienable rights, operating in the here and now (Einarsdottir et al., 2015; Minnkkinen, 2013; O'Toole, Dowling & McElheron, 2023; Qvortrup, 2009). It could be argued that children's current levels of well-being are frequently scrutinised through a negatively focussed lens, often to inform prospective actions and decisions rather than to recognise and nurture their contemporary levels of well-being. However, it must be acknowledged that children's current lived experiences are valuable indicators of prospective outcomes over which society can have a positive effect and has a duty to nurture.

There has been some movement in terms of the consideration of children's well-being within measurement instruments. This is evidenced by some attempts to reframe mental health and well-being in terms of positive psychology which highlights the power of utilising positive experiences and reflections to bring about effective change (Liddle et al., 2015; Nishida et al., 2021). Yet another development is the move towards considering subjective well-being, or seeking out children's evaluations of their 'personal assessment processes' as Minkkinen has put it (2013: 550). These personal assessments of well-being involve

individual's self-reports of health, welfare and overall satisfaction and happiness and are seen as crucial to the true and effective measurement of well-being. This can be seen in resources such as the Stirling Children's Well-Being Scale (SCWBS) which was developed by the Stirling Council Educational Psychology Service in the United Kingdom, and has been adapted for use in various international contexts. Its development drew on current theories of well-being and positive psychology to provide a method of measuring the effectiveness of interventions and projects designed to promote children's well-being and emotional development. The SCWBS utilises a set of positively-worded questions to establish a holistic gauge which measures the emotional and psychological well-being of children aged 8-15 years. While the SCWBS's move from focusing on mental illness to subjective mental well-being is a constructive one, it should be said that this is a development which has taken place on a limited scale within a specific area of well-being research, that of mental well-being. While this trend of using a strengths-based lens to examine aspects of children's well-being is gaining momentum, it is yet to be the norm in other domains of well-being research, such as environmental or physical (Nishida et al., 2021).

A significant factor to keep in mind when considering children's well-being frameworks is the fact that they have almost exclusively been designed by adults with children as their focus, but with little or no design input from children themselves (Fane et al., 2020; Rosenthal and Ben-Arieh, 2022). The exclusion of children's perspectives from child well-being knowledge is problematic as it affords the possibility for undemocratic and inequitable child well-being frameworks which can stifle children's agency. Notably, recent innovative research has revealed that when children are involved in research on this topic, they bring a unique perspective, often identifying important concepts which have often been lacking in previous research. In particular, child researchers have specifically identified agency and autonomy as key indicators of how to accurately gauge their own well-being (Moore et al., 2018; Moore et al., 2021). These studies sought to address the imbalance between child and adult voices in research on children's well-being. Importantly, they have positioned children as co-researchers and provided a platform for children to contribute to the body of knowledge on children's well-being (Moore et al., 2018; Moore et al., 2021). This repositioning of children as co-constructors in research, rather than merely participants, reframes them as intrinsic and integral to that research rather than simply incidental to the curiosity of the researcher. Within these studies, children have clearly articulated what well-being means to them with many identifying well-being indicators which are already utilised within current child well-being frameworks. However, many of these studies have also empowered children to contribute to new ways of defining and measuring well-being such as the importance of children's agency and autonomy in play (Fane et al., 2020; Hart & Brando, 2018).

With that in mind, whether designed with or without children's insights, such well-being measurement scales generally require the user to answer written questions while removed from the context of a dynamic educational setting, rather than recognising and responding

to indicators of well-being while they are being played out in real time. In essence, whether well-being measurement tools are being completed by a child or an observer, the information which is gathered is based on predetermined measures and is more likely to be used to inform future developments as opposed to guiding dynamic and ongoing interactions. While these well-being measurement scales serve a valuable purpose, they are seemingly ubiquitous, with far fewer resources to support the educator in everyday practice. Resources focussed on dynamic well-being indicators, or in simple terms, those that support educators in knowing what to look out for, are far fewer on the ground. In response to this, a resource to guide educators in gauging children's active and dynamic well-being is available at the end of this chapter.

What has an impact on children's wellbeing and how can we support children's well-being?

Shaping Well-Being: The Role of National Policy in Supporting Children and Families

National policy plays a crucial role in promoting children's well-being by developing strong and supportive families and communities. This role is multifaceted, encompassing the establishment of legal frameworks, the provision of essential resources, and the implementation of programmes designed to create environments where children can thrive. Central to these efforts are national policies that establish legal frameworks to protect and promote children's rights and well-being, ensuring that every child receives the care and support necessary for healthy development. These frameworks align with Jaana Minkkinen's model, particularly in shaping the **societal structures** that impact child well-being. They create a society where the safety and well-being of children are prioritised and safeguarded, contributing to the broader societal and cultural context in which children grow (see Hickey at al., 2023).

One key aspect of policy is the enactment and enforcement of child protection laws. Such laws are designed to shield children from abuse, neglect, and exploitation, which are critical to ensuring their physical and emotional safety (Burns & McGregor, 2018; Devaney & Gregor, 2016; Devaney & McGregor, 2015). For instance, mandatory reporting laws require professionals who work with children, such as educators and healthcare providers, to report any suspicions of abuse or neglect, thus creating a safety net for vulnerable children (Hanly, 2020; Pellegrini et al., 2022). This aligns with Minkkinen's concept of **structures of society**, where institutions like schools and healthcare systems are crucial in maintaining and protecting children's rights. Additionally, family support legislation plays a significant role in fostering environments where children can flourish. Policies that mandate parental leave allow parents to spend crucial early months with their newborns, fostering secure attachments that are foundational to emotional and social development. Flexible working hours and family benefits further support work-life balance, enabling parents to be more

involved in their children's lives, which is essential for nurturing strong family bonds and promoting overall well-being (Hewitt et al., 2017; Heymann et al., 2017; Moss-Racusin et al., 2021).

Child poverty is a complex and multidimensional issue that goes beyond a mere lack of financial resources, encompassing broader concerns such as social exclusion, capabilities, and human development. While traditional definitions of poverty focus on inadequate command over economic resources (Atkinson, 1989), contemporary perspectives recognise that poverty's impacts extend to fundamental aspects of a child's well-being, such as their ability to participate fully in their community or lead a life they value (Sen, 1999). This broadened understanding underscores that poverty not only diminishes material living standards but also limits access to opportunities, impacts social relationships, and restricts agency. For children, these deficits are particularly detrimental as they shape their developmental trajectories and influence their future life chances, highlighting the urgency of addressing child poverty as a multidimensional problem (Lister, 2004). Lone parenthood, ethnicity, disability and family size have been identified as being associated with persistent poverty (Children's Rights Alliance, 2023). Prolonged exposure to poverty and deprivation significantly affects children's outcomes across various domains, including their physical and mental health, educational achievement, and socio-emotional well-being (Children's Rights Alliance, 2023). It can also lead to low self-esteem, which may contribute to mental health difficulties later in life. The longer a child remains trapped in the cycle of consistent poverty, the more profound the negative impact on their self-perception, aspirations, and ability to seize opportunities and reach their full potential. However, these outcomes are not inevitable, and with the right policy decisions, it is possible to break the cycle of child poverty.

National policies allocate funding and resources to universal and targeted supports that directly benefit children and their families. Early family supports are crucial in addressing and mitigating the impacts of poverty and economic stress, which as discussed above, can be significant barriers to child well-being. Welfare programs such as child allowances and tax credits provide families with the financial means to meet their children's basic needs, such as food, clothing, and shelter. These efforts relate to Minkkinen's emphasis on **material well-being**, ensuring that children have access to resources that meet their basic needs and contribute to a stable living environment. Such supports are particularly vital for low-income families, helping to level the playing field and giving all children, regardless of their socio-economic background, the opportunity to thrive. Policy initiatives in Ireland such as Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures (Department of Children and Youth affairs, 2014), the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme (2016) and First 5 (Department of Children and Youth affairs, 2018), are dedicated to the provision of quality services for young children and their families in order to improve their child learning, development and wellbeing and support parenting competencies. More recently, the Young Ireland (2023) framework (Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, 2023),

developed in consultation with children and young people, ensures that future strategies reflect a child rights-based approach to decisions that affect children by placing them at the centre of policy and decision-making. This approach is designed to target child poverty and well-being by focusing on key areas, including; education reform and inclusion in education, child protection, access to housing and access to further/higher education, youth and family justice, and play and recreation and the digital environment.

Early supports for families, supported by national policy, often include the provision of home visiting services. These services are services, are often multi-faceted in their aims, but many prioritise strengthening the parent-child bond, offering guidance on responsive parenting practices that foster secure attachment and emotional stability. In addition, many services often focus on enhancing cognitive development through early learning activities and guidance for parents on how to stimulate their child's intellectual growth at home. By promoting positive interactions, home visiting services reinforce the circle of care described by Minkkinen, to help ensure that children benefit from supportive relationships in their formative years. A recent review of home visiting in Ireland found that home visiting promoted child learning and development, strengthened parent and child skills, and fostered a positive parent-child bond (Hickey et al., 2024). While there is considerable evidence that home visiting, as an early intervention programme, can help to promote positive child development and family outcomes in disadvantaged areas, evidence as to 'what works best' is hampered by the variability of programme components and robust evidence on programme effectiveness (Hickey et al., 2024).Despite this, home visiting programmes are particularly effective in reaching families who might be isolated or have limited access to traditional services. They have been shown to mitigate the effects of poverty and related challenges such as substance use or housing instability by connecting families to community resources and offering tailored support (McGilloway et al., 2024). By offering support directly to families, these services bridge the gap between state resources, including psychological and therapeutic services and other healthcare and educational systems, and the day-to-day realities of parenting. This aligns with Minkkinen's model, where the structures of society – including policies and services – play a vital role in shaping children's environments. By funding home visiting services, national policies help ensure that families receive early, consistent support, enhancing the **subjective actions** of children – how they engage, learn, and grow – within a nurturing and stable context. Ultimately, this holistic approach contributes to creating a more equitable and inclusive society, where every child has the foundation to achieve their full potential.

Policy in inclusive education plays a critical role in upholding the well-being of children with special educational needs (SEN) by ensuring their access to quality education. This begins with legal frameworks that guarantee the right of children with SEN to learn alongside their peers in mainstream classrooms. These frameworks often align with international agreements, such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), which emphasises the importance of inclusive education. By

embedding these rights into law, policies hold educational institutions accountable for providing supportive and accessible learning environments. This legal protection ensures that children with SEN are not discriminated against, and that their specific needs are addressed, thus creating a foundation for their academic and social well-being. By promoting inclusivity, national policies help create a school culture that aligns with the **cultural** aspects of Minkkinen's model, where every child feels valued and supported, which is essential for their social and emotional development. This inclusive approach is not only beneficial to the child with SEN but also enriches the educational experience for all students, fostering empathy, understanding, and a sense of community.

In addition to legal guarantees, inclusive education policies provide for the allocation of resources that are essential for meeting the diverse needs of children, particularly children with disabilities/ SEN. Funding supports the hiring of specialised professionals, such as special education teachers, speech therapists, and psychologists, who can provide targeted support to children. It also enables training for general educators, equipping them with the skills to implement inclusive teaching strategies. Furthermore, policies often provide for assistive technologies and adaptive learning tools that allow children with SEN to engage with the curriculum. These resources ensure that students with SEN have the tools and support necessary to overcome barriers to learning, promoting their academic growth and allowing them to participate fully in the school environment.

Inclusive education policies also focus on fostering school cultures that embrace diversity and create a sense of belonging for all students. This includes promoting whole-school approaches to inclusivity, where teachers, students, and parents work together to build a welcoming and supportive environment. By encouraging practices such as Universal Design for Learning (UDL), policies help schools create flexible teaching methods that accommodate a variety of learning styles and abilities, ensuring that every child can succeed. These inclusive practices not only enhance academic outcomes but also support the social and emotional well-being of children with SEN, as they feel accepted and valued in their school community. Together, legal protections, resources, and inclusive practices ensure that children with SEN are provided with the opportunities and support they need to thrive in a quality educational setting.

In summary, national policies play a pivotal role in promoting children's well-being by establishing the legal and social frameworks necessary for the development of strong, supportive families and communities. Drawing on Minkkinen's Structural Model of Child Well-being, these policies shape the **societal structures** that support the Circle of Care surrounding each child, while fostering environments where children's **subjective actions** can flourish. Through a combination of legal protections, financial support, access to healthcare and nutrition, and the provision of quality education, these policies create an environment where children can thrive. By addressing the diverse needs of children and ensuring that all have access to the resources and opportunities they need, national policies help lay the foundation for a healthier, more equitable society.

Children with Special Educational Needs and Disability: A Holistic Approach to Well-Being

Children with special educational needs face unique challenges that can impact their well-being across physical, emotional, social, and academic domains. Inclusive educational settings are essential in fostering an environment where these children can thrive, not merely by addressing deficits, but by recognising and building on their individual strengths and capabilities (Forde, 2023). The importance of a nurturing and supportive "Circle of Care," as outlined by Minkkinen's structural model, is particularly critical for children. This care network – encompassing teachers, peers, families, and wider community resources – must work collaboratively to create an environment of belonging and inclusion. Legal frameworks such as the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) reinforce the necessity of inclusive education, holding institutions accountable for providing accessible learning environments. Practical measures, such as individualised learning plans, assistive technologies, and tailored teaching strategies, ensure that students with SEN have equitable opportunities to achieve their full potential. However, inclusion goes beyond academic support – it also requires cultivating a school culture that prioritises social connection, emotional well-being, and active participation for all students. Schools that embrace UDL principles, for example, not only accommodate diverse needs but also foster a sense of community and shared purpose, enriching the educational experience for every child.

The Ethics of Care in Supporting Inclusion and Belonging

Ensuring the well-being of children with SEN necessitates an "ethics of care" approach, particularly in a neoliberal context where the emphasis on measurable outputs and academic performance often sidelines relational aspects of education (Forde, 2023). In such systems, teachers may find their capacity to extend care constrained by time pressures and accountability metrics, leaving those with the greatest need for support underserved. Yet, care is central to fostering a sense of inclusion and belonging which are critical components of well-being. When educators prioritise care, they create spaces where children feel valued, understood, and empowered to participate. This care must be visible not just in one-on-one relationships but also in the broader school culture, reflected in inclusive policies, collaborative leadership, and meaningful engagement with families and communities. Research underscores that a caring approach mitigates the negative effects of systemic inequities by addressing the relational and emotional dimensions of learning environments. Teachers, therefore, act not just as instructors but as advocates and allies, ensuring that the voices of SEN children are heard and their needs met. By embedding care into the fabric of educational practices, schools can resist the depersonalising tendencies of neoliberalism and instead cultivate environments that ensures the well-being of all

children—especially those with SEN—can thrive as active and valued members of their communities.

Holistic Approaches to Supporting Well-Being in Inclusive School Settings

Reflection Activity:

What might affect a child's well-being at school?

How could schools support child well-being?

The role of the school in supporting well-being in inclusive settings needs to be addressed holistically. According to Minkkinen (2013), a comprehensive understanding of child well-being encompasses not only individual development but also the social, emotional, and environmental contexts in which children thrive. To effectively support children's well-being, schools must address a range of factors, including optimal school conditions, such as resources, physical facilities and support services. Key indicators of students' well-being include positive attitudes and emotions towards school, joy in the learning environment, a positive academic self-concept, and the absence of worries, somatic complaints, and social problems (Hascher, 2003). Creating a nurturing environment and positive climate is essential, as is fostering inclusive leadership practices that engage students in decision-making. Additionally, building strong partnerships with families and the community, along with providing robust support and training for educators, is crucial for fostering an inclusive atmosphere where all children can flourish.

School conditions in terms of well-being refer to the physical conditions of the area, the learning environment, and the services provided by the school (Konu & Rimpela, 2002). An ideal school environment utilises the physical structure to encourage healthy behaviours and support social-emotional well-being, encompassing educational spaces, physical activity, and food preparation (Hawkins et al., 2023). Physical conditions include crowdedness, noise level, lighting, ventilation, temperature, cleanliness, safety (incident risk), and facility conditions. The conditions in a classroom are significantly affected by school resources, and how these resources are effectively used is crucial for creating an optimal learning environment. However, having more resources does not guarantee well-being, nor does having fewer resources mean that children's well-being is not supported. The real impact of schools on children's well-being is not determined by how much resources they have but by how effectively those resources are used. From a justice perspective, as Schweiger (2015) emphasises, the focus should be on what children can realistically do and become (i.e., their capabilities and function) rather than just the resources provided to them. Resources are only valuable if successfully transformed into opportunities that enhance children's well-being. This perspective highlights that, inequities and injustices, such as discrimination, can hinder the effective use of resources, making it crucial for schools to ensure that their resources are used in ways that genuinely support the development and well-being of all children.

Other essential parts of the learning environment are the psychological and emotional environment, often called the school climate. A positive climate feels safe, friendly, inviting, and supportive; others feel exclusionary, unwelcoming, and often unsafe (Kutsyuruba et al., 2015). Thapa and colleagues (2013) identify five essential school climate aspects critical to fostering a positive and effective learning environment. Firstly, safety includes rules and norms, physical safety, and social-emotional safety, ensuring that pupils feel protected and supported. Secondly, relationships play a crucial role, including respect for diversity, strong school ties and commitment, social support, effective leadership and the impact of students' race and ethnicity on their perceptions of school climate. Third, teaching and learning covers a broad spectrum, including social, emotional, ethical and civic education, service learning, and support for academic and professional growth, as well as teacher and student perceptions. Fourth, the institutional environment addresses the physical environment, resources, and facilities that contribute to the functionality and attractiveness of the school. Finally, the school improvement process involves continuous efforts to improve various dimensions of the school environment to create a better overall climate for students and staff. Taken together, these aspects provide a comprehensive framework for understanding and improving school climate.

Positive relationships within the school context are known to contribute to children's well-being. From an ecological perspective, any relationship within the school is interconnected with other ecosystems in children's lives (Roffey, 2012). The role of the school within this system is to develop its relationship positively, both within itself and with other systems as a mesosystem. From this perspective, the school serves as a space for reciprocal interactions between children, educators, staff, and home. The educator-child relationship could be a protective factor by promoting healthy development, especially for at-risk children (Pianta & Stuhlman, 2004). Teacher training from a relational perspective effectively supports teacher-child relationships at the school level (Lyon et al., 2009; Rudasill et al., 2020). Common characteristics of schools, where peer relationships are more positive, include leaders with a vision of safety and well-being, effective behavioural policies, and planning that emphasises relationality (McGrath & Noble, 2010). Holistically, implementing effective school-based Social Emotional Learning (SEL) programmes has demonstrated positive relational and behavioural outcomes for children. Another important relational aspect is staff relations. Caring relationships between colleagues and principals are positively associated with educator well-being and engagement while reducing burnout and coping with stressful situations at school (Eldor & Shoshani, 2016). These findings show that school policies that prioritise relationships can positively affect relationships within the school in a multifaceted way. Similarly, a positive, inviting, and inclusive school culture, leadership with a clear vision, safe and reciprocal relationships, and opportunities for participation are prominent in family-school relationships (Haines et al., 2015). Additionally, the way to effective school-family relationships is to see the family as equal

partners who want the best for the children and involve them as collaborators in their child's learning (Roffey, 2012).

School leadership is seen as a critical factor for children's well-being and inclusion, targeting specific learning needs that vary depending on the context (Fonsén et al., 2022; Douglas, 2022). The principles of effective leadership for inclusion are as follows: inclusive principles, a strategy that includes the whole school, and a shared leadership model (Ekins, 2013). It is important to prepare inclusive principles and a strategic foundation in an adaptable way. This outlines the school's shared idea of inclusiveness and steps to prioritise child well-being. However, creating this shared idea means reviewing the members' values, beliefs, and meanings. The Index for Inclusion (Booth et al., 2006) is helpful for schools planning their inclusive practices. This includes the key concepts for inclusion, such as planning techniques for inclusive frameworks, and outcome evaluation strategies, and is a useful roadmap for schools looking to support child well-being and participation. While it is clear that prioritising whole-school well-being and inclusiveness is a systematic process, it is also evident that the leadership that promotes these practices is highly effective. Ryu and colleagues (2020) indicate that leaders can shift the school approach more positively with their educational vision, personal values, and adjustments to organisational priorities and structures, transcending individual relationships. To effectively implement the systematic changes, school leaders must be trained, exposed to good practices, and supported in developing their vision, as this can significantly impact inclusiveness at schools. Consider visiting the "Leadership for Inclusion" chapters for detailed information about inclusive school leadership.

Teachers as Catalysts for Children's Well-Being: Key Influences and Support Strategies

Improving what we do as educators and perhaps more importantly, how we do it, builds personal practice, confidence and self-esteem. When practice is honed, meaningful connections can be made between educator and student, laying firm foundations on which both educator and child well-being can be built. Considerable research has identified the symbiotic relationship between educator and child well-being (Harding et al., 2019, Lavy & Naama-Ghanayim, 2020; Marigen et al., 2022;). In particular, this relationship emphasises the importance of the connections between educator well-being and classroom interactions, which in turn support affective environments which nurture social, emotional and cognitive development for all concerned. Educator well-being can be influenced by different factors, many of which have been discussed elsewhere in this chapter (see section on School's Role in Supporting Well-Being). However, on an individual level, educators who focus on developing an effective personal practice are well positioned to improve levels of personal and professional well-being. So how can we hone our practice?

Reflective Practice

The process of reflection is regarded as an essential aspect of building teaching practice (Brookfield, 2017; Farrell, 2015); and its implications for improving communication and building relationships, underscores reflection as an integral skill required to support inclusive practice and children's well-being. It has frequently been noted that educators reflect constantly, although often in an informal way (Brookfield, 2017; Kraft, 2002; Schön,1983; Schön, 2017). While the knowledge to be gained from regular reflecting on the practicalities of what happens during an educator's working day is invaluable, critical reflection provides a deeper understanding of an educator's personal practice. So, when does reflection become critical reflection? Schön's research on professional education (1983) focused on distinguishing between reflection *in* action and reflection *on* action. Reflection in action is the thought process that we have whilst involved in a situation, during which we become aware of what we are thinking, feeling and doing. Whereas reflection on action takes place at a later stage, when we consider the events that took place and the subsequent consequences, and relate these to what we were thinking, feeling and doing. The dynamic interplay between both types of reflection creates a process in which the educator can better understand the implications of her/his personal practice and the far-reaching effects it can have on others, including their subjective well-being.

This is particularly pertinent when considering the relational aspect of pedagogy and the complex nature of actions and interactions which take place in a dynamic and diverse classroom environment. Indeed, relational pedagogies require significant levels of responsiveness and reciprocity which are regularly informed by relevant and meaningful feedback on their efficacy. Reich (2017) reports that the ability to be appropriately responsive or as he terms it, reflexive, requires constant reflection. Within the process of self-reflection, there is a degree of self-research which leads to developing levels of personal understanding and growth. Of course, any process is made more fruitful by applying as much pertinent information to it as possible. One way to appreciably inform reflective practice is to utilise Brookfield's four lenses of critical reflection (2017). He suggests that educators need to see themselves from different angles in order to fully appreciate many aspects of their practice, including the effect they have on others and their sense of self. He goes on to argue that as individuals harbour implicit views and assumptions that guide their actions, then perhaps the individual is not always best placed to interrogate their own actions objectively. By extension, when educators reflect on their own teaching, they are more likely to self-confirm their actions rather than self-reflect. Brookfield offers some guidance in counteracting this tendency by identifying four lenses which can be used to guide educators to be objective in their subjective reflection. These are:

Students Eyes

Seeing ourselves through the eyes of students allows us to understand the effect our actions and communications can have on them. Our actions, even when they are entirely well-meaning, can have significant effects on a child's well-being in both positive and negative ways. It is important to recognise and acknowledge that the meanings we ascribe to our actions may not be perceived in the same way by the students who are at the receiving end of those actions; looking at ourselves through the eyes of the students provides valuable insight into how our actions and communications are received.

Colleagues' Perspectives

Inviting colleagues to observe and discuss practice can provide insights from those who have a shared, contextual understanding and appreciation of actions and interactions. They can offer new perspectives and often suggest responses which may never occur to individuals when reflecting in isolation. Moreover, shared and professional dialogue regarding children's learning, development and well-being bolsters shared and sustained thinking, and fosters a sense of inclusive practice amongst team members.

Personal Experience

Your own experience as a student educator brings with it a wealth of understanding of how environment, context and dynamics can help or hinder your ability to feel secure, confident and self-assured. Continuous Professional Development (CPD) provides ongoing opportunities to not only upskill in specific areas, but also offers opportunities for personal reflection on learning contexts and environments.

Theory and Research

Theory and Research can furnish unanticipated and illuminating interpretations of the familiar, as well as revealing unfamiliar knowledge and understanding. Moreover, Theory and Research are not static in nature, but rather evolve, bringing ever-developing understanding to our work as educators. Arming ourselves with the most current and pertinent information can only support our efforts to nurture children's well-being and build inclusive educational settings.

Brookfield's four lenses framework is highly valuable in enabling educators to assess the impact of their personal practice and is particularly pertinent in relation to supporting educator and child well-being.

Pedagogy of Care

A significant element of Minkinnen's SMCW Model (2013) is the presence of *a **Circle of Care,*** in which it is acknowledged that children's well-being is highly dependent on those

individuals who interact with them face to face. Here it is recognised that, amongst others, teachers provide physical, cognitive, emotional and material support to children through a lens of care. However, the connection between care and education is one that is more embedded in some educational areas than others. For example, the field of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) is one which espouses the belief that education and care are intrinsically linked, and that there cannot be one without the other. As a direct result of the interconnectedness of care and education, children's well-being is often a key focus of educators within the field of ECEC. The Key Person Approach (Goldschmied & Jackson, 2004) often acts as an effective framework that Early Childhood Educators utilise to direct their focus and actions. This approach sees each child explicitly linked to an educator who is personally responsible for building a close relationship with the child, acting as a significant figure of attachment for the child and liaising closely with family. Within other educational settings, the subject of well-being is often just that – an explicit topic which is covered by a detailed curriculum. For example, in Ireland, well-being has been added to the Primary and Special School curriculum, with an overall goal of supporting children's well-being through integrating the subjects of Physical Education (PE) and Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE). This has led to 'well-being' being treated like other subjects within the curriculum, often with the usual set of expectations, such as homework, attached. Correspondingly, a report on equity and excellence in education from the International Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) revealed that indeed, schools in many jurisdictions typically rely on explicit curricula and programmes as the prevailing approach for promoting student wellbeing (OECD, 2016). According to the report, most schools implement wellbeing programmes through dedicated units or strands within physical and health education, civic and citizenship education, moral or religious education. This is in contrast to the area of ECEC, where care and well-being are seen as an implicit part of educators' work with children as opposed to an explicit body of knowledge to be imparted. While it is vital that educators know, and work, within the curriculum they are provided with (what we do), however, how educators work with children when utilising the curriculum (how we do) is equally important. When care underpins educators' actions and interactions, relationships are stronger and well-being is fostered.

Building a Sense of Belonging

It is interesting to note that many well-being measurement scales contain evaluative questions based on feelings of belonging, highlighting the importance of individuals feeling a sense of inclusion or togetherness for the betterment of their subjective well-being. Added to this, the growing body of research which examines the link between a sense of belonging and effective learning contexts and environments (Hurley, 2023; Juutinen, Ólafsdóttir, & Einarsdóttir, 2024; Rose & Shevlin, 2017), points to the necessity for educators to promote environments where children feel they belong. Engaging with diverse communities of students requires the educator to adopt the view of belonging as a holistic

and relationally constructed concept which does not necessarily require a shared language, ethnicity, religion, gender, background or age. Rather, what is required is a sense of shared space and focus, where each person present feels that she/he is welcomed, recognised, valued and has agency within that space. As in all matters related to children's well-being, the educator's role in building a sense of belonging is informed by her/his relationships with those with whom that space is shared. Knowing each child's personality, strengths, and family and cultural context, is key to shaping a space that can both reflect and nurture those who engage within it, adult and child alike. When educators build a welcoming and empowering educational setting, they not only reveal the complexities and the strengths of the children they work with, but they also provide a window into their personal practice, revealing the values and care that underpin their work with children.

Peer's and Family' Role: What has an impact on children's well-being and how can we support children's well-being?

The relationship between parents and children serves as a critical protective factor in a child's well-being, offering emotional security, guidance, and a foundation for resilience. This bond becomes even more significant when extended to include collaborative relationships with schools and teachers, creating a unified support system that reinforces the child's well-being. When schools actively engage with families – particularly those of children with special educational needs (SEN), disabilities, or immigrant backgrounds – they bridge gaps in understanding and create opportunities for tailored support. Adopting a capabilities approach in these collaborations ensures that the focus is on what children are capable of, rather than merely addressing deficits. Close communication between parents and educators enables a shared understanding of the child's unique needs and strengths, fostering trust and aligning efforts to create inclusive and supportive environments. For children from immigrant backgrounds, this collaboration can address cultural and linguistic barriers, promoting a sense of belonging and validation. Likewise, for children with SEN and disabilities, this partnership ensures access to resources, adaptive strategies, and emotional support tailored to their individual circumstances. Families play a vital role in shaping educational policies and practices through active participation in advisory committees, school councils, and decision-making processes, ensuring their perspectives are valued and included. Additionally, strengthening family capabilities through targeted workshops on parenting skills, home-based learning, and behaviour management empowers parents to effectively support their children's education and well-being. Ultimately, when families, schools, and teachers work together with a shared commitment to inclusivity and well-being, they create a powerful framework for protecting and nurturing each child's growth and potential.

Siblings play a critical role in shaping a child's well-being, often serving as companions, confidants, and role models within the family dynamic. Positive sibling relationships can offer emotional support, a sense of security, and opportunities for social learning, which

are especially important for children with special educational needs (SEN) or those from immigrant backgrounds. For instance, a child with SEN who has a nurturing sibling may experience increased self-confidence and social competence as their sibling advocates for their inclusion and helps bridge gaps in communication or understanding with peers and teachers. Similarly, an immigrant child may rely on their sibling to navigate new cultural or linguistic challenges, providing a shared sense of identity and resilience in the face of adversity. However, strained or neglectful sibling relationships can have the opposite effect, potentially exacerbating feelings of isolation or inadequacy. For example, a child with SEN who is teased or excluded by a sibling may internalise negative perceptions of their abilities, impacting their emotional well-being and self-esteem. Minkkinen's Circle of Care framework emphasises the critical role siblings play as part of a child's immediate support network, influencing their social, emotional, and developmental outcomes. Schools can reinforce these positive sibling dynamics by involving siblings in collaborative activities, offering guidance on how to support one another, and recognising the unique contributions siblings make to a child's well-being. By fostering strong sibling relationships, families and schools can create an environment where every child feels valued, supported, and empowered to thrive.

Peers also play a pivotal role in shaping a child's well-being, particularly in the school environment, where friendships and social interactions significantly influence their emotional and social development. Positive peer relationships can provide children with a sense of belonging, validation, and emotional support, which are crucial components of well-being. For children with special educational needs (SEN), or those from immigrant backgrounds, having a supportive peer group can be transformative. For example, a child with SEN who is included in collaborative classroom activities, or befriends peers who offer encouragement and assistance, may experience enhanced confidence, reduced anxiety, and improved engagement with learning. Similarly, an immigrant child who is welcomed by peers and invited to participate in cultural or linguistic exchanges may feel a sense of inclusion and pride in their identity, which fosters resilience and self-esteem. Conversely, the absence of such positive interactions can lead to isolation and exclusion, undermining a child's well-being. For instance, a child who is marginalised, due to their disability or linguistic differences, may feel disconnected and develop low self-worth, negatively impacting their academic and social development. Minkkinen's Circle of Care underscores the importance of these peer relationships within the broader ecosystem of well-being, highlighting how peers, as part of the child's immediate social environment, contribute to emotional safety and positive development. Schools can nurture this dynamic by fostering inclusive practices, promoting empathy, and creating opportunities for cooperative learning, ensuring that all children – regardless of their background or abilities – have the chance to thrive within a supportive peer network.

Schools can play a vital role in fostering well-being between parents and children, siblings, and peers by creating inclusive opportunities that strengthen these relationships.

This approach aligns with Minkkinen's Circle of Care, which emphasises the importance of close, supportive interactions in a child's immediate environment. Below are practical examples tailored to children with SEN such as a chronic illness.

Fostering Well-Being Between Parents and Children

- **Parent-Child Workshops:** Organise regular workshops focused on joint activities, such as art projects, storytelling, or cooking classes. For example, a school could host an "Inclusive Family Art Day," where children with SEN and their parents work together on creative projects that emphasise teamwork and communication.
- **Home-School Journals:** For a child with a chronic illness who may miss school frequently, schools could provide a home-school journal that allows parents and teachers to communicate daily about the child's needs and achievements. Parents could also share positive moments at home, reinforcing their connection with the child.
- **Family Inclusion Days:** Host events like "Family Fun Days," where parents can participate in classroom activities or see their children's work is showcased. For a child with a chronic illness or disability, this could include an adapted environment where they can fully participate.

Fostering Well-Being Between Children and Their Siblings

- **Sibling Support Programs:** Create school-based sibling groups where siblings of children with SEN such as a chronic illnesses can share experiences and receive guidance on how to support their sibling. For example, a school counsellor could facilitate sessions where siblings discuss strategies for helping their brother or sister feel included during play or activities.
- **Inclusive Learning Projects:** Plan activities that involve siblings working together, such as science fairs or reading buddy systems. A child with SEN could partner with their sibling to present a project that highlights their unique strengths, fostering mutual respect and teamwork.

Fostering Well-Being Between Children and Their Peers

- **Peer Buddy Systems:** Pair children with SEN, or chronic illnesses, with supportive peers for activities like group work, lunch breaks, or recess. For example, a peer buddy could help a child with mobility issues navigate the playground, ensuring they feel included in social interactions.
- **Social Skills Groups:** Run small, inclusive social skills programs where children learn about empathy, active listening, and inclusion. A child with SEN could benefit from structured opportunities to build friendships in a supportive environment.
- **Inclusive Celebrations:** Ensure that all children, including those with chronic illnesses,

disabilities, from ethnic minorities etc. are part of school-wide events. For example, during sports day, offer adapted activities where all children can participate, such as wheelchair-friendly races or team-based games that focus on collaboration rather than competition. For cultural events ensure representation of all children.

- **Peer education and self-advocacy:** When children are given the opportunity to share their experiences, such as explaining a chronic illness or a unique learning need to their peers, not only fosters understanding but also reduces stigma and builds empathy within the classroom. This process allows children to develop confidence and agency, enabling them to feel valued and respected for their contributions. For example, a child with diabetes might explain how they manage their condition, helping classmates understand their needs while encouraging acceptance and support. Peer education and self-advocacy not only benefit the individual child but also create a more inclusive and empathetic school culture where all children feel empowered to share their stories and perspectives.

These practical initiatives reinforce the **Circle of Care** by fostering positive, reciprocal relationships among the key individuals in a child's immediate environment, i.e., parents, siblings, peers, and educators. By creating spaces for collaboration, understanding, and mutual support, schools ensure that children with SEN feel valued and included. These efforts not only enhance individual well-being but also contribute to a culture of empathy and community that benefits all children.

Child's level: What has an impact on children's well-being and how can we support children's well-being?

Reflection Activity: How can educators create an environment that empowers children to express themselves and engage actively in their own well-being?

Children's well-being is a multifaceted concept that we are trying to expand our knowledge of. In this section, we will focus on the individual child. We could gain a more comprehensive understanding by considering children as active subjects in their own well-being (Mason & Danby, 2011). Beyond this, conceptualising the child as a social actor who structures their own world and as an agent who transforms society will reveal a more meaningful perspective (Minkkinnen, 2013). Child well-being is connected to daily experiences, including their interactions with people, places, activities, and time (Fattore et al., 2009). Research shows that children's subjective well-being is influenced by their agency and sense of control, opportunities for play, interactions with educators, peers, and staff, and feeling safe and secure at school (Fattore et al., 2009; Jevtić & Visković, 2021). Although these concepts are intertwined and support each other in terms of children's well-being, it would be useful to talk about how they can be supported by looking at their separate meanings.

Fostering children's agency and participation in inclusive settings is essential for their well-being and development. Children have the right to express their views on matters affecting them, and this participation is crucial for their holistic development (UNCRC, 1989). According to Minkkinen (2013), children's agency is integral to their overall well-being, as it enables them to navigate their social environments and contribute meaningfully to their learning experiences. Agency, that is the ability to make choices and have a say in their lives, empowers children to become active participants in their learning and social environments (Jans, 2004). According to Sen's capability approach, children can be seen as agents who construct their own world; however, they must have opportunities to realise their agency so that they can be capable (Hart & Brando, 2018; Sen, 1993). Likewise, looking at the agency as a practical achievement rather than a priori assumption could be a more empowering approach (Jerome & Starkey, 2022). It means that even though agency and the right of participation are universal rights, it is possible to emerge through interaction and negotiations between the child and the school. This can be achieved by providing diverse opportunities for decision-making, whether it is choosing activities, contributing to classroom rules, or engaging in group projects. Using dialogic communication techniques, where children are encouraged to express their thoughts and feelings openly, helps to foster a sense of agency. Tools like visual aids, storytelling, and role-playing can be effective in facilitating this process.

Play is essential for children's well-being, encompassing their physical, emotional, and psychological health. Through play, children can build connections with people and places, learn independently, and develop confidence, resilience, self-esteem, and self-efficacy, all crucial for their overall well-being (Cole-Hamilton & Gleave, 2011). Furthermore, children's subjective well-being is strongly linked to free time and play opportunities (Corominas et al., 2021). Research indicates that engaging in playful experiences positively influences children's development, regardless of their age group (Gordon, 2014). Given these findings, promoting free play in the classroom and at school, and providing playful learning experiences, will positively contribute to children's well-being. Creating supportive environments across multiple domains, to support children's well-being through play within an inclusive education framework, is essential. This involves integrating play-based learning into the school curriculum, designing classrooms with flexible and accessible spaces for various types of play, training educators to incorporate inclusive play into their teaching, and ensuring sufficient unstructured recess time to allow play that benefits all children. Lynch and colleagues (2023) suggested universal design principles for facilitating play in inclusive settings. A play promoting space for all should serve equitable, flexible, simple, and intuitive use, include perceptible information, tolerance for error, different sizes and spaces, and require low physical effort. In this way, the space could be responsive to the changing needs of play and learning.

Children's relationships with peers and adults play a significant role in their well-being, especially in inclusive educational settings. In particular, the quality of those relationships

provides emotional support or a sense of relatedness, which contributes to positive development, including higher levels of engagement, motivation, and academic performance (Sabol & Pianta, 2012). From Minkkinen's perspective, the 'Circle of Care' emphasises the importance of a supportive relational environment where children feel valued and understood. Supporting well-being from a relational perspective at the child level, it is essential to understand the children and their perspective on relationships, help relationship-building skills, and create space for them to express themselves and their feelings. It is thought that the relational support perceived by children may be effective in their adaptation to school, and that negative relationships may also be a determinant to school-related adaptation difficulties (Harrison et al., 2007). In educational settings, where children from low-income, culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds may risk feeling like they do not belong at school or consider dropping out, the protective role of relationships becomes even more critical (Jain et al., 2019; Reicher, 2010). On the other hand, child temperament could affect teacher-child interaction quality (Rudasill & Rimm-Kaufman, 2009). For example, shyness could impact the closeness in teacher-child relationship. It is important to be aware of the character, temperament and differences between children, to ensure their inclusion and to support reciprocal relationships. For these relationships to progress positively for the child, it is important to think about ways to create opportunities to get to know the child and support them to express themselves.

Initial recognition methods – including observations, checklists, and informal interviews – help educators identify a child's developmental level, interests, and needs (Bagnato, 2007). With young children, it is also essential to have a check-in routine to understand their well-being (Laevers & Declercq, 2018). Creative methods could be used to explore their ideas and opinions about their well-being (Pople & Cotton, 2014). Drawing, playdough, videos, and photobooks could potentially be tools for children to reflect on their perspectives on well-being. While creative methods help to understand children, they also allow children with different needs to express themselves, thanks to various techniques. Another critical method is participatory observation (Fine & Sandstrom, 1988). Observations can be made by understanding the child's culture, verifying the information the adult understands from the child, and diversifying the methods. Building trust through empathetic communication is vital; active listening and attention to verbal and non-verbal cues help educators grasp a child's feelings and thoughts (Petrie, 2011). Offering self-expression opportunities through art, play, or storytelling further deepens understanding, ensuring each child feels seen, heard, and supported.

It should be taken into consideration that different children may give different meanings to these dimensions and have different needs. This can be challenging, and it is crucial to be mindful of and respectful of children's individuality and diverse identities. For instance, a child who speaks a different language at home may require language support, and a child with a physical disability may need specific accommodations to access the playground. Children who feel anxious about interacting with their peers may benefit from private

conversations with their teacher, one-on-one peer support, and gentle encouragement. As seen in the examples, knowing and understanding the child can be seen as an important step in supporting the child's well-being in the classroom. Understanding each child in an inclusive setting begins with recognising their unique strengths, needs, and preferences (Villa & Thousand, 2021).

Building a Strong Circle of Care for All

Ultimately, a strong **Circle of Care** within a school ensures that all children – whether they have disabilities, come from marginalised backgrounds, or face unique challenges – are supported holistically. This approach is rooted in the idea that every child needs a network of caring individuals who provide consistent and meaningful support. By creating a nurturing environment where teachers, peers, families, and communities collaborate closely, schools can offer the emotional security that children need to feel safe and valued. For instance, teachers who are trained in inclusive practices can provide differentiated instruction tailored to each child's unique learning needs, while peers contribute to a sense of belonging and acceptance through positive interactions. Families, when engaged as active partners in the educational process, help bridge the gap between home and school, ensuring that children feel supported in every aspect of their lives. This comprehensive approach allows schools to be more responsive to the individual needs of each child, creating an inclusive atmosphere where all students can thrive.

In addition to emotional support, a strong Circle of Care is critical for fostering social development, which is especially important for children who may feel isolated or excluded due to disabilities or socio-economic disadvantages. Inclusive schools that prioritise peer support and collaboration create opportunities for children to build friendships and develop social skills through group activities, peer mentoring programs, and cooperative learning. These experiences are essential for building empathy and understanding among students, helping them to appreciate the diverse backgrounds and abilities of their peers. For children with disabilities, being integrated into social activities alongside their classmates can reduce feelings of isolation and increase their sense of belonging, while for marginalised children, such interactions can help break down social barriers. By facilitating positive social interactions, schools contribute to a broader culture of inclusivity, ensuring that every child has opportunities to develop the social competencies that are critical for success both inside and outside the classroom.

Moreover, a well-rounded Circle of Care also addresses the **academic foundation** needed for children to thrive, especially for those who might face additional challenges in their educational journey. Through individualised learning plans, access to specialised support services, and a curriculum that respects diverse learning needs, schools can ensure that every child receives the guidance and resources they need to succeed academically. For instance, children with disabilities might benefit from assistive technologies that help them

access learning materials, while those from marginalised backgrounds may need additional academic support to overcome gaps in their educational experiences. By providing these resources, schools help level the playing field, giving each child the tools they need to reach their full potential. The Circle of Care thus acts as a framework that integrates emotional, social, and academic support, creating a well-rounded educational environment where all students are given the opportunity to flourish. This holistic approach ensures that inclusivity is not just a policy, but a lived reality, where every child is empowered to succeed.

Promoting the well-being of children with disabilities and other marginalised groups in an inclusive school is a comprehensive effort that requires collaboration among teachers, peers, families, and the wider community. By strengthening the **Circle of Care** and addressing broader societal barriers, schools can create environments where all students, regardless of their needs or background, can flourish. In line with Minkkinen's Structural Model of Child Well-being, this approach ensures that every child has the opportunity to experience positive physical, emotional, and social development, ultimately contributing to a more inclusive and resilient society.

Conclusion

Now, it's time to recall our case. After reading the chapter, what did you think of to encourage Fatima, include her in the classroom, and support her learning? Here is the rest of the case.

The Unseen Factors

Beneath the surface, Fatima's migration background played a significant role in her behaviour. Her family had left Syria to escape conflict, facing numerous challenges such as housing instability, financial difficulties, and the emotional toll of leaving their homeland. At home, Fatima found solace in drawing and painting, expressing her feelings and experiences through art. She also had a keen interest in animals, though the language barrier and cultural differences at school made it difficult for her to engage with these topics. These unseen factors contributed to her shyness and reluctance to participate in class.

Intervention and Support

Recognising Fatima's potential, her teacher, Ms. Garcia, took the initiative to understand her better. After noticing Fatima's interests, Ms. Garcia arranged a meeting with her parents to learn more about her background. She then incorporated visual aids and bilingual resources into her teaching, helping Fatima grasp the curriculum better. Art projects became a regular part of class activities, allowing Fatima to express herself creatively. Ms. Garcia also paired Fatima with Layla, a bilingual classmate, to assist with language and class activities, and

organised cultural lessons and a "Cultural Heritage Day" to celebrate diversity, fostering a sense of belonging for Fatima.

Transformation and Conclusion

The impact of these interventions was transformative. With the support of visual aids and bilingual resources, Fatima's comprehension and engagement in class improved markedly. Her academic performance showed steady progress, especially in subjects with visual learning components. Socially, Fatima began forming friendships, starting with Layla and extending to other classmates. She became more active in class discussions and group activities, gaining confidence in her language skills and cultural identity. The inclusive and supportive environment at Harmony Elementary helped Fatima feel valued and understood, significantly reducing her anxiety and sense of isolation. Fatima's story highlights the importance of cultural competence and empathy in education, demonstrating that every child has the potential to succeed when given the right opportunities and support.

Local contexts

Closing questions to discuss or tasks

This case study highlights the complexities of supporting child well-being in an inclusive educational setting, where each child's story and needs are unique. As demonstrated by Fatima's experience, a child's initial behaviour and engagement may not provide a complete understanding; instead, they may reflect deeper, unseen factors such as language barriers, cultural adjustments, or past experiences. To effectively support children like Fatima, educators must look beyond first impressions and strive to understand each child's background and strengths. This requires a commitment to empathy, cultural sensitivity, and the implementation of inclusive practices that recognise and celebrate diversity. As you reflect on Fatima's story, consider specific steps you can take in your educational practice to enhance inclusivity. Whether by introducing cultural events, creating partnerships with families, or encouraging peer support, remember that every action contributes to a more inclusive and supportive learning environment. Let's move forward with a commitment to ensure that every child feels seen, valued, and supported on their journey to well-being and belonging.

Relationships	• Do you recognise each child as a unique individual with their own way of being, communicating and coping? • Do you collaborate with parents to gain knowledge and understanding of the child's home and family context? • Do you recognise and acknowledge each child's funds of knowledge (Moll, 2006) such as the knowledge, understanding and skills she/he has learned outside of the classroom environment such as in their family and home context? • Do you provide opportunities for children to demonstrate, celebrate and share their funds of knowledge? • Do you provide opportunities to share your own funds of knowledge?
Communication	• Do you tune in to all children; observing, interpreting and acting on cues given? • Have you developed a 'listening culture' where the physical, temporal and emotional environment is set up to seek input and feedback from others? Do you listen and act upon feedback received and then communicate subsequent developments to the actors involved? • Have you developed a Pedagogy of Listening (Rinaldi, 2001) where you as an educator recognise the multitude of ways that children can communicate? (Consider verbal and non-verbal communication, visual and expressive art, movement, focus, attention, mood, conflict, personal affect etc.)
Educational setting	• Have you provided an adaptable environment where children are facilitated in their communication? • Do you recognise the impact of immediate environmental context on children's actions and interactions (such as the difference between children's levels of movement indoors as opposed to outdoors)? • Are children 'visible' within your classroom? (For example, are individual creations displayed? Are children's quotes displayed?) • Have you built a classroom culture which invites and values diverse methods of communication? • Do you have access to assistive technology?
Reflective practice	• Do you regularly reflect in and on practice (Schön, 2017)? • Do you seek children's feedback in a variety of ways? Are all children enabled to provide feedback? • Are you aware of the Hidden Curriculum – the implicit messages children and adults receive through the actions and communications of others? • Do you seek and consider colleagues' perspectives? • Do you upskill to support practice which speaks to specific cohorts? (For example, becoming familiar with assistive technology or non-verbal communication systems) • Do you celebrate your achievements in supporting children's well-being? • Do you discuss children's well-being with significant others?

Guiding Questions to Support Educators in Gauging and Nurturing Children's Everyday Well-Being

Indicator Domain	Potential Indicator Prompts
Presentation	• Is the child active and engaged? • Is the child visible in all areas of the classroom? • Is the child experiencing enjoyment without constraints? • What does the child's posture say about her/him? • What message does the child's demeanour give? • What message does the child's focus of attention give? (For example, is the child only engaging with specific activities and ignoring others? Does the child seem like she/he is actively listening to others?) • How does the child react to being approached by others? • How does the child react to being touched by others?
Engagement	• Is the child engaging with all aspects of school life? • Is the child engaging with peers? • Does the child find it challenging to enter group play? • Does the child engage with all types of play? • Does the child observe others at play? • Is the child engaging with adults? • Is the child sharing achievements with others? • Is the child inviting input from others? • What message does the child's levels of focus give? • What did the child's transition into the setting tell you? · Did the child find it difficult to start the school year? · Did the child find it difficult to transition from parent/caregiver to school/classroom on the day?

Communication	• Is the child connecting with others? • What emotions is the child displaying? How are they being displayed or shared? • What message is the child's facial expression giving? • What message is the child's body language giving? Consider: · Stance · Posture/Demeanour · Gaze/Focus/Attention – where is the child looking? How is the child's eye contact? · Movement – is she/he moving away? · Proxemics/Positioning – is the child always very close to you? Distant from others? · Kinesics – does the child understand/use physical gestures such as a thumbs up or a waving of hands · Haptics – communication through touch such as holding your hand – does the child seek lots of tactile comfort? • Does the child's body language match their spoken language? • Does the child ask for help when needed? • Can the child communicate how she/he is feeling? • Does the child talk about home or family? • Can the child's behaviour lead to conflict? Is she/he involved in conflict often? • Can the child 'stand their ground'? Can the child advocate for her/himself when faced with a challenge?

Literature

Ackah-Jnr, Francis R., John Appiah, and Alexander Kwao. "Inclusive Language as a Pedagogical and Motivational Tool in Early Childhood Settings: Some Observations." *Open Journal of Social Sciences* 8 (2020): 176.

Bagnato, Stephen J. *Authentic Assessment for Early Childhood Intervention: Best Practices*. Guilford Press, 2007.

Ben-Arieh, Asher. "Social Policy and the Changing Concept of Child Well-Being. The Role of International Studies and Children as Active Participants." *Zeitschrift Für Pädagogik* 60, no. 4 (2014): 569–81. https://doi.org/10.25656/01:14673.

Booth, Tony, Mel Ainscow, and Denise Kingston. *Index for Inclusion. Developing Play, Learning, and Participation in Early Years and Childcare*. Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education, 2006.

Bornstein, Marc H., Jennifer A. Kotler, and Jennifer E. Lansford. "The Future of Parenting Programs: An Introduction." *Parenting* 22, no. 3 (2022): 189–200. https://doi.org/10.1080/

15295192.2022.2086808.

Bradley, Robert H., and Robert F. Corwyn. "Infant Temperament, Parenting, and Externalizing Behavior in First Grade: A Test of the Differential Susceptibility Hypothesis." *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* 49, no. 2 (2008): 124–31. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-7610.2007.01829.x.

Bradshaw, Jonathan, Petra Hoelscher, and Dominic Richardson. "An Index of Child Well-Being in the European Union." *Social Indicators Research* 80, no. 1 (2007): 133–77. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-006-9024-z.

Bretherton, Inge. "The Origins of Attachment Theory: John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth." In *A Century of Developmental Psychology*, edited by Ross D. Parke, Peter A. Ornstein, John J. Rieser, and Carolyn E. Zahn-Waxler, 431–71. American Psychological Association, 1994. https://doi.org/10.1037/10155-029.

Britto, P. R., S. J. Lye, K. Proulx, A. K. Yousafzai, S. G. Matthews, T. Vaivada, and L. C. Fernald. "Advancing Early Childhood Development: From Science to Scale 2 Nurturing Care: Promoting Early Childhood Development." *Safety* 3, no. 4 (2016).

Britto, Pia R., Stephen J. Lye, Kerrie Proulx, Aisha K. Yousafzai, Stephen G. Matthews, Tyler Vaivada, Rafael Perez-Escamilla, and Zulfiqar A. Bhutta. "Nurturing Care: Promoting Early Childhood Development." *The Lancet* 389, no. 10064 (2017): 91–102.

Brogaard-Clausen, Sara, Sofia Guimaraes, Camilo Rubiano, and Fiona Tang. "International Perspectives on Well-Being and Democratic Living in Early Childhood Curricula." *Early Years* 43, no. 4–5 (2023): 729–43.

Bronfenbrenner, Urie. *Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design*. Harvard University Press, 1981.

Brookfield, Stephen D. *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher (2nd Ed)*. San Francisco, California: Jossey Bass, 2017.

Burns, Kenneth, and Caroline McGregor. "Child Protection and Welfare Systems in Ireland: Continuities and Discontinuities of the Present." In *National Systems of Child Protection*, 115–38. Springer, 2018. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-93348-1_7.

Carr, Margaret, and Wendy Lee. *Learning Stories: Constructing Learner Identities in Early Education*. SAGE Publications, 2012.

———. *Learning Stories in Practice*. London: SAGE Publications, 2019.

Children, Department of, and Youth Affairs. "Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People, 2014-2020." Dublin: Government of Ireland, 2014.

Cole-Hamilton, Ingrid, and Jenny Gleave. *Play and Children's Health and Well-Being*. National Children's Bureau, 2011.

Commission, European. "European Child Guarantee," 2021. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legalcontent/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52021DC0137&qid=1647980233530.

Corominas, Mari, Mónica González-Carrasco, and Ferran Casas. "Analyzing Factors for an Optimum Play Environment through Children's Subjective Well-Being Indicators." *Children*

and Youth Services Review 122 (2021): 105688.

Department of Children, Integration, Equality, Disability and Youth. "First 5: A Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and Their Families 2019-2028," 2019.

———. "Young Ireland: National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2023-2028." Dublin: Government of Ireland, 2023.

Devaney, Carmel, and Caroline McGregor. "A Review of Children First and Keeping Safe Training in Ireland: Implications for the Future." *Child Care in Practice* 22, no. 2 (2015): 166–82. https://doi.org/10.1080/13575279.2015.1027175.

———. "Child Protection and Family Support Practice in Ireland: A Contribution to Present Debates from a Historical Perspective." *Child & Family Social Work* 22, no. 3 (2016): 1255–63. https://doi.org/10.1111/cfs.12342.

Douglas, Anne. "Redefining Leadership: Lessons from an Early Education Leadership Development Initiative." *Early Childhood Education Journal* 46, no. 4 (2018): 387–96.

Einarsdottir, Johanna, Anna-Maija Purola, Eva Marianne Johansson, Stig Broström, and Anette Emilson. "Democracy, Caring and Competence: Values Perspectives in ECEC Curricula in the Nordic Countries." *International Journal of Early Years Education* 23, no. 1 (2015): 97–114.

Ekins, Alison. "Special Education within the Context of an Inclusive School." In *Leadership for Inclusive Education*, edited by G. Mac Ruairc, E. Ottesen, and R. Precey, 19–33. Sense Publishers, 2013. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6209-134-4_3.

Eldor, Liat, and Anat Shoshani. "Caring Relationships in School Staff: Exploring the Link between Compassion and Teacher Work Engagement." *Teaching and Teacher Education* 59 (2016): 126–36. https://doi.org/10.1016/J.TATE.2016.06.001.

Fane, Jennifer, Colin MacDougall, Jessie Jovanovic, Gerry Redmond, and Lisa Gibbs. "Preschool Aged Children's Accounts of Their Own Wellbeing: Are Current Wellbeing Indicators Applicable to Young Children?" *Child Indicators Research* 13 (2020): 1893–1920.

Farrell, Thomas S. C. *Promoting Teacher Reflection in Second Language Education: A Framework for TESOL Professionals*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2015.

Fattore, Tony, Jan Mason, and Elizabeth Watson. "When Children Are Asked about Their Well-Being: Towards a Framework for Guiding Policy." *Child Indicators Research* 2 (2009): 57–77.

Fine, Gary A., and Kent L. Sandstrom. *Knowing Children: Participant Observation with Minors*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1988.

Fonsén, Elina, Leena Lahtinen, Mari Sillman, and Jyriki Reunamo. "Pedagogical Leadership and Children's Well-Being in Finnish Early Education." *Educational Management Administration & Leadership* 50, no. 6 (2022): 979–94.

Forde, Deirdre. "'A New Publicness for Children with SEN in Ireland.'" In *The New Publicness of Education: Democratic Possibilities after the Critique of Neoliberalism*, 115–38. London: Routledge, 2023.

Goldschmied, Elinor, and Sonia Jackson. *People under Three: Young Children in Day Care*.

Psychology Press, 2004.

Gordon, Gwen. "Well Played: The Origins and Future of Playfulness." *American Journal of Play* 6, no. 2 (2014): 234–66.

Green, Jonathan, and Ruth Goldwyn. "Annotation: Attachment Disorganisation and Psychopathology: New Findings in Attachment Research and Their Potential Implications for Developmental Psychopathology in Childhood." *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* 43, no. 7 (2002): 835–46. https://doi.org/10.1111/1469-7610.00102.

Guerrero, Laura K. "Attachment Theory." In *Engaging Theories in Interpersonal Communication*, 299–313. Routledge, 2021. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003195511-27.

Haines, Shana J., Judith M. S. Gross, Martha Blue-Banning, Grace L. Francis, and Ann P. Turnbull. "Fostering Family–School and Community–School Partnerships in Inclusive Schools: Using Practice as a Guide." *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities* 40, no. 3 (2015): 227–39.

Hanly, Conor. "The Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect in Ireland in an International Context." *International Journal of Law, Policy and the Family* 34, no. 2 (2020): 145–67. https://doi.org/10.1093/lawfam/ebaa003.

Harding, Sarah, Richard Morris, David Gunnell, Tamsin Ford, William Hollingworth, Kate Tilling, and Judi Kidger. "Is Teachers' Mental Health and Wellbeing Associated with Students' Mental Health and Wellbeing?" *Journal of Affective Disorders* 242 (2019): 180–87. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2018.08.080.

Harrison, Linda J., Leanne Clarke, and Judy A. Ungerer. "Children's Drawings Provide a New Perspective on Teacher–Child Relationship Quality and School Adjustment." *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 22, no. 1 (2007): 55–71.

Hart, Caroline Sarojini, and Nicolás Brando. "A Capability Approach to Children's Well-Being, Agency and Participatory Rights in Education." *European Journal of Education* 53, no. 3 (2018): 293–309.

Hawkins, Georgianne Tiu, Chloe S. Chung, Marci F. Hertz, and Noehealani Antolin. "The School Environment and Physical and Social-Emotional Well-Being: Implications for Students and School Employees." *The Journal of School Health* 93, no. 9 (2023): 799–812. https://doi.org/10.1111/josh.13375.

Hewitt, Belinda, Lyndal Strazdins, and Bill Martin. "The Benefits of Paid Maternity Leave for Mothers' Post-Partum Health and Wellbeing: Evidence from an Australian Evaluation." *Social Science & Medicine* 182 (2017): 97–105. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2017.04.022.

Heymann, Jody, Aleta R. Sprague, Arijit Nandi, Alison Earle, Priya Batra, Adam Schickedanz, Paul J. Chung, and Amy Raub. "Paid Parental Leave and Family Wellbeing in the Sustainable Development Era." *Public Health Reviews* 38, no. 1 (2017). https://doi.org/10.1186/s40985-017-0067-2.

Hickey, Grainne, Sinéad McGilloway, Yvonne Leckey, Patrick McCormack, and Deirdre Forde. "UNITES Project: National Mapping and Review of Home Visiting Provision in Ireland. Report

Number One." Government of Ireland, 2023.

Holliday, Erin L., Linda J. Harrison, and Sharynne McLeod. "Listening to Children with Communication Impairment Talking through Their Drawings." *Journal of Early Childhood Research* 7, no. 3 (2009): 244–63.

Housman, Donna K. "The Importance of Emotional Competence and Self-Regulation from Birth: A Case for the Evidence-Based Emotional Cognitive Social Early Learning Approach." *International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy* 11, no. 1 (2017): 13. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40723-017-0038-6.

Hurley, Angela. "Facilitating a Sense of Belonging in the Primary Classroom: Translating Research into Practice." *Education Research and Perspectives* 50 (2023): 36–77.

Ireland, Government of. "First 5: A Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and Their Families 2019-2028." Dublin, 2018.

Jain, Sonia, Rebecca Reno, Alison K. Cohen, Henrissa Bassey, and Mansi Master. "Building a Culturally-Responsive, Family-Driven Early Childhood System of Care: Understanding the Needs and Strengths of Ethnically Diverse Families of Children with Social-Emotional and Behavioral Concerns." *Children and Youth Services Review* 100 (2019): 31–38. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2019.02.034.

Jans, Marc. "Children as Citizens: Towards a Contemporary Notion of Child Participation." *Childhood* 11, no. 1 (2004): 27–44.

Jerome, Lee, and Hugh Starkey. "Developing Children's Agency within a Children's Rights Education Framework: 10 Propositions." *Education 3-13* 50, no. 4 (2022): 439–51. https://doi.org/10.1080/03004279.2022.2052233.

Jevtic, Adrijana Visnjic, and Ivana Visković. "What about Us? – Children's Perspectives on Their Wellbeing." *Psicología, Conocimiento y Sociedad* 11, no. 1 (2021). https://doi.org/10.26864/PCS.v11.n1.3.

Juutinen, Jaana, Sara Margrét Ólafsdóttir, and Johanna Einarsdóttir. "Children's Belonging Constructed through Material Relations in Multicultural Early Education Settings." *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research* 68, no. 5 (2024): 878–89.

Konu, Anne, and Matti Rimpelä. "Well-Being in Schools: A Conceptual Model." *Health Promotion International* 17, no. 1 (2002): 79–87. https://doi.org/10.1093/heapro/17.1.79.

Kraft, Nancy P. "Teacher Research as a Way to Engage in Critical Reflection: A Case Study." *Reflective Practice* 3, no. 2 (2002): 175–89.

Kutsyuruba, Benjamin, Don A. Klinger, and Alicia Hussain. "Relationships among School Climate, School Safety, and Student Achievement and Well-being: A Review of the Literature." *Review of Education* 3, no. 2 (2015): 103–35. https://doi.org/10.1002/rev3.3043.

Laevers, Ferre, and Bart Declercq. "How Well-being and Involvement Fit into the Commitment to Children's Rights." *European Journal of Education* 53, no. 3 (2018): 325–35. https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12286.

Lavy, Shiri, and Eman Naama-Ghanayim. "Why Care about Caring? Linking Teachers' Caring and Sense of Meaning at Work with Students' Self-Esteem, Well-Being, and School

Engagement." *Teaching and Teacher Education* 91 (2020): 103046. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2020.103046.

Lawlor, Eilish, Jessica Aked, Nicola Steuer, and Steve Spratt. "Backing the Future: Why Investing in Children Is Good for Us All." New Economics Foundation, 2009. https://neweconomics.org/2009/09/backing-the-future.

Lewis, Michael, Candice Feiring, and Sandra Rosenthal. "Attachment over Time." *Child Development* 71, no. 3 (2000): 707–20. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8624.00180.

Liddle, Ian, and Gerald F. Carter. "Emotional and Psychological Well-Being in Children: The Development and Validation of the Stirling Children's Well-Being Scale." *Educational Psychology in Practice* 31, no. 2 (2015): 174–85.

Lynch, Helen, Alice Moore, and Maria Prellwitz. "From Policy to Play Provision: Universal Design and the Challenges of Inclusive Play." *Children, Youth and Environments* 28, no. 2 (2018): 12. https://doi.org/10.7721/chilyoutenvi.28.2.0012.

Lyon, Aaron R., Rachel A. Gershenson, Farahnaz K. Farahmand, Peter J. Thaxter, Steven Behling, and Karen S. Budd. "Effectiveness of Teacher-Child Interaction Training (TCIT) in a Preschool Setting." *Behavior Modification* 33, no. 6 (2009): 855–84. https://doi.org/10.1177/0145445509344215.

Mashford-Scott, Angela, Amelia Church, and Collette Tayler. "Seeking Children's Perspectives on Their Well-Being in Early Childhood Settings." *International Journal of Early Childhood* 44, no. 3 (2012): 231–47. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13158-012-0069-7.

Mason, Jan, and Susan Danby. "Children as Experts in Their Lives: Child-Inclusive Research." *Child Indicators Research* 4, no. 2 (2011): 185–89. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12187-011-9108-4.

Masten, Ann S. "Ordinary Magic. Resilience Processes in Development." *American Psychologist* 56, no. 3 (2001): 227–38. https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066x.56.3.227.

Masten, Ann S., and Andrew J. Barnes. "Resilience in Children: Developmental Perspectives." *Children* 5, no. 7 (2018). https://doi.org/10.3390/children5070098.

Narea, Marigen, Ernesto Treviño, Alejandra Caqueo-Urízar, Catarina Miranda, and Javiera Gutiérrez-Rioseco. "Understanding the Relationship between Preschool Teachers' Well-Being, Interaction Quality and Students' Well-Being." *Child Indicators Research* 15, no. 2 (2022): 533–51. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12187-021-09876-3.

Nations, United. "Convention on the Rights of the Child." *Treaty Series*, 1989.

Pellegrini, Seán, Philip Moore, Mike Murphy, and Daniel Flynn. "Experiences of Psychologists in Applying Mandatory Reporting in Ireland (Children First)." *Journal of Public Child Welfare* 17, no. 5 (2023): 1086–1109. https://doi.org/10.1080/15548732.2022.2137272.

Petrie, Petrie. *Communication Skills for Working with Children and Young People: Introducing Social Pedagogy*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2011.

Pianta, Robert C., and Megan W. Stuhlman. "Teacher-Child Relationships and Children's Success in the First Years of School." *School Psychology Review* 33, no. 3 (2004): 444–58. https://doi.org/10.1080/02796015.2004.12086261.

Pople, Larissa, and Sonia Mainstone-Cotton. "Children's Wellbeing." In *Early Years Education and Care: New Issues for Practice from Research*, edited by Susan Hay, 59–76. Routledge, 2015.

Priddis, Lynn, and Noel D. Howieson. "Insecure Attachment Patterns at Five Years. What Do They Tell Us?" *Early Child Development and Care* 182, no. 1 (2012): 45–58. https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2010.537334.

Purnell, Paula G., Ali Parveen, Nurun Begum, and Marilyn Carter. "Windows, Bridges and Mirrors: Building Culturally Responsive Early Childhood Classrooms through the Integration of Literacy and the Arts." *Early Childhood Education Journal* 34, no. 6 (2007): 419–24.

Qvortrup, Jens. "Are Children Human Beings or Human Becomings? A Critical Assessment of Outcome Thinking." *Child Indicators Research* 2 (2009): 631–53.

Raby, K. Lee, Dante Cicchetti, Elizabeth A. Carlson, J. J. Cutuli, Michelle M. Englund, and Byron Egeland. "Genetic and Caregiving-Based Contributions to Infant Attachment." *Psychological Science* 23, no. 9 (2012): 1016–23. https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797612438265.

Reich, Yoram. "The Principle of Reflexive Practice." *Design Science* 3 (2017): 1–27. https://doi.org/10.1017/dsj.2017.3.

Reicher, Hannelore. "Building Inclusive Education on Social and Emotional Learning: Challenges and Perspectives–a Review." *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 14, no. 3 (2010): 213–46.

Rinaldi, Carlina. *In Dialogue with Reggio Emilia: Listening, Researching, and Learning*. London; New York: Routledge, 2005.

Roffey, Sue. "Developing Positive Relationships in Schools." In *Positive Relationships*, edited by Sue Roffey, 145–62. Dordrecht: Springer, 2011.

Rose, Richard, and Michael Shevlin. "A Sense of Belonging: Childrens' Views of Acceptance in 'Inclusive' Mainstream Schools." *International Journal of Whole Schooling* 13, no. 1 (2017): 65–80.

Rosenthal, Ayelet, and Asher Ben-Arieh. "Rethinking Child Maltreatment: Children's Perceptions of Physical and Emotional Maltreatment—Initial Findings." *International Journal on Child Maltreatment* 5, no. 2 (2022): 215–29. https://doi.org/10.1007/s42448-021-00108-3.

Rudasill, K. M., and S. E. Rimm-Kaufman. "Teacher–Child Relationship Quality: The Roles of Child Temperament and Teacher–Child Interactions." *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 24, no. 2 (2009): 107–20.

Rudasill, Kathleen Moritz, Ray E. Reichenberg, Jungwon Eum, Jentry Stoneman Barrett, Yuenjung Joo, Emily Wilson, and Martinique Sealy. "Promoting Higher Quality Teacher-Child Relationships: The INSIGHTS Intervention in Rural Schools." *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 17, no. 24 (2020). https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17249371.

Rutter, Michael. "Resilience as a Dynamic Concept." *Development and Psychopathology* 24,

no. 02 (2012): 335–44. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0954579412000028.

———. "Resilience in the Face of Adversity: Protective Factors and Resistance to Psychiatric Disorder." *The British Journal of Psychiatry* 147, no. 6 (1985): 598–611. https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.147.6.598.

Ryu, Jisu, Jeff Walls, and Karen Seashore Louis. "Caring Leadership: The Role of Principals in Producing Caring School Cultures." *Leadership and Policy in Schools* 21, no. 3 (2022): 585–602. https://doi.org/10.1080/15700763.2020.1811877.

Sabol, Terri J., and Robert C. Pianta. "Recent Trends in Research on Teacher-Child Relationships." *Attachment & Human Development* 14, no. 3 (2012): 213–31. https://doi.org/10.1080/14616734.2012.672262.

Schön, Donald. *The Reflective Practitioner – How Professionals Think in Action*. Basic Books, 1983.

———. *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*. Routledge, 2017.

Schweiger, Gottfried. "Justice and Children's Well-Being and Well-Becoming." In *The Well-Being of Children*, edited by Gottfried Schweiger and Gunter Graf, 84–96. De Gruyter Open, 2015.

Sen, Amartya. "Capability and Well-Being." Edited by Martha Craven Nussbaum. *The Quality of Life*, 1993, 30–53.

Skibniewski-Woods, Diana. "Examining the Literature on Mental Health Outcomes of Disorganised Attachment in Children." *Journal of Health Visiting* 5, no. 10 (2017): 500–505. https://doi.org/10.12968/johv.2017.5.10.500.

Thapa, Amrit, Jonathan Cohen, Shawn Guffey, and Ann Higgins-D'Alessandro. "A Review of School Climate Research." *Review of Educational Research* 83, no. 3 (2013): 357–85. https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654313483907.

Tisdall, E. Kay M. "Children's Rights and Children's Wellbeing: Equivalent Policy Concepts?" *Journal of Social Policy* 44, no. 4 (2015): 807–23.

UNICEF. "Progress on Children's Well-Being: Centring Child Rights in the 2030 Agenda: For Every Child, a Sustainable Future." United Nations, 2023.

Villa, Richard A., and Jacqueline A. Thousand. *The Inclusive Education Checklist: A Self-Assessment of Best Practices*. Dude Publishing, 2021.

Werner, Emmy E. "Vulnerable but Invincible: High-Risk Children from Birth to Adulthood." *Acta Paediatrica (Oslo, Norway)* 422 (1997): 103–5. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1651-2227.1997.tb18356.x.

Wilkins, David. "Disorganised Attachment Indicates Child Maltreatment: How Is This Link Useful for Child Protection Social Workers?" *Journal of Social Work Practice* 26, no. 1 (2012): 15–30. https://doi.org/10.1080/02650533.2011.598228.

About the authors

Anne Piezunka

Anne is an educational researcher from Germany. In her research she is interested in educational relations, the implementation of inclusive education and the potential and limitations of data collection on discrimination. She is also involved in an initiative to improve educational relations called "Reckahner Initiative für Pädagogik".

Büşra Gündeş Orman

Büşra is a researcher in early childhood education from Istanbul Aydın University in Turkey. She has experience teaching children aged 3-5 and has worked on various projects with children from diverse groups, especially those affected by poverty and migration. Currently, she supervises teacher candidates during their practicum. Her research interests include school well-being, socio-emotional learning, children at risk, and inclusive education.

Mahvand Sahranavard Espily

Mahvand is educated in English Literature. She is educated kids music teacher at Adamak institute (orff schulwerk association) in Iran. She is a vocal coach and kids music teacher around 21 years. She is teaching in an alternative school in Iran (kodakan Donya) from 2013 until now, also has experiences in working with kids 3-5 years old, Working with autistic children , low concentration children and hyperactive children. Managing many different kids event such as Pinocchio, Little black fish, Alice in wonderland, manage play week, nations celebration, manage many internal and external travels for kids, manage different visit for kids and invite many different musicians, manage many workshops for parents in different fields, member of literature work group,music work group, child friendly work group and report writer work group. She's got many certifications about vocal pedagogy, education and kids music in Iran and outside of Iran.

Tracy McElheron

Tracy is a practising early childhood educator and Lecturer in Early Childhood Education. She has worked in the early childhood sector in Ireland for 25 years, teaching children from 2 to 5 years old. Her areas of expertise include curriculum and assessment for early childhood education, and the theory and practice of

play as a pedagogy in the early years. Her doctoral work explores the implications of the hidden curriculum on children's articulation of gender in early childhood education. She is a passionate advocate for the transformative capacity of relational pedagogy to build child, family, and educator identity.

Deirdre Forde

Dr. Deirdre Forde is a distinguished lecturer in Inclusive Education at Maynooth University. With a background as a qualified primary teacher and a chartered child and educational psychologist, she brings extensive experience from various educational settings and psychological services to her role. Deirdre's research and teaching interests are diverse and encompass areas such as disability and the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion within educational and societal contexts. She is particularly passionate about amplifying children's voices, advancing relational education, and shaping policies related to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI). Her work is dedicated to fostering inclusive environments that acknowledge and celebrate diversity.

STICKS AND STONES: BULLYING AND MICROAGGRESSION AT SCHOOL

Clíona O'Keeffe; Evrim Çetinkaya Yıldız; Fatma Kurker; and Pamela February

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://book.all-means-all.education/ ama-2025-en/?p=641#oembed-1

Below, we provide three example cases of people who have experienced bullying for various reasons. They describe a few of their experiences, and the chapter will refer to these cases throughout.

Example Case 1 – Sam

"I have experienced a lot of exclusion within school from age five up until about 16, 17 or potentially even 18. I was a really awkward kid. And I'm also trans (gender), so I was hanging out predominately with girls in school. I was always the kid that, they went, "Oh, we don't want to be friends with her any longer. We don't want to play with you, and we don't want to be your friend anymore". And I had that experience every year, all the way through my schooling. It's only in the last couple of years that I've realised I'm neurodivergent, and it explains for me quite a bit of what I had gone through. (I was probably the really awkward kid who was overly chatty). But then my peers basically decided that they didn't want to associate with me any longer, and it became a very lonely space. I moved schools when I was 11 from a mixed school to an all-girls school. The reason I chose that all-girls school was that this school was a feeder school for the secondary school. So, actually the bullying continued and was quite an uncomfortable experience for me being a non-binary masculine person in an all-girls school."

Sam Blankensee, National University Maynooth Ireland, Ireland

Example Case 2 – Andrew

Bullied as a child

"My experience with bullying in schools. It happened in as early as grade one. You know, as a little boy, I was quite effeminate, but I was also very outspoken. And, you were told a lot to shut up. You know, the older you get, you realise shut up is not just verbal. It's shut up physically. Shut up with your talent. Shut up with your gifts. Shut up with your ability. So that bullying for me, at a very early age, I realised it was shutting me down. Not just my voice, but my presence, my involvement, my inclusion. I would be told to shut up in the library, but I'd be shut up on the playground as well. And so you want to be kept silent. By the time I reached grade five, at age ten, I felt like they definitely didn't want to see me at all. "Shut up" turned into "don't be here"—they wanted me to disappear. It becomes a really, really strong exclusion. And then when I went to high school-grades seven, eight, nine, you realise you could feel it because you look around and realise, well, where's everyone? And then you realise that you have been excluded, and that bullying came through the form of exclusion. Everyone is welcome but you. You get to realise that you are being excluded for reasons that sometimes you didn't even understand. And that was something that I think bothered me when I got older, and I realised I was being bullied for things that I didn't even understand. I remember, you know, being described as gay and all those strong words we used back in Jamaica for gay. At that time, I didn't understand people what gay was. But you are being accused and labelled with those words, and it felt horrible. You know, I think we have to realise the impact that bullying has had on many of us. It was horrible."

Bullied as an adult/a teacher

"The bullying is different because now it's coming from outside of school. It's coming from parents. And you kind of want to redefine what bullying is at that time because you wouldn't think it was bullying. But those looks, the questions, the conversations that felt violent because, you know, we're being questioned if it's safe for you not only to be in school, but for children to be around you as a teacher. So it comes again with the assumptions, the stereotypes. And I can tell you for a fact that those assumptions and the stereotypes they follow you. It's no longer the playground. I think a lot of the myth that I wanted to talk about

is that we really think bullying is for just the classroom and the kids on the playground. Bullying is happening in the staff room in our schools. Bullying is happening in PTA meetings and parent council bullying is at every single level in our society. And it's not just a school thing, it's a people thing. When people are doing harm to each other. We bully and it's harmful."

Andrew B. Campbell, University of Toronto, Canada

Example 3 – Yuko

"To begin with, I have a brother who has a disability, and, although he's physically okay, he cannot speak, and has intellectual impairment. When I was in elementary school, bullying started in the first grade. They imitated my brother's voice or demeaned him in front of me to make fun of me and to make me feel really bad, but my family and I got through it. Although the adults also experienced discrimination as a family, we, collaboratively, encouraged each other. The bullying became severe at the age of 13, and, the whole classroom, became an enemy to me. They wanted to attack me. I got verbally, sometimes physically abused. They hid my shoes. They wrote graffiti, such as words like "die" or "get out" or "how is your brother doing?", and so on, on my desk. I thought, I don't have to erase the words using my eraser. They should. They should erase the words. So for four months, I didn't do anything about the desk. Then, finally a classroom teacher noticed and he asked what happened to your desk? Did you write on it? I asked, why would I write this?" This is my desk. Then he realised that I was being bullied. But before that, nobody noticed. So the teacher wanted to improve the situation, but still the bullying went on after school when the teachers were not watching us. So at that time, I really felt I should get over it and one thing I saw as a strategy to survive was to study hard to defeat them, which I didn't before. That's really made me what I am today. And, of course, it was a blessing in disguise for me as it really enhanced and encouraged me. But it is difficult for all the people who are bullied in Japan to get over being bullied. Some killed themselves, and that's happened a lot. Now that I have become a teacher, I really can relate to the students' feelings, but I really didn't want to share my own experience with them because I wanted to be away from my own hardship. So it was difficult for me to share my own feelings until only recently. I started to share my own experiences and found that the situation was better because sharing collaboratively felt great."

Yuko Uesugi, Eikei University of Hiroshima, Japan

Note: For the sake of clarity for the reader, we have amended the direct transcript in the examples. For the exact words, please watch the full interview with Sam, Andrew and Yuko.

Initial questions

In this chapter, you will find the answers to the following questions:

1. Who defines bullying and how?
2. What are the different forms of bullying?
3. What is the prevalence of bullying across different settings and contexts?
4. What are the roles of those involved in a bullying situation?
5. What is the motivation for and cause of bullying?
6. Who to whom?
7. What are the effects of bullying?
8. Mechanisms of change: How can we prevent and address bullying in our schools?

Introduction to Topic

Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me is an old rhyme, adage or proverb (the earliest seen around 1844), at times chanted by children who were taunted and teased. This chapter will prove that sometimes the pen (words) is mightier than the sword. King Solomon (Proverbs 18:21) stated that *"Death and life are in the power of the tongue."* Or as the English comedian Eric Idle said: *"Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will make me go in a corner and cry by myself for hours."*

If we asked the man in the street about their experiences concerning bullying, that is, whether they have been bullied or witnessed bullying, we would get a vast range of stories depending on who we asked. Their responses may also vary as to how to handle situations where bullying occurs, depending on these experiences. What will probably cut across all their experiences is how vividly they remember them, even if it happened way back in their childhood days. The three examples depicted above of Sam, Andrew and Yuko are cases in point.

The children's rhyme referenced at the start of this chapter underscores that bullying has deep historical roots. First documented in 1844, this chant reveals that even 180 years later (in 2024), the concept of bullying is still widespread, complex, and often misunderstood. Despite the passage of time, confusion lingers, and efforts to address and prevent it continue as we seek effective strategies.

This chapter aims to unpack bullying as follows. The chapter starts by defining bullying and reflecting on who defines it. It looks at terms sometimes confused with bullying and the various forms bullying can take. We look at the concept of microaggression as a specific form of bullying. Based on our introductory remarks, bullying may regularly occur, but what do statistics say about its prevalence? We look at the roles of those involved in a situation where bullying occurs.

The chapter reviews theories of bullying and the related research carried out. We examine the motivation for and cause of bullying. We also scrutinise who is bullying whom. Furthermore, important aspects of the chapter are the effects of bullying on learners, the classroom, the school and the community as a whole. To mitigate these effects, the chapter examines the mechanisms of change, that is, what strategies could the learner, the classroom, the school and the broader community adopt?

This chapter is tailored towards student teachers who will come across situations where bullying occurs. The chapter poses questions throughout that are meant to make the student teacher reflect on bullying in relation to the learner, the classroom and the school community situation in which they find themselves.

Key aspects

What defines bullying, who are the individuals involved in bullying situations, and what are the different types of bullying?

Bullying can be interpreted differently. However, our aim in this section is not to focus on differences, but to develop a common understanding of the nature of bullying. With this understanding, we hope to help readers better understand bullying behaviour, be more sensitive to its detection, and develop effective intervention plans.

a. Bullying

One definition of bullying is "aggressive, goal-directed behaviour that harms another individual within the context of a power imbalance" (Volk et al., 2014). However, the most well-known definition of bullying is "being repeatedly subjected to harmful actions by one or more individuals" (Olweus, 1993). For this author, bullying is characterised by aggressive behaviour or intentional harm-doing, which occurs repeatedly and over time in an interpersonal relationship marked by a power imbalance. In addition to these two characteristics listed by Olweus (1993), power imbalance and harm are also among the characteristics of bullying (Volk et al., 2014). There are 4 key characteristics of bullying:

1. *Intentional:* Bullying behaviours are intentional and driven by the intent to harm (Olweus, 2012). This characteristic distinguishes bullying from self-defence and reactive aggression. Bullying is not spontaneous or motivated by self-defence; it is

carried out deliberately and with bad intention.

2. *Repetitive:* Bullying is a repetitive behaviour and is not limited to a single incident. It occurs repeatedly over time (Olweus, 2012).

3. *Power Imbalance:* A power imbalance exists between the parties involved in bullying, which can manifest in various forms, including physical, cognitive, and social power. Physical power refers to differences in strength or size, while cognitive power involves disparities in intellectual abilities, such as verbal fluency or social-cognitive skills. Social power arises from factors like popularity or social status (Volk et al., 2014).

4. *Harm:* Bullying is harmful to those who are subjected to it. The harmfulness of bullying is the product of both the frequency and the perceived intensity of a behaviour (Harm = Frequency × Intensity) (Volk et al., 2014). In other words, as either frequency or intensity increases, harmfulness appears to increase as well (Ybarra et al., 2014). (Intensity examples: pinching (lower), stabbing (higher), etc.)

While there is no universally agreed-upon definition of bullying, a commonly accepted description emphasises its key characteristics: intentionality, repetitiveness, and the negative (unwanted or harmful) actions of one or more individuals directed at another person who cannot defend themselves. Bullying is often viewed as an aggressive act or deliberate harm that occurs repeatedly over time within an interpersonal relationship characterised by a perceived imbalance of power. A conflict cannot be considered bullying when both parties have equal strength. Therefore, in a school setting, teacher-targeted bullying is identified when a learner victimises a teacher who has authority over the learner, though the teacher may not use that power (Garrett, 2015).

Bullying is often confused with aggression, violence, conflict, and disputes. However, these behaviours have different characteristics.

b. Terms confused with bullying

Aggression: In social psychology, aggression is most commonly defined as a behaviour that is intended to harm another person who is motivated to avoid that harm (DeWall et al., 2012). This harm can be in various ways, including physical injury, emotional distress, or damage to social relationships. There are 4 key characteristics of aggression (Allen & Anderson, 2017):

1. Aggression is an observable behaviour (not an aggressive thought or feeling).
2. Aggressive behaviours are intentional and carry out the goal of harming another.
3. Aggression involves people.
4. Recipients of the aggression must be motivated to avoid harm.

Two characteristics that distinguish aggressive behaviour from bullying are repetition and

power imbalances. Let us not to forget that not every aggressive behaviour constitutes bullying.

Violation: Violence is a risky behaviour characterised by intentional harm inflicted through physical or psychological means. This harm can be directed towards oneself, others, such as in student-on-student, student-on-teacher, teacher-on-teacher, or teacher-on-student scenarios, or objects (Steffgen, 2009). All violent behaviours can be considered as aggression, but not all aggressive behaviours can be considered violence (Allen & Anderson, 2017). Given that violence is characterised as an extreme manifestation of aggression (Bushman & Huesmann, 2010), it can be inferred that the distinction between aggression and bullying parallels the distinction between violence and bullying. This differentiation is mainly due to the repetitive nature of bullying and the presence of a power imbalance inherent in bullying situations.

Conflict: In its simplest definition, conflict refers to incompatibilities, disagreements, or dissonances within or between social entities (individuals, groups, institutions, etc.) (Rahim, 2002). There is a fundamental difference between conflict and bullying. From this perspective, two key aspects set bullying apart from conflict: (a) the perpetrator's intention is not to resolve a mutual disagreement but rather to deliberately and actively harm the victim, and (b) the unequal power dynamic in which the perpetrators hold control over the victims due to a significant power advantage. This power imbalance is pre-existing and present from the onset of bullying. Perpetrators deliberately target victims based on this imbalance, choosing those who are weaker (Baillien et al., 2017; Keashly, 2020; Olweus, 1993). Despite the conceptual distinction between bullying and interpersonal conflict, the literature discusses the potential effectiveness of conflict management skills in reducing bullying in schools. However, studies have shown that there is no relationship between conflict management and bullying victimisation in schools (Burger, 2022). These findings highlight the need for distinct approaches when addressing bullying and conflict in educational settings.

Disputes: Disputes are short-term disagreements between people or groups (Burton, 1990). Two key aspects that set bullying apart from conflict also apply to disputes. In disputes, there is not always an imbalance of power between the parties, and there is no intention by the parties to deliberately and systematically harm each other. Disputes are more easily resolved than both bullying and conflict.

c. What forms can bullying take?

Examining the types of bullying can facilitate defining and intervening in bullying incidents. Therefore, this section provides explanations regarding the various forms of bullying behaviour.

Physical: In this form of bullying, the bully is directly involved in physical behaviours (Crick, 1996). Bullying that involves direct, physical, and obvious behaviours includes

actions such as hitting, kicking, pushing, shoving around, locking someone indoors, damaging their belongings, or seizing or destroying others' property as a means of intimidation (Crick, 1996; Gong et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2009). Physical bullying is a common type of bullying in schools, mainly due to the presence of individuals from various age groups in the school environment. Younger students who are behind in physical development are at higher risk for physical bullying (Crick, 1996).

Verbal: Bullying with cruel words involves hurtful name-calling, verbal abuse, ridicule, threatening, insulting nicknames, and spreading gossip or rumours, such as name-calling and teasing in a hurtful way, which refers to actively saying unfriendly words to harm, hurt, or scare others (Wang et al., 2009; Gong et al., 2024). Verbal attacks can be personal or sexual, or they may target the victim's family, race, or religion (Sticks and Stones, n.d.). This type of bullying can occur in person, by phone, by email, or in other virtual environments. Due to its possibility to extend beyond the school environment and its insidious nature, it is more difficult to detect compared to physical bullying.

Relational: Relational bullying refers to an indirect form of bullying that "refers to the manipulation of social relationships to destroy or damage others' social network or social reputation" (Gong et al., 2024, p.2) and includes social exclusion, such as being excluded from a group of friends or being ignored, and spreading rumours, including telling lies or spreading false information about someone (Wang et al., 2009). Although it has highly destructive effects on the bullied person, it is more difficult for others to notice and intervene. To better understand relational bullying in school environments, you can watch the 2004 movie *"Mean Girls."*

Emotional: Emotional bullying is a type of bullying that targets a person's emotional well-being, self-confidence, and self-esteem. It can manifest in non-verbal forms such as laughing, pointing, staring, or drawing pictures, as well as in psychological forms like isolation and rejection (Fried & Fried, 2004). Unlike physical or verbal bullying, emotional bullying does not involve direct physical contact or words, but rather focuses on disrupting the individual's emotional state. Emotional bullying often overlaps with verbal and relational bullying, but its primary aim is to cause emotional harm through behaviours like constant criticism, blaming, emotional manipulation, and demeaning actions.

The types mentioned above are traditional forms of bullying, meaning they encompass all the characteristic elements of bullying behaviour (intentionality, repetition, power imbalance, and harm). In addition to these, there is cyberbullying, which has become a widely recognised concept in recent times. While cyberbullying is often evaluated as the online extension of traditional bullying, it also possesses its own distinct characteristics while still carrying the attributes of traditional bullying.

Cyberbullying: Cyberbullying can be defined as any behaviour performed through electronic or digital media by individuals or groups that repeatedly communicate hostile or aggressive messages intended to inflict harm or discomfort on others (Tokunaga, 2010). It can occur on social media, messaging, gaming, and mobile phones. Cyberbullying is a form

of bullying that occurs through the use of digital technologies. This type of bullying involves repeated behaviours aimed at scaring, angering, or shaming those who are targeted. For example, spreading lies about someone or posting embarrassing photos or videos of them on social media, sending hurtful, abusive, or threatening messages, images, or videos via messaging platforms, or impersonating someone to send mean messages to others are all examples of cyberbullying. Face-to-face bullying and cyberbullying often occur alongside each other, but cyberbullying leaves a digital footprint—a record that can help stop the abuse (UNICEF, n.d.). The "*Is Anyone Up?*" website serves as a stark example of the severe consequences cyberbullying can have. This platform enabled targeted harassment and revenge porn, causing significant harm to individuals' lives (Tallerico, 2022). It illustrates how cyberbullying can extend beyond individual actions, with its negative impacts spreading at the community level and reaching severe levels of harassment. This case underscores the need for legal regulations to combat cyberbullying, such as the Australian goverment's *Charlotte's Law* (Anti-Bullying Crusader, n.d.). Cyberbullying is distinguished by its feature of anonymity, which, along with a wide audience, increases the potential to harm victims. Unlike traditional bullying, where the victim knows the bully's identity and witnesses their power display, cyberbullies remain anonymous, reducing their risk of being caught and encouraging more harmful behaviour. This anonymity can leave victims feeling powerless and inadequate. Moreover, cyberbullies often fail to grasp the consequences of their actions, leading to a lack of empathy and remorse. The public nature of cyberbullying further amplifies its impact, often resulting in more severe outcomes than traditional bullying (Slonje & Smith, 2008). You can find a cyberbullying case sample: https://www.nytimes.com/2024/07/06/technology/tiktok-fake-teachers-pennsylvania.html

There is also another classification that Smith (2016) suggested.

1. *Bullying based on disability*

This type of bullying, often referred to as disability-based bullying, involves targeting individuals because of their physical or cognitive differences. This form of bullying can occur in various environments, including schools, workplaces, and online platforms. A study carried out by Aljabri, Bagadood, and Sulaimani (2023) addresses the significant issue of bullying experienced by learners with intellectual disabilities during their intermediate school years. Key findings from the study indicate that all participants reported being bullied, with the most common types being physical and verbal abuse, along with social isolation and ridicule. The emotional repercussions for these students included feelings of embarrassment, anger, and withdrawal, leading them to prefer associations with peers with disabilities over neurotypical students. In fact, students with intellectual disabilities often struggle with limited social skills, making them more vulnerable to bullying, which can result in decreased self-esteem and academic performance. The authors recommend promoting respect and appreciation for these students among neurotypical peers, encouraging active

involvement from adults in fostering inclusive environments, and implementing peer support programs to enhance understanding and friendships. In conclusion, the study emphasises the necessity for schools to adopt proactive strategies to combat bullying and support the social integration of students with intellectual disabilities, ultimately aiming to create a safer and more inclusive school culture that benefits all students and promotes diversity and acceptance.

2. *Identity-based bullying*

Identity-based bullying at school refers to harassment or discrimination that targets students based on various aspects of their identity, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status. It also includes disability, as discussed above. This type of bullying can take many forms, including physical violence, verbal abuse, social exclusion, and cyberbullying.

We briefly discuss a few of the identity markers that are common targets of identity-based bullying:

• Race and Ethnicity:

The study carried out by Galán et al. (2021) involving 3,939 participants reported a mean age of 15.7 years (SD = 1.3). Among these learners, 36.3% identified as Black/African American, 53.7% as assigned female at birth, 32.6% as belonging to a sexual minority group, and 10.0% as gender diverse. The findings indicated that race/ethnicity-based experiences of bullying were prevalent, with 9.5% (375 learners) reporting such experiences, while 5.8% (209 learners) were identified as perpetrators of bullying. Notably, youth with multiple stigmatised identities faced even higher rates of victimisation and perpetration. Gender-diverse Black and Hispanic youth reported the highest rates of experiences with identity-based bullying. The study also established a correlation between experiencing identity-based bullying based on multiple stigmatised identities and adverse outcomes, including delays in accessing well-care services. This underscores the significant impact of intersecting social identities on bullying experiences and highlights the importance of addressing these forms of victimisation within preventative and intervention strategies.

• Gender and Sexual Orientation:

LGBTQ+ students often face bullying related to their gender identity or sexual orientation. The research carried out by Atteberry-Ash et al. (2019) reveals significant concerns regarding the safety of LGBTQ+ youth in schools, noting that these students experience higher risks of feeling unsafe, being bullied, and skipping school compared to their cisgender heterosexual peers. Transgender students, irrespective of sexual orientation,

face the greatest challenges, primarily due to societal homophobia and transphobia. Intersectionality is emphasised, revealing that students of colour face even greater safety challenges. The lack of inclusive anti-bullying policies and mechanisms in many school districts perpetuates these risks, stressing the need for systemic change. Their research shows that only 10% of school districts in the US have explicit anti-bullying policies that include LGBTQ+ youth.

These findings by Atteberry-Ash et al. (2019) highlight the urgent need for the educational system to implement inclusivity training for teachers and staff to adequately support LGBTQ+ youth. They are of the opinion that teachers informed about LGBTQ+ issues are more effective in intervening during bullying. Building relationships between students and supportive adults, as well as between peers can enhance feelings of safety, especially for LGBTQ+ youth. A comprehensive curriculum reflecting diverse identities is essential to foster a safe learning environment.

- Religion

The discussion will focus on two aspects of bullying as they relate to religion. The first is where individuals may be targeted for their religious beliefs or practices. The second is where individuals, especially those who are viewed to have "non-conforming" gender and sexual orientation, are harassed under the guise of religion.

- *Bullied because of religious beliefs*

The systematic review by Sapouna, de Amicis, and Vezzali (2023) outlines significant findings related to bullying victimisation among religious minorities. The studies reviewed indicate a strong correlation between visible expressions of religious identity (such as religious coverings) and increased risk of bullying victimisation. This was particularly relevant for Muslim and Sikh youth in the USA, Muslim and Christian youth in the UK, Jewish youth in Australia and Muslim youth in Nordic countries (Estonia, Finland, Sweden). Thus, the visibility of practising one's religion becomes a target for bullying, highlighting the challenges faced by individuals in minority religious groups. The study also revealed that many of these bullying incidents are under-reported. This cycle of silence can perpetuate victimisation as schools remain unaware of the issues. Learners from religious minorities have perceived that school policies and practices may be biased against their beliefs. In addition, in certain cases, negative or dismissive reactions from teachers can lead students to internalise their victimisation as "normal". Hence, the authors indicate a critical need for teacher training and awareness. In fact, research suggests that a sense of belonging and perceived support for cultural diversity can help reduce incidents of bullying based on ethnicity/race. This underscores the importance of fostering an inclusive environment in schools.

-Bullied/harassed due to gender and sexual orientation under the guise of religion

In contrast to individuals who are bullied for their religious beliefs, individuals who do not conform to the religious views of gender and sexual orientation can be bullied under the guise of religion. The study conducted by Newman, et al. (2018) aimed to investigate how religious discourse contributes to the bullying of sexual and gender minority youth (SGMY) by examining the perspectives of service providers and educators in Toronto, Canada. It focused on how religious beliefs and community dynamics operate within the broader social ecology affecting SGMY. The researchers conducted semi-structured interviews with 16 key informants, including educators, service providers, and administrators who work with SGMY. The interviews were analysed thematically to identify patterns of religiously based bullying and potential interventions. The study found significant use of religious language to justify bullying behaviours, such as referencing scriptural condemnations of sexual and gender minority identities. This discourse often equates SGM identities with immorality, creating a hostile environment for affected youth (Homophobic Religious Discourse). Places of worship and faith-based schools perpetuated negative messages regarding SGM identities, often leading to direct harassment or exclusion of SGMY in these spaces (Religious Settings' Influence). Victims of religiously based bullying exhibited higher levels of internalised homophobia and experienced rejection not only from peers but also from family and religious community members, leading to heightened emotional and psychological distress (Impact on SGMY). The study discusses "sexual orientation change efforts" (SOCE), where religious families and institutions pressure SGMY to change their sexual orientation, further entrenching feelings of guilt and alienation (Conversion Therapy and SOCE). The authors suggest that interventions should occur at multiple levels of the social ecology, including:

- Engaging religious institutions in discussions about acceptance and integration of SGM identities to counteract harmful narratives;
- Providing tools and strategies for educators and service providers to recognise and effectively respond to religiously based bullying; and
- Establishing safe spaces within churches and community organisations for SGMY to affirm their identities without fear of discrimination.
- Socioeconomic status

Typically, it is assumed that learners from lower-income families may experience bullying related to their economic situation. The meta-analysis undertaken by Tippett and Wolke (2014) investigates the relationship between socioeconomic status (SES) and bullying roles (victims, bullies, and bully-victims) in response to increasing public health concerns about the impact of bullying on children's health and well-being. The study includes findings from 28 studies demonstrating that, while there are associations between SES and bullying, these relationships are weak. Victims of bullying are more likely to come from low SES

backgrounds. Conversely, children from high SES backgrounds show a negative relationship with victimisation. The findings reveal that bullying perpetration has a weak connection to SES. Children from low SES backgrounds show a slight association with bullying others, while those from high SES show less likelihood to be bullies. Bully-victims (those who are both victims and bullies) are also more likely to come from low SES backgrounds, but no significant relationship exists with high SES. In conclusion, the analysis concludes SES plays a significant, albeit weak, role in predicting bullying behaviour and victimisation among children. Specifically, low SES is associated with increased risk of being victimised or being a bully-victim. The association between SES and bullying perpetration is minimal, suggesting that bullying behaviours are not limited to specific socioeconomic groups. The findings suggest that interventions to combat bullying should not be exclusively focused on low SES children. Instead, efforts should target all children, as bullying is pervasive across different socioeconomic backgrounds.

d. Microaggression

Because of the perceived subtlety of microaggression, it may not always be viewed as bullying, but it may be even more pervasive, hence the need for separate sections.

The term "microaggression" was first introduced by psychiatrist Dr. Chester M. Pierce in the 1970s to describe the verbal and non-verbal insults experienced by African Americans (Pierce, 1970). Since then, the concept has broadened to encompass a wide array of interactions that reflect and perpetuate societal prejudices based on various aspects of identity, such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, and socioeconomic status.

Microaggression is characterised as "subtle, stunning, often automatic, and non-verbal exchanges which are "put-downs" of people from minority and marginalised statuses (Pierce et al., 1977). Microaggressions are examples of subtle, verbal, behavioural, or environmental offences, intentional or not, directed at individuals from marginalised groups or underrepresented groups (Sue et al., 2007). These groups include those defined by gender, race/ethnicity, sexuality, and socioeconomic status.

Microaggressions are distinctive in their subtlety; unlike overt acts of racism or sexism, they often manifest in daily interactions and may be perceived as innocent or even benign by those delivering them. However, the cumulative effect of these microaggressions can cause significant emotional distress for individuals who experience them. Research has shown that microaggressions can lead to adverse psychological outcomes, including increased levels of anxiety, depression, and stress among marginalised individuals (Sue et al., 2007; Nadal, 2011). These experiences can erode self-esteem and contribute to feelings of alienation or marginalisation in both social and professional settings.

Types of Microaggressions

To better understand microaggressions, it is helpful to categorise them into three main types: microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations. Each type differs in intention and expression, but collectively contributes to the perpetuation of systemic biases.

1. Microassaults

Microassaults are explicit and intentional discriminatory acts that are often overt and aimed at inflicting emotional harm on another individual based on their identity. Unlike microinsults or microinvalidations, microassaults are consciously executed, reflecting a clear intent to demean or belittle. This type of microaggression can take many forms, including racist imagery, derogatory slurs, or outright refusal of service based on an individual's race or ethnicity (Sue et al., 2007).

Microassaults include concrete actions such as displaying racist symbols (e.g., a swastika) in public, using racial slurs toward individuals of color, purposefully avoiding someone based on their identity, mocking accents or language disabilities, and making any theme discriminatory jokes. For instance, a white person using a racial slur to refer to a black individual or a business owner refusing service to a Muslim person due to their attire are clear manifestations of microassaults (Sue et al., 2007; McAndrews et al. 2017).

Unlike microinvalidations and microinsults (discussed below), microassaults are often conscious acts. According to researchers, racial microassaults are small-scale attacks directed at persons of marginalised or minority groups. While some microaggressions (e.g. micro-assaults) can fit the common definition of bullying, microaggressions can also be unintentional, do not always involve repeated interactions between specific individuals, and the power imbalance often reflects broader structures of oppression rather than individual power based on size, strength, or popularity (Walton & Niblett, 2013). As seen, although microassaults are categorised as "micro," they are not so "micro" in terms of intentionality and obviousness (McAndrews et al. 2017).

2. Microinsults

Microinsults involve comments or actions that unintentionally convey rudeness or insensitivity toward an individual's identity. These statements often stem from ingrained stereotypes and can undermine a person's self-worth by implying that they are lesser in some way. Microinsults may occur in the form of seemingly complimentary remarks that carry an underlying message of inferiority. Microinsults are generally unconscious behavioural or verbal slights that demean one's heritage, racial identity, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, etc. (Sue et al., 2007, Minikel-Lacocque, 2013).

For example, telling an African woman, "You're so articulate for someone from your background," may be intended as a compliment but reinforces stereotypes about linguistic

abilities based on ethnicity (Nadal, 2011). In the classroom, the following are regarded as microinsults (Kickboard, 2018):

- A learner's academic potential is judged based on their racial background.
- A parent's commitment to their child's education is presumed based on their appearance, manner of speaking, or place of residence.
- Learners of colour are often denied the same opportunities as their white counterparts.
- A black or brown learner is often unfairly perceived as threatening or aggressive.

Such microinsults can accumulate over time, leading to feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt among those targeted, particularly in professional environments.

3. Microinvalidations

Microinvalidations occur when comments or behaviours negate or dismiss the experiences, thoughts, or feelings of marginalised individuals. These statements often convey disbelief in the individual's lived experiences, significantly contributing to feelings of alienation and frustration. Microinvalidations are particularly damaging because they can make the individual feel invisible or unworthy of recognition.

An example of microinvalidation would be a white individual telling a black person, "I don't see colour. We are all just people," which dismisses the unique challenges and experiences rooted in racial identities and minimises the impact of systemic racism (Sue et al., 2007). This type of microaggression can be especially prevalent in discussions about race and identity, where the lived realities of marginalised groups may be glossed over or overlooked entirely.

Microinvalidations are often unconscious verbal or behavioural actions that exclude or neutralise thoughts, emotions, or knowledge of people of marginalised or minority groups (Sue et al., 2007; Minikel-Lacocque, 2013). For example, if you accuse someone of overreacting when they are simply responding to someone making racist statements, that dismisses the seriousness of the situation.

Microaggressions represent a significant yet often overlooked form of discrimination that can adversely affect the mental health and well-being of individuals from marginalised backgrounds. By understanding and addressing the different types of microaggressions — microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations — society can foster more inclusive and equitable environments. Recognising and addressing microaggressions, therefore, is crucial for dismantling systemic oppression and creating spaces where all individuals feel valued and acknowledged.

Recognising microaggressions and the messages they send
Before you can respond to a microaggression, it is necessary to recognise that one has

occurred. The following examples are adapted from the University of California, Office of the President published in 2015 (Center for Educational Effectiveness [CEE], 2018).

Table 1: Recognising microaggressions and the messages they send

Microaggressions	Examples	Messages
Ascribing intelligence. Evaluates someone's intelligence or aptitudes based on their race and gender.	(To a woman of colour): "I would never have guessed you were a scientist!" Or "How did you get so good at maths?"	People of colour and/or women are not as intelligent and adept at maths and science as white people, and men.
Assumption of criminality/ danger. Presumes a person of colour to be dangerous, deviant or criminal because of their race.	A white person crosses the street to avoid a person of colour, or a professor asks a young person of colour in an academic building if they are lost, insinuating they may be trying to break in.	People of colour don't belong here, they are dangerous.
"Othering" cultural values and communication styles. Indicates that dominant values and communication styles are "normal" or ideal.	Structuring grading practices in such a way that only verbal participation is rewarded, failing to recognise cultural differences in communication styles, and varying levels of comfort with English verbal communication.	Conform and/or assimilate to the dominant culture.
Second-class citizens. Awards differential treatment.	Calling on male learners more frequently than female learners; mistaking a learner of colour for a service worker.	Men's ideas are more important; people of colour are destined to be servants.
Gender/sexuality exclusive language. Excludes women and the LGBTQ+ community.	Forms that only offer male/female choice for gender; use of the pronoun "he" to refer to all people.	There are only two acceptable genders; men are normative and women are derivative.

What is the prevalence of bullying across different settings and contexts?

Bullying remains a pressing issue with significant global implications. Understanding its prevalence is crucial for developing effective prevention and intervention strategies. Current research provides a comprehensive overview of bullying rates, highlighting significant trends and variations.

a. Global prevalence and trends of bullying

According to the 2019 UNESCO Report, a significant issue regarding school violence and bullying indicates that nearly one-third of school-aged children and adolescents experience bullying (UNESCO, 2019). In 2020, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported that 20% of youth experienced bullying in school, with 14% of adolescents facing bullying weekly. Additionally, 33% of middle school students experienced cyberbullying

at least once a week. Research indicates that bullying affects a substantial portion of adolescents worldwide. According to data from over 279,000 youth in 44 countries and regions, the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) report (Cosma, Molcho Pickett, 2024) provides the following key insights:

- **Bullying other students**: On average, 6% of adolescents report bullying other students at school. Boys are more likely (8%) than girls (5%) to engage in this behaviour.
- **Experiencing bullying at school**: Approximately 11% of adolescents report being bullied at school, with no significant gender differences.
- **Cyberbullying others**: About 12% of adolescents, or 1 in 8, report cyberbullying others. Boys (14%) are more likely than girls (9%) to engage in cyberbullying, reflecting an increase from 2018 (boys up from 11% and girls from 7%).
- **Experiencing cyberbullying**: Around 15% of adolescents report having been victims of cyberbullying, with rates similar between boys (15%) and girls (16%). This represents an increase from 2018, with boys rising from 12% to 15% and girls from 13% to 16%.
- **Physical fighting**: About 10% of adolescents have been involved in physical altercations, with a clear gender disparity: 14% of boys versus 6% of girls.

b. Variability in prevalence rates

Survey prevalence rates of bullying can vary significantly due to several factors, including the definitions used, the frequency of bullying considered, and the time periods investigated. Smith (2016) notes that variations in definitions—such as whether they include cyberbullying or different forms of bullying—and differences in how frequently bullying is reported (e.g. once a month versus once a year) can affect prevalence rates. Additionally, the timing of questionnaire administration (e.g. at the start or end of the academic year) can impact reported rates, making cross-study comparisons challenging.

c. Prevalence regarding types of bullying

The prevalence of different types of bullying also shows significant variation. The results of the Global School-based Student Health Survey between 2003 and 2015 in 65 countries revealed that the most common type of bullying was verbal (66.36%), followed by physical (24.02%), and the least common type was neglect (9.62%). Geographically, verbal bullying was highest in the Americas (71.09%) and lowest in Africa (61.75%); neglect was highest in South East Asia (11.10%) and lowest in the Eastern Mediterranean (7.11%); physical bullying was highest in Africa (28.98%) and lowest in the Americas (18.84%) (Man, Liu, & Xue, 2022, p.7). Smith et al. (2016) aslo reported that cyberbullying is an emerging concern, with 15% to 20% of adolescents reporting involvement.

Understanding the prevalence of bullying, along with the factors influencing these rates,

is essential for designing effective prevention and intervention strategies. Efforts must continue to address the varying types of bullying and adapt approaches based on regional and temporal differences to effectively reduce the impact of bullying on adolescents.

Let us pause and reflect

Which type of bullying do you think is experienced more frequently in your school/city/country?

What are the "roles" of those involved in a situation where bullying occurs?

As earlier discussion demonstrates, the concept of bullying is difficult to define. Similarly, ascribing names or terms to the role players in the situation where bullying occurs is not simple either. The choice of language is crucial, as it can profoundly influence the dynamics of the bullying process, just as it does in many psychological contexts. It is essential to avoid language that either glorifies or excessively vilifies the individual engaging in bullying, as well as terms that diminish the agency of the person experiencing bullying, rendering them a passive victim. This section explores the diverse experiences of those involved in bullying, acknowledging that the terminology used is not exhaustive.

Numerous studies on bullying have typically categorised children into three groups: aggressors, aggrieved, and aggressor-aggrieved. Additionally, other roles include bystanders, defenders, assisters, and reinforcers.

Aggressor (bully, perpetrator, who starts bullying)

Perpetrators or bullies intentionally harm or cause suffering in others without facing retaliation (Menabo et al., 2024). While these individuals are generally viewed as disliked and aggressive, a significant portion is also perceived as popular, powerful, possessing leadership qualities, and having various competencies and advantages. The reason for this difference in perception is social power. Bullies who are socially more powerful are perceived more positively by their peers (Vaillancourt et al., 2003). Rettew and Pawlowski (2022) referred to these groups, which differ in terms of social power, as 'alpha bullies' and 'delta bullies.' Alpha bullies are described as a socially powerful group with fewer pathologies, whereas delta bullies are characterised by weaker social skills and a higher likelihood of cognitive and behavioural issues. Considering this distinction when assessing bullying behaviour is crucial to developing accurate and effective intervention strategies. However, a typical bully generally struggles with resolving conflicts and faces academic

difficulties. Such individuals often hold negative attitudes and beliefs about others, come from families marked by conflict and poor parenting, view school unfavourably, and are negatively influenced by their peers (Cook et al., 2010). In addition to the bully's social power, the level of hostility is also a notably variable in the bullying process. The bully's hostility increases the emotional harm inflicted on the victim (Carrera-Fernández et al., 2018).

The Aggrieved (victim, target, bullied)

Victims are those who suffer attacks repeatedly over an extended period. They are typically characterised as being defenceless (Menabo et al, 2024). Anyone can become a target of bullying, even when they have not done anything to provoke it or make a mistake. Often, it only takes being in the wrong place at the wrong time (Sticks and Stones, n.d.). The ones who lack social skills, think negative thoughts, experience difficulties in solving social problems, and come from disadvantaged families, schools, and community environments are risky groups for bully victimisation (Cook et al., 2010). Bullies are often driven by the vulnerable and distressed reactions of their intended victims, which gives them a sense of power and control. Children who are hyper-sensitive, cautious, anxious, passive, or submissive —and lack determination, assertiveness, or decisiveness— are more likely to be singled out than other children. Those who respond to bullying with vulnerability and distress are often subjected to repetitive aggression. What differentiates children who are not victimised from those who are is not their physical strength, but rather their capacity to either stand up to or distance themselves from the bully's aggressive behaviour (Sticks and Stones, n.d.). Victims may not always recognise that they are being bullied, and even if they do, they might not seek help. Therefore, it is essential to observe and identify signs of bullying. Here are some warning signs to detect bullying victimisation (UNICEF, n.d.):

1. Unexplained physical marks, such as bruises, scratches, broken bones, or healing wounds,
2. Fear of going to school or participating in school events,
3. Signs of anxiety, nervousness, or heightened vigilance,
4. Having few or no friends at school or outside of school,
5. Suddenly losing friends or avoiding social situations,
6. Personal belongings such as money, clothing, or electronics being lost or destroyed,
7. Declining academic performance,
8. Frequent absenteeism or calling from school asking to go home,
9. Trying to stay close to adults at all times,
10. Difficulty sleeping, including experiencing nightmares,
11. Complaining of headaches, stomach aches, or other physical ailments,
12. Regularly appearing distressed after spending time online or on their phone

without a clear reason,

13. Becoming unusually secretive, especially regarding online activities,
14. Displaying aggression or having frequent angry outbursts.

However, observation alone is insufficient; prevention plans should also include raising awareness of threatening cues because research shows that bullies-victims are more aware of threatening cues like eye movements; in contrast, victims tend to avoid them by gaze (Menabo et al.2024).

The Aggressor-aggrieved (bully-victims)

A distinct group from the bully and the victim is the bully-victim who both perpetrates bullying and is a victim of bullying. While the exact cause of bullying-victimisation in certain learners remains unclear, prior research has indicated that characteristics such as diminished empathy, restricted prosocial conduct, weak familial ties, or issues with controlling their anger could contribute to their profile (Menabo et al, 2024). The typical bullies-victims (someone who bullies and is bullied) have negative attitudes and beliefs about himself or herself and others. They have trouble with social interaction, do not have effective social problem-solving skills, have low academic achievement, and are not only rejected and isolated by peers but also negatively influenced by the peers with whom they interact (Cook et al., 2010). In comparison to the other groups, bully-victims are the most despised and are more prone to self-harm and experience higher levels of depression (Menabo et al, 2024). Bullies-victims constitute the most aggressive group among those involved in bullying roles (Salmivalli & Nieminen, 2002). Due to their aggression, they receive less support from teachers and peers compared to pure bullies and pure victims (Shao et al., 2014).

The Bystander (uninvolved)

School bullying is a collective issue involving not only the bullies and victims but also a significant number of witnesses who observe the bullying behaviour. There are four distinct bystander roles: assistant, reinforcer, outsider, defender (Salmivalli et al., 1996). Bystanders aren't passive actors; in contrast, they are critical actors in deterring the demoralising and damaging impacts of bullying (Padgett and Notar, 2013). Also, even if they witness it once, bystanders (especially those who have previously been in the victim role) may experience depression, anxiety, substance use, and somatic symptoms related to bullying. (Rivers et al., 2009; Mishna & Van Wert et al., 2014).

Supporter of Aggressor (pro-bully/ assistant, reinforcer)

The assistant and reinforcer roles are described as being pro-bullying. The main and typical

behaviour of these roles is supporting the aggressor. The role of the supporter of the aggressor or the pro-bully is composed of individuals who actively support the bully through either aggressive behaviour or laughter and jeering that encourages the bully (Menabo et al, 2024). Assistants do not initiate bullying; they join it after someone else does (Salmivalli, 2010). Reinforcers are present in the bullying case, as are other bystanders. However, they may display varied behaviours, which can be active or passive. They may be witnesses (not responding or acting regarding bullying) or support the bully. They also may be more active bystanders. Furthermore, they could laugh or actively encourage the bully, reinforcing the bully's aggressive behaviours. The nuance between assistant and reinforcer roles is that reinforcers do not actively join the bullying (Monks & O'Toole, 2020).

Supporter of aggrieved (defender)

In sharp contrast, the defender (as a supporter of the aggrieved) actively stands up for the victim by encouraging them to tell an adult, protecting, supporting and (Menabo et al, 2024; Reinjtjes et al., 2016). Beyond these, defenders may also intervene in bullying, which could directly stop it (Reinjtjes et al., 2016). Defenders' interventions can stop 60% of ongoing bullying within 10 seconds, and the victims whom defenders support have less psychological maladjustments and negative outcomes (Hawkins et al., 2001; Ma & Chen, 2019). Thus, it is clear that adding defenders to prevention and intervention plans is critical for effectively addressing bullying. While Pozzoli and Gini (2010) state that defending a victim can be risky because the defender may confront a powerful bully and their supporter, recent research suggests that defending was not significantly associated with future victimisation, suggesting that it is not generally a risk factor for victimisation (Malamut et al., 2023). As seen, defenders play an influential role in preventing bullying. Therefore, equipping them with the necessary skills and supporting them in potentially risky situations (even if the likelihood is low) is crucial for preventing bullying.

Theories related to bullying

Examining theoretical frameworks that shed light on the fundamental causes and contributing elements of bullying is necessary to comprehend and address it. Some of these theories are briefly summarised below.

  a. Social learning theory

According to Albert Bandura (1973, 1983), bullying behaviour is learned through imitation and observation. According to this theory, people who see that aggressive behaviours are rewarded or ignored are more inclined to bully others. This idea highlights how violent behaviour is shaped by role models such as parents, friends, and celebrities (athletes, singers, actors, social media influencers, etc.). According to Bandura's research, children

who saw aggressive behaviours were more inclined to imitate these behaviours. To better understand Social Learning Theory, you can watch the video of Bandura's Bobo Doll experiment.

b. Frustration and aggression theory

Frustration and aggression theory, first proposed by Dollard et al. (1939) and later developed by Berkowitz (1989, 1993), suggests that bullying and other forms of aggression are caused by frustration. It implies that people may react angrily out of dissatisfaction when they don't succeed in achieving their aims. This theory defines bullying as a way of expressing anger or regaining power and explains reactive aggression as a reaction to perceived dangers or obstacles.

c. Social dominance theory

According to the social dominance theory, bullying is a tactic used to create and uphold social hierarchies. Aggression is a tactic used by people to establish dominance and a better standing in social organisations. This idea contributes to the explanation of why bullying frequently entails an imbalance of power, with bullies wanting to maintain their social standing and influence over their victims. It draws attention to how social structures support and encourage bullying behaviour (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Furthermore, there is a personality trait known as social dominance orientation (SDO) represents a person's "degree of preference for inequality among social groups" (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, Citation1994, p. 741).

d. Ecological systems theory

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding bullying by accounting for multiple levels of influence. This concept examines the ways in which a person's behavior is influenced by a variety of contexts, such as their family, peers, school, community, culture, and media. The importance of the broader social environment in shaping bullying behaviors and responses is emphasised (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Espelage & Swearer, 2003).

e. Developmental psychopathology

This approach focuses on the interactions between environmental factors, developmental pathways, and risk factors that shape bullying behavior. The analysis considers the ways in which early experiences, personality traits, and contextual factors interact to shape bullying throughout time. Volk et al. (2012) claim that developmental psychopathology

sheds light on the ways in which individual and environmental factors interact to shape bullying behavior and its outcomes.

f. Attachment theory

According to John Bowlby's attachment theory (1969), early relationships with caregivers have an impact on bullying and other subsequent social behaviors. Strong attachment relationships are the foundation of constructive social interactions, yet insecure attachments can feed aggressive or bullying behavior. This idea emphasizes how early relational experiences shape emotional and behavioral reactions (Bowlby, 1969; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007).

g. Self-control theory

The self-control theory of Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) states that a lack of self-control is a major contributing factor to violent behavior, which includes bullying. Individuals who struggle with emotional regulation and behavioral self-control are more likely to act impulsively and violently. The theory states that self-control exercises are essential for putting an end to bullying and other antisocial behavior.

These theories, along with relevant research, provide a thorough knowledge of the intricate dynamics and underlying aspects of bullying. They offer insightful information that can be used to create interventions and preventative measures that effectively address and stop bullying behavior.

Motivating, risk, and protective factors of bullying

Motivating factors

Understanding the differences between instrumental and reactive aggression is crucial to comprehending the motivating factors. Responding to a threat with harm is the goal of reactive aggression, which is motivated by resentment and frustration (Berkowitz, 1989, 1993; Dollard et al., 1939). By contrast, instrumental aggression is associated with joy and excitement and is a planned activity to attain certain aims (Bandura, 1973, 1983). Gradinger, Strohmeier, and Spiel (2009) found that combined bully-victims (traditional and cyber) bullies displayed the highest levels of both reactive and instrumental aggression compared to traditional bullies, cyberbullies, and non-bullies. A subsequent study (Gradinger, Strohmeier, & Spiel, 2012) showed that cyberbullies are primarily driven by power and enjoyment, traditional bullies by anger, and combination bullies by a mix of anger, power, affiliation, and fun.

According to Roland and Idsoe (2001), aggressors have two main goals: power and affiliation. Students often resort to violence to gain control or form favourable relationships.

Bullying motivations also vary by age. For instance, among eighth graders, bullying is associated with power and affiliation but not anger, whereas fifth graders show connections with power, affiliation, and anger. Gender differences reveal that girls' bullying is more linked to affiliation and boys' to power.

Fluck (2017) investigated the causes of bullying and found that one of the five causes (power, revenge, sadism, ideology, and instrumental) was not confirmed (instrumental), but the other four were confirmed. In addition, the qualitative data of the study revealed new reasons (peer pressure and self-control). The seven reasons mentioned in Fluck's research are:

Power: Many bullies are driven by a desire for power and dominance over others. This can manifest in various ways, such as controlling or intimidating peers to assert their superiority.

Revenge: Some individuals resort to bullying as a form of retaliation for perceived wrongs or injustices they have experienced. This response is often driven by a deep sense of hurt, betrayal, or frustration, leading them to target those they believe have wronged them in some way.

Sadism: In some cases, bullies may derive pleasure from inflicting pain or suffering on others. This sadistic motivation is linked to a lack of empathy and a tendency to dehumanise victims.

Ideology: Bullying can be motivated by ideological beliefs, such as racism, xenophobia, sexism, or homophobia. Bullies may target individuals who they perceive as different or inferior based on these beliefs.

Instrumental: Bullying can be used as a means to achieve certain goals, such as gaining social status, securing resources, or influencing group dynamics.

Peer Pressure: The desire to fit in with a certain peer group can motivate individuals to engage in bullying behaviour, especially if the group values or rewards such actions.

Lack of Self-Control: Some bullies may have poor impulse control and act out aggressively without considering the consequences of their actions.

Bullies often cite retaliation as a key motivation, while victims report power and sadism. Understanding these motivations is crucial for developing effective interventions to address and prevent bullying behaviour.

What is the relation between empathy and aggression?

Zych, Ttofi, and Farrington (2017) found that bullies generally lack empathy and exhibit callous-unemotional traits, correlating with repeated bullying. Bullied individuals showed low empathy, while defenders exhibited higher empathy levels.

1. Lack of empathy in bullies: Bullies typically have low levels of both cognitive and affective empathy. This means they struggle to understand others' perspectives and do not feel concern for their victims' distress. This lack of empathy allows bullies to inflict harm without feeling guilt or remorse.
2. Callous-unemotional traits: Bullies often display traits such as a lack of guilt, shallow emotions, and insensitivity to others' feelings. These traits are associated with persistent and severe bullying behaviour.
3. Empathy in victims: Victims of bullying often have lower empathy scores compared to non-victims. This could be due to the emotional toll of being bullied, which can impair their ability to relate to others emotionally.
4. Empathy in defenders: Individuals who stand up against bullying, known as defenders, generally possess higher levels of empathy. Their ability to understand and share the feelings of others drives them to intervene and support victims.

To sum up: The relationship between empathy and aggression highlights the importance of fostering empathetic skills in children to prevent bullying and promote prosocial behaviour.

Risk factors

Several risk factors increase the likelihood of an individual engaging in or becoming a victim of bullying and aggression. Here are some of the risk factors:

Individual factors: Traits such as low self-esteem, self-efficacy, aggression, and lack of empathy can make one more likely to bully or be bullied (i.e. Bandura et al., 2003; Donnellan et al., 2005; Jollife & Farrington, 2006; Salmivalli, 2001).

Family factors: A lack of parental supervision, harsh or inconsistent discipline, and exposure to family conflict can contribute to bullying behaviour (i.e. Bowes et al., 2009; Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Stavrinides et al., 2015).

School factors: Schools with weak anti-bullying policies and mechanisms, lack of supervision, location of school, and a negative school climate are environments where bullying is more likely to occur (i.e. Bowes et al., 2009; Payne & Gottfredson, 2004).

Peer factors: Peer pressure, association with delinquent peers, and social isolation can increase the risk of bullying (i.e. Bowes et al., 2009; Salmivalli, 2010).

Neighbourhood factors: Neighborhood safety, neighborhood structural disadvantage, and residental instability can increase the risk of bullying (i.e. Choi et al., 2021; Foster & Brooks-Gunn, 2012)

Protective factors

Protective factors can help mitigate the risk of bullying and bullying victimization and their effects. Here are some of the protective factors:

Strong social support: Positive relationships with family, peers, friends, and teachers can provide emotional support and reduce the likelihood of bullying (i.e. Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Mishna et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2009).

Effective school policies: Schools that implement comprehensive and regular anti-bullying programs and mechanisms and foster a positive school climate can reduce bullying incidents (i.e. Hall, 2017).

Emotional and social skills: Fostering empathy and assertiveness in and with children, and teaching conflict resolution strategies can protect against bullying behaviour and victimisation (i.e. Ttofi et al., 2014).

Parental involvement: Active parental engagement in a child's life, including monitoring activities and promoting open communication, can serve as a buffer against bullying (i.e. Simmons-Morton et al., 2004; Wienke et al., 2009).

Whom to who?

Schools in many ways are just like all other types of organisations. As long as there are humans in an organisation, its operation will rely on relationships. The dynamics of these relationships can lead to individuals or groups feeling bullied at times.

When we think of school violence or bullying, we tend to think of it as something which happens between individual learners or individuals and groups. Whilst learners are the main group, they are not the only members of the school community who can experience bullying. Adult bullying occurs in schools as it does in other workplaces: teachers can feel bullied by leadership and vice versa (Fahie, 2014), parents can feel mum/dad-shamed by other parents at the school gate, and it is not uncommon for individuals or groups of parents to make a teacher feel bullied. In fact, it is notable that since the Covid pandemic this particular type of bullying is more spoken of within the teaching community. The lack of face-to-face contact between parents and teachers during the pandemic led to all communication happening online. Parents just like everyone else can feel a little braver in online communication: for example, it is a lot easier and quicker to press send on an abusive email than it is to arrange a meeting with a teacher and to say those same things directly to them.

This is not to say that teachers do not engage in this type of behaviour themselves. Depending on the culture of the school you work in, you may find yourself feeling bullied by a colleague, being ostracised in the staffroom or feeling harassed by school leadership.

Learners can often feel as though the teacher does not like them or is picking on them. They may feel as though they are always in trouble and can do nothing right. As teachers, we are human and just like our learners we will not like everyone we interact with on a

daily basis. This may include some of the learners we work with. We have a professional responsibility to ensure that learners never pick up on this. We must ensure that learners feel valued and heard in our classrooms. Unfortunately, it does happen that some teachers cannot maintain their professionalism and bully particular learners. If you notice this in yourself or a colleague, you have a moral and professional obligation to raise it with school leadership.

An increasing trend in secondary and higher education is learner/teacher bullying, which is not as common in primary level education. Such bullying can include cyberbullying as well as traditional bullying. Learner/teacher bullying is most commonly trolling, creation of false profiles/accounts and posting of fake images. A recent study conducted by the Association of Secondary Teachers in Ireland found that 18% of respondents to their survey had experienced some form of cyberbullying from students or parents (RedC ASTI 2024).

Bullying behaviour has negative effects on all those at whom it is aimed. No group within a school community experiences bullying behaviour and remains unscathed. Learners however lack the life experience, resilience and understanding of bullying that adults have and are therefore more greatly affected.

What are the effects of bullying?

Bullying remains a significant issue that impacts both individuals and societies. Studies conducted in the twenty-first century have shown that bullying has a variety of negative consequences on the physical, psychosocial, and academic domains.

Physical consequences

Bullying can have immediate negative effects on one's physical health, like physical harm, or it can have long-term consequences, like headaches, disturbed sleep, or somatisation. But it can be challenging to pinpoint the physical after-effects of bullying in the long run and connect them to previous bullying conduct as opposed to other factors like anxiety or other traumatic childhood experiences, which can also have long-term physical effects that persist into adulthood (i.e. Hager and Leadbeater, 2016).

Psychosocial consequences

The psychosocial ramifications of bullying are extensive and multifaceted. People who are bullied may experience internalising and externalising problems. Anxiety, dread, depression, self harming, and social disengagement are examples of internalizing symptoms (i.e., Juvonen and Graham, 2014; Vaillancourt et al., 2013). Anger, violence, conduct issues, including a propensity for dangerous and impulsive behavior as well as criminal activity, are examples of externalising behavior (i.e., Patchin et al., 2006). Substance use and abuse are examples of externalising difficulties. Bullying has been linked to long-term psychological

suffering, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and chronic anxiety (i.e. Nielsen et al., 2015). Bullying has an impact on social interactions and behaviour as well. Friendship formation and maintenance can be difficult for victims, which can worsen feelings of loneliness and isolation. According to research by Hawley and Williford (2015), social dominance is important in the dynamics of bullying since it causes problems for both bullies and victims in their interactions with peers.

"Sticks and stones will break my bones, but words can never hurt me."Do you think that's the case in reality?

Recent studies underscore that verbal bullying has the highest prevalence and the most substantial detrimental impact on adolescent mental health. Research by Man, Liu, and Xue (2022) using data from the global school-based student health survey conducted between 2002 and 2015, reveals two key findings. Firstly, verbal bullying is the most common form of bullying, and its frequency has a significant and negative impact on adolescent mental health. The study found that the more often adolescents experienced peer ridicule or name-calling, the worse their mental health outcomes were. Secondly, from the perspective of social identity theory, this highly discriminatory ridicule results in poor mental health outcomes, particularly for adolescents with strong social identities. This discrimination increases their psychological distress and contributes to the severity of their mental health issues.

Aademic consequences

Bullying has an effect on kids' academic performance and participation as well as beyond the classroom. Bullying victims experience lower academic accomplishment, as evidenced by an increasing body of research, regardless of how grades or test scores are calculated. Children who experience bullying are more likely to experience poor academic attainment (Nakamoto & Schwartz, 2010) and higher absenteeism (Juvonen et al., 2000), according to cross-sectional study. According to multiple short-term (one academic year) longitudinal studies, academic problems do not predict being the target of bullying, but rather being the victim of bullying predicts academic problems (Schwartz et al., 2005). Speaking about the negative consequences of bullying that are limited to the victim would be inadequate. This is because bullying has negative consequences on the victims as well as the bullies, the bully-victims, and the bystanders. The table below shows the negative consequences of bullying on all students in different bullying roles as reported in different studies (Rivara et al., 2016; Vanderbilt & Augustyne, 2010).

Table 2. Negative effects of bullying for different bullying roles

Victim	Bully	Bully-victim	Bystander

*Absenteeism
 	
*Abusive relationships
  *Aggression
  *Anger
  *Anxiety
  *Conduct problems
  *Delinquency
  *Depression
  *Fear
  *Isolation, loneliness, and withdrawal from social contact
  *Lower social status
  *Maladjustment
  *Mental health problems
  *Peer victimisation
  *Physical health problems (i.e. headache, sleep problems, somatisation)
  *Physical injury
  *Poor academic performance
  *Poor self-esteem and self-efficacy
  *Self-harming behaviour
  *Social deficits
  *Substance abuse
  *Suicidal thoughts
  *Truancy
  *…
	*Higher rates of depression and psychological distress
	
	*Higher risk of criminal behavior, weapon carrying, fighting
	  *Higher risk of dropping out of school
	  *Higher risk of substance use
	  *Mental health problems
	  *Negative attitudes towards school
	  *Psychosomatic problems
	  *…
		* Anger
		
		*Aggression
		  *Conduct problems
		  *Depression
		  *Loneliness
		  *Mental health problems
		  *Negative attitudes towards school
		  *Negative perception of self and others
		  *Peer relationship problems
		  *Physical health problems (i.e. headache, sleep problems, somatisation)
		  *Physical injury
		  *Poor academic performance
		  *Poor social skills
		  *Psychosocial maladjustment
		  *Self-harming behaviour
		  *Substance abuse
		  *Suicidal thoughts
		  *…
			*Anxiety
			
			*Helplessness
			  *Insecurity
			  *Interpersonal sensitivity
			  *Mental health problems
			  *Substance use
			  *Suicidal thoughts
			  *…

The effects of bullying on people in different roles are presented in detail in the table above. We see that some of the same negative effects are experienced by different bullying "roles" (See the colour-code across the columns). For example, physical health problems, substance use/abuse, and suicidal thoughts are experienced by three of the four groups.

Another victim group related to bullying is poly-victims. Poly-victims are one subgroup of school-age children who might be more vulnerable to the negative immediate and long-term effects of bullying victimisation. According to Finkelhor et al. (2007), poly-victims are those who exhibit high levels of traumatic symptomatology and are exposed to the following: (1) violent and property crimes (such as theft, burglary, assault, and sexual assault); (2) child welfare violations (such as child abuse and family abduction); (3) the violence of warfare and civil disturbances; and (4) being the targets of bullying behavior.

Compared to youth who did not meet the criteria for poly-victimisation, youth who were poly-victims were more likely to meet criteria for psychiatric disorders, such as being up to five times more likely to use drugs or alcohol, two times more likely to report depressive

symptoms, three times more likely to report post-traumatic stress disorder, and up to eight times more likely to have comorbid disorders (Finkelhor et al., 2005; Ford et al., 2010).

Understanding the comprehensive effects of bullying is crucial for developing effective interventions. Addressing bullying requires a multifaceted approach that includes **improving mental health support for victims, fostering positive social relationships**, and **enhancing academic support systems**. It also involves creating a school environment that actively prevents bullying and supports affected individuals.

By recognising the broad impacts of bullying on psychological well-being, social interactions, and academic performance, educators, parents, and policymakers can work together to implement strategies that reduce bullying and mitigate its adverse effects.

Mechanisms of change: How can we address and prevent bullying in our schools?

In this section, we discuss the need for collaboration and a common understanding in addressing and preventing bullying in our schools. This common understanding is found in policies that guide schools on the procedures to be followed in addressing and preventing bullying at school. In turn, schools need to ensure that all teachers and learners are fully aware of their role in addressing and preventing bullying at an individual level.

Mechanisms of change – Policy level

As discussed above, bullying will not end if it remains a situation that should be solved between the bully and the bullied only. Thus, the chapter discussed the need for classroom and school strategies. However, we know that what happens at school frequently spills out into the extended environment of the learner. Hence, there is a need to broaden the scope of the area that covers bullying and its impact. In fact, several articles describe bullying as a public health concern (Gong, et al., 2024). As a result, this section will examine the national policies that discuss bullying and the strategies needed to address and prevent it.

As noted above, whole-school policies should be grounded in strong legal and policy frameworks in order to be effective. A national policy or guidelines on bullying are useful tools in supporting schools to design and develop Whole School Approaches (WSAs) which can reach the school community and beyond. One of the issues for schools in tackling bullying traditionally has been that the messages being received and reproduced at home and the wider community could not be controlled and could be in direct opposition to what the school was trying to do. National policies are written and developed to reflect the social norms of a particular society and, as such, tend to be in alignment with the morals and ethics of most of the population. Basing school policy on such documents gives them a greater chance of being acceptable to the majority of the school community, and thus being

more powerful. Many such national policies are based on international children's rights law, such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)

One such national policy is Bí Cineálta (2024) from Ireland. Bí Cineálta highlights the rights outlined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which bullying interferes with. These include:

- the right to freedom of expression (Article 13)
- the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Article 14)
- the right to freedom of association and freedom of peaceful assembly (Article 15)
- the right to privacy (Article 16)
- the right to be protected from all forms of abuse and neglect (Article 19)
- the right to enjoy the highest attainable standard of health (Article 24)
- the right to education (Article 28)
- the right to enjoy their own culture, religion or language (Article 30)

Bí Cineálta outlines the forms bullying may take and the impact of such behaviour, how bullying may be prevented and addressed. Whilst each section of the policy document provides guidance and suggested courses of action, the ultimate decision about how the school will tackle the issue and the processes to be put in place rests with the school community. This is a recognition of the fact that there is no 'one size fits all' way to ensure that all children feel safe in their schools. The Bí Cineálta policy does however include several requirements which must be included in the anti-bullying policies and procedures of all schools:

- a statement of the school's commitment to prevent and address bullying behaviour
- a statement acknowledging that bullying behaviour interferes with the rights of the child
- the core definition of bullying behaviour as provided in Section 2.1 of these procedures
- how the school engaged with the school community to develop the policy
- how the school engaged with the school community to review the policy
- how the school prevents bullying behaviour (based on Chapter 5 of these procedures)
- how the school supports students who experience, witness and display bullying behaviour
- what happens when bullying behaviour is reported
- the teacher(s) in the school responsible for addressing incidents of bullying behaviour
- how oversight of bullying behaviour will be managed
- how the school will communicate its Bí Cineálta policy

Schools are also encouraged to develop a student-friendly version of the policy in order to ensure that children have a clear understanding of the procedures in place in their school.

There are many other examples of similar national policies, particularly in nations that are signatories to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Does your home country have such a policy or perhaps guidelines for schools? How do schools in your country implement these policies/guidelines[CO(2] ?

National policies like Bí Cineálta provide school communities with the tools they need to tackle and prevent bullying behaviour and to create policies and procedures that are suitable for their school context.

Mechanisms of change – School level

As with many educational initiatives and programmes, the success of any anti-bullying measures at school level relies on the buy-in and cooperation of the whole school community. In taking this type of Whole-School Approach (WSA), schools must ensure that the voices of all stakeholders are heard. The initiative needs to be supported by learners, staff, leadership and parents and ideally by the local community.

In order for a school to establish an effective WSA for the prevention of bullying, nine factors must be in place.

1)   Whole school policies need to **be grounded in strong policy and legal frameworks** which can only occur with robust political leadership. Many nations now have national policies on school-based bullying and violence e.g. Bí Cineálta in Ireland, Respect for All in Scotland and Stopbullying.org in the US.

2)   Bullying prevention efforts are most successful when they are supported by **learner-centred, respectful and caring classroom management strategies**. No child should be demonised due to their involvement in bullying behaviour. Instead, teachers must try to understand the motivations and needs of all parties.

3) The National Curriculum, whole-school plans and teachers' individual lessons and plans should all **provide space for the promotion of a caring school climate**. Dr. Andrew Campbell speaks eloquently on how this can be achieved here .

4) Learners thrive when they feel safe and heard in school. If learners are to feel secure enough to report and/or discuss bullying events, they must be confident that their **physical and psychological safety will be assured in the classroom and school.**

5)   **A formal reporting system must be established, and these procedures shared with learners, staff and parents.** Once a report is made, learners should be confident in the knowledge that they will have access to support services. Some bullying reports may raise safeguarding concerns. A system should be in place for staff to bring these concerns to the relevant individual or organisation. This may be a senior member of the school leadership team and/or the social services in your area.

6) It is crucial that the bulk of the work needed to prevent bullying in a school is not

placed on the staff and learners alone. Learners pick up unconscious bias from their homes and communities, so some attitudinal changes may be required here too. By **engaging groups such as parents and local community groups in accepting and supporting all learners, schools can send clear messages to learners about what is and is not accepted behaviour**. Learners need to hear honesty about the harm and damage that can be caused by their words and actions if/when they engage in bullying behaviours .

7)   As these WSAs are aimed at preventing and/or addressing bullying in schools, it is vital that **learners are empowered to advocate for themselves and their peers, to report bullying, to say something when they see something.** The inclusion of learners in the selection, use and evaluation of anti-bullying programmes being used in their schools will lead to a greater chance of success for such programmes.

8)   There is a great deal of support available to schools internationally with regard to anti-bullying resources and programmes. Many of these resources and programmes are produced by government agencies and departments, others by Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) focusing on bullying and academics with an interest in inclusive education. Schools can choose between pre-made programmes or can cherry-pick elements of many to design a programme unique to their school context and needs. The interest and collaboration of all these organisations in supporting bullying prevention in schools highlights the seriousness with which the issue is considered on the world stage.

9)   A successful WSA to bullying prevention **must be grounded in evidence and consistently monitored to check its effectiveness**. Have incidents increased or decreased since taking the approach? Are changes required to improve the effectiveness of the approach? All these questions should be considered by all those involved at least annually, if not more regularly.

There are many different WSAs available for use in schools internationally, some will be completely appropriate for use in your context and others will have elements that can be cherry-picked and adapted to build a unique WSA. Amongst the most evidenced based approaches are Kiusaamista Vastaan (KiVa) (Finland and Estonia), The Olweus Bullying Prevention Programme (OBPP) (Norway), and Restorative Practices (RP) (International). Readers can find more information on each of these approaches by clicking on the hyperlinks.

The key aspects of each of these approaches are outlined in Table 3 below:

Table 3: Whole-School Approaches

KiVa	OBPP	RP
• Aimed at preventing bullying but also tackles individual cases • Consists of 10 lessons taught across the school year • Each school has a KiVa team of staff who function as 'experts' in bullying related matters in their school. They provide the support for individual cases. • Focuses on the responsibility to stop bullying, how to act in a group and respect for all	• Aimed at preventing bullying but also tackles individual cases • All students participate in the programme with those bullied/ bullying receive additional interventions • Focuses on encouraging prosocial behaviour and building a sense of community	• Aimed at preventing bullying but also tackles individual cases • All students participate in the Fair Process which builds with those individual cases being addressed by a staff mediator who uses specific questions to support reflection, accountabilitly and restoration of damaged relationships. • Fosters a sense of belonging and empathy

The systematic nature of these WSAs should be noted. Part of the success is a shared understanding around expectations of behaviour within the school community and the effects of irresponsible behaviour on individuals and the school community as a whole. A key part of the effectiveness of these programmes is the explicit teaching and modelling of acceptable behaviours by teachers and other school community members.

Mechanisms of change – Classroom level

In a study conducted by Smith et al. (2004) on English students between the ages of 13 and 16, the five most common coping mechanisms were talking to someone, ignoring it, standing up for yourself, avoiding bullies, and making new or different friends. Speaking with someone seemed to be the best course of action, since during a two-year period, individuals who had stopped being victims had spoken to someone about it more frequently (67%) than those who had either remained victims (46%) or became victims (41%). According to Hunter and Boyle (2004), older students and boys are less likely to tell a teacher.

To prevent microaggressions, consider using *micro affirmations*, which involve little gestures of inclusion, listening, comfort, and support for individuals who may feel alienated or invisible in their environment. These can include welcoming facial expressions and

concerted efforts to use appropriate names, pronunciations, and pronouns, support children's feelings and experiences, and praise excellent conduct (Rowe, 2018).

A UNESCO Technical Brief from 2022 entitled '*The key role of teachers in ending school violence & bullying',* highlighted the central role of teachers in the successful implementation of WSAs,

Teachers are essential in creating psychologically and physically safe school and classroom environments, and their relationship with students is key in preventing and addressing school violence. (2022:2)

As we saw in *Table 3* each of the three WSAs mentioned had central roles for teachers in the effective delivery of both school-wide preventative strategies and in individual cases.

As teachers, the heart of our influence on our students lies in our classrooms and in the relationships we form with the children and young people in our charge. It is extremely important that as well as actively engaging with the WSA being used in our school, we also create safe classroom environments and open, honest and respectful relationships with and between learners. Students respond best to teachers who are fair, consistent and who actually listen to them.

At the start of each school year, one of the easiest ways of beginning to establish that you listen and are fair and consistent is to collaboratively establish classroom behavioural expectations or rules with the learners. Rather than dictating what your expectations are around behaviour and their interactions with each other and you, it is important to discuss what all of you together expect. This can be done by developing a *class agreement or class contract* with your learners. This should be drawn up collaboratively with your learners. A good starting point is to ask them to share with you*what they need to feel safe and ready to learn* in their classroom. You should then share with them *what it is you need in order to be ready and comfortable to teach.* All of this information should be*recorded* on a flipchart, poster or whiteboard so that it can help shape the *discussion* around integrating the information into a set of guidelines/rules that everyone will follow. Whilst your initial discussions will create a lot of information, it is important to return to the discussion within a day or two and work with your learners to*categorise* it. This helps to consolidate the information and **develop a succinct set of rules which all parties can agree upon**. In order to formalise the process and help learners to see that you are genuinely interested in their needs, *it is important that you as teacher and each of the learners sign the poster.* This should then be *displayed prominently within the classroom* and used to remind both learners and teacher about the agreed acceptable and appropriate behaviour throughout the school year. Learners, like all other humans, respond better to positivity and praise than negativity and punishment. It is important that classroom contracts*use positive language and focus on what learners and teachers should do*. However, in clearly outlining positive behaviours, we implicitly highlight those that are unacceptable and inappropriate.

Following the drawing up of a classroom agreement or contract, it is critical that learners are made aware of the ***processes for dealing with and the consequences of inappropriate behaviour***. If we are engaging with a WSA which takes a children's rights perspective such as those mentioned above, it is important to ***make the learners aware of not just their rights but their responsibilities***. In particular, their responsibilities to ensure that their actions do not impinge on the rights of their peers. This is especially important when it comes to preventing bullying behaviour within a class group or between learners in other classes. Much like the classroom agreement or contract, it is vital that ***teachers and learners discuss the class and school reporting procedures*** in cases where someone feels they have been affected by bullying behaviour or have witnessed the same. In many cultures there may be a history of reporting such behaviour being frowned upon with those who report being called 'snitches', 'rats' or 'touts'. There may also be a culture of reporters or potential reporters being threatened with dire consequences for doing the right thing. The only way that individual teachers and schools can overcome this type of attitude towards reporting bullying behaviour is to ***establish procedures that allow both the bullied and witness to feel safe when reporting.*** Such procedures need to be discussed often and openly. Learners should feel secure enough to flag any issues with the school's procedures. Learners should also ***be aware of the processes in place to handle reported incidents***. They should be familiarised with what will happen at each step of the process. Younger children in particular may be fearful of having to come face to face with the peer they feel has engaged in bullying behaviour. Those to whom such behaviour is reported ***must engage in active listening when taking the report. Learners should feel that they are believed*** and that the teacher will do something to improve the situation. Most of the WSAs suggest that the teacher speaks to both parties separately first, to establish what they believe to be their truth. Many will then bring both parties together and either mediate between them or facilitate them to discuss the issues in a calm, non-judgemental manner. If you as a class teacher find yourself in a position of being the mediator, the use of simple questions can be very helpful. For example, in schools taking a Restorative Practices approach, restorative questions are used with both parties to aid reflection and bring about a restorative action to help restore the damaged relationship. Examples of such restorative questions are outlined in *Table 4* below.

Table 4 – Restorative Questions

Restorative Questions

- What happened?
- What were you thinking of at the time?
- What have you thought about it since?
- Who has been affected and in what way?
- How could things have been done differently?
- What do you need?
- What do you think needs to happen next?

These questions are central to achieving what is known in Restorative Practices as *Fair process.* Fair process builds trust within a school community and within a classroom by *engaging* all involved in the resolution process. Adopting a shared understanding of the situation by having all parties*explain* their truth. By involving all parties in reaching a decision on the restorative action that needs to be taken, the fair process provides *clarity* for all involved.

Two other key components of classroom work help to establish an environment in which bullying is less likely to occur. These include*reward systems to positively reinforce* appropriate and acceptable behaviour and the explicit *teaching of empathy*.

Reward systems are important in showing learners that their actions have consequences in the case of both acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. It is the case that learners of primary school age in particular are developing a sense of right and wrong and need guidance and support whilst developing their own moral compass.. Reward systems, although somewhat behaviourist in operation, help younger learners to correlate appropriate and acceptable actions with positive outcomes. It is important that teachers spend as much if not more time rewarding desired actions as they do dealing with unacceptable behaviours. Younger learners need to feel that their efforts to operate within social norms (these are of course contextual) are rewarded. Reward systems vary from class to class, school to school, and nation to nation. The simpler they are to operate the better, and they do not need to cost a penny. Key to the smooth operation of a reward system is the teacher being active in observing, noting and rewarding the behaviours outlined in the classroom contact. Some systems work with individual rewards, others with groups or whole class rewards, and others combine all three. In one of the authors' own schools, each class teacher has their own reward system, which can either feed into the school-wide reward system or operate separately. The school-wide system highlights three specific aspects of our WSA, these are being respectful, responsible and ready to learn. When teachers observe children engaging in any of these, they can award them a special card for example. When a learner receives ten of these they go to the Principal's office where she allows them to select a prize from a treasure box, asks what they did to get the cards and gives them a note to take home outlining how proud she is of the learner. This

type of system is very effective for primary age children. Each school will have different ways of rewarding learners which work for that school context and the types of learner.

What types of Reward Systems have you encountered whilst on placement? What would improve those systems so that they are more attractive to your learners?

The value of ***explicitly teaching empathy*** cannot be underestimated. Building empathy within a group decreases aggression within and from that group (Connolly et al., 2018). Empathy can be taught using several methods and resources. One of the most basic is through ***modelling*** it for your learners. By dealing with all learners in an understanding manner you are showing them the importance of being able to place themselves in the shoes of others. Most national curricula include subjects such as Social, Personal and Health Education, Wellbeing or Social Science which lend themselves well to teaching empathy. Many countries also have specific programmes which support the teaching of empathy. There are plenty of resources available to allow you to ***develop lessons with a focus on empathy***. Encouraging your learners to put themselves in the position of others can be achieved by having them ***examine and discuss images, listening to or reading stories and books with a theme that helps them realise that not all learners exist in the same context as them.*** There are also international organisations which promote the development of empathy in children and young people. One such organisation is ***Roots of Empathy*** , an organisation which teaches empathy by using 'tiny teachers'. Learners work with a newborn baby and its parents over the course of the school year. The lessons help learners to see one of the most powerful models of empathy, the secure attachment between infant and parent. Learners ***begin to identify and label the baby's feelings, to reflect on their own feelings, and then apply that learning to understand and empathise with the feelings of others.*** The main reason to teach empathy explicitly is that empathy is foundational in navigating relationships successfully and in forming bonds and friendships. The ability to do these two things provides humans with self-worth, feelings of belonging and social interaction, all of which make us less likely to engage in bullying or aggressive behaviours.

Conclusion

This chapter started by providing examples of people who have had experiences of bullying both in their childhood and their adult life. What bullying is was unpacked, together with the different forms bullying could take. Microaggression as a specific form of bullying was explained. Although the perception is that bullying is a fairly common occurrence, the prevalence rates cited in the chapter range from 6 to 40%. This variability in the prevalence rates is explained in the chapter and indicates a need for a clearer definition of bullying, forms of bullying and how bullying is reported.

If we are looking at potential strategies to mitigate bullying, we need to understand what underlies bullying. The chapter examines theoretical frameworks that shed light on the

fundamental causes and contributing elements of bullying necessary to comprehend it. Thereafter, the chapter investigates what the motivation for bullying is by looking at several factors. As part of the understanding of bullying, the chapter examines who bullies whom. Most important are the complex effects of bullying and how they affect the academic, social, and psychological areas of those who are bullied.

Finally, the chapter inspects several mechanisms of change in order to address and prevent bullying. These strategies are discussed along three levels, starting with the national policy level. These national policies are supposed to support the policies and strategies at the school level, specifically those strategies used in the classroom and enforced by the teacher or student teacher. This first level investigates how national policies address bullying and the strategies that are suggested. The second level examined is the school level and how this broader level creates an ethos that rejects bullying and embraces one that includes all learners.. The third level looks at the classroom level where we find the learner. This level is especially important for the student teacher as it is the level at which the student teacher will be directly engaging with the bullied, the bully and the environment that supports either the bullied and/or the bully and how the student teacher could better address the situation. The chapter regularly examines the student teacher's reflection on all the main issues surrounding bullying discussed in the chapter, and thus strives to provide tools that the student teacher can use when confronted with bullying in the classroom.

Local contexts

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=641#h5p-33

Closing questions to discuss or tasks

Now that you have been exposed to a lot of information regarding various aspects of bullying, will you as a student teacher/teacher be able to:

- Define what bullying looks like in your classroom/school?
- Identify the different forms that bullying can take?
- Distinguish the various players in a bullying situation?
- Recognise who bullies whom?
- Understand the motivation behind bullying?
- Comprehend the effects that bullying has?
- Explore and put into action mechanisms of change which address and prevent bullying in your school?

Literature

Aljabri, Aeshah S.., Bagadood, Nizar H.., & Sulaimani, Mona F. (2023). Bullying of female students with intellectual disability in mainstream schools: Personal experiences from Saudi Arabia. *International Journal of Educational Research Open*. 5. 1 – 9. 10.1016/j.ijedro.2023.100287. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/374535173_Bullying_of_female_students_with_intellectual_disability_in_mainstream_schools_Personal_experiences_from_Saudi_Arabia/citations

Allen, Johnie J., & Anderson, Craig A. (2017). Aggression and violence: Definitions and distinctions. *The Wiley handbook of violence and aggression*, *1*, 1-14.

Anti-Bullying Crusader. (n.d.). *Charlotte's Law*. Retrieved October 27, 2024, from https://www.antibullyingcrusader.com/campaigns/charlottes-law

Association of Secondary Teachers in Ireland & RedC (2024).*RED C ASTI Survey 2024 – Digital Technology and its Impact on Teachers' Working Lives.* https://www.asti.ie/document-library/red-c-asti-survey-2024-digital-technology-and-its-impact-on/

Atteberry-Ash, Brittanie; Kattari, Shanna K.; Speer, Stephanie R.: Guz, Samantha, & Kattari, Leo (2019). School safety experiences of high school youth across sexual orientation and gender identity. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 104, Article 104403. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2019.104403

Baillien, Elfi., Escartín, Jordi., Gross, Claudia., & Zapf, Dieter. (2017). Towards a conceptual and empirical differentiation between workplace bullying and interpersonal conflict. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, *26*(6), 870-881. https://doi.org/10.1080/1359432X.2017.1385601

Bandura, Albert. (1973). *Aggression: A Social Learning Analysis*. Prentice-Hall.

Bandura, Albert. (1983). *Self-Efficacy: The Exercise of Control*. W.H. Freeman.

Bandura, Albert, Caprara, Gian V., Barbaranelli, Claudio, Gerbino, Mario, & Pastorelli, Concetta. (2003). Role of affective self-regulatory efficacy in diverse spheres of

psychosocial functioning. *Child development, 74*(3), 769-782. DOI: 10.1111/ 1467-8624.00567

Berkowitz, Leonard. (1989). Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis: Examination and Reformulation. *Psychological Bulletin, 106*(1), 59-73. https://doi.org/10.1037/ 0033-2909.106.1.59

Berkowitz, Leonard. (1993). *Aggression: Its Causes, Consequences, and Control*. McGraw-Hill.

Bowes, Lucy; Arseneault, Louise; Maughan, Barbara; Taylor, Alan; Caspi, Avshalom; & Moffitt, Terrie E. (2009). School, neighborhood, and family factors are associated with children's bullying involvement: A nationally representative longitudinal study. Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, 48(5), 545-553.

Bowlby, John. (1969). *Attachment and Loss: Volume I. Attachment*. Basic Books.

Bronfenbrenner, Urie. (1979). *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design*. Harvard University Press.

Burger, Christa. (2022). School bullying is not a conflict: The interplay between conflict management styles, bullying victimization, and psychological school adjustment. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 19*(18), 11809.

Burton, John. W. (1990). *Conflict: Human needs theory*. Palgrave Macmillan UK

Bushman, Brad J., & Huesmann, Rowell L. (2010). Aggression. In S. T. Fiske, D. T. Gilbert, & G. Lindzey (Eds.), *Handbook of Social Psychology* (5th ed., Vol. 2, pp. 833–863). Wiley.

Center for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020). *People with disabilities and chronic diseases: Information about bullying.* https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandsafety/ bullying.html

Center for Educational Effectiveness [CEE]. (2018). Microaggressions and Microaffirmations Series. *Just-inTime Teaching Resources*. Retrieved from https://cee.ucdavis.edu/JITT

Choi, Jeong-Kyun; Teshome, Tamrat; & Smith, John (2021). Neighborhood disadvantage, childhood adversity, bullying victimization, and adolescent depression: A multiple mediational analysis. *Journal of affective disorders, 279*, 554-562.

Connolly, Patricia; Miller, Simon; Kee, Francis; Sloan, Suzanne; Gildea, Aisling; McIntosh, Eileen & Bland, Julia M. (2018). A cluster randomised controlled trial and evaluation and cost-effectiveness analysis of the Roots of Empathy schools-based programme for improving social and emotional well-being outcomes among 8-to 9-year-olds in Northern Ireland. *Public Health Research*.

Cook, C. R., Williams, K. R., Guerra, N. G., Kim, T. E., & Sadek, S. (2010). Predictors of bullying and victimization in childhood and adolescence: A meta-analytic investigation. *School Psychology Quarterly, 25*(2), 65–83. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0020149

Cosma, Alina; Molcho, Michal; Pickett, William. A focus on adolescent peer violence and bullying in Europe, Central Asia and Canada. *Health Behaviour in School-aged Children*

international report from the 2021/2022 survey. Volume 2. Copenhagen: WHO Regional Office for Europe; 2024. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

Crick, Nicki R. (1996). The role of overt aggression, relational aggression, and prosocial behavior in the prediction of children's future social adjustment. *Child Development, 67*(5), 2317-2327. https://doi.org/10.2307/1131625

Department of Education. (2022). *Cineáltas: Action plan on bullying*. Government of Ireland.

https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/52aaf-cinealtas-action-plan-on-bullying/

Department of Education (2024) *Bí Cineálta – Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*. Government Publications Office: Dublin.

DeWall, Nathan C., Anderson, Craig, & Bushman, Brad J. (2012). Aggression. In H. A. Tennen, J. M. Suls, & I. B. Weiner (Eds.), *Handbook of psychology* (2nd ed., Vol. 5, pp. 449–466). Wiley

Dollard, John, Doob, Leonard W., Miller, Neal E., Mowrer, Otto H., & Sears, Robert R. (1939). *Frustration and Aggression*. Yale University Press.

Donnellan, M. Brent & Trzesniewski, Kali; Robins, Richard; Moffitt, Terrie & Caspi, Avshalom. (2005). Low Self-Esteem Is Related to Aggression, Antisocial Behavior, and Delinquency. *Psychological science, 16*. 328-35. 10.1111/j.0956-7976.2005.01535.x.

Espelage, Dorothy L., & Swearer, Susan M. (2003). Research on Bullying and Victimization: What Have We Learned and What Do We Need to Know?. *School Psychology Review, 32*(3), 365-383.

Fahie, Declan (2014). Blackboard bullies: workplace bullying in primary schools. *Irish Educational Studies*, *33*(4), 435–450. https://doi-org.ezproxy1.lib.gla.ac.uk/10.1080/03323315.2014.983679

Carrera-Fernández, Maria V., Cid-Fernández, Xose M., Almeida, Ana M., González-Fernández, Antonio, & Lameiras-Fernández, Maria. (2018). Attitudes toward cultural diversity in Spanish and Portuguese adolescents of secondary education: The influence of heteronormativity and moral disengagement in school bullying. *Revista de Psicodidáctica (English ed.)*, *23*(1), 17-25.https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psicoe.2017.07.002

Ford, Julian D., Elhai, Jon D., Connor, Daniel F., & Frueh, B. Cristopher (2010). Poly-victimization and risk of posttraumatic, depressive, and substance use disorders and involvement in delinquency in a national sample of adolescents. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 46*(6):545–552.

Finkelhor, David, Ormrod, Richard K., & Turner, Heather A. (2007). Poly-victimization: A neglected component in child victimization. Child Abuse & Neglect, 31(1):7–26.

Finkelhor, David, Ormrod, Richard K., Turner, Heather A., & Hamby, Sherry L. (2005). Measuring poly-victimization using the juvenile victimization questionnaire. Child Abuse & Neglect, 29(11):1297–1312.

Fluck, Julia (2017). Why Do Students Bully? An Analysis of Motives Behind Violence in Schools. *Youth & Society*, *49*(5), 567-587. https://doi.org/10.1177/0044118X14547876

Foster, Holly, & Brooks-Gunn, Jeanne (2013). Neighborhood, family and individual influences on school physical victimization. *Journal of Youth and adolescence, 42*, 1596-1610.

Fried, SuEllen & Fried, Paula. (2004). *Bullies, targets, and witnesses: Helping children break the pain chain*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Galán, Chardee A.; Stokes, Lynissa R.; Szoko, Nicholas; Abebe, Kaleab Z.; & Culyba, Alison J. (2021). Exploration of Experiences and Perpetration of Identity-Based Bullying Among Adolescents by Race/Ethnicity and Other Marginalized Identities. *JAMA Network Open*, 4(7):e2116364. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2021.16364

Garrett, Lynda R. (2015). The student bullying of teachers in Irish second level schools: Exploring the influence of historical low state intervention in education on the development of contemporary policy responses in Ireland (Doctoral dissertation, National University of Ireland, Cork).

Gong, Zepeng; Zepeng, Zhiwei; Zhou, Jing; Zhou, Ziqiang; & Zhang, Jingran. (2024). A comparison of definitions of school bullying among students, parents, and teachers: An experimental study from China. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 161. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2024.107693

Gottfredson, Michael R., & Hirschi, Travis. (1990). *A General Theory of Crime*. Stanford University Press.

Gradinger, Petra; Strohmeier, Dagmar & Spiel, Christiane. (2009). Traditional Bullying and Cyberbullying: Identification of Risk Groups for Adjustment Problems. *Zeitschrift Fur Psychologie-Journal of Psychology – Z PSYCHOL*. 217. 205-213. 10.1027/0044-3409.217.4.205.

Gradinger, Petra; Strohmeier, Dagmar., & Spiel, Chrietiane. (2012). Motives for bullying others in cyberspace: A study on bullies and bully-victims in Austria. In Q. Li, D. Cross, & P. K. Smith (Eds.), *Cyberbullying in the global playground: Research from international perspectives* (pp. 263–284). Wiley Blackwell. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119954484.ch13

Hager Alanna D., & Leadbeater Bonnie J. (2016). The longitudinal effects of peer victimization on physical health from adolescence to young adulthood. Journal of Adolescent Health, 58(3):330–336.

Hall, William. (2017). The Effectiveness of Policy Interventions for School Bullying: A Systematic Review. Journal of the Society for Social Work and Research, 8(1), 45–69. https://doi.org/10.1086/690565

Hawley, Patricia H., & Williford, Anne (2015). Articulating the theory of bullying intervention programs: Views from social psychology, social work, and organizational science. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 37*, 3-15.

Hawkins, David L., Pepler, Debra J., & Craig, Wendy M. (2001). Peer interventions in

bullying: The role of social context. *Journal of Adolescence, 24*(3), 279-284. https://doi.org/10.1006/jado.2001.0375

Hunter, Scott C., & Boyle, James M. E. (2004). Appraisal and Coping Strategy Use of Victims of School Bullying. *British Journal of Educational Psychology, 74*, 83-107. https://doi.org/10.1348/000709904322848851

Jollife, Darrick, & Farrington, David P. (2006). Examining the relationship between low empathy and bullying. *Aggressive Behavior: Official Journal of the International Society for Research on Aggression, 32*(6), 540-550.

Juvonen, Jaana, Nishina, Adrienne, & Graham, Sandra (2000). Peer harassment, psychological adjustment, and school functioning in early adolescence. Journal of educational psychology, 92(2), 349.

Juvonen, Jaana, & Graham, Sandra (2014). Bullying in schools: The power of bullies and the plight of victims. Annual Review of Psychology, 65(1):159–185.

Kaukiainen, Annika, Salmivalli, Christina, Kaistaniemi, Anni, & Lagerspetz, Kyra M. J. (2002). The Role of Empathy and Self-Esteem in Bullying. *European Journal of Personality, 16*(1), 7-18. https://doi.org/10.1002/per.438

Kay, Robert. (2004). Understanding the Dynamics of Bullying: Motivating and Enabling Factors. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 96*(4), 826-839. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.96.4.826

Keashly, Loraleigh, Minkowitz, Henia, & Nowell, Branda L. (2020). Conflict, conflict resolution and workplace bullying. In *Bullying and harassment in the workplace* (pp. 331-361). CRC Press.

Kickboard (2018). *Examples of Racial Microaggressions in Schools.* https://inclusioncounts.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Kickboard____Examples_of_Racial_Microaggressions_in_Schools_v1.1.pdf

Laura Menabo, Simona C.S. Caravita, Grace Skrzypiec, Phillip Slee, Annalisa Guarini. Effects of victimization and perpetration in observing bullying scenes: an eye-tracker study *International Journal of Clinical and Health Psychology*. Volume 24, Issue 2, April–June 2024, 100451. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijchp.2024.100451

Ma, Chengxing, & Chen, Tianyu. (2019). The effect of peer defenders on victim outcomes: Evidence from a school-based bullying intervention. *Aggressive Behavior, 45*(2), 172-183. https://doi.org/10.1002/ab.21858

Malamut, Sarah T., Trach, Jessica, Garandeau, Claire F., & Salmivalli, Christina. (2023). Does defending victimized peers put youth at risk of being victimized? *Child Development, 94*(2), 380–394. https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.13866

Man, Xiaoou, Liu, Jiatong, & Xue, Zengxin (2022). Effects of Bullying Forms on Adolescent Mental Health and Protective Factors: A Global Cross-Regional Research Based on 65 Countries. *International journal of environmental research and public health, 19*(4), 2374. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19042374

McAndrews, Pearl, Todd, Meghan, & Truesdale, Arleigh. (2017). *Not so micro:*

Microassaults and environmental microaggressions in the classroom. SOAN 371: Foundations of Social Science Research – Quantitative Methods St. Olaf College. https://wp.stolaf.edu/sociology/files/2019/03/Microaggressions-Microassaults-and-Environmental-MAs-Final-Paper.pdf

Menabo, Tiziano, Topp, Michael, & Mak, Francesca. (2024). The role of defenders in reducing bullying incidents. *Violence and Victims, 39*(1), 1-14.

Mikulincer, Mario, & Shaver, Phillip R. (2007). *Attachment in Adulthood: Structure, Dynamics, and Change*. Guilford Press.

Minikel-Lacocque, Julie. (2013). Racism, college, and the power of words: Racial microaggressions reconsidered. *American Educational Research Journal*, *50*(3), 432-465.https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831212468048

Mishna, Faye., & Van Wert, Melissa (2014). Bullying. In A. Gitterman (Ed.), *Handbook of social work practice with vulnerable and resilient populations* (3rd ed., pp. 227–247). Columbia University Press.

Mishna, Faye, Khoury-Kassabri, Mona, Schwan, Kaitlin, Wiener, Judith, Craig, W., Beran, T., … & Daciuk, J. (2016). The contribution of social support to children and adolescents' self-perception: The mediating role of bullying victimization. Children and Youth Services Review, 63, 120-127.

Monks, Claire P. & O'Toole, Sarah E. (2020). The vantage points of assistants and reinforcers. In Rosen, L., Scott, S., & Kim, S. (Eds.), *Bullies, Victims, and Bystanders* (pp. 45–77). Palgrave MacMillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-52939-0

Nadal, Kevin L. (2011). The Racial and Ethnic Microaggressions Scale (REMS): construction, reliability, and validity. *Journal of counseling psychology*, *58*(4), 470-480.https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/a0025193

Nakamoto, Jonathan, & Schwartz, David (2010). Is peer victimization associated with academic achievement? A meta-analytic review. Social Development, 19(2):221–242.

Nielsen, Morten. B., Tangen, Tone, Idsoe, Thormod, Matthiesen, Stig B., & Magerøy, Nils (2015). Post-traumatic stress disorder as a consequence of bullying at work and at school. A literature review and meta-analysis. Aggression and violent behavior, 21, 17-24.

Olweus, Dan. (1993). *Bullying at school: What we know and what we can do*. Wiley-Blackwell.

Padgett, Sharon, & Notar, Charles E. (2013). Bystanders Are the Key to Stopping Bullying. *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, *1*(2), 33-41. Doi:10.13189/ujer.2013.010201

Patchin, Justin & Huebner, Beth & Mccluskey, John & Varano, Sean & Bynum, Timothy. (2006). Exposure to Community Violence and Childhood Delinquency. Crime & Delinquency, 52. 307-332. 10.1177/0011128704267476.

Payne, Ann Allison, & Gottfredson, Denise C. (2004). Schools and bullying: School factors related to bullying and school-based bullying interventions. In Bullying (pp. 159-176). Academic Press.

Newman, Peter A., Sophia Fantus, Michael R. Woodford and Marie-Jolie Rwigema. (2018).

"Pray That God Will Change You": The Religious Social Ecology of Bias-Based Bullying Targeting Sexual and Gender Minority Youth—A Qualitative Study of Service Providers and Educators. *Journal of Adolescent Research* 33:5, 523-548

Pellegrini, Anthony D., & Brooks, Frank P. (1999). The Role of Peers in Bullying and Victimization. In Robert L. Selman & Amanda W. Smith (Eds.), *Bullying: Insights and Interventions* (pp. 51-70). Routledge.

Pierce, Chester M. (1970). Offensive mechanisms. In F. B. Barbour (Ed.), *The Black Seventies* (pp. 265–282). Porter Sargent.

Pierce, Chester. M., Carew, Jean. V., Pierce-Gonzalez, Diane & Wills, Deborah. (1977). An experiment in racism: TV commercials. *Education and Urban Society*, *10*(1), 61-87. https://doi.org/10.1177/001312457701000105

Pozzoli, Tiziana, & Gini, Gianluca. (2010). Active defending and passive bystanding behavior in bullying: The role of personal characteristics and perceived peer pressure. *Journal of abnormal child psychology*, *38*, 815-827.https://doi.org/10.1007/s10802-010-9399-9

Pratto, Felicia, Sidanius, Jim, Stallworth, Lisa M., & Malle, Bertham F. (1994). Social dominance orientation: A personality variable predicting social and political attitudes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 67*,4 741–763. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.67.4.741

Rahim, Afzalur M. (2002). Toward a theory of managing organizational conflict. *International Journal of Conflict Management, 13*(3), 206-235. https://doi.org/10.1108/eb022874

Rakić, Jovana G., Hamrik, Zdeněk, Dzielska, Agnieszka, Felder-Puig, Rainer, Oja, Liisa, Bakalár, Peter, et al. (2024). A Focus on Adolescent Physical Activity, Eating Behaviours, Weight Status and Body Image in Europe, Central Asia and Canada. *Health Behaviour in School-aged Children International Report from the 2021/2022 Survey*. Volume 4. Copenhagen: WHO Regional Office for Europe; Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

RedC ASTI. (2024*). Cyberbullying among secondary school students: A survey report*. [Data Brief].

Reintjes, Albert., Vermande, Marjolijn., Thomaes, Sander., Goossens, Frits A., Olthof, Tjeeert., Aleva, Liesbeth., & Van der Meulen, Matty. (2016). Narcissism, bullying, and social dominance in youth: A three wave joint trajectory analysis. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, *44*, 63-74. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10802-015-9974-1

Rivers, Ian., Poteat, Paul V. , Noret, Nathalie., & Ashurst, Nigel. (2009). Observing bullying at school: The mental health implications of witness status. *School Psychology Quarterly*, *24*(4), 211-223. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0018164

Rivara, Frederick., Le Menestrel, Suzanne., & National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. (2016). Consequences of bullying behavior. In *Preventing bullying through science, policy, and practice*. National Academies Press (US).

Roland, Erling & Idsoe, Thormod. (2001). Aggression and Bullying. *Aggressive Behavior, 27*. 446 – 462. 10.1002/ab.1029.

Rowe, Mary (2008). Micro-affirmations and micro-inequities. *Journal of the International Ombudsman Association, 1*(1), 45-48

Salmivalli, Christina. (2001). Feeling good about oneself, being bad to others? Remarks on self-esteem, hostility, and aggressive behavior. Aggression and violent behavior, 6(4), 375-393.

Salmivalli, Christina. (2010). Bullying and the peer group: A review. Aggression and violent behavior, 15(2), 112-120.

Salmivalli, Christina., & Nieminen, Eija. (2002). Proactive and reactive aggression among school bullies, victims, and bully-victims. *Aggressive Behavior: Official Journal of the International Society for Research on Aggression*, *28*(1), 30-44.

Sapouna, Maria, de Amicis, Leyla, & Vezzali, Loris (2023). Bullying victimization due to racial, ethnic, citizenship and/or religious status: A systematic review. *Adolescent Research Review, 8(*2), 261–296. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40894-022-00197-2

Saulo Fernándeza, Eran Halperinb, Elena Gaviriaa, Rut Agudoa, Tamar Saguy Understanding the role of the perpetrator in triggering humiliation: The effects of hostility and status. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*. Volume 76, May 2018, Pages 1-11

Schwartz, David, & Proctor, Lisa J. (2000). Community Violence Exposure and Social-Emotional Functioning in Aggressive and Non-Aggressive Youth. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, 28*(5), 441-454. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1005103523517

Schwartz, David, Gorman Andrea H., Nakamoto, Jonathan, & Toblin, Robin L. (2005). Victimization in the peer group and children's academic functioning. Journal of Educational Psychology. 2005;97(3):425–435.

Shao, Aihui., Liang, Lichan., Yuan, Chunyong., & Bian, Yufang. (2014). A latent class analysis of bullies, victims and aggressive victims in Chinese adolescence: relations with social and school adjustments. *PloS one*, *9*(4), e95290. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0095290

Sidanius, Jim, & Pratto, Felicia. (1999). *Social Dominance: An Intergroup Theory of Social Hierarchy and Oppression*. Cambridge University Press.

Simons-Morton, Bruce G., Hartos, Jessica. L., & Haynie, Denise L. (2004). Prospective analysis of peer and parent influences on minor aggression among early adolescents. Health Education & Behavior, 31(1), 22-33.

Slonje, Robert & Smith, Peter K. (2008). Cyberbullying: Another main type of bullying? Scandinavian Journal of Child Psychology, 49, 147-154. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9450.2007.00611.x

Smith, Peter K. (2016). Bullying: Definition, Types, Causes, Consequences, and Intervention. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass, 10*(9), 519–532. https://doi.org/10.1111/spc3.12266

Smith, Peter K., Cowie, Helen, Olafsson, Ragnar F., & Liefooghe, Anne P. D. (2002).

Definitions of Bullying: A Comparison of Terms Used, and Age and Gender Differences, in a Fourteen-Country International Comparison. *Child Development, 73*(4), 1117-1133. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8624.00461

Smith, Peter K., Talamelli, Luca, Cowie, Helen, Naylor, Polly, & Chauhan, Pervin. (2004). Profiles of Non-Victims, Escaped Victims, Continuing Victims, and New Victims of School Bullying. *British Journal of Educational Psychology, 74*, 565–581. https://doi.org/10.1348/0007099041552386

Stavrinides, Panatiotis., Nikiforou, Militisa., & Georgiou, Stelios. (2015). Do mothers know? Longitudinal associations between parental knowledge, bullying, and victimization. Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 32(2), 180-196.

Steffgen, Georges. (2009). Deviant behaviour and violence in Luxembourg schools. I*nternational Journal of Violance and School, 10*, 54-70.

Sticks and Stones. (n.d.). *About us*. Sticks and Stones. Retrieved August, 2024, from https://sticksandstones.ie/about/

Sue, Derald W., Capodilupo, Christina M., Torino, Gina C., Bucceri, Jennifer M., Holder, Aisha M. B., Nadal, Kevin L., & Esquilin, Marta. (2007). Racial microaggressions in everyday life: implications for clinical practice. *American psychologist*, *62*(4), 271-286.https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/0003-066X.62.4.271

Tallerico, Brian. (2022, July 27). *The Most Hated Man on the Internet* [TV Review]. RogerEbert.com. Retrieved October 27, 2024, from https://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/the-most-hated-man-on-the-internet-tv-review-2022

The New York Times. (2024, July 6). *Students target teachers in group TikTok attack, shaking their school*. https://www.nytimes.com/2024/07/06/technology/tiktok-fake-teachers-pennsylvania.html

Ttofi, Maria M., Bowes, Lucy, Farrington, David P., & Lösel, Friedrich. (2014). Protective factors interrupting the continuity from school bullying to later internalizing and externalizing problems: A systematic review of prospective longitudinal studies. *Journal of School Violence, 13(*1), 5-38.

Tippett, Neil, & Wolke, Dieter. (2014). Socioeconomic status and bullying: A meta-analysis. *American Journal of Public Health, 104*(6). https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2014.301122

Tokunaga, Robert S. (2010). Following you home from school: A critical review and synthesis of research on cyberbullying victimization. *Computers in human behavior*, *26*(3), 277-287. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2009.11.014

UNESCO. (2019). *Behind the Numbers: Ending School Violence and Bullying*. https://hivhealthclearinghouse.unesco.org/library/documents/behind-numbers-ending-school-violence-and-bullying

UNESCO (2022) *The key role of teachers in ending school violence and bullying: technical brief*. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation: Paris.

UNICEF. (n.d.). *How to stop cyberbullying*. UNICEF. Retrieved August, 2024, from https://www.unicef.org/end-violence/how-to-stop-cyberbullying

United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child, November 20th, 1989 https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child.

Vaillancourt, Tracy., Brittain, Heather L., McDougall, Patricia, & Duku, Eric (2013). Longitudinal links between childhood peer victimization, internalizing and externalizing problems, and academic functioning: Developmental cascades. Journal of abnormal child psychology, 41(8), 1203-1215.

Vanderbilt, Don, & Augustyn, Megan (2010). The Effects of Bullying. *Paediatrics and Child Health, 20*(7), 1–6.

Volk, Anthony. A., Dane, Andrew. V., & Marini, Zopito. A. (2014). What is bullying? A theoretical redefinition. *Developmental Review*, *34*(4), 327-343. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.dr.2014.09.001

Walton, Gerald, & Niblett, Blair. (2013). Investigating the problem of bullying through photo elicitation. *Journal of Youth Studies*, *16*(5), 646-662. https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2012.733810

Wang, Jing, Iannotti, Ronald J., & Nansel, Tonja R. (2009). School bullying among adolescents in the United States: Physical, verbal, relational, and cyber. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 45*(4), 368-375. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2009.03.021

Wert, Michael J., Koller, Yvonne, & Neno, Toni. (2015). The long-term effects of bullying on mental health. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 62*(7), 151-160.

Wienke Totura, Christine M., MacKinnon-Lewis, Carol., Gesten, Ellis L., Gadd, Ray., Divine, Katherine P., Dunham, Sherri., & Kamboukos, Dimitra. (2009). Bullying and Victimization Among Boys and Girls in Middle School: The Influence of Perceived Family and School Contexts. *The Journal of Early Adolescence, 29*(4), 571-609. https://doi.org/10.1177/0272431608324190

Ybarra, Michele. L., Espelage, Dorothy. L., & Mitchell, Kimberly. J. (2014). Differentiating youth who are bullied from other victims of peer-aggression: The importance of differential power and repetition. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, *55*(2), 293-300. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2014.02.009

Zych, Ignacio, Ttofi, Mircea M., & Farrington, David P. (2017). Empathy and Callous-Unemotional Traits as Risk Factors for School Bullying: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 36*, 24-33. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2017.07.002

About the authors

Clíona O'Keeffe

An experienced educator, Clíona is Principal at a large all-boys primary school on the outskirts of Dublin. Having previously worked as a classroom teacher, in curriculum development and in teacher education she has a wide range of research interests these include leadership selection processes in education, inclusive education particularly in relation to learners with additional educational needs, Catholic education and social teaching, and the teaching of History, Geography and Science.

Evrim Çetinkaya Yıldız

Evrim Çetinkaya Yıldız is working as an associate professor at Akdeniz University, Türkiye, Department of Psychological Counseling and Guidance. Her research interests are inclusive education, prevention of student problem behaviours, and school counsellor education.

Fatma Kurker

Fatma is a PhD candidate in Psychological Counselling and Guidance and works as a research assistant. Her research interests include basic psychological needs, social media-mental health, international students' mental health, and racial microaggressions in the university environment.

Dr. Pamela February

Dr Pamela J. February is a senior lecturer in the Department of Early Childhood Education and Care in the School of Education at the University of Namibia. Her areas of interest and expertise include inclusive education practices; early childhood education and care; deaf education; how learners/students learn and how we should assess them; reading acquisition and fluency; vocabulary acquisition; mathematics education and the use of technology to enhance inclusive learning. In addition, she has written articles and book chapters and supervised postgraduate students in these areas.

MARGINALISED STUDENTS IN CLASSROOMS

Silver Cappello; Tracy Fletcher; and Nysha Chantel Givans

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=633#oembed-1

Example Case

When I was a student, I went to a school in Berlin-Neukölln. A school that was familiar with the term "Brennpunktschule". The term "Brennpunkt" or "sozialer Brennpunkt" refers to an area where many people with a migration background and social disadvantage live. My school was in such an area. Most of the students there came from different countries, had different religions, different cultures and spoke different languages.

There were about 23 students in my class and it quickly became clear how different we were. We all had different social and economic resources, different levels of knowledge and different language skills. How can these 23 students be guaranteed to get the same access to education? Do we all have the same equal opportunities? I kept asking myself these questions, while many high-achieving students were praised for their performance and others were told that they should study more at home. Even though many teachers were always there for us, supported and encouraged us and were confronted with many problems from home, it wasn't always enough to help everyone equally. Sometimes it felt like the education system didn't want to do justice to everyone.

I was therefore lucky to have two class teachers who built up a particularly good relationship with us. They visited every student in the class at home to get to know the families, learn from their culture and communicate with the parents. Many families were simply happy that our teachers took an interest in them and took the time to really understand them. Most of them

cooked traditional meals and shared stories from their lives. I am sure that our teachers learnt a lot about our cultures and our family backgrounds.

I am grateful to my teachers that we were all seen not just as students, but as individual people from different backgrounds. Because sometimes it's simply more than just a facade. Sometimes you have to look behind it to understand someone's stories and needs. We were taught that our voices are important and that every little story is essential. No one should feel invisible any longer. For many of us, school is more than just a place to learn – for many it is a second home. School should therefore be a place where students can feel comfortable and receive the support that is so often lacking outside of school.

Each of us carries a backpack on our back, filled with all kinds of big and small stories, experiences, resources and much more. This backpack makes us the person we are.

Ranya Defairi, student at the University of Bremen

Initial questions

In this chapter, the following questions will be addressed:

1. What does "marginalisation" mean?
2. Who are "marginalised students" and how are they evidenced in the classroom today?
3. Which forms of marginalisation exist?
4. Who is responsible for marginalised students?
5. How can educators create inclusive learning environments that validates the identities and experiences of marginalised students?
6. How can curriculum content and teaching methodologies be adapted to reflect diverse perspectives and histories, empowering marginalised students to see themselves positively represented in their education?
7. What strategies and approaches can support marginalised students, address systemic barriers, and prevent marginalisation in classrooms?

Introduction to Topic

This chapter considers the marginalisation of students within classroom settings. We will explore what is meant by marginalisation, how marginalisation occurs within the context of the classroom and the reasons for this. Lastly, you will be presented with a range of suggestions for possible strategies and approaches that you could apply in your own classroom. After reading this chapter, we hope that you will be more aware of how students can be marginalised and understand the steps you can take to tackle marginalisation.

Key aspects

What does marginalisation mean?

Theorists agree that there is no *"official"* definition of marginalisation (Messiou, 2006), although there is substantial discourse on the topic. Marginalisation refers to the process through which individuals or groups are pushed to the edges of society, where they have limited social, economic, or political power. Importantly, as Mowat (2015:457) discusses in *Towards a new conceptualisation of marginalisation* we need to "recognise that marginalisation is more than a state: it encompasses feelings about that state". This often results in restricted access to resources, opportunities, and rights that are readily available to more dominant groups.

In the context of education, marginalisation refers to the unequal, preferential, or biased allocation of access to learning opportunities, facilities, and resources (Messiou, 2006). This marginalisation is influenced by factors such as geographical location, gender, socio-economic status, or personal circumstances (Messiou, 2006).

Messiou (2012) argues that marginalisation is not a monolithic concept, but rather has multiple conceptualisations, that can be viewed across four distinct interpretations, as outlined in Table 1 below. A crucial element of Messiou's analysis is the differentiation between the experience of marginalisation, as perceived by the individual or others, and its recognition, whether by the individual themselves or by others. This distinction highlights the subjective nature of marginalisation. Consequently, an important question arises: if an individual does not recognise their life as marginalised and therefore does not experience it as such, on what basis can others deem them to be marginalised? This question carries significant implications for public policy.

Table 1. Messiou's conceptualisations of marginalisation	
Experience of marginalisation	Recognition of marginalisation
Experienced by the individual	The individual and others
Experienced by the individual	Not recognised by others
The individual is construed by others as belonging to a marginalised population	Not recognised by the individual
Experienced by the individual	Denied by the individual

Marginalisation can be viewed through the lens of the *'social capital'* theory. Marginalised or more disadvantaged groups are seen to lack the social capital which more dominant groups use to promote social mobility and economic benefits? The concept of *'cultural capital'* is obtained through learning and social connections, hence any barriers to learning should be viewed through the lens of social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1972). There are possible links to '*habitus*'which Bourdieu (1972: 86) defined as "a subjective but not individual system of internalised structure, schemes of perception, conception and action common to all members of the same group or class". One of the key principles is to understand the implications of the concept of '*capital*'. Capital can buy you a higher position in society and build key social networks? and can determine your role in the social world.

The OECD report (2014) *Equity, Excellence and Inclusiveness in Education* states: "The challenge we face is how to ensure our education systems give every child the quality learning experiences they need to develop and realise their individual potential, and to do so in ways that value who they are, their language, identity, and culture. How do we harness diversity, create fairness, and ensure our learning environments engage and achieve the best outcomes for all individuals, not just a few?" (Schleicher, 2014: 3). How do we address the tension (or imbalances) between creating an inclusive learning environment and empowering marginalised students?

Mowat (2015) explores the subtle ways in which marginalisation can occur. For example, when a child is excluded from participating in a reward system, such as "Golden Time," due to their misbehaviour, the psychological trauma resulting from such actions would require immediate address to support the healing of marginalised children. Interestingly, Mowat highlights an often-overlooked form of marginalisation, involving children who may have abundant access to material wealth, but lack the emotional warmth and love commonly found in other family settings. This absence can lead to attachment or behavioural issues, as noted by Cooper (2008), and serves as a form of marginalisation for these children. This underscores that marginalisation is not exclusively rooted in lower socio-economic groups.

Who are "marginalised students" and how are they evidenced in the classroom today?

We use the term "marginalised students" to refer to those who experience unfair or inequitable access to learning. Students who differ from the dominant norms of identity may face marginalisation. This group includes students who are neurodiverse, from low-income backgrounds, racial or cultural minorities, those who speak different languages, have physical disabilities, or identify with different sexualities. Marginalised students often receive limited and poorer-quality education compared to their non-marginalised peers.

Poverty can influence not only children's experiences at school, but also their future aspirations and opportunities. According to Carter-Wall and Whitfield (2012), a significant attainment gap exists in the UK between children living in poverty and those from higher socioeconomic backgrounds. The research indicates that this gap begins to widen at an early age, with disparities becoming apparent by the age of three. Consequently, children from severely impoverished backgrounds are only half as likely to pursue higher education compared to their more affluent peers. Socioeconomic background is a key predictor of students' learning outcomes. Unsurprisingly, low attainment has long-term impacts on both students' educational and psychological well-being. Sosu and Ellis (2014) found that children living in poverty face higher levels of marginalisation that have long-term consequences for their future well-being, ultimately reinforcing cycles of deprivation.

A significant issue identified by the Millennium Cohort Study, as discussed by Dickerson and Popli (2012), is that ongoing poverty, rather than short-term poverty, has the most detrimental effect on children's cognitive development during their early years. Bell Hooks (1994) discusses how identity plays an important role in the identity politics for oppressed and exploited groups??. This framework allows for a critique of dominant structures, giving their struggle purpose and meaning. Encouraging students to share their personal experiences enriches the learning environment, benefiting both students and teachers, and fostering inclusive learning environments.

Which forms of marginalisation exist?

Marginalisation in the classroom can exist in a number of ways, and some are more explicit than others. Some of the more obvious forms of marginalisation can include *Othering* , which includes microaggressions, isolation, racism, and discrimination of students. The framework of Intersectionality also explores the combined factors, or parts of a students' identity, that can contribute to marginalisation. Intersectionality, as a tool, represents an inclusive method of viewing culture and the dynamics of power in a way that recognises the complexity of discrimination and oppression which affects individuals. As our cultures are increasingly diverse, it is important to consider different social identities, as well as the intersecting parts of an individual's identity, and how these can contribute to greater inequality. This is especially important if we are actively working towards fairness and

justice. Intersectionality also increases awareness of how an individual's own privilege can influence their experiences of the world and create empathy for the situation of others. In the classroom a student may be marginalised due to a combination of their gender, ethnic background, and disability. This type of student could then experience a higher level of discrimination due to the combination of different aspects of their identity.

Other subtle forms of marginalisation exist, such as micro exclusion. While less obvious as other types of exclusion, such as segregation of students or discrimination of ethnic groups, it can also have a significant effect on a student's attainment, and also their well-being. An example of micro exclusion could be a student who is an immigrant and who is allowed to attend a class with their peer group but is given material which differs from other students. On the surface, it appears that they are included, however, they are not being given the same access to the curriculum as the other students. Another example could be students who are removed from the classroom for the purposes of more focused work for example, rather than remaining with their classmates and having extra support.

In inclusive school systems, another possible form of marginalisation and micro exclusion occurs on a micro-level, for example on a class level, where marginalisation can occur within the single school for all and yet could be present inside the same context and classroom. Research has shown that these forms of micro exclusion take place where some students work in separate rooms (so-called support rooms or special places in general) or remain in the common classroom but not collaborate or learn with their peers or leaving the class for several amounts of time or staying in the common classroom, but separated from classmates (D'Alessio, 2011; Nes, Demo & Ianes, 2018). When this micro exclusion exists within the school context this reinforces the marginalisation of students. Micro exclusion within inclusive school systems occurs more frequently in upper school grades. This means that, although students are formally enrolled in a mainstream school, there is an overall decrease in classroom participation from lower to upper classes and a congruent increase of time amount spent out of the class (Ianes, Demo & Zambotti, 2013; Wendelborg & Tøssebro, 2011).

One of the most explicit and marginalising experiences is the 'push and pull out' phenomenon, which describes situations where a pupil or a group of pupils are removed from the classroom and carry out activities removed from their classmates. Such exclusion can be linked to internal class factors, such as a teacher who cannot manage pupils' behaviours and sends them out with another teacher, or external factors like a well-equipped space that attracts pupils out of the class (Ianes, 2014). They can also take the form of special classes or units within the school. Research suggests that leaving the classroom can have varying effects in terms of inclusion depending on the context. For example, whether leaving the classroom, or the division into groups, effects the whole class group or only some pupils. Also, the criteria by which the groups are organised and how much choice is shared among all teachers can have varying effects on the whole class group (Buli-Holmberg & Jeyaprathaban, 2016; Nes, Demo & Ianes, 2018). However, the

pedagogical meaning of the phenomenon still remains unclear – while in some cases the risk of marginalisation to inclusion is evident, in others, leaving the classroom seems to be able to be interpreted as a phenomenon of an organisational flexibility of pupil groups that conforms to the idea of inclusive education (Bellacicco et al., 2019).

Another aspect to be aware of is what is known as *the hidden curriculum* (Jackson, 1968). This refers to a range of unspoken or implicit rules that students are expected to follow through the social situation of attending school. In contrast to the formal school curriculum, the hidden curriculum is not explicitly taught yet involves the expectation that these rules will be understood and followed. This also relates to the norms and values of the school, which are expressed via the school culture. According to the psychiatrist, Benson R. Synder (1970), these can have a negative impact upon students, causing anxiety and conflict. The hidden curriculum can inform the way students see themselves, and their abilities, and students can therefore be marginalised due to the demands of the hidden curriculum. Paul Willis in *Learning to Labour* (1978) found that the hidden curriculum led to resistance and the development of school subcultures. In his study of working class boys in the UK, he discovered that resistance to the norms and values of the school could contribute to poorly paid employment. An inclusive school culture should promote healthy values and allow for students to have agency in their learning and employment choices.

Another form of marginalisation, often more covert than the previous one, is the school disaffection. This describes circumstances based on the students' difficulty in perceiving contact between the school and the world outside, as well as in those students who continue to perform the assigned tasks, living the classroom experience with low participation and involvement (Rudduck, Chaplain & Wallace, 1996). Even if they are physically present, they are mentally absent and reluctant towards learning (Collins, 1998).

There are also cases in which school disaffection is visible, with manifestations of a poor sense of belonging, lack of interest, commitment and participation, dislike of teachers, lack of trust in the school, low aspiration, self-esteem and achievement (Keys & Fernandes, 1993; Lenzi, 2004).

In some cases, there are extreme situations where the individuals can no longer tolerate social norms and they exhibit negative emotions towards institutions (Hayton, 2013), which includes destructive behaviours and alienation. This often results in persistent absences or exclusion from class, as the student may want to avoid specific lessons, teachers or tests, or the fear of being bullied (Hargreaves & Reid, 2011; Harrison, 2004; Krawczyk & Horner, 2006; Newburn, Shiner & Young, 2013). Skinner and Belmont (1993) state that disaffected pupils are passive, bored, depressed or angry and rebel with teachers and classmates. According to Klein (1999), the founder of the International Journal on School Disaffection, the causes of disaffection can be different and can range from discrimination and accentuation of differences in students' abilities, excessive punishment in cases of disciplinary problems, and curricula that do recognise students' experiences, interests and talents. Other possible causes can be attributed to the family environment: low socio-

economic status, single-parent family, migrant background, impoverished parents, disordered home life, family breakdown, lack of family support, negative parental attitudes towards school and education, (Lenzi, 2004; Riley et al., 2002).

All these negative experiences could lead students to be part of this drop-out phenomena as a "virtual drop-out" (Kumar, Gheen & Kaplan, 2002), which is another visible form of marginalisation, even if it derives from various causes: socio-cultural (family cultural poverty), school-related (in school orientation and teacher-pupil relationships) and personal (negative experiences of the subjects and refusal behaviour towards school) (Bertolini, 1996).

Who is responsible for marginalised students?

We believe that all those connected to, or working in education, have a responsibility for tackling marginalisation and promoting an inclusive school. This will benefit everyone, by providing a democratic education which enables equity, and promotes social justice. It is crucial therefore that all school staff act as role models for students, and recognise the value of inclusive work, and the relevant opportunities and potential that exists in different contexts. For example, the school leadership can implement a school wide policy to establish and set the tone for an inclusive school culture. In practice this means actively nurturing a safe space for students to be themselves, providing the necessary resources, (such as support staff and training for teachers), to promote inclusivity across the whole school.

However, a top down approach is not enough, and all members of the school community must take responsibility by reflecting on how best they can support students. At the classroom level, teachers can take responsibility by being mindful and aware of classroom dynamics, by using inclusive language, and by being open-minded to applying inclusive pedagogy. Teachers need to examine the dynamics of their classrooms, and the diverse identities that make up the learning environment. Although teachers often have good intentions, they should also be aware of the influence of unconscious bias, and reflect upon their views, position, and context in the classroom (for more information on these aspects see the chapters about anti-bias education and teacher habitus).

With guidance from school staff, classmates can be encouraged to include other students, or students themselves can take responsibility for their own situation, by being conscious of their peers?, and reflect on how they engage in their own learning journey. Students should feel empowered, safe, and able to voice their opinions and concerns.

In the wider community, we can extend the circle of support by involving parents and other members of the community. This method assists those from marginalised groups to build on their existing circle of support or to build a new one. When a circle of support is formed around an individual who might otherwise feel excluded, it can shift its focus to empowering that person. This approach is particularly effective when supporting

individuals from marginalised groups and can empower them by providing a community that helps them achieve their goals and build meaningful relationships.

How can educators create inclusive learning environments that validate the identities and experiences of marginalised students?

Creating inclusive learning environments for marginalised students involves recognising and valuing their diverse identities and experiences. Educators should focus on integrating diverse perspectives into the curriculum and fostering an atmosphere of mutual respect and support. It is important to create a safe space where all students feel comfortable expressing themselves and where their backgrounds are acknowledged and respected. Building strong, supportive relationships with students and involving families and communities in the educational process can enhance this sense of belonging (for more information on these aspects see the chapters about inclusive learning environments and collaboration with parents). Additionally, ensuring that teaching practices and materials reflect and celebrate diversity helps all students feel seen and valued. Finally, continuous professional development for educators on issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion is crucial to maintain an environment that supports the academic and social success of all students.

A positive school culture, and classroom culture, recognises the value that all students have in the learning environment. This involves the acknowledgement of diversity, and a celebration of a variety of different identities that make up the student body. In the classroom, this could include collaborative work between students and using a variety of materials that represent the different identities that are present in the classroom (for more information see chapter about inclusive school culture).

Research suggests that marginalisation can have enduring effects, leading to detrimental impacts on mental health, including depression and anxiety, which may further exacerbate marginalisation within broader communities. Prince and Hadwin (2013) emphasise the importance of fostering positive relationships between students and teachers, particularly as these relationships can promote resilience among marginalised students. Additionally, a supportive and caring school environment plays a crucial role in mitigating the effects of marginalisation.

How can curriculum content and teaching methodologies be adapted to reflect diverse perspectives and histories, empowering marginalised students to see themselves positively reflected in their education?

Recent educational reforms across the globe reflect a growing commitment to decolonising the curriculum and adapting teaching methodologies to include diverse perspectives – a notable example being the UK's ongoing initiative to decolonise the curriculum (DcT). Wales is at the forefront of this movement with its Anti-Racism Wales Action Plan (ARWAP),

which aims to dismantle systemic and institutional racism by 2030 (Welsh Government, 2022). This initiative acknowledges that Global Majority communities, including Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic groups, face ongoing challenges of racism, race inequality, and colourism (Welsh Government, 2022). Addressing such issues requires not only changes to the curriculum, but also an adaptation of teaching practices.

In the context of decolonising education, Chetty's (2022) contribution to Decolonising Curriculum in Education: Continuing Proclamations and Provocations underscores the importance of self-reflexivity within White power structures as a necessary step towards dismantling these hierarchies. Chetty highlights the need to examine the power dynamics and advocates for a commitment to change at an institutional level (Race et al., 2022). Similarly, in the U.S., the Ithaca school district has developed an anti-marginalisation curriculum that includes topics such as 'pronouns, flags, and feeling safe', and encourages students to challenge their own assumptions about identity, diversity, and power through critical thinking and collaboration (Mansfield, 2022).

Furthermore, Hooley's (2002) model of "two-way enquiry learning" (see Table 2 below) provides an example of how educational systems can integrate diverse knowledge systems. He explains how Australia adapted its educational practices by incorporating Indigenous and Western knowledge systems, a practice that could be applied to non-Indigenous educational settings globally. This approach allows both Indigenous and Western ways of knowing to coexist, promoting mutual respect without placing one above the other. Learning, in this model, is derived from community and social practices, requiring reflection on significant experiences, with a particular emphasis on environmental learning (Hooley, 2002).

Table 2. Neil Hooley's seven dimensions of two-way learning

Dimension 1	Continuity of experience as the basis of all learning programs.
Dimension 2	Recognition that the expression of learning occurs in different ways for different children based on their cultural and socio-economic background, but that a set of similar factors may exist in all cultures that emphasise construction of new knowledge rather than instruction in old content. This demands a respect for the knowledge and culture that all children bring to school, and an acceptance that learning occurs actively from this platform in an outwards – inwards cyclical manner.
Dimension 3	Long-term systematic processes of reflection on experience.
Dimension 4	Integrated theory and practice, incorporating respect for and learning from the natural environment.

Dimension 5	Teaching and learning that enables a framework of:
	
	– holistic, integrated and constructed knowledge
	  – emphasis on knowing by doing and experimental work
	  – collaborative interaction with peers and teachers in real life situations
	  – combining informal and formal situations and events
	  – negotiated decisions on directions and processes
	  – strategies of trial and error, reproduction and critique
	  – multiple pathways for entry and enquiry
	  – unknown results by teachers and students
	  – opportunities for thinking about previous and new action
	  – construction and critique of ideas and proposals
	  – applying context specific and general ideas
	  – utilising respected local and expert advice as required – encouragement of personal and group interests and – being challenged by local and global events.

Dimension 6	Validation of children's learning, knowledge, experience and propositions that is based upon long-term consensual communication and democratic dialogue between participants and agreement on what is generally considered as being acceptable and true.
Dimension 7	Holistic views of life and learning where knowledge arises from and returns to social and cultural environments for the betterment of communities of interest and where formal systems of education must be connected with the major trends and debates within communities to ground their purpose and meaning.

This model aligns with the necessity of adapting curriculum content to reflect diverse perspectives. Incorporating materials that highlight the contributions and experiences of different cultural, ethnic, and social groups ensures a more inclusive educational environment. These adaptations are crucial for enabling marginalised students to see themselves reflected positively in their education (Welsh Government, 2022). In practice, educators can integrate literature from marginalised communities, present historical events from multiple perspectives, and engage students in discussions on contemporary issues relating to diversity and equity (Mansfield, 2022).

Equally important is the adaptation of teaching methodologies to reflect diverse perspectives. Inclusive pedagogies, such as collaborative learning and inquiry-based methods, allow students to explore and share their own experiences, fostering a more inclusive classroom environment (Hooley, 2002). This also includes the incorporation of

multimedia resources and guest speakers from diverse backgrounds to enrich the learning experience. Mansfield (2022) highlights that these inclusive approaches not only challenge the exclusion of Global Majority students, but also build a foundation for future citizens to engage with a globalised vision. Wright Edelman's famous quote, "It's hard to be what you can't see" (Mansfield, 2022), underscores the need for visible role models and the importance of diverse representation in education.

Importantly, these adaptations should not be seen as merely compensating for past exclusions, but rather as a forward-thinking approach that recognises the evolving nature of education. This is evident in the practice of two-way enquiry learning, which reinforces the value of Indigenous knowledge within the broader context of human learning. By positioning Indigenous learning on equal footing with non-Indigenous learning, this approach fosters the development of inclusive curricula that are reflective of diverse cultural perspectives (Hooley, 2002).

The inclusion of diverse perspectives and histories, in both curriculum content and teaching methodologies, is essential for empowering marginalised students. By reflecting a broad range of experiences and knowledge systems, educational institutions can create a more inclusive and equitable learning environment that benefits all students (Hooley, 2002; Mansfield, 2022; Race et al., 2022; Welsh Government, 2022).

What existing strategies and approaches can be used as examples of facilitators and benefits to help and support marginalised students, address systemic barriers, and prevent marginalisation in classrooms?

Studies indicate that when students feel a sense of belonging, they tend to achieve higher levels of academic success and experience improved well-being . However, marginalisation can undermine this sense of belonging, thereby negatively affecting students' overall educational experiences and outcomes.

Inclusive education aims to tackle students' diversities in order to minimise exclusion, marginalisation and inequalities, and guarantee quality education for all. For marginalised students, feeling a sense of belonging in educational spaces means experiencing acceptance, value, and inclusion within the academic community, despite the systemic barriers they face. If a student does not feel that they belong to the school community, they may experience a form of social pain which includes feelings of rejection, and this can affect brain activity that is very similar to that which is produced by real physical pain (Eisenberg, Lieberman & Williams, 2003). This may lead to avoidant behaviour and isolation (MacDonald & Leary, 2005) and have serious consequences. For example, feelings of isolation are a common characteristic of religious fundamentalism as well as supporters of radical right-wing political parties (Doosje et al., 2016).

According to Booth and Ainscow in the Index for Inclusion (2011), inclusive education

involves full participation, and high quality learning, for all learners. This broad definition focuses on diversity and inclusion of all learners, and not on specific groups. Furthermore, it does not view inclusion as the simple placement in a mainstream setting but instead considers co-existence as the initial starting point, followed by involvement, sharing and quality of learning processes. The goal of inclusive education also aligns with global initiatives, such as the UN 2030 Agenda's Goals 4 and 10 (UNESCO, 2015), which seeks to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, thereby tackling all forms of exclusion, marginalisation, and inequalities.

Mowat (2015) explores the subtle ways in which marginalisation can occur, which may not be immediately apparent. An example provided is when a child is excluded from participating in a reward system, such as "Golden Time," due to their behaviour not meeting a teacher's expectations. The psychological trauma resulting from such actions would require immediate address to support the healing of marginalised children. Interestingly, Mowat highlights an often-overlooked form of marginalisation, involving children who may have abundant access to material wealth but lack emotional warmth and love, which is commonly found in other family settings. This absence can lead to attachment or behavioural issues, as noted by Cooper (2008), and serves as a form of marginalisation for these children. This underscores that marginalisation is not exclusively rooted in lower socio-economic groups.

Mowat (2015) also investigates the role of schools in the marginalisation process, highlighting the paradox that, while education is often perceived as a pathway out of marginalisation, schools themselves can inadvertently act as agents of exclusion. This occurs through the implementation of curricula that fail to address the diverse needs of students, and through inflexible systems and structures that do not account for the discrepancies between behavioural expectations and students' capacities to meet them. Such conditions can create environments where exclusion becomes more likely (Munn & Lloyd, 2005). Additionally, the emphasis on a 'standards agenda', which inherently produces "*winners and losers*", can further contribute to the marginalisation of students (Razer et al., 2013).

Peim, as cited in Bennett and McDougall (2013: 34), reinforces this notion by stating: "The agents of education will tell students not only what they need to know, but what they need to do and to be. Students will be educated above all in the norms of conduct befitting their social destiny". This suggests that education systems often impose norms that may not align with the diverse needs of all students, leading to marginalisation.

To address this, several strategies have been proposed that effectively combat marginalisation in the classroom. Culturally responsive teaching, which integrates students' cultural backgrounds into both curriculum and pedagogy, is one such strategy. It validates the identities of marginalised students, enhancing their engagement and academic performance by making them feel acknowledged and respected, which in turn boosts their

motivation and participation. Restorative practices, focusing on community-building rather than punitive measures, also play a crucial role. They help create a positive classroom climate, reduce the need for suspensions and expulsions, and support students' social-emotional development, which is especially beneficial for those who may feel marginalised.

Addressing systemic barriers within education also involves implicit bias training and recruiting diverse staff to mitigate biases and ensure equitable resource allocation. Differentiated instruction, mentorship programs, and support services like counselling and tutoring are essential in accommodating diverse learning needs. Anti-bullying policies, inclusive classroom practices, and cultural competence training further contribute to creating a supportive environment, fostering a more equitable and inclusive educational system.

Lloyd (2008) critiques efforts to promote inclusion through the removal of learning barriers, suggesting that these efforts often perpetuate deficit models of students within an exclusive curriculum where success is narrowly defined by norm-referenced standards. Lloyd argues that "members of the excluded groups can join the game if they submit to the rules and demonstrate that they can play the game at a standard which is acceptable" (Lloyd, 2008: 234). In such exclusive educational environments, both teachers and students can experience marginalisation, often reinforcing each other's negative experiences (Razer et al., 2013).

Which other strategies and approaches can help and support marginalised students, address systemic barriers, and prevent marginalisation in classrooms?

Teacher education, and continuous professional development, is a vital component towards combating marginalisation. Teachers with insufficient training might not be aware of the different needs that can exist simultaneously in the classroom, and most importantly how to address them. Teachers should feel supported, empowered, and have agency to work in a manner that confronts marginalisation. Investing in regular training for teachers and school support staff is crucial to targeting marginalisation. While we recognise the importance, and influence of government policy, teachers should feel that they can challenge those aspects of the classroom setting that may cause marginalisation (for more information on these aspects see the chapters about continuous professional development and teacher agency).

   **Certainly, teacher collaboration plays an important role in general, even more if they can work through the co-teaching method with its different forms. It is a practice where two or more teachers (class and/or support teachers) plan, teach and assess together for a group of students. According to Friend and Cook (2007), there are six kinds of models:

1. *One teach, one observe*; where one teacher conducts the lesson, while the other simply

observes students' learning processes and collects different kinds of data which have been determined in advance.

2. *One teach, one assist;* where one teacher teaches a full group lesson, while the other teacher roams and helps individual students, often providing additional support for learning or behaviour management.

3. *Parallel teaching*, where the team splits the class into two groups and each teacher teaches the same information at the same time to a smaller group.

4. *Alternative teaching*, where one teacher instructs most of the class and the other teacher teaches an alternate or modified version of the lesson to a smaller group of students

5. *Station teaching*, where the class is divided into three or more groups and students rotate through the stations, while teachers teach the same material in different ways to each group.

6. *Team teaching*, where both teachers are in the room at the same time but take turns teaching the whole class, like co-presenters. With these models, it is possible to reduce contextual barriers, improving the benefits for students (for more information about the co-teaching method see the chapter "Teamwork in the classroom").

Other possible strategies and approaches to address systemic barriers and prevent marginalisation are the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and open learning. With the UDL it is possible to recognise the individual differences and to pay attention to the context in terms of barriers and benefits where contents are represented in different formats, each individual can have more ways of action and expression, and teachers can motivate and engage students in multiple forms (for more information see the specific UDL chapter).

Open learning is a student-centred approach with more freedom of choice, based on different degrees of openness (Demo, 2016).

1. On the first level, an openness of organisation would allow pupils to decide *where, when and with whom* they are learning.

2. On the second level, the openness is methodological and the emphasis is on *how* to learn something.

3. A third openness level is related to learning goals and contents, so *what* the students would like to learn.

4. The last level works on *socialisation*, relationships and rules, namely on the *class community*. With this kind of approach, it is possible to include everyone, creating a context where each student could perceive to be included.

To reduce marginalisation in the classroom and enhance inclusivity in educational settings, several strategies can be applied. Implementing assigned mentors or key individuals to support each student, akin to a key person approach, can be highly effective. Additionally,

peer buddy programs that foster peer-to-peer assistance and relationship-building should be put into practice. Developing an inclusive school culture, where diversity is celebrated, is essential to ensure all students feel a sense of belonging.

Creative pedagogical approaches, such as "coming out pedagogy," can help create safe spaces for students to express their identities and experiences. Furthermore, applying an intersectional lens to teaching and school policies ensures that the overlapping identities and experiences of students are acknowledged, allowing for tailored support to address their unique challenges.

In the beginning of this chapter an example case was given of a school in Germany in which marginalisation had occurred using the lived experience of a student. This chapter has allowed us to explore the concept of marginalisation in more detail, firstly by considering what marginalisation is, how and why it can happen, exploring types of marginalisation, and using intersectionality as a tool to understand how different types of marginalisation can exist simultaneously. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, we have provided practical suggestions as to what can be done to tackle marginalisation, and the strategies that educators can apply in the classroom.

Local contexts

Closing questions to discuss or tasks

- Why is it important for teachers and school staff to actively address marginalisation? What are the benefits?
- Based on this chapter, what steps can you take in your own context to better support marginalised students? Do you now perceive yourself more able to identify and help them?
- Think about your context and try to answer this question; who is responsible for marginalised students? Based on this chapter, could you find some solutions to extend the responsibility to all staff around them? Is it possible to realise a shared responsibility among all members of the school community?
- How could marginalised students be supported and included?
- Reflect on a personal experience where you, or someone important to you, faced marginalisation. How would you address that situation using the insights from this

chapter?

Literature

Armstrong, Ann Cheryl, Derrick Armstrong, and Ilektra Spandagou. "Inclusion: By Choice or by Chance?" *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 15, no. 1 (2011): 29–39.

Bellacicco, Rosa, Silver Cappello, Heidrun Demo, and Dario Ianes. "L'inclusione Scolastica Fra Push e Pull out, Transizioni e BES: Una Indagine Nazionale." In *Didattica e Inclusione Scolastica*, edited by Dario Ianes, 175–218. Milano: FrancoAngeli, 2019.

Bennett, Peter, and Julian McDougall, eds. *Barthes' Mythologies Today: Readings of Contemporary Culture*. New York: Routledge, 2013.

Bertolini, Piero. *Dizionario Di Pedagogia e Scienze Dell'educazione*. Zanichelli, 1996.

Booth, Tony, and Mel Ainscow. *Index for Inclusion: Developing Learning and Participation in Schools*. Bristol: Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education, 2011.

Bourdieu, Pierre. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972.

Brann-Barrett, M. Tanya. "Same Landscape, Different Lens: Variations in Young People's Socio-Economic Experiences and Perceptions in Their Disadvantaged Working-Class Community." *Journal of Youth Studies* 14, no. 3 (2011): 261–78. https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2010.506528.

Buli-Holmberg, Jorun, and Sujathamalini Jeyaprathaban. "Effective Practice in Inclusive and Special Needs Education." *International Journal of Special Education* 31, no. 1 (2016): 119–34.

Carter-Wall, Charlotte, and Grahame Whitfield. "The Role of Aspirations, Attitudes and Behaviour in Closing the Educational Attainment Gap Round-Up." York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2012.

Collins, Janet. "Playing Truant in Mind: The Social Exclusion of Quiet Pupils." Centre for Curriculum and Teaching Studies, School of Education, Open University, 1998.

Cooper, Paul. "Nurturing Attachment in School: Contemporary Perspectives on Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties." *Pastoral Care in Education* 26, no. 1 (2008): 13–22.

D'Alessio, Simona. *Inclusive Education in Italy*. Springer Science & Business Media, 2011.

Demo, Heidrun. *Didattica Aperta e Inclusione: Principi, Metodologie e Strumenti per Insegnanti Della Scuola Primaria e Secondaria*. Edizioni Centro Studi Erickson, 2016.

Dickerson, Andy, and Gurleen Popli. "Persistent Poverty and Children's Cognitive Development: Evidence from the UK Millennium Cohort Study." London: Centre for Longitudinal Studies, 2012.

Doosje, Bertjan, Fathali M. Moghaddam, Arie W. Kruglanski, Arjan de Wolf, Liesbeth Mann,

and Allard R. Feddes. "Terrorism, Radicalization and de-Radicalization." *Current Opinion in Psychology* 11 (2016): 79–84.

Eisenberg, Naomi, Matthew D. Lieberman, and Kipling D. Williams. "Does Rejection Hurt? An FMRI Study of Social Exclusion." *Science* 302, no. 5643 (October 2003): 290–92. https://doi.org/10.1126/science.1089134.

Friend, Marilyn, and Lynne Cook. *Interactions: Collaboration Skills for School Professionals*. 5th ed. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2007.

Government, Welsh. "Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan," 2022. https://www.gov.wales/anti-racist-wales-action-plan.

Hansen, Janne Hedegaard. "Limits to Inclusion." *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 16, no. 1 (2012): 89–98. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603111003671632.

Hargreaves, David, and Ken Reid. *Disaffection from School*. Routledge, 2011.

Harrison, Roger. "Disaffection and Access." In *Disaffection and Diversity: Overcoming Barriers for Adult Learners*, edited by Judith Calder, 2–18. Routledge, 2004.

Hayton, Anette. *Tackling Disaffection and Social Exclusion*. Routledge, 2013.

Hooks, Bell. *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. New York, NY: Routledge, 1994.

Hoole, N. "Two-Way Enquiry Learning: Exploring the Interface Between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Knowing." Melbourne, Australia: Victoria University, 2002. http://vuir.vu.edu.au/379/.

Ianes, Dario. *L'evoluzione Dell'insegnante Di Sostegno*. Trento: Erickson, 2014.

Ianes, Dario, Heidrun Demo, and Francesco Zambotti. "Integration in Italian Schools: Teachers' Perceptions Regarding Day-to-Day Practice and Its Effectiveness." *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 2013.

Jackson, Phillip. *Life in Classrooms*. New York: Rinehart and Winston, 1968.

Keys, Wendy, and Cres Fernandes. *What Do Students Think about School?* Slough: National Foundation for Educational Research, 1993.

Klein, Reva. *Defying Disaffection: How Schools Are Winning the Hearts and Minds of Reluctant Students*. Stylus Publishing, LLC, 1999.

Krawczyk, Steve, and Nigel Horner. *Social Work in Education and Children's Services*. Learning Matters, 2006.

Kumar, Revathy, Margaret H. Gheen, and Avi Kaplan. "Goal Structures in the Learning Environment and Students' Disaffection from Learning and Schooling." In *Goals, Goal Structures, and Patterns of Adaptive Learning*, 143–73, 2002.

Lenzi, Gabriele. "La Dispersione Scolastica e Formativa in Europa: Orientamenti e Misure Di Contrasto a Livello Comunitario." In *Volti Della Dispersione Scolastica e Formativa: Un'indagine in Provincia Di Forlì-Cesena*, edited by Paolo Zurla, 31–54, 2004.

MacDonald, Geoff, and Mark R. Leary. "Why Does Social Exclusion Hurt? The Relationship Between Social and Physical Pain." *Psychological Bulletin* 131, no. 2 (2005): 202–23.

Mansfield, Andrew. "Increasing Inclusion for Ethnic Minority Students by Teaching the

British Empire and Global History in the English History Curriculum." *Oxford Review of Education* 49, no. 3 (2022): 360–75.

Messiou, Kyriaki. "Understanding Marginalisation in Education: The Voice of Children." *European Journal of Psychology of Education* 21 (2006): 305.

Mowat, Joan G. "Towards a New Conceptualisation of Marginalisation." *European Educational Research Journal* 14, no. 5 (2015): 454–76.

Munn, Pamela, and Gwynedd Lloyd. "Exclusion and Excluded Pupils." *British Educational Research Journal* 31, no. 2 (2005): 205–51.

Nes, Kari, Heidrun Demo, and Dario Ianes. "Inclusion at Risk? Push and Pull out Phenomena in Inclusive School Systems: The Italian and Norwegian Experiences." *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 22, no. 2 (2018): 111–29.

Newburn, Tim, Michael Shiner, and Tara Young. *Dealing with Disaffection*. Routledge, 2013.

Prince, Emily Jane, and Julie Hadwin. "The Role of a Sense of School Belonging in Understanding the Effectiveness of Inclusion of Children with Special Educational Needs." *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 17, no. 3 (2013): 238–62.

Race, Richard, Pere Ayling, Dorrie Chetty, Nasima Hassan, Stephen J. McKinney, Lauren Boath, Nighet Riaz, and Saima Salehjee. "Decolonising Curriculum in Education: Continuing Proclamations and Provocations." *London Review of Education* 20, no. 1 (2022): 12.

Razer, Michal, Victor J. Friedman, and Boaz Warshofsky. "Schools as Agents of Social Exclusion and Inclusion." *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 17, no. 11 (2013): 1152–70.

Riley, Kathryn A., Elle Rustique-Forrester, Mary Fuller, David Rowles, Ron Letch, and James Docking. *Working with Disaffected Students: Why Students Lose Interest in School and What We Can Do about It*. London: SAGE Publications, 2002.

Rudduck, Jean, Roland Chaplain, and Gwen Wallace. *School Improvement: What Can Pupils Tell Us?* Fulton Publishers, 1996.

Schleicher, Andreas. *Equity, Excellence and Inclusiveness in Education: Policy Lessons from Around the World: Background Report for the 2014 International Summit of the Teaching Profession*. Paris, France: OECD, 2014.

Skinner, Ellen A., and Michael J. Belmont. "Motivation in the Classroom: Reciprocal Effects of Teacher Behavior and Student Engagement across the School Year." *Journal of Educational Psychology* 85, no. 4 (1993): 571–81.

Snyder, Benson R. *The Hidden Curriculum*. Alfred A. Knopf, 1970.

Sosu, Edward, and Susan Ellis. *Closing the Attainment Gap in Scottish Education*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2014.

UNESCO. "UNESCO 2015," 2015. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000244834.

Wendelborg, Christian, and Jan Tøssebro. "Educational Arrangements and Social Participation with Peers amongst Children with Disabilities in Regular Schools." *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 15, no. 5 (2011): 497–512.

Willis, Paul. *Learning to Labour: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs*. 1st ed.

Routledge, 1978.

About the authors

Silver Cappello

Silver Cappello has accomplished a PhD in General Education, General and Social Pedagogy at the Free University of Bolzano-Bozen (Italy). He is qualified as primary school teacher with a specialisation as support teacher and he has worked as primary school teacher (mainly teaching second language), as assistant for people with disabilities, and as research assistant on different research projects at the Competence Centre for School Inclusion of the Free University of Bolzano-Bozen.

Tracy Fletcher

Tracy Fletcher is a teacher in the subject of English, and researcher, originally from the U.K but has been based in Sweden for the last 14 years. She has experience of curriculum planning and management, co-ordinating CPD for teachers, as well as working to support newly arrived immigrant students integrate into a new school system. Her research interests include anti racist education, inclusive education, and student mental health. She is also an activist for autism awareness and trans rights.

Nysha Chantel Givans

Nysha Chantel Givans is currently pursuing a Professional Doctorate in Education at the University of Wolverhampton, with a research focus on the educational challenges faced by marginalised communities from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Her work encompasses a range of topics, including navigating the English education system, decolonising education, and addressing Afro hair discrimination. Employing methods such as autoethnography, film analysis, and literary text examination, her doctoral thesis will delve into Shane Meadows' This Is England to illuminate the educational barriers encountered by working-class individuals and explores the impact of communitarianism on these communities.

BREAKING THE SILENCE - EMPOWERING SCHOOLS IN THE PRACTICE OF TRAUMA INFORMED EDUCATION

Julia Bialek; Evrim Çetinkaya Yıldız; Cynthy K. Haihambo; and Ramona Thümmler

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=455#oembed-1

Example Case

"We would like to start with a case study from the school that illustrates the difference between trauma-sensitive interventions and standard intervention practice.

It is about a 6 year old boy who attended the 1st grade. He had many conflicts with his teachers because he kept climbing on tables and trampling over everything that was on them, such as notebooks, books, etc. The teachers tried to stop this behaviour with different interventions, the boy was even suspended from school several times for some days, but the interventions did not show any effects.

During the observation of this boy, it became clear that this behaviour was triggered by different situations. The main triggers were moments when he did not know exactly what was going to happen next.

After traumatic experiences, anything that cannot be fully predicted and influenced feels dangerous and threatening to the person affected. His body reacted to these situations with massive stress, which forced the boy to remove the danger. He found a very effective strategy:

by climbing on the tables he took control of the situation that he experienced as dangerous. Wat would happen next became predictable and controllable for him, and he could feel safe again.

Once we understood this, we worked with him to find alternative ways of dealing with situations where he felt threatened. He was asked what he needed when he felt uncomfortable in class and he said that he needed a place to hide in class. He was allowed to build a small safe place in a corner of the class. Great care was also taken to ensure that the structure of the class was very transparent and predictable for him. And additional procedures were agreed with him for difficult situations by agreeing on emergency signals he could use to indicate the need for support.

With this support, the boy was able to participate in the class in a relatively stable way without having to control it through his behaviour. This was possible because he had been given alternative ways of acting which gave him a sense of security, predictability and control. The previous "if…. then" interventions had only taken away his ability to feel safe without offering him an alternative. With these interventions the boy could not change his behaviour."

Initial questions

1. What is trauma? What are the effects of trauma on children, on the classroom, and on the school climate? How to break the silence about these questions?
2. What are the responsibilities of educational staff and education institutions when working with children who have had traumatic experiences?
3. What are the options to support learners who have had traumatic experiences?
4. What are the responsibilities of school for trauma awareness and trauma prevention?
5. How does society take responsibility for empowering individuals, peers and teachers?
6. How can silence be broken?

Introduction to Topic

The number of children and young people in the world who are exposed to traumatic events on a daily basis due to neglect and abuse, violence against them, deprivation of basic needs, exclusion and discrimination is increasing (Mew, Koenen, & Lowe, 2022; UNHCR, 2023). In

addition to these micro- and meso systemic factors, many children around the world are exposed to man-made macro- and ecosystemic factors, such as wars, natural disasters including floods, severe droughts and earthquakes, and structural inequalities, leading to migration and multiple factors of vulnerability. It is therefore necessary for teachers to have trauma-sensitive knowledge and to use this knowledge to develop trauma-informed interventions (Carello & Butler 2014).

Trauma is defined as the events experienced or witnessed by the individual when death, threat of death, serious injury, or a threat to the integrity of the body occurs in human life (American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2013, pp. 265, 266). Children and adolescents around the world experience high rates of traumatic experiences. These include physical, emotional, and sexual abuse; neglect; exposure to community violence; bullying; natural disasters; poverty; homelessness; immigration; and parental problems such as domestic violence, incarceration, death, mental illness, involvement in substance abuse, and military deployment. Traumatic experiences undermine students' ability to learn, to form relationships, and to regulate their emotions and behaviour, putting them at increased risk for trauma and a range of negative academic, social, emotional, and vocational outcomes (Schäfer, Gast, Hofmann, et. al, 2019; Vibhakar, Allen, Gee & Meister-Stedmann, 2019). For many children and young people, the school environment is the best option for accessing support services, particularly during periods of trauma that are inevitable in their developmental stages. The school, as a place of inclusion, education and socialisation, has a responsibility to positively identify and respond to the needs of learners who have experienced trauma in their lives. WithIn trauma-informed schools or places of education, all adults who come into contact with children, including teachers, school counsellors, school administrators and parents, should be informed about the effects of trauma on the nervous system and the psychosocial impact of trauma on children. Teachers and other role players in the school should therefore be empowered to practice embedded trauma-informed education.

In this chapter we explain the meaning of trauma-informed education, the types of trauma and possible school responses. We focus on the professionalisation of teachers for trauma-informed education and on the well-being of teachers in this work.

Key aspects

What is trauma?

The term 'trauma' is derived from the Greek word 'trauma', which translates literally as 'wound' or 'injury'. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines trauma as "a delayed or protracted response to a stressful event or situation (either short or long-lasting) of an exceptionally threatening or long-lasting nature, which is likely to cause pervasive distress in almost anyone" (WHO, 2010). Several key characteristics of trauma can be identified.

1. Such an event can be overwhelming. The individual lacks the capacity to cope with the circumstances and experiences a sense of vulnerability and exposure. The potential for resolution is severely constrained or absent. The extent to which an individual is affected by a traumatic event is dependent on their personal circumstances and the potential for coping mechanisms to be exercised.

2. Such occurrences are typically unanticipated. It is not possible to predict the occurrence of such an event, nor can one assume that another individual will perpetuate such an act against them.

3. It engenders feelings of fear and helplessness. The occurrence is so pervasive that it causes significant anxiety and feelings of helplessness.

4. It is life-threatening. The occurrence is so devastating that it alters subsequent lives and is remembered for an extended period.

The definition of a traumatic event is contingent upon the individual's experience and perception of the event, rather than the specifics of the event itself. The person's available options are of paramount importance for assessing and coping with the trauma.Childhood trauma can be defined as an event experienced by a child that evokes fear and is commonly violent, dangerous, or life-threatening. The experience of physical or emotional neglect or abuse can have a traumatic effect on children. Similarly, one-off occurrences such as road traffic accidents, natural disasters (e.g. hurricanes), the death of a loved one or a significant medical event can also have a profound psychological impact on children. The global pandemic of the novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) and the associated public health measures, including prolonged school closures, were experienced as traumatic by many children, particularly those whose educational institutions remained inaccessible for extended periods.

It is a common misconception that childhood trauma is exclusively characterised by direct experiences of the child in question. Observing a loved one undergoing a significant health challenge can be profoundly distressing for children for example. It is erroneous to assume that all intense experiences are traumatic. Trauma is not a final, life-determining fate. It can be dealt with and healed. Furthermore, in light of the growing multicultural and diverse nature of schools, it is imperative for educators to recognise that certain experiences may be perceived as traumatic by children from one cultural background, while being less so by those from another. It is therefore incumbent upon teachers to ascertain from their pupils' behaviours and responses (which may be observed, reflected upon, undertaken, illustrated or conveyed in narrative form) whether or not they have been traumatised by a specific event in their lives. Cultural identity is not the only determining factor in the experience of trauma. A number of factors contribute to an individual's vulnerability, including membership of a disadvantaged group. Such groups may include people with a migration background, persons with disabilities and special needs, those living below the income threshold, and those enduring bullying, stigmatisation and

exclusion. Such circumstances can render individuals more vulnerable to traumatic experiences, and to a greater extent than might otherwise be the case. One illustrative example is that of natural disasters such as floods. In the event of such occurrences, those who are impoverished and reside in regions with inadequate infrastructure are the most severely affected. They are at an elevated risk of losing their lives and possessions, and may require a longer period to rebuild their lives. In addition to their vulnerabilities, they also do not have back-up resources like insurance or savings to rebuild their lives.

Similar circumstances have been documented in cases where individuals have been exposed to armed conflict, torture, and forced displacement. In 2022 over 108 million people worldwide were forced to flee their homes due to a range of factors, including war, torture, natural disasters, and political persecution. These individuals often lose not only their homeland but also their loved ones and social support systems (UNHCR, 2023). Furthermore, they frequently encounter additional trauma in their new surroundings due to stigma, discrimination, and rejection. Trauma-informed education equips educators with the knowledge and skills to provide sensitive and supportive learning environments for children with migration histories, thereby reducing the risk of secondary trauma.

What are the types of trauma?

In the literature, there are several different classifications of trauma. Some classify it according to the number and duration of the traumatic event. Others classify it according to the source of trauma.

Different types of trauma can be distinguished according to the type and length of exposure. Single-event trauma, sometimes referred to as Type I trauma, describes abrupt, unplanned events that pose a serious risk. Serious accidents, natural disasters, and violent attacks are a few examples. These traumas usually have a distinct beginning and might result in disorders such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or acute stress disorder (ASD) (Terr, 1991). On the other hand, Type II trauma is the result of persistent or recurrent exposure to stressful events. This category, which encompasses ongoing events like persistent emotional or physical abuse, marital violence, or extended exposure to conflict, is frequently predicted. Complex psychological effects, such as challenges with emotional regulation and interpersonal interactions, might result from the cumulative impact of Type II trauma (Courtois & Ford, 2016).

Apart from Type I and Type II trauma, the differentiation between "Big T" and "Small T" traumas is also a helpful classification. "Big T" traumas are those intense or overpowering incidents that are usually connected to severe and unmistakably traumatic situations, such as rape, serious accidents, child abuse, and war. Because of their severity and lasting effects, these incidents are typically acknowledged as major traumatic experiences (van der Kolk, 2015). Even though they have the capacity to be extremely overwhelming, "Small T" traumas are frequently more subdued and may not be identified as such right away. A few

instances are losing a job, moving to a new house, or losing a loved one or pet. "Small T" traumas may not seem as dramatic, but if they are not properly addressed, they can have a major and long-lasting effect on a person's mental health.

Acute, chronic, and complicated trauma are other categories of trauma (DeThierry, 2015). A single incident causes acute trauma. It is a psychological trauma brought on by an extremely stressful incident, including going through a violent or natural disaster, seeing a major car accident, or being in a car accident. Trauma of this kind might result in acute stress disorder (ASD), a mental illness that usually manifests three days after the incident and can last for up to a month (American Psychological Association, 2020). Long-term mental health problems might arise from acute trauma if it is not appropriately treated (Herman, 2015). The result of recurrent and extended stressful encounters is chronic trauma. It may be the consequence of chronic conditions such as poverty, marital violence, or abuse on a physical, sexual, or emotional level. More severe psychological consequences, like anxiety, sadness, and complicated post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), are frequently brought on by this kind of trauma (van der Kolk, 20015). When a person experiences several ongoing or protracted traumatic events—often starting in childhood—they develop complex trauma. This can result from events such as childhood abuse or neglect, domestic violence, sexual assault, or war-related trauma and is tightly linked to generational trauma (Courtois & Ford, 2016). Emotional control, self-perception, and the capacity to establish and sustain healthy relationships can all be significantly impacted by complex trauma. Complex trauma's long-term impacts can cause serious problems with one's physical and mental health (DeThierry, 2015).

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN, 2023) categorises trauma based on the occurrence that led to it. Trauma occurs when a youngster experiences or sees an event that makes them feel extremely threatened. Children and teenagers may be exposed to a variety of traumatic events or trauma types. Children may be subjected to a variety of traumas, including bullying, complex trauma, disasters, intimate partner violence, early childhood trauma, medical trauma, physical abuse, trauma from refugees, sexual abuse, sex trafficking, terrorism and violence, and traumatic grief.

Putting traumatic occurrences into categories such as those generated by nature and those purposefully brought on by human hands is another popular way to group traumatising experiences. Yet inadvertent, human-caused accidents can also occasionally have traumatic effects. Human carelessness frequently results in the transformation of natural occurrences into traumatic ones. An earthquake, for instance, is a natural occurrence, but it causes destruction because structures built in an unsafe location get damaged. Experiences that could be considered natural disasters that do not cause damage or casualties could turn into painful experiences if earthquake-resistant structures are developed. Lastly, it should be mentioned that traumatic incidents can occur in large or small groups. A single person or a small group of people may be impacted by an event, but in other situations, like forced migration and war, it may have a mass effect on a significant

number of people. Comprehending distinct forms of trauma is essential to customising efficient interventions and therapies that cater to the individual requirements of individuals impacted (Courtois & Ford, 2016).

The prevalence of trauma: A few global and national statistics from our countries

Worldwide statistics: Regretfully, across the globe, children are exposed to various forms of trauma at a very high rate. This is amply supported by the findings of extensive research projects on the topic. According to projections from the World Health Organization (WHO, 2020), 1 billion children between the ages of 2 and 17 may have been victims of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse or neglect in the previous year. Approximately 420 million children are estimated to be living in conflict zones by UNICEF (2019). There is a greater chance of trauma from violence, displacement, and war for children in these locations. More than 35 million children have been forcefully relocated due to conflict according to the UNHCR (UN Refugee Agency), which greatly contributes to trauma experiences. Sexual abuse before the age of eighteen is estimated by the World Health Organization (2018) to affect about 18% of girls and 8% of boys worldwide. Over 100 million children are impacted by natural disasters and humanitarian crises annually according to UNICEF (2020), which causes severe psychological damage. Felitti et al.'s (1998) Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study investigated the long-term effects of maltreatment, neglect, and dysfunctional households on the health and behaviour of adults. According to the study, more than two thirds of the individuals said they had had at least one ACE, and over 12.5% said they had had four or more.

Turkey: The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Social Services and Child Protection Agency released a study on domestic violence and child abuse in Türkiye in 2010. The study's findings show that 51% of Turkish children aged 7 to 18 experienced both physical and emotional abuse, 43% experienced physical neglect, 25% experienced emotional neglect, and 3% experienced sexual abuse. As per UNICEF (2010, p 17-37) the survey found that 56% of children had witnessed physical abuse, 49% had witnessed mental abuse, and 10% had witnessed sexual abuse.

Şirin & Rogers-Şirin (2015) did research with 311 children (mean age 12) at a refugee camp in Türkiye in 2012. They conducted a study on the traumatic experiences and psychological problems of children that are under temporary protection status in Turkey. Results revealed that compared to their Turkish peers, they are in a higher risk group for survival. These children had experienced very high levels of trauma:

- 79% of children witnessed the deaths of family members
- 60% of children witnessed physical injury or shooting of a family member
- 30% of children were exposed to violence (injury, shooting)

- almost half of the children had post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), ten times more often than other children
- 44% of the children showed symptoms of depression
- almost a quarter of these children experiences daily psychosomatic pains in their arms and legs
- about one in five children experiences headaches on a daily basis

In February 2023, Unicef reported that 4.6 million Turkish children and 2.5 million Syrian children were affected by the earthquake in Turkey and Syria. One year after the earthquake, according to the data announced by Unicef (2024), psychological support was provided to 1.5 million children and caregivers in Turkey.

Germany: In Germany in over the the last number of years, several discussions about child abuse, neglect and emotional and physical maltreatment of children and also of sexual abuse were held.

Research on respondents from the general population (n = 2504) aged 14 and over shows the presence of severe emotional maltreatment in 1.6% of respondents, severe physical maltreatment was reported by 2.8% of respondents and severe sexual maltreatment by 1.9%. Severe emotional neglect was reported by 6.6% of respondents and severe physical neglect by 10.8%. In the most recent study on the prevalence of sexual violence in Germany, a representative sample of 2513 persons over 14 years of age was interviewed. It showed that 0.6% of the male respondents and 1.2% of the female respondents reported having been victims of sexualised violence within the last 12 months (Witt, Glaesmer, Jud et al., 2018).

Namibia: In a study about post-traumatic stress disorder amongst children aged 8–18 affected by the 2011 northern-Namibia floods (Taukeni S. G., Chitiyo,G., Chitiyo, M. Asino, and G. Shipena, G.) the results show that 55.2% of learners aged 12 and below and 72.8% of learners aged 13 and above reported experiencing symptoms of trauma following the floods in Northern Namibia, 2 years after the event.

Descendants of the genocide that was committed by the German Truppe in Namibia against the Herero and Nama people of Namibia in 1904 -1908 have revealed signs of transgenerational trauma.

Many children and adults continue to battle the persisting trauma caused by the COVID 19 pandemic between 2020 – 2023 (deaths of loved ones, isolation from friends, falling behind with education targets, online learning) (UNESCO, 2022).

In a study on children's use of online platforms and vulnerabilities in the online space in Namibia, 81% of children aged 12–17 were found to be internet users during the time of the research. In the past year alone, 9% of internet users aged 12–17 in Namibia were subjected to clear examples of online sexual exploitation and abuse that included blackmailing children to engage in sexual activities, sharing their sexual images without permission, or coercing them to engage in sexual activities through promises of money

or gifts (ECPAT, INTERPOL, and UNICEF (2022). There are continuous cases reported of childhood trauma emanating from abuse in the online space.

A child abuse survey conducted in Namibia revealed that nearly two out of five females (39.6%) and males (45.0%) aged 18-24 years experienced physical, sexual, or emotional violence in childhood (Ministry of Gender Equality, Poverty Eradication and Child Welfare, Republic of Namibia, 2020).

Possible Effects of Trauma

Exposure to different types of traumatic events may have different consequences. Not everyone who experiences a traumatic event develops post-traumatic stress disorder, as the experience of a potentially traumatic event and the way in which an individual processes it can vary greatly from person to person. Therefore, it should not be assumed that the experience of one or more potentially traumatic events will automatically lead to traumatisation, or that a person is not affected by traumatisation simply because they have not developed clear symptoms. Crucially, trauma is subjective; what one person may consider to be a severe trauma may not be regarded as such by another (Courtois & Ford, 2016). Some situations such as the magnitude of the traumatic event, the way it occurred, its duration and how many people were affected by this event, as well as the person's own coping mechanisms and previous experiences determine how traumatic this event can be for this person.

Effects on the nervous system and the brain

Traumatic events can change both psychological and physical processes, as the body remains in a state of defence that is no longer present but is still experienced as persistently threatening. Trauma-induced changes affect the nervous system, which is limited in its ability to regulate. Traumatisation can only be processed when the permanent stress reaction has come to an end and the entire organism can operate again from a safe state (van der Kolk, 2023, p. 90).

In threatening situations, the stress level arises to enable a person to defend himself. The sympathetic nervous system is activated and stress-related hormones are released in the body. If there is no way out of the threatening situation, the stress level rises further. In the brain control activity is directed to the brainstem and the fight and/or flight response is initiated. This is an automatic response that the person cannot control.

If the danger still cannot be averted, the organism switches to survival mode. In addition to the sympathetic nervous system, part of the parasympathetic nervous system is activated. This puts the body into a state of reduced energy so that the danger can be survived. With the sympathetic system still activated it is as if one were trying to simultaneously accelerate fully and brake fully. This puts the body into a state of "freezing" where reactions are no longer possible and information cannot be processed (Van der Kolk,

2023, S. 135). "In a state of shock, the images disintegrate into fragmentary fragments that concentrate exclusively on the threatening aspects that stand out most" (Levine, 2011, S. 152).

The different activation states of the autonomic nervous system

Stress

Sympathetic and parasympathetic activation

"freeze and fragment"

Sympathetic activation

Activation, fight and flight

Parasympathetic activation

"rest and digest"
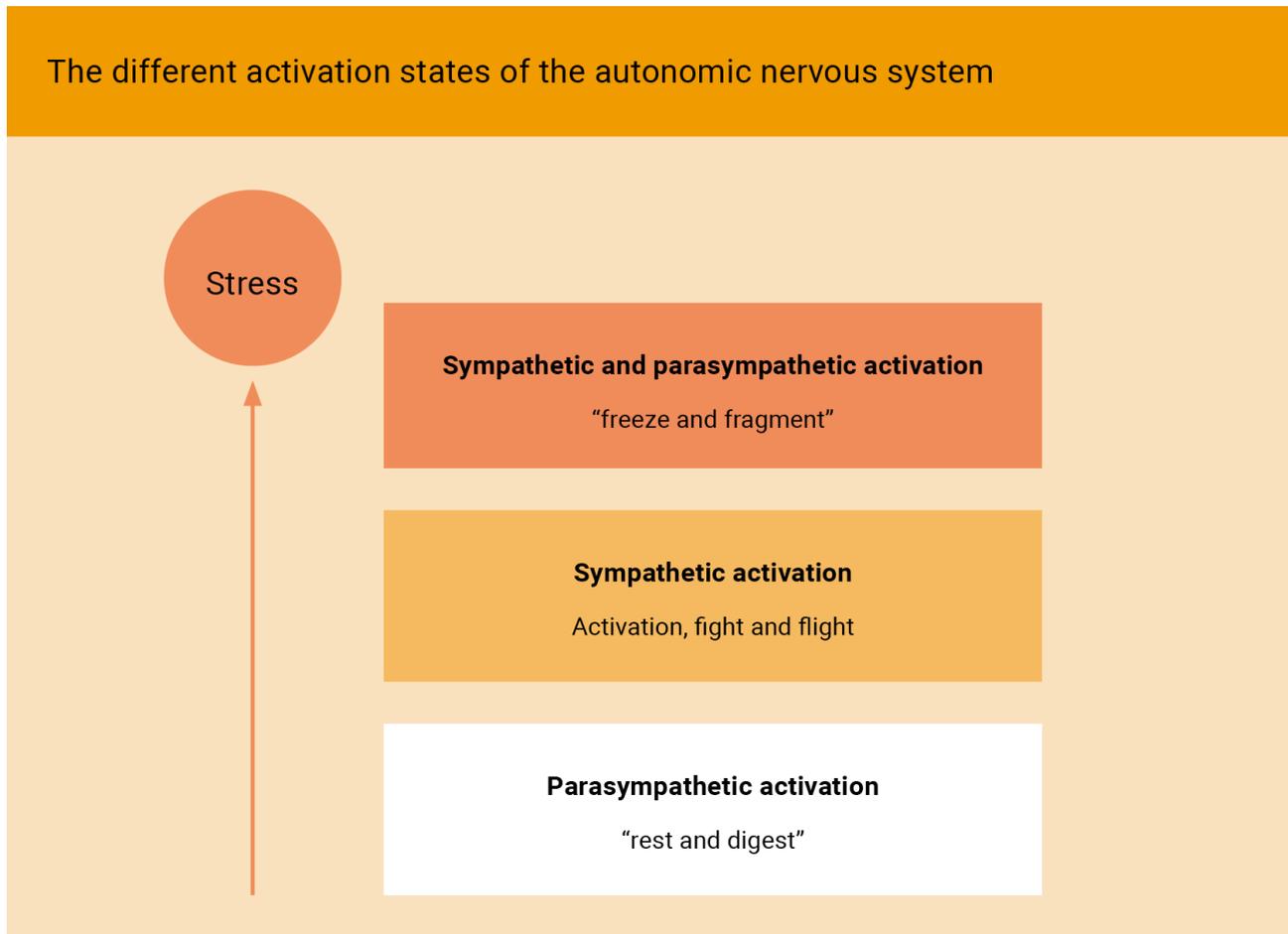
To be traumatised means to have had one's boundaries violated. This violation is primarily physical rather than psychological. The nervous system loses its ability to regulate and to adapt. It remains in a state of hyperarousal or hypoarousal and can no longer adapt appropriately to a situation (Levine/Kline in: Jäckle et al., 2017, S. 695). As a result, rapid shifts between states occur and emergency responses such as fight, flight or freeze are sometimes triggered even by minor demands. There is also a risk of using substitute strategies for regulation, such as medication, drugs, alcohol, risky behaviour, overeating or self-harm. Thus a really important and helpful aspect of supporting traumatised people is to help them to regulate their nervous system.

A variety of possible effects of traumatic life experiences on the brain, the body and especially on learning and developmental processes have been identified. All these processes take place very quickly and automatically in the brain. An important part of this is that memory plays an important role in these processes, which is particularly affected by trauma.

In comprehending trauma an examination of the brain and autobiographical memory is essential. This memory can be delineated into two distinct categories: cold memory and hot

memory. Cold memory encompasses factual recollections of life-time periods and specific events, typically stored as objective information. For instance, one might recall being in the workshop of the project "All Means All" in June 2023, engaged in discussions about trauma (Huber, 2020). Conversely, hot memory encompasses emotional and sensory recollections, incorporating subjective experiences such as feelings and thoughts, alongside physiological responses like increased heart rate, respiration, or perspiration. Through the amalgamation of these hot memories, a fear network is constructed within the brain. The functionality and even the structural composition of the brain undergo alterations when individuals encounter life-threatening situations, as stress induces changes within the brain's dynamics.During a situation where flight is unattainable and fighting appears futile, individuals may experience a state of freezing. This triggers an alert within our systems, leading to a disconnection between hot and cold memory networks. Consequently, data regarding the situation may be inadequately stored.

Subsequently, when such individuals encounter stimuli reminiscent of the traumatic event, the fear network is reactivated, plunging them into a state of disorientation commonly known as flashbacks. In these instances, individuals may perceive themselves as being once again in the midst of warfare, experiencing torture, or enduring instances of past bullying by peers.

The symptoms associated with post-traumatic stress disorder can be divided into three groups: symptoms of hyperarousal, caused by the changes in the nervous system described above; symptoms of re-experiencing, caused by the altered storage of the experience in the memory; and, thirdly, avoidance behaviours and withdrawal, so that stress triggers and symptoms of re-experiencing are avoided as far as possible.

According to the currently valid DSM-5, these include the following possible symptoms and behaviours:

Criterion	Symptom description
Intrusion Symptoms (B)	• Recurrent, involuntary and distressing memories of the traumatic event • Distressing dreams where the content relates to the traumatic event • Dissociative reactions (e.g. flashbacks) where the individual feels or acts as if the traumatic event ist recurring • Intense or prolonged psychological distress upon exposure to internal or external cues related to the event • Marked physiological reactions to reminders that symbolise or resemble aspects of the traumatic event
Avoidance and Negative Alterations in Cognition and Mood	• Avoidance of distressing memories, thoughts, or feelings associated with the traumatic event • Avoidance of external reminders (people, places, activities) that bring up memories or the traumatic event • Persistent negative emotional state (e.g. fear, anger, guilt, shame) • Markedly diminished interest or participation in significant activities • Feelings of detachment or estrangement from others • Persistent inability to experience positive emotions
Marked Alterations in Arousal and Reactivity	• Irritable behaviour or angry outbursts • Reckless or self-destructive behaviour • Hypervigilance • Exaggerated startle response • Difficulty concentrating • Sleep disturbance (e.g.) difficulty falling or staying asleep or restless sleep

(American Psychiatric Association, 2013, S.271f)

This is only a rough overview of symptoms; a wide range of other forms of expression of traumatisation can develop, which can then be assigned to these subgroups in terms of their origin. What all forms of expression of traumatisation have in common is that they make subjective sense in the context of the individual's life experience and, more specifically, the traumatic experience, or at least made sense for survival in an earlier period.

Effects on physical and mental health

Children and adolescents who have experienced traumatic events often exhibit a series of other types of social-emotional and behavioural problems. Although not all children who experience challenging situations develop symptoms of trauma, the majority often have problems with fear, anxiety, depression, anger and hostility, aggression, self-destructive behaviour, feelings of isolation and stigma, poor self-esteem, difficulty in trusting others,

substance abuse, and sexual maladjustment among many other emotional and behavioural difficulties. Children who have experienced traumas also often have relationship problems with peers and family members as well as problems with acting out, which leads to difficulty with academic performance.

There are a number of psychiatric disorders that are associated with traumatic experiences. These may include anxiety disorders such as separation anxiety, panic disorder, and generalised anxiety disorder; and externalising disorders such as attention-deficit/ hyperactivity disorder, oppositional defiant disorder, and conduct disorders (Frieze, 2016).

Trauma can have physical and mental impacts:

In addition to the emotional and psychological difficulties explained above, trauma can have physical and mental impacts. When a child experiences a traumatic event, it can negatively affect their physical development. The stress related to the trauma can impair the development of their immune and central nervous systems, making it harder to achieve their full potential. Because of poor health and poor general well-being, they may experience lack of sleep, lack of appetite or binge eating and poor self-esteem. The children can experience concentration and memory difficulties and struggle to complete learning tasks. These are impacts of trauma and should not be confused with Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), or learning disabilities. The child may undergo learning and social-emotional difficulties as a result of the trauma, as their bodies are drained by the traumatic experience (Maercker & Hecker, 2016). These are complex psychological and psychiatric conditions which require the interventions of professional psychologists.

Activity: Think of a big problem you or a friend experienced as a child.

In one paragraph, describe the event. What happened and what caused the problem? How did you or your friend respond/ react? How did it affect your life / the life of your friend? Go back to the list above and select any five impacts you think could have been your or your friend's reactions to the trauma. Create a table where you write down the term and what it means for example:

Term/ Impact Behaviour / Thoughts	Meaning Symptoms or Effects of Trauma

Effects on the educational process

Traumatic experiences undermine students' ability to learn, form relationships, and manage their feelings and behaviour and place them at increased risk for trauma and a range of negative academic, social, emotional, and occupational outcomes (Rossen & Hull, 2013). If not managed properly, this makes the learning environment unsuitable for all children. Children affected might start to underperform in learning situations, even if they did not

present with learning difficulties before. Teachers should refrain from blaming or labelling them. Instead, teachers could conference with the learner and where possible with parents and guardians of the learner showing the above signs to try and understand the issues they are facing. They should try to work on achievable targets with the learner.

Exposure to trauma can "impact learning, behaviour, and social, emotional, and psychological functioning" (Kuban & Steele, 2011, p. 41). Maslow's hierarchy of eeds suggests that children whose basic needs – such as physiological needs, a sense of security, and emotional needs are not met, are more likely to be unable to concentrate and achieve in school. These children will have difficulties with concentration, memory, application of knowledge and focus. These learners will develop emotional and behavioural problems, which will in turn manifest poor academic performance, with poor attendance and low reading and numeracy levels (https://khironclinics.com/blog/trauma-and-education).

Learners who have experienced trauma may struggle with reading and writing skills, participation in debate and discussion, and solving mathematical and other cognitive problems. The development of each of these skills relies on the brain's ability to organise, comprehend, remember, learn, trust, and produce work. A big part of cognitive functioning is emotional self-regulation, attention, and optimism demonstrated in a belief in oneself. The ability to control one's emotions, retain attention, and behaviours are crucial for healthy brain development and personal growth through education (https://khironclinics.com/blog/trauma-and-education). Unfortunately, traumatic experiences disrupt these brain processes and concerted efforts are needed to restore and normalise emotions and functions needed for learning and socialisation.

Here are some examples of how trauma interferes with the brain functions:

- Hindered development of brain areas associated with language and communication
- Jeopardised sense of self
- Compromised ability to pay attention in class
- Reduced memory – difficulty following instructions
- Poor organisation skills
- Difficulty grasping 'cause and effect' relationships (https://khironclinics.com/blog/trauma-and-education).

Case study

Suppose that you have a 13-year-old boy in your class who recently lost both his parents as a result of COVID-19. Your learner is the eldest of the siblings and has since taken over a parental role over his younger brother (12 years old) and a younger sister (7 years old). These children have no problem accessing food and other basic necessities because their parents left enough resources for them to survive on. However, this eldest child finds it difficult to supervise all the activities at home, including the sibling's school work. By the

time he sits down to focus on his own academic work, he is tired. He comes to class with incomplete homework and sometimes he writes his work in the wrong book.

- Would you say that this boy and his siblings had a traumatic experience? Explain your answer.

- From the list above, what do you think is the specific area of this boy's brain that is affected by the new role of caring for his siblings?

- Make three suggestions on how you would support this boy in class.

Importance of Trauma-Informed Education

Children and adolescents are the ones who become the victims of traumatic events the most. They are usually school aged children, and if they are lucky, they can attend a school. For instance, the majority of refugees fleeing the Syrian war are children, and the schools they attend are often forced to meet the psychological, social, and educational needs of these children who are victims of war (Sullivan & Simonson, 2016).

Schools are places where students can learn, explore, and grow as individuals. However, a crisis or traumatic incident that occurs within the school community jeopardises the mental well-being and academic progress of pupils (Finelli & Zeanah, 2019). These crises can manifest in many different ways, such as a natural disaster, a war, or the death of a pupil. Crisis situations in schools can be acutely traumatic, but they can also have long-lasting effects on students' well-being. For instance, psychological vulnerabilities such as post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, and depression are linked to natural catastrophes (Makwana, 2019). Finally, by interfering with students' metacognitive learning processes, the psychological impacts of trauma can hinder academic achievement (Panlilio et al., 2019). At the same time, stress reactions experienced by children and adolescents in trauma situations make learning almost impossible and also cause behavioural problems at school (Dyregrov, 2004). Therefore, attending to kids' post-crisis mental health needs may help to lessen the effects of long-term trauma. However, research revealed that many schools lack comprehensive plans for responding to crisis situations (Sokol et al., 2021).

Figure 1 demonstrates the trauma cycle in an educational setting. Children affected by trauma might start to underperform in learning situations, even if they did not have learning difficulties before. They might also demonstrate behavioural problems. If not handled properly by the educators, the trauma cycle continues, and new traumas due to punishments, failure, or bullying may be added to the original trauma. We can say that if not focused/handled properly, trauma can make the learning environment unsuitable for all children. Instead schools should try to work on achievable targets with the learner. Teachers can also confer with the learner showing the above signs to try and understand

the issues they are facing. By observing students during lessons and other activities at school, it may be advisable to adjust the educational environment and/or homework according to the specific needs of the learner. The timely involvement of teachers or a child mental health professional, depending on their academic, social or psychological needs, may help to resolve the child's problem before it progresses further.
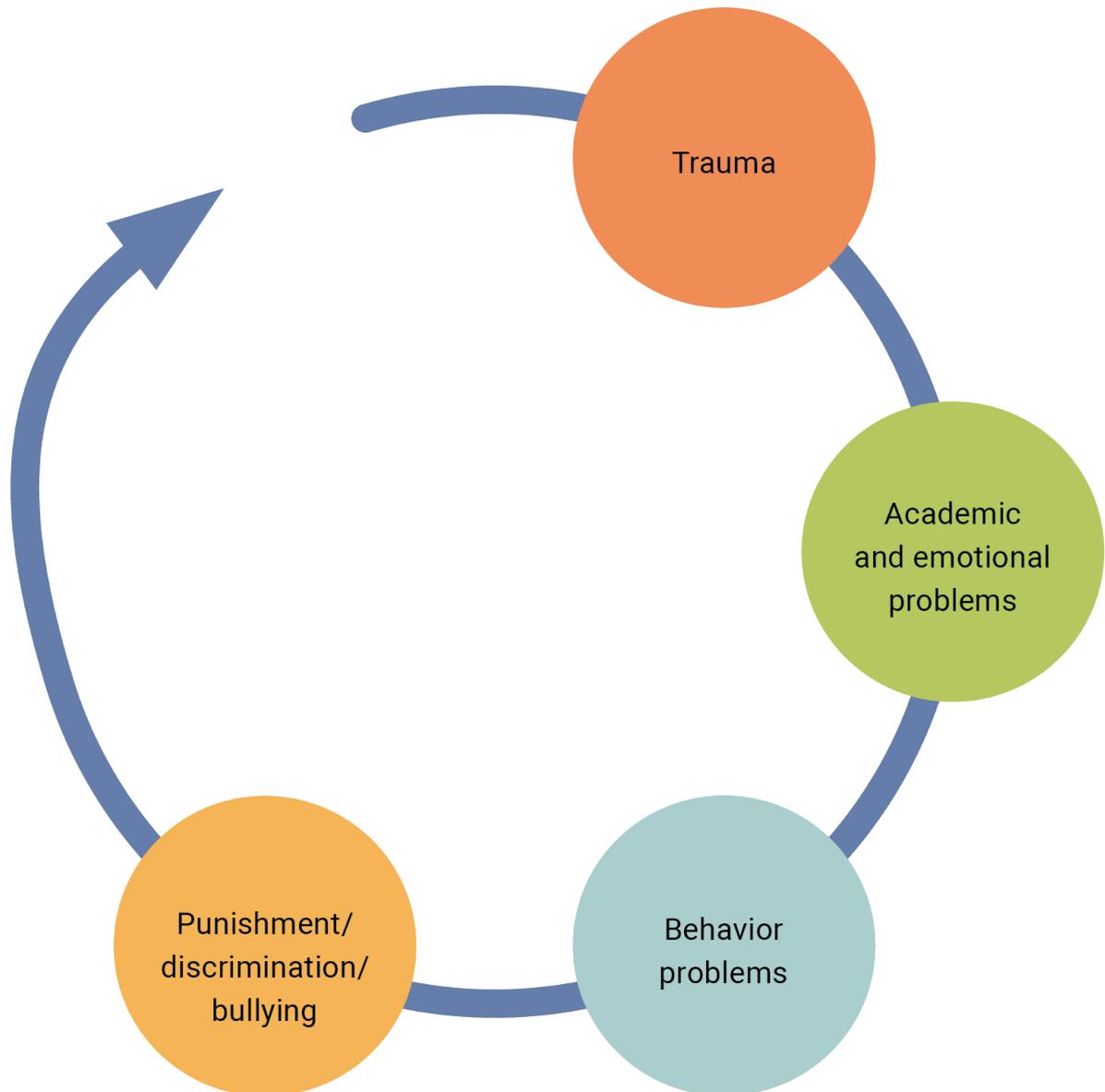
Schools are critically important settings to intervene and foster trauma-affected children's resilience. As Weist, Paternite, and Adelsheim (2005) stated, schools play an important role in community-based mental health. Because many children and families can be reached easily, it is a very practical place to implement change. Therefore, considering the effects of trauma on children's well-being and the role of schools in the community, we can say that teachers and other school personnel should be informed about the trauma.

Trauma-informed education means teaching with the awareness that children go through serious, challenging events, and those experiences can affect learning. has the following characteristics:

- It is a strength-based approach
- It emphasises safety in all aspects for both educators and students
- It creates opportunities for people who have survived trauma to rebuild a sense of control and empowerment (Hopper, Bassuk, & Olivet, 2010, p. 82).

Trauma informed Interventions

"Trauma-informed approaches in schools must be implemented at all levels, from classroom practices to school policies, in order to create a consistent and supportive environment for students." (Luthar & Mendes, 2020, p. 148)

In order to establish educational institutions as environments that are responsive to social circumstances which have the potential to cause psychological trauma, it is essential to consider a multi-faceted approach that ensures the safety and well-being of young learners, even in the aftermath of traumatic life experiences. Firstly, educators require trauma-specific knowledge to facilitate individualised relationships and lessons. Given that teachers typically work with groups rather than individuals, there is also a need for opportunities to work with groups in a trauma-sensitive way. Secondly, social awareness and recognition of the factors that cause trauma and the need to take responsibility for this as a task for society as a whole is essential.

Individual-based interventions – Experiencing school as a safe space

After harrowing and potentially traumatising experiences, people also need to feel safe in everyday life. In a trauma-sensitive context, we talk about creating safe spaces. This means not only making the environment in which the person lives safe, it also includes the willingness of the environment to be there in situations of stress, to help with stress regulation, to reorient in crisis situations and to develop a high level of sensitivity to the person's need for safety. "Schools must create trauma-sensitive environments where students can feel safe and supported, which in turn fosters their capacity for learning." (Luthar & Mendes, 2020, p. 148).

In order to achieve this, educational establishments must first be prepared to address the consequences and requirements of traumatic experiences. It is also essential to cultivate a trauma-sensitive approach throughout the institution, enabling the identification of trauma-specific indicators and the implementation of trauma-sensitive strategies. "In trauma-informed schools, adults are trained to understand that disruptive behaviours are often not intentional but are rooted in a child's emotional pain." (Luthar & Mendes, 2020, p. 148).

There are some general principles and methodological considerations that should be taken into account in schools and in teaching, which will be discussed in the following section:

a) Experiencing a Secure Relationship
Both brain research and therapy research have shown that the main condition for

successful trauma processing is the corrective experience of a relationship that provides security. "According to previous empirical knowledge, it can be assumed that the correction of the loss of trust through new, positive experiences about the reliability of relationships is perhaps the most important starting point for dealing with traumatic experiences" (Hüther, 2002, w.p..; translated b.t. authors).

This is not simply about being in the company of other people, but about experiencing reciprocity with at least one person in the sense of being truly heard, seen and responded to (Van der Kolk, 2023, p.132). It is not necessary for this supportive person to be always available; resilience research shows impressively that the willingness to see and support a person is more important than a permanent presence.

Kline (2020, p.120) offers very good guidance on how to create secure relationships and support secure attachment experiences with 8 points:

1. Safety, containment and warmth, transmitted through the adults own well-regulated nervous system
2. Soft mutual eye gazing
3. Shared attention, intention and focus – this is called "attunement" and is experienced as a sincere desire to discover the needs, intentions, and energetic rhythms of the other and to be in synchrony
4. Appropriate touch or appropriate proximity, which does not have to involve physical contact
5. Soothing voice, rhythmic movement programmes
6. Harmonious movements, synchronised movements and facial gestures
7. Having pleasure: smile, play and laugh together
8. Alteration between quiet an arousing /stimulating activities

When teachers include these aspects in their teaching, new, corrective experiences of security in relationships can be experienced.

b) Support through co-regulation

As described in Chapter 2, traumatic life experiences alter the ability of the stress system to regulate itself appropriately to a given situation. It remains in hyperarousal or hypoarousal or switches between these states. In such heightened states, learning and emotional regulation become difficult. Educators must create an atmosphere where students feel physically and emotionally safe. This includes using a calm tone of voice, controlling body language, and maintaining patience, especially during moments of heightened stress by being regulated of their own emotional states. "Co-regulation, where adults help children manage their emotional states through calm and supportive interactions, is critical in helping trauma-affected children develop the ability to self-regulate over time" (Walkley & Cox, 2013, p. 124).

c) Being sensitive to students' signals

It is frequently the case that trauma is not conveyed through verbal communication, but rather through vegetative responses that give rise to behavioural patterns, specific requirements or barriers. This refers to the importance of educators being keenly aware of students' nonverbal cues, such as body language, facial expressions, and tone of voice. Educators must learn to read these nonverbal signals to gauge how much stimulation or learning a child can handle at any given time. This attunement allows teachers to adjust their approach, providing individualised support that meets the child where they are emotionally. A very helpful question to ask yourself or the young learners is: "Are you doing this/showing this behaviour, because of……?" (Weiß, 2016, p.122f).

d) Being present

Being present means giving attention to students in the moment, ensuring they feel seen and understood. Educators who are mentally and emotionally present with their students help to create a sense of security, which is crucial for building strong, supportive relationships. This mindfulness not only fosters emotional safety but also models healthy relational patterns, which can have a profound healing effect for children who may have experienced inconsistent or harmful relationships in the past.

e) Transparency, predictability, routines and structures

People who have experienced trauma often view the world as unpredictable and unsafe. Establishing predictability in their daily routines can help mitigate this sense of chaos. The principle of predictability emphasises the importance of routine, structure, and repeated positive experiences. When students can anticipate what will happen next, they are more likely to feel secure and less likely to act out due to anxiety or fear (Garner et al., 2012). Predictability also reinforces a sense of control, which trauma-affected children often lack in other areas of their lives. Educators can implement predictability by maintaining consistent schedules, providing clear expectations, and offering regular feedback to help students feel grounded in their school environment.

f) Participation and opportunities for choice and control

If a person has experienced situations in which they have felt completely helpless and out of control in the face of an extreme threat, they need to feel in control at all times. Demands or unclear situations, which are usually difficult or impossible for the learner to influence in a school, can therefore have a triggering effect. For this reason, it is necessary for learners to have the opportunity to shape things that affect them. For example, they need to be able to choose the order in which they start tasks. They also need agreed alternative strategies and emergency signals for situations in which they have no direct choice (Kline, 2020, p. 108).

g) Trauma-sensitive crisis interventions

Trauma-affected children may have difficulty regulating their emotions, which can lead to outbursts or extreme reactions when they feel threatened or overwhelmed. In addition, trauma-related triggers or feelings of insecurity can lead to rapid, uncontrollable increases in stress, resulting in emergency responses such as fight or flight. In such situations, it is

crucial for educators not to let their own emotions intensify the situation. "This means that teachers are themselves well-regulated and poised to contain conflict rather than feed the fire of a scared student" (Kline, 2020, p. 147). Instead, staying calm and controlled, even in the face of emotional distress, helps de-escalate the situation and provides a model of emotional regulation for the student.

One crisis intervention that is often necessary is reorientation from flashbacks and dissociation. In addition to the ability to recognise them, this requires methods of reorientation. This means taking the person out of the stressful experience and bringing them back to the sensory reality of the here and now. This can be done by talking to them, by focusing their attention on what they can see, hear and feel, or by using pre-arranged skills.

An example for a step-by-step plan for reorientation:

1. Making contact: make contact from a distance (so as not to frighten the other person) by briefly introducing yourself to the person: 'I am …'.
2. Orientation: Briefly inform the person where they are: 'You are safe here. Today is 23 October 2011 and we are in the living room of the flat at Amselstraße 5.'
3. Activation: You can then try to activate the person by giving easily understandable prompts ('Try as best you can to open your eyes, move your hands …').
4. Further activation: If the first activation is successful, it is helpful to ask the person to look around the room and, for example, to name a given number of objects.
5. Self-reorientation: For self-reorientation, the person can now be asked again what their name is, how old they are and whether they know where they are.
6. Clarification: The other person is then briefly informed that they have just had a flashback and were in an old film.
7. Maintain contact: Then ask if it is possible to make eye contact and maintain contact with the person (Scherwath & Friedrich, 2016, p. 167).

Group interventions

For children or youth who have experienced trauma, there are many group interventions available in addition to individual ones. Group interventions enable the delivery of the intervention to more kids at once. This method of delivery is seen as especially helpful in lower-and middle-income nations, where resources can be especially scarce after widespread traumas like natural disasters or conflict. Even the health systems of developed countries may find it difficult to respond to the needs after mass traumas.When compared to individual evidence-based interventions such as Trauma Focussed Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (tf -CBT), group treatments frequently require less training for facilitators (or on-the-job training through the role of co-facilitator), and can be provided by non-mental

health professionals. This allows a greater number of children to access support (Berger & Gelkopf, 2009; UNICEF, 2021).

The effectiveness of group-based therapies was examined in a recent meta-analysis (Davis et al., 2023). A total of 42 studies involving about 5998 kids (aged between 6 to 18 years) were included. In comparison to no treatment, the study indicated that such interventions, particularly those based on cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), were effective in reducing trauma symptoms and depression. There was proof of effectiveness when given to a variety of trauma-exposed groups, including those exposed to war or conflict, natural disasters, and abuse, in extremely complex and resource-limited contexts. The authors of this study also concluded that the results of the study have important implications for contexts in which group programmes may be the most or only viable option, including communities exposed to conflict or natural disasters and poorly resourced services. While individual tf-CBT remains the best-evidenced treatment for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorders (PTSD) in children, our meta-analysis demonstrates that group programmes are also a valuable therapeutic resource.

Some of these CBT based trauma-focused group interventions are translated and adapted to different cultures. Tf-CBT in group format usually 12 sessions, Deblinger, Pollio, & Dorsey, 2016), Teaching Recovery Techniques (TRT, usually 5 sessions, Children and War Foundation, 2002-2018), and Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools (CBITS, usually 10 sessions, Jaycox et al., 2012) are the most commonly used programmes. These programmes also include parent/caregiver sessions.

In order to give an example, the outline of the TRT intervention that was developed by Children and War Foundation will be briefly presented here. The Children and War Foundation develops and disseminates effective psychological procedures for helping large numbers of traumatised children by teaching techniques to recover from trauma. They have developed five manuals to help children cope with their reactions to war, disasters, and violence. The names of the manuals are, Children and War Manual, Children and Disasters Manual, Children and Grief Manual, Writing for Recovery Manual, and Manual for Children Between 4 and 8 Years. The Teaching Recovery Techniques (TRT) manual is based on the A-B-C model (Thoughts and memories, Feelings, and Behaviours) of CBT and includes five group sessions for children and adolescents and two parent sessions. The main goal of the program is to show the children that their reactions are normal for their situation and that they are not going crazy. Specifically the goal is to give children skills to regain control over their thoughts and feelings and be able to remember without being overwhelmed. There are several studies that prove the effectiveness of TRT. For instance, Barron et al. (2013; 2016) and Qouta et al. (2012) implemented it after war in Palestine; Chen et al. (2014) used it for traumatic bereavement in China, Ooi et al. (2016) implemented it after war in Australia, Pityaratstian et al. (2015) used it after natural disasters in Thailand.

Community-Based Interventions

Statistical evidence indicates that a significant proportion of individuals experience traumatic events throughout their lifespan. The social implications of trauma, traumatisation and the ways in which these can be addressed are therefore also worthy of consideration. In this context, it is pertinent to examine how society can enhance awareness of these issues, how it can facilitate effective responses and what options are available.

It is imperative to begin by establishing a culture of openness and communication. It is essential that within a society, there is an understanding of the emergence and consequences of trauma. In order to make grievances visible, it is necessary to create spaces in which trauma can be addressed. It is very important that those who have suffered are afforded the opportunity to articulate their experiences. The following section will examine the issue of sexual violence in Germany in closer detail.

In Germany, following the revelation of numerous scandals concerning the sexual abuse of children and young people in educational institutions, a commission was established to investigate these incidents. The Federal Ministry of Education and Research allocated funding for research into sexual violence, with the aim of facilitating further investigation and reappraisal of the issue. The commission provides a forum for those affected to articulate or document their experiences. Furthermore, it serves as a representative of the affected parties within society. The objective is to elucidate the structural conditions that facilitated the occurrence of the abuse. It would be beneficial for contemporary social sectors to adopt a similar approach. One consequence of these endeavours in recent times is discernible in the Child and Youth Welfare Act (KJSG), which mandates that institutions engaged in the care of children and young people must possess a binding violence prevention strategy.

It is of the utmost importance for societies to establish structures that render the occurrence of man-made trauma an improbable outcome. Conversely, it is imperative that instances of trauma are brought to the fore within society, and that those affected are provided with the requisite assistance and backing.

Empowering Teachers with Trauma-Informed Pedagogy

Why should teachers and other educational personnel be empowered in trauma-informed education?

Trauma-informed education provides teachers with the tools to effectively manage traumatic stress, facilitates the provision of comprehensive support to other members of the school and education community, and enables the delivery of targeted training and skills development. A school-wide trauma-informed education approach has been demonstrated to enhance students' sense of comfort (de Stigter et al., 2024).

It is incumbent upon educators to be conversant with the following areas:

The objective is to provide guidance on how to respond to the needs of students who have experienced trauma. The regulation of stress levels is a crucial aspect of maintaining mental health and well-being in educational settings. This can be achieved through a combination of school- and classroom-based methods. The first objective is to establish school as a secure environment. The second objective is to determine the most appropriate course of action to take when a student is experiencing a crisis or a stressful situation.

Furthermore, the curriculum encompasses a range of additional methodologies, including stress management, classroom management, anti-discrimination activities, peer bullying prevention, and numerous other subjects.

The remaining contents include the definition of trauma, its various types (such as those resulting from war and migration, child abuse and neglect, natural disasters, loss and mourning), the causes of trauma, the symptoms of trauma, the short- and long-term effects of trauma, and the effects of trauma on the learning process. Additionally, the course addresses how to respond to trauma. The training will equip teachers and school administrators with the knowledge and skills to identify and respond to the needs of children exhibiting symptomatic behaviours in the educational environment. This will include guidance on positive discipline, classroom management, in-class psycho-social support activities, peer bullying and anti-discrimination activities.

Why teachers' well-being is important?

Being a teacher is already a stressful role and there is always a risk of burnout. So many things are going on in school and teachers usually receive little or sometimes no support at all. Teachers are usually the ones who do the heavy emotional work and this leads to stress and burnout. As teachers are charged with constantly balancing multiple responsibilities, there is generally little deliberate attention to their own emotional well-being, thus threatening abilities to withstand the continuing stressors that come with their demanding work lives (Richards, Levesque-Bristol, Templin, & Graber, 2016).

In the literature, it is stated that people involved in the education and rehabilitation process of traumatised children are affected by this experience, both positively and negatively. Positive effects are mostly related to post-traumatic growth, resilience, and satisfaction, and they are called vicarious post-traumatic growth, vicarious resilience, and compassion satisfaction. However, there are some other effects that are negative, such as secondary trauma and burnout. These negative effects not only affect the individual person (teacher or helper) but also other systems (education, organisation, NGO, etc.) and individuals (other students and family members of the teachers and helpers). Neglecting teachers' psychological health is problematic because this can greatly affect their students (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). It should be something like wearing the mask yourself first and then helping your children in a flight.

The literature also provides some information that people who contribute to helping processes neglect their own self-care (Figley, 1995; Stamm, 2010). In many countries, teachers delivering trauma-informed education (life skills teachers, teacher counsellors, school counsellors, etc.) lack facilities where their emotional well-being can be restored. It is also important to note that dysregulated teachers cannot support dysregulated children. It is advisable for educators to seek therapeutic support when triggered by behaviour or trauma responses within the classroom. Thus, it is very important for those who provide services to traumatised people to be informed about the importance of self-care and to use self-care skills in their lives in order to maintain their well-being.

Self-care encompasses all the actions that individuals take to protect their well-being and to cope with stress effectively. Professional self-care of therapists or people who provide support to traumatised people can be defined by Wise and Barnett's (2016) definition. Self-care is the routine behaviours that individuals consciously perform in order to protect or improve their physical, emotional, social and spiritual well-being in their professional life.

Showalter (2020) listed the activities that need to be done in order to improve the level of self-care as follows. Staying calm, being aware of feelings, thoughts and behaviours and experiencing them in the present moment, meditating, exercising, eating regularly, spending time with loved ones, sleeping regularly, taking time to rest, appreciating oneself and what they are doing, accepting the difficulty of providing assistance. Sholter (2010) also shared a list of what not to do. This list includes: working harder than usual, giving up on leisure activities and personal needs and interests, ignoring the problem, complaining, blaming coworkers, quitting to look for another job or looking for surface solutions.

Lastly, educational staff or people who provide help are also human beings and must accept this and continue to work according to their own well-being. Especially after traumatic events which affect so many people at the same time, such as earthquakes, legally and ethically, it is not appropriate for people to offer help by neglecting their own well-being. In the same line, legal authorities should not expect them to help others or continue their work while they are not feeling well.

Conclusion and Questions

This chapter provided insights into the situations that lead to trauma among children across the globe. We further unpacked the concept of trauma, the types of trauma and its effects on the brain and aspects such as physical and mental health on individuals and their significant others. We provided examples of trauma affecting children from the perspective of four different countries. We mainly focused on trauma-informed education and its application in inclusive and democratic schools. We explained the concept in terms of its meaning, both subjectively and objectively and provided guidelines to teachers on how to use trauma-informed education. We also provided information on the importance

of teacher-wellbeing in the process of providing psycho-social care and support to their learners.

We concluded that trauma among children is a widespread phenomenon and should be treated with sensitivity. Learners from diverse cultural backgrounds perceive trauma differently. Teachers should observe their learners carefully and be aware of their own biases. It is important to note that there is silence around issues contributing to trauma amongst children, especially the man-made and environmentally created traumas. Learners might not disclose, and therefore, teachers must be attuned to notice inner-suffering of learners and attempt to support them through the process by using culturally relevant and inclusive trauma-informed approaches. Some learners develop PTSD and they would need further support from schools and communities. Such support can only be provided if schools and communities can work together in the minimisation of the trauma effects and the prevention of primary and secondary trauma.

While teachers have a responsibility to respond to the needs of their learners who experience trauma, they should be conscious of their own emotional well-being and seek support they may need to continue with their demanding responsibilities toward learners who undergo traumatic experiences. The chapter ends with recommendations to increase awareness on trauma-informed education and to enhance teachers' capacity to deal with traumatisation emanating from changing societies.

Local contexts

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=455#h5p-13

Closing questions to discuss or tasks

- Which aspects of trauma-informed education are already being implemented in your school?

- What changes does your school need to make to become a trauma-informed institution?
- Is there anything you would like to change in order to work in a more trauma-sensitive way?
- What social necessities do you see to break the silence about trauma in society and in institutions?

Literature

American Psychiatric Association. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*. 5th ed. Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Publishing, 2013.

American Psychological Association. "Trauma," 2020. https://www.apa.org/topics/trauma.

Barron, Ian G., Ghassan Abdallah, and Unni Heltne. "Randomized Control Trial of Teaching Recovery Techniques in Rural Occupied Palestine: Effect on Adolescent Dissociation." *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma* 25, no. 9 (2016): 955–73. https://doi.org/10.1080/10926771.2016.1231149.

Barron, Ian G., Ghassan Abdallah, and Patrick Smith. "Randomized Control Trial of a CBT Trauma Recovery Program in Palestinian Schools." *Journal of Loss and Trauma* 18, no. 4 (2013): 306–21. https://doi.org/10.1080/15325024.2012.688712.

Berger, Rony, and Marc Gelkopf. "School-Based Intervention for the Treatment of Tsunami-Related Distress in Children: A Quasi-Randomized Controlled Trial." *Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics* 78, no. 6 (2009): 364–71. https://doi.org/10.1159/000235976.

Carello, Janice, and Lisa D. Butler. "Potentially Perilous Pedagogies: Teaching Trauma Is Not the Same as Trauma-Informed Teaching." *Journal of Trauma & Dissociation* 15, no. 2 (2014): 153–68. https://doi.org/10.1080/15299732.2014.867571.

Cole, Susan F., Jessica G. O'Brien, M. Geron Gadd, Joel Ristuccia, D. Luray Wallace, and Michael Gregory. *Helping Traumatized Children Learn: Supportive School Environments for Children Traumatized by Family Violence*. Massachusetts Advocates for Children, 2005.

Courtois, Christine A., and Julian D. Ford. *Treating Complex Traumatic Stress Disorders: An Evidence-Based Guide*. 2nd ed. The Guilford Press, 2016.

Davis, Rebecca S., Richard Meiser-Stedman, Nimrah Afzal, John Devaney, Sarah L. Halligan, Katie Lofthouse, Patrick Smith, Paul Stallard, Siyan Ye, and Rachel M. Hiller. "Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis: Group-Based Interventions for Treating Posttraumatic Stress Symptoms in Children and Adolescents." *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 2023. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaac.2023.02.013.

Deblinger, Esther, Elisabeth Pollio, and Shannon Dorsey. "Applying Trauma-Focused Cognitive–Behavioral Therapy in Group Format." *Child Maltreatment* 21, no. 1 (2016):

59–73. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077559515620.

DeThierry, Betsy. *Teaching the Child on the Trauma Continuum*. Grosvenor House Publishing Limited, 2015.

Dyregrov, Atle. "Educational Consequences of Loss and Trauma." *Educational and Child Psychology* 21, no. 3 (2004): 77–84. https://doi.org/10.53841/bpsecp.2004.21.3.77.

ECPAT, INTERPOL, and UNICEF. "Disrupting Harm in Namibia: Evidence on Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse." Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, 2022. https://www.end-violence.org.

Felitti, Vincent J., Robert F. Anda, Dale Nordenberg, David F. Williamson, Alison M. Spitz, Valerie Edwards, Mary P. Koss, and James S. Marks. "Relationship of Childhood Abuse and Household Dysfunction to Many of the Leading Causes of Death in Adults: The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study." *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 14, no. 4 (1998): 245–58. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0749-3797(98)00017-8.

Figley, Charles R. *Compassion Fatigue: Coping with Secondary Traumatic Stress Disorder in Those Who Treat the Traumatized*. Brunner/Mazel, 1995.

Finelli, Julianna, and Charles H. Zeanah. "Psychopathology in Children and Their Caregivers Following America's Hurricane Katrina." In *An International Perspective on Disasters and Children's Mental Health*, edited by C. W. Hoven L. V. Amsel and S. Tyano, 233–52. Springer International Publishing, 2019. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-15872-9_12.

Frieze, Stephanie. "How Trauma Affects Behaviour." *BU Journal of Graduate Education* 7, no. 2 (2015).

Garner, Andrew S., Jack P. Shonkoff, Benjamin S. Siegel, Mary I. Dobbins, Marian F. Earls, Laura McGuinn, John Pascoe, and David L. Wood. "Early Childhood Adversity, Toxic Stress, and the Role of the Pediatrician: Translating Developmental Science into Lifelong Health." *Pediatrics* 129, no. 1 (2012): e224–31. https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2011-2662.

Herman, Judith L. *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence–From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*. Basic Books, 2015.

Huber, Michaela. *Trauma Und Die Folgen: Trauma Und Traumabehandlung, Teil 1*. 1st ed. Paderborn: Junfermann, 2020.

Hughes, Karen, Mark A. Bellis, Katherine A. Hardcastle, Dinesh Sethi, Alexander Butchart, Christopher Mikton, Lisa Jones, and Michael P. Dunne. "The Effect of Multiple Adverse Childhood Experiences on Health: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis." *The Lancet Public Health* 2, no. 8 (2017): e356–66. https://doi.org/10.1016/S2468-2667(17)30118-4.

Hüther, Gerald. "Die Folgen Traumatischer Kindheitserfahrungen Für Die Weitere Hirnentwicklung." *Forum* 3, no. 1 (2002). http://www.agsp.de/html/a34.html.

Kline, Maggie. *Brain-Changing Strategies to Trauma-Proof Our Schools: A Heart-Centered Movement for Wiring Well-Being into Education*. Berkeley, California: North Atlantic Books, 2020.

Kuban, Caelan, and William Steele. "Restoring Safety and Hope: From Victim to Survivor." *Reclaiming Children & Youth* 20, no. 1 (2011).

Levine, Peter A. *Sprache Ohne Worte*. München: Kösel-Verlag, 2011.

Levine, Peter A., and Maggie Kline. "Notes on the 'Body-Brain' Use of Somatic Experiencing Principles as a PTSD Prevention Tool for Children and Teens during the Acute Stress Phase Following an Overwhelming Event." In *Handbuch Trauma—Pädagogik—Schule*, edited by M. Jäckle B. Wuttig and C. Fuchs, 693–716. Transcript Verlag, 2017.

Luthar, Suniya S., and Skyler H. Mendes. "Trauma-Informed Schools: Supporting Educators as They Support the Children." *International Journal of School & Educational Psychology* 8, no. 2 (2020): 147–57. https://doi.org/10.1080/21683603.2020.1721385.

Maercker, Andreas, and Tobias Hecker. "Consequences of Trauma and Violence: Impact on Psychological Well-Being." *Bundesgesundheitsblatt, Gesundheitsforschung, Gesundheitsschutz* 59, no. 1 (2016): 28–34. https://doi.org/10.1007/s00103-015-2259-6.

Makwana, Nikunj. "Disaster and Its Impact on Mental Health: A Narrative Review." *Journal of Family Medicine and Primary Care* 8, no. 10 (2019): 3090–95. https://doi.org/10.4103/jfmpc.jfmpc_893_19.

Mew, Emma J., Karestan C. Koenen, and Sarah R. Lowe. "Trauma as a Public Health Issue: Epidemiology of Trauma and Trauma-Related Disorders." In *Evidence Based Treatments for Trauma-Related Psychological Disorders*, edited by U. Schnyder and M. Cloitre. Springer, Cham, 2022. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-97802-0_2.

Ministry of Gender Equality, Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare. "Violence Against Children and Youth in Namibia. Findings from the Violence Against Children and Youth Survey." Republic of Namibia, 2020.

Ooi, Chew S., Rosanna M. Rooney, Clare Roberts, Robert T. Kane, Bernadette Wright, and Nikos Chatzisarantis. "The Efficacy of a Group Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for War-Affected Young Migrants Living in Australia: A Cluster Randomized Controlled Trial." *Frontiers in Psychology* 7 (2016). https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.01641.

Panlilio, Carlomagno C., Amanda Ferrara, and Leigha MacNeill. "Trauma, Self-Regulation, and Learning." In *Trauma-Informed Schools*, edited by Carlomagno C. Panlilio, 61–78. Springer International Publishing, 2019. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-12811-1_4.

Pityaratstian, Nuttorn, Vinadda Piyasil, Panom Ketumarn, Nanthawat Sitdhiraksa, Sirirat Ularntinon, and Pornjira Pariwatcharakul. "Randomized Controlled Trial of Group Cognitive Behavioural Therapy for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in Children and Adolescents Exposed to Tsunami in Thailand." *Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapy* 43, no. 5 (2015): 549–61. https://doi.org/10.1017/s1352465813001197.

Richards, K. Andrew R., Chantal Levesque-Bristol, Thomas J. Templin, and Kim C. Graber. "The Impact of Resilience on Role Stressors and Burnout in Elementary and Secondary Teachers." *Social Psychology of Education* 19 (2016): 511–36.

Rossen, Eric A., and Robert V. Hull. *Supporting and Educating Traumatized Students: A Guide for School-Based Professionals*. Oxford University Press, 2013.

Stigter, Rianne de, Wendy Nelen, Marc Delsing, Afra de Berk, Roel Kooijmans, Evelyne Offerman, and Petra Helmond. "Implementing a School-Wide Trauma-Informed Education

Approach: An Evaluation of Student Outcomes during the First Year of Implementation." *Journal of Child & Adolescent Trauma*, 2024. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40653-024-00663-0.

UNICEF. "Syria and Türkiye Earthquakes: One Year On," 2024. https://www.unicef.org.au/stories/syria-turkiye-earthquakes-one-year-anniversary-update.

Van der Kolk, Bessel A. *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*. Penguin Books, 2015.

Walkley, Meg, and Tory L. Cox. "Building Trauma-Informed Schools and Communities." *Children & Schools* 35, no. 2 (2013): 123–26. https://doi.org/10.1093/cs/cdt007.

Weiß, Wilma. *Philipp Sucht Sein Ich: Zum Pädagogischen Umgang Mit Traumata in Den Erziehungshilfen*. 8th ed. Beltz Juventa, 2016.

World Health Organization. "Global Status Report on Preventing Violence Against Children 2020," 2020. https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240004191.

About the authors

Julia Bialek

Julia Bialek is working as a research assistant at the University of Bremen in the "All Means All!" project. She is a pedagogist, has a degree in special education, and has been working in the field of trauma-sensitive education for many years. She teaches this topic at the university, in training courses for educational professionals, and works as a trauma therapist.

Evrim Çetinkaya Yıldız

Evrim Çetinkaya Yıldız is working as an associate professor at Akdeniz University, Türkiye, Department of Psychological Counseling and Guidance. Her research interests are inclusive education, prevention of student problem behaviours, and school counsellor education.

Cynthy K. Haihambo

Cynthy Kaliinasho Haihambo Ya-Otto is a teacher-educator at the University of Namibia. Her teaching and research areas are in Educational Psychology and Inclusive Education.

Ramona Thümmler

Ramona Thümmler is an educational scientist and child and adolescent

psychotherapist who works at various universities in Germany. She conducts research on refugee children, multi-professional cooperation and the professionalisation of teachers.

BEING AFRAID OF 'THE OTHER' - PHOBIAS IN EDUCATION

Anna Frizzarin; Damini Sharma; Jean Karl Grech; and Valerio Ferrero

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=649#oembed-1

Example Case

Fig. 1: Example case.

Take some time to look at Figure 1 above. It depicts an unknown person who is receiving the comments displayed around them. You may notice that these comments do not specify an identity but mainly are using words such as "you" and "we", or "us" and "them". This is being done so that you, our reader, firstly reflect on who you think this individual could be and secondly to think about the emotions that they may be feeling as they hear them. As a teacher in training, it would be also beneficial to reflect on this scenario taking place in a school environment and apply the same two questions to this context. We suggest that you list or write both the identities and feelings you think of, so that you can refer to them as you read this chapter.

Initial questions

In this chapter you will find the answers to the following questions:

- Who is "the other"? How do you construct "the other"?
- What are the emotions at play, in the process of (re)producing othering?
- How does othering manifest itself in schools?
- What can teachers do to counter othering processes in their classrooms/schools?

Introduction to Topic

Difference, diversity and otherness are classic themes in education generally and specifically in teacher education. Schools, as key sites of interaction, are where individuals often encounter "the other" – i.e., those who differ from themselves in various ways. Teachers play a pivotal role in shaping these encounters, influencing how diversity is navigated and understood within a given classroom or school. The concept of "the other", along with associated phobias, significantly impacts educational environments and the experiences of both students and educators. Phobias linked to race, sexuality, gender identity, and other dimensions of human diversity can foster climates of fear, exclusion, and discrimination in schools. In educational discourse, terms like xenophobia, homophobia, transphobia, and Islamophobia are often used to describe specific forms of prejudices and discrimination. These phobias can trigger strong emotional reactions, and for those who are marginalised, the resulting discrimination can lead to feelings of fear, anxiety, shame, and social isolation. Consequently, addressing these issues is essential for creating inclusive, supportive educational environments where all students can thrive.

This is precisely why teacher education programmes should explore this topic beyond rhetoric. This means in the first place defining what otherness and diversity mean and understanding the experiences linked with them in educational environments. Various disciplines deal with this from a particular perspective: inclusive education, intercultural education, social psychology, cultural and educational anthropology, sociology, etc. However, given its extremely extensive and complex nature, defining the concept of "otherness" is a very complicated task and involves the examination of related and crucial notions like identity, difference, normality, culture, social order, etc. Therefore, interdisciplinary exchanges are necessary and allow us to go beyond simplistic explanations for overly complex phenomena whose understanding cannot be

compartmentalised by a single disciplinary view (Morin, 2008). That is the reason why in this chapter we will refer to different theories and authors, trying to merge their perspectives in defining and addressing othering processes in education.

In doing so, this chapter focuses on the need to appreciate the uniqueness of each person without losing sight of the sameness that characterises us as persons. Our reflections concentrate on schools. Nonetheless, in every context there is an encounter between people with different baggage (Ainscow, 2016; Bernstein et al., 2020). An idea of unity (e.g., sharing a condition, a context, a perspective, a communicative code, etc.) and at the same time an idea of diversity (e.g., the different origins, biography, reference value system, etc.) are necessarily recalled (Granata, 2018). Unity and diversity are not antinomies, but dialectical polarities that are in constant dynamic relationship with each other (Granata, 2016; Lanes & Demo, 2023). Therefore, pedagogical action must take these two different and complementary dimensions into account. An excessive focus on the dimension of diversity runs the risk of forgetting the common humanity of people. Conversely, a strong focus on the dimension of human equality risks perpetuating an indifference to differences that can lead to inequalities, and a dynamic of exclusion and marginalisation.

The dialectical model of cultural diversity elaborated by Ogay and Edelmann (2016) explains these dynamics and the resulting need to find a never-final balance between the dimensions of diversity and equality in order to highlight the uniqueness of each individual without falling into a dynamic of exclusion that is difficult to overcome (see Fig. 2). This elaboration refers specifically to cultural diversity, but we can imagine that the risk of culturalisation is present in any type of diversity, as will be explained throughout the chapter.

Figure 2: Dialectical model of diversity
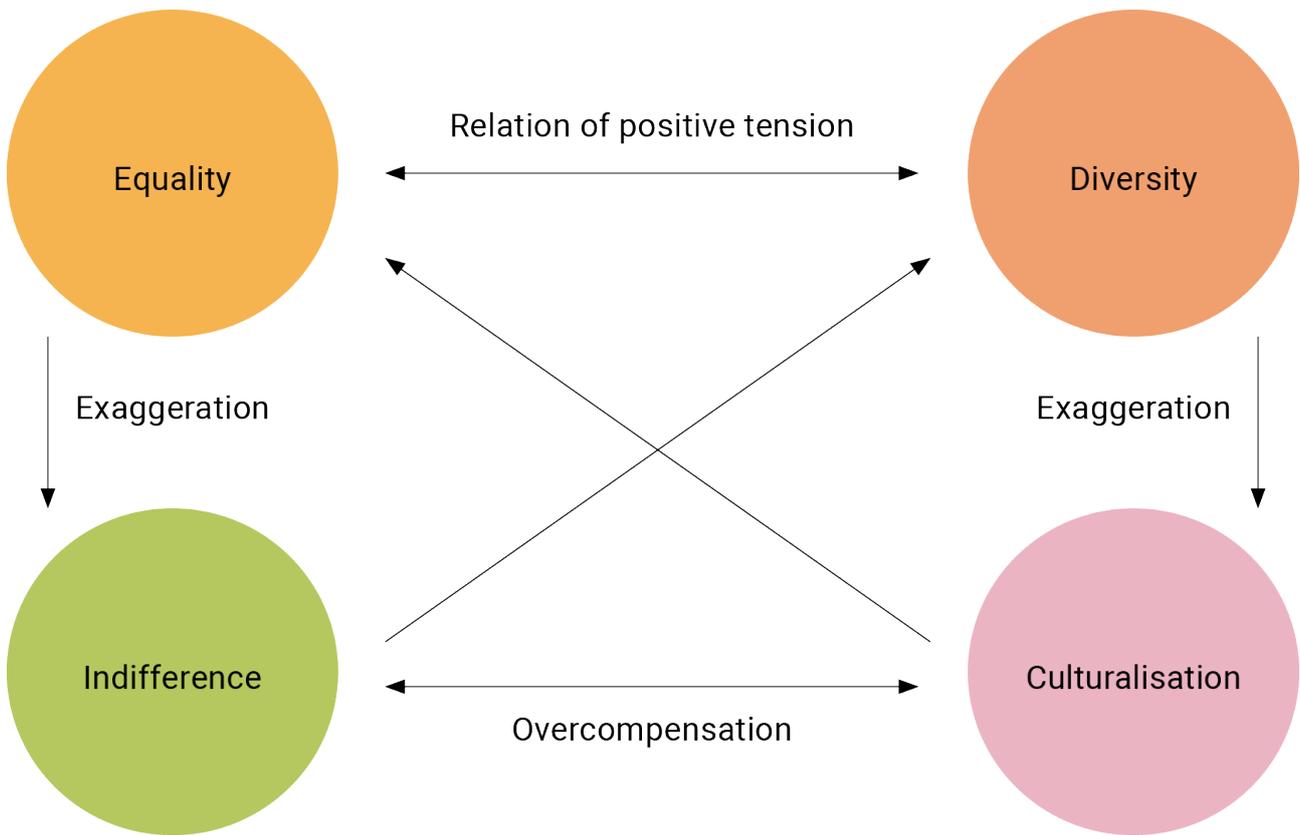
Based on Ogay & Edelmann (2016)

In the following sections, we address this issue from a theoretical-practical perspective. Firstly, we examine the academic debate and the various theories that describe the processes of othering and their consequences for people's lives, and in particular for their educational experience. Secondly, we focus on the emotions associated with othering, both from the perspective of those who perpetrate it and of those who experience it. Thirdly, we concentrate on school systems and schools, showing, on the one hand, how they produce and reproduce these phenomena and, on the other, how they can act to overcome them.

Key aspects

"The other" as a social construct

As you may have noticed from our example case, this chapter deals with the general concept of "the other"/otherness, without framing it in specific dimensions of diversity and/ or groups. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, we are reflecting here a constructivist stance in the definition of otherness. This means understanding otherness as a social product emerging from the interactions among individuals and groups which, in turn, reflect power relations and dynamics present at the societal level. Within this framework, diversity and otherness are not fixed or given once and for all, but socially produced through socio-

cultural practices and discourses (Wieworka, 2004). This, in turn, implies that they have nothing to do with the intrinsic characteristics of individuals, but rather on the meanings that are attributed to them in specific contexts (Goffman, 1968). It follows that "the other" can be considered as such only as far as he/she/they is/are perceived and identified as "different" by someone else. All this leads to the rejection of the idea of an ontological and/or biological foundation of diversity, which can instead be interpreted as the result of a *relation* involving certain individuals and their respective cultural systems and structures of signification (Burbules, 1996).

The process through which "the other" is "produced" in the sense we have just described is called *othering*. The term was originally coined within post-colonial theory, but the notion itself has deeper roots and draws on several philosophical and theoretical traditions coming from sociology, psychology and anthropology, amongst others. The concept of othering is used to describe the processes through which someone (usually the majority or dominant group) is ascribing difference or otherness to someone else or to some other group (usually the minority or non-dominant group) to categorise and form individuals' and groups' identities (Udah, 2019). Otherness is indeed an essential category of human thought, given that it is constitutive of the self: there must be the other for the self to exist and *vice versa*, and by defining self, one defines "the other" (Canales, 2000). This dichotomy, by putting emphasis on the differences between individuals and groups, is reflected in and based on a dualistic or binary thinking, which distinguishes and marks a border between self and other, us and them, ingroup and outgroup, and centre and margins (Brons, 2015; Dervin, 2012; Udah, 2019). This could for example be based on differences in terms of ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, language, ability, dress, religion or other characteristics. Specifically, people tend to emphasise "negatively" what differentiates them from others, in terms of some positive or desirable characteristic of the self or ingroup that "the other, /the outgroup, does not have. Conversely some negative or undesirable characteristic that "the other", the outgroup, possesses and the self or ingroup does not (Crang, 1998, cited in Brons, 2015) is emphasised. Stereotypes and prejudices play a crucial role in such differentiations. In this way, both the identity of the self and of the others are constructed, but while the former is not defined by difference – but is rather recognised as "the norm", or the standard to conform with – the latter comes to coincide with otherness, being often stereotyped and thus usually excluded or discriminated against (Canales, 2000).

All of this finally leads us to the second reason why, in principle, we are not referring in the current chapter to any specific diversity dimension: because we do not want to (re)produce othering processes by defining some individuals or groups as "the others" ourselves. Nevertheless, there will be examples in the text that refer to some specific groups and experiences: these must be understood as an attempt to raise awareness about exclusion and discrimination processes that need to be overcome, and not as an occasion to reinforce them.

Different forms/the roots of othering

As mentioned above, the concept of othering was first used by authors from the post-colonial, feminist and cultural studies to analyse "the lived experiences and oppressions of colonised, enslaved, marginalised, misrepresented and exploited people marked as Other" (Udah, 2019: 4). In the following section, we will provide examples of some of these authors' analysis of different forms of othering to exemplify how such processes take place and can affect different identities or individual characteristics.

Post-colonial theory concerns itself with the study of the impact of colonialism on the colonised people and their societies. This suspected impact has been on language, politics, economy, and culture. In particular, language affects how people view and engage with the outside world: colonisers utilise language as a means of control and dominance to oppress the colonised. Within this framework, Gayatri Spivak first coined the term *othering* and used it systematically in her essay "The Rani of Sirmur" (Spivak, 1985) to describe how Europeans and Westerners have created differences between themselves as the norm and the others as inferior, using the example of the relationship between the British colonisers and Indian population. According to the author, the latter are silenced and denied their subjectivity through the dominant discourses, and thus relegated and forced into a position of inferiority and subalternity.

Similarly, in his writings on orientalism, Said (1979) explores how the Occidental scholars have built and portrayed the Orient (East) as barbarous, subpar, and strange to establish its inferiority and thus justify its colonisation, while reaffirming at the same time the cultural superiority of the West (Udah, 2019). According to the author, Occidental scholars indeed disregard the traditions, languages, and knowledge of the East and seek to justify colonial dominance via oppression and the need to "civilise" the local population. In this sense, the process of othering indeed upholds colonial legacies and strengthens societal hierarchies by not including the knowledge of the marginalised groups who do not appear to fit in and whose experiences are not valued (Young, 2009).

The same reasoning was used almost 30 years before by de Beauvoir ([1949] 2011) to describe how women have essentially been constructed as "the inessential other" by men to explain their subaltern position in society. According to the author, this is the result of a historical process of definition and mystification that ultimately relegated them to a position of inferiority and dependence on men. To put it in the author's words, "she is determined and differentiated in relation to man, while he is not in relation to her; she is the inessential in front of the essential. He is the Subject; he is the Absolute. She is the Other" (de Beauvoir, 2011: 26). De Beauvoir's notion of "the other" – understood as a social construct *opposed* to and therefore *constitutive* of the self – is the one upon which the concept of othering is based (Brons, 2015).

Foucault also examined this in the light of sex and sexuality, where he contested that "by the Age of Reason, what was involved was a regulated and polymorphous incitement

to discourse" on the subject leading to a repressive understanding of the nature of sex, as a "genitally centred sexuality devoid of the fruitless pleasures" (Foucault, 1978: 34-36). The rise of science and medicine in the 18th and 19th century brought forth a focus on and development of terminology on the subject, which until then was devoid of language to distinguish it. This judiciary-medical rise of knowledge and discourse on the subject, referred to by Foucault as *Bio-Power*, had the capacity to categorise sex and sexuality into, 'notions of "normal development" and "instinctual disturbances;" and it undertook to manage them' (1978: 67). Thus, society became obsessed with eliminating the dangerous and perverse practices of sexuality through medical terminology.

These same processes are related to the cultural discrimination and social oppression often experienced by people with disability, as highlighted by Disability Studies and advocates for the disability rights movement. According to them, the category of disability stems from the dichotomy "abled" vs "non-/dis-abled", based on a certain idea of the normal body and its functioning, both of which are socially constructed notions (Davis, 2013; Monceri, 2018). This is the result of a dominant discourse defined by the so-called medical-individual perspective (or "deficit model"), which considers disability as an internal characteristic of the person and sees a causal link between the individual impairment and being disabled. According to Medeghini (2010), this creates a condition of isolation for people with disabilities, by locating "the problem" within them instead of relating it to the possible causal role of contexts in the construction of disability.

Bourdieu's theory of capital and social reproduction provides a critical lens through which to examine processes of othering and exclusion in society. He posited that different forms of capital – economic, cultural, and social – are not equally distributed, leading to the perpetuation of social inequalities (Bourdieu,1986). Cultural capital, in particular, plays a crucial role in this process. Bourdieu argued that educational institutions, while ostensibly meritocratic, actually serve to reproduce social hierarchies by valuing and rewarding forms of cultural capital possessed predominantly by the dominant classes (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). This unequal distribution of capital contributes to what Bourdieu termed "symbolic violence"; a form of non-physical violence manifested in the power differential between social groups. Bourdieu's theory thus unveils the subtle mechanism through which social exclusion is perpetuated, challenging the notion of a truly meritocratic society and highlighting the deeply ingrained nature of social inequalities.

This is what happens in the caste system in India which, as analysed by Ambedkar in "The Annihilation of Caste", provides an insight into "the other" within society (Ambedkar, [1936] 2022). Ambedkar's concept of graded inequality illustrates how the caste system establishes a hierarchy where each group is superior to those below. The persistence of caste-based distinction leads to deeply entrenched discrimination in this form of social stratification. For instance; restricting access, participation and opportunities of individuals belonging to the lower castes especially Dalits. Students who belong to the lower structure

of caste experience discrimination based on caste and are denied a share in the cultural and social capital of society (Sukumar, 2022).

As is evident from this overview, otherness and therefore othering processes are and can be linked to different individuals' characteristics or identities and serve different "dominant" groups' purposes by producing and reinforcing power dynamics and relations. Before describing how this is achieved, it is fundamental to highlight that some people may experience othering also on different levels because of their multiple identities. This is known as *intersectionality*. The concept has its origins in black feminism (Crenshaw, 2015; Hill Collins, 2019) and invites a multidimensional view of inequalities and discrimination: gender, geographic origin, religion, culture, sexual orientation, skin colour, education, socioeconomic status, age, nationality, (dis)ability are all dimensions that can add up and lead to inequalities and injustices that combine in unprecedented ways.

The construction of "the other"

As discussed above, othering is strongly hierarchical and lies on power dynamics between individuals and groups, as well as relationships of inclusion and exclusion (Canales 2000; Udah, 2019). However, one might ask at this point how othering is concretely achieved – i.e., how *others' otherness* is defined – and how it manifests itself. It is indeed not enough for one individual to define another as "the other" to give rise to othering processes or, at the very least, to reach its most extreme consequences. This requires that practices and discourses related to otherness are shared and deemed legitimate within a given community. In this sense, the construction of "the other" is deeply rooted in power dynamics, discourse practices and knowledge production. This process is fundamental to understanding how social exclusion and discrimination operate within various contexts, including educational settings.

Power Dynamics and Exclusion

Those in positions of power, often representing dominant social groups, have the means to create and disseminate knowledge about themselves and those they regard as 'the others' (Foucault, 1980). This power allows them to shape the discourse by establishing power and reinforcing stereotypes about how society perceives other different groups. For instance, as seen above, Said's Orientalism (1978) demonstrates how Western scholars constructed "the Orient" as backward, exotic and irrational, justifying colonial domination. Additionally, in line with Bourdieu's (1984) concept of cultural capital, dominant groups maintain their power by valuing certain forms of knowledge and cultural practices over others. In Indian educational settings, this might manifest as curriculum choices that prioritise urban, upper caste perspectives, marginalising the experiences of rural, Dalit, and Adivasi communities (Nambissan & Rao, 2013). Those in power often have the means to widely disseminate their views through various platforms – social media, media, education systems, and

cultural institutions. This influence shapes societal norms and values; often normalising the marginalisation of certain groups (Hall, 1997).

Power, discourse, and knowledge thus intertwine to create and maintain exclusion, discrimination, and othering in society. As Thomas-Olalde and Velho (2011) explain, drawing on Foucault and Laclau, "discourses produce subjects" (Thomas-Olalde & Velho, 2011: 35), shaping them through dominant narratives and power structures in society. These hegemonic discourses establish what is considered "normal" and construct distinctions between those who belong (the "inside") and those who do not (the "outside"). Laclau's concept of the "constitutive outside" is particularly relevant here. It suggests that powerful groups define themselves by creating "the other" – often marginalised groups, such as migrants or religious minorities. This process of othering is reinforced through various channels, including academic discourse, media, and public debate, which often present these groups as homogeneous and fundamentally different from the majority. For instance, the media representation of LGBTQI+ individuals can influence how they are perceived in society, which extends to educational institutions. McInroy and Craig's (2015) research highlights this through their study of LGBTQI+ youth perspectives, where participants emphasise that media representations often reinforce problematic stereotypes. For example, transgender individuals are frequently portrayed as "sex workers, mentally ill… and as unlovable" (McInroy & Craig, 2015:607) or as individuals conforming to heteronormative gender expectations. The impact of these representations extends beyond media representations. The study found that over 20% of transgender individuals reported experiencing verbal harassment directly stemming from these media portrayals, with participants noting that negative media representations significantly influenced how they were treated in various social contexts, including educational settings (McInroy & Craig, 2015). These representations often reinforce existing stereotypes and contribute to the othering process.

This cycle of power, discourse, and knowledge production makes exclusionary practices seem natural and unquestionable, thereby maintaining existing power structures. By presenting certain perspectives as "factual and given" (Thomas-Olalde & Velho, 2011: 36), this system makes it challenging to recognise and confront discrimination and othering in society. In this way, the oppressor, holding societal power, can therefore reinforce their position by keeping "the other" away from centres of influence and decision-making (Freire, 1970). This exclusion prevents marginalised groups from challenging existing narratives or contributing to knowledge production, which results in perpetuating their otherness. In educational settings, for example, this implies that the dominant group's culture and practices become the norm, which can make it difficult for marginalised students to feel included and can lead to their experiences and perspectives being overlooked or undervalued. For instance, history curricula often present a eurocentric perspective, while literature courses may feature few authors of colour. These omissions send powerful messages about whose knowledge and experiences are valued in society.

In this sense, power dynamics in educational settings – often mirroring broader societal hierarchies – play a crucial role in shaping students' experiences and outcomes. Paulo Freire's (1970) critique of the "banking model" of education highlights how traditional teaching methods can reinforce existing power structures. In this model, teachers are positioned as knowledge holders who deposit information into passive students, reflecting and perpetuating societal power imbalances. The content of curricula significantly contributes to these power dynamics. Stuart Hall in his work "Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices" conveys that cultural representation helps us understand how the systemic omission or misrepresentation of certain groups in educational material shapes societal perceptions and reinforces marginalisation (Hall,1997). For educators, understanding such power dynamics is therefore crucial. They shape not only the content of what is taught but also how it is taught and who has access to educational opportunities. As teachers navigate these complex dynamics, they must be aware of how their own positions of power can influence student experiences and outcomes, particularly for those from marginalised communities.

Among the various authors who have dealt with the processes of othering and the possibilities of overcoming them, bell hooks[1] (1994, 2003, 2010) is particularly noteworthy. This scholar and feminist has long emphasised the importance of looking at the dynamics of otherness, discrimination and racism from an intersectional perspective. Furthermore, she has emphasised that educational contexts are not neutral, but themselves produce and reproduce dynamics of inequality, dominant discourses and narratives, practises of subalternity and social exclusion. Only the construction of new narratives, the transformation of the classroom into a space of possibilities and the abandonment of transmissive modes in favour of dialogical and collaborative processes of knowledge construction, can promote marginalised voices and the awareness that there is not only one belonging, but multiple belongings that belong to us all. Education has a central role to play, but it too must be transformed from a decolonial perspective: diverse stories, narratives and experiences must be given a voice and space so that they can enter into a dialogue, so that pluralism is lived as a daily experience, in school and in society.

In this sense, intersectionality represents the key to interpreting educational and social contexts "in the plural", taking into account all identity variables that can lead to exclusion and marginalisation due to their non-conformity with the dominant norm and the non-membership of subjects to dominant groups (Al-Faham et al., 2019; Cho et al., 2013). At the educational level, the intersectional approach shows us, on the one hand, the need to pay attention to all those aspects of identity and personality that can lead to exclusion

---

1. A pseudonym for Gloria Jean Watkins. The American scholar and activist chose it in reference to the name of her grandmother, Bell Blair Hooks. She decided that it should be written with lowercase initials so that the focus would be on the content of her writings and not on who she is.

due to their distance from dominant narrative and on the other hand, it emphasises that people are not monolithic but are composed of several variables that are mixed in a unique way. The encounter with "the other" thus becomes an opportunity for self-knowledge, for discovering "the other" within us and for overcoming all those cognitive, emotional, social and psychological barriers that produce othering processes.

Stereotypes, Prejudice formation and Discrimination

As mentioned above, the (collective) knowledge of "the other/s" promoted via dominant discourses is often based on negative representations and stereotypes about them (Brons, 2015; Udah, 2019). These are in turn incorporated in individuals' social representations which influence their attitudes and behaviours, ultimately leading to the discrimination of those "othered". In this sense, othering processes are fuelled by stereotypes and prejudices. In the following section, we will try to define these concepts and explain where they stem from – i.e., the psychological mechanisms behind them.

The formation of stereotypes and prejudices is often a result of the overgeneralisation of social categories. Stereotypes are general and often inaccurate beliefs about a group and serve as the cognitive foundation of prejudice. Allport (1979:191) defines stereotypes as "exaggerated belief(s) associated with a (social) category". When internalised by society, these contribute to the formation of in-groups (those perceived as similar to oneself) and out-groups (those perceived as different or "other"). The theory of social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) suggests that individuals belonging to the same social group (ethnic group, socio-economic class, caste, gender) naturally tend to favour members of their in-group over members of their out-group. The out-group perceives its "members as undifferentiated items in a unified social category, rather than in terms of their individual characteristics" (Tajfel & Turner, 1986: 279). This often leads to in-group favouritism and out-group discrimination. Hence, a stereotypical view of the out-group justifies discriminatory behaviour towards its members. In educational settings like schools, this process is evident in the formation of caste-based, class-based or language–based cliques, reinforcing existing social divisions. Research from educational settings indicates that educators often assume that students from the "dominant" groups hold the same views as fellow students from the "other" group (Garibay, 2015). This situation results in students feeling "othered", like some form of difference from the norm.

Prejudice, instead, is defined as a "bias which devalues people because of their perceived membership of a social group" (Abrams, 2010:3). This bias can lead to negative attitudes towards out-groups based on stereotypes and has both cognitive and emotional components (Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995). The cognitive aspect involves the stereotypical beliefs about the out-group, while the emotional aspect involves an element of fear, uncertainty or anger towards them. These prejudices lead to discrimination, which is the

unfair treatment of individuals based on their group membership. Prejudiced attitudes form ideologies and beliefs that justify discrimination (Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995).

Members of privileged groups legitimise their position with positive regard of the in-group and negative regard of the out-group. This also applies to educational institutions like schools where teachers and/or students belonging to in-groups discriminate against students from out-groups. In an educational context, this might manifest as lower expectations for students from marginalised communities, leading to academic achievement gaps and social participation. For instance, teachers may unconsciously hold lower expectations for students with disabilities, which influences their participation and academic achievements in the classroom. Discrimination and isolation were found to result in increased school dropout rates, poor academic performance and impact on the mental health of students (D'Augelli et al., 2002; Kauffman & Landrum, 2012; Priest et al., 2014; Ruijs et al., 2010). Further research highlights that students who are discriminated against spend more time struggling with discrimination in the classroom instead of focusing on learning (Anjorin & Busari, 2023).

All of this shows how the concepts of othering and discrimination are deeply intertwined with emotional and psychological processes as they evoke a range of emotions and feelings, both in those who are othered and those who engage in othering.

What are the emotions at play, in the process of (re)producing othering?

Figure 3: A depiction of some of the emotions at play in othering processes.
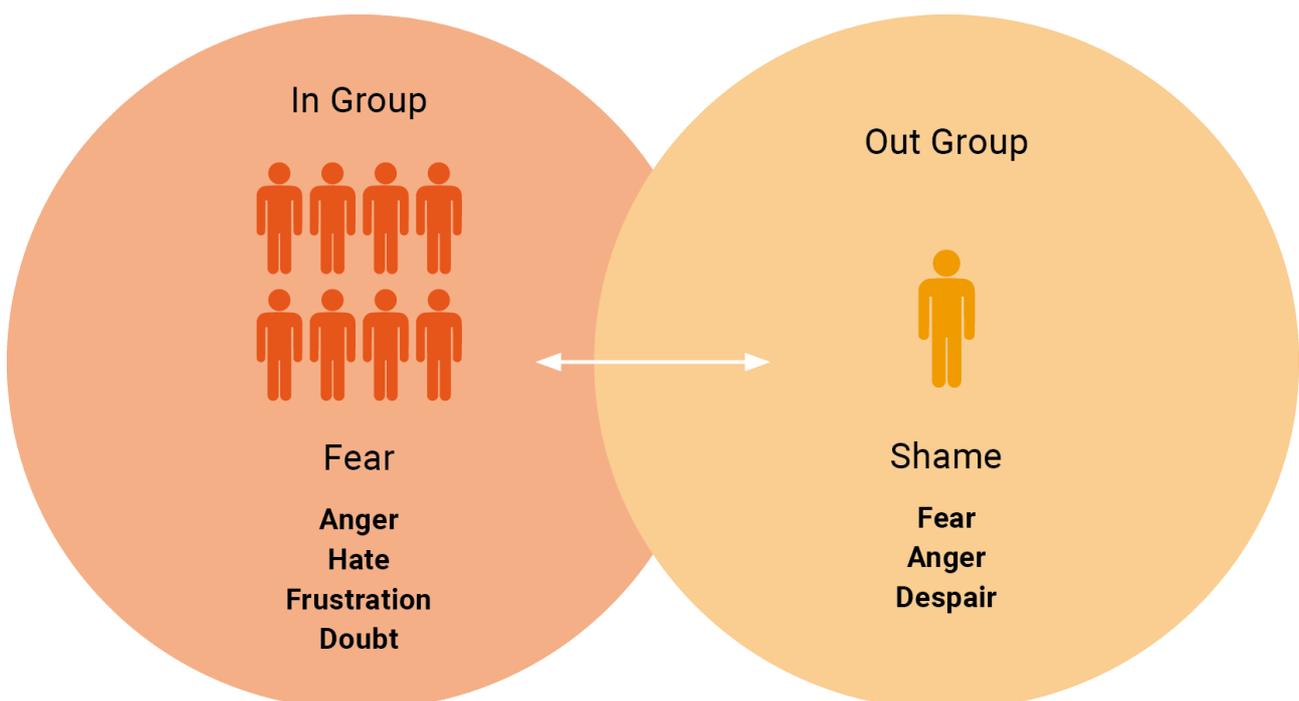
In the sections above we focused on the roles that knowledge and dominant discourse play for the majority to maintain power over those who are perceived as "the other." We also elaborated on how this manifests itself in different forms of prejudice which are consolidated cognitively through beliefs and thoughts about the subject (i.e., internalised discourse and knowledge) and then manifested behaviourally (ie., through externalised action and expression of the former). This section focuses on the affective elements that are evoked in humans as they perpetrate and experience cognitive and, consequently, behavioural biases towards individuals and groups considered as "different others." It further elaborates on the emotions that are at play in the process of categorising what is a part of "the us" and "the other" (Dovidio et al., 2010; Hovland & Rosenberg, 1960).

Ahmed (2004) explains how emotions are not just personal feelings, but are deeply intertwined with cultural and social contexts. Emotions shape and are shaped by the social norms, influencing identity and power structure between those constructing them and those abiding by them. This takes place through a continuous process caused by the nature of human relations, and the role that emotions play in the processes of socialisation and internalisation of the self in response to the reactions of everyone else. As Butler is quoted in Kahil (2017: 162),

For I am confounded by you, then you are already of me, and I am nowhere without you. I cannot muster the "we" except by finding the way in which I am tied to "you"!

Since there exists an inseparable and inevitable emotional connection between the individual and the social, the emotions of both those contributing to processes of marginalisation (in-group) and those who are othered (out-group) need to be considered here. Moreover, since the expression of these emotions is sometimes outwards, there is also an interplay between these two sets of emotions (see Fig. 3. This element exemplifies the capacity and power that emotions have at (re)producing constructions of othering. Figure 3 lists only a few of the emotions experienced, because literature suggests that these are at the core of establishing and maintaining power over individuals or different forms of minorities elaborated on above. This is especially the case for fear and shame, which are marked in colour in Figure 3 (Ahmed, 2004; Kahil, 2017). However, it is to be noted that there are other emotions which can be manifested in such interactions. This is why our example case asks our reader to list some of their own and we here once again encourage you to refer to them.

Fear & Hate

Fear is presented in both circles of our diagram because it is an emotion experienced by both groups. While the resultant impact of the emotion is common, that is to maintain and reproduce constructions of othering, it affects the people in the two circles differently. Focusing on the fear which is experienced by the in-group brings back to light the processes of negative stereotyping explained above (Dovidio et al., 2005: 7). The latter are needed

because it is through these identifiable signifiers of a different "other" (object) that fear evokes itself as a consequential negative emotion. By establishing these characteristics as a threat, fear manifests itself in members of the in-group (Ahmed, 2004: 64). This requirement for an identifiable object to stir up aversion, through fear, is what comprises phobia. In fact, the same object being feared is often included as a prefix to the word "-*phobia*". A subgroup of phobias is related to signifiers that make up the characteristics of an individual or a group within society. These include but are not limited to Islamophobia, anti-semitism, racism, ableism and queerphobia. Through such phobias, fear acts as a primary emotion which often triggers other emotions and also even mobilises the in-group to act on these. This, as history has repeatedly shown, results in mechanisms which seek to exclude and at times even exterminate feared figures who are perceived as a threat.

Following fear, other emotions then often manifest themselves in ways which further strengthen this divide, especially since these are directed toward the marginalised group, rather than being felt by the in-group witnessing a feared object's approach (Ahmed, 2004: 66). Hatred is one of such key emotions. It is defined as a long lasting emotion involving bitter feelings usually towards a collective group and many times expressed in the face of "the other" (Smith & Mackie, 2005: 361). Hence, when it is expressed towards the out-group it directly impacts the individual witnessing and absorbing this emotion being thrown at them. In sum, while fear helps with classifying and establishing the threat, hatred is a resultant execution which directly impacts this threat through the distribution of various forms of violence. Anger and frustration are included in our diagram because these tend to play a similar and important role in intrinsically energising a population, which is trying to justify or make sense of the difficulties that they themselves may be experiencing. These are often the emotions that politics feed on to (re)produce power by locating the blame on a specific list of identities. Allport coins such type of hatred as *character conditioned,* whereby the individual thinks up some convenient victim and some good reason (Smith & Mackie, 2005: 362). An example of this in the context of schools is when "the other" is blamed for their inability to behave like the norm or for failing to catch up with their peers. This perception often fails to criticise the institutions which are failing to address the needs of both the student and provide the right support. This can often cause frustration which further propagates and strengthens the parameters through which the individual is perceived as "the other".

On the other hand, the fear experienced by the "the other" is a consequential and reactionary emotion. The fear felt by those in the out-group is a reaction to the hate or other negative emotions thrown at them for failing to conform and thus of being excluded. Naturally, this further legitimises centres of normalised majorities and margins of minorities to which people respectively belong. As the minority succumbs to the feelings of being othered, it strengthens the power of those establishing the norms and practices for belonging. Unless contested, this fear experienced by "the other" manifests itself in different spaces in the form of active silence. Active silence refers to the deliberate,

conscious choice of avoiding the subject and often it has the loudest voice in its impact (Humphry, 2012: 484). This is so because it further strengthens the visibility of the majority against the invisibility of "the othered" groups.

This pathologizing and repressive interaction between the two groups leads to dominant discourses not being contested by the opposing experiences of the silent other. Subsequently, inclusive, reparative and positive change fails to take place (Freire, 1970: 61). Kahil (2017: 135) suggests that such "pathologizing, repressing, excluding, and discounting the experiences of those othered within their own communities [have] a direct route to [the feeling of] shame". In fact, shame is considered to be a leading emotion prompted by oppression and often it is said to hide itself behind other emotions including fear, anger or despair. This is why we will now delve further into this emotion.

Shame & Pride

"Shame is sensed as a result of a feeling of negation, which is taken on by the subject as a sign of its own failure, […] usually experienced before another" (Ahmed, 2004: 103). It is characterised by a threatened social image; Image Shame, or a threatened moral essence; Moral Shame (Allpress et al., 2014: 1270). Naturally this threatened image is based on the expectations and reactions of the same person or group in front of whom one is feeling shamed (the social). "The shaming targets any expression of subjectivity outside the boundaries of those ideals and is considered a trespass against the social" (Kahil, 2017: 138). The latter further affirms the location of both the in-group and the out-group since it requires a hierarchical system where the shamed is *"the inferior"* with the threatened image and *"the superior"* who is the one threatening the image of the other (Johnson, 2013: 90). In short, one cannot feel ashamed outside of a social interaction involving other people and the expectations established by them. It is experienced once the ego of the individual experiences a form of deviance from the norm which is pointed and even more so, if they are asked to change or address it.

Shame binds us to others in how we are affected by our failure to 'live up to' those others, a failure that must be witnessed, as well as be seen as temporary, in order to allow us to re-enter the family or community (Ahmed, 2004: 107).

On the other hand, this resultant feeling of shame is in itself a declaration of our interest, love and need to belong to the centre and not the marginalised other, according to Rula (2017: 138-139), which highlights the productive power that is contained within this emotion. In feeling shame, the self exposes its need for belonging with others and unless it contests this feeling, it submits to potential forms of oppression which decide who gets to belong and who does not. The latter is maintained through the established discourse and knowledge which distinguishes between the characteristics of the two parties. This sees the act of "colonisation" move away from the overt, physical and geographical colonisation of land and people, to "the colonisation of the psychic space" (Oliver, 2004: 43). This

takes place when the psyche of the individual or group becomes colonised by that of the dominant individual or group through socialisation and the production of oppressive emotions.

The colonisation of psychic space is the occupation or invasion of social forces – values, traditions, laws, mores, institutions, ideals, stereotypes, etc. – that restrict or undermine the movement of bodily drives into signification…The psyche is the 'place' where bodily drives intersect with social forces (Oliver, 2004: 43).

Amidst all the emotions at play in this space, Kahil (2017: 135) explains how this colonising effect manifests itself mostly through shame because this emotion is expressed inwards, towards the self and not outwards. Other emotions such as melancholia and despair are then related to shame and likely to manifest since the subject takes on the "badness" as its own, by feeling bad about "failing" loved others.

We have so far mainly focused on the negative impact that emotions have in the process of othering, thus, picturing "the other" as a powerless individual absorbing and submitting themselves to this power. However, as we have seen throughout history, from different social movements, this is not always the case. The Black Lives Matter, MeToo and LGBT+ pride marches around the world are all recent examples of this. Pride and courage are also resultant emotions that stem from such experiences of shame. This is especially the case when these emotions experienced individually are spoken about, gathered and collectively raised by a marginalised group, through which, the same yearn for longing to a group, finds solace and energy in the experiences of more marginalised others. This emancipatory journey is deemed by Kahil (2017) as the productive face of shame.

Shame's productivity stems from its capacity to motivate self-reflection on a lot of things, among which are the structures we take for granted, our complicity within such social structures and the validity of the norms/social codes we live by. (Kahil, 2017: 142)

Being able to question the established power structures and knowledge has the potential to lead the way towards emancipation. As the othered no longer confines themselves in fear and silence, powerful and normative discourse is challenged by that conceived as non-normative.

Having considered this productive face of shame, it is to be noted that sometimes, contesting and revolting against established structures and powers may not be an easy thing. Therefore, those choosing to be in silence and absorbing these negative emotions, may not necessarily be unaware of these structures or simply absorbing them. However, they can be in situations where they would be at greater loss if they had to speak up, especially if they do so on their own. Therefore, as Kahil (2017: 136) explains, "revolt ought to be accompanied by assurances that one will be forgiven by the same community or by an accepting/loving third". Thus, if forgiveness is not possible, revolt may not necessarily manifest itself through major social movements calling for changes in communities. It can also be grasped individually by choosing to leave that community through migration.

All the structures and emotions at play described here are not new to the dynamics of the

school culture. As a teacher in training, you, our reader, may be wondering as to how you can contest against experiences of othering that you witness in schools. The next section examines the different levels of people and stakeholders found in school communities and how they exert such colonising power and emotions on each other. After that, we try to provide some practical solutions and ways you can yourself challenge these structures.

Education systems and schools as (re)producers of othering processes

Othering processes often take shape in schools (Borrero et al., 2012; Canales, 2000; Wright, 2010). As shown by the several examples provided throughout the present chapter – educational contexts are indeed not neutral, but themselves produce and reproduce dynamics of inequality, dominant discourses and narratives, practices of subalternity and social exclusion. As such, as highlighted by Anjorin and Busari (2023: 3), "schools are cultural contexts that have the power and potential to promote students' cultural assets or to 'other' youths in a way that keeps them from creating meaningful academic identities".

The search for the causes of such manifestations is a very complex undertaking, as various factors and actors come into play at different levels. Between structural and cultural aspects, we can distinguish the level of the self, the dynamics in the classroom, the decisions at the level of school governance and what is happening in the broader social and cultural context (Boeren, 2019; Ferrero, 2023), according to Brofenbrenner's ecological-cultural model (1981; see Fig. 4).

Figure 4: Bronfenbrenner's ecological-cultural model

Based on Bronfenbrenner's Model as cited in Berk (2013: 24).

Reflection on the dimension of the self is crucial and involves different actors: teachers, students, school leaders, families, etc. Within a kind of cognitive economy, each of us interprets the world through categories and schemas: we need to be aware of this dynamic in order to avoid developing stereotypes and prejudices that can lead to real discrimination and a compartmentalised understanding of reality. Going to school with stereotypical and prejudiced views runs the risk of othering processes (Brons, 2015; Dervin, 2012): based on a false and non-existent idea of the norm, certain groups of people are defined as different because they differ from the dominant group. This, as discussed above, creates

real inequalities that have a major impact on pupils' well-being and their chances of success at school.

At the level of the classroom, this means that the history and perspective of the country one lives in, and Western countries in general, take centre stage (Azada-Palacios, 2022; Bull & Alia, 2004): often there is no space for other visions and meanings, and everyone must conform to the dominant discourse. In many cases, the idea of co-construction of knowledge is not realised, instead we witness forms of cultural transmission where it is necessary to adapt to the thinking of the majority. This affects both the pedagogical relationship between teachers and students and the relationship between peers: the school culture (MacNeil et al., 2009; Roach & Kratochwill, 2004; Glover & Coleman, 2005) conveys a hierarchy in terms of languages, countries of origin, genders, social classes and many other dimensions, in turn conveying a colonial view that excludes those who are perceived as different.

The role of single school governance, in which teachers, head teachers, parents and sometimes students are entrusted with more institutional tasks, is also crucial. This is where rules and forms of organisation are established (Allen & Mintrom, 2010; Fullan, 1995): this is where a colonial, elitist school culture based on the idea of the norm can be changed. In fact, any attempt to approach homogeneity is artificial and doomed to failure (Dupriez et al., 2008): heterogeneity is a characteristic inherent to all social groups; creating situations of homogeneity in school means to be the bearer of a mindset that is not open to diversity and to the recognition that everyone has multiple belongings. Phenomena of school segregation and curricula that do not include histories other than the national one are two clear examples of how the institutional level can generate processes of othering with negative consequences for the educational pathway (Frankel & Volij, 2011; Watras, 2007).

Finally, the social, political and cultural context has a major impact on both school systems and individuals (Thomas-Olalde & Velho, 2011; Weiguo, 2015). When inequities exist at the structural level in terms of access to resources and social and civil rights, in terms of social norms and values, at the level of dominant policies and discourses, and when inequalities become institutionalised, a change on the part of the individual, but also, and more importantly, a paradigm shift involving policy makers and society as a whole is urgently needed. In this sense, individuals can play a crucial role in recognising forms of injustice and oppression and making their voices heard by the institutions that can change the social order (Hackman, 2005).

The dynamics we describe here are certainly complex and have been layered over the course of thousands of years of history. Therefore, it is difficult to unhinge the dominant discourses and practices of the subaltern, and there are no ready-made solutions. Yet, there is a lot that schools can do at each of these levels in order to counter othering processes. In the following section, we will provide some examples of how this can be concretely achieved.

Cultivating "the other" in us: the role of the school

If we think of the school context, work on the individual and professional self at the institutional level must be mediated through the dimension of collegiality (Bovbjerg, 2006; Shah, 2012). It is essential to promote self-awareness of groups in which positions of privilege or marginality can emerge that affect professional practice, in relationships with students and between teachers, in relationships with school leaders and families. Being aware of these dynamics is the first step to unhinge what produces processes of othering and inequalities in pedagogical action.

At the institutional level, it is important to develop educational policies that promote equity, inclusion, belonging and valuing the uniqueness of each individual (Karlsson et al., 2020; Ward et al., 2015). As also specified in Agenda 2030 (UN, 2015): the curriculum needs to be decolonised by giving importance to other languages, other histories and other narratives, giving voice to marginalised groups and those who cannot normally participate in decision-making processes, and imagining new forms of teaching and learning. This also has an impact on pedagogical practices in the classroom: from the transmissive model, we are moving to forms of teaching that typify active learning (Settles, 2012), where the student's diverse and unique perspective is valued through dialogic and collaborative processes.

School systems, schools and all their actors can play an essential role at the policy level when it comes to activism and social change (Youdell, 2010). As teachers, principals, parents and students, we must have the courage to bring demands for equity and social justice to the public debate and to raise broad awareness of othering processes and all those groups that are excluded or marginalised because they bring some diversity to the dominant model (Apple, 2012). This political role of schools has been repeatedly emphasised by us and in other chapters: a pedagogical attention and awareness of the colonial mechanisms that characterise our societies is indispensable to promote diverse discourses and practises at every level (personal, classroom, institutional and political) against dominant thinking and to go beyond the classification "us/them" in order to be able to cultivate "the other" in all of us.

Practical implications

Focusing on the school and classroom level, the literature offers several approaches and strategies that teachers can apply to create inclusive learning environments valuing each individual's identity/identities and promoting equity, inclusion, belonging for all. With a view to counteracting othering and its consequent forms of marginalisation in educational settings, we deem three of these as particularly important: (1) culturally responsive teaching; (2) anti-bias education; and (3) pedagogy of coming out (see Table 1).

Table 1: A summary of the three practical implications

Culturally Responsive Teaching	Anti-Bias Education	Pedagogy of Coming Out
Requires educators to develop cultural competence through self-reflection, curriculum diversification, and support for linguistic diversity to promote belonging.	Helps students understand and build positive relationships with difference by creating learning environments that acknowledge and celebrate students' different identities and encourage them to recognise and confront discrimination and inequities stemming from them.	Adopts notions of coming out to allow students and all those involved in the classroom to present their true authentic self rather than a conforming self.

Firstly, as mentioned above, this implies a decolonisation of the curriculum so as to value different languages, histories and narratives, including those of usually marginalised groups. In this respect, culturally responsive teaching emerges as a powerful approach to address issues of othering and promoting belonging in educational settings. As Ladson-Billings (1995: 17) notes, it is a pedagogy that "empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes". However, this observation underscores the critical role that educators play in fostering an inclusive environment that promotes belonging for all students. Instead, this pedagogical approach recognises and values students' cultural references in all aspects of learning, creating inclusive spaces where everyone feels valued and respected (Gay, 2000, 2002). In this way, educators can create learning environments that not only address othering but actively promote a sense of belonging for all students.

To effectively implement culturally responsive teaching, teacher education programs should focus on developing cultural competence among pre-service teachers. Firstly, self-reflection is crucial. Educators must understand their own cultural background, biases, and assumptions. Ladson-Billings (1995) suggests that teachers engage in exercises that explore their cultural identity and how it influences their teaching practices. This self-awareness is the first step in recognising and addressing instances of othering in the classroom. Secondly, curriculum diversification is essential. Teachers should be trained to critically examine and diversify their curriculum to include perspectives from various cultural backgrounds. This might involve incorporating literature from diverse authors or using historical accounts that represent multiple cultural viewpoints. As Ladson-Billings (1995: 17) notes, "Culturally relevant teaching uses student culture in order to maintain it and to transcend the negative effects of the dominant culture". By seeing their cultures reflected in the classroom, students from marginalised groups are less likely to feel othered or alienated. Addressing linguistic diversity is also crucial in creating inclusive environments. Teacher education should equip future educators with strategies to support linguistic learners, encourage the use of students' home languages as resources for learning and promote the value of multilingualism. This approach not only supports academic achievement but also affirms students' linguistic identities, countering language-

based othering (García & Wei, 2013). Therefore, fostering belonging through culturally responsive teaching is not just about a welcoming atmosphere; it's about fundamentally changing how we approach education to ensure that all students, regardless of their background, feel valued, respected and capable of success.

Alongside this decolonising effort, it is also important for teachers to actively address prejudices and discrimination in their classrooms and schools. The Anti-Bias Education (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2019) approach could provide a useful framework in this regard. Anti-bias Education aims to create learning environments accepting, understanding and celebrating students' differences (i.e., different identities) while acknowledging and tackling the discrimination and inequities deriving from them (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2010, 2019; Wagner, 2009). The approach requires teachers and students (and the whole school community) to identify and confront unfair and discriminating beliefs and behaviours. To do that, the approach proposes four lines of action (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2019):

- Building positive personal and social identities for all students (Goal 1: Identity);
- Enabling students to understand and build positive relationships with difference (Goal 2: Diversity);
- Developing students' empathy, sense of justice, fairness and critical thinking, so that they will be able to recognise discrimination around them (Goal 3: Justice);
- Enable students to stand up against discrimination (Goal 4: Activism).

These four objectives should permeate all aspects of the school life and be reflected in the values and culture of the school, the curriculum, the teaching methods and materials used in the classroom, in the relationships among individuals within (but also beyond) the school, as well in its policies and activities, etc. In this way, students are likely to develop an inclusive mindset and develop the necessary knowledge, attitudes and skills to positively relate to and deal with "the other" also beyond the school walls.

Another way for teachers to address different forms of discrimination as the result of one's identity/identities is constituted by the "pedagogy of coming out". While the term "coming out" is mostly associated with the LGBTIQ+ community as they allow their identity to be shared with others, as a pedagogy in the classroom, this does not restrict itself to this one specific community. It is instead a teaching strategy which can be exercised by all those involved in the classroom. In essence it strives for visibility as opposed to the silencing of the individuals often experiencing othering. "It places [a primary focus] on the power and politics involved in the production of knowledge, and the political-economic circumstances of teaching and learning" (Pykett, 2009: 103), and contests it by making other forms of knowledge visible and accessible.

This pedagogy does not only address the exclusion of "the other" but also challenges the social location of "the normal" together with "the normal", that is the majority itself.

Therefore it is a pedagogy both for the oppressed and the oppressors. Freire's (1970) work in "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" is instrumental to it because the author embraces such principles. The mere promotion of respect towards "the (different) other" in schools, falls in line with what Freire refers to as a 'false charity, which constrains the fearful and subdued, the "rejects of life," to extend their trembling hands,' rather than 'striving so that these hands … need be extended less and less [as] they become more human hands which … transform the world' (1970: 19). Applying this to the subject discussed here implies that what a liberating pedagogy of coming out should do, is beyond only celebrating diverse identities. It should instead, provide the space for all humans to understand their unfinishedness and their potential to be othered in some shape or form and to allow for the critical self to transform reality, in the continuing process of the humanisation of all human beings. As a pedagogy it is mostly achieved during day-to-day life in the classroom, through authentic interaction with different realities of the lives that make up the community itself and the emotions that are at play. Authentic interaction for teachers with students, strives to let go of the soulless disseminator of knowledge and instead transforms into a being with their own story that can be shared. The latter is naturally evermore crucial if the teacher is a part of the othered minority. On the other hand, authentic learning and teaching for the student sees also transformation, as they no longer remain a lifeless vessel of content but instead an active participant in the formation of new knowledge. Students are encouraged to talk about their identities and experiences. These are used together with the classroom to build a community.

Through such a strategy, liberation no longer remains as another deposit to be made into men, but it is praxis, "the action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to transform it" (Freire, 1970: 61).

These are of course just a few examples of ways through which teachers and educators can counteract othering processes in their classrooms and schools. In this handbook you will find several other possible approaches and strategies, addressing all the levels of the model depicted in Figure 4.

Local contexts

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=649#h5p-35

Closing questions to discuss or tasks

We would now like to suggest some open questions for you to reflect on yourself as a person and as a pedagogical professional. Do not consider these questions as exhaustive, but as a possible opening for other questions to think critically about the processes of othering, the binary "us/them" categorisation and the need to engage in ways of decolonising our minds.

1. Have you ever felt like "the other"? How did you feel? What feelings did you experience?
2. Have you ever been in a situation in which you saw other people as different from you, in which you carried out othering processes? What attitudes did you adopt? What provoked them?
3. Are there differences that you dislike less than others? And why?
4. What can you do in the classroom to cultivate a culture of diversity that does not ghettoise, but unites, so that everyone discovers "the other" in us?
5. What ideas could you bring to the leadership of your school to avoid othering processes and decolonise the school experience?
6. How do you envision your political role?

Literature

Abrams, Dominic. "Processes of Prejudice: Theory, Evidence and Intervention." Equality and Human Rights Commission Research Report 56, 2010. https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/research-report-56-processes-of-prejudice-theory-evidence-and-intervention.pdf.

Ahmed, Sara. "Shame before Others." In *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 101–21. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004.

Ainscow, Mel. "Diversity and Equity: A Global Education Challenge." *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies* 51 (2016): 143–55.

Al-Faham, Hajer, Angelique M. Davis, and Rose Ernst. "Intersectionality: From Theory to Practice." *Annual Review of Law and Social Science* 15, no. 1 (2019): 247–65.

Allen, Ann, and Michael Mintrom. "Responsibility and School Governance." *Educational Policy* 24, no. 3 (2010): 439–64.

Allport, Gordon. *The Nature of Prejudice*. Cambridge, MA: Perseus Books, 1979.

Allpress, J. A., R. Brown, R. Giner-Sorolla, J. A. Deonna, and F. Teroni. "Two Faces of Group-Based Shame: Moral Shame and Image Shame Differentially Predict Positive and Negative Orientations to Ingroup Wrongdoing." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 40, no. 10

(2014): 1270–84.

Ambedkar, Bhim Rao. *Annihilation of Caste: A Landmark Discourse on Equality and Social Justice*. Prabhat Prakashan, 2022.

Anjorin, Omolayo, and Jamio O. Busari. "Unpacking the Social Constructs of Discrimination, Othering, and Belonging in Medical Schools." *Teaching and Learning in Medicine*, 2023. https://doi.org/10.1080/10401334.2023.2230211.

Apple, Michael W. *Can Education Change Society?* Routledge, 2012.

Azada-Palacios, Rowena A. "Hybridity and National Identity in Post-Colonial Schools." *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 54, no. 9 (2022): 1431–41.

Beauvoir, Simone de. *The Second Sex*. New York: Vintage Books, 2011.

Bernstein, Ruth Sessler, Morgan Bulger, Paul Salipante, and Judith Y. Weisinger. "From Diversity to Inclusion to Equity: A Theory of Generative Interactions." *Journal of Business Ethics* 167 (2020): 395–410.

Boeren, Ellen. "Understanding Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 on 'Quality Education' from Micro, Meso and Macro Perspectives." *International Review of Education* 65 (2019): 277–94.

Borrero, Noah E., Christine J. Yeh, Crivir I. Cruz, and Jolene F. Suda. "School as a Context for 'Othering' Youth and Promoting Cultural Assets." *Teachers College Record* 114, no. 2 (2012): 1–37.

Bourdieu, Pierre. "The Forms of Capital." In *Cultural Theory: An Anthology*, 1:81–93, 1986.

Bourdieu, Pierre, and Jean-Claude Passeron. *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*. Vol. 4. Sage, 1990.

Bovbjerg, Kristen Marie. "Teams and Collegiality in Educational Culture." *European Educational Research Journal* 5, no. 3–4 (2006): 244–53.

Bronfenbrenner, Urie. *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981.

Brons, Lajos. "Othering, an Analysis." *Transcience* 6, no. 1 (2015): 69–90.

Bull, Simone, and Valerie Alia. "Unequaled Acts of Injustice: Pan-Indigenous Encounters with Colonial School Systems." *Contemporary Justice Review* 7, no. 2 (2004): 171–82.

Burbules, Nicholas C. "Deconstructing 'Difference' and the Difference This Makes to Education." *Philosophy of Education Archive*, 1996, 114–23.

Canales, Mary K. "Othering: Toward an Understanding of Difference." *Advances in Nursing Science* 22, no. 4 (2000): 16–31.

Cho, Sumi, Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, and Leslie McCall. "Toward a Field of Intersectionality Studies: Theory, Applications, and Praxis." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 38, no. 4 (2013): 785–810.

Crenshaw, Kimberlé. *On Intersectionality: Essential Writings*. New York: New Press, 2015.

D'Augelli, Anthony R., Neil W. Pilkington, and Scott L. Hershberger. "Incidence and Mental Health Impact of Sexual Orientation Victimization of Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Youths in High School." *School Psychology Quarterly* 17 (2002): 148–67.

Davis, Lennard. "Disability, Normality, and Power." In *The Disability Studies Reader*, edited by Lennard Davis, 1–14. New York: Routledge, 2013.

Derman-Sparks, Louise, and Julie O. Edwards. *Anti-Bias Education for Young Children and Ourselves*. Washington: NAEYC, 2010.

———. "Understanding Anti-Bias Education: Bringing the Four Core Goals to Every Facet of Your Curriculum." *Young Children* 74, no. 5 (2019): 6–12.

Dervin, Fred. "Cultural Identity, Representation and Othering." In *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Intercultural Communication*, edited by Jane Jackson, 195–208. New York: Routledge, 2012.

Dovidio, J. F., P. Glick, and L. A. Rudman. "Introduction: Reflecting on the Nature of Prejudice: Fifty Years after Allport." In *On the Nature of Prejudice: Fifty Years After Allport*, edited by P. Glick J. F. Dovidio and L. A. Rudman, 1–16. Blackwell Publishing, 2005.

Dovidio, John F., Miles Hewstone, Peter Glick, and Victoria M. Esses. "Prejudice, Stereotyping and Discrimination: Theoretical and Empirical Overview." In *The SAGE Handbook of Prejudice, Stereotyping and Discrimination*, edited by Peter Glick John F. Dovidio Miles Hewstone and Victoria M. Esses, 3–28. London: Sage, 2010.

Dupriez, Vincent, Xavier Dumay, and Anne Vause. "How Do School Systems Manage Pupils' Heterogeneity?" *Comparative Education Review* 52, no. 2 (2008): 245–73.

Ferrero, Valerio. "Equity and Excellence in Education: SDG 4 of the 2030 Agenda in the Italian Context." In *Public Policy's Role in Achieving Sustainable Development Goals*, edited by Emil Ahmad Mahani Hamdan Muhammad Anshari, Norainie Ali, 206–35. Hershey: IGI Global, 2023.

Foucault, Michel. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*. Pantheon Books, 1980.

———. *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1978.

Frankel, David M., and Oscar Volij. "Measuring School Segregation." *Journal of Economic Theory* 146, no. 1 (2011): 1–38.

Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Seabury Press, 1970.

Fullan, Michael. "The School as a Learning Organisation: Distant Dreams." *Theory into Practice* 34, no. 4 (1995): 230–35.

García, Ofelia, and Li Wei. *Translanguaging: Language, Bilingualism and Education*. Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2013.

Garibay, Juan C. "STEM Students' Social Agency and Views on Working for Social Change: Are STEM Disciplines Developing Socially and Civically Responsible Students?" *Journal of Research in Science Teaching* 52, no. 5 (2015): 610–32.

Gay, Geneva. *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2000.

———. "Preparing for Culturally Responsive Teaching." *Journal of Teacher Education* 53, no. 2 (2002): 106–16.

Glover, Derek, and Marianne Coleman. "School Culture, Climate and Ethos: Interchangeable

or Distinctive Concepts?" *Journal of In-Service Education* 31, no. 2 (2005): 251–72.

Goffman, Erving. *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. Pelican Books, 1968.

Hackman, Heather W. "Five Essential Components for Social Justice Education." *Equity & Excellence in Education* 38, no. 2 (2005): 103–9.

Hall, Stuart. *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. London: The Open University/Sage Publications, 1997.

Hill Collins, Patricia. *Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory*. Duke University Press, 2019.

hooks, bell. *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope*. Routledge, 2003.

———. *Teaching Critical Thinking: Practical Wisdom*. Routledge, 2010.

———. *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. Routledge, 1994.

Hovland, C.I., and M.J. Rosenberg. *Attitude Organization and Change: An Analysis of Consistency Among Attitude Components*. Greenwood Press, 1960.

Humphry, Nicoli. "Disrupting Deficit: The Power of 'the Pause' in Resisting the Dominance of Deficit Knowledges in Education." *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 18, no. 5 (2014): 484–99.

Johnson, Erica L. "Colonial Shame in Michelle Cliff's Abeng." In *The Female Face of Shame*, edited by Erica L. Johnson and Patricia Moran, 89–99. Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2013.

Kahil, Rula. "The Complexities of Shame: An Exploration of Human Connection." PhD Thesis, Doctorate, 2017.

Karlsson, Jenny, Gregory McPherson, and John Pampallis. "A Critical Examination of the Development of School Governance Policy and Its Implications for Achieving Equity." In *The State, Education and Equity in Post-Apartheid South Africa*, edited by Enver Motala, 139–77. New York: Routledge, 2020.

Kauffman, James M., and Timothy J. Landrum. *Characteristics of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders of Children and Youth, 10th Ed*. Pearson, 2012.

Ladson-Billings, Gloria. "Toward a Theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy." *American Educational Research Journal* 32, no. 3 (1995): 465–91.

MacNeil, Angus J., Doris L. Prater, and Steve Busch. "The Effects of School Culture and Climate on Student Achievement." *International Journal of Leadership in Education* 12, no. 1 (2009): 73–84.

McInroy, L. B., and S. L. Craig. "Transgender Representation in Offline and Online Media: LGBTQ Youth Perspectives." *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment* 25, no. 6 (2015): 606–17.

Morin, Edgar. *On Complexity*. New York: Hampton Press, 2008.

Nambissan, Geetha B., and Srinivasa Rao. *Sociology of Education in India: Changing Contours and Emerging Concerns*. Oxford University Press, 2013.

Nations, United. "Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development." Paris: United Nations, 2015.

Ogay, Tania, and Doris Edelmann. "'Taking Culture Seriously': Implication for Intercultural

Education and Training." *European Journal of Teacher Education* 39, no. 3 (2016): 388–400.

Oliver, Kelly. "Alienation's Double as Burden of the Othered Subject." In *The Colonisation of Psychic Space*, 27–43. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004.

Pettigrew, Thomas F., and Roel W. Meertens. "Subtle and Blatant Prejudice in Western Europe." *European Journal of Social Psychology* 25, no. 1 (1995): 57–75.

Priest, Naomi, Ryan Perry, Angeline Ferdinand, Yin Paradies, and Margaret Kelaher. "Experiences of Racism, Racial/Ethnic Attitudes, Motivated Fairness and Mental Health Outcomes among Primary and Secondary School Students." *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 43, no. 10 (2014): 1672–87.

Pykett, Jessica. "Pedagogical Power: Lessons from School Spaces." *Education, Citizenship, and Social Justice* 4, no. 2 (2009): 102–16.

Roach, Andrew T., and Thomas R. Kratochwill. "Evaluating School Climate and School Culture." *Teaching Exceptional Children* 37, no. 1 (2004): 10–17.

Ruijs, Nienke, Thea Peetsma, and Ineke van der Veen. "The Presence of Several Students with Special Educational Needs in Inclusive Education and the Functioning of Students with Special Educational Needs." *Educational Review* 62, no. 1 (2010): 1–37.

Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. Pantheon Books, 1978.

Settles, Burr. *Active Learning*. Springer, 2012.

Shah, Madiha. "The Importance and Benefits of Teacher Collegiality in Schools – A Literature Review." *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences* 46 (2012): 1242–46.

Smith, E. R., and D. M. Mackie. "Aggression, Hatred, and Other Emotions." In *On the Nature of Prejudice: Fifty Years After Allport*, edited by P. Glick J. F. Dovidio and L. A. Rudman, 361–76. Blackwell Publishing, 2005.

Spivak, Gayatri. "The Rani of Sirmur: An Essay in Reading the Archives." *History and Theory* 24, no. 3 (1985): 247–72. https://doi.org/10.2307/2505169.

Sukumar, Narayana. *Caste Discrimination and Exclusion in Indian Universities*. Routledge, 2022.

Tajfel, Henri, and John Turner. "The Social Identity Theory of Intergroup Behaviour." In *Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, edited by S. Worchel and W. G. Austin, 7–24. Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1986.

Thomas-Olalde, Oscar, and Astride Velho. "Othering and Its Effects – Exploring the Concept." In *Writing Postcolonial Histories of Intercultural Education*, edited by Heike Niedrig and Christian Ydesen, 27–51. Peter Lang, 2011.

Udah, Hyacinth. "Searching for a Place to Belong in a Time of Othering." *Social Sciences* 8, no. 11 (2019): 297–313.

Ward, Sophie C., Carl Bagley, Jacky Lumby, Philip Woods, Tom Hamilton, and Amanda Roberts. "School Leadership for Equity: Lessons from the Literature." *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 19, no. 4 (2015): 333–46.

Watras, Joseph. "Was Fundamental Education Another Form of Colonialism?" *International Review of Education* 53 (2007): 55–72.

Weiguo, Qu. "Dehistoricized Cultural Identity and Cultural Othering." In *The Discourse of Culture and Identity in National and Transnational Contexts*, edited by Aditi Bhatia Christopher Jenks Jackie Lou, 38–54. New York: Routledge, 2017.

Wieviorka, Michel. "The Making of Differences." *International Sociology* 19, no. 3 (2004): 281–97.

Wright, Cecile. "Othering Difference: Framing Identities and Representation in Black Children's Schooling in the British Context." *Irish Educational Studies* 29, no. 3 (2010): 305–20.

Youdell, Deborah. *School Trouble: Identity, Power and Politics in Education*. New York: Routledge, 2010.

Young, Robert J. "What Is the Postcolonial?" *Ariel: A Review of International English Literature* 40, no. 1 (2009): 13–24.

Local context/Local Literature *(references in other languages)*

Granata, Anna. *La Ricerca Dell'altro. Prospettive Di Pedagogia Interculturale*. Roma: Carocci, 2018.

———. *Pedagogia Delle Diversità. Come Sopravvivere Un Anno in Una Classe Interculturale*. Roma: Carocci, 2016.

Ianes, Dario, and Heidrun Demo. *Specialità e Normalità? Affrontare Il Dilemma per Una Scuola Equa e Inclusiva per Tuttǝ*. Trento: Erickson, 2023.

Medeghini, Roberto. "L'inclusione: Una Lettura Attraverso i Disability Studies Italy," 2013. http://www.icsbuonarroti.edu.it/images/2019.2020/formazione/academia/L_INCLUSIONE_UNA_LETTURA_ATTRAVERSO_I_DI.pdf.

Monceri, Flavia. "Disabilitazione e Potere: Presupposti, Implicazioni, Strategie." In *Disability Studies e Inclusione: Per Una Lettura Critica Delle Politiche e Pratiche Educative*, edited by Dan Goodley et al, 27–43. Trento: Erickson, 2018.

Wagner, Petra. "Vorurteilsbewusste Bildung Und Erziehung in Kindertageseinrichtungen," 2009. https://www.kindergartenpaedagogik.de/fachartikel/bildungsbereiche-erziehungs-felder/soziale-und-emotionale-erziehung-persoenlichkeitsbildung/1989/.

About the authors

Anna Frizzarin

Anna Frizzarin has a PhD in Pedagogy and Didactics and works as a researcher in the field of inclusive education. Her research focuses on inclusive teaching and learning, inclusive development processes of educational contexts, attitudes and social representations in relation to perceived diversity and the resulting implications for students' participation in schools.

Damini Sharma

Damini Sharma is an educator and researcher specialising in inclusive education and child development. She has worked as an inclusive facilitator at schools in India. Damini's work focuses on social justice, teacher education, and policy development, exploring inclusive practices and their implementation to promote equitable education.

Jean Karl Grech

Jean Karl Grech is from Malta. A gay primary teacher with a particular passion for inclusion and cultural integration. A recent graduate with a Master's in Euro-Comparative Education. In his studies at the University of Malta, he focused on the inclusion and visibility of the LGBTIQ+ community in schools through subjects and daily school practices.

Valerio Ferrero

Valerio Ferrero does research in the field of intercultural education, focusing on equity and inequality in schools. He is also interested in community philosophical practices, on which he also carries out training activities. Before starting his research work, he was a primary school teacher.

IDENTITY POLITICS - LABELING IN EDUCATION

Sam Blanckensee; Özge Özdemir; Lina Render de Barros; and Josefine Wagner

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://book.all-means-all.education/ ama-2025-en/?p=429#oembed-1

The examples we chose are multilayered and a complex part of our everyday experiences at school. You might have already witnessed similar or very different, but equally complex incidents. You might have engaged spontaneously, tried to overlook it, felt helpless, angry or shocked or even confident. With the example cases, we suggest taking a closer look at different angles of these complex situations. This might help you to navigate complexity and dilemmas in the future. Feel free to add your own experiences, questions, worries and good practice. It might be helpful to read the examples and discuss the questions that follow each situation with a partner.

Example Case 1 – Negotiating friendships and (group) identities between religious dogma, racist stigma, liberal values and LGBTIQ* rights

"So I remembered an example from school where a group of otherwise very well-adapted girls, friends even, excellent students, were suddenly found split in two different groups, shouting at each other in the courtyard. They looked like they had ganged up against each other, like a mob. People in one group were shouting: "If you don't respect LGBTQ rights, we don't respect your religion". And the other group started to shout: "You're a bunch of racists" and then some boys entered the group and started shouting "Allahu Akbar".

1. What is going on here?
2. How are you going to deal with this as a teacher? How can you make sense of this situation?

3. How can you interfere without reproducing racism or discrimination against LGBTIQ* or Muslim students?
4. How could this have been prevented? How could this be mediated?
5. How can we develop solidarity between marginalised groups? What kind of feelings could this situation provoke in queer muslim kids or colleagues?
6. Who is being homogenised? By whom or what?
7. How were your immediate emotional responses? Did you take a side? Which one was it? Why? Try to imagine yourself taking the other side. What is different?"

Example Case 2 – The Girl that was a Horse

"In one of my internships at primary school, the class teacher referred to one of the girls, let's call her Elen, as a horse. Not because she really believed Elen to be a horse, but because Elen would refer to herself as a horse. Elen had been diagnosed with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) and had had difficult school experiences with other teachers. Apart from the FAS label, she had been labelled as being unable to sit still or concentrate. This teacher was an experienced primary school teacher in her late 50s. Her radical acceptance of Elen's self-identification manifested in her use of Elen's language and adopting and expanding it. Elen did quite well at school and got along well with classmates and the teacher. When she had difficulties concentrating or started acting out by neighing or pawing the 'hooves' in class, the teacher would remind her that the classroom was not very well suited for wild horses. She would ask her whether she was a domestic horse, a racehorse or a wild horse at that moment, and would suggest the courtyard as an appropriate environment for wild horses. The girl then sometimes chose the courtyard and ran around neighing until she came back to play and interact with the people in class, or she would choose the domestic or race horse and start with exercises or games in the classroom.

1. *What is going on here?*
2. *How are you going to deal with this as a teacher? How can you make sense of this situation?*
3. *Have you ever been in a situation where somebody's reality is radically different to your*

own?

4. *What role does power (teacher-student, adult-child, rich-poor …) play in affirming, accepting, playing with or attacking people's versions of reality, especially with regard to the sense of self?*

5. *In what respect is the teacher in a position of power in this situation?*

6. *How does the behaviour of the teacher likely affect the behaviour of Elen, the behaviour of the class and of other parents?*

7. *Imagine a different approach of the teacher, where she negates Elen's version of reality. What effect would this have on Elen, the class, or other parents?*

8. *In Q5, you have reflected on the position of power of the teacher, in how far is Elen in a position of power, or the class and the parents?"*

Initial questions

1. How do you describe yourself? Are there any ways that you describe yourself that are especially important to you?

2. Have you ever been labelled in a way that made you feel uncomfortable? How was that? Did it have any impact on how that person treated you?

3. How do labelling and identity politics influence students' learning experiences and full participation in education?

4. What are the challenges teachers face with regard to identity politics and labelling?

5. How can we recognise that students are affected by structural discrimination and how can we empower students with multiple identities?

Introduction to Topic

We, the authors, of this text write with sometimes divergent understandings of difference as we come from different schools of thought and also different biographical experiences, privileges and experiences of discrimination. All Means All is a collaboration of teachers, students, activists and academics from different fields. We speak to you as educators, and

as people, whose perspectives on the world have been shaped by theory and academia as well as by activism motivated by the experiences of exclusions that sexist, trans-misogynistic, heteronormative, capitalist, racist societies create. We would like to sensitise teachers and trainees for the struggles students face as they try to develop a sense of who they are.

However, we also want to engage you with our own voices as teachers who are personally affected by discourses that deny us, our friends or our families the right to expression and existence. As we advocate for full personhood of students and educators – inside and outside of the classroom – we also want to highlight, and reflect, on the difficult decisions teachers need to make during everyday classroom dilemmas. It is not easy to generate effective solutions to bullying or to find the correct words when children's views or actions limit the abilities of others. It is also no small feat to understand, work with or confront the structural conditions of schooling. Mass institutions, such as public education systems, designate certain roles and tasks to children and adults in ways that appear to be driven by the logics of bureaucracy and austerity politics, instead of the wellbeing of those involved. Nonetheless, schools are important spaces with regard to personal and social learning, in which we can set examples for living peacefully with each other and for learning how to navigate conflict, negotiate, argue, or reconcile, and how to stand up for ourselves and others and be part of a community.

Throughout this chapter we invite you to reflect on your own experiences, biographies, overwhelming feelings, powerlessness, agency and privilege. In our group of four, we combine people with backgrounds in disability studies, teaching, teacher training, political education and anti-discrimination work. We have German, Irish, Kurdish and Brazilian roots, and we hold passports from three continents. We identify with the journeys and struggles of neurodivergent, trans* and queer people. We have been labelled and have applied labels to ourselves and to others. All these experiences help us to better understand the sometimes conflicting demands that are put on recognising differences, normalising differences, but also emancipating ourselves from prescribed norms and oppressive structures.

Our chapter starts with scenarios from everyday school experiences, which illustrate some of the core questions and challenges that teachers deal with on a daily basis. A key challenge is the difficulty between naming yourself and being named by others. The case studies help to understand the practical consequences of this dilemma around identities. On the one hand, while labels are used to allocate resources, they can also be used to categorise marginalised and disenfranchised people, without their consent and consequently result in further stigma. At the same time these labels can be adapted, (re-)appropriated or (re-)invented by groups of people to make claims for participation and share of resources.

As a potential tool to navigating this dilemma on how best to support young people

in their way of being, in encouraging playfulness around identity with or without labels, while at the same time understanding and drawing boundaries to protect those affected by discrimination, we introduce May-Anh Boger's concept of the trilemma of inclusion. Her empirical study and model offers a theoretical framework which contextualises the dilemmas, or rather trilemmas, that we encounter and exemplify in our interviews with Danielle, Özge and Sam.

Having a look at our example cases

The example cases in the introduction illustrate the value, and necessity, of respecting and understanding our students' expressions of who they are. In the second example, adopting Elen's language and developing it into pedagogical metaphors helped her to become aware of her behaviour and needs, without feeling rejected. She learned to differentiate her needs and develop an awareness of when she wanted to sit and concentrate on a task, or when she needed to self-regulate impulses through exercise. Instead of merely seeing Elen through the lens of deficit or her special needs label, the educator worked with the student's imagination. She followed her lead and was able to pick up on the individual student's creativity, resources and needs. The student's imagination then started to become a resource for communication of needs and a tool for self-regulation. This illustrates how our perception of students can be transformative?

On a superficial level the first example at the beginning of the chapter seems to be a miniature reproduction of conflicts between religious dogma, on the one hand, and LGBTIQ* rights on the other. If we see only mutually exclusive templates or prototypes of religiousness and LGBTIQ*, it is very hard to mitigate this very real conflict in the present. Conflicts at school that seem to appeal to a supposed opposition of religion and homosexuality, transgender[1] and queer identities are often rooted in a secure world view. As students mature, they begin to explore their place in society, and begin to develop their political standpoints and opinions. This is particularly challenging, especially if one feels that these positions are mutually exclusive. Students play with, provoke, and change their positions and attitudes, if they are given the opportunities. Individual positions often reflect belonging or isolation from a social group. So if a student comes from a conservative Muslim family that teaches their children to respect others independently of their gender or sexual orientation, this student may still feel the need to experiment with expressions of queerphobia, since the social discourses in Europe construct Islam as being in opposition

---

1. The language surrounding transgender and queer identities has been rapidly evolving over the past number of years. We have chosen to use trans or transgender without an asterisk. See here: Why We Used Trans* and Why We Don't Anymore for further information.

to LGBTIQ* rights. Students who try to find their Muslim identity in the midst of predominantly Christian societies, and where anti-Muslim racism is increasingly viewed as a concern, might be experimenting, rather than conveying, a fixed mindset or being aware of the fact that they are (re-)producing hate. It is important for teachers to know exactly where freedom of expression ends and discrimination begins. It is equally important to be able to see that students are still developing and experimenting with ideas, opinions and boundaries and finding ways to view students not according to tabloid headlines, but rather in their complexity as a whole. As teachers, we need to face social and political realities inside and outside of the classroom.

If these example cases seem straightforward to you, you may want to focus on the questions in the following paragraphs. If you also wonder, or worry, about how to act or react in complex everyday interactions with students, the following paragraphs may help. We have collected suggestions and questions for self reflection which requires you to think, and respond, to. Every student becoming a teacher needs to find his, or her, own personality in the classroom within a professional, pedagogical and ethical framework. You can use the theory-loaded ideas as guidelines with regards to the creation of your pedagogical framework and the questions can help you to reflect on what kind of teacher you would like to be, and on how best to develop, sharpen, and (re-)invent your professional identity.

Teachers today are expected to create a surrounding where every student can reach their potential and thrive. They are expected to negotiate boundaries and support the development and practice of ethics and behavioural expectations. Teachers are currently struggling to understand and negotiate the complexity of identities, the language around identity discourses, student's needs and the structural discrimination and violence of various types students may face in schools.

How can teachers navigate these complexities of classroom realities: identity construction, individuality, belonging, discrimination, violence? You are already working on the first step: becoming aware of the complexity. We need to respect that complexity, to avoid reproducing exclusionary discourses or erasures. Becoming aware of power and social hierarchies is another important step in preventing (structural) violence. I, as a teacher, can only intervene if I recognise violence, so I need to educate myself about it. Apart from academic education and activist literature, an important source of information are the students themselves. We need to learn to listen. One possibility to protect students from structural discrimination and violence in the classroom is to create spaces and relationships in which they feel seen and valued as a person with multiple aspects of their identity. In these spaces students are visible to the teachers as more than simply their role as students. Students get the chance to determine themselves, with which part of their identities they want to become visible to the class and/or the teacher. The feeling of security stemming from these kinds of relationships is one central aspect for the prevention of violence. Furthermore, it also offers possibilities for interventions. Only if we are aware, witnessing or being told about boundaries can we successfully intervene. In the following

paragraphs we will further develop this first step of becoming aware of the complexity of identity and identity construction in postmodern societies, we will then take a closer look at labelling and its critique as well as identity politics and its critique. We will see that a conflict arises between a strong critique of labelling and an identity politics approach. We will sketch Boger's model (2023), the trillmatic theory of inclusion, to navigate this conflict and show how the model can be a tool to increase your own tolerance of ambiguity and also your agency in the classroom.

Naming Yourself and Naming Others: Why does it matter?

What is the difference, you might wonder, between claiming an identity and being labelled? To make it short, the latter is creating knowledge about "others", 'objects of knowledge' so to speak, while the first is actively taking a subject position. It is crucial to understand the context within which "claiming an identity" emerged as a liberatory and emancipatory act, rooted in social movements that advocated for solidarity and gaining political power for marginalised groups in a pluralistic society. "Labelling" on the other hand is a passive experience as it implies the individual is being given a marker that it may or may not identify with. Labels organise and structure reality, they influence expectations and in the field of education, disability studies and social services are often a prerequisite to access to the social and health systems.

A central argument in this article is that an understanding of theory, theoretical models and politics on identity, society, discrimination, power, labelling will help you navigate the complex everyday interactions taking place in schools. We want to encourage everybody to understand the theory, as this can affect your ability to analyse everyday situations in their complexity and provide you with opportunities to (re-)gain agency in otherwise often overwhelming situations.

What is identity?

The question of identity can roughly be translated to the question "Who am I?". While the answer to that question may change over time, places and contexts, it also suggests a kind of stability and continuity, since the answer can only be understood if it refers to the object the question has been about. The following argument is based on a non-essentialist sociological and social-psychological concept of identity as presented by Heiner Keupp, Jean-Claude Kaufmann and Zygmunt Bauman. Identity is understood as the concept with which an individual makes sense of one's experiences. It is a central point of reference for the interpretation of all experiences internal and external and initiating everyday task solving (Keupp et al., 2008: 60). Identity construction is not only an individual's choice. It is the process of constructing a subject that has the ability to act, despite contradictory environments and the resulting contradictory demands. The production of coherence and

the ability to bear ambiguities are no oppositional goals, instead they complement each other in making identity possible and balancing out different areas/aspects of life (Render, 2014).

There are social and historical reasons behind the emergence of the concept of "identity" and the omnipresence of the question "Who am I?". Society has changed rapidly and many shared belief systems and stories (known as meta-narratives) are being deconstructed or drastically altered. Processes such as globalisation, migration movements, emerging democracies, and the internet have contributed to this change, along with the availability of information online and the acceleration of social interaction through technology. These processes lead to changes in the way societies organise themselves and established concepts such as families, nation states, religion and gender are now increasingly being challenged and questioned. As these concepts are being broken down, people are less and less bound to external determination (e.g. farmer, clergy, nobility or husband, wife, child, grandparent). This situation is simultaneously liberating (offering possibilities to be different – not determined by birth), violent (uprooting from communities and concepts that had offered orientation and a sense of belonging) and creating a need / obligation of identity construction. If your faith and future are not determined by birth – if it is not clear to everyone who you are, or have the potential to become, people will ask themselves and others who they are and want to be(come) in order to make sense of the social world. This historical period is called Late Modernity or Liquid Modernity (Bauman, 2010).

This loosening of social ties brings freedom of choice on the one hand, and uncertainties on the other. The institutions that structure and give meaning to life are increasingly being questioned. Institutions and ways of organisation that offer alternatives to institutions such as religions, hetero-normative family models, gender binary, and the power of nation-states. So while this might feel like freedom to some, it might feel like a loss or an uprooting from community to others. People now not only can choose what they believe in, they also have to choose in order to construct their identity. You can choose who you are and want to be, but you also have to choose. Create your identity. Social Media, Tiktok, Instagram and others can be regarded as a means of creating and sharing an image of oneself, but also as creating and (re-)inventing oneself.

In a society where "identity" holds such a prominent place, it is valid to conceptualise "identity markers" which can be considered as a new form of capital interchangeable with economic, cultural and social capital (Bourdieu, 1997). Since identity construction is not only an individual choice, but also depends on recognition by others through validation and confirmation, the need for the construction of identities introduces a new dimension of suffering for marginalised individuals (Render, 2014). There may be less resources available for some individuals to construct their identities, and the flexibility of constructing one's identity can offer more or less opportunities. In regard to the identity- process, the unequal distribution of resources is not only important on a material-existential scale, but is also of existential importance on the psychological constitution level. If I am a member of a

marginalised community, there may be people who wish harm upon my group. Ignoring or avoiding the naming of the part of my identity that others want erased is a collaboration in this erasure. The erasure of people through language is a form of violence that mirrors the erasure of people through killings.

Figure 1: The Anti-Violence Continuum/Pyramid Model
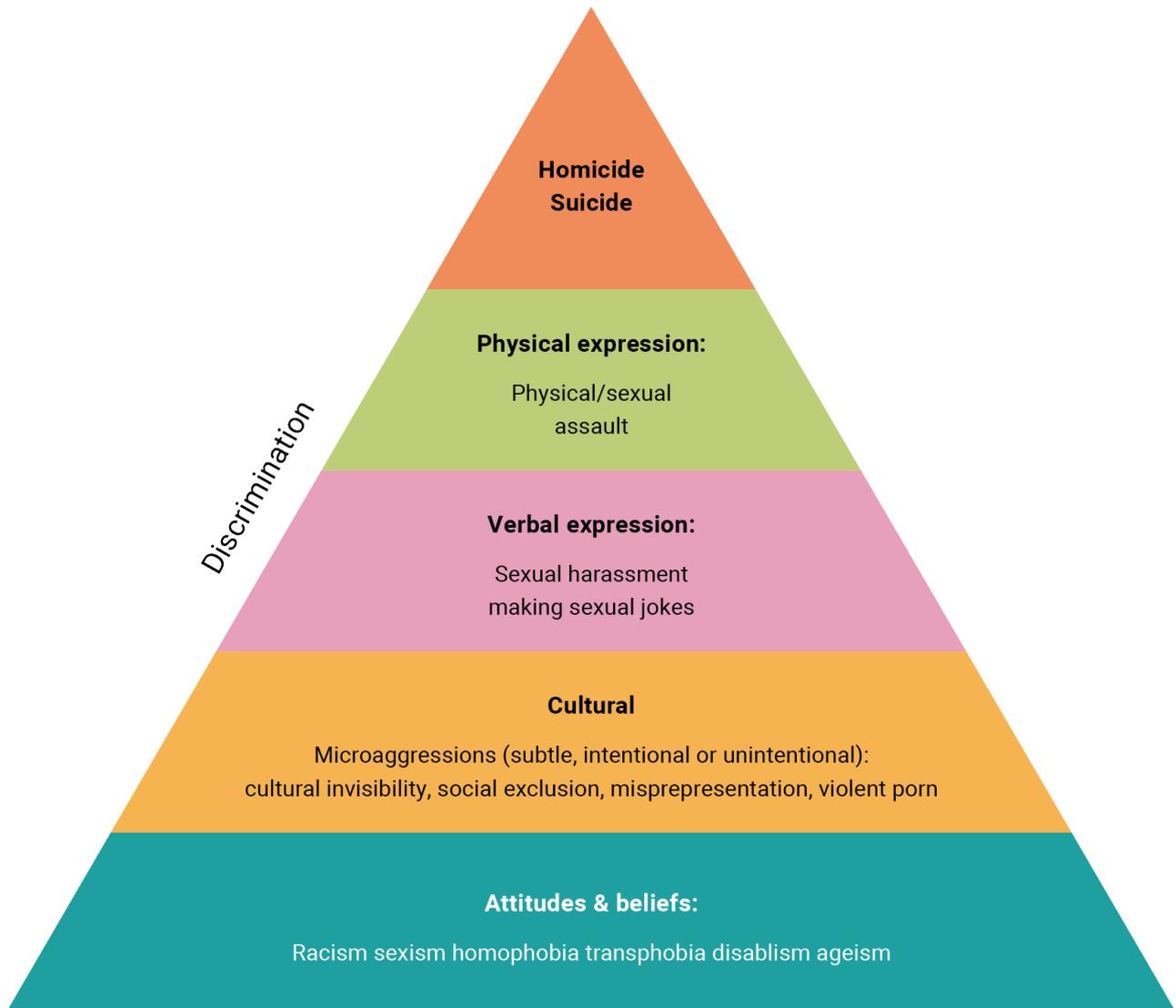
Illustrated by Calgary Communities Against Sexual Abuse based on the Pyramid of Hate: Anti-Discrimination League

Example

"My queer friend is living in their family home currently, they are dependent on their family

financially and emotionally. They want to tell their family about being queer but they are afraid of their family's reaction and being kicked out or abused. Sometimes people with a strong social network outside their family have those fears too but they may be able to take that risk and 'out themselves' because they have a support system and won't end up alone."
Anonymous – Germany

Everyone feels the need to belong or to feel connected to other people. In the context of teaching, it is important to understand the student's emotional and social need of belonging and how it shapes their identities. In the case of poverty and stigmatisation, individuals can be denied access to recognition and identity and belonging at the same time. This implies that identity has structural determinants. Through a process of over-generalisation and elevation of identity to the state of a collective 'identity', identities can become powerful instruments of exclusion. At the same time, these overgeneralised aspects of identities can also be used in political struggles for example, to raise awareness of these structural determinants that benefit one group and deprivilege, or discriminate, the other.

Labelling: Being named by others

In most education systems, children with special needs are categorised according to a special educational needs status in order to allocate resources in support of these students. In Germany, for example, there are up to eight different categories that students can qualify for: sight, learning, emotional and social development, speech, mental development, hearing, physical and motor development and instruction for sick pupils (KMK, 2023). In other education systems, differentiation varies. Usually, special educators, doctors or psychologists, diagnose students with specific needs through standardised testing. Students are either already registered at schools with special needs labels, or are later indicated for testing by teachers, parents or educators. When difficulties in the classroom arise and they are unable to keep up with tasks, they are frequently mentally or physically absent, or show sexualised or overly provocative or violent behaviour. Their "disability" becomes translated into a pedagogical special needs diagnosis that offers different types of support measures. For example, a student who is diagnosed with a learning disability has the right to special assistance by a special needs teacher. A student who is diagnosed with intellectual delay, receives the right to more hours with a special needs teacher. What is common to all special needs diagnosis is that they are formulated under a deficit hypothesis. This means that a student is assessed through the lens of what they are not able to do, and compared to an (imaginative) average child. This view might be "thickened" through repeated iterations which in-turn produces a limiting belief set and likely impacts students' sense of self (Wortham, 2006; Pfahl, 2011; Wagner, 2023).

The history of separating students according to different educational needs, and creating a divide between regular students and those deemed ineligible to participate in mainstream education, became institutionalised through the first special schools. These were established to cater for the needs of children with sensory impairments, i.e. schools for the blind or the deaf. Such developments took place in Western Europe during the late 18th century. With the turn of the 20th century, so-called "help schools" were established in Germany and were mostly attended by children from lower socio-economic backgrounds to address the needs of children who lack care and support. Help schools also alleviated the stresses of mainstream schools. Therefore, they had two main functions: provide education to those who need more support and alleviate the need for regular schools to create provisions for children seen as morally and intellectually "inferior". Later, these schools continued to support children with learning disabilities, social and emotional development or cognitive delay. During the Nazi era, children that attended special schools were targeted for sterilisation and those who did not succeed in special schools were considered 'ineducable' which served as a criterion for murder under the term 'euthanasia' (Hänsel, 2006). After World War II, special schools continued to operate. A special educational needs label has now become a bureaucratic mechanism for which students are referred to different types of schools. While it is important to mention that children with intellectual impairments did not receive any education for many decades, the establishment of special schools also led to stigmatisation by communities (parents, other children, teachers, etc.) and by the students attending special schools (Schumann, 2007). With the emergence of inclusive education in the 1970s, a number of students who were labeled with severe additional needs (often labeled as special school students) could continue their education in primary schools and received additional support by former special school teachers in a regular classroom. The label also served as a prerequisite for the allocation of additional resources.

In contemporary inclusive schools, children often become affiliated with certain labels to administer extra support. Children with learning difficulties or disabilities might have a special needs status, whereas children whose families migrated to a new country may need more support and are seen as children with a migration background or second language learners. These additional markers are not typically diagnosed, but rather attributed through (first) subjective impressions and often do not lead to the allocation of further resources. In other words, they are not necessarily connected to a deficit, but they often imply a deficitary lens and thus create differences. A favourable reading of markers allows us to say that they are intended to offer additional support for children through state funding. A label could allow a child to receive more time during a test or assistance from specialised members of staff or extra language classes. These measures are intended to support students within an inclusive setting. However, research on stigma and subjectification

(Goffmann, 1963/2010; Pfahl, 2011; Pfahl & Powell, 2014) has shown that labels can have an impact on students' self-concept and thereby ability to perform. In the German context, this mechanism has been described as the "Etikettierungs-Ressourcen-Dilemma" (Füssel & Kretschmann, 1993), highlighting the predicament how resources are linked to labelling, while a label usually carries a set of expectations and behaviours that a child must exhibit to access the necessary resources.

It can be said that labels are an approach used by an education system to guarantee individual legal entitlements, and these legal entitlements have changed over time in terms of the location and form of special support (United Nations, 2006). However, the stigmatising element is problematic, both in terms of outside attribution and from the learners themselves. As students with labels like special educational needs often have access to resources (e.g. special education teachers, assistants), it can sometimes lead to a differentiation of "my students"/"your students". This is different to other dimensions of diversity, as resources are rarely allocated based on such differences.

The concept students have of themselves plays an important role in the way they view themselves as capable members of the classroom community (Rubin, 2007). This is particularly the case at the intersection of racialised minority status, socio-economic conditions and learning difficulties, where some school systems are poorly equipped to offer teaching content that is accessible for students with a variety of different needs – whether due to mental health or abilities, stigma, different first languages, bullying, discrimination or violence. In Germany and Austria, for example, children who speak Turkish or Bosnian/Serbian/Croatian at home are more likely to attend special schools than mainstream institutions (Statistik Austria, 2022/23: 25). Waitoller and Ammanna (2017) have emphasised the importance of space and location in how student identities are viewed negatively in relation to expectations around performance and success. Individual districts as well as urban versus rural neighbourhoods offer very different interpretations of student backgrounds. In rural settings, comprehensive schools are often the only choice for all children in the community, whereas in urban centres competition around specific schools creates hierarchies between academic bourgeois secondary schools and comprehensive schools. The latter is often dominated by students who are designated as more disadvantaged, such as migrant children or those whose abilities are considered below average. While such schools may exist in rural settings, they become a place to divide student populations according to specific identity formations (Nasir & Saxe, 2003).

Therefore, we are concerned with questions around naming differences and creating specific realities around labels and identities. When does it serve a child to be labelled in a particular way? How invisible can a label really be? When does visibility cause suffering and when does invisibility create pain? How can we grant special provisions to students who

need support without labelling them publicly? And when do these practices preclude the possibilities of participation of children and limit their engagement with teaching content and classroom peers? While schools often encourage children to introduce aspects of their culture in the mainstream classroom, these events can become token incidents that blur the much more subtle preconceptions around students' cultural backgrounds. When do children feel seen and appreciated? And when do students' multiple perspectives – due to their presumable differences – strengthen the understanding of the group regarding complex issues?

Identity politics: Naming yourself

Claiming Identity as an emancipatory practice

The term "identity politics" was introduced by the Combahee River Collective, a black feminist lesbian socialist collective: "as children we realised that we were different from boys and that we were treated differently – for example, when we were told in the same breath to be quiet both for the sake of being 'ladylike' and to make us less objectionable in the eyes of white people. In the process of consciousness-raising, actually life-sharing, we began to recognise the commonality of our experiences and, from the sharing and growing consciousness, to build a politics that will change our lives and inevitably end our oppression" (Combahee River Collective, 1977).

The central idea of identity politics lies in turning around a shared experience of marginalisation, humiliation or discrimination by adopting a label, derogatory term or external definition (crip, queer, f-gg-t, black, N*Word, …) for oneself (Alick, 2023; Worthen, 2023). This process is called reappropriation and holds the possibility of using the language of power that has separated and degraded human beings. This language of power, with its derogatory terms, turns people into projections that serve self-identification. It turns them into objects of a range of emotions such as hate, fear, fantasy or pity. The seemingly counterintuitive act of appropriating a term that is often used to humiliate or belittle, can be extremely powerful, if done collectively. Through the collective process of identification and redefinition of the labels or categories, individuals are no longer mere objects of this process. They become powerful subjects, claiming spaces in public discourse, politics and (re-)gaining access to rights and resources formerly withheld. The function and purpose of identity politics is consequently to point out how universal promises implied in the declaration of human rights, often fall short and are being used to protect the rights and interests of particular social groups (Dowling et al., 2017). When the advantages of some groups become normalised and accepted and almost invisible to those growing up with them, we call these advantages privilege. The status quo is already a type of identity politics, we just tend to label it as "normal". Have you ever thought of Christian Democratic

Parties in predominantly Christian European countries as actors in the field of identity politics? Some prominent examples of emancipatory movements that are also publicly viewed as identity politics on the other hand are: The black Lives Matter movement, Kanak Attack (Germany), the Zapatista resistance (Mexiko), the MST Landless Worker Movement (Brasil) or the #Metoo movement, just to name a few.

   Identity politics is controversially discussed, often by those who are unaware of their own privileges, but not necessarily in positions of power. This is not surprising since identity politics is a tool to call for a redistribution of resources, such as money, access to health care and education, and access to social and political participation. If people are not in positions of power and economically disenfranchised, and unaware of e.g. white privilege, they might feel threatened by calls to redistribute resources that do not centre or even further decenter their own experiences. Instead, they may understand a shared oppression and include the fight for BIPoC rights, people with disabilities, queers in their own struggles for dignity and liberation.

The Dilemma

With all of the above in mind, it can be said that labels can be problematic as they can limit our capacities of self-expression, they can also be mistaken and tend to be somewhat reductionist since they can never encapsulate a person's complexity and reality of their experiences. However, labels are also a pragmatic way to claim special support that enables individuals to access resources and spaces. Some of the information that labels carry might also hold useful insights to the individual or might be taken on voluntarily as an emancipatory act. Therefore, labelling can be perceived as a balancing act, weighing the pros and cons of being named, on the one hand, while claiming an identity on the other. In the next part we will discuss a model that helps understanding the challenges and also this act of balancing.

Working with the Trilemma

The trilemma of inclusion is a theoretical model by May-Anh Boger (2023) that helps us navigate the dilemma between identity politics and a radical critique of labelling. It offers insights into the dynamics of how groups deal with oppression. Through empirical research, she highlights how the struggle against oppression manifests in various ways. She challenges the notion that what is expected from oppressed people is very often contradictory, and therefore the solutions to oppression are also often contradictory.

Three Dimensions

May-Anh Boger outlines the three dimensions of the trilemma; empowerment, normalisation and deconstruction. Her findings show that it's impossible to follow the three

different strategies at the same time. You can follow one. But if you follow two, the third is automatically excluded. So when labelling in education is critically discussed, this often occurs within a deconstructionist approach ('labels are bad, because they limit our capacity of self-expression and they are wrong, because they never cover the complexity of reality'), while for identity politics this is often undertaken through empowerment and normalisation ('I am x and as x I should get access to y').

When we discussed the role of labelling and the role of identity politics in inclusive education, there was some controversy in the beginning. The perspectives of the four authors of this text included self-advocacy with regard to working class identity, neurodiversity, trans rights, queer rights, lesbian and gay rights, racisms and also cis, straight, white perspectives, formal teacher training special education and secondary schools, political educator in NGOs, sociology, HR, activism, feminism, care work and mental health.

From the biographical perspective of a special education teacher and researcher in the field of special education teacher training, there was a strong need to deconstruct labels and show the harm they do in the school system with regard to migration background, class and disability. As a reaction to the strong activist position for a call for deconstruction, one of the authors felt threatened and maintained the empowerment and normalisation position. This could be summarised as follows. The special education teacher says: "Since labels are bad, because they limit students' development and they are for the most part oversimplifications and never fully accurate, we should abolish labels altogether." The queer activist says, on the other hand: "I'm a Lesbian and am not giving up the labels, 'Lesbian' nor 'Queer'".

The first step of working together was understanding the difference between naming yourself and being named by others. The trilemma then helps us to understand what is happening among us on a deeper level. While all three aspects empowerment, deconstruction and normalisation are important, not all of them can be adopted at the same time. It gave us a way out saying that all the points are valid.

Practical Consequences of the Trilemmatic Theory of Inclusion

This experience can be very helpful for teachers to understand that, if you make any emancipatory statement with regard to a marginalised group, it can at most follow two of three emancipatory strategies: empowerment, normalisation or deconstruction. Since it automatically excludes one of the other strategies, for example, a student or a colleague might take the excluded position as they feel that their strategy has been threatened by the position you have taken. A practical consequence of the trilemma is an understanding

of this dynamic and taking a step back and realising its impact, and attempting to include different strategies in similar statements and to encourage conversations on this topic with older students or colleagues.

Figure 2 Title: Examples of self-understanding as (not)in_sane applied to the trilemma

Normalization

EN: Strategically-Essentialist Otherness

"People with mental impairments have the right to full participation and dignified, self-determined treatment."

ND: De-Essentialized/De-Categorizing Individuality

"We all err, only each of us errs differently."
(G.C. Lichtenberg)

Empowerment

Deconstruction

DE: Resistant/Fundamental Otherness

"Truly insane would be the attempt to be healthy and happy in a sick society."

Boger, 2020, translated by the authors from German

Example Cases of three individuals navigating the trilemma

As discussed in the paragraphs about identity, the process of answering the question, 'Who am I?' is both individual and collective. While every person's journey is different, there are some common experiences marginalised groups share. When we refer to marginalised groups, we see this as encompassing LGBTIQ* people, disabled people, racialised people including Roma and Traveller groups, Jews, working class people, single parents, migrants,

poor and homeless people and all of those living on the margins. However, there are also significant differences among people who are targets of the same ideology of inequality. Ignoring these differences within groups can contribute to tensions and render invisible specific pain and inequality (Crenshaw, 1991).

Intersectionality, as coined by Crenshaw, is a key concept that helps understand how identities work for individual learners. The intersection between two or more identities creates a different experience of marginalisation. Crenshaw (1991) argued that black women are discriminated in ways that are a combination of both racism and sexism (though not neatly fitting into the legal definitions of either), as the behaviour in the case of sexism is compared to the experiences of all women including white women, and in the case of racism to all black people including black men. This leaves the experiences of black women largely unseen, as their blackness cannot be removed from their womaness (Crenshaw, 1991).

In the context of the classroom, intersectionality speaks to how teachers and students with intersectional identities, for example, a black disabled person, would not just experience disadvantage due to racism and ableism, but also another form of disadvantage experienced when ableism and racism combine. Therefore, in this instance, an approach may be taken to recognise the complexity of identity, combining the learnings of studies in the inclusion of disabled people and anti-racism and considering the additional barriers created at the intersection. Although individuals have different experiences (due to a combination of their own identities and the relationship between those identities), there are commonalities between people who share an identity and it is useful to be aware of this.

In the video that accompanies this written chapter, you will find two of the authors (Özge and Sam) speaking with Dr. Danielle Farrel on their experiences of identities, labelling and the role of schools and teachers in facilitating students to express themselves, participate and thrive as people with complex and some marginalised identities. For the purpose of the discussion they describe themselves briefly as follows: Sam describes themself as a non-binary trans neurodivergent person, as an activist, a partner and a family member; Özge describes herself as a woman of colour, student and activist. Below we will take a few examples from the discussion to illustrate the trilemma and how it may be used within the classroom to identify solutions and strategies.

Normalisation

Normalisation, as part of the trilemma, can also be described as integration or transnormalism (Boger, 2023). Boger explains:
   Normalisation (N) is defined as the process of opening privileged positions

and institutions to enable full participation. Others, having multiple identities can create a stronger sense of community when engaging with others with a similar identity, similar experiences and similar emotions even if not all of those identities always overlap. (2023: 21).

Normalisation can play out in a desire to raise the 'other' voice within normalised structures or to create a society where everyone is equally normal or equally different. As Sam explains:

"I was in a Catholic Girls school and stayed in the Catholic all-girls school until I finished, and my teachers did not know how to cope at all [with Sam being trans]… The focus was that I have to keep wearing the school uniform. Not on how I was getting on and whether everything was okay at home. My parents and I weren't really getting on very well, and I was trying to finish my schooling but it wasn't about supporting me. It was about making sure I follow the school rules."
Sam (Ireland)

In this example the school was prioritising normalisation, potentially as a means of protecting the student. However, they did not support the position of normalisation with either empowerment or deconstruction, either of which may have enabled greater inclusion for the student.

Consider some strategies the school could have used using the lens of normalisation:

- They could have enabled Sam to be empowered and have a conversation about trans people in the school. If Sam identified as male, this might have meant the introduction of a boy's uniform option and the identification of boys' toilets. As a non-binary person it would be including non-binary options within the school setting and creating a space for non-binary people within the categories of the school.
- They could have brought in more uniform options for all students, with a focus less on gender, and the deconstruction of norms.
- Can you think of any others?
- What about strategies that empower and deconstruct rather than normalise? Could that be to take away all uniforms and gender categories and enable students to express themselves away from labels?

Deconstruction

Deconstruction within the trillemmatic framework for inclusion can also be described as dissolution or resistance (Boger, 2023).

Deconstruction (D) is defined as the process aiming at the dissolution of dichotomous orders of difference (as, for example 'men vs. women', 'disabled vs. able-bodied', 'white vs. black/of colour') in which the normalised is represented as desirable and as the centred position from which the others are constructed as the others and thereby decentred.' (2023: 21).

Deconstruction is a rejection of categorisation and the pursuit of fundamental change in how society orders itself. Danielle spoke of her experience being labelled by doctors, before she had had the opportunity to progress through life:

"And so I think it is difficult when you have or you're faced with labels of medical diagnosis before you even meet milestones like going to school and progressing through school."
Danielle (Scotland)

Those labels assumed a deficit in her abilities and her potential. It determined whether she could go on a school tour, go on sleepovers and how much she was expected to achieve in the eyes of her teachers. A deconstructionist look at disability would require an examination into the assumed truth, to show the power relationships and how social inequalities are presented in the lives of children. On a basic level it would mean removing labels from the classroom, and removing practices where children are categorised.

- Consider some strategies the school could have used using the lens of deconstruction:
- Paired with normalisation, they could have treated Danielle as an individual with individual needs in the classroom, while treating her classmates in the same manner. Instead of categorising students by ability or needs, they would each be treated as individuals and given individualised support, outside of any categorisation.
- Paired with empowerment, this could have meant Danielle refusing to be normalised, or expected to fit in within that space. In this respect, Danielle would be seen and heard as a member of this classroom with her needs met within and by the collective (Boger, 2023). This could mean being within a group of exclusively disabled people, away from the ableist gaze. Danielle spoke about finding the experience of being outside the mainstream empowering, as in secondary school there were less limits put on her by others with assumptions of her abilities.
- Can you think of any other strategies?

Empowerment

Empowerment can also be described as emancipation or participation:

Empowerment (E) is defined as the political process in which an oppressed or discriminated group forms a collective to gain power and raises the other voice that has been silenced and not listened to' (Boger, 2023: 21).

Educators build relationships with their students. This relationship should be built on mutual trust and validation. Students need positive experiences in school, to feel believed in, and supported in their efforts to excel and to achieve. Özge describes her positive experience:

"I think for me it was in secondary school. Well, I don't really remember a lot of primary school, but in secondary school, I had the feeling that my class teacher… she was believing in me, and like trying always to motivate me and trying to find ways in how I would understand the content of the subjects. And I had the feeling she was like really supportive and always telling me, you can do it and you will make it."
Özge (Germany)

Marginalised people may or may not see their marginalisation as core aspects of their identities. However, due to others perceptions of marginalised identities, these identities can be suppressed or erased. More complex identities can be found, expressed and fostered through representation and empowerment. Danielle does not see cerebral palsy as the core aspect of her identity and explains:

"Cerebral palsy is only a small part of who I am. It's not insignificant because without it, I wouldn't be the person I am, but it doesn't define me. I am also aware that other people, other disabled people, aren't able to voice that. So I have a passion for disabled people in general to be able to embrace their own identity, whatever that might be, and to advocate for the fact that identity doesn't need to be just an appearance."
Danielle (Scotland)

- From above, have we thought about strategies the school could have used using the lens of empowerment paired with deconstruction or normalisation. Are there any others that you can think of?
- Can you think of times where empowerment would not be a good approach or may come into conflict with other perspectives?

Reflecting on Identity and Labelling in Practice for Teachers

During their school years, many students are grappling with the question of who they are, and this process can often appear overwhelming. Rather than labelling them, we should

aim to structure and shape the classroom in a way that enables students to go through this process of self-naming independently.

We, as educators, have the responsibility to create a space where students are not discriminated against based on their identity. While we cannot guarantee that discrimination will never occur – as classrooms inevitably reflect societal structures thus reproducing discriminatory discourses and actions – we can work on raising our own and our students' awareness of the complexities of identity. Through our actions, methods, and language, we influence the overall dynamic in the classroom, which can reduce discriminatory behaviour. One of our goals should be to create a learning environment where students do not feel pressured to identify with specific categories, groups, or communities, but where they have the freedom to choose to do so if they wish. Being labelled by others, especially by teachers, can be an inherently violent act, as it can strip students of their agency.

Labels often come with preconceived notions about students' abilities. Their bodies and identities are already coded and constructed by outsiders – including teachers – before they even enter the classroom. This process is inherently biased and does not give all students an equal chance for fair treatment. Our identity is not solely defined by what marginalises us, but often, because of these marginalised aspects, others make assumptions about our capacities and our ability to be individuals. Consequently, these assumptions become part of the everyday experiences of discrimination that students face in schools.

In every classroom, there are students who experience this structural inequality due to different or overlapping aspects of their identity. To help these students build new narratives about themselves, educators need methods that show them that characteristics or skills society labels as deficits are, in fact, powerful resources. This is particularly true for multilingual students. Society often leads them to believe that growing up with multiple languages can have a negative impact on the language they use in school. However, the opposite is true: being able to understand and speak different languages provides students with access to diverse cultures, literature, and knowledge systems, making it a valuable resource. In order to support students in this way, it is crucial to get to know them well, to understand their unique needs, and to be aware of potentially discriminatory situations they might face. The need to empower students is crucial to providing them with the necessary tools to assert their identities and their self-worth.

Students have complex and nuanced identities, and some may want to label their experiences, while others may feel restricted by labels. Students benefit from feeling seen and valued, not just as marginalised individuals, but as complete persons, including their

marginalised identity. Throughout their school years, students will explore their own identities, learning more about themselves and the communities they belong to or could potentially belong to. For some, these identities will be shaped by the norms of the communities they were born into, and as they grow older, they may begin to challenge these norms. It is important to question those norms and create space for students to explore their own sense of self.

As educators, we encounter emotionally charged situations on a daily basis, particularly when identity is involved. Identity touches the core of who we are – our sense of self, self-esteem, and personal beliefs – making these moments inherently emotional. The process of exploring one's identity is not just social, but deeply existential. This is why such situations can be so intense. By recognising this, we can maintain composure and professionalism in these charged moments. Being "professional" does not mean being devoid of emotion; it means being aware of both our own emotions and those of the students, particularly the existential struggles they may be facing. Identity formation is not just a social process, but a deeply personal one, and threats to one's identity can cause significant existential pain. Being mindful of this allows us to stay centered and offer the support students need during these crucial developmental moments.

Questions you could ask yourself as an educator:

1. What actions am I taking to help students get to know each other better, and to foster a deeper understanding of each student's individual background?
2. Am I staying informed about political or societal changes that could impact my students and, in turn, affect the classroom dynamic? (For example, elections, issues affecting diasporic communities such as war or family living situations abroad, or incidents of racism, sexism, or queer and transphobic violence.)
3. Do I feel unsure or overwhelmed when conflicts arise in the classroom, and struggle to find effective ways to address them?

Local contexts

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it

online here:

https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=429#h5p-17

Closing questions to discuss or tasks

- How can teachers be questioning themselves and open while at the same time – have enough confidence and have tools to navigate the complex situations? (not one solution, but different…)
- How can we make sure educators refer to students by name and not by labels (administrative or self-constructed like stars-, sun- and moon-kids)?
- How can we ensure rights to support for students who need it without stigmatising them?
- How can we create a safer space for students to develop their identity with peers, while staying part of the school/classroom community?

Literature

Alick, Claudia. 2023. 'CRIP as Disability Terminology'. Calling Up Justice! 16 March 2023. https://callingupjustice.com/crip/.

Annamma, Subini A., David J. Connor, and Beth A. Ferri. "A truncated genealogy of DisCrit." DisCrit: Disability studies and critical race theory in education (2016): 1-8.

Bauman, Zygmunt/Benedetto Vecchi (2010a): Identity. Conversations with Zygmunt Bauman. Cambridge, Polity.

Bauman, Zygmunt (2010b): Die Mu¨hen des Glu¨cklichseins [The Efforts of Being Happy]. Berlin, Suhrkamp.

Boger, Mai-Anh. "Political Ontologies of Difference and Their Trilemmatic Structure." International Perspectives on Inclusive Education (2023).

Bourdieu, Pierre (1997): Die verborgenen Mechanismen der Macht. Ökonomisches, kulturelles und soziales Kapital. In: Baumgart, Franzjörg (Hg.): Theorien der Sozialisation. Hamburg, Klinkhardt, 49-57.

Brehme, David, Fuchs, Petra, Köbsell, Swantje & C. Wesselmann (2020): Disability Studies im deutschsprachigen Raum: Zwischen Emanzipation und Vereinnahmung [Disability Studies in German-speaking countries: Between emancipation and co-optation]. Weinheim: Beltz Juventa publishing.

https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Abbildung-2-Beispiele-fuer-Selbstverstaendnisse-als-nicht-ver-rueckt-im-Trilemma_fig1_344025009

Combahee River Collective (1977). 'A black Feminist Statement'. na.

Crenshaw, Kimberle. 1991. 'Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color'. Stanford Law Review 43 (6): 1241−99. https://doi.org/10.2307/1229039.

Dowling, Emma, Silke van Dyk, and Stefanie Graefe. 2017. 'Rückkehr des Hauptwiderspruchs? Anmerkungen zur aktuellen Debatte um den Erfolg der Neuen Rechten und das Versagen der „Identitätspolitik"'. PROKLA. Zeitschrift für kritische Sozialwissenschaft 47 (188): 411−20. https://doi.org/10.32387/prokla.v47i188.69.

Ferrington, Philip, and Kevin Tucker. 2019. 'Person-First Language vs. Identity-First Language: An Examination of the Gains and Drawbacks of Disability Language in Society'. Journal of Teaching Disability Studies 1:1−12.

Füssel, Hans-Peter and Kretschmann, Rudolf (1993) Gemeinsamer Unterricht für behinderte und nicht-behinderte Kinder. Wehle publishing.

Goffmann, Irving. 1963/2010. Stigma: Notes on the management of spoiled identity. London: Penguin Random House.

Hänsel, Dagmar. 2006. Die NS-Zeit als Gewinn für Hilfsschullehrer [The Nazi era as benefical to help school teachers]. Bad Heilbrunn: Julius Klinkhardt.

KMK 2023 Kultusministerkonferenz − Assembly of Ministries of Education of the German States 2023 https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/Dateien/pdf/Eurydice/Bildungswesen-engl-pdfs/support_and_guidance.pdf&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1737292637090547&usg=AOvVaw3q6tlKPsYzAktl8X0LX6WG

Kaufmann, Jean-Claude (2005): Die Erfindung des Ich. Eine Theorie der Identita ̈ t [The invention of the I. A theory on identity]. Konstanz, UVK.

Kaufmann, Jean-Claude (2006): L'identité, une nouvelle religion? [Identity, a new religion?] Vortrag vom 22.03.2006 in der Cité des siences et de l'industrie, Paris. URL:

http://www.universcience.fr/fr/conferences-du-   college/seance/c/1239026848329/l-identite-une-nouvelle-religion/p/1239022827697/ – Aufgerufen am: 22.08.2011

Keupp, Heiner & Thomas Abhe et al. (2008): Identitätskonstruktionen. Das Patchwork der Identitäten in der Spätmoderne. 4. Auflage. Reinbek, Rowohlt.

Nasir, Na'ilah Suad, and Geoffrey B. Saxe. "Ethnic and academic identities: A cultural practice perspective on emerging tensions and their management in the lives of minority students." Educational Researcher 32, no. 5 (2003): 14-18.

Pfahl, Lisa. 2011. Techniken der Behinderung: der deutsche Lernbehinderungsdiskurs, die Sonderschule und ihre Auswirkungen auf Bildungsbiografien [Techniques of disability: the German learning disability discourse, the special school and its effects on educational biographies]. Bielefeld: transcript publishing.

Pfahl, Lisa, and Justin JW Powell. "Subversive Status: Disability Studies in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland." Disability Studies Quarterly 34, no. 2 (2014).

Render, Lina. 2014. 'Identity as a Reflexive Category and Its Importance in Teacher-Student Interaction'. In: Elistirel Egitim Seckisi – III International Conference on Critical Education. Pegem Akademi, Ankara.
https://www.academia.edu/11237521/
Identity_as_a_Reflexive_Category_and_its_Importance_in_Teacher_Student_Interaction.

Rubin, Beth C. Learner identity amid figured worlds: Constructing (in) competence at an urban high school. The Urban Review 39, no. 2 (2007): 217-249.

United Nations. 2006. 'Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities'. OHCHR. 12 December 2006. https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-persons-disabilities.

Schumann, Brigitte. 2007. "'Ich schäme mich ja so!". Die Sonderschule für Lernbehinderte als "Schonraumfalle'". Klinkhardt: Bad Heilbrunn. https://doi.org/10.25656/01:5479. Available at: https://www.pedocs.de/volltexte/2012/5479/pdf/Schumann_2007_Ich_schaeme_mich_ja_so_D_A.pdf (Accessed 15/01/2025).

Statistik Austria 2022/23. Bildung in Zahlen: Schlüsselindikatoren und Analysen [Education in numbers]: key indicators and analyses. https://www.statistik.at/fileadmin/user_upload/BiZ-2022-23_Schluesselindikatoren.pdf

Wagner Josefine. 2023. Ada, Ada, Ada, and Ada: Transforming Learner Identities through Social Practice. Anthropology & Education Quarterly 54:2, 165-182.

Waitoller, Federico R., and Subini Ancy Annamma. Taking a spatial turn in inclusive education: Seeking justice at the intersections of multiple markers of difference. The Wiley handbook of diversity in special education (2017): 23-44.

Wortham, Stanton. 2006. Learning identity: The Joint Emergence of Social Identification and Academic Learning. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Worthen, Meredith G. F. 2023. 'Queer Identities in the 21st Century: Reclamation and Stigma'. Current Opinion in Psychology 49 (February):101512. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2022.101512.

About the authors

Sam Blanckensee

Sam Blanckensee (they/he) is a equality, diversity and inclusion practitioner based in Ireland with extensive experience in equality in Higher Education through their role as the Equality Officer at Maynooth University. Sam holds an MA in management for the nonprofit sector. Sam has worked within Irish LGBTQ+ organisations in voluntary and professional roles since 2013. Sam's work covers a broad range of equality, diversity, inclusion and interculturalism initiatives including LGBTQ+ matters, gender equality, anti-racism, disability awareness and access for those within the international protection system. Sam is a non-binary trans person who is also neurodivergent and queer, All Means All is a project where the personal meets professional for Sam.

Özge Özdemir

Özge Özdemir works in extracurricular political education with a strong focus on anti-racism, anti-discrimination and empowerment. During and after her studies of political science and sociology in Frankfurt am Main, she specialised in working with young people and adults in educational work. Her activist experiences form the basis for both her practical educational work and her academic career.

Lina Render de Barros

Lina Render de Barros is a queer of color activist from Pernambuco and Münsterland. She completed her first state examination (teaching degree) and her master's degree in bilingual European education at the University of Education in Karlsruhe and her master's degree in sociology at the Goethe University Frankfurt. She researches, lives and works in Cologne, always with the aim of taking a stand against group focused enmity and contributing to a more peaceful coexistence.

Josefine Wagner

Josefine Wagner is a postdoctoral researcher at the Department of Education and Social Work at the University of Luxembourg.

She has completed several postdoctoral fellowships with a focus on inclusion and the origins of special needs education, including a visiting fellowship at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (2020), at the Departments of Education and Anthropology at the National University of Ireland, Maynooth (2024) and the Department of Teacher Education and School Research at the University of Innsbruck in Austria (2021-2024).

ENHANCING MINORITY LANGUAGES FOR INCLUSION

Petra Auer; Beausetha Juhetha Bruwer; Pamela February; and Federica Festa

---

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=436#oembed-1

Example Case

"What? … No. … Do they maybe mean … Ah no. They didn't. Maybe I should try again … at least try to explain … What? … Ah! Maybe I got it now. … No. … If they just could understand what I was trying to say. … Are they getting mad? … Or are they just as frustrated as I am. … If I just knew what they wanted to tell me …"

Initial questions

- How can we implement a learning environment that enhances minority languages and makes learning accessible for all learners?
- Are there common strategies that can be applied to different scenarios?

Introduction to Topic

"Language learning [or learning in general] becomes a different issue seen from the perspective of the speakers of a minority language […]" (Gorter, 2007:1). In contrast to students speaking the language of the majority community, who speak the language at home with their parents, and at school it is the only subject and medium of instruction, however, this is not true for students of a minority language community. Instead, what they encounter in school is a mismatch between the language they speak at home – their first or native language(s) (for example, L1) – and the language they encounter in the classroom (Gorter, 2007). As the example case illustrates, students' first language(s) is their language(s) of thought, emotion, identity and the construction of knowledge (Cummins, 1981; Gibbons & Ramirez, 2004; Lange & Pohlmann-Rother, 2020). It can therefore be deduced that learners who are speakers of a minority language and attend schools with a "monolingual habitus" (Gogolin, 1994) face an increased risk of exclusion or marginalisation. The following section elaborates on how the enhancement of minority languages can foster the inclusiveness of schools or education systems in a broader sense. Before that, however, we want to venture a definition of the terminology.

Key aspects

What do we mean when talking about minority languages?

The concept of "minority language" can be understood as controversial, which mainly arises from the fact that the term "minority", no matter from which discipline it is seen, is problematic (Gorter, 2006). The endeavour to define what is a minority and what is not, to set criteria for who belongs to a minority group, is a very complicated one (Laakso et al., 2016). Very often, minority language is simply defined as the language spoken by less than a certain percentage of a population in each geographic context (for example, region, state, country), that is, it is about the size of the speaker population within a specific territory (European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, 1998; Grenoble & Singerman, 2014). Contrary to this, Garcia (2006) defines "minority language education[…] as the school's use of a language (or languages) spoken by students whose heritage language differs from that of the more powerful members of society who usually exercise the most control over state schools" (Garcia, 2006; 159). Her definition does not refer to numbers but rather to language status and associated power relations. Thus, the question arises as to which language is dominant rather than how many people speak the language in that situation. Finally, it can be added that different types of minorities exist; old or traditional (i.e., indigenous, autochthonous) versus new minorities (i.e., migrant). In this regard, it needs to be stated that some of these nominations are discussed controversially and very often, borders between one type and the other can be fuzzy (Laakso et al., 2016).

It becomes evident that when it comes to minority languages, we might meet various and sometimes even conflicting definitions and understandings of what a minority language is. The above example case depicts a lone learner who does not understand what is happening in the classroom as their home language is different from the language of instruction. It may be familiar to you, as this situation is happening in classrooms around the world daily. You might also notice the risk of exclusion that lies within the fact that a learner does not understand what is going on in the learning situation (De Korne, 2021).

In the following, we are going to examine in closer detail four scenarios that depict diverse (language) learning situations that may make you think about the topic differently. These scenarios will be accompanied by the specific language policies that underpin them and the realities of each of the instruction contexts within which the learners in these scenarios find themselves. In this way, we try to illustrate how the concept of minority language is strictly related to and interwoven with contextual and structural factors such as the policy context of the nation-state, which, for instance, plays a crucial role in defining which language varieties obtain minority status and thus rights and protection (Gorter, 2006), and consequently, is given importance and space in education and in the classroom.

Description of a structural disadvantage and how to address or prevent it through the use of four scenarios

Scenario 1: Finnish Sign Language and the case of a deaf learner

Deaf/hard-of-hearing (DHH) pupil named Jenna is schooling in a classroom using spoken language, Finnish, with a hearing teacher in an environment where others do not know a national sign language, Finnish Sign Language (FinSL). Jenna herself has started to acquire FinSL with her family. In this scenario, how can she learn and acquire FinSL in a non-signing environment where the teacher and other classmates do not sign? Also, how does Jenna

understand what is spoken in the environment, and what the teacher is teaching? How can we support Jenna's evolving bilingualism and DHH identity? Why is Jenna in this situation?

Language Policy

According to various estimates, there are more than 70 million deaf people in the world, and an even larger number who are hard of hearing (World Federation of the Deaf, 2023). Signed languages, like spoken languages, are natural, complete, and independent languages in the visual-gestural modality that have emerged in deaf communities around the world over time. Each country has its own signed language and even more than one, like in Finland, there is a FinSL and Finnish-Swedish Sign Language (FinSSL). Signed languages have been researched for decades in the field of sign language linguistics (Brentari, 2010) and Deaf Studies (Gertz et al., 2016), but still, public knowledge of these languages and communities seems to remain quite limited.

The status of sign languages varies in different countries in Europe and around the world. Recently many European countries have acknowledged sign languages in their legislation (Murray et al., 2015). In Finland, sign language was recognised in 1995 and the Sign Language Act, concerning both national sign languages, was enacted in 2015.

DHH people who use a signed language are a group with a unique double status – are not only a linguistic minority but also a disability minority. The rights and needs deaf and other people with diverse hearing status, should therefore be seen from different and complementary perspectives.

The majority of DHH children, over 95%, are born to hearing parents, most of whom do not know a national signed language, so DHH children do not automatically learn a national signed language (Mitchell & Karchmer, 2004). In the case of DHH children, hearing parents who do not know a national signed language also have to learn a new language with their children. Ensuring bilingual education and support in a national signed language at different educational stages and in public services for families is crucial for a DHH child's balanced bilingual development and growth with full linguistic accessibility.

Instructional context

Current situations are always shaped by history. There have been, for example, also serious human right violations in Finland, like sterilisations as part of racial hygiene policy efforts and deaf people have been forced to speak and the use of sign languages has been banned in education (Katsui et al., 2021). In Finland, this history has contributed to the beginning of a unique national truth and reconciliation process about the injustices done to the sign language and deaf community. It is similar to that of the Sami minority, where the truth and reconciliation process began earlier (Katsui et al., 2021).

Deaf people's language proficiencies have often been controlled by normative standards, such as deaf children's national sign language learning being restricted by governments, early invention and so-called "inclusive" education system (Snoddon, 2022; Snoddon & Paul, 2020). Many DHH children in mainstream schools are isolated with other non-signing children in the classroom without support services (Murray et al., 2018). Henner and Robinson (2023) find that DHH children very often experience language deprivation and lack of linguistic capital because they do not have access to a community of languages inside and outside school and they do not have fluent signers around them. Snoddon (2022) describes this situation as social and epistemological violence against deaf bodies and deaf ecosystems, as the education system deprives children of direct instruction in a signed language and access to the signing community of DHH peers. There is an intergenerational transmission that has been disrupted by so-called 'inclusive education', resulting in a loss of identity for DHH children (Snoddon, 2022).

Recent research shows that pupils in special education have a much better chance of receiving instruction in a signed language than those in mainstream education in Finland (Katsui et al., 2021). This can be a difficult situation for families who would like their children to attend a local school, and to be taught in a bilingual way with signed language (FinSL/FinSSL). Advanced hearing technology and its practices has contributed to the contradiction between medicalisation and rehabilitation discourse and the linguistic-cultural view. This dual distribution and discourse can still be seen in the field of education, thus leaving bilingual education in a signed language on the margins of education.
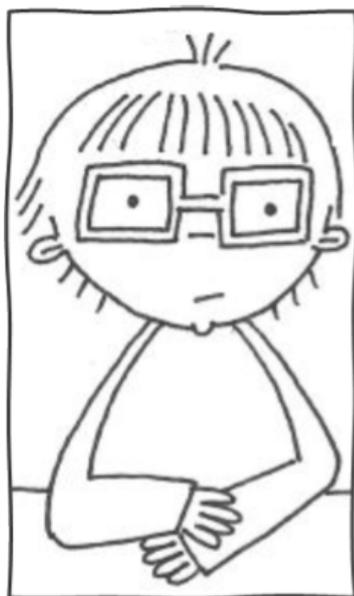
Scenario 2: Migrant Students and new minority languages

Enson is a 15-year-old student. His family is originally from Albania and moved to South Africa when Enson was four years old. As a result, Enson speaks both Albanian and English as a native speaker. Last year he arrived in Italy as an unaccompanied minor because he had been recruited by a professional football team. He initially enrolled in a scientific

secondary school because of his excellent maths results in South Africa, but he failed. He is now in the first year of a commercial vocational school. Why is Enson in this situation?

Language policy

In Italy, according to the Ministry of Education (MI, 2024), 11.2% of the students are migrant students; more than half of them (65.4%) were born in Italy, others arrive, like Enson, when they are already grown up. For the school year 2022/2023 it was observed that there was a decrease in the total school population (-1.2%). The number of students with Italian citizenship declined (-2%) while those students with non-Italian citizenship showed a growth (+4.9%). Italian citizenship is transmitted through *jus sanguinis*, that is, students born in Italy as children of parents who are both non-Italian citizens are considered migrants in the statistics. Linguistically speaking, many of the students are new minorities that are gradually becoming part of the national historical heritage. Almost half (44.4%) of the students with non-Italian citizenship are of European origin, but there are almost 200 countries from which students originate.

According to Italian law, students under the age of 18 have the right and duty to be educated and must be enrolled in the grade appropriate to their age. In practice, however, many secondary schools refuse or discourage the enrolment of migrant students on the grounds that their level of Italian is considered insufficient to enable them to succeed in school (Bonizzoni et al., 2006; Barban & White, 2011; Romito, 2014). So, these students often choose a vocational or technical school, regardless of their previous educational background. It is also very common for migrant students to drop out of school. Sometimes, because they fail, other times, because they are placed in classes below their age (despite legislation). According to the Italian Ministry of Education (MI, 2024), more than one quarter of foreign students aged between 17 and 18 drop out of school, with a strong gender difference that sees the schooling rate of female students' 20% lower than that of males.

Enson's story is very common among migrant students and indicates that the presence of new minority languages is regarded as a problem, even though Italian law (Law 482/ 1999; MIUR, 2014) and common European and international documents (Council of Europe, 1992; Pasikowska-Schnass, 2016) affirm that the presence of many national, regional, old and new minority languages spoken in Europe enriches the common cultural heritage. The proportion of low-achieving migrant students exceeds that of native-born students in most European countries, even when socio-economic status is controlled for (OECD, 2016).

It seems that teachers, in spite of the legal guidelines, give different values to the

different languages and thus they appear in a hierarchy. If Enson had been the son of an English couple who had just moved to Italy, would the school have thought of rejecting his enrolment? In Italy, the law has been protecting linguistic minorities since the Constitution of 1948, and some regions have a bilingual or even trilingual education system. Instead, for example, the Romanì language, which historically is considered a minority in Italy, is not recognised as such by the law (Scala, 2021), and the same is true for other regional languages.

Instructional Context

As we can see, theoretical principles and policies are often not applied in everyday school life. Very often teachers ask learners to exclusively use the language of instruction at school and to avoid their native language or languages. So, Enson is a typical case of a *heritage speaker*. On the one hand, the immersive situation allows students to learn the target language very quickly, but on the other hand, it seems to be a demand for cultural assimilation.

In Italy, foreign students are immediately placed in mainstream classes where they learn the language of the school as a second (or third, or fourth, …) language in an immersive way, since any form of special schooling has been abolished in Italy since the 1970's (Law 517/77). Only for pupils who have been in Italy for less than a year are schools obliged to activate L2 courses during school hours, and it is more common for schools with a high presence of pupils with non-Italian citizenship to be well organised to support the L2 learning path both for newly arrived pupils and for all levels of academic language learning as L2. In fact, any other Italian L2 course is only activated when the class council/teaching team deems it appropriate and with the agreement of the pupils' families, as the law stipulates that language learning must be predominantly immersive, through the adaptation and personalisation of the curriculum (C.M. 24/2016). The most recent legislative provisions allocate resources to schools in the form of specialised teachers for the teaching of Italian as a second language and funds for the activation of courses, but only to schools with at least 20% of foreign pupils. The percentage of pupils with non-Italian citizenship in science high schools is 4.3%, while in technical and vocational schools it ranges from 9% to 28.4% (MI, 2024), so science high schools usually do not have Italian L2 courses, but exceptions to the average can be found, both virtuous and less so.

Despite studies (D'Anglejan, 1988) showing that it takes about one year to learn the basic interpersonal communication skills of a new language and about 5 years to achieve cognitive academic language proficiency, bilingualism is still a disadvantage in formal education, so much so that 53% of foreign pupils are behind their age group at the end of secondary school (MI, 2024).

How can Enson's teachers change their attitudes, possibly changing the outcome of his studies and supporting him on his path of growth and identity construction as a migrant

and multilingual person? In this scenario, there was no suggestion that Enson should do his studies in his mother language at the same time as learning Italian. Study material in English could have been found easily and the use of translators could have been encouraged. Additionally, it would have been possible to activate the Albanian-speaking community in Turin, or to look for other Albanian- or English-speaking students in the school or in similar schools. What kind of teacher knowledge would have been necessary to activate these resources?

Scenario 3: Official Minority Languages in a multilingual context

Giulio is in his first year of primary school and just started learning German as a second language. At home, he speaks Italian with his mother, his father, his little sister Francesca, his *nonna* (grandmother) and his *nonno* (grandfather). With all his friends from kindergarten, he primarily spoke Italian, even if it was not always everybody's native language. He learnt some words in Albanian and Moroccan from his friends there. However, learning German is a totally new thing for him, so in the first days of school he struggled because he does not understand what the German teacher is telling him. Why is Giulio in this situation?

Language Policy

The Autonomous Province of Bolzano, a region in Northern Italy bordering Austria and Switzerland, is characterised by a specific ethnolinguistic reality with three different ethnolinguistic groups historically cohabitating on the territory: Italian, German and Ladin (Nössing, 2017).

With the end of World War I and according to the peace treaties of Saint Germain in 1919, the province, which before was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, was annexed to the Italian Kingdom (Steininger, 2004). Due to this annexation, German and Ladin became linguistic minorities within the Italian Empire. In 1922, with the fascist takeover of power, the so-called time of Italianisation began, a forced assimilation of the German- and Ladin-speaking inhabitants (Voltmer et al., 2007). After World War II, the latter started striving for the province to become autonomous to ensure their language and culture were protected, which at times also took on violent overtones (Alcock, 2001). Consequently, tensions and mistrust dominated the relationship between and coexistence of the three language groups

for a long time (Baur, 2009). In 1972, the Second Autonomy Statute came into force, which implemented a series of provisions (for example primary responsibilities for public services, agriculture, kindergarten and school buildings; introduction of a quota system to regulate access to public positions; autonomous administration of the school) guaranteeing the protection of minorities and aimed at setting the pillars for a peaceful coexistence of all.

Nowadays, all three languages share the status of official languages and Ladin and German are further recognised as minority languages within the Italian nation-state and protected as such by law (Nössing, 2017). These historical events and the resulting legislation led, among others, to a tripartite division of the education system according to the "language groups" (i.e., the establishment of three parallel school systems, each with its administration, education authority, directing body, and evaluation board) (Wisthaler 2013). Consequently, all educational institutions from kindergarten to secondary education are separated by language.

Instructional Context

In the territory, you can find schools in the German, Italian and Ladin language. However, children and youth in school learn the other official language(s) as second/third language(s) (i.e., in German schools Italian is thought as L2, in Italian schools German, in Ladin schools both German and Italian as L2 and L3). While the Italian and German educational institutions can be defined as "monolingual schools" (Baur, 2009), where the second language is taught as a subject for a certain number of hours per week, Ladin schools follow a "parity model" (Rautz, 1999). Here, an equal number of lessons are taught in German and Italian, and Ladin is taught as a subject creating a trilingual school model. More specifically, Ladin is used as a teaching language in kindergarten and an auxiliary language in primary school. In first grade, literacy is achieved through Ladin and one of the two other official languages, Italian or German, and the respective third language is taught for at least one hour per week with the aim to respond individually to the child's language skills. From the beginning of second grade equal use of German and Italian is applied (Verra, 2008, 2011).

Even though, having schools in each of the official languages was initially implemented to protect the linguistic minorities, recently, scholars also address the current situation critically as contributing to the creation of parallel worlds because the strict separation hinders daily contacts between the children of different language groups (Baur, 2013; Gross, 2019; Zinn, 2017, 2018). It is the case for Giulio, who has no German-speaking friends, even though Hannah lives next door; she also just started primary school in the exact same building as Giulio, but their classrooms are on different floors, and the break time is not the same. As the statistics show, the chance that Giulio and Hannah will ever become friends is small. A survey from 2017 showed that 90% of the interviewed youth stated having many friends of the same language group. Further, only 23% of those interviewed considered the

co-living of the different language groups as a positive aspect of the province, and only 20% identified the division among language groups as problematic (ASTAT, 2017).

Therefore, taking an inclusive perspective, one of the central questions regarding the Province of Bolzano is "[…] whether the policies aimed at protecting the historical traditional minorities in South Tyrol help or hinder the creation of a tolerant and pluralistic society […]" (Medda-Windischer, 2015: 101). Even though the Italian school system in terms of its structure and the long tradition is one of the most inclusive education systems around the world, when taking the perspective of languages, the inclusiveness of schools in the Province of Bolzano might be questioned (Auer, 2023).

Scenario 4: The official language of instruction is not native to anyone

Elina is a Grade 3 learner from Namibia who speaks Khoekhoegowab at home with her parents, her friends, and everyone else in her community. She loves interacting in her language with her friends, as the "click" sounds of her language are music to her ears. Elina and many of her friends go to an Afrikaans school, because of a lack of Khoekhoegowab schools in the area where she is staying. In school, Elina's teacher teaches in Afrikaans, which makes learning difficult for Elina as she does not always understand what the teacher is saying. In addition, Elina must also learn to read and write in English, which is even more confusing as she only uses English at school. Why is Elina in this situation?

Language Policy

In Namibia, the language policy states that from Pre-primary to Grade 3, learners should be instructed in their home language, with English offered as a subject. Grade 4 is a transitional year where English becomes the primary medium of instruction and the home language is taught as a subject (MEC, 1993). The objectives of this policy were to promote the equality of all national languages in Namibia and to ensure that all citizens had a sufficient level of English proficiency to support the establishment of English as the official language (Norro, 2022). Although this is the language policy, it is not always implemented in the prescribed manner, as seen in Elina's case.

According to Kamwangamalu (2013), two opposing ideologies, decolonisation, and internationalisation have influenced language planning in post-colonial African nations. In contrast to decolonisation, which involves replacing the ex-colonial language with indigenous languages, internationalisation results in the preservation of the ex-colonial

languages to gain economic advancement and greater communication. Globalisation has most recently expanded and strengthened the internationalisation ideology. In order to provide their children with an equal chance to prosper in the new global order, more parents are insisting that their children learn English, which has increased the language's significance (Norro, 2022).

Interviews with people from various ethnic groups in Namibia revealed that the majority of parents, teachers, and learners agreed that English should be the primary language of instruction and that it should be taught in the first year of primary school. They believe that early exposure to the language will accelerate learners' fluency in it and that people who cannot speak English are unable to contribute effectively to society (Chavez, 2016). The leniency with which the policy is applied in schools makes this another reason why many learners do not receive early primary education in their home languages. For example, if schools can demonstrate that there are a significant number of residents from other language communities in the area, they may apply to the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture to teach in English from Pre-Primary to Grade 3 while using the learners' home language/local language as the second language. In this sense, English becomes superior to local languages.

Instructional Context

Statistics showed that only 42% of Khoekhoegowab-speaking learners have Khoekhoegowab as their medium of instruction (February, 2018). As Elina's language is a Khoisan language, which is different from the Afrikaans language, which has a Germanic root (Norro, 2022), it is difficult for the teacher to accommodate Elina and her friends in the class. The teacher does not understand Elina's language and struggles to explain the content of the lessons to Elina and her friends. As she is not familiar with Khoekhoegowab, she can also not use code-switching to make the learning process easier. This is an unfortunate situation, but it is a common situation in Namibia where learners are taught in a language that is not their native tongue. The scenario of the Namibian situation (in terms of the number of Khoekhoegowab-speaking learners) is indicative of the power of a dominant language that is legislated to be taught to the learners in spite of their heritage language.

The fact that learners are taught in a second or third language that they find challenging to grasp makes learning difficult for them. Often, they find themselves in a situation where they have to learn a language at the same time that they have to learn in the language. In Elina's situation, she has to learn Afrikaans at the same time that she learns in Afrikaans. She is also consecutively introduced to English as a subject in which she needs to gain a level of proficiency that will enable her to read and write in the language. In these situations, the learners' self-esteem and confidence in their ability to speak and write in the instructional language may suffer. Learning in these circumstances can lead to frustrated learners, as they may feel that their own language and cultural experiences have no place

in formal education. They may face the situation of being looked down upon by those more fluent in the language of instruction and characterised as underachieving and slow. This can result in them avoiding situations where they have to express themselves using the language of instruction (Motitswe & Taole, 2016).

Figure 1: The four scenarios at a glance

Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3	Scenario 4
Deaf learner in hearing context	**Immigrant learner in monolingual context**	**Monolingual school in a multilingual context**	**Instruction languages ≠ home/heritage language of the majority**

Policy

Status of sign language varies from country to country In many European nations ↓ legislative acknowledgement Right for interpreter service Right for bilingual education and in a national signed language	Italian Constitution and legislation ↓ protection of (historical) linguistic minorities & national, regional, minority and migrant languages = enrichment	Officially recognized and legally protected minority languages ↓ Tripartite division of the school system according to all three official languages	(Pre-)Primary Eduaction ↓ instruction in home language From grade 4 ↓ English becomes main instruction language

Classroom

• Teacher and classmates do not sign • No sign language interpreter in the classroom • Most deaf children do not receive bilingual education • Limited school / community/ government budget • No other signing peers or adults - lack of role models	• Migrant students learn language of instruction in an immersive way • Bilingualism is often perceived as disadvantage • Migrant students > vocational schools	• Monolingual schools > students learn other official language(s) as a subject • Parity school model > subjects are held to an equal amount in the two languages and Ladin becomes auxiliary language	• Students are taught in a language, which is not their native tongue • Learning in L2 or L3 is difficult • Learning a language while learning in a language • Missing status of minority language in formal education

Finland	**Italy**	**Italy**	**Namibia**

To sum up, Figure 1 provides an overview of the four scenarios just presented. As represented in these scenarios what we are talking about when using the term "minority language" can be very different and is strongly related to language policy and contextual factors. Further, the scenarios demonstrate the complexity of the different classroom situations. You may typically have assumed that minority language is a case of the lone learner who speaks or uses a different language than the rest of the class, for example, the case of the deaf learner who uses Finnish Sign Language (Scenario 1). In Scenario 2, in addition to the case provided, there is also a discussion of several migrant learners who speak different languages to those taught at the school. Instead, in Scenario 3, the fact that the minority language(s) are officially recognised and protected by law leads to monolingual schools in a multilingual context. In the Namibian case (Scenario 4), the Khoekhoegowab learners are the majority in the class but do not reflect the language of instruction, Afrikaans and English. Despite the individuality of each of the scenarios, in the following, by responding to two initial questions, we try to elaborate some overarching possibilities for action, which might be applicable for all four and even other possible scenarios of minority languages in educational contexts.

Enhancing minority languages

Over half the world's population is bilingual and many people are multilingual. In China, for example, there are 56 nationalities that use around 80 different languages (Fang, 2017). According to the Atlas of the World's Languages of UNESCO (n. d.), "language is a carrier of human heritage, a local knowledge repository system, a system for communicating between people and a regional, national and global economic-political resource to be managed as an asset along with natural, human, financial and other resources, as part of good governance and societal development" (UNESCO, nd). Schools and teachers, but also more broadly, education authorities and the surrounding community play a role in how a minority language is preserved for future generations and what development opportunities it has (European Commission, 2019). This is particularly important in the case of small national minority languages, which may have only hundreds or a few thousand language users. The situation is different in the case of transnational languages with a large community of users. These languages often have more resources, for example in the form of networks, institutions, and learning materials. Instead, for instance, signed languages often have very few materials appropriate for primary education and different subjects (Katsui, 2021). According to the World Report on Disability (Lancet, 2011), people with disabilities, including the deaf, are the most discriminated group in the world. Deaf people are socially disadvantaged and vulnerable in many parts of the world, and are often denied access to education, among other things (Lancet, 2011). The World Federation of the Deaf and many researchers, consider the use of signed language and education in a signed

language to be a human rights issue (Murray, Meulder & Maire, 2018). Similarly, indigenous people, who represent a significant part of the world's vast cultural and linguistic diversity and heritage, often do not have access to schooling in their traditional languages (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs [UN DESA], 2017).

As argued previously (see Introduction), it is not only about preserving minority languages around the globe, but from an inclusive perspective, it is about responding to the diversity of *all* learners through the removal of barriers and the prevention of exclusion, which can arise from specific attitudes towards the many possible facets of diversity (Ainscow et al., 2013). Language can be understood as one of these facets and therefore needs to be taken into consideration in the realisation of inclusive education as a human right and as groundwork for a more equitable society. Therefore, it needs to be asked, how schools can provide *all* students with the opportunity to learn, to play an active citizenship role, and communicate a policy of equal value for *all* languages.

In this regard, it is believed that the school community, as well as the wider society, could respond in the following manner. In Figure 2 there is an overview of six possibilities for action in terms of approaching the goal of a more inclusive education from the perspective of minority languages. As can be seen, five of them can be located in the classroom or school level, while one of them operates at a higher level of legal anchoring. Further, certain strategies will lead to another creating a recurring circular structure in their application but essentially, they are all interrelated in a reciprocal way, which is why the application sequence can be flexible, reversed, or swapped.

Figure 2: Strategies to enhance minority languages for inclusion
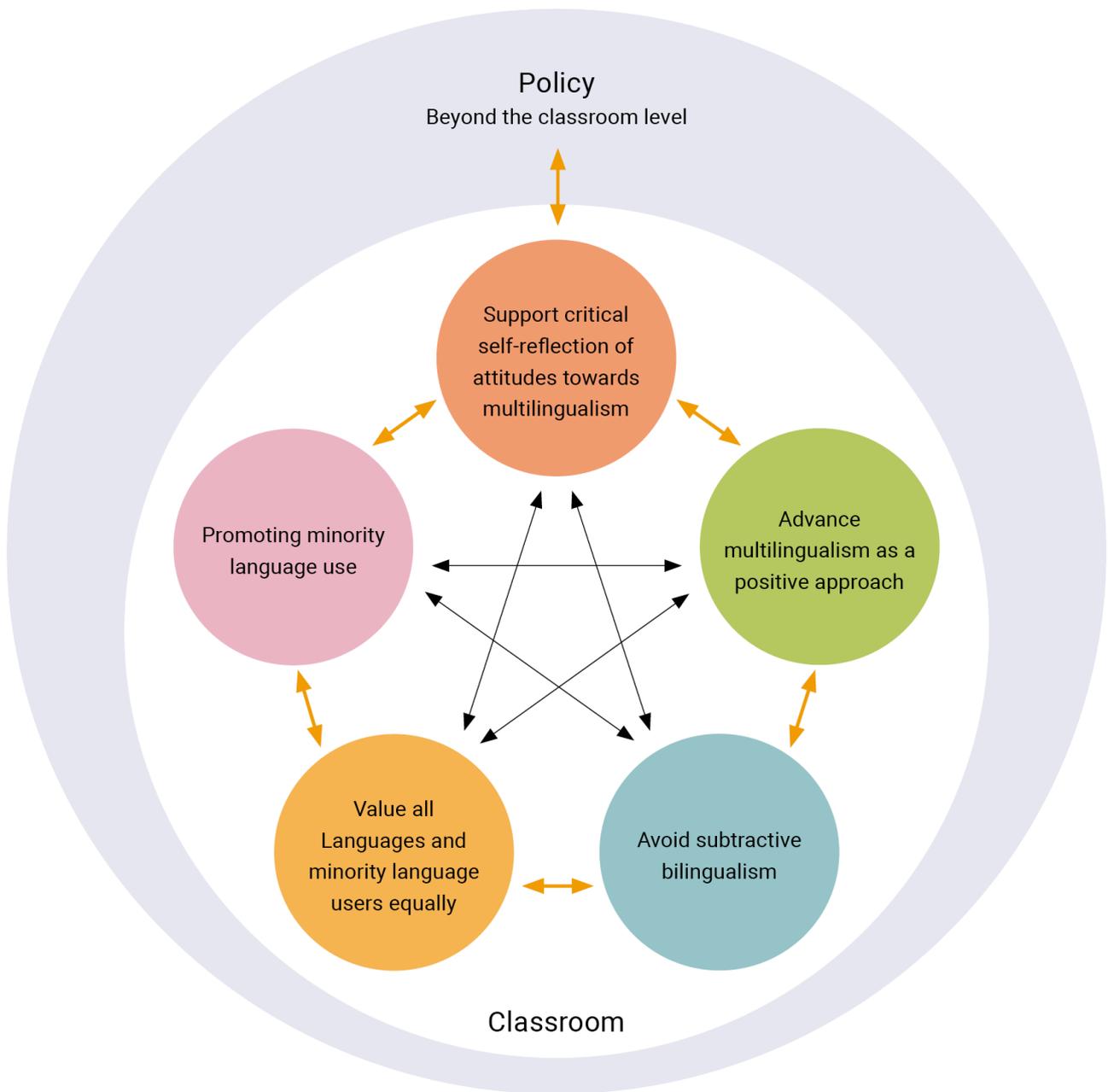
Support critical self-reflection of attitudes towards multilingualism

The construction of plurilingual language environments and opportunities is also influenced by the teacher's own perceptions and attitudes (Heller, 2007) as part of the school culture. It is therefore important for teachers to reflect on their own perceptions of multilingualism and multilingual learners.

Among the various directions taken by research on multilingualism education, teacher training is one of the main fields of action for integrating pluralistic approaches into a language policy open to plurality. Teachers need to be stimulated to adopt a reflexive attitude that makes them critical of the representations and certainties related to the profession and teaching disciplines. Just as the focus in the classroom has progressively shifted from the subject to the methodology and finally to the learner, so teacher training, which was mainly based on the transmission of concepts and know-how relating to

classroom management, has more recently recognised the centrality of the trainee teacher's individual experience.

Pluralistic approaches, as a way of looking at language teaching and because of the challenges they pose to many preconceptions about languages and language learning, are an ideal way to promote education based on reflection, critical thinking and collaboration. Many factors come into play when teachers relate to languages, which are difficult to identify if they are not critically recognised in their own training: the social status that distinguishes each language, the possibility of appropriating them, the hope of their practical usefulness in the future, and the affective dimension (Blondeau & Salvadori, 2020). For instance, in the Scenario of the Autonomous Province of Bolzano it seems to be important – due to the historical events and ongoing tensions between the different language groups (the three language groups live together separately and ethnic conflicts still occur) (Baur, 2009, 2013; Carlà, 2007; Heiss & Obermair, 2012) – all those involved in education critically reflect their own language history and attitudes towards the other official languages. As Baur (2013) argues, in the case of the Province of Bolzano, the coming together of the language groups and the acquisition of multilingual and intercultural competences depend not only on contacts and cooperation but also on joint processing of the historical trauma, which alone can produce a sensitive understanding of societal equality.

Literature suggests many strategies that can be used to develop greater awareness of multilingual identity. The *linguistic autobiography* (D'Agostino, 2012; Andrade et al., 2020) is an example of a tool to reflect on the complexity of everyone's linguistic history. A linguistic autobiography is a personal narrative or account that focuses on an individual's experiences of and relationship with language throughout his or her life. It usually includes information about the person's linguistic background, including the languages they speak, their language learning experiences and the ways in which language has shaped their identity, culture and communication. Language autobiographies are often used as a tool for self-reflection and as a means of exploring the complex interplay between language and personal identity. For this reason, this technique has been tried and tested in the in-service and initial training of teachers working in multilingual contexts. Other similar tools that can be used in teacher training include *Identity text* (Cummins, 2010), which are written or visual representations, such as essays, stories, drawings, or any form of creative expression, that allow individuals to explore and express their own cultural and linguistic identities.

Advance multilingualism as a positive approach

The term "multilingualism" has many definitions. The term can refer to multilingual individuals or locations where multiple languages are spoken. Therefore, it may be useful to apply the Council of Europe's distinctions between plurilingualism and multilingualism (Lid, 2018). Plurilingualism is defined as the quality of an individual possessing a "plurilingual

repertoire" of language competences, and multilingualism is the attribute of a place, city, society, or nation-state where many languages are spoken (Council of Europe, 2007). Even with precise definitions, the description and perception of multilingualism can occasionally change from one context to another.

A common view of multilingualism is having a population that speaks or understands two or more main languages learnt in school in addition to one or more national languages. Some will define multilingualism as the ability to distinguish between languages that are considered "valued" and those that are not. With very rare exceptions, the languages of relatively recent immigrants continue to be those that are considered to have less significance than the extremely important languages of communication, such as English. In some African countries, there are children who can speak more than one language before they start primary school. They learn one language at home, one or more in the neighbourhood, and then a third or even fourth language at school, where it serves as the medium of instruction (Lid, 2018).

The way people think of multilingualism is as varied as its reality. Linguistic diversity and multilingualism have often been seen as problematic, with monolingualism being considered a more natural and preferable option. Many parents and educationalists believed that having more than one language was detrimental to cognitive development or at least caused some confusion (Cenoz, 2012). However, studies show that multilingualism has a positive impact on cognitive development and meta-linguistic awareness (Baker, 2011) and it seems that professionals are beginning to make more use of learners' entire linguistic repertoires in foreign and second language (L2) education (Taylor & Snoddon, 2013).

The number of multilingual students in European schools and elsewhere has increased recently, which has prompted a re-examination of multilingual student models to enhance multilingual students' academic performance and participation (Duarte & van der Meij, 2018). Considering our four scenarios, which include a national language, a minority language, a foreign language, and numerous immigrant languages, it can be difficult to meet the requirements of multilingual education in an educational system that reflects these realities.

If schools strive for multilingualism and multiliteracy, then multilingual education is the use of two or more languages in the classroom. As such, it serves as a catch-all phrase for a variety of pedagogical strategies that make use of several instruction languages, as well as those that seek to promote elite bilingualism. Using students' family languages as a resource for instruction is a typical element of many new programs designed from a multilingual education perspective (Duarte & van der Meij, 2018).

Translanguaging is one of those novel linguistic subjects that scholars are interested in studying. It refers to the act of multilingual people using their whole language repertoire to communicate, or more specifically to learn in an academic environment. A translanguaging approach to teaching would mean that multilingual students would have the opportunity to

use any language they have access to in a school setting. Although it was always thought that a teacher conducting a language exercise in a L2 setting had to do it exclusively in L2, researchers are now attempting to develop new educational approaches for bilinguals considering the large-scale migration. As a result, translanguaging was presented as a means of bridging L1 and L2. Students can use their whole language repertoire in a translanguaging classroom, and they can switch between L1 and L2 at different points during the learning process (Evgenikou, 2017).

Numerous studies have highlighted the benefits of a translanguaging pedagogy at various school performance levels for both new and old minority languages. According to Duarte and van der Meij (2018), some of these benefits include:

- better lesson completion,
- balancing the power dynamics between the languages in the classroom,
- minority language protection and promotion,
- increased participant, confidence and motivation,
- learning maximisation,
- language empowerment,
- and higher cognitive engagement in content matter learning.

In the past, bilingualism, or multilingualism, was viewed as a hurdle in educational environments, resulting in the separation of languages. However, with translanguaging pedagogies, all languages spoken in a classroom are purposefully and systematically utilised to improve learning outcomes and recognise all students' linguistic diversity and abilities. By providing encouragement and training for teachers to strategically use translanguaging practices, the focus can shift from viewing multilingualism as a problem to continuing to recognise it as a valuable resource (Norro, 2022).

Avoid unbalanced/subtractive bilingualism

The previous section emphasises the shift from viewing multilingualism as a problem and instead encourages the perception of viewing the use of all languages as valuable. Discouraging the use of other languages in school and institutional contexts very often leads to an unbalanced and subtractive bilingualism, in which one or more languages are gradually abandoned and "hidden" because considered less valuable, resulting in a loss of wealth for the individual and society. This is of particular concern when the "hidden" language is the child's first language.

In direct contrast, additive bilingualism encourages learning the second language while the first language is reinforced. In addition, Garcia and Cole (2014) argue that the common practice of treating two languages as equal but separate disregards the intricate language skills of multilingual learners who strive to balance the power dynamics between multiple

languages. This includes efforts to counteract linguistic hierarchies between majority and minority languages, as well as between spoken and signed languages. To give a concrete example, instead of confrontation between spoken and signed languages, the education sector and its authorities should see different languages, cultures and different human abilities as human capital and thus support the bi-multilingualism and identity development of DHH learners in a holistic way.

The growth of bilingualism and the acquisition of a bilingual identity are hampered by keeping one language out of reach of the other (diglossia). Garcia's concept of "Transglossia" was first introduced as a result of this insight (Garcia & Cole, 2014). Transglossia is a communication network that functions on stable and dynamic principles, where diverse languages function in a mutually beneficial interdependent relationship. It prioritises flexible language practices of bilingual/multilingual individuals over preserving linguistic asymmetries among nation-states and socio-economic groups by upholding two or more of their respective languages. Consequently, the study of bilingualism moves away from defending national languages and ideologies.

In the first scenario, there was a DHH learner in a classroom in a 'hearing' environment where others use spoken language. The school could deploy a paired teaching model where two teachers teach in parallel in signed and spoken languages, that is one of the teachers being deaf or hearing person who is fluent in national signed language. The school could also organise an interpreter who conveys the information that enables the DHH learner to access spoken instruction and interaction with others and to express her thoughts in a signed language. These different solutions, such as organising a paired teaching model with suitable teachers, interpreting services and placing other signing children in the same school or classroom supports the DHH learner's identity development. These arrangements show that the school environment accepts the languages and bilingual and cultural identity of DHH people.

Regarding new minority languages, Unganer (2014) claims through her personal migration experience that language loss or attrition has a huge impact on the individual in various aspects of their life. She recommends the following:

- The establishments of partial immersion and/or cultural heritage programmes.
- Educating the public against hostile and racist attitudes.
- Raising parents' awareness of the need for proficiency in the second language, while maintaining their first language identities and cultural values.
- Most importantly, second language teachers should promote additive bilingualism over subtractive bilingualism by creating a welcoming environment.

It is believed that these strategies promote a child's well-being and indicate to the child that all languages are valued equally.

Value all languages and minority language users equally

Minority language is often seen as less important and often ignored. This mindset and attitude reflect linguistically discriminatory thinking, which is also called "linguicism". It is estimated that more than 40% of the world's languages are endangered (Harrison, 2007). Throughout the world, the status of deaf people, signed languages, and deaf education has long been marked by the struggle between spoken languages and signed languages, and by discrimination against deaf people and signed languages (Gallaudet University, 2023).

Minority languages are easily overshadowed by majority languages. The different roles and status of languages are often visible in the school environments, because languages are often valued in different ways, as we can see in all the scenarios. In the field of applied linguistics, multilingualism has been examined from perspectives such as language policy, language planning and attitudes towards the use of different languages. When it comes to language learning in the classroom, it is important to provide a more equal status to the different languages coming together in one classroom, be it the student's native or heritage languages, the language of instruction or the second/third language.

Research has shown that, when the language of origin is used in school, the students' sense of identity, self-esteem and self-concept are strengthened, whereas when these children are simply placed in 'mainstream' education, they are vulnerable to loss of self-esteem and status, and their motivation and interest in schoolwork suffers, with negative effects on performance (Council of Europe, 2020).

To critically address the existing power relations between languages within the school, it is necessary for teachers to work on their own attitudes and perceptions (Section 1), to adopt an approach that values multilingualism in their teaching practice (Section 2), and thus to actively work to prevent their student's bilingualism from becoming unbalanced (Section 3). However, this is not enough if we do not broaden our view to include the context, which, through its organisation, helps to convey a hierarchy of languages and cultures.

A useful tool in this direction is the observation of the *linguistic landscape*, which in this particular context, is called the *linguistic schoolscape*. The term *linguistic landscape* refers to the visual representation of languages in a particular geographic area, typically in public spaces. Traditionally, when thinking of languages in school, our mind runs directly to reading and writing. The landscape perspective broadens our gaze to classrooms and corridors, assembly spaces, playgrounds, signs posted on doors where staff or students work and where students congregate, blackboard writings, signs, and posters on walls. There images combine with different languages to inform, instruct and/or influence. As Krompák and colleagues (2021) have well demonstrated, multilingual inequalities in schools are often reflected in the linguistic schoolscape, because schools are one of the key institutions in the reproduction of the symbolic order, but the mobilisation of the linguistic landscape can also be a pedagogical tool to pursue broader pedagogical goals,

and the use of critical and participatory linguistic landscapes can be an instrument of democracy at school.

Promoting minority language use

In the case of Scenario 1, the UN Convention on the Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD, 2016) contains provisions requiring the recognition and promotion of the use of sign languages. DHH-learners' access to inclusive education on an equal basis with others means delivering education in the most appropriate languages that maximise their academic and social development as per CRPD Article 24. Not providing access to national signed languages constitutes discrimination (International Disability Alliance [IDA], 2020; World Federation of the Deaf [WFD], 2023). Learning and teaching (national) signed languages, sign language-medium education and promotion of positive deaf identity are actions that implement the points of the CRPD agreement which states that "Facilitating the learning of sign language and the promotion of the linguistic identity of the deaf community" (Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities [CRPD], Article 24, b) and "Ensuring that the education of persons, and in particular children, who are blind, deaf or deafblind, is delivered in the most appropriate languages and modes and means of communication for the individual, and in environments which maximise academic and social development." (CRPD, Article 24, 3 c).

Inclusive multilingual education consists of managing learning environments in a way that supports learners' language learning and linguistic-cultural identity also in their minority languages (L1). It can mean, for example, collaborative teaching, peers and adults using the same minority language, translanguaging, using multilingual media materials, teaching each other one's own L1 and linguistically sensitive curriculum planning. More examples and solutions for teaching are described also in the Chapter on *Language Learning for All*.

One important aspect that enables learners to become fully proficient multilinguals is offering multilingual education based on their L1 (Skutnabb-Kangas et al., 2009). This might be one of the biggest challenges in inclusive education. However, education in a minority language (L1) is important for the preservation and protection of the minority group's identity since "its capacity to survive as a cultural group is in jeopardy if no instruction is given in that language" (Capotorti, 1979: 84).

Continuing to learn in the L1 by making constant linguistic comparisons with the L2 does not slow down the learning of the L2 but facilitates it. In the migrant student scenario, no one suggested that the student should continue to use his or her L1 for study in parallel with learning Italian. Either it would have been very easy to find study material in English or to encourage the use of translators. It would also have been possible to activate the Albanian-speaking community in the wider society or to look for other Albanian or English-

speaking students in the school or in similar schools. We therefore argue that teachers should promote the use of the L1, namely the minority language, for learning.

The model suggested by Cummins (1996) serves as a foundation for considering how first-language (L1) proficiency might be seen as significantly facilitating the acquisition of a second language (L2). He claims that a shared underlying skill across languages allows for positive transfer if a L2 is sufficiently exposed to and motivated to learn it. This suggests that transfer will only happen if learners are proficient in their L1, if they receive adequate input in L2, and if they are motivated to acquire that language (Holzinger & Fellinger, 2014; Knoors & Marschark, 2014). Cummins distinguishes between fundamental academic and interpersonal communication skills and broad cognitive language abilities. Academic language skills include broad cognitive language skills as well as language-related problem-solving abilities and literacy abilities. Based on interdependence theory, this fundamental cognitive and academic competency is universal across languages, allowing for the transfer of shared higher-level language and literacy-related skills (Holzinger & Fellinger, 2014). This hypothesis thus suggests that proficiency in a home language will result in a higher level of conceptual and linguistic proficiency as well as literacy in the second language (L2).

Literature further suggests some strategies and adjustments that teachers can practise to promote native language use and the attitude of appreciation of all languages through context. About promoting L1 use, some authors suggest that encouraging *Child Language Brokering* (Pugliese, 2016) improves academic results, as well as *encouraging students talking at home about academic topics* (Andorno-Sordella, 2021). Other strategies that are widely used for this purpose are *Translanguaging* (Cioè-Peña, 2017) and *Intercomprehension* (Wei, 2023).

Intercomprehension and translanguaging (see Section 2) are two concepts that deal with interaction and comprehension between different languages but differ in their approaches and goals. In contrast to translanguaging, inter-comprehension is a concept that refers to the ability to understand and communicate in a foreign language using knowledge of one or more similar or related languages. Individuals using inter-comprehension can recognise similar words, grammatical structures, and language patterns between languages, enabling them to understand and communicate effectively even if they are not fluent in the target language.

Enhancing minority languages beyond the classroom level

As it has been argued in the introduction of this section, when it comes to the enhancement of minority languages, the everyday reality in the classrooms around the world first and foremost depends on the language policy (Laakso et al., 2016). Even though, teacher's actions and methods, their language-awareness and attitudes towards linguistic diversity improve learners' access to their first language and their multilingual development and contribute to more inclusive school environments, the preconditions for doing so are

dependent on measures and actions on a higher level. It is public authorities and educational planners who have a key responsibility in building the foundations that support linguistic diversity at an administrative level.

To make it more concrete, for instance, in the Scenario of the Autonomous Province of Bolzano, changes on the macro-level (i.e., the organisation of the school system) might be necessary. A cross-linguistic "collaboration between policymakers, school authorities, school heads, and teacher training" (Gross, 2019: 159) and the creation of one single school system involving personnel from all three language groups could sustain the preparation for a multilingual society (Baur, 2000; Baur & Videsott, 2012). Another important step could be the adaption of the Ladin school model, the parity model, in which all official languages – minority and majority languages – do have their place and equal value. Further, teachers in these school's act as role models since children encounter the teacher as a trilingual person able to switch from and to each of the three languages since all teachers at Ladin schools have to document their knowledge in all three languages (Risse & Franceschini, 2016).

Another concrete example for possibilities of action on a higher level applies to Scenario 1, the case of Jenna. Around the world and in Europe interpreter services for sign languages vary even though interpreting services are crucial for accessibility as it enables the learner to know what is discussed in the classroom and what the teacher is teaching in the spoken language. Providing interpreting in the educational setting, thus, promotes linguistic accessibility in the learning environment. The World Federation of the Deaf has estimated that 90% of deaf children do not have access to education (Haualand & Allen, 2009). Out of those 10% who have access to education, only a small minority, receives bilingual education where a signed language is used. Communities using signed languages, called as deaf communities, embody a rich Deaf culture with different events, traditions, customs and values. These communities also provide spaces to learn a (national) signed language and build a Deaf identity. Thus, Deaf and sign language communities have valuable knowledge, Deaf-centred ontologies and views of social inclusion (Snoddon, 2020) to share with community members and others. Collaborating with the wider community would therefore be one possibility of action going beyond the classroom level. Teachers and schools can work with local language communities to create spaces where people from minority languages and cultures can meet and teach each other.

Finally, the enhancement of minority languages in educational contexts might be reached also through a higher degree of diversity within the teaching staff. It would be important that linguistic minorities are represented also among the teaching staff, not only among the students. Empirical data of the European Commission (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2023) show that diversity in the teacher population is still quite uncommon in most European countries. Only few European countries do have policies and measures for increasing diversity in the teacher population and these are mostly restricted to the facets of disability and migrant backgrounds (for example, through specific quotas reserved for people with disabilities in the public sector). So, on the one hand we have an increasingly

diverse student population and on the other hand a still quite homogeneous teacher population (Bellacicco & Demo, 2022; Bellacicco et al., 2022), even though research was able to show the positive effects of a diverse teacher workforce, for example role model effects (Goldhaber et al., 2019). Furthermore, dating back to 1994, international agendas asked for a diversification of the teacher population as being a right of students with special educational needs (UN CRPD, 2016; UNESCO, 1994). But why would it be important to have teachers who are minority language speakers in the schools? This possibility for action can be applied to all four scenarios. Jenna, for instance, would encounter a teacher who is deaf or fluent in a national sign language and knows about specific didactical strategies making education accessible to her, acts as a role model, (i.e. self-empowerment, self-advocacy, autobiography), deals openly with the disability and the fact of being a member of a minority language group, who understands Jenna emotionally (Bellacicco et al., 2022). This would not only have a positive impact on Jenna but for *all* children in the classroom. Very similar positive outcomes can be expected for Enson and Elina if in their classroom there would be a teacher of their same linguistic community. For Giulio's case, options of action might be slightly different since the presence of the minority language teachers in the school has already been established but is apparently not sufficient to make the context inclusive. Instead, a closer collaboration between the Italian speaking subject teachers and the L2-German teacher would be necessary to reach a further level of inclusion (for example, co-teaching and bilingual lessons; content integrated language learning [CLIL] where teachers of both or all three languages are involved).

Closing remarks

Human communication varies widely, showing up in the many linguistic families, the wide range of dialects and registers within each community but also in the diverse communication practices among different actors, contexts, and time points (Blommaert, 2010). Therefore, it seems clear that "diversity is an inherent feature of the phenomenon of language" whereby the latter can play a powerful role in creating and reinforcing social inequalities (de Korne, 2021), such as when children and adolescents who are minority language users are disadvantaged in educational contexts (Heller & Martin-Jones, 2001). Due to restricted time and resources very often, it is decided to only give space to specific languages without considering what would be an effective contribution to the learners' well-being and social equality (de Korne, 2021). For decades, there have been criticisms that education systems have failed to support minority language learners. As teachers, we must be particularly careful to ensure that the use and development of *all* languages is actually supported, since these issues are linked to democracy, linguistic and minority, but more generally, to human rights and sustainable development. Even though language is mostly absent and invisible in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Fettes, 2023), according to Tonkin (2023), it is a key issue and affects human rights and (e)quality of

education. Therefore, "if we wish to unite humanity around a common goal, we must first address the need for effective and inclusive communication: talking is of no avail if it is not accompanied by understanding – and understanding will not lead to action if it is unaccompanied by persuasion. Persuasion implies listening, because our common future requires consensus" (Tonkin, 2023: 3).

Local contexts

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=436#h5p-8

Closing questions to discuss or tasks

1. Investigate and describe a scenario in your community/country that may be similar or vastly different from those depicted in this chapter.
2. Describe the policies/laws that underpin your scenario.
3. What works well in your scenario and what does not?
4. What possible strategies do you suggest to enhance the learning environment for the learner(s) in your scenario?

Literature

Ainscow, M., A. Dyson, and S. Weiner. *From Exclusion to Inclusion: Ways of Responding in Schools to Students with Special Educational Needs*. CfBT Education Trust, 2013.

Alcock, A. "The South Tyrol Autonomy. A Short Introduction," 2001.

Alliance (IDA), International Disability. "What an Inclusive, Equitable Quality Education Means to Us: Report of International Disability Alliance," 2020.

Andorno, C., and S. Sordella. "Promoting Communication Practices about School Activities in Multilingual Families." In *Cultures in Dialogue: Learning through Interaction at Home and in School*, edited by Benjamins. Amsterdam, 2021.

Auer, P. "On the Inclusiveness of the Education System in a Multination State from the

Perspective of Primary School Children and Teachers' Values." In *International Perspectives on Inclusive Education: In the Light of Educational Justice*, edited by S. Seitz P. Auer and R. Bellacicco. Barbara Budrich, 2023.

Baker, C. *Foundations of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*. 5th ed. Multilingual Matters, 2011.

Barban, Nicoal, and Michael J. White. "Immigrants' Children's Transition to Secondary School in Italy." *International Migration Review* 45, no. 3 (2011): 702–26.

Bellacicco, R., D. Ianes, and V. Macchia. "Teachers with Disabilities: A Systematic Review of the International Literature." *Form@re* 22, no. 1 (2022): 64–88. https://doi.org/10.36253/form-12138.

Blondeau, N., and E. Salvadori. "Introduction. Autobiographies Langagières: Pour Une Conscientisation Des Trajets Existentiels et Professionnels Des Enseignants." *Italiano LinguaDue* 12, no. 2 (2020): 254–67.

Bonizzoni, Paola, Marco Romito, and Cristina Cavallo. "Teachers' Guidance, Family Participation and Track Choice: The Educational Disadvantage of Immigrant Students in Italy." *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 37, no. 5 (2016): 702–20.

Brentari, D. *Sign Languages*. Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Capotorti, F. *Study on the Rights of Persons Belonging to Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities*. United Nations, 1979.

Carlá, A. "Living Apart in the Same Room: Analysis of the Management of Linguistic Diversity in Bolzano." *Ethnopolitics* 6, no. 2 (2007): 285–313.

Cenoz, J. "Multilingualism." In *The Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics*, edited by C. A. Chapelle, 2012. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405198431.wbeal0791.

Chavez, A. "Rights in Education and Self-Identity: Education and Language of Instruction in Namibia." *International Education Studies* 9, no. 3 (2016): 189–1196.

Cioè-Peña, M. "The Intersectional Gap: How Bilingual Students in the United States Are Excluded from Inclusion." *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 21, no. 9 (2017): 906–19.

Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, European. *Promoting Diversity and Inclusion in Schools in Europe. Eurydice Report*. Publications Office of the European Union, 2023.

———. *The Teaching of Regional and Minority Languages in Schools in Europe*. Publications Office of the European Union, 2019. https://doi.org/10.2797/47209.

Cummins, J. *Bilingualism and Minority-Language Children*. The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1981.

———. *Negotiating Identities: Education for Empowerment in a Diverse Society*. California Association for Bilingual Education, 1996.

Cummins, Jim, and Ed Early. *Identity Texts: The Collaborative Creation of Power in Multilingual Schools*. Trentham Books Ltd., 2010.

D'Anglejan, A. "Bilingualism and Special Education: Issues in Assessment and Pedagogy. Jim Cummins. Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters, 1984. Pp. x 306." *Studies in Second*

Language Acquisition 10, no. 2 (1988): 267–69. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0272263100007373.

De Korne, H. *Language Activism*. Vol. 114. Contributions to the Sociology of Language [CSL]. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2021.

Deaf, World Federation of the. "Declaration on the Rights of Deaf Children: Position Paper," 2023. https://wfdeaf.org/news/resources/declaration-on-the-rights-of-deaf-children/.

Dewaele, J. M. "Why the Dichotomy 'L1 versus LX User' Is Better than 'Native versus Non-Native Speaker.'" *Applied Linguistics* 39, no. 2 (2018): 236–40.

Duarte, J., and M. van der Meij. "A Holistic Model for Multilingualism in Education." *EuroAmerican Journal of Applied Linguistics and Languages* 5, no. 2 (2018): 24–43. https://doi.org/10.21283/2376905X.9.153.

Economic, United Nations Department of, and Social Affairs (UN DESA). "State of the World's Indigenous Peoples (Volume III): Education," 2017. https://social.desa.un.org/sites/default/files/migrated/19/2017/12/State-of-Worlds-Indigenous-Peoples_III_WEB2018.pdf.

Education, Ministry of, and Culture (MEC). "The Language Policy for Schools – 1992-1996 and Beyond." Longman, 1993.

Europe, Council of. "European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages," 1992.

———. *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages*. Council of Europe, 1998.

———. *From Linguistic Diversity to Plurilingual Education: Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies in Europe*. Council of Europe, 2007.

———. *Good Practices of Multilingual and Minority Language Medium Education*. Council of Europe, 2020.

Evgenikou, U.N.T. "Final Essay Translanguaging on Landscape and Classroom Environment: Hellenic Open University," 2017.

Fang, T. T. "How to Maintain a Minority Language through Education." *Chinese Studies* 6 (2017): 1–11. https://doi.org/10.4236/chnstd.2017.61001.

February, P. J. "Teaching and Learning to Read in Afrikaans: Teacher Competence and Computer-Assisted Support." PhD Thesis, University of Jyväskylä, 2018. https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.25457.25448.

Fettes, M. "Language and the Sustainable Development Goals: Challenges to Language Policy and Planning." In *Language and Sustainable Development*, edited by L. J. McEntee-Atalianis and H. Tonkin, 11–26. Springer, 2023. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-24918-1_2.

García, O. "From Diglossia to Transglossia: Bilingual and Multilingual Classrooms in the 21st Century." In *Bilingual and Multilingual Education in the 21st Century: Building on Experience*, edited by C. Abello-Contesse P. Chandler, M. López-Jiménez and R. Chacón-Beltrán, 155–75. Multilingual Matters, 2013. https://doi.org/10.21832/9781783090716-012.

Garcia, O., and D. Cole. "Deaf Gains in the Study of Bilingualism and Bilingual Education." In *Deaf Gain: Raising the Stakes for Human Diversity*, edited by H. Dirksen L. Bauman and J. J. Murray, 95–111. University of Minnesota Press, 2014.

Gertz, Genie, and Patrick Boudreault. *The SAGE Deaf Studies Encyclopedia*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2016.

Gibbons, J., and E. Ramirez. *Maintaining a Minority Language: A Case Study of Hispanic Teenagers*. Multilingual Matters LTD, 2004.

Goldhaber, D., R. Theobald, and C. Tien. "Why We Need a Diverse Teacher Workforce." *Phi Delta Kappan* 100, no. 5 (2019): 25–30. https://doi.org/10.1177/0031721719827540.

Grenoble, L. A., and A. R. Singerman. *Minority Languages*. Oxford University Press, 2014. https://doi.org/10.1093/obo/9780199772810-0176.

Gross, B. *Further Language Learning in Linguistic and Cultural Diverse Contexts: A Mixed Methods Research in a European Border Region*. Routledge, 2019.

Harrison, K. D. *When Languages Die: The Extinction of the World's Languages and the Erosion of Human Knowledge*. Oxford University Press, 2007.

Hauland, H., and C. Allen. *Deaf People and Human Rights. Report of the World Federation of the Deaf*, 2009.

Heller, M. *Bilingualism: A Social Approach*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

Henner, J., and O. Robinson. "Crip Linguistics Goes to School." *Languages (Basel)* 8, no. 1 (2023): 48. https://doi.org/10.3390/languages8010048.

Holzinger, D., and J. Fellinger. "Sign Language and Reading Comprehension: No Automatic Transfer." In *Bilingualism and Bilingual Deaf Education*, edited by M. Marschark G. Tang and H. Knoors, 102–33. Oxford University Press, 2014.

Kamwangamalu, N. M. "Effects of Policy on English-Medium Instruction in Africa." *World Englishes* 32 (2013). https://doi.org/10.1111/weng.12034.

Knoors, H., and M. Marschark. *Teaching Deaf Learners: Psychological and Developmental Foundations*. Oxford University Press, 2014.

Krompák, E., V. Fernández-Mallat, and S. Meyer. *Linguistic Landscapes and Educational Spaces*. Vol. 98. Multilingual Matters, 2021.

Laakso, J., A. Sarhimaa, S. Spiliopoulou Åkermark, and R. Toivanen. *Towards Openly Multilingual Policies and Practices: Assessing Minority Language Maintenance Across Europe*. Bristol, Blue Ridge Summit: Multilingual Matters, 2016. https://doi.org/10.21832/9781783094967.

Lancet, T. "World Report on Disability." *The Lancet (British Edition)* 377, no. 9782 (2011): 1977. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(11)60844-1.

Lee, J. J. "The Native Speaker: An Achievable Model." *Asian EFL Journal* 7, no. 2 (2005): 152–63.

Lid, K. "The Impact of Multilingualism on Global Education and Language Learning." Cambridge Assessment English Perspectives UCLES, 2018.

Medda-Windischer, R. "Migration and Old Minorities in South Tyrol: Beyond a 'Nimby' Approach?" In *Migration and Autonomous Territories: The Case of South Tyrol and Catalonia*, edited by R. Medda-Windischer and A. Carlà, 100–133. Brill Nijoff, 2015.

Mitchell, R. E., and M. Karchmer. "Chasing the Mythical Ten Percent: Parental Hearing Status

of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students in the United States." *Sign Language Studies* 4, no. 2 (2004): 138–63. https://doi.org/10.1353/sls.2004.0005.

Moseley, C. (Ed.). *Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger*. UNESCO, 2010.

Motitswe, J., and M. Taole. "Developing a Flexible Curriculum for Inclusive Education." In *Inclusive Education: An African Perspective*, edited by N. Phasha and J. Condy, 220–40. Oxford, 2016.

Murray, J. J., Kraus, M., and M. De Meulder. "The Legal Recognition of Sign Languages." *Sign Language Studies* 15, no. 4 (2015): 498–506.

Murray, J. J., Meulder, M. D., and D. L. Maire. "An Education in Sign Language as a Human Right?: The Sensory Exception in the Legislative History and Ongoing Interpretation of Article 24 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities." *Human Rights Quarterly* 40, no. 1 (2018): 37–60. https://doi.org/10.1353/hrq.2018.0001.

Museum, National Deaf Life. "Online Exhibition," 2023. https://gallaudet.edu/museum/.

Nations, United. "General Comment No. 4: Article 24 – Right to Inclusive Education," 2016. https://www.refworld.org/docid/57c977e34.html.

Norro, S. "Factors Affecting Language Policy Choices in the Multilingual Context of Namibia: English as the Official Language and Medium of Instruction." *Journal of Applied Language Studies* 16, no. 1 (2022): 1–20.

Pasikowska-Schnass, M. *Regional and Minority Languages in the European Union*. European Parliament, 2016.

Pugliese, R. "Tradurre per La Compagna Di Banco: Child Language Brokering e Interazioni Costruttive Nella Classe Plurilingue." In *Sviluppo Della Competenza Lessicale*, edited by L. Corrà, 1–20. Aracne, 2016.

Rautz, G. *Die Sprachenrechte Der Minderheiten: Ein Rechtsvergleich Zwischen Österreich Und Italien*. Nomos, 1999.

Risse, S., and R. Franceschini. "Auftrieb Durch Parallele Alphabetisierung: Analysen Aus Dem Dreisprachigen Schulsystem in Gröden Und Gadertal (Südtirol)." In *Mehrsprachigkeit Als Ressource in Der Schriftlichkeit*, edited by P. Rosenberg and C. Schoeder, 239–64. De Gruyter, 2016.

Romito, Marco. "L'orientamento Scolastico Nella Tela Delle Disuguaglianze? Una Ricerca Sulla Formulazione Dei Consigli Orientativi al Termine Delle Scuole Medie." *Scuola Democratica* 2 (2014): 441–60.

Skutnabb-Kangas, T., R. Phillipson, and A. K. Mohanty. *Social Justice through Multilingual Education*. Multilingual Matters, 2009.

Snoddon, K. "The Social and Epistemological Violence of Inclusive Education for Deaf Learners." *Canadian Journal of Disability Studies* 9, no. 5 (2020): 185–213. https://doi.org/10.15353/cjds.v9i5.695.

Snoddon, K., and J. J. Paul. "Framing Sign Language as a Health Need in Canadian and International Policy." *Maternal and Child Health Journal* 24, no. 11 (2020): 1360–64. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10995-020-02974-8.

Taylor, S., and K. Snoddon. "Plurilingualism in TESOL: Promising Controversies." In *TESOL Perspectives*, 2013.

UNESCO. "Atlas of the World's Languages," n.d. https://en.wal.unesco.org/world-atlas-languages.

———. "The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education," 1994. www.right-to-education.org/sites/right-to-education.org/files/resource-attachments/Salamanca_Statement_1994.pdf.

Unganer, T. "First Language Loss; Why Should We Care?" *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences* 158 (2014): 351–55. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.12.099.

United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). "UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity," 2001. https://www.refworld.org/docid/435cbcd64.html.

University, Gallaudet. "History Through Deaf Eyes – Assimilation through Spoken English," 2023. https://gallaudet.edu/museum/exhibits/history-through-deaf-eyes/language-and-identity/assimilation-through-spoken-english/.

Voltmer, L., Lanthaler, F., Abel, A., and M. Oberhammer. "Insights into the Linguistic Situation of South Tyrol." In *Aspects of Multilingualism in European Border Regions: Insights and Views from Alsace, Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, Lublin Voivodeship and South Tyrol*, edited by A. Abel M. Stuflesser and L. Voltmer, 197–258. LEO, 2007.

Wei, L. "Transformative Pedagogy for Inclusion and Social Justice through Translanguaging, Co-Learning, and Transpositioning." *Language Teaching*, 2023, 1–12.

Wisthaler, V. "Identity Politics in the Educational System in South Tyrol: Balancing between Minority Protection and the Need to Manage Diversity." *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 13, no. 3 (2013): 358–72.

Wu, R., and E. Struys. "Language Dominance and Sociolinguistic Experience Are Related to Language Control and Domain-General Monitoring Control: An Investigation in Bilinguals Who Live in a Minority/Majority Sociolinguistic Setting." *Frontiers in Psychology* 12 (2021): 594648. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.594648.

Zinn, D. L. "Migrant Incorporation in South Tyrol and Essentialized Local Identities." In *Boundaries within: Nation, Kinship and Identity among Migrants and Minorities*, edited by F. Decimo and A. Gribaldo, 93–114. IMISCOE Research Series, Springer, 2017. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-53331-5.

———. *Migrants as Metaphor: Institutions and Integration in South Tyrol's Divided Society*. CISU, 2018.

Local context/Local Literature

Andrade, I., M. Candelier, and M. D. Carlo. "Le Rôle Des Référentiels Dans Une Approche Réflexive de Formation Des Enseignants de Langues: Instruments d'uniformisation Ou Ressources Pour Le Développement Professionnel?" *Italiano LinguaDue* 12, no. 2 (2020):

Articolo 2. https://doi.org/10.13130/2037-3597/14997.

ASTAT. "Jugendstudie: Werthaltungen, Lebensformen Und Lebensentwürfe Der Südtiroler Jugend / Indagine Sui Giovani: Valori, Stili Di Vita e Progetti per Il Futuro Dei Giovani Altoatesini 2016," 2017. https://astat.provinz.bz.it/de/aktuelles-publikationen-info.asp?news_action=4&news_article_id=599014.

Baur, S. *Die Tücken Der Nähe: Kommunikation Und Kooperation in Mehrheits-/Minderheits-Situationen*. Alpha & Beta, 2000.

———. "Schwierigkeiten Und Möglichkeiten Einer Erziehung Für Ein Mehrsprachiges Europa Am Beispiel Der Grenzregion Südtirol." *Synergies Pays Germanophones* 6 (2013): 71–82.

Baur, S. A. "Einleitung." In *Die Sprache Der Anderen: Aspekte Der Sprachen- Und Schulpolitik in Südtirol von 1945 Bis Heute*, edited by S. Baur G. Mezzalira and W. Pichler, 11–54. Alpha & Beta, 2009.

Baur, S., and G. Videsott. "Klassenpartnerschaften Zwischen Deutschen Und Italienischen Grund- Und Mittelschulen in Südtirol." In *Austauschpädagogik Und Austauscherfahrung: Sprach- Und Kommunikationslernen Durch Austausch*, edited by S. Baur, 97–134. Schneider, 2012.

Bellacicco, R., and H. Demo. "(Futuri) Insegnanti Con Disabilità/DSA: Lo Stato Dell'arte." In *Insegnanti Con Disabilità e DSA: Dilemmi, Sfide e Opportunità*, edited by R. Bellacicco M. Pavone and D. Ianes, 33–62. FrancoAngeli, 2022.

D'Agostino, M. *Sociolinguistica Dell'Italia Contemporanea*. Il Mulino, 2007.

Heiss, H., and H. Obermair. "Erinnerungskulturen Im Widerstreit: Das Beispiel Der Stadt Bozen/Bolzano 2000-2010." In *Der Grenzraum Als Erinnerungsort: Über Den Wandel Zu Einer Postnationalen Erinnerungskultur in Europa*, edited by P. Ostermann C. Müller and K.-S. Rehberg, 63–80. Transcript Verlag, 2012.

Istruzione, Ministero dell'. "Gli Alunni Con Cittadinanza Non Italiana," 2024. https://miur.gov.it/documents/20182/8426729/NOTIZIARIO_Stranieri_2223.pdf/.

Italia. "Legge 15 Dicembre 1999, n. 482, 'Norme in Materia Di Tutela Delle Minoranze Linguistiche Storiche.'" *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, December 1999. https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/1999/12/20/099G0557/sg.

Katsui, H., M. Koivisto, S. Tepora-Niemi, N. Meriläinen, P. Rautiainen, P. Rainò, and H. Hiilamo. "Viitotut Muistot: Selvitys Kuuroihin Ja Viittomakielisiin Suomen Historiassa 1900-Luvulta Nykypäivään Kohdistuneista Vääryyksistä Sekä Niiden Käsittelyyn Tarkoitetun Totuus- Ja Sovintoprosessin Käynnistämisen Edellytyksistä." Valtioneuvoston kanslia, 2021.

Lange, S. D., and S. Pohlmann-Rother. "Überzeugungen von Grundschullehrkräften Zum Umgang Mit Nicht-Deutschen Erstsprachen Im Unterricht." *Zeitschrift Für Bildungsforschung* 10 (2020): 43–60. https://doi.org/10.1007/s35834-020-00265-4.

MIUR. "Linee Guida per l'accoglienza e l'integrazione Degli Alunni Stranieri," 2014. https://www.miur.gov.it/documents/20182/2223566/linee_guida_integrazione_alunni_stranieri.pdf/

5e41fc48-3c68-2a17-ae75-1b5da6a55667?t=1564667201890.

Nössing. "14.000 Jahre Land Im Gebirge." In *Das Südtirol-Handbuch*, edited by Südtiroler Landesregierung- Bozen, 30th ed., 7–20. Landespresseamt, 2017.

Pugliese, R. "Tradurre per La Compagna Di Banco: Child Language Brokering e Interazioni Costruttive Nella Classe Plurilingue." In *Sviluppo Della Competenza Lessicale*, edited by L. Corrà, 1–20. Aracne, 2016.

Rautz, G. *Die Sprachenrechte Der Minderheiten: Ein Rechtsvergleich Zwischen Österreich Und Italien*. Nomos, 1999.

Risse, S., and R. Franceschini. "Auftrieb Durch Parallele Alphabetisierung: Analysen Aus Dem Dreisprachigen Schulsystem in Gröden Und Gadertal (Südtirol)." In *Mehrsprachigkeit Als Ressource in Der Schriftlichkeit*, edited by P. Rosenberg and C. Schoeder, 239–64. De Gruyter, 2016.

Romito, Marco. "L'orientamento Scolastico Nella Tela Delle Disuguaglianze? Una Ricerca Sulla Formulazione Dei Consigli Orientativi al Termine Delle Scuole Medie." *Scuola Democratica* 2 (2014): 441–60.

Scala, A. "La Romaní in Italia Tra Rappresentazione e Legittimazione." *Language Problems and Language Planning* 44, no. 3 (2021): 346–70.

Steininger, R. *Südtirol Im 20. Jahrhundert: Vom Leben Und Überleben Einer Minderheit*, 2004.

Verra, R. "Das Schulsystem in Den Ladinischen Ortschaften." *Bündner Schulblatt = Bollettino Scolastico Grigione = Fegl Scholastic Grischun* 73, no. 6 (2011): 10–11.

———. "Die Entwicklung Der Drei Schulmodelle in Südtirol Seit 1945." *Ladinia* 17 (2008): 223–60.

About the authors

Petra Auer

Petra Auer is a trained primary school teacher qualified to teach children with special educational needs. She holds a PhD in General Pedagogy, Social Pedagogy, General Didactics and Disciplinary Didactics. Her main research interests are diversity and inclusion in education settings, children's values, value transmission, and socialization and acculturation in the school context.

Beausetha   Juhetha Bruwer

Beausetha Bruwer, instructor of inclusive education, deaf education, and sign language. Experiences as a teacher of deaf children and as a teacher and sign

language interpreter trainer at college and university level. Her key areas of research interest include, among other things: language education, early literacy and language acquisition/ development for deaf learners, sign language linguistics and practices, Deaf culture, mother tongue education, multilingual education, early childhood inclusive practices, play pedagogy, outdoor pedagogy, and teacher preparation for inclusive practices.

Dr. Pamela February

Dr Pamela J. February is a senior lecturer in the Department of Early Childhood Education and Care in the School of Education at the University of Namibia. Her areas of interest and expertise include inclusive education practices; early childhood education and care; deaf education; how learners/students learn and how we should assess them; reading acquisition and fluency; vocabulary acquisition; mathematics education and the use of technology to enhance inclusive learning. In addition, she has written articles and book chapters and supervised postgraduate students in these areas.

Federica Festa

Federica Festa focuses on participatory practices in schools and conducts research on how to include individuals with predominantly or entirely non-verbal communication in such practices. She works as a special education teacher in upper secondary schools and teaches in specialization courses for special education teachers. Her teaching focuses on how to analyze oral and written texts in schools from a sociolinguistic perspective, aiming to design their accessible adaptation within an inclusive framework.

PART V

SECTION 5: INCLUSIVE TEACHING METHODS AND ASSESSMENT

UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING

Margaret Flood; Anna Frizzarin; and María Pilar Gray Carlos

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://book.all-means-all.education/ ama-2025-en/?p=144#oembed-1

Example Case

This practical example provides a possible template that teachers can follow to plan their learning and teaching. Column 1 represents a learning activity designed for a Science class adopting a rather traditional approach. Column 2 describes the same activity but planned according to Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles and guidelines. Column 3 specifies which aspects of the UDL-framework are tackled by the changes made in the UDL-plan.

	Non-UDL	UDL	Actions
Objective(s)			
	The students will write the name and the correct functions of each cell part.	The students will be able to correctly identify each cell part and describe its functions.	The goal is written as to provide flexibility so that students will have choices for how the goal is to be achieved.
Learning Activity			
	The teacher introduces the information about the cell parts and functions using a PowerPoint with text (frontal lecture).Afterwards students are asked to create cell models with cookies and decorations.*Materials available: cookies, icing, decorations.*Physical space: students sit in their assigned seats.	The teacher introduces the information about the cell parts and functions using a PowerPoint with text, pictures, video clips (frontal lecture). After that, students examine and discuss in pairs 3D cell models.The teacher then asks the students to name cell parts and describe their functions. To carry out the activity, students can choose to work individually, with a partner, or in a small group. Moreover, they can choose among what "product" to create: a cookie model, a poster, 3D models, a song, a video, an interactive web-based program on cells, other (get teacher approval).*Materials available: cookies, icing, decorations, poster boards, writing utensils, computers, and iPads with needed software/apps.*Physical space: tables, desks, computer stations, open spaces.	Provide options for perception. Foster collaboration and community.Foster collaboration and community. Optimise individual choice and autonomy. Use multiple media for communication.Use multiple tools for construction and composition.
Evaluation			
	Given a worksheet, students will fill in the blanks by writing names of cell parts and their functions.	Students will have the following options: • Write cell part names and descriptions of functions on a blank diagram. • Point to and verbally name each cell part and describe its function (on the 3D cell model). • Other options if approved by the teacher.	Optimise individual choice and autonomy. Use multiple media for communication.

In this chapter you will find the answers to the following questions:

1. What is UDL's framework?
2. What is variability and neurodiversity?
3. How does UDL support my Planning, Teaching and Learning, Feedback and Assessment?

Introduction to Topic

What is UDL?

This introduction to Universal Design for learning (UDL) describes the concept of UDL and its three principles of Engagement, Representation, and Action and Expression. It talks about variability, a key concept underpinning UDL, and how neurodiversity is defined within the context of UDL.

The UDL Guidelines were first introduced by CAST in 2008 as a framework to improve and optimise teaching and learning for all people based on scientific insights into how humans learn. The guidelines have evolved through several iterations, with the latest being UDL Guidelines 3.0, released in July 202412. UDL Guidelines 3.0 emphasises creating inclusive and flexible learning environments by addressing barriers rooted in biases and systems of exclusion. It integrates asset-based approaches and theoretical frameworks, focusing on learners' multiple and intersecting identities. This version shifts from educator-centred to learner-centred language, promoting interdependence and collective learning. Since its inception, the UDL framework has been dynamic, continuously developed based on new research and feedback from practitioners. Each update has aimed to better honour and value every learner, ensuring that all can access and participate in meaningful, challenging learning opportunities. Universal Design for Learning is a change in mindset and a framework for inclusion. UDL is a proactive approach to learning, teaching, and assessment design that supports the varied identities, competencies, learning strengths, and needs of every learner in our classroom and school community. The UDL Guidelines are the tool to support inclusive practices in our learning environments. They do this by providing opportunities to offer a variety of pathways (choice and flexibility) to learners to ensure that:

- Learners understand the lesson content
- Goals are clear and specific to the expected outcome
- Assessment is flexibly designed to facilitate every learner to communicate and demonstrate their learning, knowledge, values, and skills through a variety of formats (Meyer et al., 2014).

UDL highlights three design principles that provide a map for teachers: Engagement, Representation, and Action and Expression. The UDL Guidelines offer recommendations, or checkpoints, for enacting each UDL principle (see Fig. 2).

The Universal Design for Learning Guidelines

The goal of UDL is **learner agency** that is purposeful & reflective, resourceful & authentic, strategic & action-oriented.

Design Multiple Means of Engagement	Design Multiple Means of Representation	Design Multiple Means of Action & Expression
Access		
Design Options for **Welcoming Interests & Identities (7)**	Design Options for **Perception (1)**	Design Options for **Interaction (4)**
• Optimize choice and autonomy (7.1) • Optimize relevance, value, and authenticity (7.2) • Nurture joy and play (7.3) • Address biases, threats and distractions (7.4)	• Support opportunities to customise the display of information (1.1) • Support multiple ways to perceive information (1 2) • Represent a diversity of perspectives and identities in authentic ways (1.3)	• Vary and honor the methods for response, navigation and movement (4.1) • Optimize access to accessible materials and assistive and accessible technologies and tools (4.2)
Support		
Design Options for **Sustaining Effort & Persistence (8)**	Design Options for **Language & Symbols (2)**	Design Options for **Expression & Communication (5)**
• Clarity the meaning and purpose of goals (8.1) • Optimize challenge and support (8.2) • Faster collaboration, interdependence, and collective learning (8.3) • Faster belonging and community (8.4) • Offer action-oriented feedback (.5)	• Clarity vocabulary, symbols, and language structures (2.1) • Support decoding of text, mathematical notation, and symbols (2.2) • Cultivate understanding and respect across languages and dialects (2.3) • Address biases in the use of language and symbols (2.4) • Illustrate through multiple media (2.5)	• Use multiple media for communication (5.1) • Use multiple tools for construction, composition, and creativity (5.2) • Build fluencies with graduated support for practice and performance (5.3) • Address biases related to modes of expression and communication (5.4)
Executive Function		
Design Options for **Emotional Capacity (9)**	Design Options for **Building Knowledge (3)**	Design Options for **Strategy Developments (6)**
• Recognize expectations, beliefs, and mativations (9.1) • Develop awareness of self and others (9.2) • Promote individual and	• Connect prior knowledge to new learning (3.1) • Highlight and explore patterns, critical features, big ideas and relationships (3.2)	• Set meaningful goals (6.1) • Anticipate and plan for challenges (6.2) • Organize information and resources (6.3)

Fig. 2. UDL Guidelines by CAST.

Multiple means of engagement

Learners differ greatly in the ways they can be engaged or motivated, and that external factors can impact on this. Thus, teachers need to ask: How can, and will, our learners engage? In order to facilitate learner engagement, variability needs to be considered. A variety of elements can influence how learners engage, including neurology, culture, personal relevance, subjectivity, and background knowledge. The diverse needs of learners requires that numerous engagement strategies are employed to support every learner in every context. For example, some students may not be interested or ready to participate straight away. Some will tire easily because of the physical or cognitive effort involved in achieving the learning goal whereas others will look forward to the practical elements. If teachers provide multiple, intentionally designed options for engagement, then each learner is offered a way into their learning (CAST, 2024).

Multiple means of representation

Learners perceive and comprehend information presented to them differently. Thus, teachers need to ask; how will learners perceive the content presented to them and how can the content be best presented in a way that provides access for each learner to engage with learning? Like engagement, there is not a one-size-fits-all means of representation. Some will not have sufficient access through text and will process information better through visual or auditory means. Others will enjoy independently exploring the content. Some will work better if they can access instructions in stages as they work through the content or task (CAST, 2024, Flood & Banks 2021)(reference(s) for this part).

Multiple means of action and expression

Every learner navigates their learning environment and expresses what they know differently. Thus, teachers need to ask; how can learners best act on their learning and demonstrate their knowledge, learning, values, and skills? Are learners given the opportunity to show their best selves? There is no one means of action and expression. Rather, it is about being clear on the goal of the task and providing those intentional options to learners that enable them to achieve. Some will not know how to start a task or how to express themselves clearly, or they may be unable to plan their actions. Others will have a system for planning their actions and will easily craft an essay, project, or presentation to display

their knowledge. Some may be able to express themselves well in writing but not speech, and vice versa. Thus, if only one act of expression is offered to learners, they may feel they will not accomplish the task well. (Cast, 2024; Flood & Banks 2021) (reference(s) for this part).

Designing for Variability

For teachers, there may be a fear around inclusive practices and how to design for the inclusion of every learner in class sizes of up to 30 learners. UDL encourages moving away from a learning approach which focuses on? lesson design, in terms of ability and disability, to one which promotes? variability. Through this UDL mindset, learners are not labelled by their disability, social background, gender, race, and so on, instead the approach involves all learners? Variability recognises not only the diversity in a group of learners but also the variability within each learner. It considers the 'jagged profile' (Rose, 2016) as a more comprehensive way of identifying a holistic view of our learners' strengths and areas for support. This jagged-profile approach to variability pays attention to context and the environment that facilitates intentional design to remove barriers to learning.

Neurodiversity

Variability is a dominant feature of UDL because it is the dominant feature of the nervous system (Meyer, Rose & Gordon, 2014). Neurodiversity in UDL recognises that there is no single way that a brain will respond to the learning environment. Because there is no 'average' brain and therefore no 'average' learner, teachers need to stop planning, teaching, and assessing based on that idea. UDL recognises that there are goals which drive the nervous system. Thus, the brain is divided into three strategic networks (see Fig. 3) that the UDL principles were designed around:

- The Affective Networks (Engagement), which is the how of learning
- The Recognition Networks (Representation), which is the what of learning
- The Strategic Networks (Action and Expression), which is the why of learning.

Fig. 3. The three UDL strategic networks by CAST.

Affective networks:	Recognition networks:	Strategic networks:
The **why** of learning	The **what** of learning	The **how** of learning
Engagement	**Representation**	**Action & Expression**
For purposeful, motivated learners, stimulate interest and motivation for learning.	For resourceful, knowledgeable learners, present information and content in different ways.	For strategic, goal-directed learners, differentiate the ways that students can express what they know.

based on CAST

The UDL Guidelines, and associated checkpoints, correspond to the nervous system and brain structure in order to help teachers address the predictable variability in learning that will be present in any environment (CAST, 2018; Meyer et al., 2014).

Key aspects

The following three main sections – Planning, Teaching and Learning, and Assessment and Feedback – provide a general overview of how UDL supports inclusive teacher practices. Each section follows the same structure. Initially, we briefly outline how these key aspects are conceptualised within the UDL-framework. Options are then considered in order to deepen understanding of each topic with relevant examples on how to enact the three UDL principles for both in-person and digital learning environments. For modelling UDL-principles, two alternative tables (A and B) will be provided for the two settings (in presence and online/hybrid) respectively, from which the readers can choose according to their own needs and/or interests.

Planning

A key priority is to understand that UDL is goal driven. Teachers need to focus on the learning outcome of a particular lesson or indeed a unit of lessons. Only once the goal

is clear and specific to the learning outcome, can the teacher identify barriers to learners achieving this outcome. In other words? once these barriers are identified, teachers can then design their lessons to remove them. This may appear as an onerous task involving planning for each individual learner separately, however, this is not the case. As UDL is designed around the connection between the three learning networks of the brain, variability can be predicted, hence learning can be intentionally designed for (Myer et al, 2014). A practical example of this is planning a lesson to debate the pros and cons of the plastic bottle. The teacher knows the goal is to debate/form an argument. However, writing a paragraph on the topic is the required goal. Consequently, students now face a barrier as the lesson plan has not considered the variability of the learners. There are barriers for students who may find writing a challenge, might have dyslexia, may be slow writers, or for whom English is not their first language. In this case, the teacher can create specific choices or pathways for students (e.g., an oral or poster presentation or a written presentation) which is designed to offer them a variety of means to meet the goal of debating.

It is also important to note that to support variability in learners' options for Engagement, Representation, and Action and Expression must be integrated at the planning stage so that they can be put into practice at the later stages.

Tab. 1a. UDL-Planning for in-person learning contexts.

UDL-Planning for in-person learning contexts
UDL planning is goal-driven. That is, once the intended learning outcome for a unit of lessons is defined, teachers will then need to consider how to address their learners' variability to remove eventual barriers to its achieving (Meyer et al., 2014). To do that, teachers must guarantee accessibility of teaching and learning and design different options for their learners to choose from. This includes methods, materials and assessments used to teach the lesson. In-person situations allow for a variety of solutions, given that learners can interact both with their classmates and with the physical environment surrounding them. In the following, we will see how teachers can apply UDL to their planning for in-person learning contexts in relation to its three underpinning principles. Remember that planning is about anticipating variability and removing barriers. It is about naming and sourcing the strategies and choices for the lesson to be prepared and applying them to teaching, learning, assessment and feedback. A helpful resource for planning with UDL in mind is this step-by-step lesson planner (Posey, no date).

Engagement

Practical approaches to engagement in lesson design include:

- Making sure that the goal, and tasks specific to it, are clear
- Making sure the strategies and choices planned for support the learning goal
- Using/understanding learners' prior knowledge of the lesson. Plan time to facilitate this. Use connecting sentences such as

- 'Remember in our lesson on X we learned Y. What do you remember? How can we use the learning here/ We are going to use that learning now to x'
- 'Today we're starting a new topic. Has anyone heard of/seen X?'

- Check your lesson plan for any barriers to learners achieving the goal
- Include one or two strategies that will increase engagement in the lesson. Examples include:

- Choice boards to get students' interest
- Options for collaboration to sustain effort
- Options for self or group reflection for self-regulation.

Representation

Practical examples for Representation include:

- Prepare visual, auditory, and written options for perception

  - Captions

- A sign, symbol, or image that represents the topic, a word, or concept. Images might be a representative image or can be something more concrete. For example, when talking about the Renaissance in History paintings from artists of the time might be on the wall for discussion
  - A voice recording or short video describing the topic, word, or concept
- A readily available resource appropriate to the topic, word, or concept. This might be a Powtoon, an analogy, an appropriate expert/role model talking on the subject, or a virtual tour of an environment

- Prepare different ways learners can access instructions

  - Instructions are clearly laid out in steps with visuals where possible
  - Screencast offers students the opportunity to watch and listen to instructions with a demonstration
    - Short video recording
  - Online version of written instruction to support learner who use Text-to-Speech
- Plan in time for learners to process the instructions using the option that works best for them

  - Identify language that may require clarification and build strategies into plan

  - Glossary of terms (text, auditory, visual)
    - Peer-to-peer support
    - Contextualising language

- Providing graphic organisers as an alternative to writing for comprehension. Some useful tips on Graphic organisers are available here.

Action and Expression

Practical examples for Action and Expression include:

- Have clear goal orientated plan to support students' executive functioning

  - Checklists to provide structure direction
  - Rubrics to provide information on expectations clearly related to the goal
    - Clear deliverables

- Flexible ways to communicate and demonstrate learning specific to the learning goal

  - Write
  - Record
  - Draw
  - Build

- Identify and provide the tools for physical action

  - Technology
  - Relevant materials based on communication methods offered
    - Physical space.

Tab. 1b. UDL-Planning for digital learning environments.

UDL-Planning for digital environments

To properly implement UDL, teachers must guarantee accessibility of teaching and learning and design different options for their learners to choose from. This includes the methods, assessments and materials used to teach the lesson. Technology provides wide support for teaching and learning situations that can take place both in hybrid or blended contexts (in-person and online) and in asynchronous and synchronous contexts.

Digital technologies can support, enhance, and facilitate in each stage of the three UDL principles.

UDL provides a frame of work to help teachers in their planning, enabling them to include digital resources to support students in achieving the intended learning goals. It is important to note that the application and use of UDL principles do not require a mastery of all technologies and digital resources available in the market. Purposeful, user-friendly digital tools are widely available. The aim is to choose one at a time, and work with essential tools that best support the access to the content, the delivery method, appropriate and timely feedback, and student engagement as well as the opportunity for students to show what they have learnt through mediums that best support their expression.

Planning is about anticipating variability and removing barriers. It is about naming and sourcing the strategies and choices for the lesson to be prepared and applying them to teaching, learning, assessment and feedback. A helpful resource for planning with UDL in mind is this step-by-step lesson planner (Posey, no date).

Engagement

Practical approaches to engagement in lesson design includes:

- Careful choice of the tool(s) that is going to be used and for what activity it may be useful
- Build in time to show students how to use the tool(s) and explain what it is intended for and how they will be interacting with it
- Avoid choosing tools that can overlap specific purposes. For example, using two different apps for collaborative learning when they essentially address the same type of activity
- Set clear expectations for what, why and how the digital tools and environments are used. This addresses boundaries for communication and supports possible issues of online security
- In the online environment it is possible to break down objectives into self-contained areas to guide students to achieve the objectives. This "chunking" will not necessarily take the same time online as it would in-person. Students can access resources in and at their own time
- When preparing for online or hybrid teaching, it is convenient to consider students' learning experiences:

- Signpost and plan the different activities (provide checks in?, checklists, negotiate deadlines for draft work). This will also help students to learn how to self-regulate their learning
- Consider timing? In that some units can be covered over short periods, while others may require a slow build up over a longer period with some in-person guidance, peer work and support

- These learning experiences can include activities/assignments that provide:

- Teachers' input (actual teaching)
- Activities that students do independently
- Activities that provide opportunities for collaboration

- Make the activities goal-relevant and use digital spaces and tools to:

- Include opportunities to find information online that relates to their studies, e.g., real life connections, pictures, videos, stories
- Connect to aspects of personal relevance for students such as home, culture, and community
- Create a space where students can communicate their own views and opinions, always respecting those who may not feel confident or comfortable in open bigger forums
- Allow students to share own interests, when relevant and appropriate, so they feel confident communicating about things they care about
- Provide opportunities for students to collaborate and teach each other concepts or topics. This can be done in small groups, and then shared more widely. Always keep in mind the means of representation, and students' level of comfort in bigger groups intervention

- Always try to identify any possible barriers for student engagement: equipment, keyboards, connectivity, etc.

Representation

It is important to make content-related input comprehensible.

- Content-related text materials and resources are websites, digital texts such as word documents, presentation slides, webpages, online reading materials and worksheets, audio and video content. Two examples of what they can provide include:

- Digital texts which provide features that enable students to look up vocabulary, highlight key concepts, consult hyperlinks that make available more information
- Digital graphic organisers offer support in organising and executive skills by providing tools for students to think, gather and organise information using multimodal elements (such as graphics and audio) to amplify the information

- When using audio and video it is important to make sure that they do not contain extraneous information:

- Make sure that the speech is clear and that the pacing of the audio or video is appropriate
- Provide the appropriate amount of information. For example: focus on relevant aspects, trim videos if needed or create banks of websites you have assessed first (a resource bank)

- Content-related information is the information provided by the teachers when presenting and discussing content online. Important points to consider are to:

- Provide step-by-step instructions on what is expected
- Minimise superfluous information
- Avoid the use of slang, idioms, irony or sarcasm, as there may be students who struggle with meaning and nuance
- Be clear and consistent in and with the medium through which you provide instructions and related information, such as, setting expectations, describing assignments, providing criteria for grading
- Maintain clear and consistent feedback and responses to student questions

- Through the various means of representation, always bear in mind the cognitive load. It is preferable to plan for less than more. It is also important to advance one little step at a time.

Action and Expression

Digital tools are the perfect medium to give students varied ways to express what they have learnt.

- Incorporate multimodal forms of expression. Allow students to develop their expressive skills and demonstrate what they know using text, photos, graphics, audio, and video
- Address student anxiety and stress. Digital tools allow students to scaffold their work, by working independently or by sharing and supporting each other in pairs or small groups
- Provide timely feedback. For students with disabilities, language learners or different cultural approaches, providing ongoing support and feedback enables them to develop their understanding and ultimately reach their learning goals
- Provide alternative ways to demonstrate what they have learnt. There are digital tools that support oral and visual production, and students can scaffold their work to feel how they progress
- Provide clear rubrics that can be applied across multimodal production of work
- Scaffold assessment according to rubrics.

Teaching and Learning

Firstly, teaching and learning must take into consideration the student, environment, curriculum, context, cognition and emotions. When planning for choice and flexibility, teachers need to ensure that the options planned will work in practice. Thus, teaching and learning follows on from intentional planning with the intentionality continuing into practice. Teachers will have a range of choices they can include in their lesson. Nevertheless, the teacher must clarify the goal and then intentionally choose the options that will work best in a specific lesson and context.

Think about this in terms of a GPS on phones. When we enter the destination, GPS provides an option that allows flexible routes to reach the destination. Firstly, it offers modes of transport. Then, it offers a variety of route options and highlights barriers or challenges – such as delays along the route. Once the preferred route is chosen there are options to preview the route in advance, use the written steps, visual map, audio directions, or a combination of options. Once enroute, GPS will adapt the journey. For example, if there is an unforeseen barrier e.g., a traffic jam, GPS will offer the choice of staying on the planned route or taking an alternative one. Regardless of the means, routes, and detours taken you still arrive at your destination. This method can be similarly applied to UDL in terms of teaching and learning. Furthermore, remember that the 'current location' or 'starting point' will be different for every traveller, as are the travel choices made. However, the destination goal remains the same, reinforcing the intentionality of choice?

Tab. 2a. UDL-Teaching and learning in in-person learning contexts.

UDL-Teaching and learning in in-person learning contexts
UDL teaching and learning reflects, and puts into practice, the intentionality of planning envisioned in the framework to address learners' variability and create barrier-free learning environments. As shown in the previous section, this intentionality translates into the design of multiple options for Engagement, Representation, and Action and Expression. Teaching and learning is about implementing these options in class and making sure they actually work. This involves facilitating the lesson, monitoring, and feedback on learners' progress (Posey, no date).

Engagement

Practical approaches to support learners' interest, effort, and self-regulation are:

- When dealing with an argument, provide choices between different sub-topics; for example, discussing a specific region/country in Geography, different workstations (one per subtopic) can be organised in the classroom to explore different aspects: e.g., landscape, history of the region, tourism offer, gastronomy, etc.
- Provide varied materials – i.e., with different degrees of difficulties – to offer choice to learners in the perceived challenge
- Use collaborative work to engage learners in the learning process (and choices may be offered in this case, e.g., allow learners decide the roles they will take within small groups, define their own norms of collaboration, etc.)
- Allow learners to move around the classroom during learning and make sure they have free and easy access to the materials and resources they need. For example, let them decide where to sit, or stand, in the classroom while working on their assignments (e.g., sitting at the desk, on a carpet, on a cushion, standing, etc.)
- To emphasise the importance of the goals and objectives, plan a time at the beginning of the lesson to discuss them with learners
- Make sure learning outcomes are clear and always available to learners. They may be displayed in a variety of ways in the classroom (on a poster on the classroom walls, written on the blackboard, posted on a shared platform, etc.)
- Role-play activities (letting learners choose their role) and/or problem-solving tasks (letting learners choose how to approach them) can be organised to simulate real-life situations and support learners' engagement.

Representation

Teachers should present the information in varied formats (e.g., when introducing a new concept, unit, etc.) which resonate with learners' different strengths and preferences for processing information – such as a lecture, activity-based exploration, or demonstration (Jackson & Harper, 2006).
Practical examples for presenting lesson content in class include:

- Using the textbook/other written materials (be aware that digital materials/texts allow for more flexibility than printed ones, as they provide many opportunities to customise how the information is displayed – e.g., in terms of colours/contrast, font style, character dimension, etc.)
- Listening a podcast or an audio file (also from learners' own mobile phones)
- Showing a video
- Manipulating concrete/physical objects

- Using posters or digital presentations (PowerPoint, Canva) also including visual/graphical elements (e.g., images, symbols, etc.) to support verbal instruction.

Additionally, teachers should always ensure to provide alternatives for perception (visual, auditory, and written) and to support students' understanding and decoding of language, symbols, etc.

- Auditory alternatives to visual information include:

- Podcasts
- Audio registrations
- Text-to-speech

- Tactile alternatives to visual/auditory information include:

- Texts in Braille
- Concrete/manipulable objects
- Videos should have captions and/or written transcripts of their content

- Verbal instruction (or in general auditory information) should be accompanied by written and/or other visual/graphical support (e.g., images, symbols, etc.)
- Practical strategies to provide support for all learners' comprehension and understanding are:

- Taking time for highlighting the most important features/aspects – e.g., writing keywords or developing a mind map on the blackboard (both analogically and digitally)
- Offering glossaries with difficult and/or important words (also with their translations in learners' first languages if necessary)

- Providing visual/non-linguistic support for vocabulary clarification (e.g., pictures, videos, symbols, etc.).

Action and Expression

Teachers need to provide their learners with a range of different assignments/tasks and tools to ensure flexibility in the ways in which they can demonstrate their skills, understanding and knowledge.
Practical examples for this include:

- Assigning tasks that can be done/completed in different formats

  - by writing (essay, poem, article for a newspaper, drama-script, blog, etc.)
  - through oral presentations (e.g., in person, through audio or video recording)
  - creative assignments (e.g., creating videos, posters, comics, recording podcasts, etc.)
  - projects that involve physically constructing something
  - creating a mind-map and verbally presenting it.

- The list of available options may be displayed in different ways in class (e.g., on the white/blackboard, on a handout with a rubric specifying task objectives and expected outcomes, posted in a shared platform, etc.).

- Creating tasks that allow for different paces and with different degrees of difficulty (e.g., offering multiple texts with a range of difficulty levels). This also includes providing different scaffolding options such as:

o   individual charts to follow the activity flow
  o   guide sheets explaining procedures
  o   subdividing the topic area into subtopics
  o   access to a peer expert

- Making sure that technologies (general/assistive) are available and that learners have alternatives to physically interact with materials and resources (e.g., by hand, voice, single switch, joystick, keyboard, or adapted keyboard)
- Providing a range of support tools. Digital tools provide flexible and accessible instruments that enhance learners' performance and participation. Some examples of this are:

o   spell and/or grammar checkers
  o   word prediction software
  o   text-to-speech
  o   speech-to-text software and apps (e.g., Voice Note)
  o   note-taking apps (e.g., SoundNote, Notability)
  o   concept mapping tools (e.g., Popplet).

Tab. 2b. UDL-Teaching and Learning in digital learning environments.

UDL-Teaching and learning in digital environments
UDL teaching and learning puts into practice the intentionality of planning envisioned in the framework to address learners' variability and create barrier-free learning environments. As shown in the previous section, this intentionality results in the design of multiple options for Engagement, Representation, and Action and Expression. Teaching and learning is about implementing these options and making sure they actually work. Technology enables people to meet and connect together synchronously (Zoom, Google Hangouts, Skype, Google Docs) and also allows students to work in their own time and place independently with asynchronous tools (Google Classroom, Seesaw, Edmodo, Canvas) and support hybrid and blended situations as well.

Engagement

Practical approaches to support learners' interest, effort, and self-regulation include:

- Ensuring learning outcomes are clear and always available to learners. Make them accessible and prominent in the learning platform you work with (Moodle, Blackboard, Edugo)
- Providing online bulletin boards such as Miro or Padlet which can illustrate information in a visual, written and collaborative way that enables students to choose between different sub-topics within a main topic. These boards can be used synchronously and asynchronously for teachers to provide banks of resources; students to engage in brainstorming, and sharing in a visual, written and audio form
- Providing varied materials – i.e., with different degrees of difficulties – not just in content but in format, scaffolding information to offer choice to learners while addressing the challenge. This can be done in written, but also through audio or visual formats (Screencast-O-Matic, Screencastify)
- Enabling learners to decide when and how they will be engaging with materials and completing tasks. Use asynchronous tools that will facilitate working independently and enable a check point with peers and with tutors. Tools for teleconferencing (Zoom) or student interaction (Google Hangouts) will facilitate both independence but with a link to collaboration with peers and access to the teacher
- Stressing the salience of goals and objectives, as well as planning (and recording) an introduction at the beginning of the course and in every lesson. Providing captions and transcripts (Screencast-o-matic.com, Zoom)
- Implementing role-play activities and/or problem-solving tasks to simulate real-life situations and support learners' engagement. Students can practise online and then record themselves or record and picture from around them and post them (Padlet, Miro).

Representation

Teachers should present the information in varied formats (e.g., when introducing a new concept, unit, etc.) which resonate with learners' different strengths and preferences for processing information – such as in the case of a lecture, activity-based exploration, or demonstration (Jackson & Harper, 2006).
Practical examples for presenting lesson content in class include:

- Using the textbook/other written materials with hyperlinks, vocabulary support, in audio and written form, using touch screens that allow to increase and change font size and font and background colour (Genial.ly)
- Listening a podcast or an audio file
- Showing a video

- Using narrated digital presentations (PowerPoint, Canva) including visual/graphical elements (images, symbols, etc.) to support.

Action and Expression

To ensure flexibility in the ways in which learners can demonstrate skills, understanding and knowledge, teachers need to provide them with a range of different assignments/tasks and tools they can choose from.
     Practical examples for this include:

   • Assigning tasks that can be completed in different formats. Students can create their own stories in written format with built in text-to-speech support, image options and graphics (Book Creator), and other tools that can be used to produce final work or for scaffolding writing towards producing longer texts
   • Provide a choice of tools that enable students to produce oral texts with visual aids for activities such demonstrating concepts, producing a professional looking product, interviewing peers, etc. (Voicethread, Explain Everything, Adobe Spark, Easel.ly)
   • Provide help for students to organise their ideas and information for stories, writing assignments, and science lab reports prior to writing (MyStudyBar, Readwritethink Storymap)
   • Plan carefully how to share the rubrics so students are tested and feedback on their progress to achieve the intended learning goals.

Assessment and Feedback

When the teacher is clear about the lesson? goal, and has facilitated flexibility and choice of how to learn, providing choice and flexibility in how to communicate this learning is a natural step. Assessment from a UDL lens means that teachers need to think about assessment and feedback from the students' perspective. They need to ask how learners can best communicate through language or actions, and facilitate their understanding, knowledge, skills, and values around the learning experience. The objective of an assessment is often a written exam. However, if the goal is not necessarily written?, then a written exam can be a barrier for many learners, with the result that teachers do not fully capture the learners' capability. By offering learners more choice such as writing or presenting an oral presentation, creating a movie or podcast, role play, learners can present their work in a way that best suits their needs and ability. An example of this is assessing a lesson on character development. The default mode of assessment would be to ask learners to write a paragraph or essay outlining how the character has developed throughout the play. However, if the teacher is clear about the learning outcome – understanding character development – then it becomes clear that just writing alone can be a barrier. Thus, the teacher intentionally offers other assessment choices; the learner can choose to write, role play, or create a poster. What if a learner approaches and asks for a fourth option, to do a comic strip. While it wasn't an intended choice it supports achieving the specific learning objectives. The outcome is that the learner can express their knowledge and learning according to what suits them. The teacher then learns the competency level of the learner and can readjust expectations or offer support based on this new understanding, rather

than what they previously demonstrated/attempted?. Additionally, the teacher may learn of a talent or interest of the learner that can be used to engage them in further learning experiences.

This example also highlights the value of feedback, particularly from students / and the importance of student input? When students feedback to teachers and the teacher acts on this feedback, it communicates to the learners that they have a voice in and responsibility for their own learning. It is important that feedback, like assessment, is formative which can be teacher or student led. Finally, it is important that feedback is constructed to support and challenge learners in a learning process, and not label their general learning competency based on a specific moment in time.

Tab. 3a. UDL-Assessment and Feedback in in-person learning contexts.

UDL-Assessment and feedback in in-person learning contexts

CAST (ref) highlights that methods and materials used in assessments often require skills and understanding that are not relevant to measure learners' knowledge, skills, and abilities, but which may also pose barriers. As such, they should be minimised by providing learners different supports and options on how to demonstrate what they have learned. Once the learning objectives – and thus the focus/construct for the assessment – are clear, then there can be flexibility in the assessment options insofar as they align to and measure the intended goals/constructs.

Thus, applying the three UDL principles to assessment means offering flexible options in how the assessment is represented, how learners can show what they know, and how they engage in the assessment process (CAST, 2015). This applies both to formative and summative assessments. However, UDL puts particular emphasis on the importance of formative assessment as an essential part of the learning process, insofar as it is intended to monitor learners' progress and to inform and adjust instruction during its course (Meyer et al., 2014). This kind of assessment is not only is useful for teachers to collect evidence about their students' progress, but importantly, allows students themselves to learn about their own performance and that of their peers. In this way, they become a proactive part in monitoring their progress and are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning.

Feedback plays a crucial role in this respect and constitutes a key feature of UDL for addressing learners' variability. By being goal-oriented, relevant, timely and specific it is indeed meant both to guide each learner towards mastery and to inform teachers' instructional practice.

Engagement

Increasing learners' engagement in assessment can enhance their performance. Practical strategies to do this include:

- Involving learners in the choice of the ways they are going to be evaluated (e.g., allowing them to come up with new ideas/suggestions). For example, provide them a list of options and the last point should include this question: 'Do you think you would best complete the task in a different way? If so, discuss your idea with the teacher'
- Taking time to discuss with them the importance and the value of the evaluation (linking learning goals and objectives and assessment)
- Creating authentic/relevant/problem-solving tasks for assessment
- Explicitly expressing confidence that learners can meet high expectations
- Providing different degrees of (perceived) challenge in assessment tasks (e.g., providing different questions/topics so that students can choose the one they feel most prepared on; providing different response formats, etc.).

To engage learners in the learning process, ongoing, relevant and mastery-oriented feedback is also essential. Opportunities for feedback are:

- Teacher-to-student. Plenty of opportunities exist in class for teachers to provide feedback to their students during and after learning activities. Practical examples for this are:

  - Orally during/after an activity/assessment
  - Written after an activity/assessment (planning a time to discuss it together in person/in class)

  - Through informal check-ins
- Student-to-student. Use the peer group as a source of feedback; for example, this can be done at the end of an oral presentation asking the class to provide feedback on the performance, or in a shared platform online where the students post their ongoing works/projects and give and receive feedback from the others

- Student-to-teacher. Receiving feedback from the students allows teachers to reflect on what was done and eventually rethink and redesign strategies and activities. For example, at the end of each lesson, teachers can ask learners to give feedback on their progress (in whatever form they feel more comfortable with – orally, written, noted on a self-assessment journal, via mail/message, etc.).

Representation

Applying the principle of Representation to assessment means considering how the information and content of the assessment task are presented.
Options for presenting assessment items and instructions include:

- written (printed and/or digital)
- audio
- video
- mind map.

Alternatives for perception (visual, auditory, and written) and support for understanding and decoding of language, symbols, etc. should be offered in assessment too. Strategies for this include:

- Record and post the description of the given tasks/assignment to allow learners to listen to it again
- Providing graphical/visual support to written instructions
- Offering glossaries explaining keywords.

Action and Expression

To get accurate data regarding students' knowledge and capability, teachers should provide multiple means of response and multiple opportunities in varied media for them to demonstrate their skills, understanding and knowledge.
For example, written assessments may allow different question/answer formats, such as:

- Multiple choice
- Fill-in-the-blanks
- Short answer
- Analysis questions
- Essay questions.

However, if written production is not the measured construct, then alternatives should be offered to complete the assignment. These may include:

- writing a text/document
- preparing a presentation.
- creating a video
- recording a podcast
- creating an infographic
- drawing.

UDL assessment also provides support on construct-irrelevant dimensions. Examples of different support tools and scaffolds are:

- text-to-speech and speech-to-text
- hyperlinked multimedia glossaries
- online translators and spell/grammar checkers
- word prediction software
- calculators
- rubrics or checklist specifying relevant components
- models/templates
- graphic organisers.

Tab. 3b. UDL Assessment and Feedback in digital learning environments.

UDL-Assessment and feedback in digital learning contexts

CAST highlights that methods and materials used in assessments often require skills and understanding that are not relevant to measure learners' knowledge, skills, and abilities, and which may also pose barriers to learning. As such, they should be minimised by providing learners different means and a variety of options to demonstrate what they have learned. Once constructive alignment (Biggs 1996) and working through content provides a clear idea on how students can be assessed, the assessment is measured and the means of assessment production are supporting expression and individual needs. Thus, applying the three UDL principles to assessment means offering flexible options (and therefore choice) in how the assessment is represented, how learners can show what they know, and how they engage in the assessment process (CAST, 2015).

Feedback constitutes another key feature of UDL for addressing learners' variability. By being goal-oriented, relevant, timely and specific it is indeed meant to guide each learner towards mastery.

Engagement

Increasing learners' engagement in assessment can enhance their performance. Practical strategies to do this include:

- Involving learners in the choice of the ways they are going to be evaluated (e.g., allowing them to come up with new ideas/suggestions). Communicate this idea orally and in writing, and post in a clearly designated area within the syllabus and within the learning environment so that students can access it? synchronously (Zoom, Google Hangouts) or asynchronously (Google Classrooms, Blackboard, Moodle)
- Once students are clear on the why and when of the assessment (linking learning goals and objectives and assessment), propose tools that best suit them to prove their learning, in written, or an interactive electronic page, or through video, or written text with audio support (Microsoft Word or Powerpoint, Flip, Genial.ly, Pecha Kucha)
- It is important to create authentic/relevant/problem-solving tasks for assessment that have a meaning in the "real-world"
- No matter what tool or medium in which the assessment takes place it is important to provide different degrees of (perceived) challenge in assessment tasks and make sure there is a system to check in progress or allow consultation
- Feedback opportunities can be provided both via synchronous tools (Google Docs, Zoom) or asynchronously (Email, Forums, Voicethread, Flip).

Feedback is very important at every step of the course and in any lesson, in particular in online environments where physical presence of the teacher is reduced, mechanisms for following up, checking and supporting progress are needed.

Representation

Applying the principle of Representation to assessment means considering how the information and content of the assessment task are presented.
Options for presenting assessment items include:

- written (Microsoft Word, Book Creator)
- audio/video file; teachers may also record and post the description of the given tasks/assignment to allow learners to listen to it again (Voki, Lingt, Flip)
- mind map (MindMup, Readwritethink Storymap).

Action and Expression

Provide different options to complete the assignment:

- writing a text/document (Google Docs, Microsoft Word)
- preparing a presentation (PowerPoint, Prezzi, Canva)
- creating a video (Flip)
- recording a podcast (Soundtrap)
- creating an infographic (Infogram).

Written tests may allow different question/answer formats (Google Forms, Moodle and Blackboard assessment tools), such as:

- Multiple choice
- Fill-in-the-blanks
- Short answer
- Analysis questions
- Essay questions.

Both in-person and online (blended, hybrid, asynchronous or synchronous) teachers should always plan for different support tools to reduce the measurement of construct-irrelevant factors.

Closing

We began this chapter introducing UDL as a 'shift in mindset' which proposes the proactive and intentional design of learning environments which are responsive to learners' differences. Inclusion and participation in learning is thus enhanced in this framework via the design of methods, materials and assessments used to teach the lesson that are flexible and accessible for all learners. The focus on the accessibility of teaching and learning constitutes indeed a key feature of the UDL approach and reflects a shift of perspective from what students can/cannot do (with respect to the "average") to the contextual barriers that may prevent them from succeeding in learning. This marks a pivotal change, insofar as it implies the recognition of the role of the environment in hindering learning progress and learners' active engagement in it, moving beyond labels and categories (and thus overcoming a medical/deficit-oriented perspective on disability and difference; Meyer et al., 2014). Moreover, the emphasis on flexibility and choice enables the implementation of a differentiated instruction – and thus individual learning paths – for all, avoiding the risk for some children of being stigmatised for their need of special accommodations.

In this sense, the UDL framework can be seen as a driver of inclusion and equity. The inherent flexibility and choice allows a more equitable education by acknowledging,

embracing and celebrating students' unique identities (with all their intersections) and providing them with all they need to succeed in their learning (Chardin & Novak, 2020).

At the beginning of this chapter, we set out three questions to answer for teachers. The next step is for you to ask and answer this question in relation to your practice: 'How can I use UDL to support and challenge the learning of every student in my classroom?'

Local contexts

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=144#h5p-7

Closing questions to discuss or tasks

- How does viewing UDL as a "shift in mindset" from deficit-based approaches to removing contextual barriers change the way you design and implement lessons?
- Looking at the example case provided, which specific UDL modifications (e.g., choice boards, alternative formats, varied assessment methods) do you believe most effectively bridge the gap between traditional and UDL-informed teaching?
- Considering the emphasis on formative feedback in the chapter, how can you use both student and peer feedback to refine and adapt your UDL practices over time?
- Reflect on a previous teaching experience where student engagement was lacking. Using the UDL framework, analyze what might have caused the engagement gap and propose concrete strategies or adjustments to overcome these barriers.
- Develop a plan for incorporating ongoing formative feedback into your teaching practice. Outline how you will collect, analyze, and act on this feedback to continually improve accessibility and inclusion in your classroom.

Literature

Biggs, J. (1996). Enhancing Teaching Through Constructive Alignment. Higher Education, 32, 347-364. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00138871

CAST (2004). UDL Principles for Learning. https://udlguidelines.cast.org

CAST (2015). Top 10 UDL Tips for Assessment. Available at: https://slds.osu.edu/posts/documents/top-10-udl-tips.pdf (Accessed 6th October 2022)

CAST (2018). Universal Design for Learning Guidelines version 2.2. Retrieved from http://udlguidelines.cast.org (Accessed 10th October 2022)

CAST (2021). UDL Rising to Equity initiative; CAST. Available at [UDL: The UDL Guidelines (cast.org)] (https://udlguidelines.cast.org/) (Accessed 26th July 2021).

CAST (2024). Universal Design for Learning Guidelines version 3.0. Retrieved from https://udlguidelines.cast.org

CAST (no date). UDL Tips for Assessment. Available at: https://www.cast.org/binaries/content/assets/common/publications/downloads/cast-udltipsforassessment-20200920-a11y.pdf (Accessed 10th October 2022)

Chardin, M., & Novak, K. (2020). Equity by design: Delivering on the power and promise of UDL. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Floos. M. (2021) An Introduction to Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Inclusion through variability. Education Matters. Retrieved from https://irelandseducationyearbook.ie/irelands-education-yearbook-2021/second-level/

Flood, M.; Banks, J. (2021). Universal Design for Learning: Is it gaining momentum in Irish education? Education Sciences, 11(7), 341. https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci11070341

Meyer, A., Rose, D.H.; Gordon, D. (2014). Universal Design for Learning: Theory and Practice. Boston, MA: CAST Professional Publishing.

Murawski, W. W., & Scott, K. L. (Eds.) (2019). What really works with Universal Design for Learning. Corwin Press.

Rose, T. (2016). The End of Average. New York: HarperCollins.

Posey (no date). Lesson planning with Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Available at: https://www.understood.org/en/articles/lesson-planning-with-universal-design-for-learning-udl?_sp=aec8c71b-bc8a-4133-b843-a45349f9c779.1663247873874 (Accessed 10th October 2022)

About the authors

Margaret Flood

Dr Margaret is an Assistant Professor in Inclusive Education and the MAP Academic Advisor for the Education Department. Her experience in inclusive and special education includes teaching, teacher professional learning design and delivery,

policy development and curriculum design. She is a leading expert in UDL. Margaret's research interests include contextual dimensions and the role of teachers in inclusive policy and practice enactment, teacher engagement with professional learning for inclusion and student voice. As a Fulbright Scholar, in 2021 Margaret worked with Lynch School of Education and Humanities at Boston College and CAST to explore equity, diversity, inclusion, and social justice through the lens of UDL. Margaret is the creator and host of the Podcast 'Talking about all things Inclusion'.

Anna Frizzarin

Anna Frizzarin has a PhD in Pedagogy and Didactics and works as a researcher in the field of inclusive education. Her research focuses on inclusive teaching and learning, inclusive development processes of educational contexts, attitudes and social representations in relation to perceived diversity and the resulting implications for students' participation in schools.

María Pilar Gray Carlos

María Pilar Gray Carlos was born and raised in Spain but spent over 20 years living and working in the United Kingdom, where she built a distinguished career in higher education. Her primary role was at the **University of Reading**, where she implemented, managed, and coordinated the Spanish program at the Institution-Wide Language Centre. Under her leadership, the Spanish program became one of the most successful alongside French and Mandarin Chinese.

Pilar also held notable academic roles as a visiting lecturer at **Oxford University** and as an external examiner for Spanish programs at the **University of Manchester** and the **University of Sheffield**. Beyond teaching, she contributed to university-wide initiatives, including the **Electronic Management of Assessment (EMA)** project, which streamlined and digitized the submission and evaluation of assessments across all schools and programs at the University of Reading.

Pilar holds a **BA in English Literature and Linguistics**, an **MA in Translation**, and an **MSc in Digital Education**, reflecting her commitment to both language and technology-enhanced learning.

Currently based in Spain, she has worked as a consultant for online Spanish language teaching start-ups and as an associate professor of Spanish at **IE University**. Currently she teaches part-time at the **Universidad Autónoma de Madrid** and the **Universidad Internacional Menéndez Pelayo**.

Her career has been enriched by her dedication to social impact. Pilar has worked on community development projects in Mexico, raised awareness about endemic violence against children and women in the Middle East (Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan), and created

programs for Spanish learners to enhance their language skills while participating in development projects with communities in Nicaragua.

Her current focus is on exploring the impact of technology on teaching and learning, particularly how shifts in delivery methods influence pedagogy, methodologies, and the experiences of educators and students.

COOPERATIVE LEARNING

Heidrun Demo; Vana Chiou; Miriam Cuccu; and Özge Özdemir

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=378#oembed-1

Example Case

Two teachers, Nick and Eva, are in their office discussing their day in the classroom.

Nick: *"Today, I organised my class into 3 groups and asked them to work together and answer 3 questions about the impact of the pandemic on education. I don't know why but the groups didn't cooperate very effectively and in addition it took them too long to make decisions and come up with conclusions. Even when they decided and answered the questions on the worksheets, all of them were reluctant to present their work and the conclusions. Maybe next time they should work in a different way. They don't like working in groups at all".*

Eva: *"I am not sure about that. How many students are in your class?"*

Nick: *"Twenty-four."*

Eva: *"As I know, it's not very effective to work in large groups, especially if you want to work in the classroom within a certain time period. Smaller groups work more effectively. I usually organise groups between 3-4 people. I also make sure that everyone's role is clear from the beginning. For example, one student can take up the role of secretary, another can be the presenter, etc. In this case their roles are defined beforehand, and they don't waste too much time deciding on their responsibilities during the activity. Also, I always consider the skills and interests of my students when organising teamwork in the classroom."*

Nick: *"Oh.. Can you explain that? How do you arrange groups in that way?"*

Eva: *"I always make sure to create heterogeneous groups based on the skills and interests of*

the students. In this way, each of them complements the other, they help each other and the team works more effectively. Why don't you try it next time?"

Nick: *"I think you are right. I will try to arrange teamwork in my classroom next time in a different way. Thanks for the advice."*

Initial questions

In this chapter you will find the answers to the following questions:

- What is cooperative learning?
- What is the difference between group work and cooperative learning?
- What are the benefits of cooperative learning?
- What is the role of students in cooperative learning?
- What is the role of teachers in planning cooperative learning?
- How can equal participation be ensured in cooperative learning?

Introduction to Topic

Cooperative learning is the instructional use of small groups through which students work together to maximise their own and each other's learning (Johnson, Johnson, and Holubec, 1994). It can be defined as a variety of classroom management techniques in which students work in small groups on learning activities and receive evaluations based on achievement (Comoglio & Cardoso, 1996). Cooperative learning is related to collaborative learning, which emphasises that learning occurs as an effect of community (Johnson & Johnson, 1999). It is, however, contrasted with individualistic and competitive learning in which students work by themselves to accomplish learning goals that are not related to others, and compete with each other for grades (Johnson, Johnson, and Smith, 1998). Specific characteristics define interactions among students during a cooperative learning process, which is not only forming groups to discuss a topic or study a lesson, urging students to help each other, or assigning a written task to complete with a group work

(Comoglio & Cardoso, 1996), instead, it implies a change of both students' and teachers' roles, together with careful planning of time, space, materials and assignments.

Key aspects

From a teacher-centred to a learner-centred approach

Besides considering cooperative learning as a specific method, it can be seen as an aspect of a wide educational movement that promotes the development of learning settings as communities where cooperation and learning are strongly intertwined. Characterised by a long history, a prolific research and theoretical elaboration and vast literature, cooperative learning considers the relationship as an indispensable variable of the learning process (Comoglio & Cardoso, 1996).

Within this approach, the preservation of peer interactions as a means for knowledge co-construction requires that hierarchical teacher-student relationships are questioned. This means taking into account the issue of power in classrooms.

In teacher-centred classrooms there is a hierarchical relationship between the teacher and the students. Power is distributed asymmetrically: the teacher is expected to have control on interactions and consequently limit productive discussions with and between students.

Changing from a teacher-centred to a learner-centred classroom model does not mean that there is no difference of responsibility between teachers and students. In this case, the teachers' authority is not used anymore to take control, but to construct a space of participation for all. It is a responsibility of teachers to find a way to use the power of their role to promote a democratic learning environment, instead of perpetrating hierarchies (Hooks, 1994). The shift from a teacher-centred model of learning to a learner-centred implies several changes in the classroom practice, as represented in Table 1.

Table 1:

Teacher – Centred	Learner – Centred
Teacher is the only leader	Leadership is shared
Management means control	Management means guidance
Teacher talks and students listen	Teacher is a model, students interact with each other and interact with the teacher
Students work alone	Students work in pairs, in groups, or alone depending on the purpose of the activity
Teacher monitors and corrects every student statement	Students talk without constant teacher monitoring, teacher provides feedback/correction when questions arise
Teacher answers students' questions	Students answer each other's questions, teacher consults and moderates
Teacher chooses topics	Students have some choices of topics
Teacher evaluates student learning	Students evaluate their own learning, teacher also evaluates students' learning
Teacher is responsible for organising the class	Students collaborate with the teacher to organise the classroom
Rules are set by the teacher	Rules are negotiated in the group
A few students support teachers in classroom management	All students have the opportunity to actively contribute to classroom management
Students are allowed limited responsibilities	Students share responsibilities in the classroom
Classroom is quiet	Classroom is active

Table adapted and modified from Rogers and Frieberg (1994: 240)

In a cooperative learning setting the teacher delegates part of one's own power and authority in favour of students' multiple learning centres. This requires that the teacher goes beyond the concerns of losing control, to question existing structures and teaching methods. This means moving from an education in which the knowledge is transmitted only by the teacher, and students have just to receive and memorise the contents, to an idea of education in which learning is a research process with students having an active role. Instead of being just passive receivers of knowledge, they are now critical researchers, in dialogue with the teachers, who are also learners and critical researchers themselves (Freire, 1970).

In this way, teachers are thus required to be in an educational space of higher complexity, where great importance is given to the relationship between all learners. It means that they are active and support students to be more responsible, making the achievement of cognitive, emotional and motivational goals possible. According to Cohen (1994) if the

teachers delegate authority, there are more learning centres in operation, the percentage of students talking and working together is higher, and consequently the average learning results are increased. Students' talking and working together at multiple learning centres ensures higher learning gains.

Cooperative learning vs. simple group work

In literature, two of the most well-known authors on cooperative learning, Johnson and Johnson (1999), have identified five elements that help teachers understand when cooperative groupwork is really promoting learning processes. In this sense, "cooperative learning is the instructional use of small groups so that students work together to maximise their own and each other's learning" (Johnson et al, 1994: 812). The first characteristic of cooperative learning, and probably the most crucial one, is positive interdependence. It describes the situation where students depend on each other in the sense that they feel the work they are doing together is better than the work they would complete alone. And at the same time, everyone feels part of the group's success. The second element is about group and individual accessibility. It describes how, when cooperative learning is working in a successful manner, each member feels simultaneously responsible for the group and for their own learning process. The third principle is being face to face, promoting interaction. This means that, if cooperative learning is happening, students are really working together. Their joint task does not have the structure of a chain work, with single steps done by single students that are then assembled together. Instead, students share materials, encourage and help each other, and discuss; in brief, students construct knowledge together. In order to do that, students need to develop interpersonal skills, which is the fourth principle. For example, they need to learn how to listen to each other, but they also need to learn how to constructively critique the work being done and learn how to make joint decisions. This is why it is important that, when we practise cooperative learning, social competencies are a main focus which needs to be explicitly learned. Students need time to understand which behaviours are related to some specific social competences and need time to try these behaviours and to reflect on them. Lastly, the fifth element is about group processing. Here the group moves to a metacognitive level. Group members reflect on their own learning process, looking both at how they are managing the content-related task of the group work, but also looking at the way they are maintaining the relationship and their collaboration.

Students' benefit from cooperative learning

Cooperative learning is an effective strategy that contributes to the development of a wide range of social, emotional, and cognitive skills. Many researchers have explored the impact of cooperative strategies on learning during the last decade, and their benefits to students are well-documented in literature.

Research consistently indicates that when students work cooperatively, they are more

open to diverse ideas, not always coinciding with their own on many matters. Cooperative learning facilitates students to discuss, exchange ideas, and listen to their classmates' points of view. This process contributes to the enhancement of their oral and active listening communication skills (Al-Tamimi & Attamimi, 2014; Kirbaş, 2017; Namaziandost et al., 2019).

Furthermore, during cooperation and discussions, students realise that their classmates may have the same or different ideas and feelings towards the issues discussed, thus recognising the diverse aspects existing in their classroom. When students are able to understand their classmates' emotions, and can easily understand each other's points of view while working together, their empathy increases. Interestingly, cooperative learning was found to significantly reduce bullying among students, due to an increase of empathy (Van Ryzin & Roseth, 2019). While cooperating, social interactions are strengthened and increased, and socialisation is promoted . Students and teachers, build positive relationships during their cooperation to accomplish projects and assignments promoting a positive classroom climate and increasing wellbeing amoung students.

Besides the interpersonal skills developed in cooperative classrooms, students also become efficient in intrapersonal skills. When working together, they learn to offer suggestions and solutions to problems that occur, they learn to defend their opinions while respecting their classmates, and take responsibility for the tasks they work on. Therefore, self-confidence and ownership increase, benefiting students who work together cooperatively. In addition, when students can understand their own emotions and how these emotions influence their behaviour during groupwork, their self-awareness is enhanced.

The benefits from cooperative learning are not only related to social and emotional outcomes (Ferguson-Patrick, 2012). Empirical evidence demonstrates that students working cooperatively gain better academic outcomes in most subjects compared to those working individually in classrooms (Hsiung, 2013; Johnson & Johnson, 1987) and they also display more independent learning when studying (Slavin, 2010). High-order and reasoning thinking is especially promoted, when students work on challenging and demanding tasks (Gillies, 2014). Gillies and Haynes (2011) found that students exposed to challenging questions during cooperative learning offered more complete and detailed answers than those working individually. Furthermore, the implementation of cooperative learning was found to develop students' critical thinking in reading (Devi, Musthafa & Gustine, 2015) and also enhance problem-solving in elementary and secondary mathematics (Slavin, 2013; Slavin & Lake, 2008). In general, recent reviews show that when students are engaged in inquiry-based cooperative learning, they develop content knowledge and a rich repertoire of skills including cognitive, social, and emotional skills (Barron & Darling-Hammond, 2008).

Having said that, it is evident that successful cooperative learning can lead to significant cognitive, social, and emotional competences on both intrapersonal and interpersonal levels. Students engaged in cooperative learning can easily understand when you work

together you can achieve more. In inclusive classrooms, the respect towards diversity is one of the top achievements for successful cooperation.

The contribution of cooperative learning to a democratic inclusive classroom

For an inclusive classroom, participation and valuing diversity are crucial. This is only possible in a democratic classroom environment that views school as a community where students can develop respect and a sense of justice (Ferguson-Patrick, 2012). It implies a transformative understanding of education in the sense that it connects change in education with a broader change in society.

Participation

Through cooperative learning, students participate in activities collaboratively. They learn to co-construct knowledge through interactions. It is necessary to listen and support each other and to interconnect the different forms of previous knowledge. When working on tasks, students may need to explain their opinions and ideas to their peers, thus feeling that they are positively dependent on each other and that the learning experience as a group can be more successful than on an individual level. This promotes the development of a sense of belonging within the group.

In cooperative learning, the motivation to express one's own thoughts is encouraged, and through collaborative dialogue different students' perspectives are equally valued. Participation of all can flourish in a cooperative classroom.

Valuing diversity

Democratic classroom interactions require practices of respect, acknowledgment, and recognition of equal worth. In cooperative classrooms, all students' voices are equally heard and mutually respected.

Working in groups, students learn to discuss and negotiate varied topics in different group settings. They also learn to deal with diverse opinions and find ways to accomplish their group work. At the end of group activities, they have the space to reflect on their working process and learn how to give and receive constructive feedback. This may have a significant impact on their ability to manage conflicts and lead to a more democratic classroom.

Democratic classroom for a democratic society

It can be helpful to see the classroom as a mirror of society. The historical, social, economic, and political structures of society influence students' opinions and relationships in the classroom. Social patterns are reconstructed and have a greatly impact the behaviour of students. For a democratic stance in society the experience of a democratic class culture is crucial. Teachers can act as advocates promoting equality, freedom, and justice, and be a model for their students in taking responsibility for their actions in the classroom and in society. If students learn to be open-minded and understand the points of view of others, they are more likely to respond to diversity and develop civic and social engagement.

They are encouraged to stand up for themselves, but also for other students, and practise civil courage through intervening in situations where students experience discrimination. By means of cooperative learning, classmates are active protagonists of their learning community and can develop the commitment to shape it together. In cooperative classrooms participation is increased and there is less space for exclusion.

The role of teachers in successful cooperative learning for all

Teachers have different tasks, and each one is very important for a successful cooperative learning environment. In fact, teachers are still taking responsibility, in the sense that they create space and structures for students participation in the classroom. Firstly, teachers are designers and organisers of the learning environment and learning units. Together with the students they arrange the classroom in a way that encourages dialogue in an open space. Secondly, teachers are facilitators and moderators. When students are working in small groups teachers promote positive relationships and interactions. Furthermore, they have the role of consultants, advising students when needed. As role models they act in a responsible way in front of students, in the sense that they act coherently with what they say.

Teachers promote equal participation and are aware of their own power and authority in the classroom. They listen to all voices equally and reflect on their own actions in order to become more aware of their own prejudices. Dewey (1938) goes further and suggests that teachers are agents of change that contribute to improve and reshape society founded on democratic values. The classroom can therefore be seen as a microcosm of our wider society. This requires, firstly, a rethinking of the role of the teachers, who acknowledge their own role as a teacher-adult and at the same time carefully avoids setting up a hierarchical and transmissive relationship with students. Instead of reproducing hierarchies they try to reduce them and to contribute to the students' emancipation.

In fact, leaving learning and socialisation processes fully in the students' hands would not be beneficial in terms of emancipation. There is a risk of failing to overcome the problem of "consciousness between the oppressed and the oppressor" (Freire, 1970). Freire promotes a form of authority built within a cooperative group, where teachers and students together decide how to work. This facilitates the recognition of each one as a resource for the group and promotes a habit of living and deciding together. In this context, practices such as the children's parliament or students' assembly become fundamental. Additionally, teachers should be aware of the diversity in the classroom and of students' different experiences that may influence their attitudes towards school. Differences in society may turn to inequalities, and being aware of discrimination can help when understanding the dynamics of the classroom and students' behaviours. Especially, the acknowledgement that everyone has unique experiences of discrimination that can be intersectional is important. Students may be affected by different forms of discrimination at the same time (racism, classism, ableism, homophobia, etc). A heterogeneous classroom also requires teachers to be aware of geopolitical and historical events which have a great impact on social identities

of the students and their relationships. If we see the classroom as a microcosm that reflects society (Dewey, 1938), we will have a better understanding of relationships among students.

The role of students in successful cooperative learning for all

For a successful cooperative learning the enhancement of inter- and intrapersonal competences is required and these foster the students' role.

Interdependence and common responsibility

Students are responsible both for their individual task and the group's work. They help and encourage each other, trying to ensure that everyone learns effectively. Due to cooperative interactions an increased autonomy is promoted.

All students exchange information, materials, and accomplish the task together, growing their collaborative culture and limiting the effects of a competitive educational setting. In this environment, help and support are positive and support everyone's efforts to contribute to the common goal.

Some structures can support the feeling of interdependence (Johnson & Johnson, 1987; Johnson, Johnson & Holubec, 1998):

- Interdependence of purpose: students share a final goal, which can be the production of a drawing, a poster, or studying a specific topic, etc.
- Role interdependence: students play different roles that contribute to the accomplishment of the work.
- Interdependence of information and resources: students share information and resources with each other.
- Identity interdependence: students identify their group with a name or slogan.
- Fantasy interdependence: students imagine a fantastic scenario to set their work, together with the motivations of their choice.
- Context interdependence: the way students occupy the space encourages them to stay together. In this case the organisation of the environment is clearly explained by the teacher.
- Interdependence of evaluation: the evaluation of the group is based on each students' contribution.
- Celebration interdependence: students "celebrate" the successful achievement of the goal, enhancing the sense of belonging in the group.

Learning to do (and to be) with others:

In a cooperative group the leadership is shared among the students and they can all take up different, but equally necessary roles during the group work.

Here are some examples:

1. *Task Roles*

   - Speakers present the group's work.
   - Synthesisers take notes of the ideas emerged in the group.
   - Verbalisers write decisions made by the group.
   - Visualisers recap the ideas with drawings, concept maps, diagrams etc.
   - Readers read aloud the material provided by the teacher.

2. *Maintenance Roles*

   - Moderators manage the discussion.
   - Participation trackers facilitate group interactions, encouraging participation.
   - Time Controllers monitor the group's work progress on the planned timelines.
   - Voice Volume Controllers check the volume of the group members' voice.
   - Materials managers organise the materials to accomplish the activity.

In cooperative learning, students are committed both to achieve task-related goals and to foster positive relationships. They care about the difficulties and weaknesses of peers, celebrate their success, support each other with feedback and messages of appreciation and encouragement, since everyone's contribution is indispensable.

Due to direct and open communication among classmates, students learn to manage conflicts and solve them constructively, in order to make common decisions for the accomplishment of the work (Comoglio & Cardoso, 1996).

Planning cooperative learning

Teaching refers to a set of delineated actions that are organised during the design of the lesson plan before it takes place. Teachers who decide to implement cooperative strategies in their classrooms should know a variety of factors that may influence the learning of their students and the teaching process.

Plan the objectives of the learning unit:

One of the most important steps in designing a learning unit is to define its objectives, taking into account the content and what the students should learn and achieve at the end of it, both at the subject-related level and the socio-emotional goals. Objectives should be content-based and aligned with the desired students' outcomes to be achieved at the end of the cooperative learning. Precise objectives facilitate teachers to organise a successful instruction and communicate them effectively to students. In other words, it is important that both teachers and students understand what the purpose of the classroom cooperation and its goals are (Anderson et al., 2001).

Tips for planning objectives

- Decide the knowledge, skills, and attitudes you what to achieve through your teaching.
- Mention the target group of your teaching (students).
- Write down clear and precise objectives using active verbs (Anderson et al., 2001; Bloom, 1956; Gogus, 2012).
- Mention the degree of mastery the students should demonstrate.

The objectives should be achievable in the given time of your teaching, easily written, understandable, and challenging. An example of a learning objective based on Bloom's taxonomy is: At the end of this lesson, students will be able to describe in detail the steps for the design of an app and provide examples of its application.

Choose a cooperative learning strategy

For effective cooperative learning, teachers need to be aware of and confident to use multiple cooperative strategies in different circumstances based on the projects' objectives and the needs and interests of the students. Literature provides us with a variety of cooperative strategies that can be applied in classrooms. Indicatively, some of the most well-known and widely implemented are: Think Pair Share, Numbered Heads Together, Jigsaw, and Peer Tutoring.

Think Pair Share: There are three stages to this cooperative discussion strategy:

(1) Think: The teacher poses a question or gives a prompt to the class to get them thinking. Students take a few minutes to think about the question individually.

(2) Pair: Students discuss their answers / thoughts with a classmate, compare, reconsider them and come up with answers that are more convincing to them.

(3) Share: Students share and discuss their ideas /responses with other classmates in a four student group or larger groups or with the whole class (Lyman, 1987).

Numbered Heads Together: This is a cooperative learning strategy with four steps that aims for the maximum involvement of all students in the activity.

(1). Students are numbered usually from 1 to 4.

(2) Teacher informs them about the topic they will work on and the time limit.

(3) To complete the task, students put their heads together, think, discuss, and cooperate.

(4) Teacher calls out a number from 1 to 4 and the numbered student should present the group's work.

Jigsaw: This is one of the most popular cooperative learning techniques that promotes students' interdependence, socialisation, social skills, collaboration, listening, and academic growth. Although it can be found in different versions (Drouet et al., 2023), all of them share a common structure which is outlined below.

The teacher divides the day's lesson into five or six segments and creates Jigsaw groups of five or six students. Then, the teacher distributes each segment to each of the students in the Jigsaw groups. Next, students from different Jigsaw groups get together in "expert" groups to help one another get ready to teach their Jigsaw groups their individual pieces. Then, all students come back to their initial Jigsaw groups and "teach" their group the

assigned part of work. At the end, the teacher gives a quiz to the students (Aronson et al., 1978).

Peer Tutoring: It is a cooperative technique that promotes peer assisted learning. When this technique is applied, more experienced students act as tutors and assist less experienced ones on a specific task to learn the material (Topping, 2020).

Research suggests that these strategies, when used in classrooms, facilitate the promotion of students' learning and a rich repertoire of skills. The choice of which strategy will be chosen is definitely a professional decision made by the teacher who will take into account how the students will approach the material and develop their cooperation in order to fulfil the lesson's objectives.

Design assessment:

Both formative and summative assessment can be applied in a cooperative classroom. Formative assessment is used to provide teachers and students with feedback during the learning process, while summative assessment is organised to judge the final products and is highly related to the content knowledge. A successful assessment should be aligned with the objectives and the content of the activities that will take place during cooperative learning. It is highly recommended for teachers to differentiate the assessment keeping in mind the different needs, interests, background, and learning styles of their students. Different assessment activities can be implemented at different cooperation stages and can be conducted by teachers, the students themselves (self-assessment) or their peers in groups (peer-assessment). The evaluation results guide both teachers and students to consider factors that positively influenced the cooperative learning and also reconsider those that may have hindered it. The assessment informs the cooperative learning in subsequent lessons.

Tips for designing the assessment:

- Identify the objectives set for the cooperative learning.
- Select the appropriate assessment techniques for the cooperative learning.
- Decide at which stage of the cooperative learning each assessment technique will be adopted and by whom (teachers, students themselves or peers).
- Make sure that the assessment content is aligned with the objectives of the lesson.
- Design and differentiate the assessment, taking into account the different needs, interests, background, and learning styles of your students.
- Carefully read the results of the assessment, and share them with the student.
- Consider factors that may influence the success of the cooperative learning both positively or negatively.
- Adjust or improve your next lessons in your cooperative classrooms based on the assessment results.

Prepare material and means:

The materials and means used in cooperative classrooms are of great importance for successful learning. Teachers should decide on the format and the content of the materials provided during the cooperation in order to facilitate students to achieve the learning goals. It is highly recommended that the content of the material, its format, as well as the means that will be used are based on the diversity of the classroom. Teachers should take into consideration the attributes of the students, their needs, interests, background, and learning styles, offering them different learning paths. Furthermore, the preparation of the material should be based on the principles of cooperation providing all students equal chances to access different types of material and to work cooperatively.

Tips for preparing the material of a lesson:

- Prepare accurate and easy understandable material based on the students' competences.
- Prepare material in different formats that facilitate students with different learning styles, needs and interests.
- Check that your material is easily visible and accessible to all.
- Make sure that the material is aligned with both lesson's objectives and assessment.
- Choose the means that facilitate your students to have easy access to the material from different paths.
- Make sure that the means you choose are well maintained and in good condition.

Organise time.

There is not always adequate time to reach all our goals. This can depend on many factors, both external and internal. However, in the case of classroom activities, time may not be flexible enough, taking into account that school hours are fixed and set by the school administration for the whole school year. Time is an important factor that influences the flow of cooperative learning, and students' accomplishments at the end of the activities. To have a maximum didactic time enriched with meaningful cooperation among students, teachers should ensure that the lesson plan and the designed activities are in line with the time provided for the lesson.

In the cooperative classroom, at some stages, students can also contribute to organise time. The opportunity for example, to define the time spent autonomously for single steps of an assignment could be a way to meet the differences in learning pace.

Tips for planning the time:

- During the design of your lesson, estimate the time needed per each task.
- Make sure at the start of the lesson that you have access to an item to tell you the time, for example a clock or smartphone, or set an alarm, if needed.
- In order to engage the students in having a sense of time in relation to their assignments, ask one student per group to keep time (timekeeper).

- Advise the students of the time at regular intervals and continue or stop activities based on the needs and the interests of students, as well the learning objectives set.

Organise space:

Space is also one factor that can influence the success of cooperative learning in a classroom. Teachers who decide to organise a cooperative classroom should take care of the space based on the strategies that they will adopt. For example, the number of groups and numbers of members in each group will affect the arrangement of the furniture in a classroom and play an important role in facilitating easy and productive communications among students and teachers, as well as the group working at them. The layout of the classroom should be relevant to the cooperative strategy chosen and the groups using it. Ensuring adequate lighting, avoidance of distracting noises, easy eye-contact, and access to materials in the classroom are also crucial for a successful cooperative learning experience. The physical arrangement of the classroom will facilitate students to work effectively in groups. If there is adequate time, students could be involved in arranging the learning space, this might increase engagement and a sense of belonging.

Tips for planning the space:

- Arrange the desks and chairs in circles or half circles based on the cooperative learning strategy, the numbers of the groups, and group members in the classroom.
- Ensure that the classroom layout will facilitate the groups working.
- Make sure that all members of the group can have eye contact and listen to each other without difficulty.
- Make sure that the seating arrangements provide students with easy access to learning materials.
- Engage students in the process of arranging the space to enhance their participation and their feeling of belonging.

Ensuring equal participation in inclusive cooperative learning for all

The work by Elizabeth Cohen and her group, made visible how status characteristics affect participation in cooperative learning. At the initial stage of her work, in the US she compared the rates of interactions and the influence on the group decisions of white adolescents, perceived to be high status, and African-American or Mexican-American, perceived to be low status, and described how participation and influence of the high status members was significantly higher (Cohen, 1972; 1982). Aware of that, it becomes clear that the issue of ensuring equal participation requires challenging status hierarchies in the classroom. Cohen's group developed numerous intervention models and strategies that can be adopted by teachers to put this idea into practice and organised them in the approach of Complex Instruction (Lotan & Holthuis, 2021). In their collaboration with schools, scholars of the

group recognise that "to organise the classroom for equitable interactions among students, the teacher's task becomes increasingly complex, non-routine, and uncertain" (Lotan & Holthuis, 2021: 70). This is why the implementation of strategies can be seen as a complex learning process, both for students and teachers, that requires time, braveness to experiment, tolerance with errors, and patience to reflect on them in order to refine the intervention.

Grouping strategies.

A first crucial strategy is related to grouping. How shall small groups of students be composed? If the choice is left to the students, they will probably reproduce the spontaneous relationship network they have in the classroom. Reflecting on this in terms of status, this kind of procedure is connected with the high risk that some popular students are highly requested, whereas others are left out or reluctantly included, reproducing marginalisation processes.

In literature, besides preference groups, other two grouping strategies are described: randomly defined groups and groups defined by the teacher (Klippert, 2012). An example of a random grouping technique could be asking each student to choose a stone and then finding students with a similar stone to meet in a group. In this case, everybody has the same chance to work with each other and this fact clearly conveys the idea that the teacher trusts that each combination can be a good one for successful work to be completed on the assignment.

In other situations, the precise design of each single group by the teacher can also be an interesting option. Groups can be built along the criteria of homogeneity or of heterogeneity. For example, students could be grouped homogeneously according to common interests. It could be the case of an assignment that aims at the development of reading comprehension competences, where all groups work on the same competence but on texts that address different topics, according to their interests. In the event of intellectually challenging assignments, that need for example, problem-solving or the development of a project, heterogeneous groups can be a more interesting solution. In this case, it is exactly the coexistence of different talents, interests, social abilities, and ways of learning that facilitate the completion of the task (Lotan, 2014).

Mitchell's work on "What really works in Special and Inclusive Education" (Mitchell, 2014) underlines the limits of establishing homogeneous groups in terms of ability, especially for students that struggle or are hard to reach. Assigning students to low-ability groups communicates low expectations to students and reduces learners' opportunities.

Anticipating diversity.

A second possible strategy to facilitate equal participation is to anticipate diversity in the way the assignment and the materials for the groups are designed. This means that, following the principles of Universal Design for Learning (https://udlguidelines.cast.org/), teachers plan in advance with heterogeneity in mind instead of adapting for single students at a moment's notice. In practice, the teacher can design assignments that imply that

different students in different groups can activate multiple ways of learning within the same or different assignment(s). For example, students may have the option to present the result of group work both with a visualisation poster or with an oral presentation, depending on their preferences.

Another important aspect in anticipating diversity is the idea of getting access to multiple and flexible materials. So, for example, new knowledge that the group needs to understand in order to work on the group task, can be presented with the option of choosing between a video or a text. Again, students choose according to their preferences.

Role assignment.

A third strategy that can be adopted in order to facilitate equal participation is the assignment of specific roles to the single students working in the group (Johnson & Johnson, 1999). This can be seen as a way to structure shared leadership: assigning a role means making a member of the group responsible for a task that is necessary to the group in order to succeed. If this is not done, students will probably act according to the statutes they spontaneously have within the group. This means that those who are perceived as leaders will take up the leadership role. A person with a low status instead will participate and influence the group much less. Assigning specific roles becomes a way for the teacher to limit the impact that status has on participation and to question the status itself. In fact, assigning roles symbolically represents how each member is necessary to the group and contributes to the realisation of positive interdependence (Thomas, 1957).

Different kinds of roles exist (for example see the paragraph on the students' role in cooperative learning). To strategically challenge status the teacher can manage who takes on which role within the group. This might highlight a student's talent in the group, or it may limit the dominant influence of others. If the decision is accompanied by a reflection of their own strengths and weaknesses, the assignment of roles can be decided together with the students. The reflective process leads them to move beyond spontaneous status dynamics.

Adult's support.

The last aspect we would like to highlight is the fact that, even though cooperative learning is based on students being the protagonists of the learning process, adult's support can be very crucial and important, especially in order to facilitate and ensure equal participation. This means that every time students are excluded, discriminated against, or experience a form of marginalisation, the teachers' reaction is crucial. Teachers, in fact, can explicitly intervene and show that unfairness and exclusion is not accepted in the classroom environment. Or they can decide to act in a more indirect way praising the students' actions and explicitly acknowledging the contribution of students with a lower status (Lotan & Holthuis, 2021). In this way, they make it clear that in our inclusive classroom, every voice counts.

Local contexts

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=378#h5p-22

Closing questions to discuss or tasks

- Collect examples of group work and try to identify which of them fostered cooperative learning and which did not. Use the five characteristics identified by Johnson and Johnson (2008) to explain your choice.
- Prepare a 5-minute speech to portray the benefits of cooperative learning to parents.
- Think of a concrete situation in your school, your experience as a teacher or as a learner, where equal participation during group work was really established. Considering the contents of this chapter, how would you explain it?
- Think of a concrete situation in your school, your experience as a teacher or as a learner, where equal participation during group work was not established. Considering the contents of this chapter, what changings would you suggest in order to facilitate equal participation of all group members?
- Do you think that the many structures presented for practising effective cooperative learning can become a limitation of the single learner's freedom in the learning process?

Literature

Al-Tamimi, N. O. M., and R. A. Attamimi. "Effectiveness of Cooperative Learning in Enhancing Speaking Skills and Attitudes towards Learning English." *International Journal of Linguistics* 6, no. 4 (2014): 27. https://doi.org/10.5296/ijl.v6i4.6114.

Anderson, L. W., D. R. Krathwohl, P. W. Airasian, K. A. Cruikshank, R. E. Mayer, P. R. Pintrich, J. Raths, and M. C. Wittrock. *A Taxonomy for Learning, Teaching, and Assessing: A Revision of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*. Longman, 2001.

Armstrong, P. "Bloom's Taxonomy," 2010.

Aronson, E., N. Blaney, C. Stephan, J. Sikes, and M. Snapp. *The Jigsaw Classroom*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1978.

Barron, B., and L. Darling-Hammond. "Teaching for Meaningful Learning. A Review of Research on Inquiry-Based and Cooperative Learning." *Edutopia*, 2008.

Bloom, B. S. *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals*. Edited by M. D. Engelhart, E. J. Furst, W. H. Hill, and D. R. Krathwohl. New York: David McKay,

1956.

Cohen, E. G. "Expectation States and Interracial Interaction in School Settings." *Annual Review of Sociology* 8 (1982): 109–235.

———. "Interracial Interaction Disability." *Human Relations* 25 (1972): 9–14.

———. "Restructuring the Classroom: Conditions for Productive Small Groups." *Review of Educational Research* 64 (1994): 1–35.

Comoglio, M., and M. A. Cardoso. *Insegnare e Apprendere in Gruppo. Il Cooperative Learning*. Roma: Libreria Ateneo Salesiano, 1996.

Devi, A. P., B. Musthafa, and G. G. Gustine. "Using Cooperative Learning in Teaching Critical Thinking in Reading." *English Review: Journal of English Education* 4, no. 1 (2015): 1–14.

Drouet, O., V. Lentillon-Kaestner, and N. Margas. "Effects of the Jigsaw Method on Student Educational Outcomes: Systematic Review and Meta-Analyses." *Frontiers in Psychology* 14 (2023). https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1216437.

Ferguson-Patrick, K. "Developing an Inclusive Democratic Classroom 'in Action' through Cooperative Learning." In *Joint AARE APERA International Conference*, 2012.

Freire, P. *Pedagogía Del Oprimido*. Montevideo: Tierra Nueva, 1970.

Gillies, R. "Cooperative Learning: Developments in Research." *International Journal of Educational Psychology* 3, no. 2 (2014): 125–40.

Gillies, R., and M. Haynes. "Increasing Explanatory Behaviour, Problem-Solving and Reasoning within Classes Using Cooperative Group Work." *Instructional Science* 39 (2011): 349–66. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11251-010-9130-9.

Gogus, A. "Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning Objectives." In *Encyclopedia of the Sciences of Learning*, edited by N. M. Seel. Boston, MA: Springer, 2012. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-1428-6_141.

Hooks, b. *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. New York: Routledge, 1994.

Hsiung, C. "The Effectiveness of Cooperative Learning." *Journal of Engineering Education* 101, no. 1 (2013): 119–37. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2168-9830.2012.tb00044.x.

Johnson, D. W., and R. T. Johnson. *Learning Together and Alone: Cooperative, Competitive, and Individualistic Learning*. Englewood Cliffs, 1987.

———. "Making Cooperative Learning Work." *Theory into Practice* 38, no. 2 (1999): 67–73.

———. "Social Interdependence Theory and Cooperative Learning: The Teacher's Role." In *The Teacher's Role in Implementing Cooperative Learning in the Classroom*, 9–37. Boston, MA: Springer, 2008.

Johnson, D. W., R. T. Johnson, and E. J. Holubec. *Cooperation in the Classroom*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1998.

———. *Cooperative Learning in the Classroom*. Alexandria: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1994.

Johnson, D. W., R. T. Johnson, and K. A. Smith. "Cooperative Learning Returns to College: What Evidence Is There That It Works?" *Change* 30, no. 4 (1998): 26–36.

Kirbaş, A. "Effects of Cooperative Learning Method on the Development of Listening Comprehension and Listening Skills." *International Journal of Languages' Education and Teaching* 5, no. 1 (2017): 1–17. https://doi.org/10.18298/ijlet.1712.

Klippert, H. *Heterogenität Im Klassenzimmer*. Weinheim Basel: Beltz, 2012.

Lotan, R. A. "Crafting Groupworthy Learning Tasks." In *Designing Groupwork: Strategies of the Heterogeneous Classroom*, edited by E. G. Cohen and R. A. Lotan, 3rd ed., 86–96. New York: Teachers College Press, 2014.

Lotan, R. A., and N. I. Holthuis. "Complex Instruction for Diverse and Equitable Classrooms: In Loving Memory of Elizabeth G. Cohen." In *Pioneering Perspectives in Cooperative Learning*, edited by E. G. Cohen and R. A. Lotan, 63–77. Routledge, 2021.

Mitchell, D. *What Really Works in Special and Inclusive Education*. London: Routledge, 2014.

Namaziandost, E., L. Neisi, Kheryadi, and M. Nasri. "Enhancing Oral Proficiency through Cooperative Learning among Intermediate EFL Learners: English Learning Motivation in Focus." *Cogent Education* 6, no. 1 (2019): 1683933. https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186x.2019.1683933.

Slavin, R. "Effective Programmes in Reading and Mathematics: Evidence from the Best Evidence Encyclopedia." *School Effectiveness and School Improvement* 24 (2013): 383–91. https://doi.org/10.1080/09243453.2013.797913.

Slavin, R. E. "Instruction Based on Cooperative Learning." In *Handbook of Research on Learning and Instruction*, edited by R. E. Mayer and P. A. Alexander, 1st ed., 344–60. Routledge, 2010. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203839089.

Slavin, R., and C. Lake. "Effective Programs in Elementary Mathematics: A Best Evidence Synthesis." *Review of Educational Research* 78 (2008): 427–515. https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654308317473.

Thomas, D. "Effects of Facilitative Role Interdependence on Group Functioning." *Human Relations* 10 (1957): 347–66.

Topping, K. J. "Peer Tutoring and Cooperative Learning." *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education*, 2020. https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.013.1432.

Van Ryzin, M. J., and C. J. Roseth. "Cooperative Learning in Middle School: A Means to Improve Peer Relations and Reduce Victimization, Bullying, and Related Outcomes." *Aggressive Behavior* 45 (2019): 643–51. https://doi.org/10.1002/ab.21858.

About the authors

Heidrun Demo

Her work centers on equity in education, with a particular focus on supporting diverse learners, fostering inclusive teaching practices, and

driving inclusive school development. She is deeply involved in research and teacher training, dedicated to creating and sustaining inclusive learning environments.

Vana Chiou

Vana Chiou loves teaching and training future teachers on contemporary teaching methods and techniques. Her research interests include contemporary methods of teaching and assessment, teacher training, inclusion and education. Her published work includes editing books, chapters in books and articles in Greek and international journals.

Miriam Cuccu

Miriam Cuccu, pedagogist and subject expert in general and social pedagogy at the University of Macerata (Italy). She is involved in projects focused on intercultural education with a community-based and arts-based approach. She collaborates in monitoring and evaluating interventions to counter educational poverty and in training for education professionals. Her main research interests include dialogue between cultures, community participation and empowerment through creative languages.

Özge Özdemir

Özge Özdemir works in extracurricular political education with a strong focus on anti-racism, anti-discrimination and empowerment. During and after her studies of political science and sociology in Frankfurt am Main, she specialised in working with young people and adults in educational work. Her activist experiences form the basis for both her practical educational work and her academic career.

(DIGITAL) MEDIA AND MATERIALS FOR LEARNING

Pamela February; Grit Alter; Jules Buendgens-Kosten; Frank J. Müller; and Alessio Di Paolo

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://book.all-means-all.education/ ama-2025-en/?p=365#oembed-1

Example Case

It is the first day of your practicum at a school. The first lesson you observe starts a bit late. The teacher later explains to you: "There was a queue at the photocopy machine – and I needed to print out different versions of today's worksheet, to take the heterogeneity of our learners into consideration". This makes you think about the role of media – analogue and digital – in contexts of inclusive education.

As you read this chapter, think about suggestions you can provide to the teacher to make this task easier.

Initial questions

In this chapter you will find the answers to the following questions:

- What is a (digital) medium?

- What are the affordances of digital media for inclusive educational settings?
- Which (digital) media is beneficial for inclusive classrooms?
- How can (digital) media be applied in a meaningful way?
- What are limitations to using digital media in inclusive educational settings?

Introduction to Topic

One of the many things we need to take into consideration when creating inclusive learning environments is the media and material we use. It seems to be the case that a lot of the materials that are used in classrooms are based on verbal and/or visual texts, depending on the grade, and textbooks which mainly consist of visual (primary school) and verbal text (lower and upper secondary school). There are, however, a number of students who find it difficult to access, and learn, with these texts. In this chapter, we discuss why it is important to create and use diverse (digital) media and material and how we can do this in inclusive educational settings.

In the title of this chapter, digital is put in parenthesis. This means that we will write about both digital and analogue media and material. In large parts of the chapter, the focus will be on digital media because digital media have become part and parcel in educational contexts, not only since the COVID-19 crisis (Timotheou et.al. 2023). Even so, it is important to mention upfront that digital media, or media in general, is not a panacea, and is not a magic wand that solves all problems. Dropping a digital device into learners' hands is not enough. On the contrary, there are many factors that can impact whether or not a student can fully benefit from a specific example of (digital) media. A wonderful app, a fascinating film clip or an impressive book that fails to meet learners' needs or is not a good fit with the curriculum and learning goals, is of little help in the classroom.

So, how do we go about creating an inclusive learning environment in terms of digital media? How can we make sure that the media and material we bring into classrooms provide learning opportunities for all learners? This chapter aims to provide some answers to these questions by addressing specific topics. The chapter introduces the concept of a medium and the need to design inclusive media and materials. The chapter addresses key aspects of digital and analogue media and materials that include theoretical aspects such as Mayer's Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning and the Universal Design for Learning, in addition to the use of Open Educational Resources (OER). In particular, the chapter provides practical considerations connected to the use of (digital) media and materials in classrooms and broader educational settings.

Key aspects

What is a medium?

Initially, we need to clarify what we mean by media and material. For the purpose of this section, we consider both to refer to the objects we apply to educational settings. There are several ways to define what a medium is. We can distinguish between a narrow and a broad understanding of media. For a narrow understanding, Schmidt and Strasser (2018, p. 212) suggest that :

Media can be defined as the means by which information is conveyed from one place to another. The most obvious characteristic of a medium is its technology, the mechanical and electronic aspects that determine its function and to some extent its shape and other physical features. These are the characteristics that are commonly used to classify a medium as a 'television', a 'radio', and so on (cf. Kozma, 1991, p. 2).

Added to this, we can include a time dimension as, in most cases, the media also allows access to the information they contain over time, through archives, which are easily accessible, either on the internet or in libraries? More broadly, the many forms of information available across time and space can be interpreted as media, even if they were not crafted by humans (as the word 'technology' implies). Marshall McLuhan is well known for taking a very broad perspective on what is encompassed under the label media. One of his examples is electric light. Electric light enables colours, but it "escapes attention as a communication medium just because it has no content" (McLuhan, 1964, p. 8). It is not until it "is used to spell out some brand name that it is noticed as a medium" (McLuhan, 1964, p. 9). Additionally, understanding something as a medium also depends on what one reads into the medium. A piece of driftwood, for example, can be a medium if you tell its story; whereas a cup of coffee can be used as an incentive to discuss sustainability. This indicates that using objects in specific contexts can turn these into media. Whether something is a medium depends on the negotiation between sender and receiver, and the intention which follows.

Another differentiation is often made in terms of the way a medium functions, or the means by which it is perceived. There is visual media (pictures and photos), audio media (podcasts and audiobooks) and audiovisual media (film and advertisements). Modes and codes can also be combined and result in multimodal/codal media such as picturebooks (see below). Another way of looking at media is their underlying technology: there is analog media such as books and newspapers, digital media such as ebooks, and interactive media such as apps or video games. Certainly, the human body is also a medium as body language carries meaning and conveys information. In other words, anything that communicates content and meaning can be viewed as a medium.

In educational settings, materials such as textbooks, worksheets, videos etc are considered a form of media. Teachers use these to teach content and develop

competencies. In inclusive education settings, we can benefit from different kinds of media that address different means of perception. Objects are also included as students often learn through touch, such as playing with toy animals or by building blocks, for example.

There are specific characteristics of media that make them particularly beneficial for educational settings. Most media are interactive, multimodal and, in the case of digital media, often hypertextual. If these types or characteristics are not available, teachers can use other tools at their disposal to enhance their use. Interactivity means that media can be used in an interactive way. Interactivity refers to at least two dimensions. Firstly, learners can interact with one another based on a medium, e.g., a picture. In a foreign language classroom, for instance, each learner could have a different version of the same picture and discuss how their pictures differ. Secondly, learners can interact with the medium itself, e.g., when using a language learning app where they match correct words and pictures or translate phrases. The app then offers feedback and the learners continue their work.

Multimodality refers to the simultaneous integration of several codes and modes. Media, such as newspapers, picturebooks, feature film, and most apps, combine different modes and codes to convey meaning and information. In newspapers and picturebooks, there's a combination of verbal and visual text while in feature films, it is visual and auditive text. In apps it is often a combination of verbal, visual, and auditive text plus the user's interactivity with tasks. When using media in inclusive educational settings, it is essential to be aware of the advantages of the various modes and codes, and their combination, that provides (to be explained in further detail below).

Hypertextuality refers to the way in which media are linked to one another. This is apparent in digital verbal text such as lemmas in lexicon in which terms and concepts that explain one idea are directly linked to their own lemmas (see more details below). While this line of argument suggests that teachers and learners can benefit from characteristics which make the content more accessible, it is certainly the case that interactivity, multimodality and hypertextuality make the perception process more complex. One of the main benefits of digital media and material, however, is their adaptability.

One particular medium that teachers automatically bring into classrooms is their own body and (often) voice. In inclusive settings, it is worthwhile thinking about body language and the use of voice and pronunciation as well, because the intricacies of both can have an impact on successful learning for all. Teachers can benefit from using their bodies consciously, both as a means to distinguish between the use of body language that supports students in following instructions and explanations, and by using body language that distracts or makes students nervous. One means of bodily supporting learners would be, for example, to orient themselves in space in a way that makes lip-reading easier, or by using their bodies and voices to express empathy and affection. Thus, consciously working with the body has the potential to increase students' awareness of their own bodies and how they work, thereby building students self-confidence,and personal identity and emphasising the diversity within the classroom.

Perceiving the body as a medium implies that teachers should not only be aware of their own body language but also be able to read the body language of their students. How do students signal that they are comfortable or uncomfortable? Are they lazily chilling in their seats or highly relaxed and able to pay particular attention to what is being presented? Certainly, activities that require movements, e.g., in-between activities or where students stand up and shake their arms and legs, can play a key role in maintaining engagement in the classroom. In inclusive settings we need to be aware that not all students may be able to participate in such activities. Anything that concerns embodiment needs to be sensitively considered, especially so in inclusive classrooms. There are common ways in which the body can be designed to work for different learners including drama activities, physical movement or methods such as marketplace and mingling around. This might also involve metaphorical movement in virtual spaces using avatars or in 3D (Morganti & Riva, 2006).[1]

The need to design inclusive media and material

When teaching, it is important to address, and include, everyone, and to ensure everyone benefits from the learning experience. This is especially relevant in inclusive settings where learners with different needs develop skills and competences at a different rate. When using media and material, it is paramount to do so in such a way that invites all learners to learn. For example, the delivery and design of media and material is important, and this is particularly the case for analogue and digital media and material alike. Digital media and material can be challenging for some students as a colourful design, fast pace, or means of accessibility could be overwhelming or distracting for them. Despite this, there are numerous benefits of using digital media such as:

- Developing skills and additional competencies that would not be possible without the technology, making details observable through slow-motion or zooming-in to images;
- Ensuring participation in classroom activities and beyond, e.g., participating in lessons remotely and online;
- Supporting students in solving tasks independent from teacher support, e.g., by conducting their own research.

Developing skills and competencies is necessary for all learners, regardless of their socio-cultural, economic and social background.. All students must acquire basic skills and knowledge that enable them to assess, produce, present, and exchange information, as well as the ability to choose the appropriate technologies to tackle real-life problems.

---

1. For more details please refer to ideas such as the inclusive body (Morin, 1999), educational corporeity (Sibilio, 2011) and embodiment (Shapiro, 2010).

As indicated above, digital media and material offers particular advantages to create teaching and learning scenarios for all. Teachers and learners can, for example, benefit from text-to-speech software and visual organisers. We can adapt the structure of the material and media, and also the content. Through the online world, information and material can immediately be accessed and included in teaching. Digital media can thus support differentiation and, as a result, inclusion.

Beyond media and material, the use of language also makes teaching and learning accessible to all students. We can ensure that learning materials are provided across different levels, and also supplement written texts with audio recordings.

There are a number of benefits for using digital media in the context of inclusion:

1. As a tool for learning (e.g., learning maths);
2. As a way to develop digitalisation-related competencies (functional and personal/critical);
3. To allow students to develop life skills needed in a society predominately shaped by the digital transformation.

We can create and design inclusive media and material, or increase access to given media and material by digitising it. Digitisation is the act of translating information into machine-readable formats. With the increasing digitisation of data, a process of digital transformation begins. Digital transformation does not refer merely to the ubiquitousness of digital devices, but to the changes caused by large amounts of data being easily searchable and digitally processable. For example, scanning an individual book is a form of digitisation. A book that was scanned can be uploaded and downloaded, shared and searched. The predominance of scanned books and digital repositories of research articles, (or electronic texts) has an additional effect, in changing the way we research . For instance, instead of searching in card catalogues or printed bibliographies, we can use search engines like Google Scholar to find information. While this is beneficial in one respect (by identifying side references to obscure topics) it also has drawbacks in that it can be difficult to assess the quality of a publication.

Many studies have analysed the potential of digital media for students with special educational needs (Florian, 2004; Joimur, 2018; Tohara, 2021). These highlight how digital media can support students not only in studying, but in acquiring life skills (Bryant et al., 2020). Digital media, therefore, becomes not only an information tool but also an educational tool. A teacher who wants to respond to everyone's needs (Sibilio & Aiello, 2015) faces the challenge in designing activities that meet the needs of each individual student, and respecting their personal way of learning. Where students encounter difficulties, their teachers can resort to different resources to support them. When we think of analogue media, these can be adapted to different needs by, for example, changing the

size of letters and images or the colours in a verbal text to make it easier to identify details, or adding verbal explanations to what can be seen in an image.

The blend of modern technology with the more traditional means of learning, offers even more options. For example, an image can be viewed on the Interactive Multimedia Whiteboard to allow greater magnification. Using software to work with maps (e.g., in Geography), in addition to textbooks, adapts the learning environment for students who are more motivated when using technology, allowing them to view images in more detail compared to the classic textbook. In fact, it is often the case that children who have little interest in studying exclusively from books, learn better using a computer whilst also sustaining their attention span. Providing students with choices supports their autonomy[2], and creates ownership and self-reliance.

(Digital) Media and Material in Inclusive Settings: Theoretical Foundations

There are various theories one may use to build a foundation for critically reflecting on applying (digital) media and material in inclusive settings. For the content listed here, we believe Mayer's Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning and the approach of Universal Design for learning are fundamental when designing digital or non-digital material for learning.

Mayer's cognitive theory of multimedia learning

In the first instance, we will discuss Mayer's Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning (Mayer, 2021). It assumes that learners actively construct their understanding from the material presented to them. This theory builds on research in deciding how best to support learners through design choices related to choosing what to include and how to arrange it. Mayer ascertains that our working memory is always limited. An individual's working memory capacity differs from person to person, but it will never be unlimited. The process of learning will place demands on the working memory. Everything that a person can learn has a germane load – in other words, is it relevant for the task at hand . However, the way in which this input is presented can increase the total cognitive load. By presenting good learning designs, we can keep the extraneous load low.

So, what is good design? A long, uninterrupted text, or a truly intimidating wall of text? Perhaps a video filled with images and animation and effects, with narration and music and

---

2. The idea of learner autonomy is not new, but it has been widely referred to in the field of ELT only over the last decade, also critically? (Schmenk, 2008). Learners should feel responsible for their own learning, which includes engaging with topics in a way that suits their interests and learning preferences. They should process content and find solutions for problems in self-reliant settings and also evaluate their learning process (Smith, 2008). Even so, the concept of learner autonomy needs to be approached sensitively, particularly in inclusive settings.

everything else under the rainbow? According to Mayer's Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning, both are not the ideal. Mayer's theory assumes that the processing of input has to go through different channels. Each of these channels has a limited capacity. In designing material, therefore we do not want to overburden either of these channels. As there are different channels available, we can use multimedia to transport some information through one of the channels, and other information through the other channels.

What are these channels? There are two approaches which the theory draws on; the verbal vs. the non-verbal channel, and the visual vs. the auditory channel. The verbal channel deals with language. It can be spoken or written or signed.f it is spoken language, it is processed by the verbal channel. The non-verbal channel deals with everything else. So, if there is a video that makes use of sign language and written text, e.g., subtitles, both would have to be processed by the verbal channel. However, if there is audio text and a drawing, only the audio text would be processed by the verbal channel and the drawing by the non-verbal channel. This means, instead of sending all your metaphorical boats down a single river and clogging it up, you are sending some boats down one river, some boats down another river, and everything can travel smoothly. Another approach involves the distinction between visual and auditory channels. If you have written text and animation, both will tax the visual channel. If you have spoken text and the animation, it will draw on both systems and may avoid overtaxing any one of these channels. Hence, teachers may also address corresponding channels to allow learners to follow instructions or content. They could use meaningful hand signs while explaining an issue, may show pictures while telling a story, or develop sketchnotes while referring to grammar phenomena.

From these, and more, assumptions, certain principles have been developed that can guide your design of teaching material. One of which is the coherence principle, which encourages us to only include what is needed, and leave out what is not needed. Extra detail that sounds interesting but is not necessary – for instance, music that does not contribute to the essence of the material can be left out in order to reduce the cognitive load. Another principle that is important here is the temporal contiguity principle. If you have a picture and a narration that explains the picture, present them at the same time. For example, if you designed a PowerPoint slide deck: present the picture and the corresponding narration on one slide.

Table 1: Design Principles to Minimise Extraneous Cognitive Load in Multimedia Learning

Goal	Representative techniques	Description of techniques
Minimize extraneous processing	Coherence principle	Eliminate extraneous material
	Signaling principle	Highlight essential material
	Redundancy principle	Do not add printed text to spoken text
	Spatial contiguity principle	Place printed text near corresponding graphic
	Temporal contiguity principle	Present narration and corresponding graphic simultaneously

Table based on Mayer (2001, p. 69)

Mayer's Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning is useful for designing material that works for students with different working memory capacities. Nevertheless, there are some caveats. First, the idea of using multiple channels can fall flat if some students simply cannot use one of these channels. It is often better to risk overtaxing one channel, than depending on a channel that is not available to your learners. A deaf student might profit more from written text or a sign language video, even if this text or video, in combination with a graphic or animation, might risk overtaxing the visual channel. We can still support them by presenting information in appropriately sized chunks, allowing them to pause the input, or to rewatch parts of it. Furthermore, when you are exploring language learning, all bets are off. When students are still acquiring a language – be it in the foreign language classroom, or in other settings – being able to hear and read the same words simultaneously can be a major advantage. Listening comprehension improves when students can read while listening. This is very noticeable, for example, when watching target language videos with subtitles. Košak-Babuder and colleagues (2019) investigated language learners with dyslexia and found that students benefited even more from the combination of spoken and written language.

So, what do you do? Should you follow Mayer's Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning or not? It is certainly a useful starting point, especially as these principles can guide you in designing material with an appropriate cognitive load and that avoids unnecessary, and potentially harmful, bells and whistles. On the other hand, and for accessibility reasons, you can include alternative methods for improving the presentation of information for students with difficulties. Ideally, these can be concealed by students who do not need them i.e., subtitles that can be switched on or off.

In this section, we have only discussed the parts of Mayer's theory that look at the two channels and aim to minimise extraneous processing. The theory goes much deeper, though. To offer you a concise summary of further principles, we present these in the following table.

Table 2: Design Techniques to Manage Essential and Foster Generative Processing in Multimedia Learning

Goal	Representative techniques	Description of techniques
Manage essential processing	Segmenting principle	Break presentation into parts
	Pre-training principle	Describe names and characteristics of key elements before the lesson
	Modality principle	Use spoken rather than printed text
Foster generative processing	Multimedia principle	Use words and pictures rather than words alone
	Personalization principle	Put words in conversational style
	Voice principle	Use human voice for spoken words
	Embodiment principle	Give onscreen characters human-like gestures
	Emotional design principle	Make onscreen elements prime positive emotion
	Generative activity principle	Provide prompts for learning strategies
	Guided discovery principle	Provide hints and feedback as learner solves problems
	Mapping principle	Ask learners to create a graphic organizer or concept map
	Self-explanation principle	Ask learners to explain a lesson to themselves
	Drawing principle	Ask learners to make drawings for the lesson
	Imagination principle	Ask learners to imagine drawings for the lesson

Table based on Mayer (2001, p. 69)

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

Another theory is Universal Design for Learning (UDL). UDL is described as "a framework to guide the design of learning environments that are accessible and challenging for all" (CAST UDL Guidelines). UDL has developed a table with different principles, each containing guidelines, with accompanying checkpoints. This table is a wonderful tool for planning and reflecting on your teaching. Here, we will look only at a small part of it, i.e., the principle of

representation. (The full table, with hyperlinked explanations, can be accessed here: CAST UDL Guidelines).

Representation refers to the means at teachers' and students' disposal to learn content and information. UDL suggests we provide multiple means of representation. On the one hand, we should **design options for perception** and ensure that information is presented which includes students who are hard of hearing, blind or visually impaired. We should also ensure that students can **customise the display of information**. Do subtitles help you? Then switch them on. Do they take your attention away from the film? Switch them off. Each learner can choose for themselves what works best for them and how to make the content accessible.

Designing options for language and symbols understands that perception alone is not enough. If you use many complex technical terms, a simple process description might be incomprehensible to some of your learners. We need to **clarify how the vocabulary, symbols, and language structures** that we use are organised. When we have learners who speak more than one language, we can **cultivate understanding across languages and dialects** to support their learning. We can also help students by using **multiple media** to illustrate the same ideas.

Finally, just understanding a small piece of new information is not enough. **Design options for building knowledge** concerns how this information is processed. We can **connect prior knowledge to new learning**, or provide it to learners. Without that background knowledge, the new ideas might be meaningless or decontextualized. Do not overwhelm students with details but rather **highlight patterns, big ideas, and relationships**. For instance, guide students in how to process information and to use strategies such as visualisation and support them in **maximising transfer and generalisation** by giving them different opportunities to revisit ideas and apply them to different problems.

The idea is not to create special ways of presenting information that perfectly meets the needs of a single student (i.e., individualisation), but rather to design our teaching in a way that includes **multiple flexible options**, so that students can use include options that fit their needs and use the support that helps them in that specific lesson.

Using Open Educational Resources (OER) to address students' needs

The concept of OER

Looking at UNESCO's definition, Open Educational Resources (OER) can be defined as:

Learning, teaching and research materials in any format and medium that reside in the public domain or are under copyright that have been released under an open license, that permit no-cost access, re-use, re-purpose, adaptation and redistribution by others […] (UNESCO, 2019, p. 5).

This means that due to their open licence teachers and learners worldwide can flexibly and legally use OER. The material for the secondary level schools from the Norwegian OER

platform ndla.no (NDLA), for example, can be translated and distributed in other countries (Müller, 2019).

Interestingly, UNESCO explicitly highlights the potential of free educational materials for inclusive educational processes:

Information and communications technology (ICT) provide great potential for effective, equitable and inclusive access to OER and their use, adaptation and redistribution. They can open possibilities for OER to be accessible anytime and anywhere for everyone, including individuals with disabilities and individuals coming from marginalized or disadvantaged groups. They can help meet the needs of individual learners and effectively promote gender equality and incentivize innovative pedagogical, didactical and methodological approaches (UNESCO, 2019 p. 5).

Regarding the question of how OER might be used, we can turn to David Wiley's 5r's (2014) which outlines the advantages of using? OER:

- Retain – make, own, and control a copy of the resource (e.g., download and keep your own copy);
- Revise – edit, adapt, and modify your copy of the resource (e.g., translate into another language);
- Remix – combine your original or revised copy of the resource with other existing material to create something new (e.g., make a mashup);
- Reuse – use your original, revised, or remixed copy of the resource publicly (e.g., on a website, in a presentation, in a class);
- Redistribute – share copies of your original, revised, or remixed copy of the resource with others (e.g., post a copy online or give one to a friend).

In this respect, OER is not inclusive by design, but instead offers numerous potential to create more inclusive learning arrangements. The following sections show how OER can be made inclusive and its benefits for inclusive learning.

The benefits of inclusive OER for teaching in diverse learning groups

School contexts are characterised to a large extent by local circumstances such as curricula and languages, and yet overlap considerably in terms of content. Numerous OER initiatives therefore tend to operate at a national level (such as NDLA.no in Norway, Mundo.Schule in Germany). Cross-national search engines for OER, such as OERSI, are still in their infancy and do not yet take into account the requirements of inclusive education.

In inclusive education, the development and adaptation of materials to the needs of pupils has a long tradition. However, due to copyright issues, teachers usually keep their materials to themselves, with the result that they must start from the beginning each time. With OER, teachers can build on the materials developed by others, and save a lot of time.

Beyond the time issue, there are further reasons why OER should be used and self-created materials should be shared under a free licence.

One aspect is the understanding that there is no "one material to suit all" and there is no one material that is perfectly accessible to all pupils. The particular learning requirements at different levels means that the content must be constantly adapted either for a class or individual students. Therefore, publishing material as OER, under free licences and as free formats, allows other teachers and educators to adapt the material to their learners' specific needs and to their technological setup.

The new AI developments make it possible to adapt materials at an even faster rate and according to the needs of the learning group. For example, ChatGPT as a generative language model can generate texts in different language levels (e.g. also in easy/simple language). The use of generative AI for text simplification/differentiation can also help with materials that are under Creative Commons license (especially cc-0) and do not prohibit editing with AI due to copyright.

As will be further discussed below, digital formats also allow us to address the question of representation more easily. Unlike traditional textbooks, digital space is not subject to any significant space restrictions. This "more of space" in digital space can be used to include a "more **diverse perspectives**" (e.g., by involving people with different backgrounds in the development of content and how this content is represented). Because digital space offers this low threshold for the representation of diversity, OER should take the opportunity and benefit from it in both the production and design of material.

Another aspect that contributes to increased accessibility is the free usability of OER. Learners and teachers all over the world can use materials without requesting permission and without paying licence fees. This contributes to a democratisation of educational processes, as access to the material does not depend on the financial resources of the country, school, teacher, parents, or learners.

Many students in inclusive schools benefit from a variety of representations. This can be achieved by using images, videos, audios or real life objects. Obtaining appropriate and illustrative material is often a particular challenge for teachers. As videos and graphic material are even more complex and expensive to develop, it is more worthwhile to share illustrative content with others. With the proliferation of smartphones, laptops and digital cameras, teachers have access to digital content production tools. In this case, production quality is not necessarily the first priority. Appealing content, a vivid presentation and a reference to the reality of the students' lives can make a video attractive for students (Müller, 2019, p. 51).

Creating (more) inclusive OER

While dealing with licences is a rather dry topic for teachers, it is necessary to understand the restrictions and possibilities associated with a licence or a material. There is a wide

range of Creative Commons licences available to inform end users about the legal rights they have for a resource.

The modular system makes it possible to define exactly how materials may be used, for example:

- Attribution (cc-by): you are obliged to mention the name of the author, in the form he/she wishes;
- No commercial use (nc): you may only use the content in non-commercial contexts;
- No derivative works (nd): you may not create derivative works of the material;
- Using the same licence (share alike- sa): you may only distribute the material under the same licence.

Due to their extensive openness, two licence models are particularly suitable for schools: the cc-by licence and the cc-0 licence. To ensure maximum adaptability, teachers can make their materials as open as possible, so others can build on them without issues. For example, using a cc-0-licence (which creates no requirements) instead of cc-by (which requires the name and other information), maybe a better option?.

To create materials that are meaningfully editable, the ALMS-Framework (Hilton et.al., 2010) may be useful:

- Access to Editing Tools: use formats that do not require expensive specialised software for editing (instead of PDF use HTML, OpenOffice formats);
- Level of Expertise Required: use simple tools that are widely available and do not require 100 hours of training;
- Meaningfully Editable: avoid scanned text in protected PDFs and use editable format;
- Self-Sourced: hand over source files so that editing is possible and not just closed final products.

Another dimension of accessibility is to ensure that materials are easy to find. Using platforms that are more broadly used, for example, like YouTube, Spotify, Apple or Google Podcasts or (country) specific OER repositories, and to simultaneously provide them through portals that offer secure data privacy is preferable over country specific Learning Management Systems for example.

Inclusive OER may provide more clarity by adding additional channels with the same information, i.e., to provide text and audio, images, video (cf. Mayer's theory above). This includes offering descriptive alt texts to visuals and spoken text as well as adding alternative texts to graphics. To create more inclusive OER, NDLA aims to keep the end users in mind, for example by using fictitious descriptions of potential students (in Design Thinking terms so-called personas), which target the interests and needs of a diverse group of learners (Müller, 2021). For the educational context, it is important to keep in mind

both the needs of the learners as well as those of the gatekeepers (teachers, kindergarten teachers), in deciding which materials should be used in the school/kindergarten. Therefore, openness to pedagogical approaches, is a key factor for decisions on the use of OER in educational institutions.

A German example of inclusive OER is the website: Wort.Schule (https://wort.schule/), a free OER dictionary for learners which also provides cc-0 graphics that can be used for various other purposes without the need for attribution. The images aim to reflect a diverse group of people and are based on feedback from educators and learners. The images also allow learners from different backgrounds to identify with the material and at the same time sensitise all learners to the range of diversity. Furthermore the images make the platform more accessible for students who may benefit from a visual representation of words. As the source code and images are under a free licence, other countries can build on the material and do not have to develop it from scratch.

Common concerns of OER novices

In connection with publishing one's own materials as OER, some practitioners frequently express concerns.

"What if someone sells the material?"

If the material is published under a free licence (cc-by, cc-0), it is theoretically possible to sell it. To minimise this risk, you can include the website where the material can be found in the attribution. Since attribution is obligatory, all users are informed that the material is available free of charge. A positive aspect of commercial distribution is that buyers can use the material and thus implement your ideas as a guide to? good teaching. Offering the material for free can increase its use, whereas the use of restrictive licences (e.g., non-commercial) can cause uncertainties (e.g., regarding cooperation with printing companies, use in private schools) making it's use less likely.

"I don't want colleagues to shine with the material I have created!"

There may be instances where colleagues copy the information and and take advantage of others' creativity. Changing your perspective on this may help: imagine the students who will benefit from the material you created, and not just those in your own classroom. Furthermore, if colleagues choose your material to teach, they have clearly acknowledged, and recognised, your work?!

"Well, but this material is not good enough!"

This could indeed be the case, but also implies the potential for collaborative development inherent in the concept of OER. OER is not about publishing the perfect material, but instead is about allowing others to use good material, and develop it further. If the development of OER is integrated into the context of projects or institutions, extended quality assurance mechanisms can also be implemented. NDLA distinguishes between subject quality, production quality, technical quality, quality from the user perspective and

pedagogical quality (Müller, 2019, p. 49). The didactic quality of the material is the responsibility of the creators. For the production quality, however, it makes sense to have external support for graphics, video editing, etc. The technical quality depends in part on the form of distribution. The quality from the user's point of view requires feedback from pupils and teachers, which can then form the basis for further development. Pedagogical quality relates on the one hand to fundamental pedagogical issues, such as treating learners with respect and appreciation, but also to the openness to different pedagogical approaches, which can ensure that the material can be used in a variety of contexts.

Creating a culture of sharing

There are different pathways to accessing more materials that include the right to adapt to the needs of students and to redistribute within and beyond the community of practice. These include the development of materials on behalf of governmental platforms (e.g., by specifically paid teachers and/or external companies), but also the development of materials by teachers.

The core concern is to build on the work and effort that teachers bring to the development of materials and to motivate them to share their materials. The aim is to avoid reinventing the wheel and to have access to, and adapt, existing ideas and materials. Different approaches exist that can motivate and support teachers with publishing materials. One approach is through the collaborative development of materials in groups. These groups can be formed within a school or through teams of motivated teachers from schools with similar starting points.

Practical Considerations

This section of the chapter is about teaching with (digital) media in inclusive settings. We mentioned it at the beginning of this chapter, but as it is important, so it is worth emphasising. Digital media, or media in general, must be implemented in teaching scenarios in a meaningful way, so that using the media does not become a means in itself, but rather needs to be based on didactically and methodologically sound decisions that allow all learners to benefit from their use.

With this in mind we offer a way forward to put using digital and media in general in inclusive classrooms to practise. We address the digital divide, the needs of learners, the textbook as a specific case in point for widespread media, scaffolding through media, accessibility of media, parents and the potential and limitations of media in inclusive settings as a conclusion.

The digital divide

The "digital divide" (also known as the digital gap) is a metaphor that was used to describe

the growing gap between the technological "haves" and the "have nots", both within a single country or community, but also between different countries and communities that differ in technological access. In many countries today, this digital gap has been closed in some way. Access to digital devices is widespread. In Germany, for example, if you compare the JIM study from 2020 with the JIM study of 1998, the increases in access to digital devices and the internet are astonishing. While in 1998, there were significant numbers of teenagers who *never* accessed the internet, today this number is exceedingly small (Medienpädagogischer Forschungsverbund Südwest 1998; 2020).

At the same time, there are differences in quality and reliability of devices and infrastructure access, for example, Kevin might have a hand-me-down smartphone with a cracked screen and limited battery life, while Celine might have the newest laptop with lots of useful software. Kevin might be able to access the internet through a limited data plan, or through public WiFIat the library, while Celine might have reliable WiFi at home, as well as a working printer, in case the teacher wants the homework on paper. Also, while the concept of the "digital native" (Prensky, 2001) initially suggested that by just being born in the right generation (originally: 1980 or later), an individual would develop a more intuitive grasp of digital technology, whereas in fact, young people today differ very much in their Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills. Let us imagine two students, Justus and Charlotte. Both use YouTube. Justus watches music videos on YouTube. Charlotte has her own channel, which she uses to upload "shopping haul" videos and reviews of cosmetics, advent calendars, and snack food. Both might say that they spend their free time on YouTube, but their skill sets will be very different. The International Computer and Information Literacy Study(ICILS) (Fraillon et al., 2018) looked at the ICT skills of teenagers and found that, a high number of teenagers struggle with basic tasks, such as deciding where to put a header, or how to crop an image, while there other students who are highly computer literate? And demonstrate high levels of ICT skills.

In summary, the goal is getting to know your learners really well and, based on this knowledge, providing them with access to appropriate media and materials and a path to acquiring the skills needed to critically use, navigate, and possibly transform the media and materials in order that meaningful learning can be achieved.

The learners and their media needs

When designing materials for learners, we need to pay attention to who they are as learners. This includes understanding the languages they speak, their competencies, their interests, and their way of accessing and processing information. Let us unpack this. The learners, their needs and learning objectives should form the basis of incorporating media and materials. Schools and especially teachers should carefully preselect the appropriate technology and plan its implementation so that the current learning and teaching is enhanced in a way that benefits all of the learners. It should simultaneously foster the

necessary skills that develop critical thinkers in this age where the digital world is constantly evolving. Even if students are equipped with skills that enable them to explore the (digital) media environment in such a way that strengthens their engagement in the task and ultimately their learning, we need to make sure that the teaching objectives take centre stage. Ultimately, the goal is that the use of multimedia should allow learners to act with as much autonomy as their competencies will allow, so as to support their development into critical thinkers.

Despite the constant emphasis on autonomy and individualisation in this section, a word of caution is necessary. We need to ensure that we do not only simply address students' needs and adapt learning to what they are comfortable with. This may miss the opportunity of them learning something new, of challenging them to move beyond their comfort zones and take risks. Learner autonomy is always to be encouraged? However, humans are social beings, and learning is a social process. Quoting Barbara Schmenk, we do not want to produce learners who, similar to autonomous cars, operate according to a pre-coded plan and only do what is within their programming (Schmenk, 2018, pp. 18-19).

In addition, digital competencies play an important role. As stated earlier, owning a fancy laptop or tablet does not mean that one knows how to use it to its fullest potential. Before requiring specific outputs from learners, teachers need to determine how effective and efficient learners are with regard to the use of their devices. Depending on the experiences of learners, the skills required for different tasks may vary across the classroom. As is true for any other teaching scenario, and if needed, additional support may be warranted for individual learners.

Inclusive representation in media and materials

One of the most important media types in the classroom today is the textbook and this deserves some extra attention as it impacts not only on what teachers do in classrooms, but also the learning gained from looking at textbooks, may also apply to other kinds of media used in education. Some authors have even argued that the textbook has more impact on day-to-day teaching than the official curriculum (Schmelter, 2011; Vielau, 2005). As the textbook is so important, it is essential that teachers have the skills to read textbooks critically, so they can decide what to use or not use, and where they need to add supplementary material. This is especially paramount in inclusive settings. As current research has shown, there are major deficits in textbooks regarding the visual representation of diversity (Alter & Köfler, 2021; Sunderland, 2019). In many textbooks, LGBTQIA+ characters are not appropriately represented (Bittner, 2011; Moore, 2020). Similarly, there are very few characters with visible disabilities, and even fewer with invisible disabilities (Alter, König & Merse, 2021). Even if they are visually represented, very often they lack agency and voice, and are mostly depicted as illustrations and decorations (Alter & Köfler, 2021; Alter, König & Merse, 2021) or in stereotypical contexts (Alter, 2021). This also

applies the methods and social settings which these textbooks prescribe. Unfortunately, other media are also at fault here? .

Additionally, the rise of AI-generated content in educational materials has introduced new concerns regarding diversity. Research has shown that AI models, such as text-to-image generation models, often amplify stereotypes, even when explicitly countered in the prompts. Studies have demonstrated that common AI-generated images often perpetuate stereotypical racial, gender, and social roles, by primarily associating certain professions or attributes (like software developers) with white males, or by depicting poverty through darker skin tones (Bianchi et al., 2023). This creates a challenge for inclusivity in educational content, as AI-generated images may inadvertently reinforce societal biases, making it critical for educators to assess not only traditional media but also AI-generated materials to ensure they represent diverse and equitable perspectives (Bianchi et al., 2023).

Why is this important? Let us take disability as an example of diversity. Jensen, Herrebrøden and Andreassen (2021) contend that there are five arguments why representation of disability in textbooks – and, by extension, in other media – is important:

- "Pupils must be able to recognise themselves in their learning materials";
- Representation "might positively influence their self-image and motivation";
- Representation can "influence peer attitudes";
- Representation can "contribute to both understanding and breaking down prejudices;
- Representation can "diminish the stigmatisation of people with disabilities" (Jensen, Herrebrøden & Andreassen, 2021).

It can also be argued that representation can help to reduce epistemic injustice. As Legault, Bourdon and Poirier (2020) explain in the context of a paper on marginalisation of neurodivergent people:

Epistemic injustices are situations where persons who do not belong to a dominant social group are denied (or simply not offered) access to or participation in the shared epistemic resources. The various concepts and knowledge base available do not represent their lived experience (hermeneutic injustice), and their testimony is given less weight to shape the collective epistemic resources (testimonial injustice). (Legault, Bourdon & Poirier, 2021, p. 12854).

To state this more simply: When people do not have full and equal access to the discourses in and beyond the classroom, their experiences are not recognized, and others cannot learn from their experiences. High-quality representation of different perspectives can change this.

Representation can further contribute to what Kumashiro calls "Education about the Other" (Kumashiro, 2000, pp. 31-35), which focuses on teaching students about the experiences and needs of marginalised individuals, while also potentially contributing to an "Education for the Other", where an "affirming space where Otherness […] is embraced,

where 'normalcy' […] is not presumed, where students will have an audience for their Othered voice(s), and where the Other will have role models" (Kumashiro, 2000, p. 28).

What can we do to improve representation?

In general, it is much easier for teachers to manipulate what the textbooks offer because they can simply tweak partner tasks by instructing their learners to "work alone, with a partner, or in a small group". This way, students with different needs and preferences can focus on the task at hand in the manner that they prefer. This is particularly important in settings in which the textbook is not accessible to all learners so that the teacher has to adjust it to ensure full inclusion. If needs be, the font should be able to be enlarged either digitally or through the use of assistive technology. For other learners, having books available in audio format is important for their participation in the classroom learning activities (cf. section 5.2).

In his book on representation in language teaching, Seburn suggests two approaches that teachers can use to increase representation: the utilisation approach and the disruptive approach. The utilisation approach is as follows:

One approach to creating more representation is to do so without highlighting the 'specialness' (or 'strangeness' rather) of individuals from marginalised groups and to spread their narratives alongside all others with regular frequency. When doing so through visuals, audio, and text, we increase exposure to a variety of members from these groups and a variety of voices. Here, we aim for everyone's identity to be 'usual' within a society. More clearly, the aim with this is not to highlight the specific characteristics of individuals within these groups as part of the target language lesson itself. Instead, the focus is on the linguistic aspects of the materials and on the lexical or grammatical situation (Seburn, 2021, p. 110).

This approach is fairly easy to implement, also in other subjects: Go through your materials and see whether, for example, the people in your worksheets have different body types and skin colours, the speakers in your videos speak different varieties of the language, that people of different genders are visible and voiced throughout, and that all kinds of families and relationships appear in the stories you read. Even so, this approach carries with it the risk of ignoring the actual experiences of marginalised groups and making them appear indistinguishable from the experiences of non-marginalised groups.

This is not the case with the disruptive approach, which highlights "particular characteristics and experiences of marginalised individuals to help learners make connections to themselves, question things we may take for granted, and suggest improvements to some of these things" (Seburn, 2021, p. 117). Instead of just having pictures of both straight and queer couples in a worksheet on "consent" (as you would with the utilisation approach), for example, you actually dig deep into how marginalisation happens, and what can be done to counter it.

One way to increase representation is to include stories about communities written by people from within these communities. These are a few recommendations to get you started:

Fritsch, K., McGuire, A., & Trejos, E. (2021). We move together. AK PR Inc.

A fantastic picture book on disability justice written by disabled authors, and featuring a diverse cast of characters. Supplementary material such as picture descriptions, ASL subtitling, etc. is available.
  Sidney, R. (2015). Nelson beats the odds. Creative Medicine.
  A graphic novel that tells the story of a teenager with ADHD, and his experiences in high school. The author has ADHD, too, and drew on his own life experiences.
  Johnson, C. G. (2019). The breakaways (First edition). First Second.
  This graphic novel about soccer and friendship features a diverse cast of characters, including a trans main character. The author is genderqueer herself.
  Oseman, A. (2020). Loveless. HarperCollins children's books. HarperCollins.
  An avid theatre fan realizes, in her first year at uni, that she is aro-ace (aromantic asexual). By the (asexual) author who is best known for her graphic novel series "Heartstopper", also adapted as tv series.
  McNicoll, E. (2020). A kind of spark. Knight Of Media.
  An autistic teenager gets angry that the women who were murdered as witches – just because they were different – seem to be forgotten in her hometown. She needs to get support from across her community – and her family – to change this. The book has also been adapted into a tv series, featuring autistic actors in autistic roles. The author, McNicoll, is autistic and has written a range of books that feature neurodivergent characters.

The sheer wealth of different kinds of media and material and the affordances this provides to create beneficial teaching and learning scenarios for all learners can be a huge advantage for teachers, but also a challenge. While they have media and material at their disposal with which they can address all learners, they need to make sure that they still have clear and transparent objectives in mind and do not implement media and material for their own sake. As we said earlier, if an app is not systematically contextualised in educational settings, we may entertain students but also miss the chance to actually foster the competencies we had in mind. Of course, we can play around with BeeBots and amuse ourselves with the way in which they run around the classroom, but even in such playful learning scenarios we should focus on meaningful play and playful learning. Thus, BeeBots can lead to combining coding competencies with giving directions in different languages or understanding the geographic coordinate system.

Using media to scaffold learning

Scaffolding refers to providing systematic support for learners that help them solve tasks (Wood, Bruner & Ross, 1976). As a metaphor, it implies that in order to solve a task, learners may need assistance with specific steps in solving a task independently. When teachers recognise that students have difficulty continuing with a task, they may prompt them with hints and advice on how to continue. Once the learners are on track again, the teacher can move away and let them continue by themselves. "Scaffolding is actually a bridge used to build upon what students already know to arrive at something they do not know. If scaffolding is properly administered, it will act as an enabler" (Benson, 1997, p. 28).

As such, the concept can be linked to Vygotsky's idea of the Zone of Proximal Development (1930). In a nutshell, it describes the distance between what students can do independently to what they cannot do yet. Within these zones, others can provide support so that learners can navigate this zone and develop competencies to reach a higher level from which they can explore the next stage. Scaffolding can be pre-planned or spontaneous. Pre-planned scaffolding refers to creating help sheets for learners in advance. Here, the teacher anticipates where they may have difficulties solving a task and thinks about ways to support them, for example by offering further content, advising them where to find information themselves, or giving hints on certain methods that can be helpful. This often appears in the contexts of free teaching and learning, such as in projects or working at stations. Spontaneous scaffolding is provided when a teacher recognizes that students get stuck while working on a task. It can also be provided by other learners. Scaffolding does not provide answers but helps learners through their zone of proximal development, so basically it guides them from the things they can do to the things they cannot yet do.

There are many tools teachers can use for scaffolding. One commercially available product is "qr Lernhilfen" (https://qr-lernhilfen.de/). It allows teachers to include QR codes on teaching material such as printed worksheets and allows students to individually scan and use these. Following these codes, students can find levelled or graduated support. A student who needs just a little bit of help can read the first hint, and students who need more help can open additional hints. As the help is available directly on the material itself, students do not need to wait for the teacher's feedback when they just need a quick reminder of a mathematical formula or a grammar construction, for example. The teacher, in turn, has more time to carefully observe student progress and to help students who need in-person support.

Adaptivity is a special case of scaffolding. Adaptivity means that a program or app responds to the current level of understanding demonstrated by a learner. The technology is able to track learners' progress and to manipulate the content it offers. For example, adaptive vocabulary learning means that the program spends less time on things the learner has already mastered, and more time on things the learner is still working on. Hypertextuality is another example of adapting texts to make them more accessible. In these texts, specific content is connected to further content. For example, a text that mentions Mozart's opera Mitridate, re di Ponto (1770), directly links this to an audio file that learners can individually access if they like to listen to it, a text on Caspar David Friedrich's paintings is linked to the paintings to see. If the text is enriched with links and connections to other hypertexts, the students will have the opportunity to navigate a plurality of different means to learn and develop a complex understanding of content. A good example for this would be digital glosses, which can support learners reading texts, but may also increase the cognitive load (for meta-analyses with a focus on language learning, see Abraham, 2008; Yun, 2011). In order for this to be practical, we need multimedia and hybrid settings to

actually provide pragmatic access to technology in the first place. Certainly, these need to be connected to clear tasks and instructions because hybridity can also be distracting and students may get lost in the wealth of information they find.

As we indicated before, teachers' competencies are central here as well. Independent of whether the material they use is analog or digital, they need to be able to guide students on their path to achieving the teaching and learning objectives they follow. No technology can substitute a sound methodology and beneficial planning and replace teaching. Certainly, these competencies need to match inclusive classrooms which are often considered to be very complex.

Accessibility of media and materials

As described above, a universal design in media is helpful for learners not only with different dis/abilities but also people of different ages, social and cultural backgrounds, different language skills and digital competencies or using different devices. It is therefore less about creating accessibility for individual groups than about a holistic approach that benefits all users. Nevertheless, adaptations for individual learners may be necessary.

One means would be to put content into easy or simplified language, or in general to adapt the language that we use so that it is easy to understand. Certainly, this is a whole science in itself, but elements such as short sentences or avoiding collections of sub-clauses can already make a difference to some learners. Some students may also find the material more accessible when key terms are given in other languages (especially their first language).

Easy-to-understand language

Adapting one's language to the people one speaks to often comes rather naturally. The way you address your neighbour might differ from how you address your grandfather, which might differ from how you would talk to a customer, a toddler, or the King of England. We adapt to our audiences in the way we speak, sign or write. Even though, there are some approaches to communication that are a bit more formalised.

- Easy English (in German: Einfache Sprache) follows strict rules. For example, it uses short sentences, and short, common words, and it puts images with every sentence or paragraph. Texts in easy English can be more accessible for many people who find it very difficult to read other kinds of texts. This can include people with intellectual disabilities, people who struggle with reading, or people who are still learning the language. Everybody can learn to write in easy English, but it is common that before texts are published, people with intellectual disabilities check these to make sure that they are indeed easy to understand.
- Plain English (in German: leichte Sprache) is also designed to be easy to understand. But, unlike Easy English (Einfache Sprache), there are no strict rules for how to write. You avoid long, complicated sentences and obscure, low-frequency words. You make sure you are clear in what you write. This kind of writing is helpful for all kinds of people.

Following standards such as the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines is essential for the creation of digital materials. These include a clear structuring through headings, sufficient contrasts, sensibly labelled links (in other words: actual descriptions of where a link leads

to, instead of "link/"here"), the size of buttons for motorised usability (also on mobile devices), easy-to-understand language, glossaries and lists of abbreviations, and visualisations via images and videos. Further options include:

- Alternative texts to illustrations and visuals are beneficial for people with impaired vision; these have also proved helpful for some neurodiverse users;
- Multiple ways to navigate, for example not just one way of swiping on the tablet, but voice control, if necessary, helps users with motoric limitations;
- Subtitles in videos (especially in foreign languages), and adjustable speed of audio or video also improve the accessibility of content;
- For content that is used over a long period of time, it can also be useful to offer it as sign language videos;
- Tools such as Immersive Reader can be very helpful for learners with dyslexia and dysgraphia. These hide distracting pop-ups and buttons and only show what is necessary to read the text;
- Read Aloud is another tool that allows you to listen to web pages, there are grammar tools that allow you to highlight all the nouns, all the verbs etc.

Another means is to offer multimodal support, as we outlined earlier, is by giving students verbal text on the water cycle and also illustrating, or letting them build, the water cycle with building blocks. It is paramount that teachers are aware how their learners benefit from these considerations.

Selection of media

Many points need to be considered when selecting media for the classroom:

- Multimedia and multimodal texts are typically beneficial because they combine different modes and codes to transport information. It is important, though, that these remain accessible for learners who cannot use all modes and codes included (e.g., by providing subtitling or picture descriptions);
- When we think of a picturebook, for example, we can read the verbal text but also look at the pictures and read the visual text. Learners can refer to the mode that is more accessible to them to understand the story. But then there are picturebooks in which both modes contradict each other, and these are then not as useful because learners who read the visual text get different information than those who read the verbal text (cf. Nikolajeva & Scott, 2000);
- In general, however, it is important that educators vary the modes and codes they bring into classrooms and offer visual, audio, audiovisual, and also kinaesthetic representations of content to allow everyone to benefit;
- Also a combination is important: audiovisual material connected with written text,

using other forms than oral and written methods of explanation, watching videos instead of reading a text, listening to music, and again, carrying out multimedia exercises.

(If you would want to know more about the use of accessible media and materials in the classroom, please consult the chapter, Accesible Media and Materials: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1GwCJdStzkV60JWXwJe6HOAq4acjz6ir2/edit)

The Role of parents and guardians as related to media

The homes our learners come from are just as diverse as the learners themselves. We need to be aware that learners are influenced by what they experience at home, or read/ listen through the media. Home experiences as related to media should be taken into account when considering the compatibility with the situation that learners may experience at school. A media-rich home environment has been shown to enhance learning. A study by Bonanati and Buhl (2022) shows that different aspects of the home learning environment concerning digital media influence the efficacy of the child's ICT experience. Aspects such as the positive attitudes of parents toward media and activities such as shared internet searches, for example, contribute positively to the child's efficacy. Consider the converse for children where there may be a lack of positive media experiences in the home learning environment and how they may struggle at school when these materials are unfamiliar to them. This brings us to the digital divide and how we can go about bridging the gap.

Let's discuss the issues surrounding the use of "acceptable/unacceptable" media. An example is given of a parent who bought Harry Potter books which everyone in the house could read including their 6th-grade child. When the child went to school on Readathon Day dressed as Harry Potter with one of the books to be discussed in the classroom, he was told by his teacher that this book was unacceptable as wizards and magic was unchristian-like and that the school was a Christian school. After determining that the teacher had not read any Harry Potter books, the parent asked the teacher to read one to see if she still harboured the same opinion. This may be an extreme (but true) example and most times it is the teacher who is in the position of challenging parents to broaden their child's horizons beyond what parents may feel comfortable with, and not the other way around. Thus, it is the responsibility of parents, guardians and teachers alike to minimise the tension between home and school and to do so in amicable ways for the sake of the learner. Analogue or digital media as one such aspect is no exception.

One means of avoiding this would be to invite caretakers to be on board by being transparent regarding media, methods, content and teaching objectives that are pursued in the classroom. Where needed, workshops can be arranged that include guidelines on how parents and guardians can support their children at home. In their study, Osorio-Saez and colleagues (2021) found that two things can positively impact parents' involvement in the

learning process of their children. Firstly, by schools providing or suggesting well-structured media tools and secondly, when parents see that other people around them are on board ("group norm"). On the other hand, if parents find the tools used to be too challenging, they are more likely to withdraw their engagement.

Teachers should also encourage parents and guardians who have the skills to use media in innovative ways to volunteer to work with the class or the school on special projects. Why not invite tech savvy parents or guardians as experts to conduct teacher development workshops? This may enhance the view and opinion critical parents may have regarding learning through innovative media.

Potential and limitations of (digital) media in inclusive settings

Despite the multitude of options, we should also be aware of certain challenges that are involved in using specific media and material. As teachers, we should not use technology for its own sake, but rather explore the advantages of our teaching objectives? A specific piece of technology can be of great benefit for some learners, but not for all. To some, the light from screens can already be a distracting issue, for others pop-ups and the many buttons one finds on a webpage can be distracting. Here, we can make use of adaptable settings that technology provides. Immersive Reader, for instance, allows you to hide pop-ups and buttons, and limit web pages to only show what is necessary to understand a text. This can be very helpful for students with dyslexia. Read Aloud is a tool that automatically reads out written text and can support students in their own reading processing. Grammar tools allow you to highlight all the nouns or verbs in a text which can make it easier for readers to navigate and understand a text. So, next to the multimodality that modern technology provides, such forms of manipulating resources or adapting them to individual needs can be very beneficial.

We should also keep in mind that learning is usually considered to be an interactive process. We should try to implement collaborative and cooperative settings and invite learners to solve tasks by communicating, discussing, and engaging with one another and the content. Even so, when we think of inclusive classrooms, we may need to relativise this assumption. There are some students for whom interacting with others is actually a huge challenge. They may have to use so much energy into managing and navigating these interactive settings that it is then lacking for actually solving a task. As emphasised above, choice can be a solution here. Instead of having all students work in the same setting, teachers can leave this open and suggest to students to work by themselves, in a pair or small group. Simultaneously, we indicated that we should not limit learners to their needs but also encourage them to try something new and move a little outside of their comfort zone. So here, think-pair-share can be a good idea because it allows learners to first think for themselves and prepare the pairing and sharing not only content-wise but also regarding the coming social interaction.

Finally, although this may have changed with the experience of distance teaching and learning, dealing with technology can be a challenge as well. We certainly need to ensure that everyone involved in teaching and learning, the teachers, learners, and also parents and guardians, are familiar with using the media and materials that are introduced in educational settings. Having a rough idea of how media works and its educational potential, benefits both teachers and learners. This may not necessarily be at the level of knowledge regarding the cable connections of boards and chips, but being up to date regarding apps, programmes, and software can be useful, particularly in terms of inclusive classrooms. When looking for apps, for example, we may still have some kind of average student in mind, but there are numerous programmes that specifically cater for inclusive settings as well. This can be compared with selecting literature, for instance, about ten years ago, very few teachers may have considered diversity in the selection of the literature they bring into classrooms. Now, however, with the growing public presence and awareness of diversity, literature that addresses diversity has moved front and centre. This awareness should be extended to the affordances of technology as well.

Recent and upcoming AI tools can also help pupils on an individual level to overcome barriers to learning and support personalised learning processes. They also offer potential for use in the classroom, for example by supporting creative media productions and presentations. For teachers, AI tools facilitate school diagnostics and lesson organisation. At a societal level, AI can contribute to media literacy and participation by teaching pupils how to deal with the risks and challenges of technology.

Local contexts

Closing questions to discuss or tasks

From the analysis conducted in the various sections of this contribution, some key aspects emerge:

1. Media is now a fundamental part of society and, for this reason, it is the teacher's task to foster digital competencies in all of their learners.
2. Digital media, according to the various dimensions presented here, can be meaningful to develop critical digital competences which address a critical approach to how media can manipulate users, but also productive competences such as critical thinking, problem solving, researching information and distinguishing reliable from unreliable

information. The aim is to create a teaching-learning environment in which all learners acquire the skills that are meaningful beyond school.

3. Digital media can be an inclusive tool if it succeeds in involving all students in the learning process and if it becomes a tool for making contents more accessible by providing different ways to access information.

4. Media, therefore, can generate inclusive environments of learning and growth for all.

In order to process the content provided in this chapter: Choose a certain type of media you use in the classroom. Think about how the design of it impacts its accessibility for different learners. Look at things such as readability, accessibility for blind students, costs, representation, and others.

Consider the notion of "accessibility friction": The fact that some design features can make something more accessible for some, but less accessible for others. Do you know any examples? How can you, as teacher, deal with such friction?

Literature

Abraham, Lee B. "Computer-Mediated Glosses in Second Language Reading Comprehension and Vocabulary Learning: A Meta-Analysis." *Computer Assisted Language Learning* 21, no. 3 (2008): 199–226. https://doi.org/10.1080/09588220802090246.

Aiello, Paola. *Corpo e Movimento Del Corpo Nella Ricerca Educativa: Itinerari Didattici per l'apprendimento Linguistico*. Pensa Editore, 2012.

Alter, Grit. "Nothing Just-Is. The Depiction of Socio-Economic (in)Justice in ELT Coursebooks and Its Implications for Young Learners." *Kieli, Koulutus Ja Yhteiskunta – Language, Education and Society*, 2021.

Alter, Grit, and Nadja Köffler. "Let Boys Explain the World to Girls Who Do Not Know – Visual Representations of Gender and Diversity in Austrian Primary Textbooks and Implications for Diversity-Sensitive Education." *Journal of Visual Literacy*, 2021. https://doi.org/10.1080/1051144X.2021.1974770.

Alter, Grit, Lotta König, and Thorsten Merse. "All Inclusive? Eine Kritische Lehrwerksanalyse Zur Repräsentation von Diversität in Den Englischlehrwerken Für Verschiedene Schulformen." *Inklusion. Zeitschrift Für Fremdsprachenforschung (ZFF)*, 2021, 81–104.

Benson, Beth Kemp. "Scaffolding (Coming to Terms)." *English Journal* 86, no. 7 (1997): 126–27.

Berthoz, Alain. *La Semplessità*. Torino: Odile Edizioni, 2009.

"Bestellservice Materialsuche," 2023. https://www.aktion-mensch.de/inklusion/bestellservice/materialsuche/detail?id=117.

Böhm, Katharina, Peter Schildhauer, and Carolin Zehne. "Digitale Medien Im

Individualisierenden Englischunterricht – Eine Analyse Des Potenzials Ausgewählter Tools Vor Dem Hintergrund Des Universal Design for Learning." In *Englischunterricht in Einer Digitalisierten Gesellschaft*, edited by Judith Bündgens-Kosten and Peter Schildhauer, 222–45. Beltz, 2021.

Bonanati, Sabrina, and Heike M. Buhl. "The Digital Home Learning Environment and Its Relation to Children's ICT Self-Efficacy." *Learning Environments Research* 25 (2022): 485–505. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10984-021-09377-8.

Bryant, Lucy, Melissa Brunner, and Bronwyn Hemsley. "A Review of Virtual Reality Technologies in the Field of Communication Disability: Implications for Practice and Research." *Disability and Rehabilitation: Assistive Technology* 15, no. 4 (2020): 365–72.

Bündgens-Kosten, Judith, and Carolyn Blume. "Neurodiversität– (k)Ein Thema Für Die Fremdsprachendidaktik?" *Zeitschrift Für Interkulturellen Fremdsprachenunterricht* 27, no. 2 (2022): 225–47.

Calvani, Antonio. *Educazione, Comunicazione e Nuovi Media: Sfide Pedagogiche e Cyberspazio*. UTET Università, 2001.

Collot, Bernard. "L'école de La Simplexité," 2012.

Falcinelli, Floriana. "I Giovani e i Media." *Education Sciences & Society* 3, no. 1 (2012).

Florian, Lani. "Uses of Technology That Support Pupils with Special Educational Needs." *ICT and Special Educational Needs: A Tool for Inclusion*, 2004, 7–20.

Fraillon, Julian, John Ainley, Wolfram Schulz, Tim Friedman, and Daniel Duckworth. "Preparing for Life in a Digital World: IEA International Computer and Information Literacy Study 2018 International Report," 2018. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-38781-5.

Frauenfelder, Elisa. *Pedagogia e biologia. Una possibile «alleanza»*. Liguori, 2001. https://www.ibs.it/pedagogia-biologia-possibile-alleanza-libro-elisa-frauenfelder/e/9788820723798.

Hilton, John, David Wiley, Jared Stein, and Aaron Johnson. "The Four 'R's of Openness and ALMS Analysis: Frameworks for Open Educational Resources." *Open Learning* 25, no. 1 (2010): 37–44. https://doi.org/10.1080/02680510903482132.

Iacoboni, Marco. "The Role of Premotor Cortex in Speech Perception: Evidence from fMRI and rTMS." *Journal of Physiology-Paris* 102, no. 1–3 (2008): 31–34.

Jensen, Magne Skibsted, Marte Herrebrøden, and Ulf Rune Andreassen. "The Invisible Minority: Why Do Textbook Authors Avoid People with Disabilities in Their Books?" *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 2021, 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2021.1889049.

Joimur, Cenysia. "Issues and Challenges in Curriculum and Instructional Technology for Special Needs." *Journal of Special Needs Education* 8 (2018): 58–71.

Košak-Babuder, Milena, Judit Kormos, Michael Ratajczak, and Karmen Pižorn. "The Effect of Read-Aloud Assistance on the Text Comprehension of Dyslexic and Non-Dyslexic English Language Learners." *Language Testing* 36, no. 1 (2019): 51–75. https://doi.org/10.1177/0265532218756946.

Kumashiro, Kevin K. "Toward a Theory of Anti-Oppressive Education." *Review of Educational Research* 70, no. 1 (2000): 25. https://doi.org/10.2307/1170593.

Landow, George P., and B. Bassi. *Ipertesto: Il Futuro Della Scrittura*. Baskerville, 1993.

Legault, Mylène, Jean-Nicolas Bourdon, and Pierre Poirier. "From Neurodiversity to Neurodivergence: The Role of Epistemic and Cognitive Marginalization." *Synthese*, 2021. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11229-021-03356-5.

Lipscomb, Lindsay, Janet Swanson, and Anne West. "Scaffolding." In *Emerging Perspectives on Learning, Teaching, and Technology*, edited by Michael Orey, 226–38, 2004.

Mayer, Richard E. "Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning." In *The Cambridge Handbook of Multimedia Learning*, edited by Richard E. Mayer and Logan Fiorella, 57–72. Cambridge University Press, 2021.

McLuhan, Marshall. *Understanding Media: The Extension of Man*. MIT Press, 1964.

Medienpädagogischer Forschungsverbund Südwest. "JIM '98: Jugend, Information, (Multi-) Media: Basisuntersuchung Zum Medienumgang 12- Bis 19jähriger in Deutschland," 1998. http://www.mpfs.de/fileadmin/Studien/JIM1998.pdf.

———. "JIM-Studie 2020: Jugend, Information, Medien: Basisuntersuchung Zum Medienumgang 12- Bis 19-Jähriger," 2020. https://www.mpfs.de/fileadmin/files/Studien/JIM/2020/JIM-Studie-2020_Web_final.pdf.

Morganti, Francesca, and Giuseppe Riva. *Conoscenza, Comunicazione e Tecnologia: Aspetti Cognitivi Della Realtà Virtuale*. LED Edizioni Universitarie, 2006.

Morin, Edgar. *La Testa Ben Fatta, Tad. It. 2000*. Raffaello Cortina, 1999.

Müller, Frank J. *Opportunities and Challenges of State-Financed Open Educational Resources: The Norwegian Model – a Way to More Inclusion?* Verlag ZLL21 e.V., 2019. https://osf.io/preprints/socarxiv/7325g/.

Noë, Alva. *Action in Perception*. MIT Press, 2004.

Osorio-Saez, Eliana Maria, Nurullah Eryilmaz, and Andres Sandoval-Hernandez. "Parents' Acceptance of Educational Technology: Lessons From Around the World." *Frontiers in Psychology* 12 (2021): 719430. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.719430.

Prensky, Marc. "Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants." *On the Horizon* 9, no. 5 (2001).

Rossi, Pier Giuseppe, and Pier Cesare Rivoltella. *L'agire Didattico. Manuale per l'insegnante*, 2017.

Schmelter, Lars. "Immer Noch Das Leitmedium?! – Lehrwerkforschung Und Lehrwerkerstellung Als Herausforderung Der Fremdsprachenforschung." In *Fremdsprachen Lehren Und Lernen: Rück- Und Ausblick. Arbeitspapiere Der 30. Frühjahrskonferenz Zur Erforschung Des Fremdsprachenunterrichts*, edited by Karl-Richard Bausch, Eva Burwitz-Melzer, Frank G. Königs, and Hans-Jürgen Krumm. Narr, 2011.

Schmenk, Barbara. "Aporien Des Lern- Und Bildungsziels Autonomie Im Kontext Des Institutionalisierten Fremdsprachenunterrichts." *FLUL* 47, no. 1 (2018): 10–24.

———. *Lernerautonomie: Karriere Und Sloganisierung Des Autonomiebegriffs*. Narr, 2008.

Schulz, Lea, Igor Krstoski, Martin Lüneberger, and Dorothea Wichmann, eds. *Diklusive*

Lernwelten: Zeitgemäßes Lernen Für Alle Schülerinnen Und Schüler, 2021. https://visual-books.com/download/2728/.

Seburn, Tyson. "How to Write Inclusive Materials." *ELT Teacher 2 Writer*, 2021.

Shapiro, Lawrence. *Embodied Cognition*. Routledge, 2010.

Sibilio, Maurizio. "Corporeità Didattiche: I Significati Del Corpo e Del Movimento Nella Ricerca Didattica." *Il Corpo e Il Movimento Nella Ricerca Didattica. Indirizzi Scientifico-Disciplinari e Chiavi Teorico-Argomentative*, 2011, 47–69.

———. "Simplex Didactics: A Non-Linear Trajectory for Research in Education." *Revue de Synthèse* 136, no. 3 (2015): 477–93.

Smith, Richard. "Learner Autonomy." *ELT Journal* 62, no. 4 (2008): 395–97.

Song, Hayeon, Wei Peng, and Kwan Min Lee. "Promoting Exercise Self-Efficacy with an Exergame." *Journal of Health Communication* 16, no. 2 (2011): 148–62.

Sunderland, Jane. "Inclusion and Exclusion in Foreign Language Education: A Critical Overview, with Illustrations from Studies of a German Classroom for Young Secondary Learners and of Five Polish Textbooks." *International Journal of Applied Linguistics* 29, no. 3 (2019): 308–21. https://doi.org/10.1111/ijal.12241.

Thompson, Evan. "Sensorimotor Subjectivity and the Enactive Approach to Experience." *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 4, no. 4 (2005): 407–27.

Tohara, Abdul Jalil Tohara. "Exploring Digital Literacy Strategies for Students with Special Educational Needs in the Digital Age." *Turkish Journal of Computer and Mathematics Education (TURCOMAT)* 12, no. 9 (2021): 3345–58.

UNESCO. "Recommendation on Open Educational Resources (OER)," 2019. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373755/PDF/373755eng.pdf.multi.page=3.

Varela, Francisco J., Evan Thompson, and Eleanor Rosch. *The Embodied Mind, Revised Edition: Cognitive Science and Human Experience*. MIT Press, 2017.

Wiley, David. "The Access Compromise and the 5th R," 2014. http://opencontent.org/blog/archives/3221.

Wood, David, Jerome S. Bruner, and Gail Ross. "The Role of Tutoring in Problem Solving." *Journal of Psychology and Psychiatry* 17 (1976).

Yun, Jeehwan. "The Effects of Hypertext Glosses on L2 Vocabulary Acquisition: A Meta-Analysis." *Computer Assisted Language Learning* 24, no. 1 (2011): 39–58. https://doi.org/10.1080/09588221.2010.523285.

About the authors

Dr. Pamela February

Dr Pamela J. February is a senior lecturer in the Department of Early

Childhood Education and Care in the School of Education at the University of Namibia. Her areas of interest and expertise include inclusive education practices; early childhood education and care; deaf education; how learners/students learn and how we should assess them; reading acquisition and fluency; vocabulary acquisition; mathematics education and the use of technology to enhance inclusive learning. In addition, she has written articles and book chapters and supervised postgraduate students in these areas.

Grit Alter

Grit Alter is a Professor of Teaching English as a Foreign Language at the University College of Teacher Education in Innsbruck, Austria. Her research focuses on using picturebooks in English language teaching, diversity education, teaching methodology and digital literacy in the primary English classroom as well as critical pedagogy. She is currently involved in research projects on critical textbook studies, teaching in Canada and the development of school quality.

Jules Buendgens-Kosten

Dr. Jules Buendgens-Kosten is a researcher and teacher educator at Goethe University Frankfurt. Their research interests encompass computer-assisted language learning and inclusive education.

Frank J. Müller

UNIVERSITY OF BREMEN

https://www.uni-bremen.de/en/fb12/arbeitsbereiche/abteilung-c-inklusive-paedagogik/sekundarstufe/team/prof-dr-frank-j-mueller

Prof. Dr. Frank J. Müller is a professor for "Inclusive Education for Learning and Intellectual Development Impairments in Secondary Schools" following his work as a special ed teacher at the Grünauer Gemeinschaftsschule in Berlin.

He works on support structures for teachers in heterogeneous learning groups through inclusive open educational resources, research-based study programs to make the history of inclusive education accessible to future generations, and questions of including more dimensions of diversity.

Alessio Di Paolo

Alessio Di Paolo is a PhD candidate in "Didactics, Special Pedagogy, and Technology for Inclusive Education" at the University of Salerno. His research interests focus on the inclusive potential of music in teaching-learning processes and the educational aspects it can have in formal and informal contexts, all following the theoretical framework of simplexity.

INCLUSIVE BOOKS AND LEARNING MATERIALS

Tracy Fletcher; Laura Torres Zúñiga; and Lisa Johansson

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://book.all-means-all.education/ ama-2025-en/?p=383#oembed-1

Example Case

In an upper secondary school classroom in Sweden, the teacher had taught the mandatory course in History for a couple of years and the main resource used in the teaching was a textbook which was written specifically for the Swedish context and with the Swedish curriculum in mind. Even if additional resources were used in the course, the main themes of the textbook were used as the basis for planning and structuring the course since they covered the main objectives as they are presented in the Swedish curriculum for upper secondary school.

The teacher decided to investigate the representation of diversity together with the students as part of the teaching, so they decided to do a revision of the textbook in that they focused on the representation of gender diversity in images in the book. The teacher and the students decided that they would count the images in order to detect how many images of non-binary people, women and men are depicted in the book. To do so, the students labelled and counted each image which was found in the book according to the labels: image containing one/ several non-binary people, image containing one/several female people, image containing one/several male people, image containing one/several non-binary, female and male people, and image without people. The results showed that there were no images found in the book which depicted non-binary people. Also, there were very few images which portrayed both women and men in the same picture. Furthermore, the vast majority of the images portrayed

men whereas less than a quarter of all images were images which depicted one or several women.

This exercise allowed the students and the teacher to see the inequality of representation of gender in that particular textbook. The students not only developed their visual and critical literacies but also worked on other cross-curricular contents, such as the mathematical competence needed to calculate percentages. Since this was the textbook that was used throughout the course, this enabled the students and the teacher to reflect on and suggest what additional material would be needed within this course to present a greater diversity of voices. Also, the results served as a starting point for discussing *why* there were more pictures of one particular gender represented. Subsequent questions such as "what parts of our history are we generally focusing on in teaching?" and "who decides what areas are selected?" enabled the students to approach the subject of History with a more critical perspective rather than accepting this single perspective on history or narrative. Finally, as this study focused on gender representation exclusively, the students were asked to suggest further identity markers; in other words, what other variables apart from gender can be taken into consideration when analysing images? The next step could therefore be to do a similar study which considers, for example, the representation of ethnicity to further reveal whose voices and stories are told.

who, Institution, Country

Initial questions

In this chapter, you will find answers to the following questions:

- What is meant by *diversity in books and learning materials*?
- Why is it important to consider diversity?
- How can we approach diversity and the notion of giving fair representation in our teaching and learning materials?

Introduction to Topic

Books and learning materials are vital didactic tools for your teaching. As a teacher, you

may have access to an array of resources, depending on your subject, age group, budget and where you are in the world, or you may have very little variety of materials at your disposal. What you need to think about is how these materials can help you engage students with your subject and increase levels of student achievement, and what you need to do for this to happen. Also, bear in mind that learning is a process and not simply the transfer of information from the teacher to the student. It is, therefore, worthwhile spending time, and paying attention to, the content of your materials and how it is represented and consider the implications of your choices. Classrooms are changing and becoming more multicultural and diverse, and this is something we must be aware of because, we as teachers, have a commitment to support all learners.

Maybe you are already familiar with the Ted Talk "The danger of a single story," by Chimamanda Ngozi brug (2009). In this talk, Adichie discusses the idea that we need a wide variety of telling's of people's stories to give a realistic and authentic portrayal of society. The classroom is a representation of said society, where pupils from a range of different backgrounds and identities, meet and interact, in other words, a place of intersectionality. Like society, the classroom is not homogeneous and, therefore, books and materials should reflect the diversity that is found in today's society and schools. That is why, in this chapter, you will be introduced to the importance of the representation of diversity in books and learning materials. By this, we refer to books and materials used for general education, not for specific contexts or needs, and these include textbooks but also literary texts, illustrations, photographs and images that appear in them, as well as media resources such as films and websites, etc.

The chapter starts with a description of the concept of the *hidden curriculum* and the impact it may have upon our perceptions. Then, we consider the issues that arise from this impact, such as whose voices are allowed to be heard or represented, and the danger of othering marginalised minorities and other particular groups. It is our responsibility as teachers to ensure that we are aware of the biases and prejudices we unconsciously reproduce in our teaching, especially within the changing educational landscapes. We need to create a paradigm in which diversity is a sustainable, integral component and not an occasional activity that is done in order to tick off a list of topics, only to then return to our usual teaching. We can achieve this by diversifying our teaching material, for example, exposing students to a multitude of perspectives or to a more diverse literary canon and thus allowing them to read about people from other backgrounds and inspire them to read more through which they may increase their empathy with and awareness of others.

The chapter will also provide some guidelines on how to select books whose contents cater for diversity, how to critically assess the books and learning materials you have or plan to use in your classroom, and how to approach problematic texts that are obligatory in your teaching context. Finally, we will present some discussion questions that will enable you to reflect on these issues in relation to your particular teaching context and provide some suggestions for further exploration.

Key aspects

Hidden Curriculum and Othering

The term *hidden curriculum,* coined by Philip W. Jackson (1968), refers to the social, cultural, and behavioural messages that are implicit in teaching materials and practices, and that usually reflect the dominant culture in the context in which the materials are produced, and the teaching and learning are situated. For example, educational policies that vary depending on the political party in power will reproduce the latter's ideological values and beliefs, and these will seep into the production of curriculum materials. In terms of diversity, the hidden curriculum is very relevant as political agendas and ideologies also bring with them preconceived notions on gender, age, religion, sexuality or nationality that inform the visual and verbal construction of people in learning materials, and that may create, reproduce or reinforce stereotypes and prejudices (Kamasak et al., 2020).

For example, a study coordinated by UNESCO in 2009 analysed twenty-four mathematics textbooks used for Primary Education in four French-speaking African countries: Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Togo and Tunisia (Brugeilles and Cromer, 2009). It revealed that female role models rarely appeared in those textbooks (21.4% of characters were female in Togo, and 28% in Cameroon, for example) and that "the exclusion of girls becomes more marked in the course of the curriculum. As learning becomes more complex, female characters are phased out" (Brugeilles and Cromer, 2009: 33). Consequently, this absence of female examples in the textbooks offered female pupils little foundation for identification and projection, and also male pupils could not find role models from the opposite sex. This, together with the prevalence of male teachers for that subject, favoured that, eventually, all pupils together with their parents and their teachers developed the understanding that knowledge, in this case mathematics, was legitimate for the male students only, and did not address female students. The textbooks thus contributed to perpetuating the traditional stereotype of 'maths = male,' and were unlikely to ever encourage girls interested in learning mathematics (Brugeilles and Cromer, 2009). Although recent studies have reached more positive conclusions as to the quantity and quality of female presence in textbooks in other contexts (Alter, 2019; Demir & Yavuz, 2017), there is still room for improvement in order for books to achieve a balanced representation, not only of female and male characters, but also of characters with other markers of identity such as disability, age, or ethnicity (Alter, 2019; Alter & Köffler, 2021; Bulut & Arıkan, 2015; Hawthorne, 2020; Jensen, Herrebrøden & Andreassen, 2023).

As regards the latter, you can see different ways that othering may occur in the research done by Liese in 2010 on the representation of the ethnic and cultural "Other" in Primary textbooks in Germany and Ireland. Despite both countries sharing their cultural diversity and experiences with immigration, their representation of the "other" in their teaching materials is approached in opposite ways. The analysed Irish textbooks include a few

implicit representations of ethnic and cultural diversity that avoid the stereotype and portray the "other" as an integrated part of Irish society, but they tend to underrepresent the "other" and do not engage with the challenges or affordances of interculturalism in the society they depict but seem to shy away from tackling them. On the other hand, German textbooks offer more numerous and overt references to the ethnic and cultural "other", with several explicit examples of xenophobia and prejudice that, without further reflection or criticism on the students' part, can nonetheless contribute to creating a "we/they ¨ setting and reinforcing rather than counteracting the stereotype (Liese, 2010: 173).

Another instance is offered by the World Bank's Executive Summary on *Disability and Inclusion in Latin America and the Caribbean* (García Mora et al., 2021: 17), which affirms that "[t]o have an inclusive education system, for example, countries must strive to change the mindset of teachers, school staff, parents, and students," and a way to do so is to "design a curriculum and learning materials that positively represent persons with disabilities." They report, however, that people with disabilities only appear in 83 out of 5,100 images of a selection of 40 official or officially recommended textbooks of history and language courses in ten Latin American countries studied (and 65 of those 83 images correspond to only one Ecuadorian textbook). The effect of this invisibility and of "stereotypical representations of disability in learning materials weakens the sense of belonging and dignity of learners with disabilities and inhibits the teaching of noncognitive skills such as tolerance and empathy in the classroom" (García Mora et al., 2021:11). Thus, although it may not be the explicit aim of the learning materials, they still play a part in the discrimination against this group of learners.

These examples of the effects of the hidden curriculum show that history, political ideologies, and traditions can all influence the content of our materials. This can mean that certain groups of people are not included or represented in learning materials because they are different and do not fit in with the norms of mainstream society. As a result, these groups are treated differently and may be discriminated against. In some cases, they may even be perceived as posing a threat. This is a phenomenon known as *othering*, which divides groups of people into *us* and *them*. People can be othered due to their race, sexuality, religion, gender identity, disability, nationality, ethnic background, or other identity markers. This can lead to isolation, bullying, shaming or abuse. Therefore, even if "it should be the responsibility of text-book developers and publishers to avoid reflecting the biases of the real-world and to use textbooks as agents of 'social reform'" (Goyal & Rose, 2020: 8), studies such as the World Bank's, and Brugeilles and Cromer's prove that there is still a long way to go, and we as teachers should be aware of the risks of othering and should approach our materials in a critical way, so that we may not contribute to the perpetuation of such prejudices and injustices that cause othering.

The opposite of othering is belonging, so it is important that we think about how to make students feel that they belong, that they are included and valued, and that their differences are appreciated and celebrated. We should consider how we can incorporate differences in

a way that encourages a sense of belonging, whilst avoiding othering. We should also be aware of falling into the trap of believing that when we do include minorities or marginalised groups, our practices are in fact more than a box ticking exercise. For example, there are opportunities throughout the school year, such as Black History Month, World Autism Day, Indigenous People's Day, etc. which are often used to teach students about, and highlight awareness of, social injustice and difference. Although this may initially seem positive, it can still turn into a form of othering, as the way in which we approach difference is separated from the standard curriculum. We should also be aware of how we display books in our classrooms or libraries, as to avoid othering and making the subjects appear separate and not belonging to the main group.

Selecting and Evaluating Books

We should create a diverse canon of literature and materials. For example, with literature the aim should be to widen the canon of literary texts, not to remove or replace it. One way to start is by conducting an audit. This involves counting and then analysing the number of representations of diversity (race, gender, etc.) in your existing materials, for example the number of texts written by people of colour or the presence of characters from minoritised groups.

For example, the *Teen Services Underground* website suggests different ways to do a diversity audit of your class library or school library (Frencham, 2018). The most basic one is list checking:

- Conduct an internet search to find ready-made lists of award-winning diverse titles or titles that are considered canonical within diverse literature, and
- Double check the titles listed to see if your library already has those titles.

Another method is randomised shelf checking:

- Start at the beginning of your book section and count your shelves, leaving a post-it note on the fifth shelf, then the tenth shelf, then the fifteenth, etc. You don't have to count by fives, you can always choose to count by another number if it works better.
- The shelves you have marked with a post-it note will be the ones you are going to audit.
- Look at the books that are on the marked shelves, and make tally marks in a chart, to represent each diverse title. Then calculate what percentage of the total books on the shelf appears in the chart: for instance, if the shelf has 30 books and 6 of them have made it into the chart, it means you have 20% of diverse books.

If you want to be more exhaustive, carry out a thorough check of your entire collection: download all the titles in your collection onto an Excel document, create a column for each

diversity category and mark the columns for each individual title. Although the process is time-consuming, "this will give you an idea of how many books you have in your collection and overall, how many books you have for each diversity category" (Frencham, 2018).

Using the information gathered from the audit, we can then evaluate how well diversity is represented by revealing the dominance of particular groups or diversity categories, and the absence of others. We can also consider the textbooks we use and how diverse the images or illustrations are, and critically reflect on the consequences that using such examples may have upon your students and their learner identity. For example: how is gender represented in scientific, technology or home economics textbooks? How are different ethnic groups represented in history textbooks? What are the implicit messages that students receive due to these images? The next section will cover all these aspects.

Finally, if after the audit you realise you need to incorporate new books and materials to your teaching, be active in your search for these materials by contacting regional or national educational organisations, activist groups, or local libraries, and by keeping updated on the recent research in your field. You can find some suggestions and links at the end of our chapter, for example, diversity-friendly book lists.

- Quantitative evaluation of diversity

In order to know whether a book, textbook or teaching material represents diversity adequately, we may apply two complementary approaches: a quantitative and a qualitative one. In the quantitative analysis, we must identify the presence or absence of references to diverse communities and identities both in the materials' verbal and visual texts like in the Example Case that opens this chapter. Brugeilles and Cromer (2009) offer examples of charts or grids to count characters and record their characteristics both in their visual representations and in their textual appearances. We may ask questions such as:

- Can we find any examples of characters of a variety of ethnicities, abilities, and/or social classes who show different identity markers as regards sexuality and gender, culture, and age in our books?
- Are there images of different models of families, or religious practices, or is it always the same types that are represented?

In this last regard, we should consider whether there are any intersectional examples, too, where several identity markers are combined, for instance:

- Do the examples of people of colour mostly belong to the same gender and the same age?
- Are the majority of families white, middle-class, and heteronormative?

Also, regarding the writing, we should check:

- Whether the texts are narrated in gender-neutral terms or if they use the male pronoun to refer to both males and females.
- Whether there are any terms whose meaning or use may bear negative or derogatory connotations for a particular group, for example, talking about "primitive" customs of current minority cultures or "perverted" or "abnormal" behaviours of non-heterosexual people.

This initial quantitative revision will help us discover whether there are "invisible" groups in our materials, such as single parents or same-sex couples, blue-collar workers, transgender people, people of minoritised religions, etc. Although the pertinence or relevance of these and other groups may be different depending on our teaching context, all these individuals are part of our societies and should have their representation within our classrooms, even more so if the latter comprises students who share backgrounds or identity markers with them. Remember that this does not mean that we must devote one lesson, activity or particular material to each of these groups, in order to tick a box: the balance in their representation in our books and materials should be a sustainable component of our teaching and not an occasional activity.

- Qualitative evaluation of diversity

After detecting the absence, or presence, of examples of diverse voices and images, we must carry out a qualitative approach that will evaluate how those identities are represented and take into consideration the context they are presented, because their mere presence is not enough: "[u]sing pictures of kente cloth on a poster about textiles would be inclusive; using a photo of a woman in Ghanaian dress to illustrate a poster on maths, just to raise the number of pictures of black and minority ethnic people on the classroom wall, would be tokenistic", that is, a superficial attempt at representing diversity only to prevent criticism (Pilgrim, 2020).

We must therefore check on the one hand, whether the materials' verbal and visual texts depict all people as individuals with distinctive features rather than stereotypical ones. We should look out for stereotypes: are strong, independent girls and women described as "manlike", or sensitive men as "feminine"? Are people of a particular ethnicity always depicted in traditional clothing? Are people with disabilities portrayed as not independent or to be pitied? Are low-income families depicted as passive or needing help?

On the other hand, we should also consider whether the diverse characters have a central or participant role in the stories: if they are present for a purpose or if instead, they are simply used for "decorative" reasons – like the Ghanaian woman in the example above. For instance, we must pay attention to who the "heroines" or successful protagonists in

the stories are, and ask questions such as: do they always belong to the same social class, ethnicity, or gender? In which context are they introduced, for example, are people of colour included only in pieces dealing with migration, poverty, or sports? Do characters of a particular ethnicity or gender need the help of characters from other, more dominant groups, to succeed or solve their problems?

For example, the quantitative revision of gender representations in the images of a contemporary English reader series used in primary schools in Hong Kong carried out by Lee and Chin (2021) concludes that female characters appear more often in the illustrations than male characters. However, the qualitative analysis reveals that those women – and the men too – are usually depicted in stereotypical ways: mothers are busy feeding their families, whereas fathers appear at a greater distance from their children and are portrayed as less nurturing compared with mothers; girls receive pink presents and boys blue ones, and "girls are presented as more emotionally vulnerable carriers and behavers than boys." For instance, in one of the illustrations "three children are hungry, but Bella and Katarina [girls] are in tears while Steve [boy] looks shocked but tries to seek a solution" (Lee & Chin, 2021: 21). Thus, although the sheer numbers of female representations in the books give a positive first impression, the critical analysis of those representations show the prevalence of traditional gender stereotypes.

Lee and Chin's study highlights the importance of critical visual literacy when analysing the presence of diversity in our books and teaching materials. Usually, we as teachers and our students "do not read visual images critically and may not be aware of how illustrators use visual elements such as gaze, backgrounding, etc. to create meaning and signal relations and power" (Short, 2018, qtd. in Lee & Chin, 2021: 14). To interrogate this role of images in books and textbooks, we can use the following seven question framework, used both by Giaschi (2000: 37) to analyse gender and by Hawthorne (2020) to analyse race:

1. What is the activity of the image(s)?
2. Who is active (the "protagonist") in the image(s)?
3. Who is passive (the "receiver") in the image(s)?
4. Who has status in the image(s)?
5. What does the body language communicate?
6. What does the clothing communicate?
7. Where are the eyes directed?

The answers to all these questions, and to all the others above, will help us reveal the underlying biases and prejudices that our books and materials may be reflecting and that our students are being exposed to.

Dealing with Problematic Books

Sometimes teachers are not able to select suitable books and teaching materials themselves, either because the curriculum states that certain literary texts should be studied or because the school that they are working in has already bought a large number of textbooks for a particular course or class. Often schools use the same textbooks for several years even if those books feel out of date. Sometimes it is the case that schools pay expensive subscriptions to online material, which therefore restricts teachers to using this material primarily before turning to other resources. In other words, teachers often must make use of books and teaching materials at their disposal, regardless of whether the materials are suitable in terms of the stereotypical images they contain or whether they represent diversity at all.

What we as teachers should do then, is to make sure that such stereotypical images and texts are not left uncommented upon. If we must use a particular textbook when teaching chemistry, for example, and all the images in this textbook show people of a certain age or ethnicity, we must bring this to our students' attention by engaging in a critical discussion with them. We should also reflect on what images may have been left out and need to be added.

One may argue that scrutinising images in a chemistry book has got nothing to do with the teaching of chemistry, but, in fact, students' ability to engage in subjects and show their understanding and perspectives of different school subjects, whether it is chemistry, language studies or mathematics, can actually increase students' motivation and encourage critical thinking. Also, having role models who the students can identify with is a crucial aspect that can determine whether students develop and maintain interest in that particular subject and essentially perform better.

For instance, in the article "Teaching Between the Lines: Representation in Science Textbooks" (Simpson et al., 2021), the authors refer to a study in which second grade pupils were prompted to draw a picture of a scientist. The results showed that most pupils drew a stereotypical picture of a white man in a lab coat. When asking students at university to do a similar test the results revealed that the majority still had that very same image in mind. The authors thus conclude that pupils' perceptions of who is allowed to be part of the scientific community; or to be a scientist, is established early and this mental image is very difficult to change as the students' progress within the educational system. Therefore, the authors argue that it is important to provide a wide range of role models in the course material to make sure that all students feel that they are allowed in the scientific community. Also, the article presents a study which shows that ninth grade students whose perceptions of scientists were positive performed better in those particular subjects compared with students who did not share these positive views (Simpson et al., 2021). In short, students' performance within different school subjects is not only related to the teaching and learning of the content of those particular subjects, but it is also related to whether you see yourself

as belonging to the community or group of people who you believe have the right to access and achieve something within that subject.

Therefore, if we find that the textbooks we must use in our teaching are not particularly suitable in terms of diversity, we need to add complementary materials which include, for example, information about scientists of other ages, genders, or ethnicities that have also contributed to the topic being learnt. As a starting point, we advise you to make use of the resources that your school library, colleagues, and students already are familiar with. If you find that searching for additional material for your courses is an overwhelming task, remember that adding one new text, film, or any type of resource, per year is better than not doing anything at all. Revising and updating your teaching material is after all an open-ended process and something that you should do throughout your entire teaching career. Our *Further Resources* section offers some resources to help you begin this process.

Lastly, when writing instructions or creating assignments or exams yourself, regardless of whether they are in writing or presented orally, you also need to reflect on the type of language and type of instructions you use. The United Nations' *Guidelines for gender-inclusive language* may be used as a starting point when reflecting on how to make your texts as gender neutral as possible so as to avoid using stereotypical descriptions of gender. The guidelines have been produced in several different languages, such as English, Arabic, French and Spanish, and even though some of these guidelines may not apply to the language used in your teaching context, they can still serve as an important reminder or eye-opener of what areas may be problematic when referring to and addressing students of different genders.

Local contexts

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=383#h5p-24

Closing questions to discuss or task

Questions to consider after "Hidden Curriculum and Othering"

1. Remember what type of books and learning materials were used when you were a student in primary, secondary, or upper secondary school. Which voices and images were absent, and which were heard and shown?
2. Reflect on whether your teachers addressed the question of representation of diversity in books and learning material when you were a student in primary, secondary or upper

secondary school. What did the teachers do right? What did they do wrong?

3. Scrutinise your own reading habits. For example, when you read novels, magazines, blogs or other types of media, what types of texts do you usually read yourself, and who were they written by? Which voices are you most often exposed to? Which voices are you not exposed to?

4. Can you give an example of an occasion in which you have witnessed or experienced *othering*?

5. In your context, do you celebrate "Awareness Days", weeks, or months, about certain social groups or conditions? What do you do during that time? What do you do during the rest of the year to make students of those groups or conditions feel included?

Questions to consider after "Selecting and Evaluating Books"

1. What does your curriculum say about the representation of diversity in your teaching context?

2. Use the qualitative and quantitative questions above to analyse one or several texts or images from a textbook that you use in your teaching. What are the main strengths and weaknesses when it comes to the representation of diversity in that text?

3. How could you approach the materials that you mainly use to cater for a greater representation of diversity?

4. If you were to ask your students what texts and learning materials they would like to use in their classes, what suggestions do you think you would receive?

Questions to consider after "Dealing with Problematic Books"

1. Consider the type of books and learning materials you use in your teaching context. Do you mainly use books and learning materials that are provided by the school where you work, or do you use other resources?

2. As a student or as a teacher, have you encountered any books or materials that you have identified as biased or prejudiced? How have you handled them? If you had to use them in your teaching, what would you do to offset their negative representations?

3. Reflect on what your particular language/s restricts you to or allows you to do when it comes to addressing students in a gender-neutral way. For example, do you have to refer to your students as *she* or *he* or are there other possibilities?

4. Revise some of your assignments and/or task instructions considering the UN's *Guidelines for gender-inclusive language*. What could you improve to make them more inclusive?

Further Resources

In this section you will find more academic research on diversity in books and learning materials but also some useful guidelines which help you check whether your textbooks are free from prejudice and stereotypes: for example, the UNESCO's publication *Making Textbook content inclusive: A focus on Religion, Gender, and Culture* offers an in-depth analysis and guide to check whether textbooks are free from prejudice and stereotypes based on religion, gender, and culture by looking at their employment of inclusive language,

their representation of diverse identities, and their integration of human rights. Furthermore, there are links to websites that offer checklists to detect prejudiced and biased materials and book lists of diversity-friendly literary texts.

Studies on diversity in books and learning materials

(If you are interested in the studies that we reference in this chapter – for example, the study on the representation of gender in mathematics textbooks that was mentioned in the section about the hidden curriculum, you can find their bibliographical reference in the Works Cited section of the book.)

Berlin, Freie Universität. "Recognizing and Avoiding 'Othering'. Gender and Diversity in Teaching," 2017. https://www.genderdiversitylehre.fu-berlin.de/en/toolbox/kompetenzen/leitlinien/_inhalte/Guidelines-FAQ/othering.html.

Bruijn, J. de, Y., Emmen, R. A. G., & Mesman. "What Do We Read to Our Children? Messages Concerning Ethnic Diversity in Popular Children's Books in the Netherlands." *SN Social Sciences* 1, no. 206 (2021): 1–21. https://doi.org/10.1007/s43545-021-00221-7.

Cherner, T. S., and N. Gurjar. "An Investigation of Protagonists in Storybook Apps for Children." *Reading Horizons: A Journal of Literacy and Language Arts* 60, no. 2 (2021): 51–77.

Deckman, A. S., S. L., Fulmer, E. F., Kirby, K., Hoover, K., & Mackall. "Numbers Are Just Not Enough: A Critical Analysis of Race, Gender, and Sexuality in Elementary and Middle School Health Textbooks." *Educational Studies* 54, no. 3 (2018): 285–302. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131946.2017.1411261.

Derman-Sparks, L. *Guide for Selecting Anti-Bias Children's Books*. Teaching for Change, 2013. https://www.teachingforchange.org/selecting-anti-bias-books.

"Examples of Students of All Ages Developing Critical Literacy by Analysing Diversity in Their Classroom and School Libraries," 2020. https://www.teachingforchange.org/books/critical-literacy.

Ferguson, D. "Must Monsters Always Be Male? Huge Gender Bias Revealed in Children's Books," 21 January. https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/jan/21/childrens-books-sexism-monster-in-your-kids-book-is-male.

Möller, K. J. "Creating Diverse Classroom Literature Collections Using Rudine Sims Bishop's Conceptual Metaphors and Analytical Frameworks as Guides." *Journal of Children's Literature* 42, no. 2 (2016): 62–72.

Nations, United. *Guidelines for Gender-Inclusive Language in English*, n.d. https://www.un.org/en/gender-inclusive-language/guidelines.shtml.

Nguyen, A. "'Children Have the Fairest Things to Say': Young Children's Engagement with Anti-Bias Picture Books." *Early Childhood Education Journal* 50 (2022): 743–59. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-021-01186-1.

Penguin. "Lit in Colour – Supporting Inclusive Reading in Schools," 2020. https://litincolour.penguin.co.uk/.

UNESCO. *Gender Equality Guidelines and Tools*, 2021. https://en.unesco.org/

genderequality/tools.

———. "Making Textbook Content Inclusive: A Focus on Religion, Gender, and Culture," 2017. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000247337_eng.

———. "Textbooks and Inclusive Education: Background Paper Prepared for the 2020 Global Education Monitoring Report," 2020. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373693.

Lists of diversity-friendly readings

More than 90 lists of multicultural and social justice books for children, young adults, and educators: https://socialjusticebooks.org/booklists/

List of resources for increasing diversity in science: https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0169534720302883

Allen, M. D., A., Aronson, K., Diverse Book Finder Team, & Lambert. "20 Picture Books for 2020: Readings to Embrace Race, Provide Solace & Do Good." EmbraceRace, 2020. https://www.embracerace.org/resources/20-picture-books-for-2020.

"Children's Literature in Critical Contexts of Displacement," n.d. https://childslitspaces.com/.

"Cuentos y Libros Que Muestran Multiculturalidad y Diversidad de Razas." Club Peques Lectores, 25 May. http://www.clubpequeslectores.com/2021/05/cuentos-diversidad-cultural-razas.html.

People), IBBY (International Board on Books for Young. "Europe's Regularly Updated Selection of the Best Books for Children in European Languages, Including the Most Common Languages Currently Spoken by Migrant or Refugee Children in Europe," n.d. https://www.ibby-europe.org/Books.

"Picturebooks about Children with Different Abilities, Including Children with Autism and Down's Syndrome, Children Who Are in a Wheelchair, Are Dyslexic or Have a Learning Disability," n.d. https://www.stayingcoolinthelibrary.us/picture-books-about-children-with-different-abilities/.

Rockets, Reading. "Themed Book Lists, Including Picturebooks Featuring Characters with Autism or Asperger's and Middle Grade Books Featuring Neurodiverse Characters," n.d. https://www.readingrockets.org/books/booksbytheme.

Rodríguez Thompson, S. "20 Latinx Children's Books That Should Be On Your Bookshelf." HipLATINA, 2020. https://hiplatina.com/20-latinx-childrens-books-that-should-be-on-your-shelf/.

Sigmon, A. P., M. L., Tackett, M. E., & Azano. "Using Children's Picture Books About Autism as Resources in Inclusive Classrooms." *The Reading Teacher* 70, no. 1 (2016): 111–17. https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.1473.

"Where to Find Diverse Books: List of Sites That Offer Recommendations for Diverse Titles," n.d. https://diversebooks.org/resources-old/where-to-find-diverse-books/.

Literature

Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. "The Danger of a Single Story [Video Speech]," 2009. http://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story.html.

Alter, Günther. "A Sociological Perspective on Diversity in ELT Coursebooks." In *The Praxis of Diversity*, edited by M. Lütge C., Lütge, C., & Faltermeier, 137–73. Springer, 2019.

Alter, Nadine, Günther & Köffler. "Let Boys Explain the World to Girls Who Do Not Know – Visual Representations of Gender and Diversity in Austrian Primary Textbooks and Implications for Diversity-Sensitive Education." *Journal of Visual Literacy* 40, no. 3–4 (2021): 149–69. https://doi.org/10.1080/1051144X.2021.1974770.

Bishop, Rudine Sims. "Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors." *Perspectives* 6, no. 3 (1990): ix–xi.

Brugeilles, Sylvie, Carole & Cromer. "Promoting Gender Equality through Textbooks: A Methodological Guide." UNESCO, 2009. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000158897_eng.

Bulut, Arda, Murat & Arıkan. "Socially Responsible Teaching and English Language Coursebooks: Focus on Ethnicity, Sex and Disability." *Yaşar Üniversitesi E-Dergisi* 10, no. 39 (2015): 13–20. https://doi.org/10.19168/jyu.46053.

Curriculum, National Council for, and Assessment (NCCA). "Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework." National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2009. https://curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/484bcc30-28cf-4b24-90c8-502a868bb53a/Aistear-Principles-and-Themes_EN.pdf.

Demir, Muhammed, Yavuz & Yavuz. "Do ELT Coursebooks Still Suffer from Gender Inequalities? A Case Study from Turkey." *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies* 13, no. 1 (2017): 103–22.

Education (CLPE), Centre for Literacy in Primary. "Reflecting Realities. Survey of Ethnic Representation within UK Children's Literature 2020," 2021. https://clpe.org.uk/research/clpe-reflecting-realities-survey-ethnic-representation-within-uk-childrens-literature-0.

Frencham, J. "Diversity Audit: Assessing Your Collection." Teen Services Underground, 2018. https://teenservicesunderground.wordpress.com/2018/07/06/diversity-audit-assessing-your-collection/.

Garcia Mora, G., M. E., Schwartz Orellana, S., & Freire. "Disability Inclusion in Latin America and the Caribbean: A Path To Sustainable Development." World Bank, 2021. https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/36628.

Giaschi, Peter. "Gender Positioning in Education: A Critical Image Analysis of ESL Texts." *TESL Canada Journal* 18, no. 1 (2000): 32–46. https://doi.org/10.18806/tesl.v18i1.898.

Goyar, H., R. & Rose. "Stilettoed Damsels in Distress: The (Un)Changing Depictions of Gender in a Business English Textbook." *Linguistics and Education* 58 (2020): 100820. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.linged.2020.100820.

Hawthorne, A. J. "Black in the British: Analysing the Visual Representation of Black People

in British Council Teaching Materials." Master's Thesis, Lancaster University, 2020. https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/seeing-black-how-build-anti-racism-teaching-english-publications.

Jackson, Philip W. *Life In Classrooms*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968.

Jensen, U. R., M. S., Herrebrøden, M., & Andreassen. "The Invisible Minority: Why Do Textbook Authors Avoid People with Disabilities in Their Books?" *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 27, no. 12 (2023): 1287–1303. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2021.1889049.

Kamasak, D., R., Ozbilgin, M., & Atay. "The Cultural Impact of Hidden Curriculum on Language Learners: A Review and Some Implications for Curriculum Design." In *Beyond Language Learning Instruction: Transformative Supports for Emergent Bilinguals and Educators*, edited by S. Slapac A. & Coppersmith, 104–25. IGI Global, 2020. https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-7998-1962-2.ch005.

Language, Integrate Ireland, and Training (IILT). "Together towards Inclusion Toolkit," 2007. https://ncca.ie/media/2030/assessment_toolkit.pdf.

Lee, A. C.O., J. F.K. & Chin. "Constructing Gender Using Visual Imagery – a Study of Early Readers." *Language and Communication* 78 (2021): 1–18. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langcom.2021.01.005.

Liese, M. "The Representation of the Ethnic and Cultural 'Other' in Primary School Textbooks: A Comparative Case Study of North Rhine-Westphalia (Germany) and Ireland." Master's Dissertation, Dublin City University, 2010. https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.1009.5222&rep=rep1&type=pdf.

Pilgrim, A. N. "Including Diversity in Race, Ethnicity and Culture in Your Teaching." Open Learn – Free Learning from the Open University, 2020. https://www.open.edu/openlearn/education-development/education/including-diversity-race-ethnicity-and-culture-your-teaching.

Simpson, C. J., D. Y., Beatty, A. E., & Ballen. "Teaching Between the Lines: Representation in Science Textbooks." *Trends in Ecology and Evolution* 36, no. 1 (2021): 4–8.

Teachers (PDST), Professional Development Services for. "Anti-Bullying Support Material," 2024. https://www.pdst.ie/sites/default/files/PDST%20Support%20Material_0.pdf.

About the authors

Tracy Fletcher

Tracy Fletcher is a teacher in the subject of English, and researcher, originally from the U.K but has been based in Sweden for the last 14 years. She has experience of curriculum planning and management, co-ordinating CPD for teachers, as well as working to support newly arrived immigrant students integrate into a new school

system. Her research interests include anti racist education, inclusive education, and student mental health. She is also an activist for autism awareness and trans rights.

Laura Torres Zúñiga

Laura Torres Zúñiga is a lecturer and teacher trainer at the Department of Philologies and Didactics of the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (Spain), where she teaches English Language, Syllabus Design and Children's Literature in English to pre-service teachers of all educational stages. Her research interests center on contemporary short narrative forms, English language teaching and active learning methodologies.

Lisa Johansson

Lisa Johansson is a lecturer of English within the teacher training programs at the University of Gävle. She teaches courses in proficiency, language structure, didactics, and world English across primary, secondary, and upper secondary school levels. She has a teacher's degree in English and history for upper secondary school and her interests cover sociolinguistics, language and gender dynamics and language and power.

ACCESSIBILITY OF MEDIA AND MATERIALS

Thomas Joseph O Shaughnessy; Pamela February; and Sam Blanckensee

---

📠 *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://book.all-means-all.education/ ama-2025-en/?p=530#oembed-1*

Example Case

A School-wide application for Accessible Documents

Mx May had a student with low vision join their class and required all class media and materials in an accessible format. Mx May had realised that she had never really considered making her curriculum accessible before, so she decided she would make a concerted effort to change the structure of her digital content to support this student.

Mx May followed the Accessibility Resources and Know-How (ARK) online resource by the Association on Higher Education and Disability and learned how to create accessible content. She began to add headings to her documents, alternate text for images and include descriptive links. She also added accurate captions to all her video content.

However, Mx May noticed that other students in the class, not just disabled students, began interacting with the documents. She realised that the learners could navigate and engage more with the material she was providing. She also noticed that students who used assistive technology voices, including screen readers, and text-to-speech, could access the material more readily. For one student with a disability who used text-to-speech, found this new approach had been a life-changing event.

Mx May also witnessed that learners who were learning in a language that was not their first language also seemed to benefit. They commented that the captions on videos had made it so much easier to comprehend what was discussed in the video content.

Mx May had not foreseen the wide-ranging benefits of introducing accessible materials. Mx

May felt obliged to share this information with her peers and the broader school network during staff training. Mx May saw it as pivotal to developing inclusive culture within her school.

Initial questions

In this chapter you will find the answers to the following questions:

1. What are the benefits of providing accessible media?
2. How can educators create accessible media?
3. How does stigma on technology affect accessible media?
4. How can we expand the communities of practices to the broader community?

Introduction to Topic

Every classroom is unique, with learners from various social and cultural backgrounds demonstrating different abilities and exhibiting diverse interests and preferences for engagement. As a result, educators need to be cognisant of the needs and supports of this diversity if they are to create a more inclusive classroom environment. Moreover, the level of diversity in our classrooms has never been so prevalent. For example, over 15% of people in the European Union, almost 80 million people, have some form of disability (Mehigan et al., 2022). However, disability is only one aspect of our inclusive sphere. Globalisation due to migration, conflict, political differences, and commercial and social opportunities has resulted in increasingly diverse societies (Rios & Markus, 2011). These changes have significantly impacted the diversity within our school environments, as schools tend to be microcosms of society (Bialostocka, 2016).

Increasingly socio-ethnically diverse classrooms are also reshaping classroom interactions (De Schaepmeester et al., 2022). This socio-ethnic diversity can also impact the need for accessibility and more accessible practices. Parton (2016) echoes this sentiment noting a link between diversity and accessibility where accessibility can impact learners from every nationality. Accessibility is also about equity of access, no longer a niche requirement solely used by learners with a disability (Edyburn, 2010). Therefore,

policies and practices in teaching and learning must be reviewed to guarantee that education is inclusive to everyone, not focusing simply on one cohort, the learners with a disability (Moriña, 2017; Zorec et al., 2022).

Although equity of access in education is a human right, there is a lack of emphasis on assistive technology and accessibility across the continuum of teacher education. There is a particular need for more training in accessibility and assistive technology in Initial Teacher Education (Michaels & McDermott, 2003; O'Sullivan et al., 2021; Van Laarhoven & Conderman, 2011; Wynne et al., 2016). While educators may have a moral and ethical rationale to develop accessible media and materials, it is often policy and legislation, both domestic and international, that drive accessible practice. Examples like the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) from 2006, an internationally recognised and supported treaty, includes sections specifically related to accessibility and equity of access under Article 9. This well-supported convention additionally commits member states to support people with a disability so that they receive the necessary support within the mainstream education system under Article 24, including instruction on assistive technology.

More recently, the European Union Web Accessibility Directive (WAD) 2016, requires all new public sector websites and mobile applications to be accessible by 2021. This EU directive has two primary objectives, one which focuses on the promotion of accessibility and the inclusion of everyone, and the latter which targets the reduction of litigation based on issues related to accessibility (Lewthwaite & James, 2020). Interestingly, the WAD is not disability-specific legislation, instead reinforcing the benefits of accessibility for everyone. This directive has the potential to significantly impact accessible and pedagogical practices (O Shaughnessy, 2021). The WAD also aims to ensure EU citizens can participate in society on an equal basis while guaranteeing member states must amend their laws to meet the need of this legislative framework (Mehigan et al., 2022). The Web Accessibility Directive requires Member States to report on the results of their monitoring activities every three years (European Commission, 2023).

In addition to the WAD, policies such as the Digital Education Action Plan (DEAP) also impact accessible practice (European Commission, 2020). This European Union (EU) policy initiative supports the sustainable and effective adaptation of EU member states' education and training systems. The DEAP noted how the global pandemic highlighted several existing challenges and inequalities in education and confirmed the need for improved levels of digital capacity in education and training (European Commission, 2020). The DEAP, which has inclusivity embedded across many of its key actions, was seen as a cooperative long-term strategic vision for high-quality, inclusive, and accessible European digital education. European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education [EASNIE] (2022a) reiterates the Digital Education Action Plan commitment to include the accessibility of technologies and digital content. However, they also note the strong influence of the Web Content

Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) on both accessible design and accessibility-centric legislation.

However, the DEAP is not without its critics. Some emphasise the DEAP's lack of financial strategy for implementation, while others highlight concerns about its language and remit (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2022a; Mauraille, 2020). Despite this, the DEAP has begun to influence and shape practice and policy. For example, the release of the Irish Digital Strategy for Schools to 2027 refers explicitly to its alignment with the Digital Education Action Plan, acknowledging its European expertise and suggesting it as a valuable tool to guide and assist approaches in Irish education (Department of Education, 2022). Accessibility is also an integral part of the inclusive teacher role. EASNIE's 'Profile for Inclusive Teacher Professional Learning' includes valuing learner diversity and concepts of inclusion, equity, and quality education and supporting all learning (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2022b). Despite a lack of specific reference to accessibility within this professional learning, the approaches within the publication entwine with a universal whole-school approach to accessibility, one which targets inclusion, equity, and access for all.

Divided into several sections, this chapter adopts a holistic approach to accessibility. The first section begins by discussing accessibility and assistive technology. The subsequent section examines the accessibility of media and materials, providing examples of how they can make their classrooms more accessible. The following section discusses the benefits and opportunities created when educators ensure that the media and materials used in schools are accessible. The next section will focus on the barriers educators encounter when creating accessible media and materials and will show some solutions to these barriers. This chapter shows what is currently available, although this is an area that is constantly changing with the availability of technology and new developments, this availability differs geographically, and access may vary depending on the technology currently used within the educational setting. The chapter then discusses the role of communities of practice and school management in shaping the inclusive culture within schools, which supports and promotes accessible media and materials. The chapter concludes with a summary of the chapter and possibilities for the future.

Key aspects

Accessibility & Assistive Technology

It is challenging to discuss accessible media without first mentioning what is meant by accessibility. Accessibility can have a range of meanings and is often used in an educational context to signify availability rather than ease of access, inclusion, or assistive technologies. Even when used within this context, the literature identifies varying definitions of accessibility (O Shaughnessy, 2021). Several authors have defined accessibility as

providing equitable services and systems that support everyone and prevent practices from excluding anyone (de Witte, Steel, Gupta, Ramos, & Roentgen, 2018; Shachmut & Deschenes, 2019). However, given the increasingly socio-ethnical diversity of today's classrooms, the authors have decided to embrace a more open view of accessibility. They draw on a publication from 2015 which discusses accessibility as a 'celebration of diversity' which ensures all learners are included within the learning process (Ahmad, 2015: 73).

There is also an intrinsic link between assistive technology and accessibility. This link exists because assistive technology is decisive in promoting accessibility and inclusive education (Ismaili & Ibrahimi, 2017). However, the definition of assistive technology provokes widely varying responses from the education community (Boone & Higgins, 2007). The U.S. Assistive Technology Act (2004) defines assistive technology as both the device and a service where assistive technology is "any item, piece of equipment, our product system, whether acquired commercially off-the-shelf, modified or customised that is used to increase, maintain and improve functional capabilities of the child with a disability" (U.S. Department of Education, 2004: 8). A common thread within the definition of assistive technology is its role in 'increasing the functional capabilities' of a person with a disability (Bowser et al., 2015; World Health Organisation, 2019). However, in terms of supporting a social approach, this chapter broaches assistive technology more as accessible and inclusive tools that may increase functional capabilities and as tools that can promote access, foster collaboration, and enhance productivity. These tools include text-to-speech, speech-to-text, graphic organisers, and inbuilt accessibility tools. These tools are often used as basic arguments behind classroom requirements for accessible media and materials. This chapter's approach to accessibility and assistive technology is rooted in the knowledge that equity of access is no longer a niche requirement solely used by disabled learners (Edyburn, 2010; Moriña, 2017).

Creating Accessible Media and Materials: Benefits and Opportunities

Creating accessible materials may seem like a daunting task to many educators. Often, they may not even know how to start the process. Of course, creating accessible content may depend on the technologies available to educators within a particular school. However, a simple start in supporting accessible media lies in creating documents and materials with structure. Materials, including long documents, especially books, are much easier to navigate for everyone when they have structure applied to them. There are multiple ways to do this, depending on the platform and software being used. In this example, Microsoft Word, a common word processor used across educational institutions from primary to postsecondary is used. However, alternatives like Google Docs and OpenOffice have similar supports around accessibility. Document structure in Microsoft Word is achieved by applying headings throughout your document using the Styles section on the Home ribbon. Screen readers, voice recognition, and keyboard users rely heavily on document structure

for access and navigation, but Headings also allow everyone to engage efficiently. Applying Headings using a tiered approach creates a document tree, allowing all users to move up and down the headings contained within the document (as shown on the left in Figure 1). This makes navigation easier for both learners and educators.

Figure 1: Headings in Microsoft Word
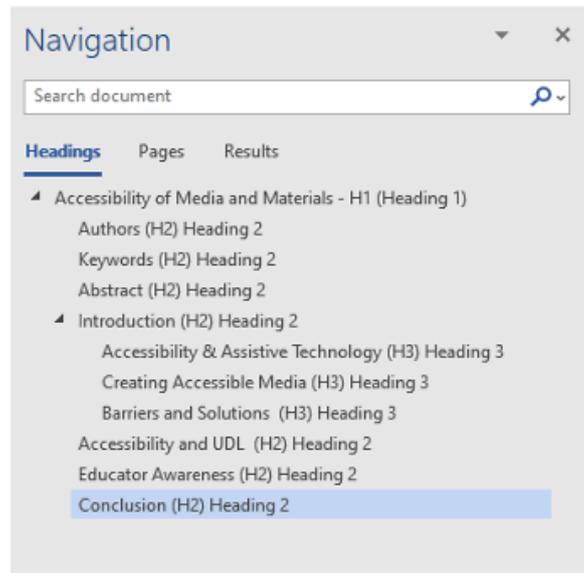
Outside of the structure, other factors can affect the accessibility of a document (see Table 1). For example, font type, font size, and bullet/numbered lists are essential to enhance accessibility and are easy to apply. In terms of font size, word processor documents should be a minimum of 12 points (pt). Accessible font types include Century Gothic, Tahoma, Calibri, Helvetica, Arial, and Verdana. All these fonts are plain sans-serif fonts. The decorative nature of serif fonts can make them much more difficult to access and read. However, Comic Sans font, sometimes prescribed for students with dyslexia, can make documents inaccessible to assistive technologies used by some dyslexic students. When making lists in Word, always use the bullets and numbering feature. Marking items as a list informs the reader that there are a set of steps or a numbered sequence to a process (McGinty, 2020).

The appropriate use of alternative text, link descriptions, and tables all play a role in creating accessible Word documents. Alternative text (alt text) is a text-based substitute for non-text elements, including images and tables. The alternative text aims to describe relevant information contained within non-text elements concisely. When applying alternative text, there is no need to begin the text with 'Picture of' or 'Image of', as it is superfluous and automatically assumed by the user accessing the alternative text. When describing the image, context is everything, so there is no need to include every piece of information within the non-text elements. Instead, the educator should focus on conveying the insight, the main trends, or the point of the graph or image. Link or hyperlink descriptions allow the user to understand the context of where the link will take them. While this is

essential for screen reader users, its logical approach provides clarity and should benefit everyone, not just those using specific technologies. Poorly labelled links include common non-descriptive links 'Click here', 'Learn more' or 'link'. Moreover, document or page links with a long and complex link name with special characters may also create access barriers. Providing descriptive naming conventions or utilising link shorteners can alleviate these accessibility concerns (Chee, Davidian & Weaver, 2022).

Figure 2:Accessibility in Microsoft Office
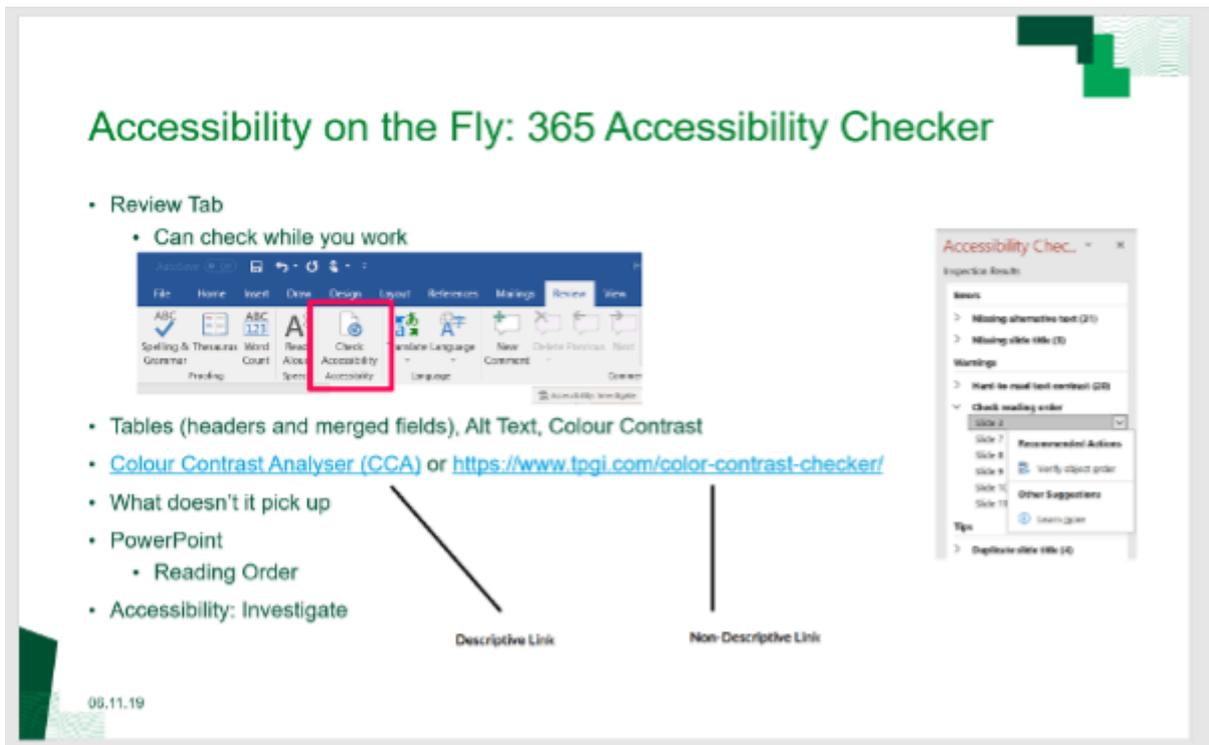
Table accessibility is usually more specific to screen reader users. Tables are read by the screen readers using header column cell and row cell to give the user context, especially if the user is blind or has low vision. Therefore, each cell in a table needs to have an associated header cell, so that when a screen reader user reads cell by cell the appropriate header data is read and the data within each cell is read. For more information see here an Introduction to accessible tables and a screen reader demo. If a header row is not applied, this creates an access problem for screen reader users. A similar situation occurs if fields within a table are merged as the screen reader cannot correlate the header column cell with the correct row cell. For more information see JAWS Reading Combined Tables.

By applying accessibility throughout your content, educators make it easier to create more accessible alternative formats, for example, braille files, audio files including DAISY files, portable document format (pdf) files and HTML files. Web services like Robobraille at https://www.robobraille.org/ offer free format conversions for learners.

PowerPoint works on a similar premise to those mentioned above. However, reading order can play a vital role in this presentation tool. Screen readers navigate through slide content based on a structured order beginning with the title and then working through the

slide in the order elements were added to the slide. If a teacher adds content outside of the template layout the reading order may be affected and require fixing. The Reading Order Pane can be accessed via the Check Accessibility drop-down pane in the Review Tab in PowerPoint. To enhance PowerPoint accessibility further, educators can use verbal descriptions of non-text elements when presenting their slides to support a more diverse audience. The application of colour is another integral part of accessible practice in Word and PowerPoint. Applying sufficient colour contrast ensures learners can visually access educational content. Although accessible colour contrast can be difficult to gauge, downloadable tools like TPGi's Colour Contrast Analyser (CCA) offer learners and educators a contrast support solution. This tool allows you to compare colours and provides pass/fail results based on WCAG standards for colour contrast. For accessibility, colour contrast ratio between the text and the background above 4.5:1 and 3:1 for large text. This ratio can be checked using the CCA. Regarding accessible font size in PowerPoint, 24 pt should be the minimum applied. PowerPoint also allows educators to search for pre-designed accessible slide templates which utilise accessible colours for contrast and reader-friendly font styles. For many reasons, including for learners with low vision and colour blindness, educators should never use colour to convey meaning alone. Moreover, when emphasising a point, it is best practice to use plain text where possible and to not use colour or bold font as a sole way for relaying important information as this can create barriers for a range of learners, for example, screenreader users, learners who have low vision, and learners with colour blindness (Arch & Abou-Zhara, 2008).

The issue of time is sometimes a factor when it comes to creating accessible media and materials. Schools, management, and educators need to develop school environments where implementing accessible practice is the new norm. Tools to support this initiative already exist, for example, Google Docs has an option to turn on screen reader support. Microsoft has the Accessibility Checker, a tool in a range of Microsoft products, including Word, PowerPoint, and Outlook. When applied correctly, it can offer real-time accessibility-specific feedback. Furthermore, the Accessibility Checker can take a lot of pressure off educators when checking for accessibility and makes accessibility checking easier for everyone (Fichten et al., 2019). Educators can significantly reduce the work needed to ensure their content is accessible by actively screening in real-time. However, the Accessibility Checker does not spot all accessibility issues, for example, subjective meaning in links and headings means that incorrectly labelled links can go unnoticed. Therefore, educators need to be knowledgeable in accessible practice, even when these tools are available.

Educators must also be aware of all these practices which are more conducive to supporting accessibility. Educators also need to understand the application of Optical Character Recognition (OCR) to scanned media and materials and how it aids a range of diverse learners. The OCR process converts an image of text into a machine-readable text format. OCR allows technologies to select and interact with individual words and characters

within a document. The application of OCR can be highly beneficial to students using assistive technologies, including text-to-speech or screen reader software. A study of 143 students with low vision and 29 blind students noted how almost 90% of students who were blind and a third of those with low vision used scanning with OCR software (Fichten et al., 2009). The application of OCR is usually a quick process. However, it can depend on many factors, which include the quality of the original text, the font and spacing used, and the quantity of scanning required. The complexity of the content is also a factor, i.e., graphics, images, maths, and scientific notation.

As we move into a more mobile age for technology, new solutions are beginning to emerge. Students and educators no longer have to rely on large scanning devices to apply OCR across media and materials. Microsoft Applications, including Seeing AI and Lens provide a free, flexible, and mobile way to scan OCR documents and materials. While these apps are free, they often require a mobile hardware device to operate. The Lens app also allows users to open scanned documents in an 'Immersive Reader' view, a feature that allows for personal customisation and text-to-speech application. Other mobile apps also facilitate learner autonomy, for example, the free application Adobe Fill & Sign enables learners and educators to capture a picture of a paper form and fill it in digitally. This can provide access to a range of learners who struggle with traditional class workbooks and require technology to access the curriculum.

Table 1: Accessible Issues in Microsoft Word & PowerPoint

Accessibility in Word & PowerPoint	Good Practice	Bad Practice	Accessibility Checker Detects
Headings	Apply Styles in logical order – Helps Define structure	Bolded Headings, no structure	No
Alternative Text	Succinct and meaningful or decorative	Auto Description or use of 'Picture of' or 'Image of'	Yes
Link Descriptions	Describe link succinctly	Click here or a long address	No
Table Header & Merged Cells	Include Header and exclude Merged fields	Merged Fields & Missing Headers	Yes
Use of Colour	Use Colour Contrast Analyser & High contrast	Low Contrast, Emphasise with colour	Yes
Font Size and Type	Minimum 12 pt Sans Serif / 24 pt in PowerPoint	Commonly used Font 11 with Serif	No
Reading Order (PowerPoint only)	Set Reading Order properly	Add content without checking the Reading Order	Yes

PDFs are often a contentious point regarding accessibility (Fichten et al., 2009). The dilemma with PDFs is that their accessibility depends on how it was created. Ensuring PDFs are accessible can be difficult but providing a PDF with OCR already applied is a good start for those relying on text-to-speech. However, a PDF that has OCR is potentially inaccessible to a screen reader unless the PDF is tagged correctly. Each PDF tag identifies the type of content and stores some attributes (for example, paragraphs, headings, lists, and tables), creating a hierarchical tree structure within the document. The tag tree forms the logical reading order structure making the document easier to access and navigate. However, tagging PDFs can be a time-consuming and arduous task.

There are a range of free applications for OCRing PDFs that exist; some are web-based others come in the form of a free feature in paid tools like Adobe Pro or literacy software including Read & Write or ClaroRead. Microsoft's Edge Browser with Windows 10 and 11 allows learners and educators to open PDFs, although it does not apply OCR to inaccessible documents. However, Edge empowers learners to read OCR'd PDF documents using text-to-speech and offers them various editing features.

Creating accessible media and materials can sometimes be laborious and costly. One example is the creation of transcripts and captions for video and audio content. Mainstream applications like Microsoft Stream and YouTube offer this auto-captioning service, including post-editing solutions. However, the accuracy of the original auto-caption dictates the amount of time needed to edit the captions. Unfortunately, auto-captions are limited and often depend on factors which include the microphone's quality, the speaker's voice, and the content. Significantly, the time taken to edit the captions may often exceed the time required to create the original video/audio content. However, tools exist that provide real-time human-based captioning solutions. These real-time human-based captioning solutions are often complex for students who need captioning services. The cost and logistics issues of acquiring a stenographer can be challenging. These stenographers/captioners can integrate within common online platforms like Zoom and Microsoft Teams (organised through the meeting administrator settings). However, they can also operate through third-party software for face-to-face interactions.

Newer paid solutions like Caption.Ed software by CareScribe allows for a more mainstream and flexible approach to real-time captioning while supporting several international voices. Despite using auto-captions, this software has quite a high accuracy rate and can be applied to any audio or video content on your device. It also provides a transcript in conjunction with the captions and therefore provides for real-time classroom notes. While this may provide a real-time, time-efficient solution, it is a subscription service which also requires some financial outlay. Caption.Ed also supports a range of different languages. Another tool, OtterAI, also works on a similar premise and may be more financially viable, it has a monthly subscription, and it also has a free version. It can also provide a transcript of the captions.

For shorter video content, apps, including Clips (free) and Clipomatic (paid), can offer quick video creation with editable captioning options. There are also post-production human-generated captions solutions. These solutions are often expensive and outside the budget of most schools. Companies like Cielo24 and Rev offer these solutions to allow educators to upload content to the cloud and receive back caption files within 12-72hrs. They also support translated captions and a range of standard file types like SRT or WEBVTT. However, for these solutions, the quicker the turnaround, the more expensive the cost. Ultimately, utilising captioning services that require time-sensitive approaches requires significant financial outlay from educational institutions. The alternative is a time-consuming process where educators must manually edit the auto-captions. However, a new captions-based solution is becoming mainstream in the form of Live Captions for Windows 11. Live Captions will allow all captions to be automatically generated from any audio content. Live Captions will also allow the captions box to float in a window or be exhibited at the top or bottom of a screen.

Although this is one of the newer accessibility features inbuilt in Windows, the inbuilt accessibility features across the main operating systems like ChromeOS, iOS, macOS,

Windows and Android devices are continually improving. Accessibility and assistive technology features now come almost as standard with new appliances. These features include text-to-speech (for example, iOS Speak Screen, Safari Reader, Immersive Reader), speech-to-text (for example, Dictate, Google Voice Typing), voice assistants (for example, Siri, Alexa, Cortana, Google Home), screen readers (for exmaple, NVDA, VoiceOver, Narrator), screen magnification, contrast customisation including dark mode and night light. Moreover, a range of additional tools and features exist within the accessibility and access settings of almost every well-known operating system.

Another method for supporting accessible content is the creation of braille. Braille is a tactile writing system used by people who are blind or who have low vision. Despite the well-documented value of braille literacy, braille literacy is declining (Hoskin et al., 2022). From an education perspective, there is also a low incidence of learners who read braille in schools (Herzberg & Stough, 2007). Moreover, braille production requires specialised technologies, which are unavailable to many if not most schools. As a result, the production of braille in schools is often the remit of organisations set up to support students who are blind or who have low vision. Euroblind provides information on access to these resources in each country within continental Europe. To produce braille, educators or learners usually need access to a braille embosser. Braille embossers emboss braille characters onto paper for tactile reading. Before the braille can be printed, the device attached to the embosser must perform braille translation from text. This translation occurs through specialised braille software such as the Duxbury Braille Translator. This software supports over 170 languages, and it supports literary, mathematics, and technical braille. However, produced braille texts are often quite bulky and regularly need to be divided up into more manageable volumes.

Electronic texts are more transportable and less burdensome than these large braille volumes (Suzor et al., 2008). As a result, more people who are blind or have low vision are moving towards technology-driven braille solutions. Hoskin et al. (2022) agree, claiming that many braille readers also use technology such as refreshable braille displays to access braille. These braille displays provide access to data on a computer screen by electronically raising and lowering different combinations of pins in braille cells. They can show up to 80 characters from the screen, which refresh as the cursor moves around the screen. Braille displays have their advantages over traditional braille by allowing for a more practical solution for the digital age that engages more readily with electronic-based reading environments (Russomanno et al., 2015).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, digital solutions provided access for those requiring remote sign language interpreting. This remote approach was seen by many as a flexible and efficient way to facilitate sign language interpreting services (De Meulder & Haualand, 2021). Interestingly, this practice is still being employed in educational settings today. However, to enable more inclusive access to media, educators need to understand how best to support remote sign language interpreting services, for example, the Center for

Excellence in Universal Design states a list of directions and techniques to ensure an interpreter is easy to see and read (National Disability Authority, 2022). These include capturing the entire signing space and ensuring the signer is the required size and visibility. Moreover, the provision of content-specific terminology for the interpreters before the class is essential and reduces the potential for complex translations.

Another accessible solution centres on the growth in audiobooks and text-to-speech-based solutions. Audiobooks can support a range of diverse learners, and it has been shown to improve language and reader competence while also increasing school performance, attitude, and motivation (Alcantud-Díaz & Gregori-Signes, 2014; Milani et al., 2009; Padberg-Schmitt, 2020; Whittingham et al., 2012). Free text-to-speech tools, including Balabolka, can create audiobooks, but professional audiobooks are also available through Bookshare and professional services like Amazon's Audible. Available in many countries, Bookshare is an accessible digital library for all people with print disabilities. Unfortunately, Bookshare is only available for individuals with a qualifying reading or perceptual disability, a visual impairment, or a physical disability affecting their ability to read printed works. The Bookshare library, which supports over 34 languages, has over a million titles, including books for schools has the largest collection of accessible digital books in the world.

Alternatively, Amazon's Audible is an online audiobook and podcast service that allows users to purchase and stream audiobooks. This platform will enable users to download and stream content from Audible's substantial online database of audiobooks and podcasts. Similar to Bookshare, Audible utilises professional human voices to narrate its products. However, it is limited in terms of educational material. Audible can also be synced with Kindle to provide a human spoken text-to-speech with highlighting known as WhisperSync. For flexibility and to support different learners, WhisperSync lets users readily switch between reading the text and narration. While time can be a barrier to providing accessible solutions like captioning, there are additional barriers to creating accessible content.

Barriers and Solutions

There are many barriers and challenges that educators can face when promoting accessible media and materials in their classrooms. These barriers, in addition to time, include cost, knowledge, and other social factors, including stigma.

Finance and sustainability solutions are high priorities in most of today's schools. However, accessible technologies, including many assistive technologies, invariably come with a high price tag (King & Allen, 2018). This high cost can deter schools and educators from utilising assistive and accessible technologies. Additionally, in many low-income countries funding may not be available to ensure access, and even less so in rural areas within the countries (Gulati, 2008). However, inbuilt accessibility and assistive technology features across most mainstream operating systems and applications may alleviate some

of this cost associated with procuring assistive technology. Assistive technology freeware and open-source technologies also provide alternative options instead of expensive bespoke technologies. Many of the technologies available also have a free version, which in some cases may not be as effective. Trialling examples include Inspiration , Read & Write and LightKey. However, these free versions allow for the trialling of technologies to test their effectiveness. Therefore, educators can experiment with a program to see if it meets the needs of learners before investing in expensive technology that may not be suitable.

Another significant barrier throughout much of the literature is the time required to learn and support these technologies (Ault et al., 2013; Courduff et al., 2016; Flanagan et al., 2013). However, time does not only impact on these inclusive technologies, as many educators do not have enough time to explore, experiment, research and implement mainstream educational technologies (Khlaif et al., 2021; Polly et al., 2020;). Priority must be given to inclusive technology across teacher education, from pre-service and in-service training to whole-school approaches to inclusive education. This may alleviate some of the time concerns noted in adopting and understanding these technologies.

Learner barriers are also an issue for educators. Stigma can prevent people from using accessible or assistive technologies and accessible media and materials by garnering unwanted attention (Zapf et al., 2015). Learners who experience learning disabilities can feel ashamed about their learning difficulties. The stigma may not emanate from an individual learner's functional limitations but from societal and social responses to disability. In that respect, stigma is caused by framing the conversation around disability, accessibility, diversity and not the use of technology itself. As a result, young people using specific adaptive technologies might feel that this makes them different to their peers, and additionally, their peers may see them as 'other' (Barbareschi et al., 2021; McNicholl et al., 2023).

Integrating accessible technologies into daily school life creates a new norm and reduces the stigma attached to these technologies, for example, smartphones either come equipped or require the download of applications which allow them to support reading, writing and organisation, text-to-speech, and dictation technologies. Having these technologies in a device everyone uses may hide the fact that the learner relies on a particular tool. Moreover, if assistive technologies like these mentioned above are used by many people using the same device, this can significantly reduce the stigma. Interestingly, newer mainstream technologies that support assistive technologies and accessible practices are already perceived to be more acceptable in this regard (Ok & Rao, 2017). The mainstreaming of assistive technologies across Microsoft applications under the umbrella of inclusion for all learners may further reduce the stigma associated with such tools.

Support for assistive technology and its implementation are known barriers to access for some learners (Ault et al., 2013; Bell et al., 2010; Donne & Hansen, 2016). Educators are often inadequately equipped to consider and implement the types of support (Naraian & Surabian, 2014). Moreover, keeping abreast of these changes can also be daunting and

overwhelming for many educators (Dawson et al., 2016). The number of technologies available and changes in accessible practice can significantly impact educators and therefore emphasises the need for hands-on teacher training on accessibility tools, and technologies, for both initial teacher education and through lifelong learning and continuous professional development (Alkahtani, 2013; King & Allen, 2018; Michaels & McDermott, 2003; Schaff, 2018; Van Laarhoven & Conderman, 2011). However, social media is another potential way for educators to upskill and stay alert to changes related to accessible practice. Many teacher networks are already utilising social media which can influence teaching and learning practices (Willems et al., 2018).

Many of the barriers related to accessibility discussed previously can be addressed through training or more open and inclusive approaches to supporting learners. Whole-school and whole-classroom approaches can also mitigate some of these concerns. However, knowledge and information sharing is key to an inclusive culture and creating an accessible environment for everyone. In addition to knowledge, adopting frameworks like the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework allows schools and educators to promote accessibility as a tool that supports everyone.

Accessibility and UDL

Accessibility and the provision of accessible media and materials complement more inclusive frameworks, including Universal Design for Learning (UDL). A full chapter also exists on UDL elsewhere in this book. An innate bond exists between UDL and accessibility, a relationship educators need to understand if they are to support more inclusive practice (O Shaughnessy, 2021). After all, a universal approach must be an approach that aims to cater for everyone, including those with accessibility needs. Moreover, assistive technologies make UDL more accessible, efficient, robust, and financially sustainable (Griful-Freixenet et al., 2017). While UDL is not a technology-based framework, the flexibility offered by technology-enhanced learning options means that technology often plays a significant role in implementing UDL practices. By combining technology and UDL, schools can deliver more profound, accessible, and engaging learning environments for everyone, including those with diverse learning needs (Rose & Meyer, 2002). However, there is still a need for Initial Teacher Education programmes to emphasise UDL, instructional practices, and technology-enhanced pedagogy (Basham et al., 2010).

A UDL-based approach also creates opportunities to address potential accessibility-related issues (Al-Azawei et al., 2016; Zorec et al., 2022). Importantly, UDL emphasises both the accessibility of learning and the accessibility of educational material (Scott et al., 2015; Tobin, 2014). The application of accessible practice across the UDL framework is evident, for example, guaranteeing that teaching materials are usable, structured, and accessible is pivotal in promoting the UDL representation principle (Boothe et al., 2018). This approach ensures that all learners, including those using assistive technology, have

access to the necessary materials. Nieves et al. (2019) also note how the UDL principle of action and expression facilitates accessible options for demonstrating learning and knowledge expression. By supporting learners with accessible content and using accessible systems, educators can support learner autonomy and paths that promote self-directed learning. Through regarding multiple means of engagement, accessible, and assistive technology tools can support and foster collaboration, facilitate coping skills and provide a range of options to minimise threats and distractions.

Adopting a UDL approach for educators, schools or institutions can sometimes be intimidating. However, the key to success can reside in taking a small-steps approach. By starting small, the UDL process becomes more manageable, and educators reduce the risk of becoming overwhelmed (Boothe et al., 2018; Novak & Rose, 2016). Tobin and Behling (2018) promote a similar approach called 'Plus One', a process that advocates adding one small thing each time along your UDL journey. O'Shaughnessy (2021) posits that an increased focus on accessibility can be that 'Plus One' or that first small step in an educator's UDL journey. However, when introducing UDL, planning for accessibility needs to happen from the outset due to difficulties that often come from trying to retrofit UDL, for example, using accessible templates in PowerPoint increases the accessibility of the slides, this saves time and effort in trying to edit slides for accessibility afterwards.

Educator Awareness of Accessibility & School Culture

While designing from the outset may not always be possible, schools and educators can take steps to ensure staff are aware of tools and technologies to make lessons more exciting and grant better access to more learners. This section discusses two approaches: training for educators and communities of practice.

In terms of inclusive education, assistive technology and accessibility training must be included in Initial Teacher Education (Drelick, 2022). However, there is a need to address assistive technology and accessibility across all facets of the teacher education continuum. This need is reflected in the CPD needs of educators, where technology and special education needs loom high on the list of teacher priorities (Murphy & De Paor, 2017). Moreover, educators need to stay abreast of new approaches to instruction to meet the demands of today's classroom (Thurlings & den Brok, 2018). Training for educators on accessibility should include practical tips and solutions with simple strategies for integrating within the classroom. Hands-on training should enable educators to experiment and become comfortable accessing, creating, and using accessible materials. Training should include giving educators guidelines to critically select and evaluate the available media and materials regarding the relevance for their learners and the topic at hand. To encourage and promote more accessible practice in schools, the development of a more cooperative peer learning approach is proposed in the form of a Community of Practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Communities of Practice have the potential to provide educators with information about the use of accessible media and materials (Lewthwaite & Sloan, 2016; O Shaughnessy, 2021). Their cooperative approach facilitates the dissemination of knowledge and personal experience, which can be highly beneficial in education. Educator Steven Anderson states on Twitter that "alone we're smart, but together we're brilliant" which captures the essence of communities of practice and their potential role in education (Anderson, 2013). Belonging to a group, using whatever means, be it in person or virtual, via some shared social space enables educators to create connections and discuss common issues surrounding the accessibility and use of media and materials. They also provide options for reflective practice, assessment, and ways to enhance student engagement (O'Shaughnessy, 2021). Establishing what worked for a colleague and what should be avoided can save a lot of time for educators. Moreover, these communities can play an integral role in the professional growth of educators (O'Sullivan, 2008).

A Community of Practice is just one approach that can benefit educators in promoting an inclusive agenda regarding accessibility. The whole-school approach to inclusive practice demands that senior management take proactive steps to ensure educators' continuous professional development through workshops and seminars. Accessibility begins with creating an inclusive school culture. In keeping with this inclusive school culture, principals and senior management must invest in school-wide licences for technology that will enable universal access to media and materials. These technologies can promote learner independence and reduce the need for individualised accommodations and differentiation while supporting a more UDL-based approach to education that empowers the learner. A shift in focus from educators to a whole-school approach supported by school management may impact the inclusive culture within a school.

Principals also play a pivotal role in fostering inclusive schools (DeMatthews et al., 2021). This influence can be even more critical because educators may sometimes not know the right course of action when promoting inclusive education (Spratt & Florian, 2015). Communities of Practice and buy-in from senior management are vital components of inclusive culture in schools. Teotia (2018) argues that an inclusive culture's diversity and unique perspectives enhance the school community including parent-teacher perspectives. Through the lens of the parent-teacher perspective, it is important for educators to be sensitive to the parents, as they can play an important role in inclusive education (Mann & Gilmour, 2021). Parents can create a platform that they can use to support each other and support their learners and their use of technology. Parents' communication platforms support communication from schools regarding the progress of their child, school meetings, homework, and important notifications. Additionally, parents can communicate with each other on common issues that affect them. Communication and sharing are integral to inclusive school culture and promoting accessible practices. Inclusive cultures empower stakeholders, drive inclusive change, and break down barriers. Communities of

practice, school management, and other stakeholders each play their own part in driving an inclusive agenda that supports and fosters accessible practice.

Conclusion

The evidence presented in this chapter highlights the importance placed on educators providing accessible media and materials. The advantages of accessible practice, while essential for access and the promotion of learner autonomy, benefit far more learners. Moreover, while technologies including screen readers, speech-to-text and text-to-speech require material to be accessible, creating an accessible structure behind accessible media and materials makes it more engaging and navigable to every learner.

Local contexts

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=530#h5p-28

Closing questions to discuss or tasks

- How could you make the media you create daily more accessible?
- What tools could you integrate into your classroom to make your media and materials more accessible?
- Describe the communities of practice (COP) you already engage in which enhance your practice in accessible media and materials.
- How could you improve these communities of practice so that they operate more effectively?
- If you do not have any communities of practice which enhance your practice in accessible media and materials, how can you establish these? Think of COPs among staff, parents, learners, etc.

Literature

Ahmad, Fouzia Khursheed. "Use of Assistive Technology in Inclusive Education: Making Room for Diverse Learning Needs." *Transcience* 6, no. 2 (2015).

Al-Azawei, Ahmed, Fabio Serenelli, and Karsten Lundqvist. "Universal Design for Learning (UDL): A Content Analysis of Peer Reviewed Journals from 2012 to 2015." *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning* 16, no. 3 (2016): 39–56.

Alcantud-Díaz, María, and Carmen Gregori-Signes. "Audiobooks: Improving Fluency and Instilling Literary Skills and Education for Development," 2014.

Alkahtani, Keetam D. "Teachers' Knowledge and Use of Assistive Technology for Students with Special Educational Needs." *Journal of Studies in Education* 3, no. 2 (2013): 65–86.

Anderson, Steven W. "Alone We Are Smart but Together We Are Brilliant. We Can Use the Collective Wisdom to Do Great Things When We Are Connected. #edchat." Twitter, September 17, 2013. https://twitter.com/web20classroom/status/380107104528658432.

Ault, Melinda Jones, Margaret E Bausch, and Elizabeth M McLaren. "Assistive Technology Service Delivery in Rural School Districts." *Rural Special Education Quarterly* 32, no. 2 (2013): 15–22.

Basham, James D., Maya Israel, Janet Graden, Rita Poth, and Markay Winston. "A Comprehensive Approach to RTI: Embedding Universal Design for Learning and Technology." *Learning Disability Quarterly* 33, no. 4 (2010): 243–55.

Behling, Kirsten T., and Thomas J. Tobin. *Reach Everyone, Teach Everyone: Universal Design for Learning in Higher Education*. West Virginia University Press, 2018.

Bialostocka, Olga. "Education for Peace and Social Cohesion in a Multicultural Society." In *Peace Education for Violence Prevention in Fragile African Societies: What's Going to Make a Difference?*, 331, 2016.

Boone, Randall, and Kyle Higgins. "The Role of Instructional Design in Assistive Technology Research and Development." *Reading Research Quarterly* 42, no. 1 (2007): 135–40.

Boothe, Kathleen A., Marla J. Lohmann, Kimberly A. Donnell, and D. Dean Hall. "Applying the Principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) in the College Classroom." *Journal of Special Education Apprenticeship* 7, no. 3 (2018).

Bowser, Gayl, Diana Foster Carl, Kelly S. Fonner, Terry Vernon Foss, Jane Edgar Korsten, Kathleen M. Lalk, Joan Breslin Larson, et al. *Quality Indicators for Assistive Technology: A Comprehensive Guide to Assistive Technology Services*, 2015.

Centre for Excellence in Universal Design. "Ensure That the Signer Is Easy to See and Read," 2022. https://universaldesign.ie/technology-ict/archive-irish-national-it-accessibility-guidelines/digital-tv-equipment-and-services/guidelines-for-digital-tv-equipment-and-services/sign-language-interpreting/ensure-that-the-signer-is-easy-to-see-and-read/.

Courduff, Jennifer, Amanda Szapkiw, and Jillian L Wendt. "Grounded in What Works: Exemplary Practice in Special Education Teachers' Technology Integration." *Journal of Special Education Technology* 31, no. 1 (2016): 26–38.

Dawson, Kara, Pavlo Pasha Antonenko, Shilpa Sahay, and Linda Lombardino. "How Mobile App Developers Conceive of Dyslexia and What It Means for Mobile App Users." *Interaction Design and Architectures*, no. 28 (2016): 69–84.

De Meulder, Maartje, and Hilde Haualand. "Sign Language Interpreting Services: A Quick Fix for Inclusion?" *Translation and Interpreting Studies. The Journal of the American Translation and Interpreting Studies Association*16, no. 1 (2021): 19–40.

De Schaepmeester, Lisa, Johan van Braak, and Koen Aesaert. "Social Citizenship Competences of Primary School Students: Does Socio-Ethnic Diversity in the Classroom Matter?" *Globalisation, Societies and Education* 20, no. 3 (2022): 365–87.

DeMatthews, David E., Amy Serafini, and Terri N. Watson. "Leading Inclusive Schools: Principal Perceptions, Practices, and Challenges to Meaningful Change." *Educational Administration Quarterly* 57, no. 1 (2021): 3–48.

Department of Education. "Digital Strategy for Schools to 2027," 2022.

Drelick, Alicia M. "Embedding Assistive Technology in Teacher Education: Building Capacity for Accessibility." In *Preparing Pre-Service Teachers to Integrate Technology in K-12 Classrooms: Standards and Best Practices*, 191–206, 2022.

Edyburn, Dave L. "Would You Recognise Universal Design for Learning If You Saw It? Ten Propositions for New Directions for the Second Decade of UDL." *Learning Disability Quarterly* 33, no. 1 (2010): 33–41.

European Agency for Special Needs, and Inclusive Education. "European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education: Inclusive Digital Education." Odense, Denmark, 2022.

———. "Profile for Inclusive Teacher Professional Learning: Including All Education Professionals in Teacher Professional Learning for Inclusion." Odense, Denmark, 2022.

European Commission. "The Digital Education Action Plan (2021-2027)," 2020.

Fichten, Catherine, Mary Jorgensen, Laura King, Alice Havel, Tali Heiman, Dorit Olenik-Shemesh, and Dana Kaspi-Tsahor. "Mobile Technologies That Help Postsecondary Students Succeed: A Pilot Study of Canadian and Israeli Professionals and Students with Disabilities," 2019.

Fichten, Catherine S, Jennison V Asuncion, Maria Barile, Vittoria Ferraro, and Joan Wolforth. "Accessibility of E-Learning and Computer and Information Technologies for Students with Visual Impairments in Postsecondary Education." *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness* 103, no. 9 (2009): 543–57.

Flanagan, Sara, Emily C. Bouck, and Jennifer Richardson. "Middle School Special Education Teachers' Perceptions and Use of Assistive Technology in Literacy Instruction." *Assistive Technology* 25, no. 1 (2013): 24–30.

Griful-Freixenet, Júlia, Katrien Struyven, Meggie Verstichele, and Caroline Andries. "Higher Education Students with Disabilities Speaking out: Perceived Barriers and Opportunities of the Universal Design for Learning Framework." *Disability & Society* 32, no. 10 (2017): 1627–49.

Gulati, Shalni. "Technology-Enhanced Learning in Developing Nations: A Review." *The*

International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning 9, no. 1 (2008).

Herzberg, Tina S., and Laura M. Stough. "The Production of Brailled Instructional Materials in Texas Public Schools." *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness* 101, no. 8 (2007): 465–78.

Hoskin, Elizabeth R., Morag K. Coyne, Michael J. White, Stephan C.D. Dobri, T .Claire Davies, and Shane D. Pinder. "Effectiveness of Technology for Braille Literacy Education for Children: A Systematic Review." *Disability and Rehabilitation: Assistive Technology*, 2022, 1–11.

Ismaili, Jalal, and El Houcine Ouazzani Ibrahimi. "Mobile Learning as Alternative to Assistive Technology Devices for Special Needs Students." *Education and Information Technologies* 22, no. 3 (2017): 883–99.

Jackson, Richard M., and Scott D. Lapinski. "Restructuring the Blended Learning Environment on Campus for Equity and Opportunity through UDL." In *Transforming Higher Education Through Universal Design for Learning*, 297–311, 2019.

Khlaif, Zuheir N., Soheil Salha, Saida Affouneh, Hadi Rashed, and Lotfia Ali ElKimishy. "The Covid-19 Epidemic: Teachers' Responses to School Closure in Developing Countries." *Technology, Pedagogy and Education* 30, no. 1 (2021): 95–109.

King, Laura H., and Ayla E. Allen. "Beyond Preservice Special Educators: Embedding Assistive Technology Content throughout a Teacher Education Program of Study." *Rural Special Education Quarterly* 37, no. 4 (2018): 228–34.

Lewthwaite, Sarah, and David Sloan. "Exploring Pedagogical Culture for Accessibility Education in Computing Science," 1–4, 2016.

Mann, Glenys, and Linda Gilmore. "Barriers to Positive Parent-Teacher Partnerships: The Views of Parents and Teachers in an Inclusive Education Context." *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 2021, 1–13.

Mehigan, Tracey, Armony Altinier, Estella Oncins, Gabriele Sauberer, Kashmira Chawan, and Dónal Fitzpatrick. "Accessibility Standards and Laws: Implementation for Successful Digital Education within the Eurozone," 2022.

Michaels, Craig A., and Jennifer McDermott. "Assistive Technology Integration in Special Education Teacher Preparation: Program Coordinators' Perceptions of Current Attainment and Importance." *Journal of Special Education Technology* 18, no. 3 (2003): 29–44.

Milani, Anna, Maria Luisa Lorusso, and Massimo Molteni. "The Effects of Audiobooks on the Psychosocial Adjustment of Pre-adolescents and Adolescents with Dyslexia." *Dyslexia* 16, no. 1 (2010): 87–97.

Moriña, Anabel. "Inclusive Education in Higher Education: Challenges and Opportunities." *European Journal of Special Needs Education* 32, no. 1 (2017): 3–17.

Muraille, Marcel. "From Emergency Remote Learning to a New Digital Education Action Plan: An EU Attempt to Mainstream Equality into Education," 2020.

Murphy, Timothy R.N., and Cathal de Paor. "Teachers' CPD and Sectoral Interests: Opportunities for Convergence and Divergence." *Teaching and Teacher Education* 66 (2017):

242–49.

Naraian, Srikala, and Mark Surabian. "New Literacy Studies: An Alternative Frame for Preparing Teachers to Use Assistive Technology." *Teacher Education and Special Education* 37, no. 4 (2014): 330–46.

Nieves, Liliana Herrara, Emilio Crisol Moya, and Rosana Montes Soldado. "A MOOC on Universal Design for Learning Designed Based on the UDL Paradigm." *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology* 35, no. 6 (2019): 30–47.

Novak, Katie, and David Rose. *UDL Now!: A Teacher's Guide to Applying Universal Design for Learning in Today's Classrooms*. CAST Professional Publishing, 2016.

Ok, Min Wook, and Kavita Rao. "Using a Digital Pen to Support Secondary Students with Learning Disabilities." *Intervention in School and Clinic* 53, no. 1 (2017): 36–43.

O'Shaughnessy, Thomas J. "Universal Design for Learning and Accessibility: A Practitioner Approach." In *Handbook of Research on Applying Universal Design for Learning Across Disciplines: Concepts, Case Studies, and Practical Implementation*, 25–47. IGI Global, 2021.

O'Sullivan, Katriona, Amy McGrane, Siobhan Long, Kevin Marshall, and Malcolm Maclachlan. "Using a Systems Thinking Approach to Understand Teachers Perceptions and Use of Assistive Technology in the Republic of Ireland." *Disability and Rehabilitation: Assistive Technology*, 2021, 1–9.

O'Sullivan, Mary. "Creating and Sustaining Communities of Practice among Physical Education Professionals." *EJRIEPS. Ejournal de La Recherche Sur l'intervention En Éducation Physique et Sport*, no. 15 (2008).

Parton, Becky. "Video Captions for Online Courses: Do Youtube's Auto-Generated Captions Meet Deaf Students' Needs?" *Journal of Open, Flexible, and Distance Learning* 20, no. 1 (2016): 8–18.

Polly, Drew, Florence Martin, and T. Christa Guilbaud. "Examining Barriers and Desired Supports to Increase Faculty Members' Use of Digital Technologies: Perspectives of Faculty, Staff and Administrators." *Journal of Computing in Higher Education* 33, no. 1 (2021): 135–56.

Rios, Francisco, and Susan Markus. "Multicultural Education as a Human Right: Framing Multicultural Education for Citizenship in a Global Age." *Multicultural Education Review* 3, no. 2 (2011): 1–35.

Rose, David H., and Anne Meyer. *Teaching Every Student in the Digital Age: Universal Design for Learning*. ERIC, 2002.

Russomanno, Alexander, Sile O'Modhrain, R. Brent Gillespie, and Matthew W.M. Rodger. "Refreshing Refreshable Braille Displays." *IEEE Transactions on Haptics* 8, no. 3 (2015): 287–97.

Schaaf, David N. "Assistive Technology Instruction in Teacher Professional Development." *Journal of Special Education Technology* 33, no. 3 (2018): 171–81.

Scott, LaRon A., Peter Temple, and David Marshall. "UDL in Online College Coursework: Insights of Infusion and Educator Preparedness." *Online Learning* 19, no. 5 (2015): 99–119.

Shachmut, Kyle, and Amy Deschenes. "Building a Fluent Assistive Technology Testing Pool to Improve Campus Digital Accessibility (Practice Brief)." *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability* 32, no. 4 (2019): 445–52.

Suzor, Nicolas, Paul Harpur, and Dilan Thampapillai. "Digital Copyright and Disability Discrimination: From Braille Books to Bookshare," 2008.

Teotia, Kumkum. "School Culture and Inclusive Education: A Review of the Literature," 2018.

Thurlings, Marieke, and Perry den Brok. "Student Teachers' and in-Service Teachers' Peer Learning: A Realist Synthesis." *Educational Research and Evaluation* 24, no. 1–2 (2018): 13–50.

Tobin, Thomas J. "Increase Online Student Retention with Universal Design for Learning." *Quarterly Review of Distance Education* 15, no. 3 (2014).

U. S. Department of Education. "Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (2004)," n.d.

Van Laarhoven, Toni, and Greg Conderman. "Integrating Assistive Technology into Special Education Teacher Preparation Programs." *Journal of Technology and Teacher Education* 19, no. 4 (2011): 473–97.

Whittingham, Jeff, Stephanie Huffman, Rob Christensen, and Tracy McAllister. "Use of Audiobooks in a School Library and Positive Effects of Struggling Readers' Participation in a Library-Sponsored Audiobook Club." *School Library Research* 16 (2013).

Willems, Julie, Chie Adachi, Francesca Bussey, Iain Doherty, and Henk Huijser. "Debating the Use of Social Media in Higher Education in Australasia: Where Are We Now?" *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology* 34, no. 5 (2018).

Witte, Luc de, Emily Steel, Shivani Gupta, Vinicius Delgado Ramos, and Uta Roentgen. "Assistive Technology Provision: Towards an International Framework for Assuring Availability and Accessibility of Affordable High-Quality Assistive Technology." *Disability and Rehabilitation: Assistive Technology* 13, no. 5 (2018): 467–72.

World Health Organisation. "Assistive Technology in the Eastern Mediterranean Region: Results of a Rapid Assessment," 2019.

Wynne, Richard, Donal McAnaney, Trish MacKeogh, Philomena Stapleton, Sarah Delaney, Noeleen Dowling, and Isabelle Jeffares. "Assistive Technology/Equipment in Supporting the Education of Children with Special Educational Needs–What Works Best," 2016.

Zorec, Klavdija, Deirdre Desmond, Trevor Boland, Aoife McNicholl, Anne O'Connor, Gillian Stafford, and Pamela Gallagher. "A Whole-Campus Approach to Technology and Inclusion of Students with Disabilities in Higher Education in Ireland." *Disability & Society*, 2022, 1–26.

About the authors

Thomas Joseph O Shaughnessy

Thomas is a graduate of the University of Limerick at both undergraduate (BSc. in Computer Systems) and postgraduate level (MSc. in Software Engineering). With a background in accessibility, teaching and assistive technology, Thomas has extensive experience promoting and facilitating inclusive practice in primary, post-primary and post-secondary education. Thomas has experience guest lecturing at undergraduate and postgraduate levels in assistive technology, accessibility, and Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Thomas's interests include wider institutional approaches to inclusive practice, the role of third space professionals in higher education and the use of communities of practice in fostering and promoting more inclusive practice.

Dr. Pamela February

Dr Pamela J. February is a senior lecturer in the Department of Early Childhood Education and Care in the School of Education at the University of Namibia. Her areas of interest and expertise include inclusive education practices; early childhood education and care; deaf education; how learners/students learn and how we should assess them; reading acquisition and fluency; vocabulary acquisition; mathematics education and the use of technology to enhance inclusive learning. In addition, she has written articles and book chapters and supervised postgraduate students in these areas.

Sam Blanckensee

Sam Blanckensee (they/he) is a equality, diversity and inclusion practitioner based in Ireland with extensive experience in equality in Higher Education through their role as the Equality Officer at Maynooth University. Sam holds an MA in management for the nonprofit sector. Sam has worked within Irish LGBTQ+ organisations in voluntary and professional roles since 2013. Sam's work covers a broad range of equality, diversity, inclusion and interculturalism initiatives including LGBTQ+ matters, gender equality, anti-racism, disability awareness and access for those within the international protection system. Sam is a non-binary trans person who is also neurodivergent and queer, All Means All is a project where the personal meets professional for Sam.

BRIDGING LEARNING AND TEACHING: POSSIBLE PATHWAYS TO MORE INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Hermione Xin Miao; Akshita Rawat; and Brian Lynam

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://book.all-means-all.education/ ama-2025-en/?p=432#oembed-1

Example Case

Aditi is a teacher in a public school. Her students belong to low-income, working-class backgrounds and are from marginalised communities. These students reside in the nearby neighbourhoods, as ghettoisation is a common feature and their parents are blue-collar workers. Aditi joined the school as part of an NGO intervention. She teaches all subjects to students in grades 1 and 2. In her teacher education and induction for the NGO she was trained in several 'progressive' methods of teaching, using interaction and dialogue and introduced to theories on pedagogies and child psychology. Like her peers in the NGO, she is privileged, upper-class, and university-educated. This also makes her very different from her students in terms of her socio-economic background.

For the short time that she is there, she is highly motivated to engage students and push them to see their potential. Students from marginalised communities had internalised a 'culture of silence', being conscious of their class and caste position. Her main goal is to retain them in school by developing an interest in learning. Being trained by the NGO, she follows an interactive method of teaching, using gestures and prompts to encourage students to participate and speak up. However, in the classroom, there are several challenges as well. The main challenge is the asymmetrical power relations as she is an upper-class English-speaking

individual who teaches in a low-resource school to disadvantaged students. She is far more privileged than the students she teaches. Therefore, for dialogue to be effective, it is also important that she understands the social conditions in which the thoughts and language of the students have developed. She makes efforts to be aware of the reality and worldview of the students. In her methods, she attempts to connect the local and the immediate to the larger concepts. She picks topics and lessons to align them with the students' worldview.

In this chapter, we start the first three sections by describing one structural disadvantage in learning and teaching, then suggest one possible pathway to bridge learning and teaching. By doing so, we can discuss how to address and even prevent disadvantages. In the final section, we put together different pathways to encourage more inclusive educational spaces. We have summarised three questions which guide us in structuring the chapter:

- How can learning and teaching methods foster cross-cultural understanding and create a more inclusive educational space?
- What challenges arise when bringing diverse perspectives into educational practices?
- How can teachers utilise inquiry-based learning, critical pedagogy and feminist approaches to engage students more meaningfully?

Initial questions

First, before reading the chapter, we invite you to think about three initial questions:

1. Past experiences: Based on your school experiences, what teaching strategies did teachers use (if any) and what opportunities (if any) did you have to investigate critical social issues in and beyond the classroom?
2. Future projections: What would you imagine as the benefits and challenges that you may face when bringing diverse perspectives to learning and teaching methods?
3. Current situations: In your case, what difference would be made if learning and teaching methods are designed to foster cross-cultural understanding and make educational spaces more inclusive?

Introduction to Topic

Introduction to the topic

This chapter brings learning and teaching methods together instead of separating them into two processes. Education needs learning, teaching and their interactions to take place. If there are only learning methods, the danger of 'learnification' (Biesta, 2009, 2022) is that learning can become empty if educators do not rediscover the gifts of teaching. If there is only teaching without learning, it is also problematic as the teaching becomes a one-person show, which is not showing education as a dialogue between teachers and students.Hence, learning and teaching methods have to come together.

We have no intention of providing an exhaustive list, and we also see the problem of being prescriptive. As an alternative, we provide three heuristic case studies from our different expertise to give examples of what diverse learning and teaching methods can look like and what they can enable. These include inquiry-based learning, critical pedagogy and feminist approaches.

The purpose is to provide alternative pathways to replace the traditional authoritarian model of teaching. We explore education's liberating potential through transforming learning and teaching methods. These alternatives are more than technical methods which aim for higher scores in assessments. None of them can be developed in one day. They are not magic cures. They take time, but the time you spend with yourself, classmates, colleagues and students on diversifying learning and teaching towards inclusion also brings you a sense of achievement.

We are fully aware that you and we all live in a society where institutional settings and school structures shape learning and teaching practices. By pointing at alternative pathways, we are not denying these, but also remind you, educators and future educators:

You also hold the power to make learning and teaching more just, democratic and inclusive.

What makes you different from artificial intelligence is your subjectivity, which is the key for a human being to develop the transformative potential of learning and teaching methods. You can think for yourself and talk to people, and be empathetic with others. This also creates a space for you to think about your own biases, prejudices and privileges along with the students to learn and unlearn by indulging in an interactional relationship.

In this chapter, we urge the readers to think about the purpose of education and not be limited to within the school. Classrooms and schools do not exist in a vacuum. They coexist with a society which is unequal and riddled with issues of class, religion, gender, caste, etc. When we come together in the classrooms as learners and teachers, we bring along with us differences based on our identities, along with levels of privilege and disadvantage, ways of thinking, perspectives, biases, and opinions. Various aspects of our lives come together. Through this chapter, we propose approaches that can enable teachers to modify

their learning and teaching methods accordingly to meet the requirements of the learners and to make the process more engaging and inclusive.

Checking our privileges

In this section, we share personal reflections to illustrate how our identities, privileges, and lived experiences shape the way we view the world and approach our work. Positionality is not static; it evolves over time and across contexts, influenced by the intersecting dimensions of our identities. As an additional resource on positionality and intersectionality, the OpenTextbook *Universal Design for Learning (UDL) for Inclusivity, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility (IDEA)*, features a video of Kimberlé Crenshaw—who first introduced the concept of intersectionality—that can further enrich your understanding of these dimensions.

As educators and researchers, understanding these dynamics is essential to fostering empathy, equity, and inclusivity in our practices.

Through our stories, we aim to offer a window into how power and marginalisation operate in complex and multifaceted ways. These narratives serve as examples of how privilege and disadvantage can coexist, shift, and intersect in unexpected ways. They also reflect our commitment to ongoing self-reflection as a cornerstone of inclusive education.

We hope that by sharing these accounts, we not only demonstrate the value of examining positionality but also encourage you to reflect on your own. The following examples highlight how our unique journeys have shaped our perspectives and continue to inform our contributions to education and research.

Hermione Miao

When I came to study for my PhD in the United Kingdom, someone shouted at me: "Go back to your country". Now sometimes when I share my views with people in China, I get criticised for being "too westernised". I have no choice but to live in this in-betweenness, being considered as outsiders in both scenarios by some people 'loyal to their traditions'. This was not something I would experience if I stayed where I grew up. I was born and bred in rural China in a Han (major) ethnicity family. Revisiting my encounters made me notice that I was born privileged in one place, but disadvantaged in another, then being dismissed in the first place as I had been to other places. In addition, the more I grew up, I also faced more situations where people told me "Good girls/women should not do this…". I gradually realised that I was not born but rather became a woman. However, I would also never think like 'some typical' feminist, not just due to my other social-economic and cultural backgrounds, but also I chose to recognise these intersectional dimensions. I have significant roles to achieve what I want to see as a feminist.

I am now also more aware of my privilege to study for my PhD with my mother's financial

support. Not every emerging scholar would have the luxury of studying full-time, I am grateful for mine. Back in the 1990s, my parents took the opportunity to start a small business by migrating from a rural village to a mega city in China. I was one in millions of left-behind children in rural areas when their parents migrated to the cities as breadwinners. By then, the household registration system in China allowed internal migration (mostly from rural to urban), but their children could not access these urban state-owned schools. I grew up with my maternal grandparents and later reunited with my parents through studying higher education in the city in which they live. Then I followed my passion to study abroad, trying to find possible routes to make education more inclusive and accessible to all. Over time, the lack of power and privilege in my school days has transformed to motivate me in reducing and ultimately preventing education reproducing social injustices.

Akshita Rawat

In India, I belong to a majorly privileged group. Privileged in class, caste, language, and education but not in gender. Up until my school and also graduation, I was in a more homogenous crowd where I was in the majority as most students were from the upper or middle class, upper caste, English speaking, born in the city, etc. Or at least they were the ones who were "visible". I did not become aware of my privilege until I was in my post-graduation (university level) where the crowd was heterogeneous with the majority of the students being from various parts of India, villages and cities, lower economic backgrounds, 'lower' caste, differently abled and who were from marginalised communities. It was during this time that I was made aware of my privilege, of how deep inequalities still are even in education, and how upper caste people (who are a minority) hold positions of power and have even made educational institutes exclusive spaces. It also made me see that education is a right and even premier and top universities can also be made truly inclusive. However, when I moved to Europe to pursue my PhD, I became disadvantaged in several ways due to my race, ethnicity, and language, and the inequalities are more visible to me than to my peers who are privileged in terms of their race. However, compared to other people in India or even other minorities here, I am still privileged as it is due to my social, cultural and economic capital, which is due to my caste and class, that I am able to pursue a PhD from abroad. I am still privileged but also have several disadvantages in Europe due to being from South Asia.

Brian Lynam

Living in the Netherlands for the past number of years, I have regularly been excluded from conversations in Dutch, due to not speaking the local language. This becomes very apparent in larger groups of people, even though English is very widely spoken and understood. In contrast, in Ireland I am regularly complimented on being multilingual, which

gives me extra clout in social interactions. In one country I am linguistically disadvantaged and in the other, I am quite privileged.

In addition to this, over time, and through my travels across continents mainly in my early twenties, I became increasingly aware of my socio-economic advantages of being able to spend long periods of time in countries and cultures that were very distinct from my own. I have first-hand experience of having minimal difficulties travelling between borders in Asia and Africa, visa exemptions and unrestricted access to beautiful parts of the world. The question of citizenship became quite interesting to me, and when I read news reports of the issues and stress refugees or immigrants face when moving countries, I became cognisant of the value of my Irish passport and the rights and opportunities it afforded.

These trips abroad, and my life-long interest in meditation and spirituality, have also made me closely examine my own identity and place in the world, particularly regarding who we are and where we come from. I am acutely aware of the privileges that have been given to me in my life, and how it has impacted my upbringing and life experiences in a generally very positive way. In meditation practice I often focus on deconstructing the thoughts, ideas and concepts that are most closely related to me, and seeing reality in a more objective manner.

Case Study 1: Critical Pedagogy in Low-Resource Classrooms

As introduced at the beginning of this chapter, Aditi's classroom offers a compelling example of the challenges and possibilities within low-resource schools. Her experience as a teacher working with students from marginalised communities highlights the tension between privilege and disadvantage, as well as the transformative potential of dialogical teaching methods. This case study builds on her story to explore the principles of **critical pedagogy**, a liberating approach to education that emphasises dialogue, reflection, and action. By revisiting the dynamics in Aditi's classroom, we examine how educators can address structural disadvantages, foster inclusion, and empower students to challenge systemic inequities. Through this lens, we invite you to consider actionable pathways for bridging the gaps in privilege and creating more equitable educational spaces.

What is critical pedagogy?

Paulo Freire was a Brazilian educator who played an important role in laying the foundations of critical pedagogy. In his book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* he describes critical pedagogy as a liberating form of education that involves praxis which is "reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it" (Freire, 1970, p.51). It begins with problematising the social and economic structures and social relations that shape the lives of the people, and in which schools also function. It views schools as ideological sites, as an embodiment of the normative values, relations of power, and larger social structure and complicit in reproducing dominant social relations and structures but also, potentially, as sites of

emancipation and for challenging the taken-for-granted nature of knowledge (Roberts, 1996). It also means looking critically at our role within the social structure, the asymmetrical power relations in the society and our privileges, as well as the role we might play in knowingly or unknowingly challenging or reproducing the values and ideologies of a repressive and exploitative system (Bartolomé, 2004).

For teachers and students in the classrooms, critical pedagogy is about remaking their perspectives and lives by critically reflecting on the world, including multiple perspectives, knowledge structures, and also enabling the students to learn "academic" or "scientific" knowledge. Within this approach, learners and teachers are encouraged to critically view their relations with others and their position in the world, and think about the forces that shape their consciousness (Giroux, 2010). This involves the act of constant remaking, where teachers and students reflect and critically perceive their social position, not from abstract ideas and concepts, but from their social position and lived experiences (Freire, 1970).

Critical pedagogy moves away from a more authoritative model of learning and teaching, which Freire describes as the **banking concept of education.** In the banking concept, the learning and teaching methods are dominated by practices of rote learning, a hierarchical teacher-student relationship, and a prescriptive model of learning and teaching wherein students are thought of as empty vessels to be filled by teachers (Freire, 1970). It is inherently anti-dialogical, where knowledge is unchanged and the social reality is treated as outside the purview of education. By not questioning the nature of reality and the inequalities in the world, this kind of education serves the interest of those in the position of power, the oppressors, and contributes to maintaining the status quo. It also kills the creativity and critical imagination of students and discourages them from posing questions about what counts as knowledge (Roberts, 1996).

Why do we need critical pedagogy?

Critical pedagogy emphasises the liberating and emancipatory potential of education. By its very nature, it is **problem-posing**.

Participants pose problems and begin to question. It is also not limited to classrooms and has liberation as its purpose through the process of posing and addressing problems (Roberts, 1996). It introduces the participants to new ways of thinking and gives them the tools to question dominant ideas, biased and discriminatory social practices and knowledge to intervene and restructure them (Giroux, 2010).

Critical pedagogy is particularly important for teachers and students who teach and learn in a diverse context which includes students from lower social and economic backgrounds. This is because the **central characteristic of critical pedagogy is dialogue.**

"Only the dialogue, which requires critical thinking, is also capable of generating critical

thinking. Without dialogue, there is no communication, and without communication, there can be no true education" (Freire, 1970, p. 73).

Here, we would like to introduce Gayatri Chakrovorty Spivak's ideas. Dialogue or the act of speaking is so important especially for students who are from non-dominant social groups, especially for the marginalised "other" as they are usually spoken for (Spivak, 1989). They are usually the object of knowledge for others to be appropriated and dialogue is essential when aiming to learn bidirectionally. It connects education to a larger context of our identity, social position and power relations. It allows both the teachers and the students to **learn and unlearn** their own privileges by entering into a dialogue. This dialogue allows us to engage with marginal or subaltern communities in a learning process that does not just result in academic knowledge about the 'other', but is useful in developing theoretical insights about one's own positionality.

Another reason why critical pedagogy is important is because education is not a neutral process. It is a reflection of the larger social structure and the inequalities that are present in the world. In a classroom, the students' and teacher's position in the social order are important factors that interact with how they learn and teach (Bernstein, 2004; Hoadley & Muller, 2010).

In Aditi's classroom, the difference in the social class and caste position of the teacher and the students was significant and it was one of the barriers that prevented them from having open communication. The students are more used to studying through a lecture-based approach and have internalised silence. Here, it is important to point out that schools not only contain an instructional aspect i.e., content taught, what is categorised as knowledge, how it is taught, etc. but also a moral aspect which includes teaching values, behaviour, and ways of thinking which are considered as essential and appropriate to exist in a society (Bernstein, 2004). This shapes what students learn and how they perceive the world around them and also themselves.

While it is important to take note of the power held by institutional structures, rules and regulations over classroom processes, it is important to remember that the **teacher's subjectivity** also plays an important role. Teaching is a political act. Often teachers believe in "meritocracy" that is, if you study hard, you succeed (Bartolomé, 2004). Often teachers have a deficit lens through which they especially view students who are linguistic minorities, low socio-economic background or disadvantaged in any other way. It has been described as a lens of educability i.e., learning potential. Teachers construct a generalised notion about marginalised students associated with a learning deficiency due to their lower socio-economic background (Bartolomé, 2004; Majumder & Mooij, 2011). When the model of teaching is authoritarian, which is based on hierarchising students as "weak" and "intelligent" and based on a non-dialogic student-teacher relationship, it can lead to the internalisation of a self-deprecating image wherein the students become fearful of any pedagogy which pushes them to think freely (Nambissan, 2010).

It is important to point out here that the criticism is not directed towards individual

teachers but towards a system of education and the attitudes and social relations that underpin and hold it together (Freire, 1970).

The teacher's subjectivity interacts with the material realities of the schooling context which shape the classroom pedagogy. So, an interactional relationship between the structure of schooling (curriculum, resources used, assessment and evaluation) and also the subjectivities of teachers and students, creates a space to challenge, learn and unlearn their own privileges, prejudices and asymmetrical power relations, while at the same time understanding how students make meaning. In the above-mentioned case study, the teacher uses the context that students are familiar with to introduce them to new concepts and ideas. She begins with their immediate surroundings and believes that they already know things and need help in giving them shape.

What can teachers do to develop this perspective?

The answer is dialogue.

Education is an act of co-creating and making knowledge, but it does not mean that 'anything goes'. Teachers give direction and structure to learning (Roberts, 1996). They are interventionists (Freire, 1970). It also does not mean imposing their views on students. The teacher's view is not the only view and asking questions is an essential part of the learning process. They 'relearn' their subject continuously. The liberating teacher welcomes questions and sees them as a sign of critical engagement. Students should critically engage themselves but there are "inductive" moments where the teachers take initiative to redirect, take charge and assist. It has to have a clear structure and purpose (Freire, 1970).

The teachers drive the learning process and encourage students to see that reality can be altered to problematise their current situation (Freire, 1970; Roberts, 1996). The teacher's role includes asking probing questions and providing important information, that will enable them to begin to ask one another questions, to perceive either former perceptions, and timorously place in doubt the opinion they held of reality, replacing it with a more and more critical knowledge.

Through critical pedagogy teachers also realise their important role as defenders and advocates for students. They hold the power to create self-empowering conditions in which students can play an active role in their own learning and have a voice in the process. They also have a responsibility to ensure that all students are able to participate in the dialogical process without feeling forced to speak up. All ideas and views are open to question, either advocated by teachers or students. This perspective helps both teachers and students arrive at a critical view of reality and question their own biases and prejudices (Bartolomé, 2004).

Case Study 2: Inquiry-Based Learning in a Multicultural Context

Imagine an International School in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, which is a very multicultural and diverse city, and famous for attracting a diverse community from around the world. The school is located in the suburbs of the city, and is known for offering high-quality and inclusive education to almost 900 students from varied cultural backgrounds between its primary and secondary programmes. The school is partly government funded and partly privately funded, with a management board that is also involved in key decision making, appointments and the broader concerns of the school.

Here are seven key features of the school.

Curriculum

The international school follows the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme (IB PYP) for its younger students, and the International Baccalaureate Middle Years and Diploma Programme (IB MYP and IB DP) for its secondary school students. It is a challenging curriculum, offering an internationally recognised education and one that has been specifically chosen to meet the needs of the local community. It is a student-centred approach to education, with a clear emphasis on inquiry-based learning and promotion of student agency in and outside the classroom.

Inclusive Education

Being a safe, welcome and inclusive school environment is at the heart of the mission and vision of the International School. Students come from diverse backgrounds, nationalities and socioeconomic backgrounds and the school ethos is based on creating and maintaining an atmosphere of respect, collaboration, openness and compassion, in fact, the 3 C's of Curiosity, Connection and Compassion are the core values of the school. The students are encouraged to engage with their own cultural identities, while at the same time developing intercultural dialogue and cross-cultural understanding between their peers.

Multilingual Education

In this international school, multilingual education and language diversity is celebrated and within the context of the school, some educational programs aim to teach students in their own native languages. Combined with this, there are many opportunities for students to engage in learning additional languages. Throughout the school year, there are specific weeks whereby a certain language is spoken and promoted throughout the school, including staff and students using basic phrases and greetings in the building. This atmosphere inspires all members of the school community to be aware of their own

linguistic identity whilst at the same time, sets the backdrop for more communication, open-mindedness and cross-cultural collaboration in a complex and diverse world.

Staff

The international school regularly has representation at job fairs, and has been able to employ very qualified and dedicated teachers and staff who are very experienced in international education. Staff members come from a wide range of cultural and linguistic backgrounds, bringing a rich collection of teaching resources, approaches and perspectives to the daily life of the school in terms of application, atmosphere and perspectives. In addition to this, staff are expected to engage in ongoing professional development learning during their time at this international school, and many of these workshops and learning programs and certificates are inextricably linked to inclusion and diversity within a school setting.

Community

The international school community is very strong and united, with a strong connection between the school, parents and the wider community, with active involvement and regular communication between all parties. Other local organisations and small businesses are also willing to participate in school related activities. Some of the ways that this happens in practice are through parents actively getting involved in school events and activities, acting as guest speakers on specific topics and local businesses offering to showcase, teach and inspire students to make their first steps in engaging with the wider community outside of school. A core belief of the school that is embedded in learning from kindergarten through to diploma level, is the emphasis on taking action, drawing conclusions and making connections with the world around them, that is not solely limited to theoretical focus in the classrooms.

Co-curricular Activities

The school offers a wide range of co-curricular activities for the students, which complement the academic subjects that are being taught, including chess, taekwondo, drama, music and many others. Students are encouraged to explore and develop their interests and talents, and build relationships with their peers while doing so. The school community is invited to join students when there are exhibitions, competitions or other activities whereby the school's students are being represented, all the while ensuring that school morale and participation is celebrated and valued in a variety of forms and settings.

School Environment

There is a clear anti-bullying policy in the school, which aims to ensure that all its students feel protected, respected and most importantly safe. This is communicated clearly on the school websites, to all students and parents, and actively discussed and visible throughout the school premises. Students feel valued, they know what is expected of them and there is a convivial atmosphere based on respect and inclusion. In addition to this, safeguarding students and child protection is a key aspect of the school's accreditation standards, meaning that all staff need to obtain and submit a police clearance regarding suitability to work in education.

One of the main goals of the international school is to provide an education that is both holistic in nature, but also prepares students for the increasingly complex global world. The aim is to guide students to take ownership of their learning and be active participants in their community, to be open-minded, caring, respectful and knowledgeable, and armed with the skills to be critical thinkers and clear communicators in their interactions and connections with the world.

Inquiry-based Learning

Curious minds and eager to learn, inquiry-based learning aims to place learners in the centre of the learning process, and to encourage students to explore, discover and question. It is a student-centred pedagogical approach that gives students the opportunity to construct knowledge and understanding throughout a learning process (Bonnstetter, 1998). In doing so, they make greater connections between themselves and world, and between ideas and concepts (Wang et al., 2010). To achieve this, students are encouraged to follow their interests and passions, research and investigate problems and draw conclusions based on evidence, all the while interacting and socially collaborating with their peers (Tal et al., 2019). It is a key component of modern educational practice across many international schools and educational settings, and with this in mind, will be explored further in relation to case study 2 above.

Clearly based upon the ideas of constructivism, and indeed the ideas and methods of scientists to construct scientific knowledge, in inquiry-based learning students use a learning model or cycle that first inspires them to question, observe a phenomenon, investigate and test, solve problems and reflect, before eventually reaching a conclusion or discovery (Keselman, 2003). The levels of inquiry in terms of the degree of autonomy afforded to students will be explored shortly, but understanding the role of the teacher is also critical, as is the importance of a positive and open rapport between the teacher and student (Uno, 1990). One of the main proponents of inquiry-based learning, Kath Murdoch states, "As an inquiry teacher, you lead and guide, but you must also be prepared to be led and be guided in turn" (Murdoch, 2015, p. 16). To lead a full inquiry cycle in a school

setting, encourages learners to develop thinking capacities and internalise skills (Öztürk et al., 2022) that allow them to take ownership of their learning, and this is done through an active learning approach (Levy et al., 2009).

MacKenzie (2018) describes four types of inquiry: controlled inquiry, structured inquiry, guided inquiry and free inquiry, in which different levels of inquiry, autonomy and structural approaches are designed for a learning cycle or unit. Within all of these approaches, students are introduced to new resources and materials, ask key questions, investigate, share and make connections.

Controlled inquiry

In this inquiry process, it is the teacher who creates the questions to be investigated by the students, including the resources and learning engagements. While students' input is limited, there is more autonomy and independence in the research and analysis stage and the students are responsible for making and sharing their own findings to the topic questions.

Structured inquiry

This level of inquiry involves the teacher managing the full inquiry process in the classroom, the type of engagement, materials, activities, questions and methods of assessment. Students are engaged in the process but have minimal say into the direction or scope of the inquiry process.

Guided inquiry

In guided inquiry, the emphasis is on student ownership and autonomy as the driver of the inquiry process, as it is assumed skills and knowledge have been internalised to such a degree that students can inquire and investigate accordingly. It stops short of being full free inquiry as the teacher still provides the initial research questions to be used, but the students will choose the resources to find the answers and ultimately decide how to demonstrate and show the findings.

Free inquiry

In free enquiry, there is complete autonomy and student ownership of learning. Students select their own questions to be investigated, find and choose the resources that will help them answer the questions and finally understand, reflect and share the findings of the research. In free inquiry, the role of the teacher is to facilitate the student on the learning journey, to support and ask appropriate questions that will drive their learning. In order for free inquiry to be effective, students should already be familiar with the inquiry cycle and

have built up the self-management and research and analytical skills to be comfortable with this approach to learning. In turn, this will maximise their learning experience and stimulate learning and connections of ideas and concepts, including their own place in the world around them.

In case study 2, inquiry-based learning is intended to encourage students to think and act critically, be engaged learners in the classroom and beyond in their lives, all the while being an inclusive space whereby students have the opportunity to express themselves without the traditional elements of indoctrination. In this student-driven process, with a clear focus on problem-solving skills and research, students explore deeply and make connections with each other in a collaborative manner. Students inquire and discuss, as well as reflect on what they have learned in the process. Student skills increase as they progress in an inquiry-based curriculum, with a more inclusive attitude and respect towards fellow learners, in addition to greater levels of empathy of learners.

In order to implement inquiry-based learning in case study 2, the International School in Amsterdam follows a particular inquiry cycle for all schoolgoers, as part of the IB curriculum. The cycle varies between each phase of learning in terms of language and accessibility but the common core elements of investigation, research and exploration are constant. In the early years, students are encouraged to take initiative and ownership of the learning, build foundational knowledge and build conceptual understanding of transdisciplinary themes and ideas. The inquiry cycle is clearly designed and synchronised throughout the school, and once students reach the end of the DP programme, the skills and abilities to succeed and be prepared for life are very evident in learners. In practice, the students are inherently familiar with collaboration with other students and groups, the principles of investigation, research and reflection, and many other facets of an inquiry-based, student-centred curriculum. The students who graduate from Case Study 2 school are independent and critical thinkers, the result of initiatives that place the student as the focal point of the learning and teaching process, and are ready and able to engage with people in an increasingly globalised, complex and rapidly changing world.

All students should have access to the same inquiry process regardless of their background, abilities or diversity, and the role of the teacher is to support students on this journey, through knowing their students' needs and guiding their students in the most effective way deemed possible. It is worth discussing the benefits of inquiry-based learning, not solely in terms of student satisfaction and inclusivity, but also in terms of the abilities and skills that students develop through its effective application, many of which are lifelong skills that remain vital throughout a student's development in later years. There is substantial literature and studies that highlight students are supported in developing creativity, reflection, analytical and critical thinking skills (Agrusti, 2013; Friedel et al., 2008). When this is achieved, and with the required amount of training and professional development given for staff and teachers (Öztürk, Kaya & Demir, 2022) the inquiry cycle and more broadly, inquiry-based learning, is an important instructional tool to develop critical

thinkers for the 21st century and encompassed in the broader scheme of inclusion of all learners in the learning process and a more equitable society for all.

Case Study 3: Feminist Approaches to Geography Education

Imagine a **geographer** in your mind. What would they look like? What do you think would be their daily routines? Why would you imagine them in this way? Yang (2017) asked Chinese teenagers to draw a geographer and found that students prominently imagined: a Han Chinese male exploring nature with maps and a magnifying glass. However, university geography in China is "a field of knowledge imported from the West" (Qian and Zhang, 2022, p.29). Sun et al. (2020) described the foreign impact on Chinese geography as "inescapable" (p.105). This result reflects several dimensions to re-think inclusion in education: gender, ethnicities, social and cultural backgrounds, language, etc.

Geography as a school subject is widely taught in most countries (Lambert, 2017). However, school geography may include knowledge about different parts of the world, but does not always prepare teachers and students to ask the question on whose knowledge is visible and what knowledge is chosen. The structural disadvantage is that students may learn the knowledge as "given" if teachers assume their teaching is "delivering" what is already there in the curriculum. One way for a teacher to tackle the structural disadvantage is to actively engage in curriculum making. See the Inclusive Curriculum Making chapter for more details. Here we provide how to apply feminist approaches in geography education as an example of a possible pathway.

What can feminist approaches do to make geography education more inclusive through learning and teaching methods?

Firstly, instead of imagining, teachers and students can look up geographers who contributed to their textbooks, such as book authors and geographers mentioned in the textbooks. This is just a beginning as we no longer live in a time where educational materials are just given textbooks. The International Geographical Union and national, regional geographical societies and associations have started to recognise women geographers and geographers from minor ethnicities, and tell their stories with their inspirational work. There is no need to 'reinvent the wheel' if some resources are already there. For example, Hermione (one of our authors) initiated a Mapping Inspirational Women project in 2023, brought together resources on a Google world map, interviewed inspirational women geographers and released them as free podcast series.

Secondly, many secondary geography teachers already knew more geographers than most students, either from their educational backgrounds (e.g., have degrees in geography) or professional networks (e.g. subscribe to subject or discipline related associations, like the International Geographical Union). Teachers must not just see themselves as givers,

but also learners who are curious to know more about geography, then share their findings with other learners (e.g., their colleagues and students), as well as listen to what they have found. The learning and teaching methods became toolboxes one takes along the learning and teaching journey.

Thirdly, as Freire (1970) argued, schools exists in a society, but can also be the place where changes begin. Hence, "imagine geographers" would still be appreciated as a creative method to learn and teach geography for its potential in forward-looking prospects. However, if we consider a feminist approach to re-design and update our methods, teachers and educators could identify what is missing in students' imagination, and share more diverse and inspirational real life stories with students. In addition, the boundaries of geography as a subject can also be crossed. For example, many school geography curricula include the content of plate tectonics and use the map of the ocean floor to prove the theory of continental drift. However, the brilliant geologist and oceanographic cartographer Marie Tharp who mapped the ocean floor was not often credited. Studying geography, as with other school subjects, does not necessarily mean we expect them all to become geographers, or specialists in one subject.

To educate is to practise freedom (hooks, 1994), finding ways to transform the world towards a better place for everyone to feel connected and seen. We assume everyone reading the chapter does not want to encourage racism and sexism in their classrooms, but are we actually dealing with this well when all the examples we could show to students are 'classical examples of scholars'? In the age of multiculturalism, teachers and students are not necessarily only familiar with one country, one culture, and so they are potential agents of change to rethink and personalise the learning and teaching journey they experience. For example, Shetterly (2017) told the stories of black women scientists in her nonfiction book ***Hidden Figures: The American Dream and the Untold Story of the Black Women Who Helped Win the Space Race***. It was later adapted to a film by the same name. It is not possible nor necessary to give all examples in this chapter, but rather we wish to point out that a person can write and add more layers to histories as a feminist approach. Instead of becoming the only authorised narrator, feminist approaches to learning and teaching invites everyone to have the will to become a narrator in their own life, and make connections to what they already know, and what they would like not to be hidden any longer. In other words, it is an approach to embrace diverse voices which ultimately leads us to the understanding that education is for everybody.

By bringing the feminist approach to imagine and enact in learning and teaching methods, we expect new horizontal dialogical relationships could emerge between learners and teachers (the two roles actually could be fluid, mixed, and definitely not fixed). If you do not reproduce racial and gender hierarchy, or any kind of privilege in your classroom, then you have begun to navigate your journey.

More about and more than feminist approaches

In this section, we start by introducing two scholars who could provide insights to diversify learning and teaching methods, then move to possible ways to get inspiration from their work in the classroom and other educational scenarios.

Starting from her first major book *Ain't I a Woman? black women and feminism* (hooks, 1981), Gloria Jean Watkins became known by readers across the world by her pen name, bell hooks, a name intentionally not capitalised. Now one can get to know her more through the bell hooks centre.

In *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (hooks, 1994), the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire who developed the critical pedagogy approach explored above, is mentioned. Paulo Freire and the Vietnamese Buddhist monk Thích Nhất Hạnh are seen by hooks as two "teachers" who have touched her deeply with their work. She summarised their influence on her in the name of "engaged pedagogy" (hooks, 1994, p.13), summarising their similar emphasis on "action and reflection upon the world in order to change it" (hooks, 1994, p.14). This progressive and holistic education, requiring engagement in emancipatory pedagogy is not easy, and hooks recognises that this is even "more demanding than conventional critical or feminist pedagogy" (hooks, 1994, p.15).

Then why would teachers still consider taking this approach for their learning and teaching methods? One of the reasons hooks gives is its emphasis on wellbeing, not just for students but also an active commitment to promote teachers' self-actualisation. Teachers' wellbeing is promoted if they teach in a way that empowers students, which echoes Thích Nhất Hạnh' phrase: teachers as healers. It embeds a Buddhist philosophy that if the one who helps others is unhappy, they cannot help many people. In other words, if teachers do not take up self-responsibility to become self-actualised human beings, how could they help many students to also become self-conscious and go through the process of self-actualisation?

This is similar to a Chinese saying: "To give people fish is not as good as to teach them how to fish". If a teacher intends to teach students to learn in a manner of inclusion, it would not be possible if they did not learn and learn to teach with a sense of inclusion. The journey to liberatory education for inclusion is challenging, everyone would struggle, but the reason to keep it going is that the belief in education should be liberatory for all, should tear down the power of privilege and authority to empower and inform everyone of their right to an education. Instead of reinforcing existing systems which lack inclusion, teachers can learn to embrace their roles as learners, joyfully walking along with their students to make their way through the world.

However, we do not call the chapter learning and learning methods as we are fully aware that the risk of transforming an educational vocabulary into a language of learning is empty (Biesta, 2009; 2017; 2022). Teachers have a unique role by rediscovering teaching. First, teachers can give what students did not ask for, or something students did not even know

they could ask for (Biesta, 2022). Some students may never think about checking their privilege, or think that power in one scenario could be changed into lack of power in another. These are examples of where teachers can have a gesture to say: hey, look at this! What do you think?

Second, teachers can give double truth to help students understand the complicated world. It means that there is not necessarily ONE truth that is universally applicable. For example, people growing up in East Asia are likely to act differently to someone who has never lived outside their town in the middle of England. But if they happen to live in each other's countries for a while for education or jobs, they are more likely to see each other and why they have formulated different habits. However, it is unlikely that everyone would have this personal experience to live in a different country to experience cultural differences and embrace cultural diversity. Teachers could use existing resources such as The Human Library Organisation to challenge stigma and stereotypes. By showing that there is one true knowledge or one way of understanding certain things, teachers show knowledge as well as the frame in which knowledge is recognised and appreciated. Sometimes either teachers or students could be in the frame and not realise it, that is why teaching is important to get someone out of a frame which limits their thinking.

Thirdly, teaching is a practice of giving yourself. Learning, to some extent, is absorbing what is given. If everyone is only absorbing, then what is taught would be something given and fixed. Hence, the gesture of teaching matters. When a student in their life has never got a chance to be exposed to inclusive education, then a teacher does not teach by giving, how could the student learn? This does not mean the teacher would be always giving themself. It is likely that the teacher has to first give themself and help students open up to the meaning of inclusion, which could then be considered engaging. To a certain extent, it would be very rare for a human being to never experience them being powerless and marginalised. If a teacher could be an open book to talk about their transformative experience, then it is likely that this could encourage students to also make connections to their experiences and appreciate that inclusion in the end, means everyone will benefit from it. It changes some people's privilege to power shared by everyone.

In the last part of this section, we would like to introduce a Chinese woman, educational theorist and reform practitioner: Ye Lan and her Life-practice Educology (2020). Although her theory's English translation was published in 2020, her theorisation started in 1983 and is still in process today. In addition, Ye could be considered as a 'wild' feminist (Ye, 2007) for her reading in gender and feminist studies and her own reflexivity on her career with a lens of gender. The reason we put 'wild' is because Ye is not widely recognised as a feminist scholar, but known for her theorisation of education and practice wisdom, and reform she led in Chinese schools. We will not go into much detail about this. The point to make is that we hope our spotlight on Ye can help you open up your mind on what feminist approaches could be.

In 1982, Ye went to Yugoslavia and her mentor there showed her that their education

ideas focus on personal development.By then, the popular idea in China was that education serves society (Ye, 2013). From then, Ye began to challenge the role of genetic factors in human development. In 1986, she published an article in Chinese to propose that an individual as a conscious being has a say in their own development, emphasising that the genetic factors' influence fades as one grows older, but one's agency gets strengthened (as cited in Ye, 2013). As one's capability to choose and change their environment is improving, the final decisive factor is the person themself (Ye, 2013). This is where her life-practice educology started to emerge.

If the purpose of education is to help one take ownership of one's life, then classroom teaching should be considered as an important life experience for both teachers and students. From 1994, Ye started to collaborate with schools. In the classroom, the reform focused on exploring how to re-organise textbooks, how to teach, and centring on how to help students to take an active role. In each class, this reform encourages classmates to organise their class activities, and manage their class by rotating their 'managerial role' to lead. It was not until 15 years later when she had 10 schools as life-practice schools that Ye felt that she had confidence to say there is a difficult but possible route for schools to reform in the existing conditions (Ye, 2013). The fundamental view of Life-Practice Educology is rooted in a Chinese expression of education, which considers teaching the knowledge of nature and society to cultivate a self-consciousness of life (Ye, 2020).

From hooks to Biesta then Ye, there is a clear thread of involving teachers as the change-makers in the classroom. If the teacher does not want to consider engaged pedagogy, rediscover their gift of teaching, or cultivate self-consciousness, all these ideas would just be texts on the shelf. The same for our chapter. The learning and teaching methods shall be explored by teachers first, then in communication with students, and hopefully back to us and professional communities for further discussions. This cycle of reflection and action are what we can do together to make learning and teaching methods exploration part of our life-practice.

Discussion and Concluding Remarks

If we look at all three approaches closely, we will see that all are advocating a type of educational approach or perspective that treats learners as "subjects" instead of objects in the learning process. All are interconnected and wish to develop education as a process of freedom and move away from an authoritarian model of learning and teaching. In case study 2, students in the international school belong to varied socio-economic and linguistic backgrounds and nationalities. Even the teaching staff reflects this diversity and the school tries to be inclusive by adopting a curriculum suited to the needs of the learners and the context through an inquiry-based approach to learning and teaching methods. You may have noted that what Paulo Freire describes as the principles of a liberating education can also be seen being practised in this school. The school aims to promote

student agency and takes account of the students' identity and social location. They reflect critically on their own position in the world and also of their peers. Instead of trying to create a uniform space, the school celebrates the diversity of the students. In this manner, it creates a self-empowering space with the help of teachers and students wherein the knowledge structures and the skills of minorities are also presented as academic material. This school also questions the dominant pedagogic practices and promotes working together by engaging not just with textbooks within the schools but with the outside world as well.

The overlap between critical pedagogy and feminist approaches is evident as bell hooks refers to and takes inspiration from the works of Paulo Freire. In case study 3, we use the example of geography education to highlight the possibilities of using dialogue within a feminist approach. Teachers hold the power to change how learning and teaching take place within the classroom. They can exercise their autonomy and agency by using dialogue. Teachers have access to academic knowledge and give direction and structure to learning and teaching. In this case, teachers can relearn geography along with the students and also share their own knowledge about diverse geographers to enable students to develop a comprehensive understanding of geography. This will also help students look critically at what is geography, what it includes and it excludes. Dialogue which flows both ways makes it possible to evolve this subject, make connections with other subjects and also with other cultures and include what might be missing from the official curriculum of geography in the school.

Inquiry-based learning can be universally applied, indeed one of the main tenets of this approach is for the teacher to create a safe and supportive learning environment, whereby students feel comfortable to express themselves openly in groups, to discuss and explore, all the while with the support of a knowledgeable teacher(s). In case study 1, in an inquiry-based learning approach, the teacher, may use resources and materials that all students can relate to and understand. At the start of a unit or inquiry cycle, the teacher, despite her privileged position, can engage the students with a provocation or learning engagement that can motivate and interest the students in a meaningful way, that will serve to encourage the students to investigate, question, research, learn and share. It is not a process that would happen instantaneously, but allowing the students to ask questions and investigate can give them a sense of ownership of their learning. With inquiry-based learning, and even with a young class of students from a disadvantaged background, a teacher who is open to sharing and empathetic, can radically aid the students to be more critical thinkers over time. It is important to note that the students may need help with some basic skills to make these investigations and inquiries happen, but with an effective school policy and curriculum, learning and teaching will become substantially more effective. This is the very same point that is relevant to case study 3 and the feminist approaches that we believe are instrumental in creating learning environments for students that are not only inclusive and stimulating for the students, but also highlight the importance of the teachers being aware

of their own role in the learning and teaching process, being willing to lead, as well as being guided by the students (Murdoch, 2015, p 16).

When we bring feminist approaches to look at case study one, one of the connections is that the teacher does not want to remain in the status quo, but rather wants to take action. She intentionally finds alternatives to engage children in her classroom from their lives, and open up pupils' minds about their potential in education. By doing so, her agentic move as an individual challenges the whole 'culture of silence'. However, it will not be possible if pupils do not respond to her gestures in dialogues. In other words, learning and teaching emerge in dialogues between teachers and students. There is no doubt that teachers need to prepare teaching by themselves, students need time to learn by themselves. Nevertheless, the difference between self-taught and our scenario (learning and teaching methods) is that even when teachers and students are by themselves, they have each other in mind. They know they will contribute their part, take the ownership of learning and teaching, and trust the other will also do their part. Teachers know that they can ask students for their thoughts, and students can ask teachers more questions. The thread between feminist approaches and critical pedagogy is that they both see the human beings behind their role as teachers and students. By bringing their subjectivity into educational dialogues, privilege could be transformed as 'catalyst' for empowerment.

By using a feminist lens to investigate case study two, we can see that inquiry-based learning again highlights teacher-student collaboration. It may start as teachers being more curious and guiding students to inquire, but as students grow their curiosity and get more familiar with inquiry-based learning, teachers can take a back seat. We are aware that the international school may not fit all students and teachers. Quite a few features look like a luxury only accessible for those who can afford tuition fees as well as living expenses in a megacity. Many schools may sit in between case study one (have NGO teachers to support) and case study two (equipped with dedicated teachers). That is why feminist approaches are helpful to interpret case study two and inquiry-based learning in a different way. Rather than dreaming of your school changing into the Amsterdam one overnight, consider tiny changes that you as a teacher can make in your classroom. It is possible to turn two to three minutes of your lecture into **genius minutes** for students to imagine what they would like to learn in the subject you teach, or encourage them to just search something they would like to know and share with their classmates and you next time. For example, start your class with a three-minute 'ignite talk' by one student sharing what they are interested in regarding the subject. The links between feminist approaches and inquiry-based learning is to recognise that an individual teacher has been given the gift to teach their students, not by their words, but their gesture to encourage students.

For example, a geography teacher can say: "Hey, I am so happy that you are also so interested in delicious food. So am I. Would you like to share some of your favourite dishes with me?" After students share theirs, a teacher can also share. Then the teacher can relate this to geography, asking if students know where these dishes are originally from, and how

they travelled to our places. If they know, they are already knowledgeable to share. If not, the teacher can encourage students to search and share next time. In return, it would be better if teachers also share some of their knowledge.

Overall, we hope our three examples and their connections to each other can spark your ideas on updating learning and teaching methods in your scenario. There are no fixed routes for you to learn and teach, and it is helpful to know what has been explored, then you can start to create your own ideas. It is not easy to have no step-by-step guide, however, it is also an opportunity to find what suits you the best.

The message we hope that you can take away from our chapter is this: It is important for us to acknowledge that the institutional setting and the structure of the school play an important role in shaping the learning and teaching practices However, the teacher's subjectivity also holds the possibility of transforming learning and teaching and working together with students to help overcome obstacles that lie within the schools and outside. This allows teachers to work towards a more inclusive approach to education.

Local contexts

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=432#h5p-27

Closing questions to discuss or tasks

Choose three to four questions to discuss.

1. Reflecting on the Case Studies provided:

   ◦ How do the teaching strategies in the case studies demonstrate the principles of inclusive education?
   ◦ Which aspects of the case studies do you find most applicable to your future teaching practice? Why?

2. Personal Application:

- Reflect on a recent learning experience where you felt included or excluded. How did the teaching methods contribute to this feeling?
- Identify one area in your teaching where you can apply the principles of inquiry-based learning, critical pedagogy, or feminist approaches. What specific actions will you take to enhance inclusivity and student engagement?

3. Strategies for Teachers:

- What are some practical ways teachers can provide meaningful choices to students in their daily routines to foster a sense of autonomy and inclusion?
- Discuss how you can use dialogical methods to address and incorporate students' diverse backgrounds and perspectives in your teaching.

4. Overcoming Barriers:

- Think about potential barriers to promoting inclusive education in your context. What strategies can you use to address these barriers?
- How can teachers manage and respond to students' negative emotions effectively to support their self-determination and engagement?

5. Evaluating Impact:

- How do you think fostering inclusive education impacts long-term student outcomes, such as their career choices and personal development?
- Discuss how the principles of critical pedagogy, feminist approaches, and inquiry-based learning can be applied beyond the classroom to foster lifelong learning and social justice.

Literature

Agrusti, Gabriella (2013). Inquiry-based learning in Science Education. Why e-learning can make a difference. Journal of e-Learning and Knowledge Society, 9(2).

Bartolomé, Lilia I. (2004). Critical pedagogy and teacher education: Radicalizing prospective teachers. Teacher Education Quarterly, 31(1), 97-122.

Bernstein, Basil. (2004). Social class and pedagogic practice. In The RoutledgeFalmer Reader in Sociology of Education, 196-217

Biesta, Gert. (2009). Good education in an age of measurement: On the need to reconnect with the question of purpose in education. Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability, 21, 33-46.

Biesta, Gert. (2017). The Rediscovery of Teaching. New York and London: Routledge.

Biesta, Gert. (2022). World-Centred Education: A View for the Present. New York and London: Routledge.

Bonnstetter, Ronald. (1998). Inquiry: Learning from the Past with an Eye on the Future. Electron. J. Sci. Edu. 3(1).

Freire, Paulo. (1970). Pedagogy of the Oppressed.

Friedel, Curtis; Irani,Tracy; Rudd, Rick; Gallo, Maria; Eckhardt, Erin, & Ricketts, John (2008). Overtly teaching critical thinking and inquiry-based learning: A comparison of two undergraduate biotechnology classes. Journal of Agricultural Education, 49(1), 72-84.

Giroux, Henry A. (2018). Teachers as transformative intellectuals. In Thinking about Schools (pp. 183-189). Routledge.

Hoadley, Ursula, & Muller, Johan. (2010). Codes, Pedagogy and Knowledge: Advances in Bernsteinian Sociology of Education. In The Routledge International Handbook of the Sociology of Education. Routledge.

Hooks, Bell. (1981). AIN'T I A WOMAN? Black women and feminism. Boston: South End Press.

Hooks, Bell. (1994). Teaching to Transgress: Education as the practice of freedom. New York and London: Routledge.

Keselman, Alla. (2003). Supporting inquiry learning by promoting normative understanding of multivariable causality. Journal of Research in Science Teaching, 40(9), 898-921.

Lambert, David. (2017). Geography Education (K-12). Oxford Bibliographies. Retrieved from: https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10042100/1/Lambert_Geography%20Education.pdf.

Levy, Philippa, Aiyegbayo, Ola, & Little, Sabine (2009). Designing for inquiry-based learning with the Learning Activity Management System. Journal of Computer Assisted Learning, 25(3), 238-251.

MacKenzie, Trevor. (2018). Inquiry Mindset: Nurturing the Dreams, Wonders & Curiosity of Our Youngest Learners. Irvine, CA: EdTechTeam Press.

Majumdar, Manabi, & Mooij, Jos E. (2011). Education and Inequality in India: A Classroom View (Vol. 46). Routledge.

Murdoch, Kath. (2015). The Power of Inquiry. Seastar Education.

Nambissan, Geetha B. (2010). Exclusion and Discrimination in Schools: Experiences of Dalit Children. In Thorat, S., & Neuman, K. S. (Eds.), Blocked by Caste: Economic Discrimination in Modern India (pp. 253-286). Oxford University Press.

Öztürk, Bilge; Kaya, Metin & Demir, Mustafa (2022). Does inquiry-based learning model improve learning outcomes? A second-order meta-analysis. Journal of Pedagogical Research, 6(4), 201-216.https://doi.org/10.33902/JPR.202217481

Roberts, Peter. (1996). Structure, Direction and Rigour in Liberating Education. Oxford Review of Education, 22(3), 295-316.

Qian, Junxi, & Zhang, Han. (2022). University Geography in China: History, opportunities,

and challenges. Trans Inst Br Geogr, 47, 28–33. Available from: https://doi.org/10.1111/tran.12435.

Shetterly, Margot Lee (2017). Hidden Figures: The American Dream and the Untold Story of the Black Women Who Helped Win the Space Race. Harper Collins Publishers

Sun, Jun; Wu, Youde; Pan, Yujun, & Lei, Xiangyang. (2020). Foreign impact on geography in China through translation over the past 100 years. Area, 52, 105–115. https://doi.org/10.1111/area.12534.

Tal, Tali, Levin-Peled, Rachel, & Levy, Keren Sarah. (2019). Teacher views on inquiry-based learning: The contribution of diverse experiences in the outdoor environment. Innovation and Education, 1(1), 1-17.

Uno, Gordon E. (1990). Inquiry in the classroom. BioScience, 40(11), 841-843.

Wang, Feng; Kinzie, Mable; McGuire, Patrick, & Pan, Edward (2010). Applying technology to inquiry-based learning in early childhood education. Early Childhood Education Journal, 37, 381-389.

Yang, Daihu. (2017). Junior High School Chinese Students' Images of the Geographer: A Study of Their Drawings. International Research in Geographical and Environmental Education, 27(4), 357–73. https://doi.org/10.1080/10382046.2017.1389045.

Ye, Lan. (2007). Shenger weinv, ruhe chengren chengye [Born as a woman, how to achieve as a human being in the career]. Retrieved from: https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/cLHUEIB3qDc-Xjpio9NqXg.

Ye, Lan. (2013). Goujian shengming-shijian jiaoyu xuepai [Constructing Life-Practice School of Educology]. Retrieved from: http://www.dedu.ecnu.edu.cn/38/37/c6402a79927/page.htm.

Ye, Lan. (2020). Life-Practice Educology: A Contemporary Chinese Theory of Education. Amsterdam: Brill.

About the authors

Hermione Xin Miao

Dr Hermione Xin Miao was born at a rural village in China, raised by her maternal grandparents since she was eight. She stayed in her hometown for schooling while her parents migrated to a big city to make a living. She was one of millions "left-behind children" who experienced exclusion in education. Hermione is a first-generation university student in her family. She has developed research interests in curriculum making, teacher agency, climate change, inclusive education, and intersectional feminism. She has degrees in both geography and education, and a PhD degree from University of Stirling (2024). Hermione has been involved in creative and participatory methods in both research and community building, in particular early career researchers'

network communities. Hermione also has started an Mapping Inspirational Women initiative from 2023 as open educational resources to re-tell women's contribution to the world.

Akshita Rawat

Akshita Rawat is a PhD researcher at the University of Vienna. Her research focuses on social inequality and education in India. Her research interests include teaching-learning practices in classrooms, sociology of education and qualitative research methods. Her research aims to inform policies and practices that promote inclusivity and equity in education.

Brian Lynam

Brian Lynam was born and raised in Ireland and has experience of working in international education, specifically in the PYP International Baccalaureate program and International School Teacher training. He is passionate about inquiry based learning, inclusive education, UDL and the role of technology within education.

DIFFERENTIATION

Silvia Dell'Anna; Jessica Lament; Frank J. Müller; and Yasemin Acar Ciftci

🖳 *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://book.all-means-all.education/ ama-2025-en/?p=363#oembed-1*

Example Case

Sarah, a novice teacher, is confronted with a very heterogeneous class: some pupils have already fully mastered much of the proposed content, while others are struggling. She realizes that the "one size fits all" formula is not only counterproductive, as it demotivates some and leaves others behind, but also ineffective.

She turns to a colleague for advice and receives some suggestions on how to approach differentiated instruction. Instead of proposing a series of adaptations, which, while meeting the needs of some, tend to stigmatize, she decides to revolutionize classroom teaching by relying on the principles of differentiation. Her gaze quickly turns to the potential and uniqueness of each pupil's learning profile rather than their deficits. Instead of offering a single approach with minor adjustments, she introduces a wide variety of options in her lessons: hands-on, visual activities like building models, videos, and artistic expression through drawing and coloring. Throughout the activities, she moves between the groups, offering personalized guidance and feedback. Sarah understands that students do not all learn the same way, so she allows different ways to express their understanding: some students write reports, others give verbal presentations, and some create posters or models.

Not only are the tools available multiplied, but also the opportunities for pupils to interact with the content and demonstrate what they are learning. More than anything, the teacher notices the excitement in the eyes of the pupils, who are motivated and more self-confident, less concerned about measuring up or comparing themselves with their peers. By the end of

the lesson, every student has engaged with the material in a meaningful way that suited their strengths and interests. The class finally begins to appear as a learning community. Initially, the change in perspective requires a planning effort on the part of the teacher, but this is amply rewarded.

Initial questions

In this chapter you will find the answers to the following questions:

1. What is differentiation, and how does it support all learners?
2. Why is differentiation crucial for inclusive education?
3. How can teachers implement differentiated goals to address diverse needs?
4. What strategies help teachers adapt content, process, and product for all learners?

Introduction to Topic

Differentiation is a pedagogical approach to instruction that embraces the various needs of students, increases meaningful learning, and encourages motivation. It is an important practice for teachers at every level and subject area to develop consistently, because it fosters a positive learning environment, as well as, students' self-determination and engagement in the learning process.

The term "differentiation" is frequently mentioned in international pedagogical literature, although it does not always convey the same meaning (Graham et al., 2020; Lindner & Schwab, 2020). It is often, erroneously, associated with individualisation strategies for students with disabilities and other special educational needs or to curriculum differentiation for gifted and talented students. With differentiation we, instead, refer to all classroom teaching strategies planned, taking into account the characteristics, abilities, interests, talents, experiences and needs of all students, and based on the main principles of inclusive education: respecting and valuing diversity, encouraging participation, and fostering active and meaningful learning of all students (UNESCO-IBE, 2021).

The most recognised author in the field of differentiation is Carol Ann Tomlinson, a former teacher who has developed not only a conceptual framework but also an operational model, showing its applications in all school levels, from preschool to upper secondary school, and in multiple subject areas, as well as in classroom management (e.g. Tomlinson, 2001, 2014; Tomlinson & Cunningham Eidson, 2003; Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2010). Other authors dealing with differentiation tend to refer to Tomlinson's model to develop guidelines for teaching planning (e.g., Gregory & Chapman, 2013; Renzulli, 2015).

Tomlinson (2017) presents differentiation as a philosophy of instructional design based on two main principles: the recognition of all students' differences and, therefore, the importance of tailoring learning for all; the acknowledgement of commonalities within the class group, needed to create a community of learning. According to Tomlinson's model, teachers can differentiate through content, process, product, and assessment.

This approach aims to overcome both the traditional model "one size fits all" and the "micro-differentiation" strategies, which design instruction for a hypothetical average student and provide support and adjustments only for students experiencing difficulties (Tomlinson, 2001, 2017).

The application of this 'philosophy' of instruction requires a set of knowledge, awareness and self-reflection on the side of teachers. Tomlinson (2017) affirms that differentiation needs to be 'proactive' (planned in detail in advance), 'qualitative' (requiring a transformation of the assignment and not only its mastery levels) and 'multiple' (in terms of content, process and product).

Approaching this teaching model means transforming one's set of beliefs about learning and teaching. Planning differentiated instruction for a specific class group requires multiple techniques of pre-assessment, ongoing monitoring and summative assessment. Moreover, to ensure full implementation, teachers need to consider contextual constraints and available resources. First of all, teachers need to collect information on their students, in order to define individual profiles for each and to acquire a deep knowledge of the relational dynamics of that specific class. These documents provide for each student a detailed description of their characteristics and learning profile, information which are needed to plan the most appropriate teaching strategies and to offer relevant learning contents.

Based on these profiles, teachers exercise their instructional strategies to meet all needs, experiment with them and, at the end, verify their effectiveness to constantly improve the quality of their instructional proposal.

Figure 1 – The cycle of differentiation (inspired by Chapman & King, 2013)
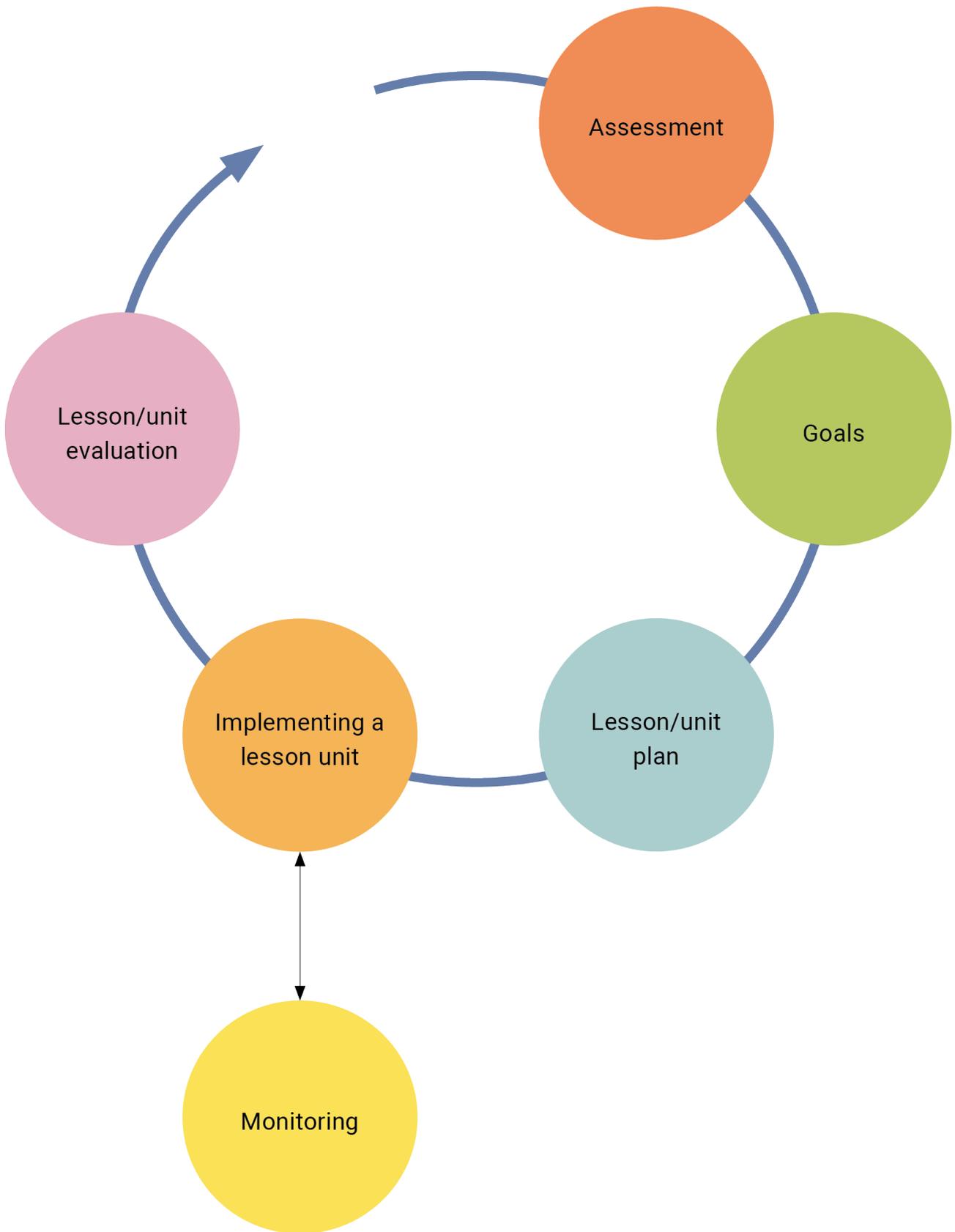
inspired by Chapman & King, 2013

The planning cycle in differentiation therefore involves a self-reflective effort on the part

of the teacher who, aware and informed of the heterogeneity of their class (interests, skills, expectations, preferences), takes this into account at every stage (planning, implementation, evaluation), and considers this data as an opportunity for monitoring and self-improvement, in order to make the proposals increasingly effective and personalised.

Why is differentiation important?

Differentiation is a perfect example of an approach that puts the principles of inclusive education into practice. This is true for two main reasons. On the one hand, it considers the globality of each student's learning profile, encompassing not only curricular competencies but also social-emotional skills, life skills, motivation and interests. This way it ensures full accessibility of educational activities, it responds to individual needs and supports the overall development of the individual. On the other hand, differentiation tries to balance individual needs with the effort to build and maintain unity in the learning community represented by the class group or school context. Therefore, attention is also paid to social participation and the quality of relationships in the classroom(Linder et al, 2019).

Is differentiation always inclusive?

An educational proposal tailored for a specific class group, which proves to be effective and inclusive, may not be successful for another class. At the same time, some teaching proposals that may, apparently, fall under the concept of differentiation, such as ability grouping, are not necessarily consistent with the principles of inclusion and may lead in opposite directions to those initially pursued.

Planning "with all students in mind" (UNESCO-IBE, 2021, p. 17) might not be sufficient to plan inclusive teaching strategies, even when the teacher has tried to take into consideration all the information at their disposal about the students. So, every time you try to apply the principles of differentiation to your teaching proposal, question their ability to ensure not only learning but also participation and well-being for all students. It is a delicate balance between the needs of each individual student and that of the whole class, where students share meaningful learning experiences and build a community with a sense of belonging (Norwich, 1994).

How is differentiation the same or different from accommodations or modifications?

Any tailoring that is made to the general education curriculum is considered differentiation. Both adaptations and modifications fit under the umbrella term differentiation. When a

student's needs go beyond differentiation to the general curriculum, then that student, or group of students, requires specific changes to how the learning happens. Those students have moved into a more targeted kind of differentiation called accommodations (Education Service Center, 2020).

If general differentiation and specific accommodations to the learning environment do not allow the student to reach their full potential, then that student may need targeted modifications that actually alter what the student is learning. Whether it is changing the learning targets to reduce the amount of content that the student needs to know at the end of the year or teaching the student at a lower grade level, if the goals are different than the curriculum, that is considered a modification (McGlynn & Kelly, 2019).

As seen in Figure 2, differentiation, accommodations, and modifications have their place in supporting student learning. They fit together to provide the appropriate amount of support to create optimal student learning.

Figure 2 – Differentiation versus accommodations or modifications

General Education Curriculum
(Differentiated Instruction)

Accommodations
(Student Specific)

Modification
(IEP Determination)
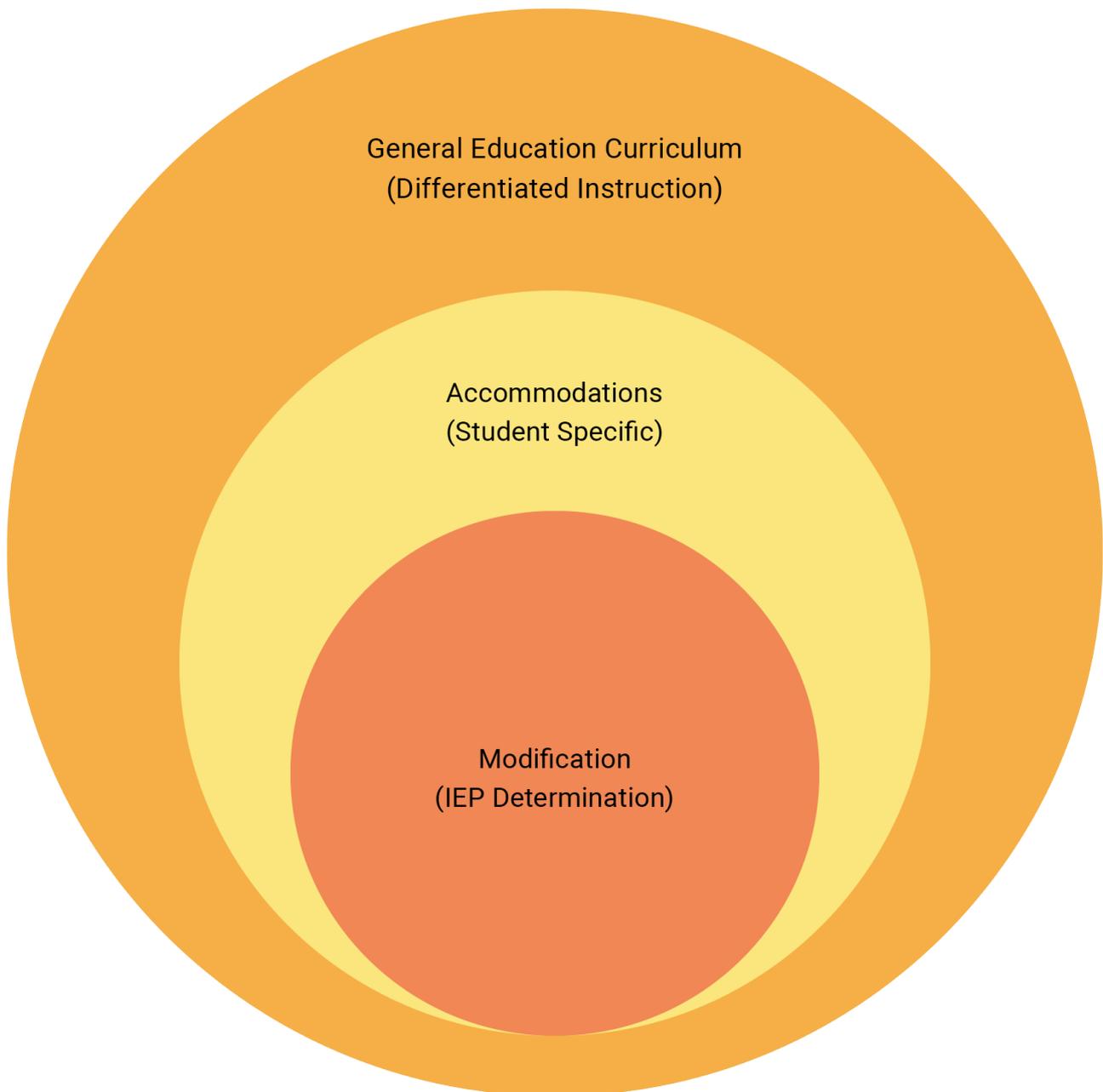
Region 10 Education Service Center (2020)

When we consider how specific accommodations and modifications fit within differentiation, it becomes clear that differentiation is essential for all students. Every learner has unique strengths and areas of potential that can be built upon, and differentiation provides the opportunity to nurture these. Students with disabilities require tailored approaches, just as neurotypical students or those working at grade level do. Similarly, all students possess areas of 'giftedness'—whether in academics, creativity, social skills, or other domains—and these talents can flourish with differentiated learning opportunities (Seitz Pfahl, 2013). By embracing this inclusive perspective, differentiation benefits everyone, ensuring each student is challenged, supported, and engaged in meaningful ways.

How can teachers provide differentiated learning opportunities?

How can teachers approach differentiation for the first time?

Tomlinson (1999, 2001) affirms that all teachers differentiate, with different modalities and gradations. Some teachers differentiate only some aspects but do it for all students (e.g., learning contents, learning materials), others differentiate only for some students.

A good way to approach differentiation for the first time could be to ask yourself what you are already differentiating (content, processes, product) and for whom (for the whole class, some students or only for one student), and then to define what are your goals in this matter. What would you really like to improve in your teaching strategies to make them more inclusive? What are the aspects that do you perceive as most important to your class group right now? Define a short list of goals for planning according to differentiation model, such as establishing new routines in classroom management, organising learning groups or assigning learning materials. When you are clear about what you would like to accomplish, you start thinking about what information you need about your students and your classroom.

How can teachers use assessment for differentiated instruction?

According to the differentiation approach, assessment is a key element in instructional design. To plan effectively differentiated instruction, many authors suggest relying on multiple forms of assessment (Tomlinson et al., 2009; Chapman & King, 2013). Specifically, we can distinguish three main phases of assessment:

- pre-assessment or diagnostic assessment: to know students, define initial competences and needs and plan goals;
- on-going monitoring and formative assessment: to monitor students' progresses and well-being, and to provide constant feedback;
- final (summative and/or formative) assessment: to inform students about their outcomes and to provide useful feedback on the whole unit learning experience.

Moreover, this information constitutes a significant indicator of teaching effectiveness, as they allow teachers to reflect on the appropriateness of the learning objectives and teaching strategies chosen, as well as enabling an update of the students' profile and more careful and targeted future planning.

What data are teachers going to collect for initial multidimensional assessment?

To consider the globality of each student's learning experience and needs, teachers need information not only on academic but also social-emotional and adaptive skills, as well as motivation and interests. Tomlinson (1999, 2001, 2014) underlines, in particular, three aspects: readiness, interests and learning preferences. Based on the principles of inclusive education, we believe that the list could be more extensive and articulate (see Table 1).

Table 1 – Collecting information on your students

Academic readiness	Knowledge (know and understand)
	Skills (do)
Socio-emotional competencies	Self-awareness
	Self-management/Self-regulation
	Social awareness
	Relationship skills
	Responsible decision-making
Social relationships in the class	Friendships
	Collaboration
	Marginalisation / Bullying
Attitudes towards…	School / Learning (motivation)
	(Specific) subjects
	Diversity
Learning profile	Preferences about learning materials (e.g., reading, listening, watching a video)
	… about the learning environment (e.g., outdoor learning, silence/music, light, etc.)
	… about types of activities (e.g., verbal/linguistic, visual/spatial, bodily/ kinaesthetic, musical/rhythmic, logical/mathematical)
	… about preferred product (e.g., oral presentation, written task)
	… about relations during class activities (individual/pair/group)
Interests	Interests in curriculum areas
	… related to out-of-school activities (e.g., sports, music and other free-time activities)
Basic skills	E.g., using scissors, going to the bathroom, …
Others	Critical thinking
	Self-determination
	Ambitions (e.g., further education and training, working career)

Not all of this information is essential for all students and all situations. Each teacher decides what is relevant for that class group, for that specific context, for that specific subject. Therefore, the list could be even longer or include only a couple of elements.

Teachers approaching differentiation for the first time may choose to select a few items and, as time progresses and the experience accumulates, continue to enrich the individual student records and class group descriptions.

As differentiation tries to balance individual needs with the effort to build and maintain unity in the learning community represented by the class group or school context, attention is paid to individual aspects but also to social participation and the quality of relationships in the classroom. For example, in a poorly cohesive class a teacher might give priority to social-relational aspects and attitudes, in another where there are many students who show little interest and behavioural problems, to motivation and hobbies, in another where there are multiple levels of readiness to analyse curricular knowledge and skills.

This way, on a case-by-case basis, teachers ensure full accessibility of educational activities, respond to individual needs and support the overall development of the individual.

How to collect data for initial multidimensional assessment?

Teachers have a variety of tools at their disposal to obtain this information, such as individual interviews, questionnaires or observation, and can select the most appropriate ones according to the situation and the type of information needed. For example, when working with small children, teachers may opt for observation, while when working with adolescents could prefer questionnaires. They may also decide for a certain type of instrument according to its ease of administration (e.g., time and resources constraints). Much therefore depends on the teacher's decision, on their considerations and on their creativity. Teachers can take inspiration from tools proposed in the literature or develop their own. The same applies to the choice between instruments that are more quantitative (e.g., standardised tests) or qualitative (naturalistic observation, class discussion). To ensure reliability of information, however, we suggest combining several different instruments.

Furthermore, for qualitative instruments or for instruments aimed at understanding classroom dynamics, we suggest a comparison with colleagues, who might offer a different perspective (e.g., observation, Moreno's sociodrama).

Table 2 – Instruments for gathering information on your students

Instrument	Examples
Standardised test	Entrance test in maths, science, English, …
Class/group activities	Brainstorming on initial competencies (e.g., defining a concept and making concrete examples), know/want-to-know/learned, …
Questionnaire	Self-evaluation of initial competencies questionnaire, questionnaire on attitudes, questionnaire on wellbeing, …
Playful activities	Ice breakers games, …
Observation	Structured observation with a grid during individual or group activities, recording critical incidents, …
Sociogram	Sociograms to identify popular and isolated students, clusters and/or group dynamics.
Self-representation	Glyphs, drawings about learning preferences or learning environment, ….
One-to-one meetings with the students	E.g., to discuss individual challenges and competencies, ….
Group discussion	E.g., about relationships and wellbeing in the classroom, about interests, …
…	…

Let's take an example. At the beginning of a new school year and cycle, such as the first year of middle school, a teacher may need to assess his or her students' study strategies, self-regulation and collaboration skills, and motivation. The quickest and simplest way might be to administer a brief self-assessment questionnaire and, afterwards, organise a short class discussion on the students' answers. This could be a good opportunity to identify possible strategies to support each student's learning and motivation.

EXAMPLE 1 – Self-evaluation questionnaire

	1 (rarely)	2 (sometimes)	3 (often)	4 (always)
I can ask for help if I am having difficulty				
I can handle stress and frustrations at school				
I can be self-motivated when I learn				
I can work in groups and collaborate with my peers				
I can organise myself effectively when studying alone (e.g., timing, strategies)				
I listen to and respect opinions different from my own				

Example inspired by Tomlinson, C.A., & Imbeau, M.B. (2010). Leading and managing a differentiated classroom. Association Supervision for Curriculum Development.

Let us take another example. Suppose that a teacher wants to organise group activities but, the first time, encounters difficulties in managing the class group. She/he could set up a semi-structured observation grid to monitor each student's difficulties and the relational dynamics in the classroom during group activities. She/he could also ask a colleague to apply the same instrument during his/her group activities with the same class, to understand whether the problem concerns specific students, who need more support or specific adaptations, or if the challenges are due to unsuitable instruction strategies or materials. This would represent an opportunity to enhance collaboration between teachers, to share perspectives on a group class or on specific students, and to exchange ideas on classroom management and learning material design.

EXAMPLE 2 – Semi-structured observation grid (author-created example

Group activity STUDENT: _____					
	1 (rarely)	**2 (sometimes)**	**3 (often)**	**4 (always)**	**Notes**
Communication/Interaction					
Collaboration					
Focus on task					
Self-regulation					
Autonomy					
Time management					
Activity engagement					
…					

How can teachers make use of differentiated goals?

Often national or local curricula provide an orientation framework, which is then adapted to the respective context in school-internal curricula. The selection of appropriate targets should be based on the current competencies and interests of the students and the requirements of the national/local curriculum and the school's internal curriculum. The conditions of learning recorded in the assessment play an important role in ensuring that learners are not over- or under-challenged. When students with completely different learning needs learn together, it is important to keep in mind that some of the goals might be different. At the same time, it is important to realise that the goals of students with very different starting points do not have to be different. As we will show in the section on teaching and learning strategies, changing framework conditions (support systems, time, space) can also contribute to achieving essentially the same goals.

How do the goals relate to the curriculum and class objectives?

At the same time, it is important to keep in mind that some learners will not be able to achieve certain goals regardless of the support they receive. These learners will especially benefit from differentiated learning goals. Even with differentiated goals it is important to offer everything to all learners (materials of all levels) to prevent limiting them and to support them to reach their highest potential. Also, learners might jump ahead or take more time to reach essential goals.

How can goals relate to social skills?

In some countries, social, personal and action competences have been included in the curricula alongside subject-related competences (e.g., Germany, Ireland).

For inclusive education central goals, that are not subject related is to ensure children are:

- able to relate to others,
- can communicate and work together with others,
- can express their needs and
- can ask for support to reach their goals as tools to develop autonomy.

These social skills may need differentiated goals for some learners as well. The individual goals might be related to the different dimensions of social skills (Figure 3).

Figure 3 – The empirical-adapted "Dimensional Model of Social Skills – DMSS".

- Questions
- Common exchange
- Communication on eye level
- Talk to each other
- Plan & moderate conversations
- Listening

- Provide assistance
- Seek assistance
- Accept assistance

- Positive interaction
- Responsibility
- Solidarity

- Group atmosphere
- Establishing contact
- Group cohesion
- Motivation
- Respectful interaction
- Appreciation
- Friendships

Assistance & Support

Team spirit

Communication

Relationship Shaping

Cooperation

Social Skills

Conflict Ability

Empathy

Feedback

- Identify & solve conflicts
- Assertiveness
- Compromise ability

- Personal feelings
- Sensitivity
- Adoption of perspectives

Based on Struck and Franz (2020)

The dimensions of social skills outlined in Figure 3 provide a structured framework for understanding and addressing these goals within inclusive education. For example, the ability to relate to others connects directly to the "Relationship Shaping" dimension, which includes elements like group cohesion, motivation, and respectful interaction. Effective communication and collaboration align with the "Communication" dimension, emphasizing skills such as common exchange, planning and moderating conversations, and listening. Expressing needs is supported by the "Empathy" and "Feedback" dimensions, focusing on personal feelings, sensitivity, and adopting perspectives. Finally, the ability to ask for support is encompassed within the "Cooperation" dimension, with components like providing, seeking, and accepting assistance. Differentiated goals for individual learners

can draw on these dimensions to create tailored pathways for developing autonomy and fostering inclusive environments.

How can teachers include students' perspectives (needs and interests) into the selection of goals?

Teachers can use 1:1 interviews, group feedback, and mentoring models to understand students' perspectives. It is essential to be mindful of power dynamics within the group and between students and teachers, creating structures that enable all students to voice their thoughts freely—including the opportunity to question and critique teaching practices—without fear of negative consequences.

For students who do not communicate verbally, augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) tools such as visual aids, communication boards, or speech-generating devices can enable expression. Observational methods are equally crucial—teachers can analyse gestures, facial expressions, and engagement during activities to understand preferences and needs.

Collaborating closely with parents and caregivers is essential, as they offer valuable insights into the child's communication style, interests, and behaviors across different contexts. Regular exchanges of information through meetings, communication logs, or informal check-ins help build a comprehensive understanding of the student's needs and preferences, ensuring consistency between home and school environments.

Incorporating multisensory activities and tools like eye-tracking technology can further reveal students' choices and interests, even in the absence of spoken language. Teachers can also collaborate with parents and caregivers to leverage shared knowledge about the child's communication style and preferences. Frameworks like the SCERTS model (Social Communication/Emotional Regulation/Transactional Support) and the Mosaic Approach provide structured ways to include diverse forms of communication, helping teachers interpret nonverbal cues and create opportunities for students to express themselves. By combining these strategies, teachers can meaningfully include all students' voices in goal-setting and ensure their needs and interests are prioritised.

By adopting these strategies, teachers can create learning environments that are responsive to individual student needs and promote active participation in setting learning goals. This student-centered approach is reflected not only in daily classroom practices but also in broader educational models.

One example from progressive secondary schools in Germany, such as Stadtteilschule Winterhude, illustrates how structural changes can support student agency. In these schools, structured learning modules are offered for each subject in dedicated rooms (e.g., one room for Math, one for German, and one for English), allowing students to choose daily which room to attend and which subject or topic to focus on. Students set their own

daily learning goals based on their interests and needs, which they document in personal logbooks. This practice encourages self-reflection and helps track progress over time.

To ensure balanced learning and prevent any subject from being overlooked, students participate in bi-weekly evaluation talks with teachers. These reflective conversations provide an opportunity to review progress, discuss challenges, and adjust goals as needed. Assessments are tied to individual modules and can be taken multiple times, emphasising the documentation of learning and understanding rather than serving as a judgment of abilities. This approach fosters a growth mindset, where learning is seen as an ongoing process rather than a one-time performance.

How can we balance the curriculum and the needs and interests of the students?

Achieving a balance between the structured curriculum and the diverse needs and interests of students is a critical aspect of differentiated instruction. This balance can be attained by adopting a flexible approach to curriculum delivery, where educators integrate student interests into the framework of the existing curriculum. Teachers can start by identifying core learning objectives and then explore creative ways to connect these objectives with students' interests and experiences. For instance, a lesson in history could be linked to contemporary issues that resonate with students, making the subject more relevant and engaging. Additionally, incorporating a variety of instructional strategies, such as project-based learning or inquiry-based approaches, can cater to different learning styles while adhering to the curriculum standards. It is also vital to create a classroom environment that values student voice, encouraging them to express their interests and learning preferences. This ongoing dialogue helps educators to continually adapt and refine their teaching methods to suit the evolving interests of their students. Through such practices, educators can not only ensure curriculum fidelity but also create an inclusive and stimulating learning environment that motivates all students to engage deeply with their education (Schiefele, 1991).

Can the computer select the goals?

In the realm of differentiated instruction, the role of technology, particularly computers, in goal setting is a nuanced topic. While computers offer immense potential in analysing student data, providing personalised learning paths, and even suggesting learning goals, the selection of these goals should ideally remain a human-driven process. This is because computers, despite their advanced algorithms, may not fully comprehend the complexity and subtleties of individual student needs, interests, and socio-emotional factors. Teachers, on the other hand, can interpret data with a deeper understanding of the students' context, backgrounds, and classroom dynamics.

Additionally, the process of goal-setting should actively involve students, empowering

them to take ownership of their learning. When students collaborate with teachers in defining their goals, it fosters self-regulation, motivation, and a deeper connection to their educational journey.

It is also critical to consider the ethical implications and potential biases in algorithms. Decisions based solely on computational suggestions could unintentionally reinforce inequities or overlook the diversity in classrooms. Teachers, therefore, play a vital role in ensuring that the ethical dimensions of goal-setting are addressed, aligning technological inputs with inclusive, equitable practices.

The fluid nature of classroom environments and the broader contexts of students' lives—such as their emotional states, cultural backgrounds, or personal experiences—further underscore the limitations of technology in this area. Computers, despite their precision, cannot fully account for the dynamic and multidimensional aspects of human development.

As technology continues to evolve, teachers' roles may shift, requiring them to act as critical facilitators who assess and adapt technological recommendations to align with the holistic needs of their students. Preparing teachers for this evolving role through professional development and equipping students with the digital literacy necessary to critically engage with AI tools is essential to maintaining a balanced and future-ready approach.

Even in times of multimodal AI and the rise of multimodal robotics, the selection of goals should remain in the hands of students and teachers. This ensures that while benefiting from technological advancements, educational goals stay rooted in a holistic understanding of student development, encompassing academic, social, and emotional learning needs.

How can teachers differentiate content in their classrooms?

Content is what students need to know, understand and be able to do as a result of a section of study (IRIS Center, 2022; Tomlinson, 2001). That is, it is the "stuff" we teach and want students to learn (Tomlinson & Cunningham Eidson, 2003). National, state, and local standards for teaching content provide teachers with guidance on what they should teach. However, a set of standards is unlikely to provide complete and consistent content. The content is therefore defined also by local curriculum guides and textbooks. Content is typically derived from a combination of sources. However, one of the most critical factors in determining the content is the teacher's knowledge of both content and students (Tomlinson & Cunningham Eidson, 2003).

Content knowledge refers to the body of knowledge (facts, theories, principles, ideas, vocabulary) that teachers must master to be effective (UNESCO, 2022). Although effective teaching relies heavily on a deep understanding of the subject matter, mastering this alone is insufficient. Shulman (1986) emphasises that teaching requires not only knowledge of

the facts and concepts but also a comprehensive grasp of how the subject fits into its broader discipline and curriculum (UNESCO, 2022). In addition, he also states that teachers need to understand why a particular subject is particularly central to one discipline, while another may be somewhat secondary (Shulman, 1986).

According to Shulman (1986), in addition to content knowledge and curriculum knowledge, teachers need pedagogical content knowledge. "Pedagogical content knowledge is a type of knowledge specific to teachers and is based on the ways in which teachers relate their pedagogical knowledge (what they know about teaching) to their subject knowledge (what they know about what they teach). It is the integration or synthesis of teachers' pedagogical knowledge and subject matter knowledge that constitutes pedagogical content knowledge." (p. 14). Pedagogical content knowledge enables teachers to "know how to organise and present content in ways that make it accessible to increasingly diverse groups of learners" (Shulman, 1987, as cited in Cooper & Alvarado, 2006, p. 5; UNESCO, 2022). The link between content and pedagogical knowledge determines teachers' decisions about materials, teaching approaches, assessment of students' learning, and feedback, among others (Cooper & Alvarado, 2006; Bold et al., 2017; UNESCO, 2022). In this context, pedagogical content knowledge is "a conceptual map of how to teach a subject" (Villegas-Reimers, 2003, p. 39).

Another critical factor in determining the content is teachers' knowledge of their students. Content can be differentiated in response to the student's readiness level, interests, or learning profile, as well as in response to any combination of readiness, interest, and learning profile (Tomlinson, 2001). Because students' readiness, interest, and learning profiles vary, it is important to diversify or differentiate content in response to these students.

Building upon these foundational concepts, the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework extends Shulman's idea of pedagogical content knowledge by incorporating technological knowledge (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). The TPACK framework highlights the dynamic interplay between content, pedagogy, and technology, emphasising that effective teaching requires not just expertise in these areas individually, but an integrated understanding of how they interact to enhance student learning.

Technology plays a pivotal role in differentiation by providing diverse and adaptable tools that meet the varying needs of students. Digital tools such as interactive simulations, educational software, and learning management systems allow teachers to present content in multiple formats, catering to different learning styles and preferences (Koehler, Mishra, & Cain, 2013). Additionally, technology enables the creation of adaptive learning environments where content can be personalized based on students' readiness levels and progress, offering both remediation and enrichment opportunities as needed (Tomlinson & Strickland, 2005).

Moreover, technology facilitates differentiated assessment practices, providing immediate feedback and data-driven insights into student learning. Formative assessment

tools, such as online quizzes and e-portfolios, allow for real-time monitoring of student progress, enabling teachers to adjust instruction accordingly (Puentedura, 2013). This continuous feedback loop supports a more responsive and inclusive approach to teaching, ensuring that all students receive the support they need to succeed.

In summary, the integration of technology within the TPACK framework is essential for implementing differentiated instruction effectively. By leveraging technological tools in conjunction with strong content and pedagogical knowledge, teachers can create flexible, engaging, and inclusive learning environments that address the diverse needs of their students.

How do teachers differentiate content according to student readiness?

Readiness refers to a student's level of knowledge and skill regarding the given content and is a student's proximity to learning goals at a given time (Tomlinson, 2014); it is the place where the student is according to where the learning objectives say the student should be (Hockett, 2018). Students' readiness levels can be affected by their background knowledge, life experiences, or prior learning about a course or content, and their readiness levels may also vary according to courses or content areas. Student readiness is not a fixed factor. Sometimes a student who has a marked difficulty in learning one subject may have a surprisingly large amount of background knowledge on another subject. In this case, the student may be ready for more advanced studies than is usually expected. On the other hand, students who are usually quite advanced may miss some prerequisites in a subject or be distracted by other subjects in their life. In this case, they may need more solid experience to be successful. For this reason, teachers should use various assessment methods in order to determine the readiness level of students for any content and differentiate the content according to student needs based on the assessment data they have obtained.

How do teachers differentiate content according to student interests?

Another student characteristic considered in differentiated instruction is interest. Interest is what the student enjoys learning, thinking and doing and is a great source of motivation. Students' interests are topics and/or processes that arouse curiosity and inspire passion (Santangelo & Tomlinson, 2009; Tomlinson, 2005a, 2005b). The purpose of interest differentiation is to help students connect with new knowledge, understanding, and skills by promoting intrinsic motivation by uncovering connections to what they already find attractive, intriguing, relevant, and valuable (Tomlinson, 2003). Differentiation by interest means creating instruction based on the interests students bring to the classroom, or offering students options within an instructional stack that they want to dive deeper into (Tomlinson, 2001) and this allows educators to connect students and engage them in a lesson (Tomlinson, 2001, 2003).

For example, environmental pollution, global warming, recycling, etc., which constitute a unit related to the environment. The student's choice of topics will reveal the student's interest in any of these topics.

How do teachers differentiate according to learner profiles?

The learning profile, on the other hand, refers to the wide variety of ways in which students differ in how they prefer to deal with the content, process, and product, according to Tomlinson (2003). A student's learning profile is a complete picture of their learning preferences, strengths, and challenges. According to Tomlinson and Imbeau (2010), a student's learning profile is shaped by four elements and the interactions among them: learning style (a preferred contextual approach to learning), intelligence preference (a hard-wired or neurologically shaped preference for learning or thinking), gender (approaches to learning that may be shaped genetically or socially for males versus females) and culture (approaches to learning that may be strongly shaped by the context in which an individual lives and by the unique ways in which people in that context make sense of and live their lives). The purpose of differentiation by learning profile is to help students learn in the ways they learn best and to expand the ways in which they can learn effectively. Because students are more productive in their learning when they are allowed to work in ways that are comfortable for them.

The three basic characteristics of students, briefly described above, are critical in differentiating the content. Strategies such as tiered content, learning contracts, compacting, providing a variety of materials, presentation styles, scaffolding are used to differentiate content (IRIS Center, 2022).

What kind of strategies could teachers use to differentiate content?

Tiered Content

The strategy of tiering content is based on students' readiness levels. The purpose of differentiating content according to readiness levels is to match the material or information students are asked to learn with their reading and comprehension capacity. Tiering content according to student readiness levels encourages students to start learning from where they are at the moment and allows students to work on challenging tasks in a way that suits them. When teachers differentiate content, all students complete the same type of activity (e.g., worksheet, report) (IRIS Center, 2022), but the difficulty or complexity of the content varies.

A task matched to student readiness takes the student's knowledge, understanding and skills slightly beyond what the student can do independently. A good readiness match pushes the learner slightly outside their comfort zone and then provides support in bridging the gap between the known and the unknown. Tomlinson and Cunningham Eidson (2003,

p. 30) provide examples of small group experiments based on preparation and interest as follows.

Divide students into groups of three or four and give each group the instructions for its assigned experiment. There are seven experiments in all, designed at varying levels of complexity and listed here from most complex to least complex:

- Experiment A: How can we determine relative humidity? (version 1)
- Experiment B: How can we determine relative humidity? (version 2)
- Experiment C: How can we determine the direction of the wind?
- Experiment D: How does air move?
- Experiment E: Does air have weight?
- Experiment F: Does air take up space?
- Experiment G: Does air have movement?

Each group carries out its experiment based on the question. Students are provided with a recording sheet as a place to collect their data as they work towards answering their questions, which has different levels of scaffolding. For students who need more support they have more specific steps or sub-steps versus students who are ready for a greater challenge who have just questions and space for documentation on their worksheet. They record all of the information required to sufficiently answer their science question. The ways that students can record their knowledge may also differ depending on how comfortable they are with scientific measurements and quantities or if they are explaining themselves using more common words. Lastly, students create a plan for how they will share their work with the rest of the class including the methods that they used and what they found in their research. Ultimately, the class will want to know if they answer their questions and what proof they have. Each group will have the opportunity to share their work and their experience based on the level of learning that they accomplished.

Differentiation Through Open and Closed Tasks

Differentiation through open and closed tasks is an effective instructional approach (Tomlinson, 2021, 48) across subject areas, including mathematics, sciences, and humanities, that caters to diverse student needs and abilities. This method involves using both structured (closed) and flexible (open) activities to engage students at various levels of understanding and skill. By blending the strengths of both types of tasks, teachers create inclusive classrooms that value student diversity and provide multiple entry points into learning.

Closed Tasks

Closed tasks are structured with predetermined outcomes and clear instructions. They are

particularly effective for assessing foundational knowledge and skills, benefiting students who thrive on structure and need concrete guidance (Tomlinson, 2021, 48). These tasks are widely applicable across disciplines.

Examples in mathematics include:

- Multiple-choice questions (e.g., "What is the sum of 15 and 9?")
- Fill-in-the-blank exercises (e.g., "Solve for x: x + 7 = 12.")
- Step-by-step math problems (e.g., "Simplify: 2(3x + 4) − 5.")

Examples in other subjects include:

- Labeling tasks in science (e.g., labeling given parts of a plant or an ecosystem).
- Identifying elements of a story in English literature (e.g., "Identify the protagonist and setting in the story.")
- Timeline tasks in history (e.g., "Place these historical events in chronological order.")

Open Tasks

Open tasks, in contrast, allow for multiple solutions and approaches. They encourage creativity, higher-order thinking, and problem-solving (Bahar & Maker, 2015), making them particularly effective for fostering deeper engagement (Hertzog, 1998). Open tasks also provide opportunities for students to showcase their unique abilities and strengths, making them a powerful tool for differentiation in inclusive classrooms. Unlike closed tasks, open tasks do not require the creation of separate materials for different levels of readiness; instead, they can be used by all students, allowing them to engage with the task at their own level and in their own way (Zohrabi & Hassanpour, 2020).

Examples in mathematics include:

- Finding multiple fraction pairs that add up to 7/8.
- Constructing rectangles with a given perimeter using various dimensions.
- Creating word problems using a specific fraction but allowing for different correct answers. (e.g. Create a story problem where 3/4 of something equals a number you choose. Solve for the total.)

Examples in other subjects include:

- Designing a poster for a historical event, including important figures and outcomes.
- Writing a diary entry from the perspective of a character in a novel or a historical figure.
- Creating a piece of artwork inspired by a theme discussed in class, such as "community" or "change."

- Developing a science experiment to explore how light travels through different materials.

To help students orient themselves and succeed with open tasks, teachers can provide examples of possible approaches, offering inspiration while leaving space for individual creativity (Tomlinson, 2021, 48).

Medium-Open Tasks for Balance

Medium-open tasks provide a balance between open and closed tasks, offering enough structure to guide students while still allowing for creative expression. These tasks are particularly effective for scaffolding students into more open-ended problem-solving.
Examples include:

- Drawing (of) an ecosystem and labeling all the parts the student knows (without blanks).
- Creating a timeline with optional categories for additional historical events.
- In mathematics:
  - Turning a closed question into an open one:
    - Closed: What is half of 20?
    - Open: 10 is a fraction of a number. What could the fraction and the number be?
  - Removing constraints:
    - Closed: There are 12 apples on the table and some in a basket. In all, there are 50 apples. How many apples are in the basket?
    - Open: There are some apples on the table and some in a basket. In all, there are 50 apples. How many apples might be on the table?
  - Using adaptive tasks:
    - These tasks contain multiple starting points and solutions for students of different levels, allowing every student to participate and be challenged appropriately . For example: "Here you have 24 wooden cubes. Which cuboids can you build with them? Make a note of the ones you have already found. How many can you find?" (Leuders & Prediger, 2016 in Bardy et al., 2021, 33)

Benefits of Open Tasks

Open tasks are a versatile and effective strategy for differentiation. They:

- Accommodate mixed abilities by allowing students to engage at their own level.
- Empower students to make decisions and develop their own thinking processes.

- Encourage students to make connections, generalise ideas, and justify their reasoning.
- Provide opportunities for creativity and self-expression across a variety of subject areas.

Balancing Open and Closed Tasks for Differentiation

Using a combination of open and closed tasks enables teachers to:

- Cater to diverse needs: Closed tasks ensure foundational skills are addressed, while open tasks encourage creativity and exploration.
- Support different learning profiles: Students who thrive on structure benefit from closed tasks, while those who enjoy autonomy excel in open tasks.
- Encourage inclusive participation: By providing both types of tasks, all students can engage meaningfully and demonstrate understanding.

By combining these approaches, teachers foster an inclusive learning environment that values both structure and flexibility. This ensures all students can engage meaningfully, build confidence, and express their strengths in unique ways.

Differentiation matrix

The differentiation matrix developed by Ada Sasse (2014) offers a structured tool to design lessons that address the heterogeneity of a learning group. This matrix enables educators to balance cognitive and thematic complexity in their lesson planning, fostering inclusive learning environments where students with varying levels of ability can work collaboratively on the same topic.

Figure : Differentiation matrix for the "Europe" lesson plan for a mixed-age class with grades 1 to 4

Abstract operations	– Mountains – Places of interest	– Capitals of neighbouring countries – Flags	– Greek yoghurt – French cheese – Italian pasta – Dutch cheese	– Famous Italians, footballers	– Famous Frenchmen
Symbolic operations	– Map work: Berlin, Thuringia	– Location of the capital and flag	– Meaning of the word European Union	Presentation	Presentation
Fully imaginative action	– Saale, Jena – Rivers, lakes, seas, transport routes	– Assignment of certain countries to individual colours (material)	– Buy goods from other countries with different money, export different goods from other countries	– Capital city: Places of interest	– Capital city, sights
Partial imaginative action	– Federal states on a map Thuringia and its neighbouring countries	– Assignment of countries via colours and plot	– European puzzle, assignment via colours	– Prepare something from Italy, Count to 10 in Italian	– Prepare something from France, Count to 10 in French
Practical and illustrative action	– Jena in Germany – Germany puzzle; capital city	– Germany puzzle and its neighbouring countries	– Money from the EU, Differences commonality (play money)	– Food from Italy – Italian vocabulary	– Food from France, French vocabulary
	Germany	**Neighbouring countries**	**Europe**	**Presentation topic**	**Country 2**

Source: Sabine Lada and colleagues at the Maria Montessori State Community School in Jena (Sasse 2014)

For instance, the "Europe" matrix used at the Maria Montessori State Community School in Jena illustrates how teachers can tailor activities to different cognitive levels while maintaining thematic unity. Practical actions, such as recreating Italian dishes or building puzzles of Germany's neighbors, are paired with more abstract operations, like analyzing famous figures or creating presentations on capitals and flags. This layered approach allows students to engage with content at a level appropriate to their skills while exploring the same overarching theme. By enabling collaborative planning among teachers and emphasizing student agency—students select tasks aligned with their interests and abilities—the matrix ensures both individual and social connectivity. This dual focus supports inclusive education by providing equitable access to meaningful learning experiences across diverse student profiles.

Learning Contracts

"A learning contract is a written agreement between teacher and learner that outlines mutually agreed upon goals, tasks, and expectations" (adapted from Greenwood, 2003,

p. 1). These contracts are inherently collaborative, involving both parties in a negotiation process that respects the student's voice and learning preferences. While the teacher brings expertise in curriculum and pedagogy, the student contributes vital insights into their own learning style, interests, and goals. In a well-structured learning contract, both the teacher and student make commitments. The student typically agrees to complete specific tasks, meet certain quality standards, and adhere to agreed-upon timelines. The teacher, in turn, might commit to providing necessary resources, offering regular feedback, or adapting instructional methods to suit the student's learning profile. Contracts can contain both skill and content components and are well suited to a differentiated classroom as the components and terms of the contract can vary according to the student's needs (Tomlinson, 2017). Through this process, teachers can differentiate the curriculum based on student readiness or learning profiles, while students gain agency in their learning journey (IRIS Center, 2022). During the negotiation process, both parties collaboratively determine:

1. The tasks to be completed
2. The timeline for completion
3. The quantity and quality expectations of the work
4. The evaluation criteria
5. The support and resources the teacher will provide

This mutual approach not only motivates students who may have difficulty accomplishing academic tasks but also empowers them by giving them a voice in their education. By jointly committing to specific, positive study and learning behaviors, both teachers and students create a more engaging and personalized learning experience (Frank & Scharff, 2013).

Compacting

Teachers can differentiate instruction by compressing the curriculum for advanced students who already master certain content or skills. Curriculum compacting is a technique for differentiating instruction that allows teachers to make adjustments to curriculum for students who have already mastered the material to be learned, replacing content students know with new content, enrichment options, or other activities (NAGC, 2022; Renzulli & Reis, 2014). Curriculum compacting allows students to skip content they know or to proceed quickly through content. This strategy targets students' readiness levels and it can be applied to any subject and at any grade level (IRIS Center, 2022).

How do teachers use differentiated teaching strategies in their classrooms?

What does differentiation look like in the classroom?

How differentiation looks in the classroom depends on the age group and profiles of the students, the content area, and the unit of study. As there is an endless variety of possibilities, we know that no two differentiated classrooms look the same, though we can see common strategies and practices. The following strategies are some possibilities to look for in the learning process of a differentiated classroom.

Proactive

Instructional strategies in the differentiated classroom are, first and foremost, proactive. They are carefully designed in advance based on assessments data, student feedback, and class or student goals. Seen in the previous sections, the importance of collecting data and formatting goals is critical to ensuring objectives are clear and appropriate strategies are chosen (Carolan & Guinn, 2007). The next step is to verify what content pieces are being taught and choose the strategies by which students will interact with the information.Using a clear and concise planning template helps to see the connections between assessment, goals (based on student assessment data), and curriculum.

Figure 4 – Example of a Differentiated Lesson Plan(self-created)

Teacher Name:					Class/Subject:
Differentiated Lesson Plan					
1. Standard/Concept/Unit/Topic/Subject:				**2. As a result of this less/unit, students will Know (facts, vocabulary), Understand (concepts), and/or Be able to DO (skills):**	
3. Pre-assessment:					
4. Grouping Decisions and Choices:					
5. Learning Experiences	**Instructional Resources**	**Content**	**Process**	**Product**	
					Exceeds Standard
					At Standard
					Approaching Standard
6. Post-assessment:					
7. Notes/Reflection for future reference:					

Flexible Groupings

As shared in the content related section, groups play an important role in a differentiated classroom. There are opportunities for whole group instruction around concepts, important vocabulary, or at the introduction to a topic, but the majority of the time students are working in other groupings – small groups, pairs, individually, or another combination. The classroom allows for opportunities for the group to come back together as a whole class to address questions or clarify instructions before breaking back into other groupings again (Sousa & Tomlinson, 2011; Wormeli, 2007). The differentiated classroom is one in which students are rarely all working whole-group settings.

Example

A classroom of grade 2 students (7-year-olds) are starting a unit of study on the life cycle of a frog. The teacher begins her instruction with a whole class discussion of what the students know about frogs already. She prepares the students to work in pairs on documenting questions that they want to answer through their unit of study. Considering her learner profiles and the level of student readiness, she has chosen to start in pairs to allow time for students to process their questions. She has considered the needs of 4 students that she has with different learning disabilities and how they could best interact with their peers as the unit begins. She circulates the room as the pairs work to list or record their questions. The teacher makes observations regarding the students' engagement and attention to their task. Once each of the pairs has a series of questions the pairs find another pair to look for any similarities in their line of questioning. The process continues for the small group of 4 to find another group of 4 and repeat their search for similarities in their questions. Then their group of 8 looks for another group of 8, and so on until the whole class comes back together to review the questions that will lead their inquiry into frogs.

In this example, the teacher uses different groupings to meet the needs of her students and is able to support them to work on critical thinking towards their unit of student. There may be more physical movement than a traditional, didactic classroom and the volume of noise produced by students busily working on an engaging project might be greater, but a differentiated classroom is meeting its students' needs.

Inclusive classrooms use these groupings to encourage peer interaction and promote social integration, enabling students with diverse abilities to work together and learn from one another.

Time & Space

Flexibility also allows for changes to framework conditions like support systems, amount of time spent, or use of space which also contributes to achieving essentially the same goals. Allowing a group of students longer time to finish their work or providing multiple physical spaces for students to do independent work or have multiple check in points with one student are ways to create opportunities for flexibility throughout the school day (Sousa & Tomlinson, 2011).

Opportunities to differentiate through space can be about where groups work and how students have access to materials, but it is also about the feeling of being in the classroom space. Do students feel welcomed and comfortable in the space? Are there places for calm relaxation versus more active group work? Are there places that students are invited to explore independently? How does the space invite the students to participate in their learning? Flexible learning spaces are ones that reflect the student population that use them regularly (Gregory & Kuzmich, 2014).

Another chance to show flexibility is how we allocate time in our classrooms. Following a consistent routine with a structured schedule is an important part of managing a classroom. When we look at our schedules, we can see where our priorities lie as those are the activities that we have allocated the most time or in some cases the most opportune times slots. We know that students are more ready to learn in the earlier part of the school day versus the later part, so how do we structure our time accordingly?

Presentation Styles

Students' learning profiles are taken into account in the presentation of any content. The term learning profile refers to a student's preferred learning mode, which can be influenced by a number of factors such as learning style, intelligence preference, gender and culture. The learning profile is shaped by these four elements and the interactions between them (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2010). Students' learning profile includes learning preferences (for example, is the student a visual, auditory, tactile or kinaesthetic learner?), grouping preferences (for example, does the student work best individually, with a partner or in a large group?) and environmental preferences (for example, does the student need lots of space or a quiet area to work?).

Students learn better when students' learning profiles match teachers' presentation styles. Therefore, teachers need to consider students' learning profiles when presenting any content. Various methods such as narration, discussion, asking questions, reading aloud, verbal explanation, picture/graphic, transparency, whiteboard, headings, thinking aloud, taking action, creating/constructing, using manipulatives can be used in content presentation. While presenting teachers' lessons, multimedia and formats also allow students to develop a deeper understanding of concepts by providing opportunities to interact with these concepts in a variety of ways (IRIS Center, 2022).

Materials

The choices of materials are as varied as there are projects in the classroom. As a teacher develops or collects materials for student learning, there are classic examples, such as texts or workbooks. Shared ideas will become catchier when teachers use materials suitable for the students that can attract the attention of the students in their lessons. Thus, sound (for example, the voices of others, sounds that make a term or concept clearer, music), pictures, stories, charts or figures, models, photographs, works of art, body language, movement, and other things that engage the senses and engage the mind. Elements should be integrated with the content (Tomlinson, 2001). When we work to differentiate our classroom for learners, we are looking for opportunities to create a varied collection of materials for our students to engage with over specific topics. We can expand our classrooms to include magazines, newspapers, posters, and advertisements in our literacy work. We can think about access to IT tools, emails, web-based searches, and online libraries. We can expand our thinking further to bring content area materials to our students through videos, zoom interviews, and virtual field trips. We want to ask ourselves, in how many different media can I get my student access to this information? Using multiple texts and combining them with a wide variety of other supplementary materials increases all students' chances of accessing content that is meaningful to them. Such differentiation allows students to access information in the way that suits them best. The point to be considered here is to match the complexity, abstraction, depth, breadth and similar levels of the source materials used with the learning needs of the student.

Teachers can build in materials that support students without having to ask the teacher directly.

Example

The teacher divides the class into four workstations where the three are student-run and the teacher is leading a fourth group, he needs the students to be autonomous in order for the other three groups to run successfully. Each of those workstations can have written directions, visual cards, or choice options to guide student learning. Maybe the teacher sets up a question group who is ready to problem solve and answer questions for other groups so as not to disturb the teacher during their workstation. Each of these strategies needs to be explicitly planned beforehand and taught to the students. Practising these processes and procedures increases the chances that students will be able to successfully operate them autonomously.

Building these opportunities into the classroom is a win-win situation. The teacher benefits from the students working independently and the students benefit from being in control of their work. Differentiating materials also requires teachers to consider access to materials (Sousa & Tomlinson, 2011). Who might struggle with this material and what are the ways that I can facilitate better access through that struggle? A language learner might need more vocabulary reminders with a text than a dominant language student. A student with specific learning needs might need a text-to-speech option or an audio recording to enhance their reading comprehension.

When teachers include varied resources like videos, tactile models, or interactive digital tools, they increase the likelihood that all students can engage with the content in ways that resonate with them. This variety reflects a commitment to honoring diverse learning needs and experiences.

Choice

One way to ensure that students are highly engaged in their learning is through allowing choice. When students are given options, either structured by the teacher or freely chosen by the students, they are given multiple means through which to process and show their learning (Carolan & Guinn, 2007). For example, students are allowed to choose a final project instead of taking a written exam. They are given the options of giving a presentation, performing an original piece, or writing a story.

Choices that take into account students' interest inherently push student thinking towards engagement as it makes the learning feel more relevant. To create authentic experiences in the classroom, and therefore make learning meaningful, we need to consider why students have to know this information and the ways that they may have already engaged with this knowledge in the past.

Scaffolding

Scaffolding refers to the process by which the teacher provides additional support to enhance learning and assist in mastery of tasks for students struggling to learn a new skill or content. It is a basic support to "enable children to independently perform tasks that they could only perform with the help or guidance of the teacher" (Gibbons, 2002, p. vii). Scaffolds facilitate the learner's ability to build on prior knowledge and internalise new knowledge. An important aspect of the scaffolding strategy is that scaffolds are temporary. As the learner's abilities increase, the scaffolding provided by the more knowledgeable is gradually withdrawn. As children's skills develop with support, scaffolding decreases and children are eventually able to perform on their own (Bıkmaz et al., 2010; Chang, Sung, & Chen, 2002).

The scaffold teaching strategy is often used to focus more on the learning needs of

an individual student during the completion of a teaching lesson or specific task rather than on a group of students, so differentiation and core teaching strategies can be used simultaneously to better meet students' individual teaching needs (Ray, 2022).Many different facilitative tools can be utilised in scaffolding student learning. Among them are: breaking the task into smaller, more manageable parts; using 'think aloud, or verbalising thinking processes when completing a task; cooperative learning, which promotes teamwork and dialogue among peers; concrete prompts, questioning; coaching; cue cards or modelling. (Elandeef & Hamdan, 2021). Scaffolding is "a supportive instructional structure that teachers use to provide the appropriate mechanisms for a student to complete a task that is beyond their unassisted abilities" (Lipscomb, Swanson & West, 2010, p. 19).

For example, for a student who has difficulty multiplying two-digit numbers, after the teacher has done a task analysis, he can divide the task into manageable steps and model each step in the task, giving the student time to practise. Support is gradually removed as the student masters the task.

Another example of scaffolding can be seen when teachers use questioning to guide students' work. Based on the students' skill levels, the teacher can develop lines of questioning that challenge students appropriately.

Example

A teacher working towards an objective in secondary maths classes around using statistics and creating visual representations to explain information. She has identified student specific goals to support learning. For one student the goal might be to be able to interpret visual representations of statistics accurately and the teacher's line of questioning might be, tell me about what you notice in the graphic, or which part of this visual is important information and how do you know? While another student's goal is to come up with two alternative ways to represent the same information, the teacher is going to have different lines of questioning. How do each of these visuals illustrate the same information? Which way is easier for a reader to interpret? Why?

Product

If we have clearly differentiated the process of learning and yet require all the students to take the same test to demonstrate their knowledge then we are not following our obligation to support all our students. To differentiate the final product of a unit of study, we need to ask ourselves how can students show their learning? What formats are required for

students to demonstrate their learning? What choices are there? How often is it done? Is it always done individually or in a group? What are the ways that you will measure students' success (Carolan & Guinn, 2007)?

For example, a teacher can offer students a choice board of options she/he has pre-selected to match the students' learning profiles and complete a final project. Another teacher can pose four questions and ask students to answer them in four different ways based on their own choice.

Figure 5 – Tools and strategies for designing inclusive differentiated classrooms for diverse learners

Climate	Knowing the Learner	Assessing the Learner	Adjustable Assignments	Instructional Strategies	Curri Appro
• **Safe** • **Nurturing** • **Encourages Risk Taking** • **Multisensory Stimulating** • **Complex Challenging Collaborative** • **Team and Class Building** • **Norms** • **Mindset**	• Learning Profiles • • Learning Preferences • Sweet Spot • Dunn & Dunn • Gregorc • Silver/ Strong/ Hanson • **Multiple Intelligences** Using observation checklists, inventories, logs, and journals to become more aware of how students learn • Cultural • Gender • Pop culture	• **Before** • Preassessment • Formal • Pretest • Journaling • Informal • Squaring off • Boxing • Graffiti facts • **During** • Formative • Formal • Journaling/ Portfolios • Teacher-made tests • Checklists/ Rubrics • Informal • Thumb it • Fist of five • Face the fact • **After** • Formal • Summative • Posttest • Portfolio/ Conferences • Reflections • Informal • Talking topics • Conversation • Circles • Donut	• **Compacting** • Gifted • **TAPS** • Total Group • Lecturette • Presentation • Demonstration • Jigsaw • Video • Field trip • Guest speaker • Text • Alone • Interest • Personalized • Multiple Intelligences • • Paired • Random • Interest • Task • Small Groups • Heterogeneous • Homogeneous • Task Oriented • Constructed • Random • Interest	• **Edu-neuroscience and Differentiation** • **Brain facts** • Memory model • Elaborative rehearsal • Focus activities • Graphic organizers • Compare & contrast • Webbing • Metaphorical thinking • Cooperative group learning • Jigsaw • Questioning • Cubing • Role-play • Technology	• Cen • Pro • Choice • Problem Lea • Inquiry • Con

Source: Gregory & Chapmann (2013)

As you can see in Figure 5, there are a wide range of ways to differentiate teaching instruction and make use of strategies to ensure that students are working at their readiness level. The selections in this chapter are a few of many different ways to use differentiation in the classroom. There are other models, such as inquiry-based models, that lend themselves to differentiate because of how they incorporate students' knowledge and allow for different points of entry into learning. Exploring more about inquiry models,

authentic learning, and project based/problem-based learning are other avenues for developing differentiation practices in your classroom.

How do teachers determine what strategies to use?

Teachers determine which strategies to use based on their student data – completed assessments, either formal or informal, that demonstrate students' feedback. Having already collected this information and determined the appropriate student goals, teachers are familiar with their learners' profiles and readiness. Therefore, they select strategies that offer the best opportunity for students to reach success. The access to materials, support, and a varied experience in the process of learning are also important determinants in choosing strategies. Strategies should be chosen to enhance access to the process as well as the product by which the students demonstrate their learning.

Finally, teachers determine useful strategies for their group through trial and error. We can find the best selection of strategies for students on a given day by approaching the process of differentiation through the constant collection of feedback (Renzulli, 2015).

How can teachers monitor learning progress?

Generally, teachers tend to design whole units of learning and check learning progress at the end of the whole course. Differentiation, however, requires activating monitoring procedures throughout the unit as well. Since activities are highly personalised, according to students' learning preferences, interests, readiness and needs, teachers need to collect data about each student's learning path. Normally, these monitoring activities are incorporated into the design of learning activities. For example, when teachers structure different learning materials regarding the same content. Teachers can let students choose or they can assign tasks but, in both cases, they need to monitor whether the type of activity completed by the student is adequate.

EXAMPLE 1 – Activity options

Lesson about	
	Structured learning materials and supports Multiple options regarding the type of task/activity Multiple options for support Multiple options in terms of additional learning materials**Options are structured according to** Mastery level Learning preferences Interests**Options are** Assigned by the teacher Chosen by the student

Example inspired by Gregory, G.H., & Chapman, C. (2013). Differentiated Instructional Strategies: one size doesn't fit all (3rd ed.). Corwin.

EXAMPLE 2 – Activity options

Listening	Reading	Writing	Speaking
Listen to a song and summarise the content of the lyrics.	Read a short narrative text and identify key words.	Write a dialogue between two characters.	Play a scene from a film.

Example inspired by Tomlinson, C.A., & Imbeau, M.B. (2010). Leading and managing a differentiated classroom. Alexandria, VA, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

EXAMPLE 3 – Activity options

Verbal/ Linguistic	Visual/ Spatial	Bodily/ Kinaesthetic	Musical/ Rhythmic	Logical/ Mathematical
Make a presentation. Write a text.	Draw a comic. Paint an illustration.	Simulate an experiment. Organise a role-play game.	Record a song. Invent a choreography.	Create a diagram. Write down the sequences of an experiment procedure.

Example inspired by Gregory, G.H., & Chapman, C. (2013). Differentiated Instructional Strategies: one size doesn't fit all (3rd ed.). Corwin.

Similarly to the planning phase, teachers can opt for multiple instruments to collect information on the adequacy and effectiveness of learning tasks. For example, they can make observations, administer self-assessment questionnaires or organise brief class discussions at the end of the activities to obtain some feedback.

Here there are two examples of possible instruments to monitor individual learning.

EXAMPLE 1 – Self-evaluation questionnaire

Individual task STUDENT: _____	1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Agree	4 Strongly agree	Notes
The task was challenging for me					
I was able to focus during the activity					
I was not motivated during the task					
The time assigned to complete this activity was enough for me					
…					

EXAMPLE 2 – Monitoring mastery

What I have learned STUDENT _____	1 I am beginning to understand	2 I could use more practice	3 I need some help	4 I can do it alone	5 I know it so well, I could explain it to anyone.
Designing a PowerPoint presentation					
Writing a summary					
Creating a flow chart					
…					

Examples inspired by Gregory, G.H., & Chapman, C. (2013). Differentiated Instructional Strategies: one size doesn't fit all (3rd ed.). Corwin.

How can teachers evaluate the effectiveness of teaching practices?

At the end of the learning unit, the teacher collects, within the student profiles, the materials gathered throughout the lessons on students' progress, difficulties and preferences. Again, as it would usually happen, they may administer a common final test. Or, even for the final summative assessment they may foresee differentiated products, allowing students to demonstrate what they have learned according to their preferences.

It is important to point out that the differentiation model does not impose minimum levels of differentiation or specific types of differentiation. It only offers guidance on how to design. Teachers can choose which ones to implement and to what extent, depending on their skills, experience and preferences, and also depending on the specific situation of the class they are working with. What is critical for an effective deployment of the model is to maintain, throughout the whole process, a strong link between instructional design and the procedures of assessment, monitoring and evaluation. Lastly, differentiation requires an aptitude for professional self-training. Each implemented unit is one more building block toward more effective future unit planning.

Conclusion

This chapter has examples of some of the ways to strengthen your differentiation practices in the classroom. At times it might feel overwhelming to consider all the elements at play in a differentiated classroom, but remember to start at the beginning of the 'differentiation circle'. Always begin first with collecting information on the needs and interests of students. Use that information to plan goals accordingly. There will not necessarily be the same goals for everyone. That information will inform how to differentiate the content and the

materials. Finally, evaluating the practices and strategies used is always the appropriate way to complete a session, activity, or project.

As this system is used, there will be more and more ease and confidence with applying differentiated strategies in the classroom. Note that not all forms of differentiation are helpful for inclusive education. There are ways that differentiation can be used which actually limit students in their learning. For example, by using Artificial Intelligence (AI) based computer programming to challenge students without an opportunity to consider the knowledge in other ways, or when students are continually offering the same strategies over time without an opportunity to assess and reevaluate student needs.

A final point to know about differentiation is that it is constantly changing. As students learn and change, a teacher needs to be adapting to those changes. There is not a perfect material or strategy that you can use effectively forever. There is not a final point of arriving at "doing" differentiation. It is an ever-evolving, a way of thinking, a framework that shifts and moves as students do. Be prepared to move with them.

Local contexts

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=363#h5p-11

Closing questions to discuss or tasks

Choose three to four of the following tasks:

- How do you currently differentiate instruction in your classroom? In which areas (content, process, product) do you feel most confident, and where do you see opportunities for growth?

- After reading this chapter, how has your understanding of differentiation evolved? Were there any concepts that challenged your previous beliefs about inclusive teaching?
- In what specific ways will you apply the principles of differentiation in your next classroom experience? Consider both small adjustments and broader changes in your teaching practice.
- Can you provide an example from your own teaching or observation where differentiation was implemented effectively? What made it successful?
- Reflect on a practice you have encountered that seemed to be differentiated but did not truly meet diverse student needs. What could have been done differently to enhance its inclusivity?
- What tools and strategies will you use to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of your differentiation practices over time?
- How can incorporating student voice and choice further enhance your differentiated instruction strategies?
- Considering the role of technology in differentiation, how might you leverage digital tools to support diverse learning needs in your classroom?
- Choose one topic from a subject area you teach or are familiar with (e.g., Math, Science, History, Language Arts). For your chosen topic, design three tasks:

  1. Closed Task:
     Create a structured activity with clear instructions and only one correct answer.
  2. Medium-Open Task:
     Develop an activity with some structure but allow for multiple correct answers or varied approaches.
  3. Open Task:
     Design an activity that encourages creativity, critical thinking, and has no single correct answer. Students should be able to explore different methods or perspectives.

Literature

Bıkmaz, F. H., Çeleb, Ö., Ata, A., Özer, E., Soyak, Ö. & Reçber, H. (2010). Scaffolding Strategies Applied by Student Teachers to Teach Mathematics. The International Journal of Research in Teacher Education, 1(3), 25–36. Retrieved from https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/ijrte/issue/8556/106211

Bold, T., Svensson, K., Molina, E., Stacy, B. W., Rockmore, C., Martin, G., Filmer, D. P. & Wane, W. (2017). What do teachers know and do? Does it matter? Evidence from primary schools in Africa. Washington, D.C.: World Bank. https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/882091485440895147/pdf/WPS7956.pdf

Bahar, A. & Maker, C. J. (2015). Cognitive backgrounds of problem solving: A comparison of open-ended vs. closed mathematics problems. Eurasia Journal of Mathematics, Science and Technology Education, 11(6), 1531–1546. https://www.ejmste.com/article/cognitive-backgrounds-of-problem-solving-a-comparison-of-open-ended-vs-closed-mathematics-problems-4451

Carolan, J. & Guinn, A. (2007). Differentiation: Lessons. Educational Leadership, 64(5), 44–47.

Chang, K., Chen, I. & Sung, Y. (2002). The effect of concept mapping to enhance text comprehension and summarization. The Journal of Experimental Education, 71(1), 5–23.

Chapman, C. & King, R. (2013). Planning and Organizing Standards-Based Differentiated Instruction. Corwin Press.

Cooper, James M. & Alvarado, A. (2006). Preparation, Recruitment and Retention of Teachers. Paris: IIEP-UNESCO. Retrieved from http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0015/001520/152023e.pdf

Elandeef, [First Name Not Available] & Hamdan, [First Name Not Available] (2021). Scaffolding Strategy and Customized Instruction Efficiency in Teaching English as a Foreign Language in the Context of Saudi Arabia. DOI: 10.7176/JLLL/77-05

Frank, Thomas & Scharff, Linda F. V. (2013). Learning contracts in undergraduate courses: Impacts on student behaviors and academic performance. Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, 13(4), 36–53.

Gibbons, Pat (2002). Scaffolding Language, Scaffolding Learning: Teaching Second Language Learners in the Mainstream Classroom. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Graham, L. J., de Bruin, K., Lassig, C. & Spandagou, I. (2020). A scoping review of 20 years of research on differentiation: Investigating conceptualisation, characteristics, and methods used. Review of Education. DOI: 10.1002/rev3.3238

Greenwood, S. (2003). On Equal Terms: How to Make the Most of Learning Contracts in Grades 4–9. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Gregory, G. H. & Chapman, C. (2013). Differentiated Instructional Strategies (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Gregory, G. H. & Kuzmich, L. (2014). Data Driven Differentiation in the Standards-Based Classroom. Corwin Press.

Hockett, Jessica A. (2018). Differentiation Handbook: Strategies and Examples: Grades 6–12. A.C.C.E.S.S.: All Children Challenged and Equipped for Success in School. Created for the Tennessee Department of Education by Dr. Jessica A. (June 2018).

IRIS. (2022, Sept. 13). How do teachers differentiate instruction? https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/di/cresource/q2/p05/

Koehler, Matthew J., Mishra, Punya & Cain, William (2013). What is technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPACK)? Journal of Education, 193(3), 13–19.

Lindner, K.-T. & Schwab, S. (2020). Differentiation and individualisation in inclusive education: A systematic review and narrative synthesis. International Journal of Inclusive Education. DOI: 10.1080/13603116.2020.1813450

Lipscomb, A., Swanson, J. & West, A. (2010). Emerging Perspectives on Learning, Teaching, and Technology. In Michael Orey (Ed.), Global Text, Chapter 21. Retrieved from https://textbookequity.org/Textbooks/Orey_Emergin_Perspectives_Learning.pdf

McGlynn, K. & Kelly, J. (2019). Adaptations, modifications, and accommodations. Science Scope, 43(3), 36–41. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26899082

Meyer, Sharon Kay (2012). Differentiated instruction: Learning profiles, assessment, and professional development. Graduate Research Paper, 206. https://scholarworks.uni.edu/grp/206

Mishra, Punya & Koehler, Matthew J. (2006). Technological pedagogical content knowledge: A framework for teacher knowledge. Teachers College Record, 108(6), 1017–1054.

National Association for Gifted Children. (2022, Oct. 22). Curriculum Compacting. https://www.nagc.org/about-nagc

Puentedura, Ruben R. (2013). SAMR and TPCK: Intro to advanced practice. Hippasus Blog. https://hippasus.com/resources/sweden2010/SAMR_TPCK_IntroToAdvancedPractice.pdf

Ray, J. (2017). Tiered 2 interventions for students in grades 1–3 identified as at risk in reading. (Doctoral dissertation, Walden University). https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/dissertations/3826/

Ray, J. (2022). Differentiation vs Scaffolding. The Literacy Brain: Information about literacy development and instruction. https://theliteracybrain.com/2022/04/07/differentiation-vs-scaffolding/

Region 10 Education Service Center. (2020). Adapting Instruction for Students with Disabilities. https://www.region10.org/r10website/assets/File/Adapting%20Instruction%20for%20Students%20with%20Disabilities.pdf

Renzulli, Joseph S. & Reis, Susan M. (2014). The Schoolwide Enrichment Model: A How-to Guide for Talent Development (3rd ed.). Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.

Renzulli, Joseph S. (2015). Five dimensions of differentiation. Gifted Education Press Quarterly, 29(3), 2–9.

Santangelo, T. & Tomlinson, Carol Ann (2009). The Application of Differentiated Instruction in Postsecondary Environments: Benefits, Challenges, and Future Directions. https://www.isetl.org/ijtlhe/pdf/IJTLHE366.pdf

Sasse, Ada (2014). http://www.gu-thue.de/material/itag14/Unterrichtsvorbereitung_Leistungseinschaetzung_GU.pdf

Schiefele, Ulrich (1991). Interest, Learning, and Motivation. Educational Psychologist, 26(3–4), 299–323. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00461520.1991.9653136

Seitz, Simone & Pfahl, Lisa (2013). Begabungsförderung an inklusiven Schulen. In Perspektiven der (Grund)Schule: Auf dem Weg zu einer demokratisch-inklusiven Schule (pp. 55–73). Pädagogische Professionalisierung und Schule, 2. LIT.

Shulman, Lee S. (1986). Those who understand: Knowledge growth in teaching. Educational Researcher, 67, 4–14.

Shulman, Lee S. (1987). Knowledge and Teaching: Foundations of the New Reform. Harvard Educational Review, 51, 1–22. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.57.1.j463w79r56455411

Struck, Philipp & Franz, Patrizia (2020). Importance of Peer Projects in Vocational Education and Training for the Development of Social Skills. In L. M. Herrera, M. Teräs & P. Gougoulakis (Eds.), Teaching, Learning and Teacher Education. Emerging Issues in Research on Vocational Education & Training Vol. 5 (pp. 86–120). Stockholm: Premiss förlag. https://www.edu.su.se/polopoly_fs/1.540753.1613111419!/menu/standard/file/Emergent%20Vol%205-Inlaga-POD-Tryckoriginal-210114.pdf

Sousa, Diane A. & Tomlinson, Carol Ann (2011). Differentiation and the Brain: How Neuroscience Supports the Learner-Friendly Classroom. Solution Tree Press.

Tomlinson, Carol Ann (2001). How to Differentiate Instruction in Mixed-Ability Classrooms. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.

Tomlinson, Carol Ann, Brighton, C., Hertberg, H., Callahan, C. M., Moon, T. R., Brimijoin, K., Conover, L. A. & Reynolds, T. (2003). Differentiating Instruction in Response to Student Readiness, Interest, and Learning Profile in Academically Diverse Classrooms: A Review of Literature. Journal for the Education of the Gifted, 27(2–3), 119–145. https://doi.org/10.1177/016235320302700203

Tomlinson, Carol Ann & Cunningham Eidson, Cynthia (2003). Differentiation in Practice: A Resource Guide for Differentiating Curriculum (Grades K–5). Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Tomlinson, Carol Ann & Cunningham Eidson, Cynthia (2003). Differentiation in Practice: A Resource Guide for Differentiating Curriculum (Grades 5–9). Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Tomlinson, Carol Ann (2005a). How to Differentiate Instruction in Mixed-Ability Classrooms (2nd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc.

Tomlinson, Carol Ann (2005b). The Differentiated Classroom: Responding to the Needs of All Learners. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc.

Tomlinson, Carol Ann & Imbeau, Marcia B. (2010). Leading and Managing a Differentiated Classroom. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Tomlinson, Carol Ann (2014). The Differentiated Classroom: Responding to the Needs of All Learners (2nd ed.). ASCD, Alexandria.

Tomlinson, Carol Ann (2014). A Differentiated Approach to the Common Core: How Do

I Help a Broad Range of Learners Succeed with Challenging Curriculum? Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Tomlinson, Carol Ann (2017). How to Differentiate Instruction in Academically Diverse Classrooms (3rd ed.). Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Tomlinson, Carol Ann & Strickland, Cindy A. (2005). Differentiation in Practice: A Resource Guide for Differentiating Curriculum (Grades 5–9). ASCD.

UNESCO-IBE. (2021). Reaching Out to All Learners: A Resource Pack for Supporting Inclusion and Equity in Education. UNESCO.

UNESCO. (2022, Sept. 18). Content Knowledge. https://policytoolbox.iiep.unesco.org/glossary/content-knowledge/

Villegas-Reimers, Ernesto (2003). Teacher Professional Development: An International Review of the Literature. Paris: IIEP-UNESCO. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000133010

Wormeli, Rick (2007). Differentiation: From Planning to Practice, Grades 6–12. Stenhouse Publishers, 480 Congress Street, Portland, ME 04101.

Zohrabi, Mohammad & Hassanpour, Saeid (2020). The Effect of Open and Closed Tasks on Iranian EFL Learners' Oral Performance at Intermediate and Advanced Levels. Journal of Language and Education, 6(1), 184–201. https://tesl.shirazu.ac.ir/article_5779_0983d93ae20f33ca7cc04f0e3880c80e.pdf

About the authors

Silvia Dell'Anna

Silvia Dell'Anna is a postdoctoral researcher in inclusive education, working at the Free University of Bozen/Bolzano. Her primary research areas include the evaluation of the quality of school inclusion, the design of inclusive teaching strategies, and the prevention of educational poverty, underachievement, and early school leaving.

Jessica Lament

Jessica Lament is a specialist in inclusive practice, especially for students with disabilities. She has worked in schools in the US, Singapore, and France supporting teachers – from pre-k to secondary school to teachers in higher education training programs – always with the same goal, to increase the implementation of research-based inclusion.

Frank J. Müller

UNIVERSITY OF BREMEN

https://www.uni-bremen.de/en/
fb12/arbeitsbereiche/abteilung-
c-inklusive-paedagogik/sekundarstufe/team/
prof-dr-frank-j-mueller

Prof. Dr. Frank J. Müller is a professor for "Inclusive Education for Learning and Intellectual Development Impairments in Secondary Schools" following his work as a special ed teacher at the Grünauer Gemeinschaftsschule in Berlin.

He works on support structures for teachers in heterogeneous learning groups through inclusive open educational resources, research-based study programs to make the history of inclusive education accessible to future generations, and questions of including more dimensions of diversity.

Yasemin Acar Ciftci

After working as a primary school teacher and principal for 20 years, Yasemin Acar Ciftci has been serving as a teacher educator for the past years. She is a faculty member at Istanbul Yeni Yuzyil University in the Child Development and Youth Services Department. Yasemin holds a PhD in Educational Sciences with a specialization in Curriculum and Instruction. Her PhD thesis focused on multicultural education and teacher competencies, and her academic work is primarily guided by critical theories.

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT FOR/OF LEARNING

Eva Kleinlein; Valerio Rigo; and Alessandra Imperio

📄 *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=373#oembed-1*

Example Case

Example of Learning Unit where learning and assessment co-occur in a perspective of formative assessment (both assessment for learning (AfL) and assessment as learning (AsL)).

Learning framework of reference: Thinking Actively in a Social Context (Wallace, 2001).

Topic: Counting with the help of the hand's fingers.

Class: primary school – 1st grade.

Previous knowledge: numbers from 1 to 20, the concept of addition, counting on fingers to solve an addition with numbers from 1 to 10.

Lesson Plan

Table 1. Planning was designed and implemented by Dr. Alessandra Imperio in her classroom.

N.	Stage	Activity
1	GATHER/ORGANISE What do I know about this?	What do you know about counting with your fingers? How do you count with your fingers when you do addition? Students reflect on their previous knowledge and respond. The teacher reports the collected information on the blackboard.
2	IDENTIFY What is the task?	The teacher explains that today the children will find out how to count by helping themselves with their fingers when the two addends do not fit together on their fingers. e.g., 7+5=
3	GENERATE How many ideas can I think of?	Try doing 7+5 with your fingers. Since we only have ten fingers, think of all the possible ideas to solve this addition problem, still helping with your hands. Children think individually about all the possible solutions.
4	DECIDE Which is the best idea?	Pairwise comparison of the solutions found and choice of the best one.
5	COMMUNICATE Let's tell someone!	Pairs tell the class about the decided solution. Real solutions found by the children were: – I use my hands and feet. – I keep the first number in mind and place the second in my hands, then count. – I pretend that 7 is a 2 and put both 2 and 5 on my hands, then add up. – I use two hands and then use one hand again.
6	EVALUATE How well did I do?	Children experiment with the proposed solutions and assess them in terms of effectiveness (does it work or not work?) and efficiency (is it convenient? is it practicable?). Voting.
7	APPLY Let's do it!	Children use the chosen method (I keep the first number in mind and place the second in my hands, then count) to perform some sums.
8	LEARN FROM EXPERIENCE What have I learned?	What have we learned? Children reflect on what they have learned and how they can reuse it with other operations.

In the example given, children were guided and supported in the co-construction of new knowledge anchored in prior knowledge, which is the identification of a method for solving addition with fingers with numbers whose sum reaches up to 20. The teacher assessed the pair's work during learning without formalising it, taking notes of evidence and feedback provided to each couple to document each student's progress. Indeed, the learning plan allowed children's thoughts and their progress in acquiring a new strategy to be visible without the need to schedule a written test. The teacher helped the children self-assess their solutions in terms of effectiveness and efficiency, supporting each one's work with the feedback needed to understand the strengths and weaknesses of each proposal (see the paragraph "Purposes" for a better understanding of how inclusion can be supported). It is a clear example of formative assessment with the twofold purpose of assessment for learning (AfL) and assessment as learning (AsL). Indeed, the teacher used feedback and ongoing support to provide clear direction for students' learning improvement (AfL). At the same

time, she helped students develop and master thinking skills (AaL) to reflect on the task and solutions.

Dr. Alessandra Imperio, Free University of Bozen-Bolzano, Italy

Initial questions

In this chapter you will find the answers to the following questions:

1. WHY do we do assessments?
2. WHEN should assessment take place in the learning process?
3. HOW are assessment processes generally structured?
4. WHAT are the possible focuses of assessment in education?
5. WHO should be involved in the assessment processes?

Introduction to Topic

The chapter maps out different aspects and concerns of assessment in education. However, it does not claim to cover all the issues that such a complex topic can address but only offers insights from where to start and which need further study. We highlight five areas of interest: First, we distinguish three distinct purposes of assessment (as, for, and of learning). Secondly, assessment can occur at different learning moments (before, during, and after learning). Thirdly, assessment processes are to be divided into three key steps (strategies, criteria, and outcome). Furthermore, it is essential to line out the overall focus of the assessment (competencies, environment, and capabilities) and to consider the various actors that can be involved in assessment processes (teachers, parents, students, peers, and other "experts"). We portray some of the most essential aspects, inherent questions, concerns, and potential within each area. By doing this, we conclude by elaborating on the role of inclusion in every subsection of the assessment process.

Building upon an example from teachers' practice and experience with assessment, we will describe inherent challenges and risks that must be addressed as a crucial part of ethical considerations. Initial questions will then guide the structure of the chapter.

Following the introduction of the topic, critical areas of assessment in education will be presented in detail. We will conclude the chapter by suggesting some closing questions for further discussion.

Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations must be addressed when elaborating on educational assessment. The following subsections outline the specific potential of formative assessment strategies for inclusive contexts, difficulties, dilemmas, and challenges. These must not be neglected but critically and carefully examined. First, it is crucial to keep in mind the societal system that schools are part of. Schools follow allocative functions within a society where performance and achievements are of great importance, like in meritocracy (Trautmann & Wischer, 2011). Therefore, schools significantly impact the social placement of learners in the greater society (University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing 2010: 602). In practice, the social order of individuals is influenced in some countries by the division of pupils among different types of schools and by the distribution of differently valued school degrees. These practices within the school system led to unequal opportunities in a meritocratic society. Even though these aspects counteract the overarching aim of community and school for all, they must be considered pre-conditions framing the topic of assessment in education.

   In addition, questions on the fundamental aim and necessity of assessment and education arise within ethical considerations regarding assessment in education. Possible underlying and relevant questions in this context are, for example: 'Why do we do an assessment?', 'What is learning, education, and development?', 'How can we measure learning and development?', 'What role does assessment have in education?' While some of these questions are tackled more directly in the following subchapters, others can be understood as questions for (self-)reflection, and discussion and their careful consideration may promote more equality and justice within the field of educational assessment.

Assessment – What are we talking about?

Assessment is a contested and highly debated field, especially regarding inclusive education. To provide a comprehensive overview of related terms, concepts, and assumptions, it is first necessary to focus on the concept's meaning and distinguish it from other associated words like diagnostics and evaluation. On the one hand, following Ingenkamp & Lissmann (2005), educational diagnostic aims to identify individual pre-conditions and learning processes through diverse diagnostic activities to optimise individual learning. On the other hand, depending on the source, assessment and evaluation can be treated as synonyms or as distinct concepts (Apple, Ellis & Hintze, 2016; Hus & Matjašič, 2017). We understand evaluation in education as the "process used for judging quality" (Apple, 1991, as cited in Apple, Ellis & Hintze, 2016: 53) which determines the extent

to which goals have been achieved based on a standard (Apple, Ellis & Hintze, 2016; Surbhi, 2017).

Assessment, instead, can be described as "the process of finding and interpreting evidence to be used by learners and teachers to enable them to establish exactly where the learners are in their learning, where they have to focus, and what is the best way to get there" (Hus & Matjašič, 2017). Thus, assessment is process-oriented as it is based on continuous observations to provide feedback and identify areas of improvement, while evaluation is more product/outcome-oriented, for example, success and failure (Apple, Ellis, & Hintze, 2016; Surbhi, 2017). Therefore, even if the main focus of this chapter is the assessment, while talking about assessment these conceptual constructs (evaluation, diagnostics) are alsotaken into account. Furthermore, assessment can in general take place at an individual, classroom, school, regional, or even internal level; this chapter however mainly concentrates on the individual and classroom perspective.

Building upon these considerations, two main types of assessment can be differentiated: summative and formative assessment. While summative assessment mainly serves "the purposes of accountability, ranking, or certifying competence by the judgement of students' achievement" (Schellekens et al., 2021: 1), formative assessment primarily "supports and improves students' learning" (Schellekens et al., 2021: 1). Therefore, especially formative assessment is of great relevance for inclusive education and education for all. The formative role of assessment supports overcoming comparative and stigmatising perspectives on the students and thus has the potential to enable a more inclusive assessment. The picture below summarises the main differences between them.
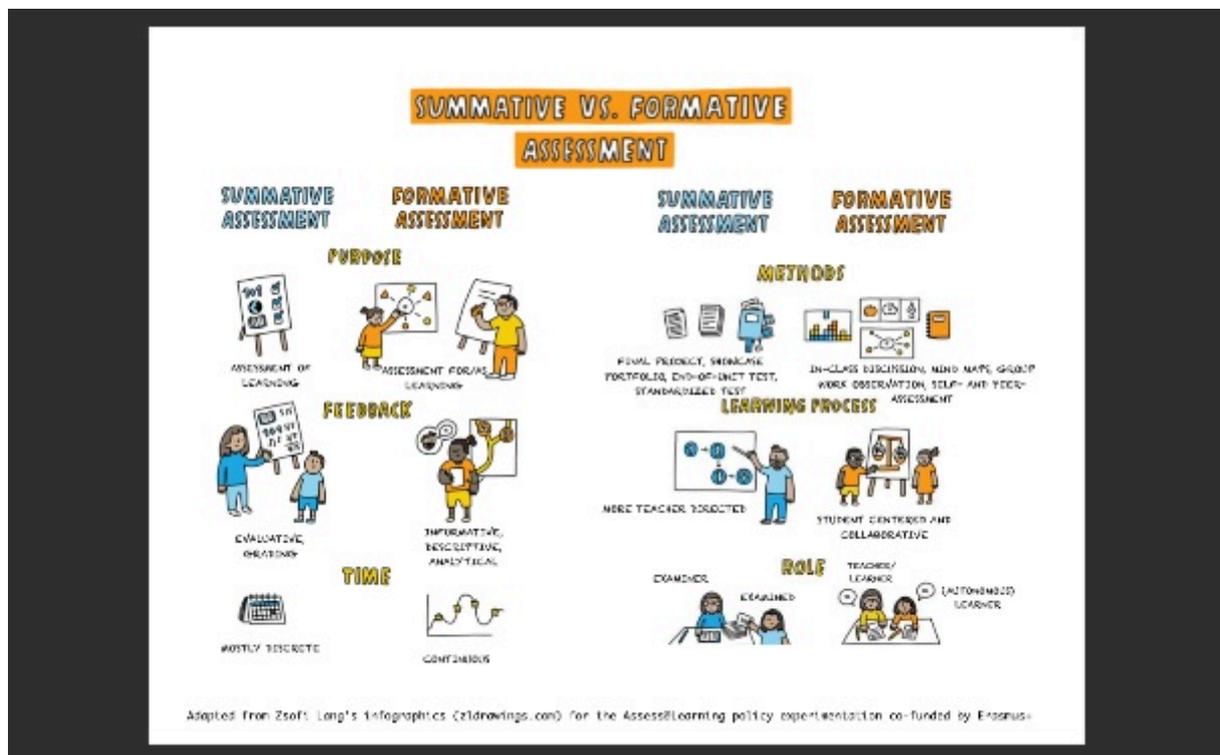
Key aspects

Purposes − WHY do we do assessments?

As suggested by Earl and colleagues (2006), the first question a teacher should ask himself/herself is not "how do I assess?" but "why do I want to assess, or do I need to assess?" Therefore, this means identifying the purpose of assessment since this has several implications: the role played by teachers and students, the teaching-learning process, and the choice of assessment methods. All these mentioned aspects are directly related to the <u>Teacher Habitus</u>. Three distinct but interrelated purposes of assessment are highlighted in the literature: Assessment OF Learning (AoL), Assessment FOR Learning (AfL), and Assessment AS Learning (AsL). There are several definitions of the three, and, more generally, each purpose simply corresponds to a type of approach to assessment (Schellekens et al., 2021). For teachers, it might be more practicable to reflect on the three as purposes in order to guide their actions and consequently, their approach to assessment. Arguably, following this route is easier to handle the many definitions and nuances in the literature. Moreover, by thinking of them as purposes, it is relevant to be aware that it is difficult to fulfil the three purposes at the same time; however, it is valuable to know them and to recognise the need to find the right balance between them (Earl et al., 2006). The following information on the assessment of/for/as learning is a brief compilation that has considered some of the existing resources in the literature (Alberta Education, 2003; Earl et al., 2006; Harapnuik, 2020; Schellekens et al., 2021).

Assessment OF *Learning*

AoL is the best-known purpose of assessment, as it reflects the traditional assessment perspective for most of the 20th century. AoL aims to certify competence or inform parents or other stakeholders about the student's proficiency concerning the learning outcomes of the curriculum. It is a <u>summative assessment</u> in nature, it is formal, and it usually occurs at the end of a training or a learning unit. It consists of collecting information on what extent students can apply knowledge, skills, and attitudes against a standard. There are many methods to collect this information, but they are not exclusive to this assessment purpose. For instance, they can be tests, presentations, or other written, oral, or visual methods. The assessment finishes with the assignment of a mark or comment on the product or performance. The role of the teacher is to grade achievement by considering students' products and processes and reporting this information. Usually, the teacher's grade or comment is used as an indicator of the student's level of success.

Assessment FOR *Learning*

When the purpose is to improve learning, it is called AfL. It is a <u>formative assessment</u> and is an integral part of the learning process. Thus, it is an ongoing process involving formal and informal assessment activities designed to modify teaching according to students' needs and to provide students with specific feedback that they can use to improve learning.

Therefore, to adjust and target teaching planning to move students' learning forward through precise feedback, it becomes necessary to make student learning visible. The main elements are descriptive feedback, as an example of what good work looks like, ongoing support, and peer collaboration. Feedback provides clear direction for improvement but also recognition of achievement. For gathering pieces of evidence, focused observation, videotapes, or audiotapes may be helpful; several strategies and methods can also be employed to make learning visible, including Cooperative learningactivities. Teachers and peers play s central role in this.

Assessment AS *Learning*

Finally, when the assessment aims to give opportunities to students to critically reflect on their work, to understand how to independently pursue their acquirements or, in other words, to promote deeper learning, develop metacognitive strategies and learn how to learn, in that case, we are talking about AaL. AaL is also considered a formative assessment. Students use formal and informal feedback and self-assessment to figure out how to continue learning. Since it is a reflective process, it should take place continuously. There are many methods for students to reflect on their learning, such as criteria, rubrics, and checklists. This approach to assessment involves each student and their peers. In this case, the teacher's role is to help students develop, master, and feel comfortable with these metacognitive strategies.

How can these assessment purposes sustain inclusion?

We can plan and employ inclusive assessment strategies with all three assessment approaches. In the case of AoL, assessment can be inclusive, for instance when you allow each student to decide in which form they want to show and make their learning visible. For example, a student can choose to show his/her learning in a written, oral, visual, or dramatic form. AfL might be more inclusive if the feedback is provided to each student individually or in a group since it is individualised for everybody in the class. Each student or group may receive specific material and guidance they need to progress. Finally, AaL gives you the foundation to be inclusive since students develop metacognitive skills that can help them become creators of their learning, with their own times and individual strengths.

Moments – WHEN should assessment take place in the learning process?

Time management is one of the most important things to remember when it comes to formative assessment. As the French pedagogist Philippe Perrenoud reminds us, we cannot introduce formative assessment in schools without a radical change in traditional educational institutions (Perrenoud, 2005, 1999). In fact, one of the crucial changes in this regard is related to time management. In the assessment process, we can identify three central moments in which assessment can take place: "before," "during," and "after" the learning process. How we give meaning to these three steps is different for each teacher and reveals the reasons why we decide to conduct an assessment and, more generally,

why we teach. We can see the initial phase as a diagnostic phase, in which the teacher considers the level reached by the pupils and their needs. However, analysing needs as a diagnosis carries a risk: privileging the selective dimension of evaluation over the formative one, thus limiting oneself to giving a static interpretation of a given moment. We must encourage a dynamic and open understanding of the processes that take place within the classroom and are in constant flux. In this phase, the assessment process must establish the learning objectives and the criteria for success (Black and Wiliam, 1998). If we do not establish criteria, students are disoriented and do not understand what they can gain from this learning experience. Furthermore, the "before" phase is also the planning phase, which is also the phase we should refer to at the end of the learning process. The planning phase is not a simple conception of activities but aims to identify the final goals and the means we can use to achieve them. Planning is always a contextualised phenomenon in the classroom and, therefore, always starts from the needs of each student. It is not something implicit, and it is not something clear only from the teacher's perspective. Still, it must be as explicit as possible to communicate to the pupils where they are in their learning journey and what gap separates them from the point they want to reach. Furthermore, the design must be open to new contributions and possible modifications throughout the school year. Finally, assessing is for learning and creating new learning opportunities. Therefore, the teacher must learn from the assessment journey and return to the planning to understand its possible developments and improvements. The 'before' phase is also a time when teamwork can take place (Teamwork in the classroom). Teachers at this stage can share their views on the planning and the objectives. In this sense, the possibility of having an interdisciplinary perspective is valuable for all those involved in the evaluation process. From an AaL perspective (@Purposes), for students, the "before" phase may represent an occasion to conduct self-assessment to better understand the level of knowledge already possessed when fragments of memory are collected and organised. They will eventually anchor this knowledge to the one they already acquired.

The "during" phase is the part of conducting activities, the stage in which pupils play an active role that can provide the teacher with an opportunity to gather evidence (Carr, 2012, 2001; Giudici & Rinaldi, 2011). It is not enough to have strong listening or observational skills, and the teacher must no longer be the leading actor in what happens within the classroom. If we want to gather evidence about what our pupils can do, it is first necessary to allow them to act freely. Celestìn Freinet (as cited in Bottero, 2021) reminds us that everybody wants to be allowed to choose their work freely, even if such a choice sometimes is not convenient. Leaving pupils free to choose allows them to discover more about their tastes, inclinations, and needs. At this stage, it is essential to rethink the value of observation and documentation. These tools allow teachers to gather evidence in a completely different way from a simple test or homework assignment. To observe, the teacher must ensure that the pupil can act freely without depending on the adult's guidance. However, there is a second aspect that we must bear in mind when we speak of observation

and documentation, namely the fact that it is impossible to observe and, therefore, document everything that takes place within the classroom. It is, therefore, necessary to have already prepared the time and way to conduct the observation in the planning phase.

The most characteristic phase to consider when reflecting on different moments is what we refer to as the "after." There are several possible "after" types: we can mean the end of a unit of learning, the end of a school year, or the end of a study cycle. By and large, only if assessment becomes a tool that follows the student even after the learning journey can we call it formative. A purely summative assessment usually ends with the final return of the test result. In contrast, a practical formative assessment should pose as a continuous process that allows students to find in the assessment a functional element for any other future learning. In this sense, all learning never ends in itself but stimulates the search for new horizons of growth. One example of the "after" phase can be the simple use of the "ticket to leave" teaching strategy. It can reinforce new knowledge, provide a time for reflection, and/or allow the teacher to evaluate what students will take home. It will help the teacher decide whether to dwell on the topic further. Before students leave, they hand in a "ticket" with an answer to a question about what they learned (for example, what do you think you learned today? Do you have a question to ask about something you didn't understand?) The exit tickets help you plan the next lesson or unit of learning.

How can these assessment moments sustain inclusion?

Of the three stages reported here, the last one, the after moment, is the one that would be most appropriate to look at from an inclusive perspective. On the one hand, this perspective allows teachers to look beyond the hindrances or difficulties encountered by pupils with special educational needs; on the other hand, it allows them to reconsider learning objectives from the student's own needs   (Lepri, 2021). The idea of adopting a long-range evaluative perspective that looks at students' personal futures and their need for self-determination is an essential step if we are to ensure that schools truly help each student cultivate his or her potential. From this perspective, any assessment that claims to be formative must necessarily take time, seeking to understand learning processes in their complexity   (Vertecchi & Bonazza, 2022).

Structure – HOW are assessment processes generally structured?

Even though assessment processes can have many different focuses and approaches, it can be noted that there is an overall structure of assessment that tends to stay the same: We apply certain *categories*, use certain *strategies*, and aim for a certain *outcome* of an assessment. These structural aspects of assessment are not only the same for educational assessment processes but can also be found in other disciplines that work with assessment, for example, in health care, medicine, and psychology (Madden et al., 2007; Schliehe & Ewert, 2013; World Health Organization, 2021). In the following, an overview of categories, strategies, and outcomes of assessment in education is provided. Within each

of these aspects, a huge variety of embodiments that consequently lead to different kinds of assessment can be identified. The chapter aims at giving an overview of educational assessment by presenting how an inclusive structure of assessment could look like in theory and practice.

Categories of Assessment

Firstly, categories are one of the main issues of assessment processes. As the use of categories raises many concerns "such as stigmatisation, peer rejection, and lowered self-evaluation [as well as] […] problems of reliability and validity" (Florian et al., 2006: 37), a careful reflection of this aspect is important. Despite these concerns, it must be noted that categories are necessary for thinking, in general, and assessment, in particular (Katzenbach, 2015). With regard to assessment "systems of classification [thus] remain an important way of organising information so that it can be passed to others, and they provide a framework to guide intervention" (Florian et al., 2006: 37).

Therefore, especially in assessment, categories that suitably describe what has been or what will be assessed are necessary. The suitability of these categories, nevertheless, can vary in many ways. On the one hand, *categories of assessment can be standardised, pre-defined*, and for example, based on curricula or certain diagnostic tests. These types of categories can therefore be considered deductive categories, as they arise from theories or specific category systems, for example, ICD or ICF of the World Health Organization 2001, 2005. Deductive categories, in general, promise somewhat higher comparability as the same set of categories is used in different contexts and assessment processes. Hence, they are, for instance, used to justify the allocation of resources (Florian et al., 2006: 39). On the other hand, inductive categories can also be used. These kinds of *categories of assessment arise during the assessment process* and teachers, as well as students, can be creators of these categories. Consequently, their experiences and practices have a direct impact on the development of these kinds of categories. Therefore, inductive categories might generally be considered to be more accurate and precise, but at the same time, their specificity and individuality might complicate comparability.

With regard to *categories for inclusive assessment*, a critical examination of enabling and stigmatising effects thus is crucial (Florian et al., 2006: 39). While there are deductive criteria like those from the ICF (World Health Organization, 2005) that can contribute to inclusive assessment, other deductive criteria that focus on disabilities, for example ICD (World Health Organization, 2001) tend not to support this perspective. However, inductively generated criteria can support inclusive approaches as they are developed very flexibly, individually, and are practice-based. Nevertheless, this kind of category tends to bear the risk of overseeing aspects that are not at the centre of attention and generating new, possibly stigmatising criteria.

Overall, it is possible to assess development and learning with a variety of open, flexible, and inductively generated criteria as well as with pre-fixed, theory-based, and deductively generated criteria. While all these options go along with certain advantages and

consequences, it is particularly important to keep the inevitable risk of categories in general in mind (Florian et al., 2006). As Boger (2017) points out, inclusion can always only fulfil two of the three basic propositions that are crucial for inclusion: empowerment, normalisation, and deconstruction. Following this, empowerment and normalisation are impossible when not using some kind of category (Boger, 2017). And as long ascategories are in place, there is a risk that they are used in discrediting ways (Katzenbach, 2015). In order to prevent and counteract stigmatisation, this risk must be considered when using standardised as well as more open categories.

Strategies of Assessment

In addition to the critical examination of appropriate and meaningful assessment categories, also a reflection on the suitability of possible tools of assessment, respectively assessment strategies are crucial. Within assessment strategies, we can broadly distinguish between two modes. Firstly, strategies of assessment can be designed in a *rather obvious and standardised* way and for instance rely on (multiple-choice) tests, quizzes, dictations, and examinations (Schäfer & Rittmeyer, 2015). Secondly, strategies of assessment can also be *rather open and flexible* and thus rely on the collection of evidence during the learning process for making learning visible (Mughini, Panzavolta, 2020). Materials such as students' drawings, texts, or classroom observations could thus be of interest (Earl & Katz 2006: 17). Moreover, materials that develop in the contexts of students' demonstrations, discussions, projects (ibid.), Inclusive Play, or on the basis of (Digital) media & materials for learning can be included in the assessment process. This way, learning and assessment processes take place simultaneously, as promoted by the formative assessment perspective.

In the light of *inclusive assessment strategies*, many of the before-mentioned forms are generally conceivable and verifiable if connected to suitable categories and outcomes of the assessment. While some situations, contexts, or needs might give valuable reasons to use standardised assessment strategies (for example, for official documentation or resource allocation), assessment strategies that are more flexible and student-oriented can especially be considered important for inclusive settings, as they provide very individual information on the student. Even though rather open approaches and inductive analyses might not withstand the quality criteria of standardised tests, they are of high relevance for inclusive assessment as they enable the collection of rich qualitative data on the student's learning and development process. The flexible and reflected use of assessment strategies in light of the particular situation and aim of the assessment is thus necessary to gain deep and meaningful insights and conduct a suitable assessment, or as Bourke and Mentis (2014: 395) state: "Ultimately, teachers' choices about the assessment practices they use for learners […] reflect their views about teaching, assessment, and learning and must therefore be both a conscious and informed decision, while weighing up ethical dilemmas that arise."

Outcome of Assessment

The third aspect that must be highlighted when elaborating on the assessment structure is the outcome of the assessment. The main focus that is generally put on assessment outcomes is *feed-back*. Feedback is a crucial part of the process, as it provides an overview and insight into what has been done and what has been reached in the past process. Therefore, written and oral feedback, structured and semi-structured, as well as standardised and open feedback, can be used (Bastian et al., 2018; Halverson, 2010; Ibrahim et al., 2021). Very common assessment outcomes are marks and grades, whereas learning reports and other more open feedback formats are still used but these are used primarily in lower grades. In this respect, it is interesting to look at a specific case.

As of the school year 2020-2021, the Italian Ministry of Education has proposed a new, more formative-oriented mode of assessment in the final report. Instead of numerical grades, so-called 'descriptive judgments' have been introduced, which require the teacher to ask about four dimensions relating to achieving the set goals. These are the continuity with which learning occurs, the autonomy with which it is conducted, the type of resources the pupil uses spontaneously, and whether the learning situation was previously known or unknown. This tool allows pupils to reflect much more deeply on their learning-to-learn competence, enhancing metacognitive processes in a formative perspective.

In light of inclusion, feedback should provide a resource-oriented perspective with detailed information about the learning process, and achievements (Brooks et al., 2019). While feedback is a crucial part of the assessment process, one outcome that is often neglected is a form of *feed-forward*. Feedforward can be understood as the outcome of assessment contributing to the improvement of the situation that has been found in the past assessment process (Brooks et al., 2019:10). In order to promote the learning and development of students, feedforward thus plays a key role. It provides information about possible next learning steps and related ideas, adaptions, and interventions that could be considered to improve students' learning and development. In this way, a feedforward can help to shift the view from the past and the question of 'what has been reached or done?' to the future and the question of 'what could be reached or done?'

In order to develop *inclusive assessment outcomes*, it is generally important to not only provide meaningful feed-back but also feed-forward, as "the provision of feedback is no guarantee of it being used" (Brooks et al., 2019: 7). Therefore, the outcome of the assessment can be considered the most supportive for inclusive education if it is process-oriented and provides information that can be considered for the arrangement of future learning and development processes and thus promote learning (Brooks et al., 2019). Moreover, it is necessary to reflect on the question of to whom feed-back and feed-forward are addressed? The shape and content of the outcome must be aligned with the expected recipients in order to fulfil the aims that were fixed in advance. Building on that, the outcome should provide meaningful information for the involved actors on how future learning processes could be designed and what adaptations and changes can be done.

How can this assessment structure sustain inclusion?

With regard to an *inclusive structure of assessment*, it is necessary to carefully consider the inclusivity and suitability of all three before-mentioned aspects: categories, strategies, and outcomes must correspond with the addressed student(s) (for example, Relationships, Sex/Gender, interests, needs, prior knowledge,…), the situation, and the aim of the assessment. Only if all three structural aspects are extensively elaborated and mutually consistent, can assessment promote learning and thus can be considered as inclusive and wholesome.

Focus – WHAT are the possible focusses of assessment in education?

One of the main aspects to consider is, "what do we want to assess?" This is usually competencies. Competencies involve the individual in a holistic perspective and are related to skills and abilities; these three help convey a broad idea of what a student can do to activate cognitive, meta-cognitive, emotional, social, and physical processes. Precisely because of its multifaceted nature, we can only observe the manifestation of competence when the student is in action and is enabled to act and mobilise different types of personal resources (for example, knowledge, skills, and attitudes). Moreover, competence is not reducible to an abstract concept but is always related to specific social, cultural, and operational contexts. Content knowledge accounts for only a tiny part of these processes, but it is often the element teachers promoting purely summative assessment tend to value most. Conversely, students should be able to understand their strengths and weaknesses, be encouraged to act autonomously, and face new challenges and unknown problematic situations, which means to "know what to do when you don't know what to do" (Claxton, 1998). However, we cannot limit ourselves to considering skills and competencies as the sole object of evaluation. The quality of the learning environment must be kept in mind when we look at all the potential inherent to the learning process. If it does not guarantee the student the fundamental elements for their development and growth, we must reflect on this aspect and try to change the learning situation. There are no neutral choices in education. To take care of the learning environment means reflecting on how students are enabled and supported to interact with each other, how free they are to explore the school environment and how they can be open to new knowledge and modes of exploration. Assessing a student without considering the potential offered by the learning environment and the obstacles it may pose does not help us fully understand the resources available to our students.

Now, let's take a step back and ask ourselves for which purposes we assess. Undoubtedly, one of the main tasks of the school should be to help students discover their interests and passions. However, the possibility of making such a discovery should not be taken for granted. Although a student may have an idea of what they like as early as primary school, it may not necessarily manifest itself. Often, a child needs a long time to explore the world around them to understand what they like. The assessment process plays an

essential role in this possibility of discovery and can inhibit or facilitate the exploration of yet unfamiliar activities and contexts. Self-assessment is a tool for students to gain critical awareness in this regard. To this end, we may use the so-called narrative assessment. This tool allows the pupils to recount what they consider to be the strengths and weaknesses of something they have experienced. Finally, it is possible to see the focus on the learning environment and the competencies in a new light, which is the development of capabilities. When we think about assessment, we must also ask ourselves what our pupils are capable of being and doing. This perspective would be helpful in considering well-being, happiness, and self-realisation as possibly essential acquisitions of the whole assessment process. Capabilities are the most important opportunities the learning context offers the students to start realising a kind of life they have reason to value. Assessment could be a powerful leverage to help them understand such opportunities' existence and potential.

How can these assessment focuses sustain inclusion?

From the perspective of inclusive pedagogy, the development of capabilities provides for greater involvement of students' voice to achieve personalised learning objectives. We should not forget that assessment on the one hand determines the balance of power in the teaching-learning process and, on the other hand, establishes what is important within it, giving relevance to one learning content over another (Cottini, 2021). Giving voice to the aspirations, goals, and life plans of students with special educational needs means recognising the pluralism of values that should be an indispensable element of democratic learning. It also means, above all, recognising people with their emotional and existential experience, truly making room for diversity.

Actors – WHO should be involved in the assessment processes?

Last but not least, the question to be tackled in this context is about who is and who should be involved in the assessment processes? As assessment processes are very complex, numerous actors may be involved. In particular, it is important to keep in mind that it is not only about who is contributing to the assessment and considered to have valuable information but also about who is being assessed. In order to line out more clearly which actors could, and possibly should, be involved in the different stages of assessment processes, the following subsections address this question in more detail.

Students

The first group of actors that must be considered in the assessment process is students. Especially in light of inclusive assessment, it is necessary to focus on all instead of focusing on some students (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). Every student brings particular competencies, interests, capabilities, and needs towards their environment to the classroom. In order to address this diversity (for example, language, Sex/Gender education), and enable active and meaningful participation of all, it is necessary to consider each student. Therefore, group assessment, as well as self-assessment strategies, can

be valuable. Students thus must not only be considered as the centre of assessment but also as valuable actors in assessment (@assessment as learning). According to the Social Childhood Studies paradigm, children take on the role of expert actors and main informants in their own lives and for this reason, they should be consulted and involved in decision-making processes that affect them (Kampmann, 2014; Levin, 2013; Melton et al., 2014). This paradigmatic shift through students' voices and active participation can also have interesting implications in assessment practices. Alongside, in the case of students in higher grades and school orders, according to the Student Voice Movement (Grion & Cook-Sather, 2013), it is about empowering them to have a voice in the life contexts they experience. Active involvement and participation of children and teenagers in assessment practices can be realised not only in assessment and peer assessment activities, indeed, just students can, for example, co-construct checklists, assessment rubrics and, more generally, define assessment criteria with their teachers (or independently) (Grion, 2014; categories of assessment). They can also choose how to demonstrate learning and thus have a voice in the choice of the assessment tool (strategies of assessment). A helpful tool for stimulating pupil participation is what Celestin Freinet (Bottero, 2021) called *brevet* (patents), a term he took from the scout movement founded by Baden-Powell. It is a kind of certificate of acquisition of a skill or competence that the pupil demonstrates having acquired following a specific performance and comparison with the class group. The pupils freely choose when to try to achieve such recognition based on what they feel they have learned so far. This free choice allows pupils to gain an essential awareness of what they can do, or not, by facilitating the self-assessment process.

Teachers

In addition to the students, another critical role is played by teachers. Teachers interact with their students on a daily basisand have an immense impact on their students' learning and development process. Therefore, their role in the assessment process is also crucial. All teachers should be considered here: class teachers, subject teachers and special educators.Depending on the aim and context of the assessment, it can be helpful and reasonable to involve only specific teachers, for instance, certain subject teachers or a wider group of teachers and educators (Galloway et al., 2013). In order to gain a broad overview of possible restraining factors and barriers for learners, and obtain a more holistic view of the situation, consultation and involvement of a wide range of (pedagogical) actors is often necessary. Therefore, also a reflected decision on Strategies of Assessment is crucial, and especially with regard to Relationships and Teamwork in the classroom, the inclusion of perspectives of different educators can be helpful.

Moreover, teachers' self-reflection and habitus (see Teacher Habitus) play a crucial role in assessment. Teachers, but also other actors that are involved in the assessment processes inevitably maintain certain presumptions or even biases that, as a consequence, can affect the assessment, if it is not critically examined and reflected upon. In addition, also trust between the different actors plays a crucial role in assessment processes. Teachers

especially are thus asked to establish a mutual and trustworthy relationship among the involved actors. Another aspect to be considered here, is the possibility to assess teachers from the perspective of students, parents, and legal guardians. While teachers mostly are in the role of assessing students, it is thus also possible to assess the teachers' work. This is especially of high importance, as teachers' ability to provide meaningful learning opportunities has a great impact on the student's learning and development process and thus should also be assessed. In particular, it must be borne in mind that if an assessment is indeed formative, then the responsibility for a negative outcome of the teaching-learning process no longer lies with the students. In an effectively formative perspective, those who must question their choices and ask why students did not achieve the desired results therefore are the teachers. Accordingly, teachers should rethink their design choices and improve the learning environment for their students' learning in the future.

Parents & Legal Guardians

Another important role in the assessment process is played by parents, caregivers, and legal guardians. These actors often have another and very important perspective on the childs' competencies, interests, capabilities, and needs towards the environment. As parents and legal guardians mostly interact with the child in situations and ways that are to a great extent contrasting to the teacher's perspective, their knowledge and opinion are highly valuable for the assessment process and for a wholesome comprehension of the situation (Bastian et al., 2018; Galloway et al., 2013). Therefore, it is necessary not only to involve parents and legal guardians in the assessment, but to carefully pay attention to their views and experiences, to involve them equally, and to ensure favourable communication. A careful consideration of eligible Strategies of Assessment, and Outcomes of Assessment, therefore, are necessary to ensure good and purposeful cooperation.

Other "Experts"

In addition to the aforementioned groups of actors, also other "experts" can be involved in the assessment. The involvement often not only depends on regional or national rules and regulations for educational assessment, but also on the specific case, situation, and aim of the particular assessment (Galloway et al., 2013). Actors that are frequently considered experts for assessment processes are, for example, medical doctors, psychologists, social workers, and youth welfare workers but also health care workers, teaching assistants, and physiotherapists can and are valuable contributors to assessment. The benefit of contributions of the different kinds of other experts must be carefully reflected upon in order to include all views and opinions that are necessary to enable a comprehensive and meaningful assessment process.

How can these actors sustain inclusion?

With regard to *actors of inclusive assessment*, equal involvement and careful consideration of diverse groups must be stressed. Therefore, it is essential to pay attention to different perspectives and experiences that are in place and to enable communication and decision-making. This is especially crucial for the involvement of students and peers,

as well as of parents and legal guardians, as their experiences are often not considered and valued enough in assessment processes. Moreover, it is necessary to keep in mind that the described actors are not only part of the assessment process but also of the learning and development processes that precede and follow. Careful consideration of the actors' different positions, contributions, and demands thus is important in all steps of learning and assessment.

Local contexts

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=373#h5p-20

Closing questions to discuss or tasks

While the chapter on assessment certainly provides a broad overview of the topic and outlines key aspects that must be considered, the flexible and reflected use of assessment in light of the particular situation and aim of the assessment is thus necessary to gain deep and meaningful insights and conduct suitable assessments in specific situations. In order to support this reflective process we provide questions for discussion and reflection that can be addressed individually or as a team. The questions tackle the various aspects that were mentioned in the previous sections and help teachers to develop specific assessment strategies for practical use in their everyday practice.

WHY: Why do we do assessment?

- Why do I want/need to assess?
- May I fulfil a summative and a formative assessment at the same time?
- How can I make assessment of learning inclusive and fair?
- How can I make assessment for learning inclusive and fair?
- How can I make assessment as learning inclusive and fair?
- Which of the three purposes/approaches to assessment should be pursued most? For what reason?

WHEN: When should assessment take place in the learning process?

- What happens before the assessment?

- What happens during the assessment?
- What happens after the assessment?
- Which role does planning play in the different phases of the assessment process?

HOW: How are assessment processes generally structured?

- Do I have a clear and well-founded aim and focus of assessment and what is it?
- Should I work with inductively or deductively generated categories and why so?
- Which categories can I use and what are possible risks and side-effects?
- Which strategies and tools of assessment can I use to gain deep and holistic insights?
- How do the assessment strategies compliment or overlap with one another?
- Is the outcome of assessment a feedback, a feedforward or both?
- What outcome is necessary to improve the student's situation?
- Which categories, strategies, and outcomes are necessary to reach the pre-defined aim of the assessment?

WHAT: What are possible focuses of assessment in education?

- Which role do competencies, abilities, and knowledge play in the assessment process?
- Why is it important to consider hindrances and opportunities related to the classroom environment?
- How can the interests of every single student be better involved in the assessment?
- What kind of contribution could a capability-based perspective offer to the assessment process?

WHO: Who should be involved in the assessment processes?

- Who or what is in the centre of assessment / who or what is assessed?
- Which actors can contribute valuable information to the assessment?
- How can I establish a trustful atmosphere with all the involved actors?
- Are all necessary perspectives considered or did I inadvertently omit something or someone?

Moreover, it might also be interesting to reflect on or discuss the following questions that were posed at the beginning of the chapter:

- What are learning, education, and development?
- How can we measure learning and development?
- What role does assessment have in education?

Overall, careful consideration of all the above-mentioned questions is necessary to ensure and strengthen equality and justice within the field of educational assessment.

Literature

Department of Education and Skills (DES). "National Strategy: Literacy and Numeracy for Learning for Life 2011 – 2020," 2017. https://assets.gov.ie/24960/93c455d4440246cf8a701b9e0b0a2d65.pdf.

Government of Ireland (GOI). Education Act (1998). https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1998/act/51.

———. "Information for Schools on Delivering Revised and New Specifications," 2024. https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/72c0d-information-for-schools-on-delivering-revised-and-new-specifications/#:~:text=In%20September%202023%2C%20the%20Minister,%2C%20Ancient%20Greek%2C%20and%20Business.

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA). "Aistear Siolta Practice Guide," 2019. https://www.aistearsiolta.ie/en/introduction/overview/aistear-siolta-practice-guide-introduction.pdf.

———. "Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework," 2009. https://curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/484bcc30-28cf-4b24-90c8-502a868bb53a/Aistear-Principles-and-Themes_EN.pdf.

———. "Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum. Guidelines for Schools," 2007. https://www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/2b3eaa53-cb4b-4053-9d71-2d28d9d6c734/Assessment-Guidelines.pdf.

———. "Curriculum Online: Assessment," 2024. https://www.curriculumonline.ie/senior-cycle/assessment/.

———. "Mo Scéal Reporting Template," 2024. https://ncca.ie/en/early-childhood/mo-sceal/mo-sceal-reporting-templates/.

———. "Supporting Assessment in Schools," 2005. https://ncca.ie/media/1351/assessment-guidelines.pdf.

About the authors

Eva Kleinlein

Eva Kleinlein is a university assistant and PhD student at the Centre for Teacher Education at the University of Vienna, Austria. In her research and her work she mainly focuses on inclusive education in an international comparative / transcultural perspective. Moreover, she is engaged in topics such as inclusive assessment, digital methods in qualitative research, inclusive teaching practices, and teacher diversity.

Valerio Rigo

Valerio Rigo is a PhD student at the Free University of Bozen/Bolzano and works on formative assessment from the perspective of the capability approach. He has a master's degree in philosophy and a second master's degree in education. He is coordinator of the Evaluation Team of the Movimento di Cooperazione Educativa (MCE, a movement inspired by the pedagogy of Célestin Frenet).

Alessandra Imperio

Alessandra Imperio has a Ph.D. in General Pedagogy, Social Pedagogy, General Didactics, and Disciplinary Didactics. She has been a primary school teacher for about 18 years and is currently a research assistant at the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano, Faculty of Education. Her main research interests are formative and inclusive assessment, pedagogy of the question and dialogic teaching/learning, learning approaches for inclusion, and life skills development.

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT PUT INTO PRACTICE

Vana Chiou; Janneke Eising; Pamela February; and Melike Özüdoğru

---

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=427#oembed-1

Example Case

"Leah has just graduated and is a novice teacher who was given a grade 7 class at the beginning of the year. She has 32 learners in her class, and she is excited to work with her first class. From what she has learned so far, they come from diverse backgrounds with different interests, learning abilities, and needs. Their diversity is not an issue for her as she really wants to accommodate all her learners and create a safe, welcoming, and inclusive learning environment. Leah would like to try more formative assessments to assist her in catering to all her learners, but she has heard from others that it is time-consuming and difficult to execute in larger classes."

Initial questions

In this chapter you will find the answers to the following questions:

- Why should we employ formative assessments in inclusive classrooms?
- How can teachers be encouraged to use formative assessment in their classrooms?
- Can this be done in small steps without disrupting the class?

Introduction to Topic

Leah's perception of formative assessment is similar to that of many teachers, be they novices or more experienced teachers. Formative assessment has been around for as long as summative assessment has and is regarded as essential to education. However, the implementation of formative assessment appears to create "assessment tension" in teachers, according to Chan and Tan (2022). Assessment tension is created when education policies and reforms around formative assessment appear to be "required" of teachers and they may not be ready for these changes. They may also see formative assessment as being time-consuming. In addition, teachers see large classes as a barrier when implementing formative assessment because the perception is that the activities related to formative assessment take even longer with larger classes. So how do we address these perceptions of teachers? According to Widiastuti and colleagues (2020), a positive belief by teachers in formative assessment is the result of having a strong understanding of the benefits of using formative assessment in the classroom. In turn, these beliefs impact the way teachers implement formative assessment and how they make decisions regarding the learning outcomes achieved by learners. Thus, the successful implementation of formative assessment depends on the knowledge and skills teachers have on the topic, their attitudes, and beliefs towards the value of using formative assessment and whether their classroom practices regarding formative assessment enhance the learning outcomes for their learners.

This chapter aims to unpack formative assessment as a concept, delve into five key strategies, and show its connectedness to classroom practices and ideologies that well-trained teachers already believe in. Furthermore, the chapter links these key strategies to success criteria that teachers use in their daily teaching. What makes the chapter distinctive is that it links the success criteria to formative assessment techniques that enhance these criteria. Specifically, each of the five key strategies will highlight a formative assessment technique, discuss how teachers can use it in the classroom practically, and pinpoint pitfalls (if any) that teachers need to note, for example, as related to classroom management. The aim is to demonstrate how teachers' simple adjustments to assessment practices can lead to increased classroom participation, learners who are aware of their learning, and typically a more fun classroom experience for all.

It is believed that when teachers are willing to make changes to their current classroom

practices regarding formative assessment, in small incremental ways, the learning and teaching experience can be enhanced. These small steps for a teacher can lead to greater learning opportunities for their learners and hopefully, encourage the teacher to venture into more complex formative assessment techniques (Yan et al., 2021). The chapter provides several formative techniques for each of the key strategies that range from the simple, quick, and easily implementable to the more complex techniques that may span over a longer time and require more input from both the teachers and learners. In addition, student/future teachers can also make use of the added resources provided at the end of the chapter.

This chapter can be read in conjunction with the chapter, Formative Assessment For-Of Learning (All Means All).

Key aspects

UNPACKING FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

How do we define formative assessment?

Two evaluation methods that teachers frequently employ to gauge students' understanding of new content and compliance with learning goals are formative (assessment for/as learning) and summative assessment (assessment of learning). While summative assessment uses the information to determine students' knowledge level upon the completion of a learning unit or sequence, formative assessment entails obtaining data to improve students' learning (Dixton & Worell, 2016).

Formative assessment is a continuous, ongoing, and "forming" process that goes alongside teaching. Although there is not a commonly accepted definition in literature, it is widely acknowledged that this type of assessment occurs while teaching and learning are taking place and is considered a crucial component of the instructional process. Interestingly, formative assessment, as mentioned by Dodge (2009), is a part of learning. That is, we cannot regard it as a distinct phase but rather as a key piece of the learning and teaching process.

The main goal of formative assessment is to provide teachers with information on their students' needs and learning progress during the instructional phase. It is a useful feedback source that empowers teachers with data and gives them a clear picture of their students' learning journey toward the achievement of the learning goals. In addition, formative assessment can also provide students with information regarding their work and development throughout the lesson. Formative assessment typically has little to do with assigning grades to students. It aims to identify students' needs in the classroom about the learning goals set by the teacher and the potential areas that need to be improved. Robert Stake's maxim (Figure 1) describes formative assessment as taking place when a

cook tastes the soup and summative assessment when the guests taste the soup. In the first scenario, the objective is to make adjustments while there is still an opportunity to do so, whereas in the second scenario, there is a sense of finality that accompanies the act of judgement (Tomlinson & Moon, 2013).

Figure 1: The difference between formative and summative assessment

1-rmdQussDcqRJohuce5NoRQ.jpeg (558×418) (robmcentarffer.net)

There is a wide repertoire of activities, tasks, tools, and resources that can be used in the classroom to implement formative assessment, including observations, exercises, conversations, visualisations, and so on. In the classroom, two types of formative assessment can be implemented: spontaneous (indirect/informal) and planned (direct/formal) (Dixson & Worrell, 2016). Spontaneous formative assessment typically refers to unplanned, unstructured tasks because they require no dedicated instructional time to compile the data for each student and they provide teachers with information about their students' development. Discussions, body language signs, question-answers during classes, and so on are indicative examples of such tasks. In this way, teachers learn about students' interests, working styles that appear to help some students or hinder others, subjects or abilities in which some students are very proficient, or areas in which some students are lacking and use this information to plan for upcoming lessons. Planned (direct/formal) formative assessment refers to more structured tasks that are designed to provide information about students' comprehension and require sacrificing instructional time for the sole goal of collecting data at the student level (Tomlinson & Moon, 2013). Pretests with paper and pencil, diary entries or writing exercises, quizzes, self and peer assessments, home assignments, and log entries are a few forms of planned assessments.

Formative assessment as an inclusive assessment method

The value of formative assessment in inclusive classrooms cannot be underestimated. Inclusive education aims to ensure equal opportunities for participation in education and learning processes for all students. The primary aim of inclusive pedagogical approaches is to avoid marginalisation in classrooms by applying strategies designed exclusively for specific individual needs (Florian & Beaton, 2018). Using formative assessment strategies provides opportunities whereby students are involved in similar assessment activities which are differentiated for their specific needs. This type of engagement with students can be a driving force to ensure an inclusive learning environment for all students regardless of their diverse needs, levels, and backgrounds.

The question that arises is why employ formative assessment in inclusive classrooms. How can it contribute to inclusion and what can be its impact on teaching in inclusive classrooms? Interestingly, Florian and Beaton (2018) mention that the key assumption for formative assessment is that it supports the engagement of all students in the learning process. In other words, we assume that formative assessment, when used consistently and methodically to enhance all students' learning and understanding, may contribute to inclusion in classrooms by engaging all learners and teachers in the learning process.

Moreover, by engaging all students in the assessment process, teachers can also encourage them to take responsibility for their own learning, feel independent and included, and improve their metacognition skills and their sense of self-efficacy. Formative assessment can promote self-assessment and guide students to self-monitor their own learning and comprehension. Students may feel more involved in the learning process this way. Furthermore, formative assessment can help students demonstrate what they know, and offer their teachers helpful information so that they can tailor the instruction to their needs (Yan et al., 2021).

In addition, as previously mentioned, by using formative assessment, teachers gain valuable information about students' needs and progress to adjust their instruction to their students' needs and leverage their understanding and mastery of the content. This allows them to reflect on their teaching and better organise their instruction to meet the different needs of all students. It is important to highlight at this point that the formative assessment should be aligned with the learning goals to deliver accurate and clear feedback to the engaged learners and teachers. All formative assessment activities and tasks should be designed, pre-organised or spontaneously implemented with the learning goals set regarding the content area of the lesson (Andrade et. al, 2019).

Cizek (2010) provides a list of ten fundamental characteristics of formative assessment that should be considered when designing it.

Formative assessment:

1. Focuses on goals that represent valuable educational outcomes with applicability

beyond the learning context

2. Communicates clear, specific learning goals

3. Provides examples of learning goals, including, when relevant, the specific grading criteria or rubrics that will be used to evaluate the student's work

4. Identifies student's current knowledge/skills and necessary prerequisites for the desired goals

5. Requires development of plans for attaining the desired goals

6. Includes frequent assessment, including self-assessment, peer assessment, and assessment embedded within learning activities

7. Includes feedback that is non-evaluative, specific, timely, related to the learning goals, and provides recommendations to improve

8. Encourages students to self-monitor progress toward the learning goals

9. Promotes metacognition and reflection by students on their work

10. Encourages students to take responsibility for their own learning.

Adapted from Cizek (2010) in Andrade et al. (2019, p. 8)

The aforementioned characteristics illustrate the multifaceted and multi-level opportunities that formative assessment can provide in an inclusive classroom, a classroom that welcomes all students.

HOW CAN WE PUT FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT INTO PRACTICE?

Now that we know what formative assessment is, how do we put it into practice in our classrooms? The next section will provide a step-by-step guide to doing this.

Step 1: Get to know your learners!

All good teaching starts with getting to know your students: knowing about their culture, gender, their well-being, their interests, prior knowledge, language level, organisational skills, the way they learn, etc. Tomlinson (2017) explains these aspects in 3 categories:

1. Pre-assessing student readiness

Readiness is about students' knowledge, understanding, and skills of the content (Santangelo & Tomlinson, 2009). Teachers can learn about students' prior understanding of the content that the following learning goals will build upon via the pre-assessment of student readiness. Leah, in our example case, can assess her students' readiness by asking questions, observing the points they find difficult or easy, conducting pretests using pen and paper, writing prompts or journal entries, interviews like think-aloud sessions, using graphic organisers or concept maps, problem sets among others. By assessing students' readiness, it is possible to spot their misconceptions as well as their knowledge and

skill gaps (Tomlinson & Moon, 2013; Tomlinson, Moon & Imbeau, 2015). Students are not blank slates. They might already have some level of knowledge of the new subject, even though teachers have not taught it to them. Due to this, it would be useful for teachers to discover the topics or skills that some students may have already mastered, or possible misconceptions or learning gaps (Tomlinson & Moon, 2013). Through the assessment of readiness, Leah as a teacher adjusts instruction by designing diverse learning tasks that are adequately challenging for her students' readiness, allowing them to enhance their knowledge, comprehension, and abilities beyond their current comfort zones (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2010).

In addition to assessing students' readiness to learn new content, a pre-assessment of interests and learning profiles is also important.

2. Pre-assessing for Interests

Students' interests are the topics or processes that provoke curiosity and inspire passion and, thus, promote attention, facilitate motivation, and encourage the involvement of students (Tomlinson & Moon, 2013). In this way, students can connect what is being taught with things they already value. For instance, Leah may choose to differentiate key skills and materials by aligning them with particular students' interests in several areas, such as music, sports, books, films, etc., which in turn affect motivation, creativity, as well as productivity (Tomlinson & Moon, 2013). To make instruction more accessible to more students, it is essential to assess student interest (Tomlinson & Moon, 2013). Leah as a teacher can make several links between the subject matter she teaches and the interests of her students. For instance, math is easily related to architecture, construction, cooking, and video games. Literature's themes are clearly visible in history, current affairs, art, and music. Politics, civic engagement, and international cultures are just a few areas where social science can be related. In this way, teachers improve student motivation, achievement, and the relevance of the curriculum.

3. Pre-assessing for Learning Profiles

A learning profile describes how students learn most effectively (Santangelo & Tomlinson, 2009). Students often have various learning preferences, such as different preferences for learning environments, cognitive styles, intelligence preferences, and group orientation (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006; Tomlinson & Moon, 2013). In this sense, some students may prefer to interact with groups, the whole class, or work alone; in workspaces that are quiet, or with music playing; and/or workspaces with tables instead of desks (Tomlinson & Moon, 2013). In addition, some students are visual or kinesthetic learners; others are verbal or auditory learners (Santangelo & Tomlinson, 2009); and another group of students might prefer learning through courses that take multiple intelligences into account (Tomlinson & Moon, 2013).

Leah as a teacher must pre-assess her students' readiness, interests, and learning profiles because they make it possible for teachers and students to relate new learning to prior information, individualise learning, remind students of essential skills and knowledge,

and support their metacognition. Teachers also use this information to change the teaching methods, the learning environment, and the assessment procedures.

For further resources on how to pre-assess your learners, see IRIS | Page 3: Know Your Students (vanderbilt.edu)

Also consult the chapter on Differentiation (All Means All)

Step 2: Getting to know key formative assessment strategies!

Because every single student has their own individual challenge(s), as teachers we need strategies to assess all students' learning towards the intended learning outcomes in an efficient way. Thanks to Dylan Wiliams' work (2018) and others, we have five key Formative Assessment strategies, addressing the earlier mentioned ten characteristics (See sub-heading, How do we define formative assessment?), which we can use in an inclusive classroom to assess all students' learning. These strategies incorporate the idea that learning is an ongoing, cyclic process, learners working on goals (feed-up), looking at how far they are towards these goals (feedback) and what next activities should be done to make progress (feed-forward) (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

Figure 2: Formative assessment is one cyclic process with three key questions

Where the learner is going
Feed-up

How to get there
Feed-forward

Where the learner is now
Feedback
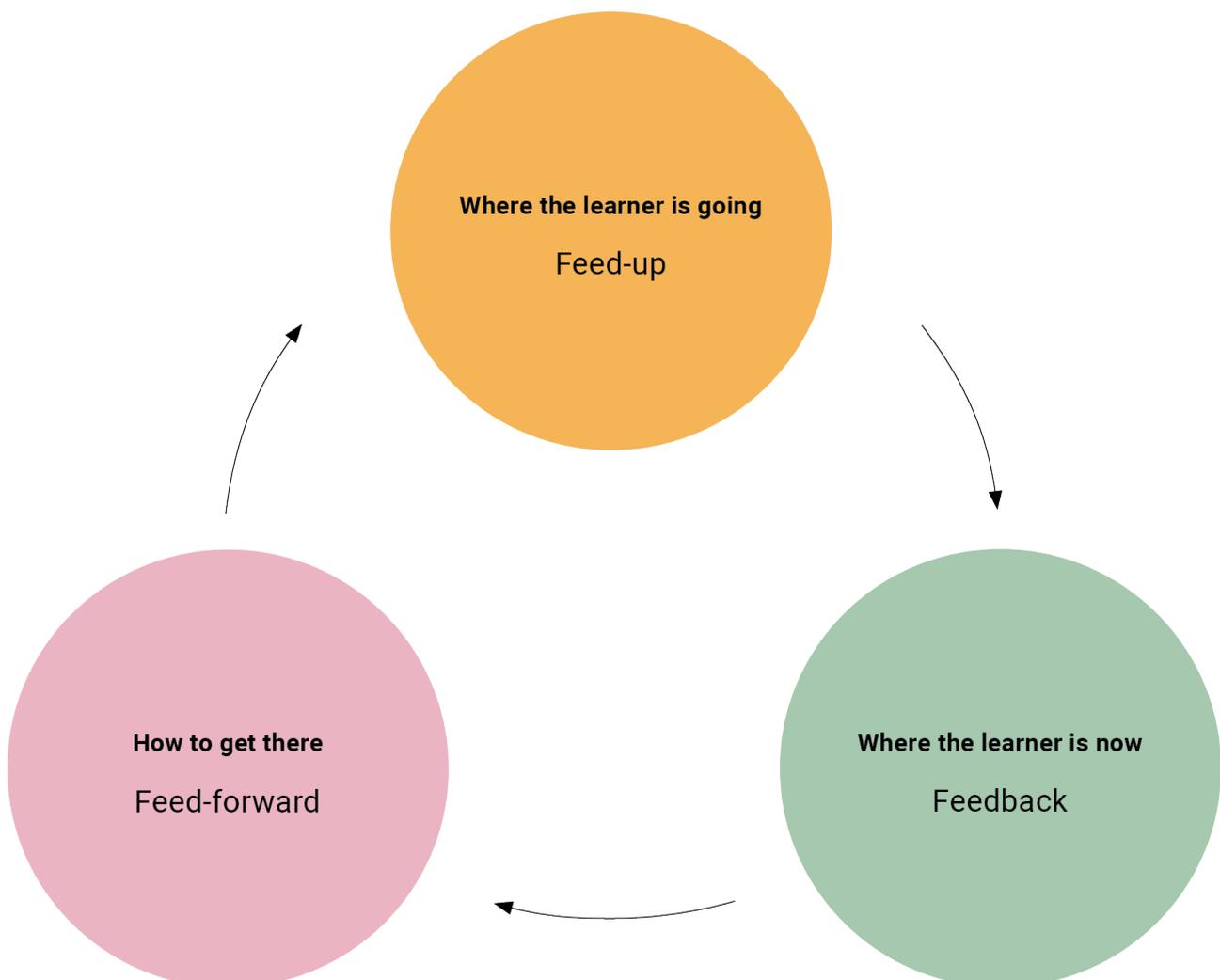
Source: Adapted from Sluijsmans, 2020

In general, teachers share learning goals with their learners (feed up) and provide feedback, but sometimes the real feed-forward is missing, implicit, or not clear for learners. However, they should know what to do to successfully complete the task and achieve the learning goal(s). Additionally, when learners are actively involved in this process, it implies that they have more awareness about what and how they learn, which will support their learning. This leads to the five key strategies below, which are all interrelated. Looking at the cyclic character of the five strategies, you can use different techniques in different orders, but keep in mind that the learning intentions and success criteria should always be leading and that your teaching activities and assessment activities are constructively aligned with the intended goals (Biggs, 2006).

Figure 3: Five key strategies of formative assessment

	Where the learner is going	Where the learner is now	How to get the learner there
Teacher	Clarifying, sharing, and understanding learning intentions	Eliciting evidence of learning	Providing feedback that moves learners forward
Peer		Activating students as learning resources for one another	
Student		Activating students as owners of their own learning	

Source: Adapted from Leahy et al. (2005) in Wiliam (2018, p. 52)

Before we dive into practical formative assessment techniques, we will explain the five key formative assessment strategies and how they are interrelated.

Key Strategy 1: Clarifying, sharing, and understanding learning intentions and success criteria – FEED-UP

Without clear learning intentions, where are we heading to? And if we do not know where to go, how should we assess progress? This seems obvious, but very often students do not know why they should learn something, what quality will be expected, or how to get there. Of course, most teachers will share learning objectives at the start of the lesson, but unfortunately, at that moment they might be meaningless for learners.

Think about how and when to share learning intentions and how to relate them to so-called big ideas, referring to real-life issues and addressing students' feelings as well. Separate the learning intentions from the context of the activity in order to work on sustainable goals. Discuss what quality will be expected by working with success criteria, related to the learning intentions: key steps or ingredients to be covered to fulfil the task successfully.

Key Strategy 2: Eliciting evidence of learning – FEEDBACK

At different moments, based on learning intentions and success criteria, you would like to know where all learners are in their learning process. For instance, by checking their prior knowledge, checking the impact of your explanation, or halfway through a task. The challenge is to see in one go where all learners are, what progress all learners made, and to engage all learners. This could be done by engineering effective classroom discussions and making use of all-student response systems, digital or non-digital.

Key Strategy 3: Providing feedback that moves learning forward – FEED-FORWARD

Wiliam (2017) states that feedback should be more work for the recipient than the donor because it should cause thinking and not an emotional response. In addition, that feedback should be a recipe for the future. In other words, get learners to think about how to improve their work. To avoid a lack of motivation, there are some 'rules' to take into account: limit your feedback, be specific in your feed-forward and praise effort rather than ability, and use comments instead of grades. It is not the summative test yet! Do not forget to provide time to work on it, and check any improvements made.

Key Strategy 4: Activating students as learner resources for each other – FEEDBACK/ FEED-FORWARD

As a teacher, you can provide feedback and feed-forward, but for both practical and educational reasons, it makes sense to ask learners to assess their peers' work, to make them feel responsible for their peers' and own learning. Bear in mind, that if learners are not used to this way of working, you should teach them how to do this in a safe manner and to engage all of them. This can be done, for instance, by making use of protocols, marking grids, and structured cooperative learning activities.

Key Strategy 5: Activating students as owners of their own learning – FEEDBACK/ FEED-FORWARD

Self-regulated learning, metacognition, self-efficacy, and agency are fundamental concepts in education. While these terms may seem complex, simple yet effective techniques can help learners articulate their understanding, identify challenges, and express when they require additional support. Establishing these routines within a safe and structured learning

environment creates a foundation for deeper engagement. Once this groundwork is in place, more advanced strategies, such as the use of learning portfolios, can be introduced to further enhance student autonomy and reflective practice.

Step 3: Let's practice formative assessment!

For each key strategy discussed above, we will now:

- List the main success criteria,
- Provide you with several practical techniques you could use,
- Give examples of how to embed it in an inclusive classroom, and
- Address pitfalls you may encounter when using a particular technique and how to cope with these.

There are a lot of informal techniques you can use in order to check students' progress and provide information about what to teach next. For instance, thumbs up (I understand), sideways (I may have difficulties in some areas), or thumbs down (I do not understand). There are also more formal techniques, which should be planned in advance and take more time, for example, if you ask students to work on a reading log with the use of a template you created (Tomlinson & Moon, 2013). But do not make it too difficult because we know that with simple, small techniques, you can highly impact students' learning and that 'the shorter the assessment-interpretation-action cycle becomes, the greater the impact on student achievement' (Wiliam, 2018, p. 51).

Figure 4: Thumbs check for understanding

I get it!
I understand everything!
—
I can tell you what I learned.

I kinda get it!
I need a little help.
—
I still have a few questions

I don't get it.
I need a lot of help.
—
I still have a lot of questions.

https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/Thumbs-Check-for-Understanding-268414?st=6ae8a472b0edda86d5f57deea54e1c53
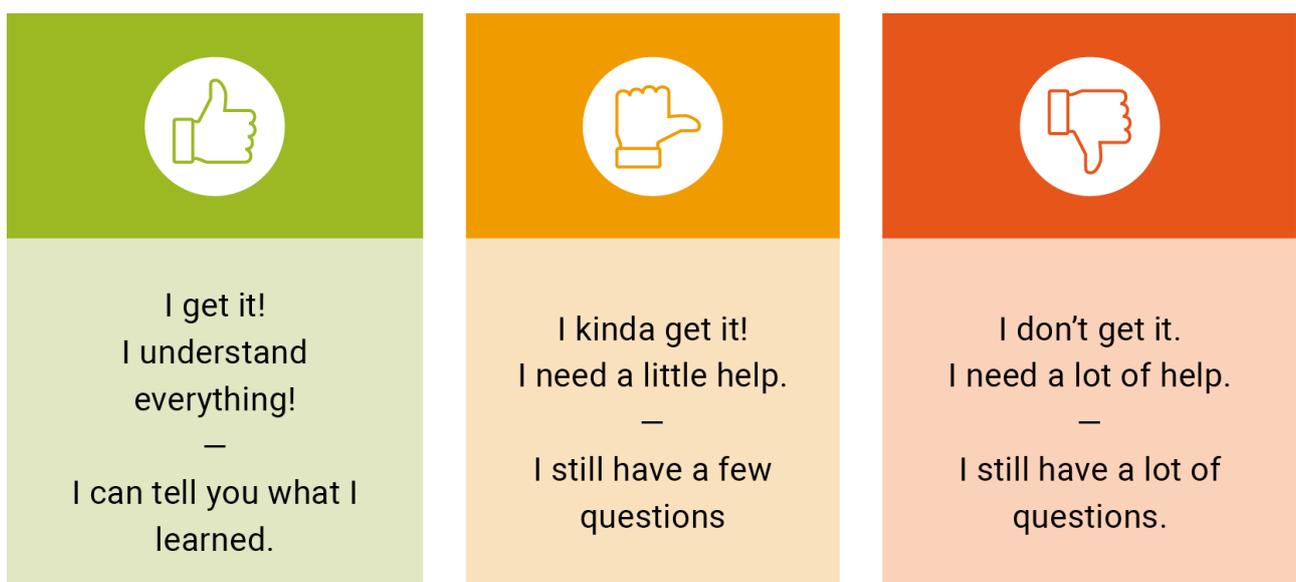
All the techniques mentioned can be found on the internet, in Wiliam's work, as well as other sources, see the list at the end of this chapter.

Key Strategy 1: Clarifying, sharing, and understanding learning intentions – FEED UP	
Success criteria: • Discuss learning intentions with learners and be creative about when and how you share them. • Keep the context of learning out of the learning intentions. • Show, if relevant, the 'big picture', the big ideas behind the learning objectives. • Start with different samples of work, rather than rubrics, to communicate quality. • Make use of success criteria: key steps or ingredients students need to fulfil the task and the learning intention	Practical techniques: • Strength and Weaknesses Discussion by comparing and contrasting samples of work from different quality • Showing Model Papers • Ask students to list success criteria based on samples • What Not to Write (what to avoid) • Immediate and Delayed Post-Tests • Daily Sign-In • Ongoing reference to the coverage of the unit of work and the why of it (use pictures, big questions, main concepts, etc.)

Example 1

Leah starts a unit of work about marketing and the role of advertisements. She wants her students to analyse techniques used to seduce people to buy something. Students are tasked to create, in groups of 3-4, a tempting advertisement for a product of their choice.

Instead of immediately sharing the learning intentions and explaining the task, Leah starts off by asking the students which advertisements made them think: 'I would like to have this!' and why. Next, she uses the Strengths and Weaknesses Discussion technique that shows her students four different samples of advertisements and asks all students to think individually about which one is the best. Students are then asked to write down at least two arguments to motivate their choice. After a few minutes, the students are told to pair up and compare and contrast their answers. They then come up with the two most important criteria for tempting advertisements, to be written down on two different Post-its. 32 Post-its are then collected on the wall, and the students are invited to walk around and order the Post-its by looking for the same criteria. This leads to a joint list with four success criteria for a high-quality advertisement, with some help from Leah:

• Visuals are used
• Related to the interests of the target group
• Including a quote you will never forget
• Including funny, unexpected elements

After this activity, Leah shares that this unit is about analysing techniques used to seduce people to buy something and asks why it might be important to be aware of how people are manipulated to buy things.

Reflecting on her teaching activity, Leah is happy with the drafted success criteria, but it took her a long time to find good samples of different quality adverts. Fortunately, next year it will be better because then she could ask students to allow her to show their work, of course, anonymously. She also realised that not all students were engaged in the classroom discussion. Some students were so eager to share their experiences that they started yelling and did not listen to the other students. In addition, some students looked distracted and did not come up with any ideas. Also, the final Post-it activity was a bit messy. These are some of the issues that Leah must keep in mind for a smoother classroom activity next time.

What would you do differently if you were in Leah's shoes?

If we look at the second formative assessment strategy, we will find techniques promoting all students' engagement in a classroom discussion, and practical techniques to use to elicit all students' learning in a structured way.

Key Strategy 2: Eliciting evidence of learning - FEEDBACK	
Success criteria: • Engineer classroom discussions, related to learning intentions, engaging all learners. • Use a wide range of questions, at the right level, not only to check understanding but to inform what to teach next. • Make use of questioning strategies in order to make all learners think, i.e. wait time, no hands up, no opt-out, etc. • Encourage learners to develop their own questions and to ask them, as well as peer students. • Make use of 'all-student-response tools': digital or non-digital.	Practical techniques: Classroom discussion: • Cold Calling • Hot-Seat Questioning • Think Pair Share • Say It Again Better • Probing Questions • Model your thinking; ask learners to think aloud • … All-Student-Response tools: • Thumbs up, -sideways, -down, etc. • Fingers: 1, 2, 3 • ABCD Cards • Mini Whiteboards • Exit tickets • Post-its • Learning logs • … Digital all response systems • Padlet • Kahoot! • Socrative • Mentimeter • Lesson up • Jeopardy • Gimkit • Blooket • Google Forms • …

Take note: We are aware that not all schools and/or learners have access to digital tools and thus the following example may not be applicable to them.

Example 2

Reflecting on the Post-it activity, Leah decided to use the digital tool Padlet to make all students' thinking visible instead of the physical Post-its. Using Padlet, a digital board where all students can upload their Post-its by name or anonymously through the use of nicknames. This avoids students having to walk around, and Leah would be able to move the Post-its to make groups/clusters, which supports her classroom management.

In addition, Leah might use one of the student response systems such as Kahoot, Socrative, Quizzes, Quizlet, etc. to assess her students' readiness, interests, learning levels

and misconceptions through surveys, quizzes, and dialogues. In this way, all her students are part of the classroom conversations and question-answer sections by using their mobile phones and publishing their answers. Through these game-based learning platforms, the motivation and interests of students to learn the topic are increased. Also, her students can examine their conceptual comprehension as well as compare it to that of their peers since they can see how they are doing in comparison to their classmates.

Engaging all students in a classroom discussion might even be more challenging. Leah asked some experienced colleagues how they do this and received different answers. Some of them make use of strict rules, such as asking a question, waiting for a few seconds, and then the students should raise their hand if they want to say something. Other teachers were more inclined to randomly pick students, using the Cold-Calling technique, so that they must pay attention. Leah agrees that this might be good to do but is wondering what to do with students, not really knowing what to say. She decides that in cases like this, she should bounce the question to other students, but will come back to the first one with a question easier to answer. Leah also noticed that she should not pose two questions in one, but that it would be better to start with one, and then ask a follow-up question to the same student or another student.

When Leah applied her ideas in the next lesson during a recap activity, starting with telling students not to raise their hands, they were pretty shocked. Some of them still did, and Leah struggled with being consistent by not rewarding their input and ignoring it. She decided to give it a try for a couple of weeks, realising that both she and her students need time to get used to it, and to make it a routine.

Key Strategy 3: Providing feedback that moves learning forward – FEED-FORWARD	
Success criteria: • Use comments only as grading. • Give students task-involving feedback rather than ego-involving feedback; praise learners for effort rather than ability. • Balance your feedback, i.e. not too much, not too general, context-specific, and focus on learner response rather than the feedback itself. • Make feedback into detective work. • Give learners time to make improvements to their work.	Practical techniques: • Keep comments positive and specific • Add questions, but not too many • Make use of improvement prompts • Highlight (some) things to improve • • Ask learners to find it and fix it • Let them 'buddy up' • Provide time to redraft or re-do some parts and check again • …

Example 3

Before starting with the final advertisement to be created, Leah asks the groups to submit the set-up of their advertisement: product, target group, and ideas about how to make it attractive and convincing, based on the listed success criteria. She composed heterogeneous groups of 3-4 students with different academic levels and different ways of learning so that they could support each other (Buddy-up technique).

All groups came up with a topic, but the target group for the advert was not always well-defined where some groups were a bit more creative than others. Instead of immediately improving their work or giving ideas, Leah decided that it would be good to add improvement prompts leading to the next step or level. For instance, 'define who should buy your product'. For one group, struggling with the activity, she gave some examples, making use of scaffolded prompts.

She also noticed that in some groups, one or two students did all the work, whereas some others were not as involved as they should be. Reflecting on this, she intended to make sure that all members of the groups were working in the next lesson. To do this, she needed to figure out what might hinder students from coming up with ideas and materials.

Additionally, she thought that it might be good to make use of a cooperative learning activity, structuring group work and addressing students' individual accountability.

Having nine groups of students with nine products to check in total, it took Leah quite some time to provide proper feed-forward to help students working on creating a good final product. After discussing the main feed-forward plenary, and returning the specific feedback to the groups, Leah asked the students to work on improvements and to show what they had changed. This went well, but Leah noticed that it might be better if the students were tasked with assessing their work and/or that of their peers, which may increase their agency, making them more responsible for their learning. This would also improve her class time management.

Key Strategy 4: Activating students as learning resources for one another – FEED BACK/FEED-FORWARD	
Success criteria: • Train learners, in stages, to mark their own work and each other's work and model how to provide feedback and feed forward. • Discuss ground rules of peer feedback with learners in order to avoid anxiety. • Let learners focus on success criteria, mainly as a checklist and identify where they need support. • Make use of cooperative learning activities to organise peer feedback and emphasise individual accountability within group work. • Make use of feedback tools and protocols to organise peer assessment, e.g. 'sentence starters', templates, mapping tools, etc.	Practical techniques: • C3B4ME (see three before me) • Homework Help Board • Group-Based Test Preparation • Peer-marking • In groups (2 -4 learners), organise peer-feedback in a guided way, by working with: • Two Stars and a Wish • Post-its • Sentence Starters • Structured Protocols • Preflight Checklist • I-You-We • …

Example 4

One lesson later the students drafted their advertisements and Leah decided to organise a peer-feedback/feed-forward activity by asking the groups to pair up twice with another group to compare their work. Aiming for high-quality feedback and feed-forward, Leah first did a recap on the four success criteria with the students, which she stuck on the wall since starting to work on the advertisement task. In her work instruction, she indicates that each group has two minutes to show their advertisement including motivating choices made. After these four minutes, the groups are tasked to discuss in their own groups two things they really appreciate in the advertisement of the other group and one thing that could be improved (Two Stars and a Wish) and then share it with the other group. She tells the students to assign a timekeeper. To increase the quality of the feedback and feed-forward Leah created some sentence starters to be used: "What went well? And better if…". She re-emphasises that the feedback and feed-forward should be based on the success criteria. For this part of the activity, she planned to spend ten minutes in total.

Before starting it, she asked if all students understood what to do, by using thumbs up

(Yes, got it), thumbs sideways (I am not completely sure), and thumbs down (I do not understand yet). Most students indicated that they know how to approach the feedback/feed-forward activity, but some showed that they were not sure yet. She asks some students who put their thumb up to repeat the work instruction in their own words (Say it Better Again) and checks all students' understanding by randomly picking one student to explain it again.

After the two rounds, the lesson is almost done, and she asks the students to collect their received stars and wishes, to be used for the upcoming lesson. Before leaving, she asks students to individually reflect on the received feedback and feed-forward and to write down one thing they really would like to improve (Exit Ticket). All students submit their exit tickets while leaving the room, with Leah standing in the doorway.

After class, Leah reads all exit tickets and is happy with the planned actions about what to do next. She summarises them and plans to use them at the start of the next lesson. She realises that, thanks to this more structured cooperative learning activity, it was easier to manage the classroom. The only thing Leah is not sure about is how far individual students are in their learning. That makes her decide to conclude the unit of work with an individual activity to assess what students gained from it and make students aware of what they developed and how.

Key Strategy 5: Activating students as owners of their own learning – FEEDBACK/FEED-FORWARD	
Success criteria: • Be aware that independent learning is probably difficult for learners. Teach them how to learn and how to organise their learning by modelling, (guided) practice, and evaluating. • Give learners challenging tasks that are achievable with effort, and make clear that failure is not only acceptable but also expected (otherwise the work is too easy). • Make use of self-report tools (and be careful to check the accuracy of reporting) and let them create learning portfolios that focus on their progress. • Embed self-assessment as a routine in your lessons. • Create a safe and powerful learning environment by giving learners choices, challenging tasks, and paying attention to social class processes.	Practical techniques: • Traffic Lights • Red or Green Disks • Coloured Cups • Learning Portfolios • Learning Logs • Self-marking, based on provided templates, protocols • …

Example 5

In the next lesson, Leah starts by discussing the results of the exit tickets. Then she tasks the different groups to make a shortlist and to finalise their advertisements in order to submit it to the next lesson. In a classroom discussion, she evaluates with the students what kind of strategies marketers use to seduce people to buy their products. She also asks the students to reflect on working in groups: what helps and what to avoid?

At the end of the lesson, Leah wanted her students to individually reflect on their learning

by writing a reading log, but some struggled with how to do this. She consulted Wiliam's work (2018, p. 184) and found prompts she would like to use:

- In these lessons, I learned…
- I was surprised by…
- What I liked most about this unit of work was…
- The most useful thing I will take from this unit of work is…
- One thing I am not sure about is…
- I would like to learn more about …
- I might have gotten more from this unit of work if…

HOW CAN YOU GET STARTED WITH FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT IN YOUR CLASS?

What we know from research (Wiliam, 2018) is that formative assessment in itself is not decisive for students' success, but that the quality of the teacher makes the difference. But what makes a good teacher? Looking at the five key formative assessment strategies, they are all intertwined, which emphasises the holistic character of teaching. Good classroom management and creating a safe learning environment are prerequisites for embedding formative assessment and increasing student learning. On the other hand, this could be seen as a circular process, where using meaningful learning goals, engaging questioning techniques that involve all students, feedback activities that guide students on what to do next, and helping students become aware of how they organise their work and approach learning, will all contribute to supporting classroom management and learning culture.

With more experience and having your own classes it might be easier to work with formative assessment, but one of the benefits of student-teachers is that they are open to trying new techniques and have the time to experiment during micro-teaching activities and their internship. In this way, they might inspire their mentor-teachers and most of all their students.

In addition to this, here are some tips to get started with formative assessment, based primarily on Shirley Clarke's work (2005):

1. Take your time

Formative assessment is not just about using one tool, it is a way of teaching. Think about where to begin and what steps to take next. Start by sharing learning intentions in a meaningful way, and consider comparing and contrasting different work samples to discuss quality and set success criteria.

2. Do not rush
   It will take time for both you and your students to get used to new routines. Be patient.
3. Share your insights

Talk with colleagues, lecturers, and peers. Sharing ideas helps everyone grow.

4. Learn from the experts

    Consult the work of formative assessment experts like Shirley Clarke and Dylan Wiliam. Dive into more readings on the topic, and do not forget to check the references at the end of the chapter for further suggestions.

5. Keep a journal

    Jot down notes about what worked well in lessons, what could be improved, and ideas for making things even better next time.

6. And most importantly, involve your students!

    Ask students for feedback on the formative assessment strategies you're using. Get their opinions and listen to how they feel about it.

When formative assessment is not part of the routine at your school and everyone is focused on grades and summative tests, it is common for students to say they prefer grades over comments, dislike random questioning, or would rather get feedback from teachers instead of doing detective work or receiving peer feedback. Do not be discouraged. This shows you're on the right track, encouraging your students to think and engage more deeply. It also highlights the importance of having a school-wide formative assessment policy. Embedding formative assessment into regular practice across classes will support you in making it a part of your teaching. Keep communicating the why, what, and how of formative assessment with your colleagues, school leadership, students, and their families.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter is to emphasise the value of formative assessment in inclusive classrooms and to provide alternative paths to put it into practice. Literature review indicates that formative assessment, when employed consistently and continuously, may involve all students and instructors in a safe inclusive classroom environment that fosters equality and equity among its members.

Formative assessment is conceptualised as a dynamic evaluative process that serves two main roles in the ongoing instructional process: it informs students about their understanding of the content and engages them in the learning process, while also acting as a catalyst for teachers' reflection on their practice and the selection of instructional strategies.

When formative assessment is put into practice, the following elements should be included for its success: clearly laid out learning goals, a variety of formative assessment techniques to elicit students' learning, and feedback in a range of formats at appropriate levels. The diversity exhibited in the collection of formative assessment techniques reminds us that there can be no one-size-fits-all package (Tomlinson & Moon, 2013). Getting to

know the students, the way they learn better, their academic readiness level, their needs, interests, and background assist in adopting multiple means of formative assessment that offer several evaluation paths to show their understanding. By ensuring the engagement of all students in the assessment and learning process, teachers create fruitful conditions for a safe inclusive environment where none is excluded or feels marginalised. In such a welcoming and safe learning environment, students may be comfortable clearly communicating their mastery of the content, thus providing useful information to teachers about their knowledge level, and any potential gaps or misconceptions.

The chapter highlights a wide range of formative assessment techniques from the conventional to more contemporary, providing teachers with a variety of options to select those they consider appropriate to help students demonstrate what they know. In several of these, technology plays an important and facilitating role.

Continuous training of pre-service or in-service teachers in a variety of assessment strategies and techniques will equip them with the knowledge and the flexibility to create or choose formative assessment techniques that are best suited to their classroom. It is crucial to emphasise at this point that even if a teacher is unfamiliar with all of the approaches presented in this chapter or other works, the process of assessing the current situation starts the moment the teacher enters the classroom, even in a more informal way. As a result, it is critical for teachers to enhance their knowledge of the value of formative assessment in guiding all students' learning and growth. Typically, practising formative assessment in the classroom leads to a more fun learning experience for your students, and students tend to learn more, remember more, and see the connections to what they are learning more holistically. And who does not want to be a fun teacher doing fun things in their classroom?

Local contexts

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=427#h5p-1

Closing questions to discuss or tasks

1. How can students' involvement in formative assessment be improved?
2. How can specific learning targets relate to students' future achievement goals?
3. How favourable should an educational context be for formative assessment?
4. What can be done to enhance the feasibility of assessment for learning?
5. What is the importance of clarifying, sharing, and understanding learning intentions and success criteria? How can we do this in a meaningful way engaging all students?
6. What makes an effective classroom discussion, eliciting evidence for learning?
7. What is the importance of student agency and self-regulated learning?
8. How do peer- and self-assessment contribute to student agency and self-regulated learning?
9. If independent learning is so important, why does it happen so little?
10. How do we balance formative and summative assessment?

Tasks

Activity 1: How to share learning intentions

Think about a topic to teach and how to introduce it, including big ideas, learning intentions and success criteria. Prepare a teaching activity in which you share your learning intentions in an engaging way and work with success criteria, related to a task for students. Teaching time depends on your activity, so do not rush yourself. Include ideas about what to take into account regarding how to manage the classroom.

Success criteria to consider:

- At least 3 learning intentions are formulated by making use of Bloom's taxonomy (Bloom verbs).
- Learning intentions are connected to a big idea, related to a task, and by keeping the context of learning out of the learning intention.
- At least 4 success criteria are provided, giving clear steps or ingredients indicating how to successfully finalise the task.
- Learning intentions and success criteria are shared with students in a creative way, stimulating all students' learning.
- Ideas about classroom management are included.

Activity 2: How to engineer a classroom discussion

A classroom discussion is meant to inspire all students to deepen their knowledge and develop their thinking skills about a specific topic. It is often used to introduce new materials but has to be built on expected prior knowledge, which explains its use as a formative assessment technique eliciting students' prior knowledge. The teacher guides the discussion but is not involved in answering the questions themselves. Students need to be active,

which emphasises the teacher's use of effective questioning skills and efficient all-response systems. Think about a topic to discuss and how to organise your classroom discussion.

Success criteria to consider:

- The discussion lasts 10 -15 minutes .
- Prior knowledge of the students, related to learning objective(s), is elicited
- Questioning strategies are used in order to make all students think, i.e. wait time, no hands up, no opt out, etc.
- A range of different questions are used. They are at the right level, not only checking understanding, but to make visible what to teach next.
- Students are encouraged to develop their own questions and to ask them to the teacher as well as to peer students.
- At least one all-response system is used.
- Classroom lay-out is in line with the activity and motivated with reference to relevant theory.
- Classroom discussion procedure is announced to the students.

Activity 3: Providing feedback and feed-forward

Dylan Wiliam (2015) states: 'Feedback should be more work for the recipient than the donor'. Explain the meaning of this statement and provide three concrete examples, related to your serial lessons, of how to organise feedback that is "more work for the recipient than the donor" and offers clear guidance on what to do next.

Activity 4: Peer assessment

Working on their task (accompanied by success criteria), organise a peer assessment activity, in groups of 3-4 students.

Consider the following:

- Describe the peer assessment activity you plan to organise and explain your rationale for choosing it.
- How do you prepare your students for this activity and what do you tell them before starting?
- Explain how you will create groups: homogeneous groups or mixed-ability groups. Give reasons for your answer with reference to relevant theory.
- Explain the importance of 'individual accountability' and how to safeguard it within your activity.

Activity 5: Self Assessment

Watch the video (5.46 minutes) about Self-Assessment and provide ideas about this strategy in this chapter.

Link to the video: Self-Assessment: Reflections from Students and Teachers – YouTube

Answer the questions below and share your ideas with a peer:

- What connections do you draw between the video and the text and your own life or other learning?
- What ideas, positions or assumptions do you want to challenge or argue within the video and the text?
- What key concepts or ideas do you think are important and worth holding on to from the video and text?
- What changes in attitudes, thinking, or action are suggested by the video and text, either for you or others?

(Based on The 4 C's Thinking Routine (The 4 Cs_1.pdf (harvard.edu))

INTERESTING VIDEOS

1. Dylan Wiliam – The Classroom Experiment

The Classroom Experiment (episode 1): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J25d9aC1GZA

The Classroom Experiment (episode 2): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1iD6Zadhg4M

Short version: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b0TTgeSn7ys

In this BBC documentary Dylan Wiliam works with a school on implementing formative assessment techniques, such as no hands up, mini whiteboard and traffic lights. The full documentary lasts 2 hours, but you can also watch the short version of it.

2. John Hattie about Learning Intentions and Success Criteria

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dvzeou_u2hM

This is a short video on how to make learning visible, discussing the high impact of sharing learning intentions and success criteria with students.

3. Austin's Butterfly

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E_6PskE3zfQ

This is a short video on how to discuss high-quality work, providing feedback and feed-forward and showing that practising really works to improve students' work.

4. Peer-assessment: Reflections from Students and Teachers

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DqWCJZH8ziQ

This is a short video about how to put peer assessment into practice.

5. Self-assessment: Reflections from Students and Teachers

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CkFWbC91PXQ

This is a short video about how to put self-assessment into practice.

6. Shirley Clarke: Formative assessment into practice

https://www.shirleyclarke-education.org/videos/

Six free short videos about different formative assessment techniques in action.

CONNECTED CHAPTERS

This chapter can be read in conjunction with the following chapters in the All Means All Book:

*Formative Assessment for/of Learning

*School Assessment in an inclusive education system – Do we measure what we value or do we value what we can measure?

*Differentiation

Literature

Andrade, H. L., R. E. Bennet, and G. J. Cizek. *Handbook of Formative Assessment in the Disciplines*. Routledge, 2019.

Biggs, J. "Enhancing Teaching through Constructive Alignment." *Higher Education* 32 (1996): 347–64.

Clarke, S. *Formative Assessment in the Secondary Classroom*. Hodder Education, 2005.

Dixson, D. D., and C. F. Worrell. "Formative and Summative Assessment in the Classroom." *Theory Into Practice* 55, no. 2 (2016): 153–59. https://doi.org/10.1080/00405841.2016.1148989.

Dodge, J. *25 Quick Formative Assessments for a Differentiated Classroom*. Scholastic, 2009.

Florian, L., and M. Beaton. "Inclusive Pedagogy in Action: Getting It Right for Every Child." *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 22, no. 8 (2018): 870–84. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2017.1412513.

Santangelo, T., and C. Tomlinson. "The Application of Differentiated Instruction in Post-Secondary Environments: Benefits, Challenges, and Future Directions." *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*20, no. 3 (2009): 307–23.

Sluijsmans, D. "Toetsing Als Kans Voor Leren, Een Thematisch Overzicht Naar Het Waarom,

Wat, Wanneer En Hoe van Formatief Handelen." NRO, 2020.

Tomlinson, C. A. *How to Differentiate Instruction in Academically Diverse Classrooms*. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), 2017.

Tomlinson, C. A., and M. B. Imbeau. *Leading and Managing a Differentiated Classroom*. Alexandria: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), 2010.

Tomlinson, C. A., and J. McTighe. *Integrating Differentiated Instruction: Understanding by Design*. Alexandria: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), 2006.

Tomlinson, C. A., and T. R. Moon. *Assessment and Student Success in a Differentiated Classroom*. Alexandria: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), 2013.

Tomlinson, C. A., T. R. Moon, and M. B. Imbeau. *Assessment and Student Success in a Differentiated Classroom*. Alexandria: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), 2015.

Wiliam, D. *Embedded Formative Assessment*. Solution Tree Press, 2018.

Wiliam, D., and S. Leahy. *Embedding Formative Assessment: Practical Techniques for K-12 Classrooms*. Learning Sciences International, 2015.

Yan, Z., Z. Lia, E. Panadero, M. Yanga, L. Yanga, and L. Hongling. "A Systematic Review on Factors Influencing Teachers' Intentions and Implementations Regarding Formative Assessment." *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice* 28, no. 3 (2021): 228–60. https://doi.org/10.1080/0969594X.2021.1884042.

FURTHER READING

Caldwell, J. E. "Clickers in the Large Classroom: Current Research and Best-Practice Tips." *Clickers in the Large Classroom* 6, no. 1 (2007): 9–20. https://doi.org/10.1187/cbe.06-12-0205.

Han, J. H., and A. Finkelstein. "Understanding the Effects of Professors' Pedagogical Development with Clicker Assessment and Feedback Technologies and the Impact on Students' Engagement and Learning in Higher Education." *Computers & Education* 65 (2013): 64–76. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2013.02.002.

Kay, R., and A. LeSage. "Examining the Benefits and Challenges of Using Audience Response System: A Review of the Literature." *Computers & Education* 53 (2009): 819–27. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2009.05.001.

Mayer, R. E., A. Stull, K. DeLeeuw, K. Almeroth, B. Bimber, D. Chun, and H. Zhang. "Clickers in College Classrooms: Fostering Learning with Questioning Methods in Large Lecture Classes." *Contemporary Educational Psychology* 34, no. 1 (2009): 51–57. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cedpsych.2008.04.002.

Sluijsmans, D. "Toetsing Als Kans Voor Leren, Een Thematisch Overzicht Naar Het Waarom, Wat, Wanneer En Hoe van Formatief Handelen." Den Haag: NRO, 2020.

Tan, D., M. Ganapathy, and M. Kaur. "Kahoot! It: Gamification in Higher Education." *Pertanika*

About the authors

Vana Chiou

Vana Chiou loves teaching and training future teachers on contemporary teaching methods and techniques. Her research interests include contemporary methods of teaching and assessment, teacher training, inclusion and education. Her published work includes editing books, chapters in books and articles in Greek and international journals.

Janneke Eising

Janneke Eising is an enthusiastic teacher trainer with a passion for learning and developing; and languages and literature. To foster inclusive education, she works on topics such as formative assessment, differentiation, classroom management, teaching adolescents and mentoring. Using practitioner research, for instance the Lesson Study approach, she works with (student-) teachers on how to enhance all students' learning in the classroom.

Dr. Pamela February

Dr Pamela J. February is a senior lecturer in the Department of Early Childhood Education and Care in the School of Education at the University of Namibia. Her areas of interest and expertise include inclusive education practices; early childhood education and care; deaf education; how learners/students learn and how we should assess them; reading acquisition and fluency; vocabulary acquisition; mathematics education and the use of technology to enhance inclusive learning. In addition, she has written articles and book chapters and supervised postgraduate students in these areas.

Melike Özüdoğru

Melike Özüdoğru completed her doctorate in the Curriculum and Instruction Department at Middle East Technical University (METU) in Turkey. She is interested in flipped learning, integrating technology into the teaching and learning process, differentiated instruction, teacher training, curriculum design, learning environments, teacher identity, situated learning, reflective thinking using videos in the teaching practicum,

and curriculum evaluation. She obtained her associate professorship from the higher education institution in Turkey.

LANGUAGE LEARNING FOR ALL

Silver Cappello; Julia Schlam Salman; and Merja Kauppinen

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=5#oembed-1

Example Case

Tracy is a language teacher who works with newly arrived immigrants in Sweden. Here she describes some of the strategies and techniques she uses to ensure that her classroom is inclusive for all.

"I've been teaching in Sweden for the past 12 years and I work with newly arrived immigrant students who come to Sweden from a variety of backgrounds. They come and they are put together in a preparation class for a maximum of two years. So we have a group with different ages, abilities, ethnicities and backgrounds, all together in one class. It's quite a challenge. In general, we are seeing a rise in multilingual classrooms. So it's something that teachers everywhere really need to be aware of— how we recognize the diversity of our students, what they're bringing to the classroom in terms of background and cultural experiences, and how this experience of being together with many different people is enriching and that we should celebrate it. It's also important to think about how this experience might affect their learning identity and mark them for the rest of their school career. Therefore, we have to be positive and encouraging about their own home languages. In Sweden, we support them by using techniques such as translanguaging. We use that as a method for recognizing where they're from, but also for integrating them into a new system."

Tracy Fletcher-Tjernberg, High School Teacher and Researcher, Sweden

Introduction to Topic

Schools today are increasingly multilingual with learners bringing different home languages and ethnolinguistic identities to the classroom. The language of instruction may be the learners' first language (L1), their second language (L2), an additional language or a foreign language (for example, in contexts where English is a foreign language and is being used as the language of instruction) (Cenoz & Gorter, 2022). In order for the learning space to be fully inclusive, care must be taken to make the language of instruction accessible to all learners.

Many factors are at play when we take into consideration how learners understand the language being used in the classroom. A helpful initial starting point is a framework developed by the Council of Europe entitled the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). This provides a framework around which curricular and educational initiatives can be developed which prompt and support multilingualism and multiculturalism. The CEFR was designed to "protect linguistic and cultural diversity, promote plurilingual and intercultural education, reinforce the right to quality education for all, and enhance intercultural dialogue, social inclusion and democracy" (Council of Europe, 2022). The CEFR outlines clear standards and performance indicators for each level of language learning and includes descriptor scales which run from A1 to C2. The first level, A1, is a beginning language learner and user and C2 is someone who can use a language in all facets of their life – personal, public, professional/occupational and educational. These spheres are significant because they emphasise authentic, real-life ways in which learners use language to function and communicate.

Figure 1: CEFR Scale and short descriptors of spoken production

Basic User   **Independent User**   **Proficient User**

| A1 | A2 | B1 | B2 | C1 | C2 |

Can read a very short, rehearsed statement - e.g. to introduce speaker, propose a toast.

Can give a short, rehearsed, basic presentation on a familiar subject.

Can give a prepared straightforward presentation on a familiar topic within his/her field.

Can give a clear, prepared presentation.

Can give a clear, well-structured pre- sentation of a complex subject.

Can present a complex topic confidently and articulately to an audience unfamiliar with it

Based on https://badges4languages.files.wordpress.com/2015/08/cefr-hours.jpg

Another important component of the CEFR framework is the distinction between receptive language skills—what a language user can hear and understand or read and understand and productive language skills—what a user can say or write. When we focus on checking for understanding and making sure the language of instruction is accessible to all learners, this is an important distinction to bear in mind. As with language learning in early childhood, learners may be in different stages in their language acquisition. They may be able to access content and understand the subject matter in the classroom but they may not yet feel comfortable "producing" responses—for example participating in a classroom discussion (Lightbown & Spada, 2021).

It is also critical to provide learners with different modes and modalities for showing their knowledge and understanding. Termed multimodality, this practice emphasises the integration of not only written texts but also images, aural resources, video resources, movement and technology (Choi & Yi, 2016). Some learners might prefer a more "traditional" approach such as reading a text and answering questions while other learners might prefer listening to a reading text and then making a video about what they have heard. Both approaches enable learners to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding.(Sousa, 2017; Tomlinson, 2017).

Additional dimensions of the CEFR expand on receptive and productive language skills and include interaction and mediation. Both of these dimensions highlight the social component of language learning. Language usage is a social act that enables participation and interaction within a society. Particularly in multilingual classrooms, learners need to be given time to practise interacting and mediating meanings in the target language. This is especially critical for students who do not share the language of instruction and the often implicit, sociopragmatic expectations. As previously discussed, these opportunities for

practice provide scaffolding for subsequent, real-life, day-to-day situations when learners will need to use the language to communicate.

A final aspect of the CEFR that is important to highlight is its framing as a "competence-based approach" to language learning (Council of Europe, 2020). In the CEFR, language learning primarily focuses on activities and interactions that are related to real world tasks. Language learners are assessed on what they can do with the language around specific communicative tasks (and not what they cannot do or do not yet know). This additive approach ensures a focus on real-life communicative competences learners are developing. It is a motivating approach that highlights the ongoing nature of language acquisition. There is always more about language to be learned but everybody, including, for example, non-verbal communication, knows and can do something with language.

With the CEFR framing our thinking, in this chapter, teachers will be introduced to three dimensions for making language more accessible to learners: mindsets, models and methods. The first, mindsets, are the epistemological frameworks—in other words the belief systems— teachers bring to the classroom which inform their teaching and learning. The second, models, are the structures teachers use to think about and organise their classrooms. Finally, methods are the actual tools and techniques teachers use in the classroom to make language more accessible to learners.

Due in part to migration, globalisation, technologization and mobility (The Douglas Fir Group, 2016) classrooms are increasingly diverse and plurilingual. Teachers may have four, five, six or more different home languages present in their classrooms. Mindsets, models and methods have a major impact on how inclusive and accessible these classrooms can be and how well learners can use the language of instruction to access the content being learned.

In this chapter, we provide resources that can be used for different kinds of language users including for example, learners studying in their first language, learners studying in their second language, bilingual learners and learners who are speakers of other languages and are studying, for example, in an English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) classroom. Irrespective of the linguistic circumstances in the particular school or classroom, in this chapter teachers will find general resources for increasing their students' access to language. It is important to bear in mind that the provided resources are designed to be used in multilingual classrooms. Another chapter will be devoted to language learners with special educational needs (SEN). That said, the provided resources must be adapted to the local, sociocultural context. Teachers need to take into consideration aspects within their specific contexts such as local identities, ideologies, values and priorities which may impact the ways in which the provided resources can be implemented in their classrooms. Some learning contexts, for example, may readily encourage multilingual mindsets while others may prioritise majority language usage and therefore would need greater guidance in adopting a mindset shift. Ultimately, teachers need to consider the language being used

and the linguistic makeup of their classrooms—which are increasingly multilingual (Ortega, 2019).

Description of a structural disadvantage and how to address or prevent it

Content in the classroom is mostly delivered through language. In multilingual, bilingual and monolingual classrooms, learners have different levels of accessibility to the language of instruction. In order to make the subject matter accessible to all and to ensure that the classroom is fully inclusive, teachers need to relate explicitly to language. They can do this by (1) scaffolding language and by (2) defining content learning objectives while remaining aware of the role language(s) play in the learning process in general.

Scaffolding covers the systematic support for learners to carry out tasks successfully. The aim is to assist learners in moving, step-by-step, towards acquiring new skills. Scaffolding "is a special kind of help that assists learners in moving toward new skills, concepts, or levels of understanding. Scaffolding is thus the temporary assistance by which a teacher helps a learner know how to do something so that the learner will later be able to complete a similar task alone. It is future oriented and aimed at increasing a learner's autonomy" (Gibbons 2015, p.16). In the terms of language education, scaffolding refers to breaking up language learning into manageable chunks. Scaffolding relates not only to vocabulary, syntax and grammar but also to semantic and pragmatic meanings as well as the prerequisite knowledge needed to access particular content. For example, learners reading about a snowy day in Finnish, might need to understand the difference between "*tykky*" (large chunks of snow) and "*viti*" (fresh powdery snow), a difference that in other languages might be marked by adding adjectives to describe snow. Similarly, learners listening to a cooking show about a common Middle Eastern food, "*kubba*" or "*kibbeh*" will need background knowledge about the more than twenty varieties of these meat-filled dumplings in order to understand the program. Scaffolding is important not only for language teachers but for all teachers who are guiding learners who are using language to access subject areas.

Defining both content learning objectives and language learning objectives is also an important part of language awareness pedagogy. Along with this, the teacher has to ensure that all learners have access to the language of instruction. A component of this is encouraging teachers to reflect on the prior knowledge needed within the realm of language and within the realm of content. Therefore, it is important to guide teachers towards asking and reflecting on how they are scaffolding language, the medium of instruction, to access content and also to consider how they are defining their content learning objectives to include language. These steps help ensure that all learners can access the subject areas being learned.

Key aspects

This chapter proposes three M dimensions (3m's) for thinking around language and accessibility within multilingual classrooms:

1. Mindsets, the epistemological or belief systems for grounding teaching and learning;
2. Models, the structures and frameworks used for organising instruction;
3. Methods, the concrete practices and techniques for making language more accessible for all.

Dimension 1: Mindsets

The first dimension discussed is Mindsets. This relates to the epistemological or belief systems teachers bring to the classroom. In our case, these mindsets specifically relate to multilingualism and language accessibility. Teachers need to be aware of the kind of language of instruction their students are familiar with and which other languages are present in their classrooms. They need to know which linguistic resources their learners bring to the classroom. Only then, is it possible to make sure that all learners also have access to the lesson's contents. In general, classroom linguistic awareness means that teachers are conscious of the role languages play in teaching and learning. They pay attention to language use in different situations and support learners' development by focusing on language and content skills interchangeably. As will be addressed in the subsequent section on methods, teachers who promote accessibility to language pay attention to language and content-learning objectives even if they do not explicitly adopt a content and language integrated approach (CLIL) to learning. They maintain a *mindset* that continuously bears in mind the role languages play in learning. According to previous research, language awareness significantly influences teachers' beliefs related to multilingualism and teaching multilingual learners. Teachers who consider home languages as a resource and maintain positive beliefs about multilingualism are more likely to promote multilingual ideologies and inclusive practices such as translanguaging (Alisaari, Heikkola, Cummins & Acquah, 2019).

Multilingualism can be defined as "the use of more than one language by a community of speakers; a society in which different languages coexist side by side" (p.13). In contrast, pluralingualism refers to "an individual's ability to communicate in a number of languages and switch among them to suit given circumstances, taking into account the trajectories and dynamic nature of language acquisition and use" (Council of Europe, 2001). In language education, the notion of plurilingualism "particularly highlights the relevance of learners' language repertoires and the necessity to take these into account in teaching and assessment" (p.14) https://meyda.education.gov.il/files/Mazkirut_Pedagogit/English/framework2020.pdf

Students' who are multilingual demonstrate language varieties, which have been developed through prior instruction and also at home, through hobbies and during their free time. Students' extracurricular and personal resources, especially their media environments, have a lot of learning potential irrespective of their subject or content. For example, students who follow football league fan sites or play online games in multilingual communities acquire particular words and phrases that can also be useful in formal learning settings (see Pitkänen-Huhta, 2019). As the above examples demonstrate, multilingualism and multisemioticity are key resources in multilingual classrooms in order to promote students' thinking and expressing of their ideas (for further information see Duarte and van der Meij, 2018; Leppänen & Kytölä, 2017).

The above describes a mindset that recognizes the cultural and linguistic background of the learners. It can be meaningful when planning and implementing instructional choices. When teachers are aware of the learning potential found in, for example, students' text worlds and media environments, they can better facilitate learners' agency, and sometimes give learners tools for connecting the learning transpiring in formal classroom settings to the learning transpiring in non-formal settings. Teachers who, for example, acknowledge the linguistic competences present in their classrooms and design activities that build on their learners' linguistic strengths can ensure that students are a part of the linguistic and cultural learning environment.

Another important aspect of mindsets is the relationship between students and teachers, which is fundamental and influences the pupils' attitudes towards learning and knowledge (Rudduck, Chaplain & Wallace, 1996). Students will have difficulty learning from those they do not love (D'Amore & Fandiño Pinilla, 2015). Only when teachers obtain admiration from their students, can they promote enthusiasm and interest in the school subject (Petracchi, 1993). This is especially true for language learning where the content and the language are intertwined. Students generally do not decide the content being studied but can only build their knowledge based on their relationships with teachers and to the materials the teachers have chosen (D'Amore & Fandiño Pinilla, 2009). Therefore, students' engagement depends on their personal relationship with the teacher and the ways in which the teacher mediates the content.

This is particularly relevant in multilingual classrooms where learners are accessing the language of instruction in different ways and from different starting points. The feelings and emotions they bring to the classroom, what the linguist Krashen (1986) referred to as "the Affective Filter" impact language acquisition. When learners feel anxious, embarrassed or afraid and exhibit a "high affective filter," it becomes difficult for language acquisition to occur. In contrast, teachers who are invested in promoting wellbeing, including building connections with their learners and creating positive learning environments, will ultimately nurture more successful language learners (Mercer & Gregersen, 2020). Language teachers should be encouraged to promote positive emotions around knowledge as well as strong human relationships.

A final aspect of mindsets worth mentioning relates to beliefs, stereotypes and errors. Empirical studies such as those carried out by Donaghue (2003) and Borg (2019) have shown that teachers' beliefs about language learning and teaching inform the mindsets they bring to the classroom. Therefore, it is worthwhile spending time reflecting on beliefs about teaching and learning in general and specifically as they relate to language.

One area where this is particularly important is around stereotypes and errors and specifically attitudes towards language "errors." How can teachers approach errors in order to encourage and motivate learners? First, errors should be framed as "appropriate" and "inappropriate" rather than "correct" or "incorrect." For example, if learners were writing a letter to the prime minister of their country, they would need to learn and practise formal letter writing including official and formal registers. However, these forms and structures would be quite "inappropriate" (albeit "correct"), if learners were writing an informal email to their new friend. Errors are very context dependent, and, in most situations, it does not matter if the grammar or syntax is "perfect." The goal is usually to communicate something which the CEFR refers to as communicative language (Council of Europe, 2020). Therefore, the focus should be on whether the point the learner is trying to convey is being successfully communicated. Another important mindset shift is seeing "errors" in a positive light and as a source of information. Often, errors can provide insights into what the learner knows and can do with the language. For example, a language user who adds an "ed" ending to an irregular verb in the past simple (such as 'fighted'), is showing awareness of the regular "ed" ending.

When considering errors, it is always important to think about the linguistic and cultural background of the learners, their prior knowledge and the home languages present in the classroom. These all have an impact on how learners grapple with and access language.

The way that teachers relate to language "errors" also connects to the perpetuation of stereotypes and the erroneous assumption that learners who do not use the language of instruction "correctly" or "perfectly" are less capable or knowledgeable. The distinction between receptive comprehension and linguistic production can again be useful here. All language users, and particularly plurilingual language users, have receptive linguistic knowledge, meaning they can understand many things being said to them before they can actively produce the same words and constructions. Moreover, they may be able to actively produce these same items in their home language but cannot yet do so in the language of instruction (for further discussion see Stubbs, 2002). As will be discussed in the section on methods, varying instruction and techniques and making use of multimodalities such as visual, non-linguistic representations can facilitate access to the content being addressed and provide opportunities for learners to successfully demonstrate their knowledge. Equally important is adopting a mindset that challenges assumptions around ability and "correct" language usage. Appropriate language usage depends on the social context and situation at hand. Teachers can openly discuss such constructions and differences while dismantling evaluation and judgements. Stereotypes sometimes used to describe variations of

language (or those that are considered "nonstandard") include "uneducated, improper, impolite and bad" (Crovitz & Devereaux, 2017). Such presuppositions can have detrimental effects on students' evolving identities both as learners and language users. Encouraging teachers to reflect on their attitudes and biases towards language differences is a critical part of the process of debunking stereotypes and validating all learners.

Dimension 2: Models

"UDL is about thinking about our learners in terms of variability instead of ability and disability. It is about the different ways that our brain learns. UDL breaks up how our brain learns into three strategic networks – UDL principles – which we can use to engage students in their learning. These principles are engagement, representation and action and expression. If you think about these principles in terms of the learning in your classroom, I can give you some really nice examples. In terms of engagement, you can think about bringing in the students' first language where they can see themselves in the classroom. If you ask them what their primary word is for a word you are teaching or for a word you taught yesterday, that is engaging them in the lesson and is bringing in that contextual aspect to the learning as well. If you think about representation, this is about the content you are delivering to the students and how they are able to access that content. If you are teaching new words and you just give the words on a worksheet with some sentences for the students to fill in, they are not necessarily going to be able to do that if they are not able to access the new words in different ways. So another way could be through audio where the words are phonetically spelled out for them. Or another way could be through visual signs. I was walking through the corridor today and the classrooms here have subjects written in Italian and German. I do not speak Italian or German. So in most rooms I don't know what subjects are being taught. But in one door, they had Italian, they had German, and then they had a music note. I know music is happening in that classroom. So that is an example of representation in terms of action and expression. It is about understanding the goal. It is focusing on that accessibility, knowing your goal and making sure that there are no barriers to the students demonstrating that they have achieved the goal. […] That is UDL in a very short nutshell and I hope some good examples of how it can be used to foster language accessibility."

Margaret Flood, Assistant Professor, University of Maynooth (Ireland)

The variety of linguistic and cultural backgrounds of students describes nowadays best the fact that every teacher is actually also a language teacher. The diverse needs of learners have to be taken into account despite the school subject. For ensuring language accessibility for all learners, the universal design for learning (UDL) framework works as a pedagogical tool in order to assess classroom activities (Connell et al., 1997). Instead of the speaking abilities and disabilities of learners, the different ways that our brain learns can be observed and used as resources of learning. Our brain learns into three strategic networks: engagement, representation and action and expression. These are UDL principles, which

we can use to engage students in their learning. We present in the following section four models that are based on the UDL principles. The PID model, thinking skills relating to the linguistic competences, languaging in mathematics, and arts-based meaning making represent the models that facilitate the learners to use their various linguistic capacity also for content learning.

The core of student-centred language pedagogy is acquaintance of students including their hobbies, reference groups, reading histories, and studying techniques. Systematic classroom observing in language settings is a part of teachers' competences and a part of teacher professionalism, it is something that can be learnt (Stürmer & Seidel, 2015). When the planning process of instruction begins, we can encourage teachers to explicitly reflect on the prior knowledge needed with respect to language and content issues and, after that, to define the learning objectives. In their reflection process, teachers can use a framework entitled the **PID model** (perception – interpretation – decision-making).

The PID model encourages teachers to pay attention to both language and content issues affecting students in their classrooms. In the first phase, the perception phase, teachers' attention should focus on a specific component of language and interaction or other content present in the classroom. Then teachers interpret their perceptions based on their experience, knowledge, and familiarity of the group. In the last phase, the decision-making phase, teachers come to conclusions about the activities being implemented in the classroom. The activities arise organically based on students' situational interests which, ideally, harnesses motivational aspects of learning (Swarat, Ortony & Revelle, 2012).

Even for experienced teachers, the PID model gives tips to get in students' engagement (Stürmer & Seidel, 2015). For example, students may not appear to be involved in the lesson, although they are actually doing intensive thinking work. Therefore, practising observation is needed to notice students' engagement. Further, co-teaching is a great opportunity to maintain and to develop observation skills. When co-teaching, both teachers' observations can be compared. It is critical to notice that students are unique with respect to their linguistic and learning resources. The observation process needs to be carried out by teachers at both the group and individual levels in order to enable teachers to recognize learners' strengths and to develop learning objectives related to linguistic competences.

Students' **thinking work** is closely connected to linguistic competences. For example, the ways in which learners work with text sources is intimately related to thinking skills. According to Lipman (1988), good thinking means critical reasoning, which includes the thinking skills of estimating, evaluating, classifying, assuming, inferring logically, grasping principles, noting relationships among other relationships, hypothesising, offering opinions with reasons, and investigating and making judgements with criteria. All of these skills contain linguistic elements which some learners grapple with. Further, multimodal text interpretation and production requires transferring from one textual mode to another (from audio to visual etc.), which can be challenging to students, while the meaning-making systems use different semiotic resources. What teachers need to do is to clarify the

connections between actual thinking and learning processes and their connection to linguistic choices. Scaffolding is critical so that the linguistic elements can support students' thinking processes.

Teachers can combine language with content in several ways (see Bunch, 2013). For example, in mathematics teachers can use languaging when there are expressions of mathematical thinking through language in the classroom. In this case, drawings, diagrams, body language and other multimedia forms of expression can be a part of the instruction. For example, learning geometry in investigating tessellations gives learners many multimodal resources for content learning despite their linguistic background (Hähkiöniemi et al., 2016). In this way, teachers can combine the content learning and language learning objectives through careful planning of the components of the learning environment (see Hähkiöniemi et al., 2016).

Arts-based meaning-making provides ways to activate multimodal expression and thus promote multilingualism as a resource of learning. It is based on the *StoRE® − Stories make readers* programme, which Aerila and Kauppinen (2017) developed together with Finnish teachers. The arts-based meaning making lies on the ASM model for literacy learning. There are 3 cornerstones of the ASM model for reading and writing literacy as follows:

- A refers to the **amount** of reading and also enough time for reading. Any kind of text can be the material of reading.
- S refers to the **suitability** of text material for the reader. Suitability includes reader's interest in topics, popular genres, language choice etc. as well as adequacy to the level of reading skills.
- M refers to **meaningfulness** to the reader so that the action around the texts makes sense to them, and the reading environments and activities are meaningful to them rather than repeating and rote reading without meaning. Especially arts-based activities have inspired the students to literacy learning.

The ASM model as part of the StoRE®-programme can be applied to various linguistic and age groups of the learners with diverse reading and writing skills (Pathways-training | Polku-täydennyskoulutus). The programme develops academic literacy skills as well as aesthetic and emphatic stances towards reading, where readers focus on the experiences and emotions they have with a text. The ASM model lies in the reading setting consisting of physical, psychological, cultural and social factors (Brooks, 2011; Figure 2). The arts-based meaning-making activities can be the part of all these reading environments so that all capacity of expression by students is largely promoted.

Figure 2: The elements of reading environment in the ASM model for literacy learning

Includes interactions prior, during and after reading in pairs as well as with adults; shared reading history

Fosters reading models, shared experiences, dialogue-initiated communication

Includes individual skills, book choices, immersing into literature, attitudes, reader-images

Fosters positive emotions, self-confidence & agency

Psychological reading environment

Social reading environment

Physical reading environment

Reading spaces, materials, reading history, simulated environments, libraries, homes etc.

Fosters auditory, visual and kinesthetic epxepriences

Source retrieved from Pathways-training | Polku-täydennyskoulutus

The following example concerns the Finnish school applying language awareness pedagogy in science. It concretely shows how the ASM model is used in transversal learning combining biology and domestic science in language learning settings. In one school, there was a greenhouse in the school yard, where students could grow plants and also different types of herbs. They learned what various herbs need in order to grow properly; namely oregano needs different soil than basil. As the herbs grew, the students made notes about the plants' properties and collected them on a table. The notes consisted of pupils' observations via senses, for example how the herbs smell, what they look like, etc. Vocabulary in the field of biology related to observations and phenomena concerning the plants' growth was learnt at the same time. Furthermore, the students searched for information about the medical purposes of the herbs as well as the herbs' history and prevalence globally. After that, they created posters that related to all of the content and

material learned. At the end, the students made a menu in which dishes were spiced with herbs.

Picture 1: Students' poster representation of Basil.
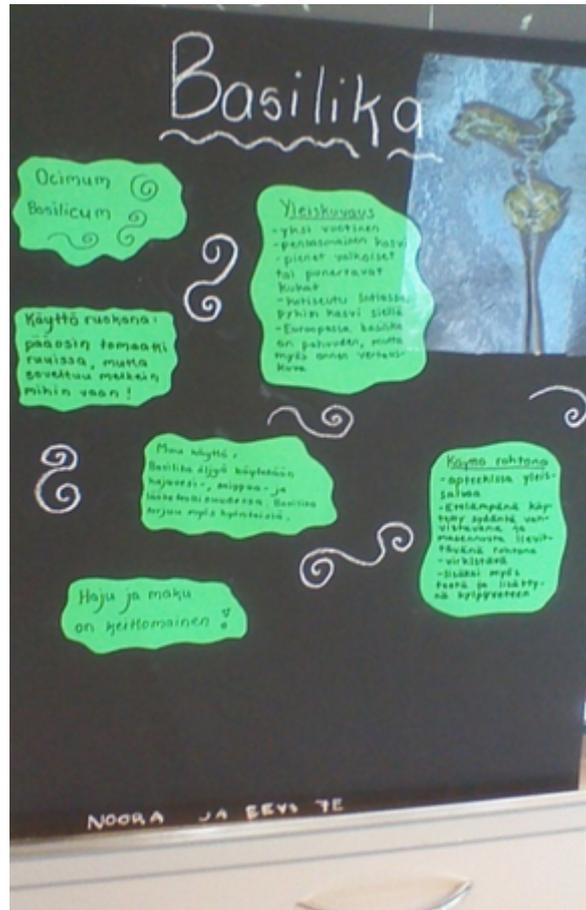
In this task, the linguistic as well as other multimedial meaning-making resources were diversely used in the classroom, while content information was collected and defined via various modalities. In addition, students learned Latin words when they searched for information about how herbs can be used for medical purposes. They also became familiar with meaning making through the visual mode of posters and other visual and graphic forms. Students reported that the learning task was meaningful and also useful for them. The choices of layout like the position of each element were an authentic learning experience for them. The teachers noticed how important it was to give multimodal meaning-making tools for learning in the multilingual classroom. In that way, each student could choose the tools which they found to be suitable for their situation and purposes.

Afterwards, the students who have studied herbs in the greenhouse organised a Herb Path for younger students with special needs. The older students planned and prepared activities that consisted of several stations where their classmates learned about different herbs. The older students guided the younger ones to smell, taste and recognize each herb and put their notices on the table. At each station, they searched for words and information

about herbs together. At the end, there was common discussion about herbs and the learning experiences.

Dimension 3: Methods

Employing innovative techniques, methods and approaches can help ensure learners have access to the language used for learning in the classroom. There are many methods in terms of tools teachers use in the classroom to make language more accessible to learners, for example, cooperative learning, peer tutoring, laboratories, and open-space learning. Methods and techniques abound. However, it is critical to bear in mind a fundamental principle: no one method is superior or best for meeting the needs of all learners. Rather, teachers should make use of and alternate different teaching methods, thus increasing the possibility that students with different personalities, characteristics and learning preferences are involved in the learning process. Even if it constitutes the most recommended method at the time or is based on "traditional" teaching, focusing the teaching-learning process on a single teaching method is almost always a source of error (D'Amore & Fandiño Pinilla, 2015). Instead, what is important is to consider the difference between teacher-centred methods and pupil-centred methods. In the first case, the focus is on the teacher, who can implement a range of teaching methods. One example is a frontal lesson. When it is the main method used and it assumes the structure of a purely transmissive lecture where the teacher explains and students listen and take notes, without moments of elaboration and feedback, the students mainly play a passive role (Trinchero, 2013), even if they could learn something. In the second case, in pupil-centred methods, students are the protagonists of the learning process. They actively experiment and act, constructing their own learning under the guidance and supervision of the teacher. This approach can include, for example, active workshops, cooperative or group learning and learning technologies. In particular, methods based on technology can help learners to use language to access content, using different modes and modalities for scaffolding language. Learning technologies can support students' learning in different ways and reinforce their motivation. Educational technology increases learner agency and helps further motivate searching for information, knowledge and for developing texts for different purposes.

Another method for fostering access to the language embedded in specific subject areas is Content-Based Instruction (CBI) or Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) (Wiseman, 2018). Such approaches involve teaching certain school subjects in a language other than the learners' main language of school instruction. In these types of lessons, the focus is on the topic or school subject, and the students access the content using the language they are learning. In particular when adopting CBI, it is important to define both content learning objectives and language learning objectives so that all learners can access the language being used (Wiseman, 2018). CBI is a helpful method and an important example for ensuring language learning for all, but before planning and simply

applying this strategy, it is necessary to consider the relationship between learners and their school subjects, in terms of pleasure and displeasure to learning a particular school subject (Ghaith & Shaaban, 2005). If students like the subject but they do not like the language used in CBI, they might end up not liking the subject as well. By contrast, using this method might be helpful for learners who love languages, helping them to approach the school subject positively. It is always better to consider students' relationships and feelings towards the topic being taught in the classroom. Teachers can take into account the affective aspects that can be interposed, positively or negatively, between the students and the subject. These aspects have repercussions on students' attitudes towards the language used and the school subjects, in terms of success or failure in a language acquisition process (Balboni, 2012; Freddi, 2012).

Another useful method is "Task-Based Language Learning" (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011) which is an approach to language learning where learners are given an authentic and interactive task to complete. In order to complete the task, learners need to communicate with each other. Every student has a part in completing the task. A nice example is the creation of a weekly activities chart where each student writes down the activities they do in a weekly calendar. For example, in the column for Monday, a student named Jack might write "every Monday Jack plays basketball." The task is complete only when every student in the group has written their activities. This ensures that all students are taking part, but they can help and support each other in filling out the weekly activities chart (for further information see Larsen-Freeman and Anderson, 2011).

A final method for fostering language learning for all is encouraging translanguaging in the classroom. Translanguaging can be defined as an approach or method that considers multilingualism at its core and uses learners' full linguistic repertoire – the home language and the language of instruction. Methods based on translanguaging relate to language and content competences and include planning activities in two or more languages. This approach is learner-centred and endorses the support and development of all the languages used by learners. Pedagogical translanguaging can be applied in language and content classes and it can be valuable for the protection and promotion of the non-majority languages present in the classroom (for further discussion see Cenoz and Gorter, 2022). In this way, it is possible to include all students in a respectful and authentic manner.

This chapter addresses three dimensions for making language accessible for all: mindsets, models and methods. A final point of consideration is that the provided resources for content learning must be adapted to specific contexts. Classrooms as well as curricular expectations vary, and it is up to teachers to modify and apply their practices to local contextual needs.

Closing questions

- How do you take into consideration pupils' different starting points in the language of instruction? What tools or strategies do you use?
- How do you build on pupils' prior content knowledge when introducing new subjects and topics?
- How can you preserve the cultural and linguistic background of your students?

Literature

Alisaari, & Acquah, J., Heikkola, L. M., Cummins, N. "Monolingual Ideologies Confronting Multilingual Realities. Finnish Teachers' Beliefs about Linguistic Diversity." *Teaching and Teacher Education* 80 (2019).

Borg, S. "Language Teacher Cognition: Perspectives and Debates." In *Second Handbook of English Language Teaching*, edited by X. Gao, 1–23. Springer International Publishing, 2019.

Brooks, D. C. "Space Matters: The Impact of Formal Learning Environments on Student Learning." *British Journal of Educational Technology* 42, no. 5 (2011): 719–26.

Bunch, G. "Pedagogical Language Knowledge: Preparing Mainstream Teachers for English Learners in the New Standards Era." *Review of Research in Education* 37 (2013): 298–341.

Cenoz, D., J., & Gorter. *Pedagogical Translanguaging (Elements in Language Teaching)*. Cambridge University Press, 2022. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009029384.

Choi, J., and Y. Yi. "Teachers' Integration of Multimodality into Classroom Practices for English Language Learners." *TESOL Journal* 7 (2016): 304–27. https://doi.org/10.1002/tesj.204.

Christison, D. E., M. & Murray. "An Overview of Multilingual Learners' Literacy Needs for the 21st Century." In *Handbook of Research on Cultivating Literacy in Diverse and Multilingual Classrooms*, edited by R. Neokleous G., Krulatz, A., & Farrelly, 1–21. IGI Global, 2020.

Connell, B. R., Jones, M., Mace, R., Mueller, J., Mullick, A., Ostroff, E., Sanford, J., Steinfeld, E., Story, M., and G. Vanderheiden. "The Principles of Universal Design." NC State University, The Center for Universal Design, 1997.

Crovitz, M., D. & Devereaux. *Grammar to Get Things Done: A Practical Guide for Teachers Anchored in Real-World Usage*. New York: Routledge, 2017.

Donaghue, H. "An Instrument to Elicit Teachers' Beliefs and Assumptions." *ELT Journal* 57, no. 4 (2003): 344–51.

Duarte, M., J., & van der Meij. "A Holistic Model for Multilingualism in Education."

EuroAmerican Journal of Applied Linguistics and Languages 5, no. 2 (2018): 24–43. https://doi.org/10.21283/2376905X.9.153.

Europe, Council of. "Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)," 2022. https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/home.

———. "Companion Volume: Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment." Council of Europe, Language Policy Programme Education Policy Division Education Department, 2020.

Ghaith, K. A., G. M. & Shaaban. "Cooperative Learning for the Disaffected ESL/EFL Learner." *International Journal on School Disaffection* 3, no. 2 (2005): 44–47.

Gibbons, P. *Scaffolding Language, Scaffolding Learning. Teaching English Language Learners in the Mainstream Classroom*. 2nd ed. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2015.

Hähkiöniemi, P., M., Fenyvesi, K., Pöysä-Tarhonen, J., Tarnanen, M., Häkkinen, P., Kauppinen, M., Martin, A., & Nieminen. "Mathematics Learning through Arts and Collaborative Problem-Solving: The Princess and the Diamond-Problem." In *Proceedings of Bridges 2016: Mathematics, Music, Art, Architecture, Education, Culture*, 97–104. Tessellations Publishing, 2016.

Krashen, S. D. *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1986.

Larsen-Freeman, M., D. & Anderson. *Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching*. 3rd ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Leppänen, S., S. & Kytölä. "Investigating Multilingualism and Multisemioticity as Communicative Resources in Social Media." In *Researching Multilingualism: Critical and Ethnographic Perspectives*, edited by D. Martin-Jones M. & Martin, 155–71. Routledge, 2017. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315405346-20.

Lightbown, N., P. & Spada. *How Languages Are Learned*. 5th ed. Oxford University Press, 2021.

Lipman, M. "Critical Thinking: What Can It Be?" *Educational Leadership* 46, no. 1 (1988): 38–43.

Mercer, T., S. & Gregersen. *Teacher Wellbeing*. Oxford University Press, 2020.

Ortega, L. "SLA and the Study of Equitable Multilingualism." *The Modern Language Journal* 103, no. S1 (2019): 23–38.

Pitkänen-Huhta, A. "Young People's Emerging Multilingual Practices: Learning Language or Literacy, or Both?" In *Reconceptualizing Connections between Language, Literacy and Learning*, edited by A. Bagga-Gupta S., Golden, A., Holm, L., Laursen, H. P., & Pitkänen-Huhta, 35–54. Springer, 2019. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-26994-4_3.

Rudduck, G., J., Chaplain, R., & Wallace. *School Improvement: What Can Pupils Tell Us?* Fulton Publishers, 1996.

Santagata, G., R. & Angelici. "Studying the Impact of the Lesson Analysis Framework on Preservice Teachers' Abilities to Reflect on Videos of Classroom Teaching." *Journal of*

Teacher Education 61, no. 4 (2010): 339–49.

Sousa, D. A. *How the Brain Learns*. 5th ed. Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin, a Sage Publishing Company, 2017.

Stubbs, M. "Some Basic Sociolinguistic Concepts." In *The Skin That We Speak Language: Thoughts on Language and Culture in the Classroom Schools and Classrooms*, edited by L. Delpit, 65–85. New York: The New Press, 2002.

Stürmer, T., K. & Seidel. "Assessing Professional Vision in Teacher Candidates." *Zeitschrift Für Psychologie* 223 (2015): 54–63.

Swarat, W., S., Ortony, A., & Revelle. "Activity Matters: Understanding Student Interest in School Science." *Journal of Research in Science Teaching* 49, no. 4 (2012): 515–37.

Tomlinson, C. A. *How to Differentiate Instruction in Academically Diverse Classrooms*. ASCD, 2017.

Van Es, M. G., E. A. & Sherin. "Learning to Notice: Scaffolding New Teachers' Interpretations of Classroom Interactions." *Journal of Technology and Teacher Education* 10, no. 4 (2002): 571–96.

Wiseman, J. "What Is Content and Language Integrated Learning?" Pearson, 2018. https://www.english.com/blog/content-and-language-integrated-learning/.

Local context/Literature

Balboni, P. E. *Le Sfide Di Babele: Insegnare Le Lingue Nelle Società Complesse*. Torino: UTET Università, 2012.

D'Amore, M. I., B. & Fandiño Pinilla. "La Formazione Degli Insegnanti Di Matematica, Problema Pedagogico, Didattico e Culturale." *La Matematica e La Sua Didattica* 3, no. 23 (2009): 261–98.

D'Amore, M. I., B. & Fandiño Pinilla. *Matematica: Come Farla Amare: Miti, Illusioni, Sogni e Realtà*. Giunti Scuola, 2015.

Freddi, E. L. "Disturbi Emotivi e Socio-Relazionali: Una Prospettiva Glottodidattica Umanistica." *EL. LE Educazione Linguistica. Language Education* 1, no. 3 (2012): 619–32.

Pellerey, M. "Volli, Sempre Volli, Fortissimamente Volli: La Rinascita Della Pedagogia Della Volontà." *Orientamenti Pedagogici* 40, no. 6 (1993): 1005–17.

Perticone, G. *La Mia Motivazione*. Trento: Erickson, 2004.

Trinchero, R. "Sappiamo Davvero Come Far Apprendere? Credenza Ed Evidenza Empirica." *Form@re* 13, no. 2 (2013): 52–67.

About the authors

Silver Cappello

Silver Cappello has accomplished a PhD in General Education, General and Social Pedagogy at the Free University of Bolzano-Bozen (Italy). He is qualified as primary school teacher with a specialisation as support teacher and he has worked as primary school teacher (mainly teaching second language), as assistant for people with disabilities, and as research assistant on different research projects at the Competence Centre for School Inclusion of the Free University of Bolzano-Bozen.

Julia Schlam Salman

Julia Schlam Salman, Ph.D., is a lecturer and teacher educator at the David Yellin Academic College of Education in Jerusalem. She also teaches in the MA TESOL program and the Division of Languages at Tel-Aviv University. Her research interests include language education, language learning and teaching, and English language learning in areas of intractable conflict. She lives near Jerusalem with her spouse and four children.

Merja Kauppinen

Merja Kauppinen is adjunct professor (language didactics and literature education) and senior lecturer of the pedagogy of L1, L2 (Finnish) and literature in the Department of Teacher Education at the University of Jyväskylä in Finland. In addition to this, she works as a poetry therapist. Her main work and research areas are multiliteracy, arts-based learning, creative methods in language learning, (reading and writing) literacy pedagogy, holistic literature education (Store® – Stories Make Readers -model) and poetry therapy in educational context. She works in both pre- and in-service teacher education in the levels from elementary to secondary education.

COMPREHENSIVE SEXUALITY EDUCATION (CSE) AND THE POTENTIAL TO TRANSFORM YOUNG LIVES

Zeynep Karaosman; Sevcan Karataş; Cynthy K. Haihambo; and Suzanne O'Keeffe

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://book.all-means-all.education/ ama-2025-en/?p=146#oembed-1

Example Case

When I was a student at a STEM-focused school, comprehensive sexuality education was noticeably absent. In grade 8, our female biology teacher, faced with a classroom of mostly boys, chose to skip the topic altogether. The discomfort surrounding the subject meant that we never received any structured information on sexuality.

By grade 10, the gap became even more apparent. Our new biology teacher, realizing that the subject had been entirely overlooked, decided to address the issue in an unconventional way—by screening Woody Allen's film Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex (But Were Afraid to Ask). Although this film provided some information, it was more of a brief and superficial foray into the topic. Consequently, much of our understanding of sexuality came from external sources such as the youth magazine Bravo, with its Dr. Sommer-Team answering questions, and a few neglected pages in our biology textbook.

Years later, reflecting on these experiences as I began my own journey in teaching, I was determined to do things differently. I recognized the importance of not only providing factual information but also teaching students how to navigate discussions about sex in various contexts. In my classes, I made it a point to include sessions on "how to speak about sex" appropriately. I engaged students by collecting vocabulary related to sexuality and

collaboratively deciding which terms were suitable for different settings and which should remain within more private discussions (and what words maybe better stay in the DIY section).

This personal journey from receiving incomplete and piecemeal information to developing a classroom that embraced open, contextual, and inclusive conversations about sexuality has shaped my approach to teaching comprehensive sexuality education today.

Frank J. Müller, University of Bremen, Germany

Initial questions

In this chapter you will find the answers to the following questions:

1. What is Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) and how does it differ from traditional or faith-based approaches to sexuality education?
2. What are the key components of CSE, and how do they address the cognitive, emotional, physical, and social aspects of sexuality?
3. How does a rights-based approach underpin CSE and contribute to empowering young people to make informed decisions?
4. In what ways does CSE cater to diverse learners, including those with different cultural backgrounds, gender identities, and special educational needs?
5. What common myths about sexuality education does CSE challenge, and how does it foster a safe and inclusive learning environment?

Introduction to Topic

Teaching sexuality education can take different approaches. These approaches include faith- and culture-based, public health, and rights-based approaches. Faith- and culture-based approaches to sexuality education take "moralistic" views on sexuality. Public health approaches are concerned with health-related matters such as sexually transmitted illnesses (STIs), using contraception, communication skills and unintended pregnancies. The rights-based approach emphasises the principles of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) with content taught beyond pregnancy and disease prevention (for

more, see Wangamati, 2020). Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) takes a rights-based approach to teaching sexuality education. CSE is understood as a curriculum-based process of teaching and learning about aspects of sexuality. It is concerned with learning about the cognitive, emotional, physical, and social aspects of sexuality (WHO, 2010). CSE was first introduced in Europe by the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) in 2006. It became more widely used when adopted by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA, 2014, 2015) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO, 2015, 2018). Good quality sexuality education is grounded in internationally accepted human rights, including the right to appropriate health-related information (European Expert Group on Sexuality Education, 2016). International agencies such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2020) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO, 2009) are consistent in the belief that sexuality education reduces sexual risk-taking behaviour, protects against sexual abuse and that a child's access to sexuality education is crucial for building competency, as well as understanding one's own sexual subjectivity (Robinson, 2012). CSE is an approach that offers breath and depth across knowledge, skills and attitudes to sexuality education. This will be explored more in the following section.

What do you mean by comprehensive sexuality education?

Comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) is a curriculum-based process of teaching and learning about the cognitive, emotional, physical and social aspects of sexuality (WHO, 2010). Depending on the country or region, CSE may go by other names. It may be referred to as 'life skills', family life', or 'HIV' education (UNESCO. 2017). It is sometimes called 'holistic sexuality education'. CSE seeks to empower children and young people by equipping them with knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that will inspire them to realize their health, well-being and dignity; develop respectful social and sexual relationships; consider how their choices affect their own well-being and that of others; and understand and ensure the protection of their rights throughout their lives (UNESCO 2017). Traditional models of sexuality education, as described above, took a risk-based approach focusing on biology and reproduction and are often informed by religious values and standards. Comprehensive sexuality education extends beyond those areas to include eight key concepts: relationships; values; rights; culture and sexuality; understanding gender; violence and staying safe; skills for health and well-being; the human body and development; sexuality and sexual behaviour; sexual and reproductive health (UNESCO, 2017). These key concepts aim to equip children and young people with age-appropriate and accurate information about sexuality such as information that dispels myths; about sexual and reproductive rights/health; references to useful resources and services, and information about sexually transmitted infections-STIs. They also develop skills such as decision-making and theability to take responsibility and create positive attitudes and values. This

results in a broader set of outcomes, which include caution against of homophobic bullying, intimate partner violence, and child abuse; understanding of sexual orientation and gender diversity; and promotion of healthy relationships, social emotional learning, and media literacy (for more, see Goldfarb and Lieberman, 2021).

Why do we need comprehensive sexuality education in our classroom?

Comprehensive sexuality education is needed in our classrooms for numerous key reasons. First, it is a central consideration of global education agendas. CSE is directly aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), in particular the SDG 3: Health; SDG 4: Education, and SDG 5: Gender Equality. It is also a key recommendation in HIV and health agendas. In a 2010 report on sexuality education, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education stressed that sexual education should be considered a right in itself and should be linked with other rights. The need for comprehensive sexuality education is also acknowledged in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development of the United Nations and in the International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education (UNESCO 2017), which states that CSE is needed so that children and young people can access reliable and scientific information appropriate to their age, become individually stronger, and ensure social peace. However, many sexuality education programs delivered in schools are from a risk-based perspective that are underpinned by biology and the traditional view of sex for reproduction. Large-scale international reports suggest that the emotional, social and health needs of young people are not being fully met from this vantage point (IPPF, 2010; UNESCO, 2021; WHO, 2021). Youth mental health is a growing concern across Europe with the World Health Organization (WHO, 2021) reporting that depression, anxiety and behavioural disorders are among the leading causes of illness and disability among adolescents and suicide is the fourth leading cause of death among 15-19 year-olds. UNESCO (2021) details important gender differences in youth mental health such as girls reporting a higher prevalence of sexual violence and eating disorders. Restrictive gender norms increase psychosocial vulnerability amongst all adolescents involved in the study across the globe. CSE plays a critical role in school-based sexuality and gender education and is essential to build a safer society for everyone. It can combat and help prevent sexual violence and exploitation, gender-based violence and discrimination by providing factual, non-stigmatizing information on sexuality and gender identity, promoting non-stereotyped gender roles, and educating children and young people about mutual respect, consent and non-violent conflict resolution in interpersonal relationships.

What should we teach in CSE?

Knowledge, skills, attitudes and values underpin CSE teaching. The content in this section represents what we should teach in CSE. This section draws from the UNESCO International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education (2018) and is also informed by

literature review of several other resources that are significant in delivering CSE content to the referred ages globally. This section outlines the first three key concepts, topics and learning objectives: relationships; values, rights, culture and sexuality, and understanding gender.

Key Concept 1: Relationships

We understand ourselves better through our families It allows us to locate our own family within a broader context of personal experiences, cultural values and societal trends. When combined, these factors promote greater personal understanding. Teaching young people about families brings many educational benefits. It introduces young people to difference, which challenges assumptions and beliefs, and promotes greater respect and inclusion.

Friendship, Love and Romantic Relationships

Friendships and relationships are fundamental to a young person's growth and development. While it may appear that friendships and love evolve naturally, teaching young people about friendship, love, and romantic relationships is an important opportunity for young people to learn   social skills. It facilitates young people in developing good communication skills and boundary setting and   helps children understand what healthy and unhealthy relationships look like and how to report concerns.

Tolerance, Inclusion and Respect

Introducing young people to issues of tolerance, inclusion and respect has been shown to increase creativity, open-mindedness and encourages a life-long appreciation of respect for difference. This topic promotes a better understanding for young people of   self-knowledge and encourages prosocial attitudes and practices crucial for accepting and respecting others for who they are.

Long-term Commitments and Parenting

Introducing young people to positive parenting practices promotes safety, well-being, and a sense of permanency. UNESCO (2018) provides comprehensive guidance on the themes as well as the knowledge, skills and attitudes that are important under the categories of long-term commitment and parenting. The themes relevant to long-term commitments and parenting include:

- There are many different families that exist around the world.
- Different family members have different needs and roles.
- Gender inequalities are often reflected in the roles and responsibilities of family

members.

- Love, cooperation, gender equality, mutual caring and mutual respect are important for healthy family functioning and relationships.
- Conflict and misunderstandings between parents/guardians and children are common, especially during adolescence, and are usually resolvable.

Key Concept 2: Values, Rights, Culture and Sexuality

Values and Sexuality

Values are strong beliefs that are learned in society/family and that are effective in shaping emotions and behaviours (UNFPA 2018). Different individuals, families and cultures have different values. Values can be influenced by many things such as religion, tradition, mass media, political and social situations. Children can learn their values by sharing with their parents/primary caregivers or other family members, religious teachings, teachers and friends. Values play an important role in children's attitudes/behaviours that they will develop throughout their lives, their reactions to events/persons, and social relationships (UNFPA 2018). Sharing similar values within the family or in social environments is effective in developing stronger relationships; therefore, values can sometimes be accepted as they are and without reflection. Values are also effective in children's development of positive or negative attitudes about sexuality. Positive values taught at an early age will help young people think about their own sexuality, respect others' sexuality, and make positive decisions. They may change over time, but it is necessary to have access to accurate and accessible resources and materials.

Human Rights and Sexuality

Sexuality is a central aspect of being human throughout life and encompasses gender, gender identities, sexual orientations, relationships and reproduction (WAS 2014). Sexuality is an integral part of every person's personality. The full development of sexuality depends on meeting basic human needs such as privacy, emotional expression, and compassion. The healthy continuation of sexuality is affected by the quality of the interaction between the individual and the social structures. Sexual rights are universal human rights based on fundamental rights such as freedom, human dignity and equality for all people. Sexual rights should also be one of the basic human rights such as health, education and housing. To develop the sexual health of individuals and communities, sexual rights must be recognised, encouraged, respected and defended by all societies.

Culture, Society and Sexuality

Every culture has norms about sexuality. In some societies, sexuality continues to be

perceived as complex, mysterious and a source of fear. Sexuality has mental and behavioural aspects as well as biological and physical characteristics (UNFPA 2018). The most important factor in the development and change of young people about sexuality is the perspective of the culture in which they grew up. Cultural and societal perspectives on sexuality may differ from each other, and even regional differences within the same culture affect the view on sexuality.

Children receive messages from family, friends, the media and the environment about how to behave, which encourage children to conform to existing patterns and practices of sexuality. Young people ought to be encouraged to discuss sexuality in schools, social areas, with their partners and families because of different sexual values and beliefs. Many young people do not consciously choose their gender-related social roles. They have already gained their roles in the socialisation process that begins in childhood.

Key Concept 3: Understanding Gender

The Social Construction of Gender and Gender Norms

The social construction of gender comes from the theory of social constructionism which states that meaning and knowledge are socially created. According to the social constructionism theory, the things that are acknowledged as natural or normal in society, such as understanding of gender, race, class, and disability, are the result of social interaction and the rules imposed by the dominant groups in society. Until the last couple of decades, the word gender was used interchangeably with sex and therefore, gender roles are the roles that are assigned to people based on their sex. For example, men were – in some societies, still are- viewed as breadwinners and women as housewives and homemakers. This meant the public sphere of life, which includes involvement in political matters, paid labour and civil society, was/is associated with men. The private sphere, on the other hand, including family issues, household and unpaid labour was associated with women. These socially created gender roles not only put people in the category of man and woman but also decide how one must behave, present and perform publicly and privately.

Figure 1: Sex vs Gender
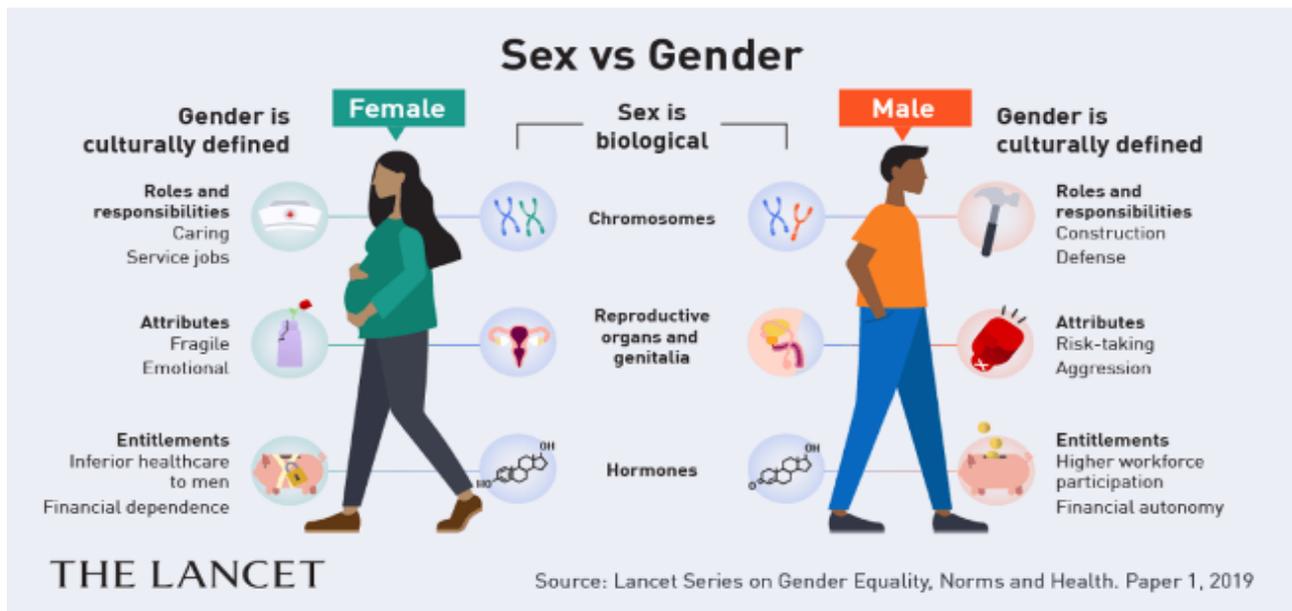
Source: Lancet Series on Gender Equality, Norms and Health, Paper 1, 2019

Unlike the traditional definition, sex is a label assigned at birth based on the genitalia, chromosomes, and hormones one is born with (e.g., male, female, intersex), while gender is about the perception, understanding, and experience of a person about what they are meant to be and how they want to interact with the world (e.g., cisgender, transgender, non-binary, gender non-conforming, genderqueer, woman, man). Therefore, assuming someone's gender identity or sexual orientation based on how they look and thinking that people are only attracted to the "opposite" gender, teaching that people are either men or women based on their body parts (cisnormativity) and ignoring non-binary and gender non-conforming people are all part of socially constructed gender norms.

Gender Equality, Stereotypes and Bias

Gender stereotypes are over-generalised assumptions and beliefs about individuals, and they reflect the perceptions and expectations about people that are solely based on their gender. The content of stereotypes and biases generally includes behaviours, physical and characteristic features, roles, preferences, attitudes, interests, and skills among others. They serve as a lens through which people view their social world and are constructed in minds as early as childhood. They influence the toys children play, the way they dress, the way they speak, the relationships they build, the school subjects they study, their entire experience of education, and their future careers and lives. These ideas come from all sorts of sources – families, schools, media, workplaces and so on. In order to ensure that every child is given the opportunity to reach their full potential, it is critical to challenge gender stereotypes and biases and teach kids about gender equality starting from a very young age. Children need to understand what gender bias is and how it shapes the society they live in. This can be achieved through non-gendered play activities, gender-neutral toys, books

and stories that challenge stereotypes, and positive role models. Our role as educators is to challenge these gender norms, deconstruct gender stereotypes and promote gender equality in and out of the school. Children should unlearn and question these false and limiting beliefs about themselves and others and for that, we should prepare them to think outside of the "gender box".

Figure 2: The Gender Unicorn
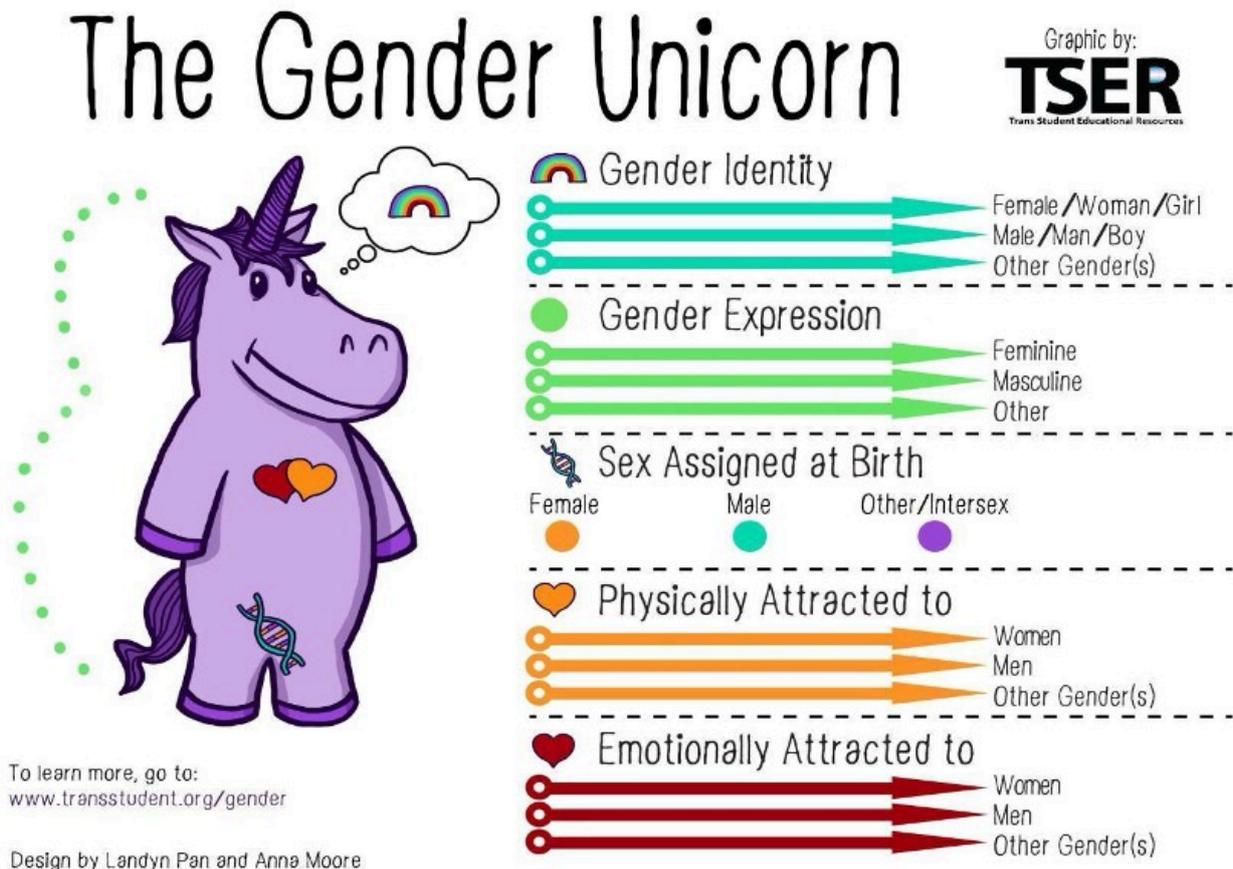
For more information about Gender Unicorn, definitions and how to use it in classroom: Gender Unicorn – (transstudent.org)

Gender-based Violence

Gender-based violence is defined as acts or threats of physical, sexual or psychological violence directed against a person based on their gender or sex and enforced by unequal power dynamics. Gender-based violence is among the most common violence that exist in all societies and all cultures because of gender norms and stereotypes. Such violence can appear in many different forms:

Table 1: Types of gender-based violence

Types of gender-based violence
Sexual violence: Includes actual, attempted, or threatened rape, including marital rape; sexual abuse and exploitation; forced prostitution; transactional/survival sex; and sexual harassment, intimidation, and humiliation.
Physical violence: Includes actual, attempted, or threatened physical assault or battery; slavery and slave-like practices; and trafficking.
Emotional and psychological violence: Includes abuse and humiliation, such as insults; cruel and degrading treatment; compelling a person to engage in humiliating acts; and placing restrictions on liberty and freedom of movement.
Harmful traditional practices: Include female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C); forced marriage; child marriage; honour or dowry killings or maiming; infanticide, sex-selective abortion practices; sex-selective neglect and abuse; and denial of education and economic opportunities for women and girls.
Socio-economic violence: Includes discrimination and denial of opportunities or services on the basis of sex, gender, or sexual orientation; social exclusion; obstructive legal practices, such as denial of the exercise and enjoyment of civil, social, economic, cultural and political rights, mainly to women and girls. For more, please refer to: **https://www.unhcr.org/**

What should we keep in mind when preparing CSE materials?

While teaching CSE, it is important to consider the needs of target groups/learners within the social and cultural contexts of their lives and to use variety of methods:

- **Storytelling**
  Storytelling can be a very powerful tool when they are relevant and the learners can relate to them.
- **Brainstorming and making Flip charts**
  Brainstorming is a great method when introducing a new topic or solving a specific problem. The topic to brainstorm should be formulated into a question that has many answers. Write the question on a flip chart and ask learners to contribute with their ideas. The answers should be written as words or short phrases. At the end of brainstorming, the group can discuss the ideas.
- **Role-play**
  Role-play can be a key method especially when we want to encourage learners to empathise with others. Through imagining themselves in an unfamiliar situation, learners can realize how social stereotypes can be reproduced even when they are theoretically against them. Before asking learners to act out in a role play, it is useful to explain the objects and outcomes of the activity. It is also important to make sure no one feels excluded or marginalized.
- **Discussions**
  Discussions in small or large groups are vital to stimulate critical thinking and

understanding important points of the topics. This method can be combined with the others by asking open questions such as; "What do you see here? Why do you think it happens? What can we do in order to prevent it?". It is necessary to summarize the major ideas and to write them down at the end of the discussion. Otherwise, it can be hard for the learners to grasp the most important points and to understand their significance.

• **Using Media**

Sources such as film clips, videos, songs or articles can be used as effective active learning materials. They can help especially young children learn complex subjects better. Learners can also be asked to create their own media like videos, writing and recording songs or articles about the topics they have learned.

In order to fulfill this comprehensive mandate of comprehensive sexuality education, the developers of Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) material should consider these principles:

• CSE starts from birth and progresses in a way that is developmentally appropriate through childhood and adolescence into adulthood.
• It covers a comprehensive range of topics beyond biological aspects of reproduction and sexual behaviour, including (but not limited to) sexuality, gender, different forms of sexual expression and orientation; gender-based violence (GBV); feelings, intimacy and pleasure; contraception, pregnancy and childbirth; and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and Human Papillomavirus.
• CSE is an evidence- and curriculum-based process of teaching about the cognitive, emotional, social, interactive and physical aspects of sexuality.
• CSE provide current, accurate information on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) that is publicly available and accessible to all, and incorporated into educational curricula, and in all spaces used by children and young people.
• It strengthens children's and young people's ability to exercise their sexual and reproductive rights to make conscious, satisfying and healthy choices regarding relationships, sexuality and their physical and emotional health while considering their lives at the current moment and for the future.
• It is based on respect for universal human rights, gender equality and diversity that underpins individual and community well-being.
• It helps young people to reflect on, understand and challenge harmful social and gender-based norms and the impact these have on relationships with peers, parents, teachers, other adults and their communities.

CSE is an integral part of the human right to health and support services; in particular, the right to access appropriate, adolescent-friendly sexual reproductive health and rights

information and support-services. In addition, the content of and design of CSE material should be:

- Age- and developmentally-appropriate
- responsive to the changing needs

What role does diversity play in CSE?

For a long time, comprehensive sexuality education materials have targeted the "average" child or young person, irrespective of the diversity of humanity. We are referring here to diversity in terms of physical, cognitive, socio-cultural, emotional, socio-economic, political and any other characteristics. In the past, comprehensive sexuality education programmes have excluded, although unintentionally, children and young people with non-normative sexual and gender identities, disabilities and other special educational needs; from remote, rural and underserved communities, wreligious and traditional beliefs and other forms of diversities. In this chapter, we want to undo this form of exclusion by using the phrase: *"All Means All"* and arguing for inclusive, comprehensive sexuality education.

Why does LGBTQI+ inclusion in CSE matter?

Adolescence is a period when friends and social circle become very important. Many LGBTQI+ students hide themselves for fear of being ostracized and ridiculed by their friends and teachers. While invisibility and being ignored alleviates a severe aspect of violence and oppression, feeling restricted and unable to be authentic paves the way for discrimination to take place. In such cases, it is possible to talk about the existence of traumatic events, especially during adolescence, when sexuality is at the forefront. Adding LGBTIQ+ to CSE is essential important as it removes the veil of silence surrounding issues of inclusivity and diversity and gives students and teachers the confidence and competence in this area. This will help shine a spotlight on LGBTQI+ issues and concerns, promote an inclusive school and address homophobic and biphobic bullying.

How can we as educators create a safer space for everyone?

CSE programmes should be designed to ensure a safe and enabling environment for students, one that engenders a sense of comfort, openness, and safety. In the classroom, a facilitator can create a protective and enabling environment, also known as 'climate setting', by establishing ground rules, such as keeping confidentiality and avoiding making generalizations about any groups of individuals; demonstrating active listening by paraphrasing questions and contributions from learners; building trust, as demonstrated by a willingness to respond to all questions without shame or minimization; reducing showing your own bias by expressions of shock or judgment to what the young people share;

encouraging contributions from learners in participatory ways, which communicates the value of the students and enables them to personalize and integrate the information and skills being taught. (UNESCO. 2015: 24).

How can we use language to open communication to open communication?

For effective and successful CSE classes it is important to set a number of agreed expectations beforehand to ensure that a safe learning space is created. The participants should be involved in generating these rules. This will make them feel more comfortable and safer. Some expectations might include:

- The personal stories shared and discussed here will not be shared with someone outside of this group.
- Everyone has the right to share and not to share their personal stories.
- We have no right to share stories or experiences of others.
- No question is stupid or not worth asking.
- We will take responsibility for challenging harmful prejudice and oppression and reflecting our own prejudice.

What are the challenges we might face during CSE?

UNESCO (2019) acknowledge resistance to CSE in some communities. The barriers to CSE implementation include social opposition, which may negatively affect other areas such as policy-makers; the availability of and teacher access to appropriate curricula and training resources covering a comprehensive range of key CSE topics; teachers' attitudes and readiness to deliver a curriculum and create the right classroom conditions for effective teaching and learning; students' motivation; and parental concerns and lack of cooperation. High teacher attrition rates, or high-turnover, is also noted as a barrier to CSE as are changes in educational administration such as a change in minister impacts on CSE implementation strategies and their momentum.

Exploring common myths and facts is an effective strategy in addressing underlying assumptions and biases that might prevent effective CSE implementation.

Table 2: Myths and Facts

MYTHS ❌	FACTS ✅
Comprehensive sexuality education encourages children and young people to engage in sexual contact and desensitizes them to sexuality	Comprehensive sexuality education program helps young people to fully understand sexuality, delays sex, and use condoms or other contraception effectively
Comprehensive sexuality education programs teach young people to consent at all times about sexuality and undermine parent/ family authority	Comprehensive sexuality education is much higher quality and inclusive than the sexuality education that families will give to their children. These education programs define the role of parents in sexuality education and create a supportive environment
Comprehensive sexuality education disregards values and promotes homosexual/ bisexual behaviour.	Comprehensive sexuality education supports a rights-based approach that includes values. It gives young people the opportunity to discover and define themselves. Moreover, it includes respect, acceptance, tolerance, equality and empathy for other individuals, cultures and societies
Comprehensive sexuality education teaches teens the mechanics of sex	Comprehensive sexuality education is planned according to the needs of age groups. Information such as family structure, body parts/structure/ names, consent, changes in puberty, infectious diseases, making decisions about relationships, contraception methods and pregnancy are included in the education content according to age groups. How to have sex is not included in comprehensive sexuality education
Comprehensive sexuality education highlights inappropriate condom use and provides inaccurate information about condom effectiveness.	Condom use is very effective in preventing HIV, other sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancies. Comprehensive sexuality education programs are not used as a tool to control population growth. Comprehensive sexuality education emphasizes the importance of using condoms, but not by using sexually explicit and/or sexually entertaining methods.

Source adapted from: Sulava D. Gautam-Adhikary (2011) Myths and Facts About Comprehensive Sex Education Research Contradicts Misinformation and Distortions. Advocates for Youth.
https://www.advocatesforyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/storage/advfy/documents/cse-myths-and-facts.pdf

How can we be more inclusive of children from different cultural backgrounds?

In order for teachers to effectively deliver barrier-free, inclusive CSE to all children and young people in their care, they need to develop attitudes, skills and materials that speak to the wide range of diversity of their learners. It is advisable to conduct an index of the students to get an understanding of their backgrounds, belief systems and traditional practices in their communities. This sounds like a mammoth task which no one should attempt to do in one week and tick off. It is a long-term process that requires an open mind and introspection of one's own value system and biases. A value -audit will help teachers to determine their own opportunities and irritations to teach CSE and seek support. This process should prepare teachers to develop material that is bias-free, barrier-free and non-judgmental. In different parts of the world, Comprehensive Sexuality Education is delivered in different ways as deemed appropriate to that particular setting. The following includes guidance and questions to ask when considering diversity and inclusivity in teaching: does the programme represent the cultural backgrounds of those you are teaching? Is the programme respectful of different languages, cultures and social structures represented in those you are teaching? Are there materials suitable for children with neuro-diverse, sensory and cognitive conditions? Do the textbooks and worksheets include representations of race, gender, religions or other forms of diversity? Does the material refer learners to a counseling support group or adolescent-friendly reproductive health clinic, yet it does not exist in the school or community? If some of the answers to the questions above are NO, what adaptations will need to be made?

Conclusion

Sexuality education is an important part of human development and starts from, through all developmental stages such as early childhood, late childhood, puberty, adolescence, adulthood and old age. It is intended to support and protect children and young children sexual development. It aims at providing tools to empower children and young people with factual knowledge, skills and positive values to understand and enjoy their sexuality, while maintaining safe and fulfilling relationships. Furthermore, comprehensive sexuality education capacitates children and young people to take meaningful decisions for their lives and take responsibility for their own and other people's sexual health and well-being. It provides them with tools to negotiate their rights and values amidst cultural and structural barriers.

Comprehensive Sexuality Education was traditionally approached from a medical, disease prevention perspective, the international trend is to prescribe to a more holistic approach including areas of positive relationships and individual as well as group wellbeing. The move from the medical perspective is also accompanied by a balance between the focus on the anatomy and the socio-cultural aspects of wellbeing.

Local contexts

> An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
>
> https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=146#h5p-9

Closing questions to discuss or tasks

- Reflect on your own journey as a young person in their puberty and early adolescence years. How did you access information related to your changing body, emotions, and feelings? Who/ What helped you cope with these changes? What do you wish you were told before you experienced it? Now ask your students to do the same and discuss the issues that come from this exercise with your learners.
- Ask learners to place questions they want to ask about the topic of comprehensive sexuality education or worries they have in a box. Also ask them how they prefer you to respond to those questions. Consult with your colleagues (be selective of whom you include) and develop a strategy for responding to those issues. Where you need to refer learners for further help beyond your scope, please do so while following the relevant referral steps.

Literature

Bronfenbrenner, Urie (1979) The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design. Available at: https://books.google.ie/books?hl=en&lr=&id=OCmbzWka6xUC&oi=fnd&pg=PA3&dq=Bronfenbrenner,+1979&ots=yALXM0WOh9&sig=pSVdgGum6gSSkunmdZUnIPVDl0U&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=Bronfenbrenner%2C%201979&f=false

FCPS (2022) How to Handle Peer Pressure Learn strategies that can help you handle negative peer pressure. Available at: https://www.fcps.edu/student-wellness-tips/peer-pressure

Government of Ireland (2020) Provision of Objective Sex Education Bill 2018 (Bill 34 of 2018). Available at: https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/bills/bill/2018/34/?tab=bill-text

Handbook for the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons. Available at: https://www.unhcr.org/4794b3512.pdf

Irish Council for Human Rights (ICHR), (2022). A review of relationship and sexuality education in Ireland. Available at: https://ichr.ie/a-review-of-relationship-and-sexuality-education-in-ireland/

IPPF (International Planned Parenthood Federation). (2006, 2010). *"Framework for Comprehensive Sexuality Education."* London: IPPF. Available at: https://www.ippf.org/sites/default/files/ippf_framework_for_comprehensive_sexuality_education.pdf

IPPF (2010) Framework for Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE). Available at: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000260770

Ketting, Evert. (2018). Sexuality education: the silent revolution in Europe, *The European Journal of Contraception & Reproductive Health Care*, 23:5, 319-320, Available at: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13625187.2018.1506573

Ketting, Evert, Brockschmidt, Laura. and Ivanova, Olena. (2020). Investigating the 'C' in CSE: implementation and effectiveness of comprehensive sexuality education in the WHO European region, *Sex Education*, 21:2, 133-147, Available at: DOI: 10.1080/14681811.2020.1766435

Morin Amy (2021) Steps to Good Decision Making Skills for Teens. Available at: https://www.verywellfamily.com/steps-to-good-decision-making-skills-for-teens-2609104#citation-2

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) (2019) Report on the Review of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in primary and post-primary schools. Available at: https://ncca.ie/media/4462/report-on-the-review-of-relationships-and-sexuality-education-rse-in-primary-and-post-primary-school.pdf

NIH (2019) Parenting Teens Guiding Kids Through Turbulent Years https://newsinhealth.nih.gov/sites/nihNIH/files/2019/June/NIHNiHJun2019.pdf

Scull, Tracy; Malik, Christina; Morrison, Abigail; Keefe, Elyse, (2022) Promoting sexual health in high school: A feasibility study of a web-based media literacy education program, National Library of Medicine, Available at: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8169563/

Sexuality Education Resource Centre (SERC), (2024) What is Sexuality? Available at: https://serc.mb.ca/sexual-health-info/the-basics/what-is-sexuality/#:~:text=This%20understanding%20includes%20all%20aspects,and%20unique%20to%20each%20person

Sulava D. Gautam-Adhikary (2011) Myths and Facts About Comprehensive Sex Education Research Contradicts Misinformation and Distortions. Advocates for Youth.

https://www.advocatesforyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/storage/advfy/documents/cse-myths-and-facts.pdf

TASCC (2022) Sexual Decision Making https://tascc.ca/supporting-high-risk-youth/sexual-decision-making/

UNAIDS (Joint United Nations Programme on HIV / AIDS (2022). UNAIDS Global AIDS Update 2022. (Online at: https://indanger.unaids.org)

UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund) (2021). The State of the World's Children 2021. On My Mind: Promoting, protecting and caring for children's mental health. [Online at: https://www.unicef.org/media/119751/file)

UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization). (2015). *Comprehensive Sexuality Education: A Global Review 2015*. Paris: UNESCO.

UNESCO. 2015. *Comprehensive sexuality education in teacher training in Eastern and Southern Africa.* Paris: UNESCO. The report provides an institutional mapping directory of courses, programmes, diplomas, and degrees offered in 21 countries of the ESA region.

UNESCO. 2017. *International technical guidance on sexuality education: an evidence-informed approach: overview.* Paris: UNESCO.

https://csetoolkit.unesco.org/toolkit/programme-design/cse-curriculum-review-selection-and-adaptation

Organization). (2018). *International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education: An Evidence-Informed Approach*. Paris: UNESCO. https://www.unfpa.org/publications/international-technical-guidance-sexuality-education

UNESCO (2018) Why comprehensive sexuality education is important https://en.unesco.org/news/why-comprehensive-sexuality-education-important

UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization). (2019). https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000368231/PDF/368231eng.pdf.multi

UNESCO, (2021) In action for Gender Equality. Available at: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000380680

UNESCO (2024) Ireland: Comprehensive Sexuality Education. Available at: https://education-profiles.org/europe-and-northern-america/ireland/~comprehensive-sexuality-education

UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund). (2014). *UNFPA Operational Guidance for Comprehensive Sexuality Education: A Focus on Human Rights and Gender.* New York: UNFPA. https://www.unfpa.org/publications/unfpa-operational-guidance-comprehensive-sexuality-education

UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund). (2015). "*The Evaluation of Comprehensive Sexuality Education Programmes: A Focus on the Gender and Empowerment Outcomes.*" New York: UNFPA. https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/UNFPAEvaluationWEB4.pdf

UNFPA (2018) International technical guidance on sexuality education. An evidence-informed approach https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/ITGSE.pdf

International technical guidance on sexuality education: an evidence-informed approach; 2018 (who.int)

Ward, Lucretia Monique; Erickson, Sarah; Lippman, Julia; Giaccardi, Soraya, (2016) Sexual Media Content and Effects. Available at: https://oxfordre.com/communication/display/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228613-e-2

WAS 2014 Declaration of Sexual Rights, Available at: https://worldsexualhealth.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Declaration-of-Sexual-Rights-2014-plain-text.pdf

World Health Organisation (WHO) (2021). Adolescent Mental Health. (Online at: https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/adolescent-mental-health)

About the authors

Zeynep Karaosman

Zeynep Karaosman is a Palestinian-Syrian queer, feminist and peace activist and a teacher. She was born and grew up in Turkey. She studied English Language Teaching(BA) at Anadolu University and English Language&Literature at Istanbul Aydin University. After 8 years of teaching English in Turkey, she moved to Germany in 2020. She is currently a student in the Turkish language teaching department at the University of Essen and has been working as an Inclusion Assistant at a secondary school for 3 years. Apart from her teaching profession, she has been doing queer, feminist activism. She is also one of the founders of *Palestinian and Jews for Peace* activist group. Considering teaching as a political act, she advocates for anti-bias education for everyone.

Sevcan Karataş

Sevcan Karataş is a Assistant Professor in First and Emergency Aid Program, Istanbul Yeni Yuzyil University (Turkey). She completed her doctorate in Florence Nightingale Nursing Faculty Mental Health and Psychiatric Nursing Department, Istanbul University-Cerrahpaşa. Her research focuses on different topics in the field of mental health, especially sexual identity and sexual orientations.

Cynthy K. Haihambo

Cynthy Kaliinasho Haihambo Ya-Otto is a teacher-educator at the University of Namibia. Her teaching and research areas are in Educational Psychology and Inclusive Education.

Suzanne O'Keeffe

Suzanne O'Keeffe is Assistant Professor of Education in the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education, Maynooth University, Ireland. Her work focuses on sociological questions in education, with a particular interest in questions of gender and masculinities. Areas of interest include children and childhood, feminist research designs, and gender and sexualities. Recent publications include *Masculinities and Teaching in Primary Schools* (2022, Palgrave MacMillan).

PART VI

SECTION 6: BUILDING INCLUSIVE SCHOOL CULTURES AND POLICIES

INCLUSIVE SCHOOL CULTURE

Angele Deguara; Jessica Lament; Thomas Joseph O Shaughnessy; and Leah O'Toole

---

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=533#oembed-1

Example Case

Don't judge a book by its cover

ORGANISING A HUMAN LIBRARY TO FOSTER A CHANGE IN ATTITUDES TOWARDS DIVERSITY IN SCHOOLS

The town in which Westfield primary school is located has experienced a changing demographic in recent years due to increased global migration. Across the country and indeed across Europe, the rise of right wing politics has led to increasing incidents of discrimination, and Westfield has not been immune to this trend. Following some disturbing incidents of bullying based on gender, class, disability and ethnicity, the staff team of the school decided that something proactive needed to be done to address the changing school climate, rather than simply responding to incidents as they arose. After conducting research on various approaches to developing an inclusive school culture, they decided to organise a Human Library (see below for details on how to organise one yourself!). In the Westfield Human Library, members of the school community had the opportunity to meet people who they normally do not have access to. These included refugees, persons with disabilities, ex-prisoners, ex-drug users, victims of domestic violence, members of the LGBTQIA+ community, people who have gender atypical jobs, people of different skin colour, parents representing different family structures such as same sex or lone parents and people from religious and ethnic minorities. The human books available in the library were chosen depending on the school context and the demographics of the school population, especially the students. Similarly, the conversations,

use of language, the stories told depended on the demographics of the readers. The Human Library was a safe space where members of the school community were able to ask difficult questions and to be provided with honest answers about different realities and human experiences. Readers of these human books learned not to judge books by their cover; that there is a human being inside every cover; they learned to reflect upon their prejudices and attitudes towards the social categories represented by each book. Visitors to the Human Library who came themselves from a minority, disadvantaged or stigmatised background appreciated being represented by human books with whom they could identify, from whom they could learn about challenges and how they may be overcome. The aim of the human library was to challenge attitudes, assumptions and taken-for-granted stereotypes about a social category of people. While it didn't solve every problem of society, the feedback to the principal from the school community of Westfield was very positive, and teachers noted a reduction in incidents of bullying afterwards. In reflecting on the activity afterwards, the general consensus of staff, children and families was that the Human Library was a hugely successful and effective way to allow people to reflect on their attitudes towards diversity and work to create a school culture where everyone feels welcome, safe and represented.

Initial questions

In this chapter you will find the answers to the following questions:

- What is an inclusive school culture?
- Why is an inclusive school culture important?
- How is an inclusive school culture implemented?

Introduction to Topic

What is an inclusive school culture?

Nowadays societies are increasingly socially and culturally diverse, and school communities are often a reflection of this diversity (Killen & Rutland, 2022; Mallia Borg,

2007). Social exclusion, discrimination, bullying, and expressions of hate are also widespread (Killen & Rutland 2022). Therefore, the need to create an inclusive school environment and to address prejudice and discrimination has become more urgent. Building and fostering an inclusive school culture within the school community in order to respond to these trends has been recognised by the international educational community and by local learning communities and educational leaders as well as by policy makers who legislate in favour of inclusivity, diversity and equality. The foreword to A guide for ensuring inclusion and equity in education (UNESCO, 2017) refers to the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and to Sustainable Development Goal 4 whose aim is inclusive and equitable quality education for all. The goal is for educational institutions and learning environments to be sensitive to the needs of all learners, to be inclusive, safe, non-violent, child-friendly, gender-sensitive and to cater for all abilities.

Inclusion policies have become more common within educational systems and are increasingly becoming incorporated within teacher education curricula in different countries, as educational institutions and educators are expected to be skilled in 'inclusion' even if there is no universally accepted definition of inclusion, or how best it can be promoted and implemented (Essex, Alexiadou & Zwozdiak-Myers, 2021). Consequently, student teachers may have to deal with different approaches to inclusion and diversity which may at times also be conflicting or contradictory (Essex, Alexiadou & Zwozdiak-Myers, 2021).

Within the social sciences, there is also no universally accepted definition of culture. It may be considered a contested concept since different scholars have provided different definitions and approaches to defining the concept (Spencer-Oatey, 2012). Jahoda (2012) claims that culture is difficult to define as it is a social construct created from a wide range of complex phenomena. However, others are more explicit in terms of phenomena and state that culture flows from standards, values, beliefs, habits, and practices developed gradually over a period of time (Peterson & Deal, 1998).

On the basis of Spencer-Oatey's (2012) discussion on the various attempts at defining culture, we may broadly define culture as a set of norms and values, attitudes, beliefs, rituals, ways of doing things, assumptions and expectations that are shared by a social group. Culture is learned from one's social environment through the various agents of socialisation such as the family, the school, religion, peer groups and so on. Similarly, defining a school culture is not straightforward but it has been described (Deal & Peterson, 2016) as having a powerful effect on school life. According to the authors, it is something which is not easy to pinpoint but rather affects how things are done at school, how people interact, norms, forms of dress, and various other elements within an educational institution. Therefore, we may define it as the set of norms, informal rules, values, rituals, traditions, goals and practices that is developed, shared, promoted, learned and reproduced within an educational setting and learning community but which, at the same time, remains slightly "elusive" and hidden, as Deal and Peterson (2016, p. 7) describe it. Cultures include

both material and non-material elements, that is those aspects of a culture which are tangible or visible and those aspects which are abstract such as values and attitudes (Hahn, 2018).

For a school culture to be inclusive, it needs to create an atmosphere which is embracing of diversity and which ensures that every member of the school community is treated with respect and dignity and embraced as a unique person regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, religion, belief, sexual orientation, parental or family status, geographic origin, political views, socioeconomic background, age and ability. Material aspects of an inclusive school culture would include physical structures such as accessible buildings, universal bathrooms, religious symbols representing different belief systems, teaching resources and materials such as images representing diversity or dolls of different skin colour and body shape used with early learners. Non-material aspects would include non-tangible elements such as the values, norms, philosophies, beliefs and attitudes which are often the drivers behind the realisation of such a culture. Values of social justice, equality and inclusion, feelings of belonging, ideas about schools being safe spaces for all, an appreciation of diversity in all its forms are all examples of non-material elements of inclusive culture.

An inclusive school also strives to go beyond the idea and practice of integration, where, for example, students with disabilities learn alongside students without disabilities. An inclusive school is not only concerned with social categories that are more likely to be stigmatised or marginalised such as gender non-conformers, persons with disabilities or those coming from minority ethnic groups, but emphasises the inclusion of all members of the school community. It strives to put into practice the concepts of universality and equality in education and considers diversity, regardless of how it is manifested, as a positive source of enrichment, within a broader scheme based on the value of social justice (Moliner Miravet & Moliner García, 2013). Inclusive schools embrace and celebrate diversity to ensure that all students have the same rights and opportunities to fulfil their potential in all areas (Hannigan, Grima-Farrell & Wardman, 2019; Villa & Thousand, 2005).

An inclusive school culture aims to foster a sense of community and belonging within the educational community (Osterman, 2000) and to ensure that all members of the community consider their school as a safe space where they can be themselves, and where they can flourish academically and find care and support. For a school culture to be really inclusive, it needs to be shared by the whole school community, as its values and principles guide everyday interaction, decisions, policies and attitudes, both on a macro and micro level within an educational institution and learning community.

An inclusive school culture is not static. In order to adequately respond to changing trends in social and cultural diversity, inclusive school cultures are developed, reproduced and reconstructed through everyday interaction, activities, initiatives, reflection, decisions, procedures, objectives of the institutions and the communities within them. It becomes an essential element of the institution in the sense that it underlies the whole structure and

day to day operations and is reflected throughout, both in its formal and informal practices (Moliner Miravet & Moliner García, 2013). In other words, it is a way of thinking.

Why is an inclusive school culture important?

Educational institutions, educational leaders and educators play a crucial role in the creation of inclusive learning spaces. When schools take proactive action to bring about change, they are more likely to succeed in reducing social and cultural exclusion as well as bias and discrimination and to create and maintain a safe and inclusive environment for all. An inclusive school culture creates a more conducive learning environment, even if it does not necessarily guarantee academic success. These include students who; do not feel accepted or who lack friends, experience rejection, discrimination or bullying, are less likely to engage or perform well academically, who lack motivation, whose attendance is poor or are likely to drop out of school, and their social development suffers (Juvonen et al., 2019; Killen & Rutland, 2022).

In recent decades, the educational community has become more sensitised to the varying needs of students. While all students have needs, some students may have more needs and may require more support and attention. Mallia Borg (2007) notes a paradigm shift in education where instead of perceiving students as failures, the onus is placed on the educational system for failing to cater for their needs. In literature, considerable attention has been given to the benefits of including learners with special needs. However, research shows that the benefits of inclusivity extend beyond students with special needs. Utomo and Thaibah (2021) describes how inclusive education is particularly beneficial for character building among all students, as experiences of inclusionary practices teach life skills and promote positive attitudes towards others who have different needs. An inclusive school culture also encourages students to take the side of those who are willing to offer support and assistance to those who need it (Killen & Rutland, 2022).

A review of initiatives in various countries, aimed at promoting an inclusive educational environment particularly for transgender young people (Domínguez-Martínez & Robles, 2019), suggests that educational institutions which have in place policies protecting gender minorities are beneficial in a number of ways. Educational spaces where binary notions of gender are challenged, where students can express their gender without fearing the consequences and which embrace diversity, tend to create a more positive and safe school climate, enhance overall wellbeing, decrease instances of victimisation and harassment and reduce absenteeism. A positive practice implemented in several countries is the formation of gay-straight alliances, which has proved to have a number of positive effects, particularly for young transgender people. School curricula which are representative of minorities also tend to have a positive impact on enhancing wellbeing and reducing victimisation and harassment of students who are considered different (Domínguez-Martínez & Robles, 2019).

A qualitative study conducted with five school principals who adopted an inclusive approach in their schools found that inclusive cultures, based on a philosophy of inclusion as "a way of thinking and acting", ensures that all members of the community become meaningfully involved and gain equally from it (Osiname, 2018). An inclusive school culture strives to eliminate social exclusion and barriers that hinder students from enjoying their rights and from feeling valued, respected, protected, and safe. This, in turn, motivates members of the school community to express themselves freely, openly, and honestly, knowing that they will be listened to and have their views respected. Staff and students have the opportunity to approach the principal and express their feelings and concerns without the fear of being punished or chastised. Adopting an open-door policy can be an effective way of encouraging openness as it conveys a message that everyone can contribute to building an inclusive school environment (Osiname, 2018).

The rapid advances and dependence on technology since the Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of digital inclusion and investment in digital technology. Research by Kim, Yi & Hong (2021) describes the inequalities of access to digital technology at home or school and noted that disparities were greater when other factors such as socio-economic background are taken into account. School cultures should be digitally inclusive as unequal access to digital technology is likely to have long term implications.

Inclusive school cultures are important as they respond to students' need for belonging (Osterman, 2000). In a context where mental health concerns are becoming increasingly critical, inclusive school cultures may prove vital for enhancing psychological well-being, and for highlighting how exclusion, disengagement from school, education-related stress, marginalisation, lack of friends or popularity may all have a significant detrimental impact on the mental health of students (Hannigan, Grima-Farrell & Wardman, 2019).

How is an inclusive school culture implemented?

Diversity within a school setting does not automatically ensure inclusion. Inclusion is a goal that needs to be developed and promoted proactively (Juvonen, 2019). The Council of the European Union reiterates the importance of implementing inclusivity in schools in its 2018 Recommendation on promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching:

"Ensuring effective equal access to quality inclusive education for all learners, including those of migrant origins, those from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds, those with special needs and those with disabilities — in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities — is indispensable for achieving more cohesive societies" (Council of the European Union, 2018, point no. 16).

Responding to social and cultural diversity in our educational systems is no easy task. It is a challenge that many schools, colleges and universities are now implementing.

Educational institutions striving to foster a culture of inclusion often need to implement radical changes which require commitment and hard work involving both deconstruction and reconstruction. Fostering a culture of inclusion often requires the dismantling of all that hinders its development such as attitudes towards diversity and may necessitate the transformation of the whole educational institution. It also requires the motivation of the whole school community in order to ensure the contribution of all involved (Moliner Miravet & Moliner García, 2013).

In his foreword to A guide for ensuring inclusion and equity in education, Dr Qian Tang (Unesco, 2017) writes that:

"To achieve this ambitious goal, countries should ensure inclusion and equity in and through education systems and programs. This includes taking steps to prevent and address all forms of exclusion and marginalisation, disparity, vulnerability and inequality in educational access, participation, and completion as well as in learning processes and outcomes. It also requires understanding learners' diversities as opportunities in order to enhance and democratise learning for all students" (Foreword).

Research by Fine-Davis & Faas (2014) into how schools in six European countries address cultural diversity revealed that European societies approach diversity in education based on different models. In countries such as Germany, Greece and Ireland, the concepts of interculturalism and intercultural education were preferred while in Britain, the Netherlands, Canada, the United States and Malaysia, the term multiculturalism is used. The authors also cite research which shows that national historical and political legacies as well as the topics taught also influenced educational policies and practices in different European countries (Fine-Davis & Faas, 2014).

The authors of this chapter have identified four major components that play a crucial role in the implementation of an inclusive school culture. These include attitudes, collaboration, knowledge, and leadership.

Attitudes – A multi-layered approach aims to bring about attitudinal and behavioural changes among students as well as administrators, educators, and other members of the school community (Juvonen et al., 2019; Killen & Rutland 2022; Mallia Borg, 2007; Moliner Miravet & Moliner García, 2013).

Collaboration – Different stakeholders, entities and communities working together, supporting and learning from each other. It involves educators working together, facilitating a leadership and educational authority structure and a supportive legal framework, involving parents and students, collaborating with other school communities, and sharing a determination to reach common goals (Lave and Wenger, 1998).

Knowledge – Knowledge, more specifically research-based evidence, that guides the realisation of school inclusion in terms of different beliefs, needs and cultures, family situations and socio-economic backgrounds of everyone in the school community. Acknowledging the importance of knowledge and recognising different sources of knowledge, e.g., through interaction with students and their parents, the provision of training

or learning from the good or bad practices of other schools (Razer, Friedman & Warshofsky, 2013).

Leadership – The role of educators and administrators as role models whose behaviour may be reflected in the attitudes and behaviour of their students (Juvonen, 2019) and the whole school community. Educational leaders may take on the roles of facilitators, innovators, visionaries and strategists, as well as enablers of an inclusive school culture and must be open to change.

All of these above combine to create 'safe spaces' in educational settings where all staff, students, and members of the wider educational community feel welcome, respected, safe and visible.

Key aspects

Attitudes

Attitudes refer to how societies, communities and individuals learn to perceive issues, people, things, objects, and events in a particular way which could be positive or negative but which could also be ambivalent at times (Cherry, 2024). According to the same author, psychologists tend to consider attitudes as having three components. These include; an affective component referring to how one may feel about a social group of people such as Muslim students; a cognitive component relating to the beliefs and ideas that one may have about an issue such as the inclusion of trans students; and a behavioural dimension where attitudes about someone or something may influence how people act, even in an unconscious manner, such as addressing the assistant of a learner with disability rather than the learner.

Moliner Miravet and Moliner García (2013) consider two factors as being crucial for the promotion of a culture of inclusion: "(a) a set of objectives agreed on by the educational community, and (b) shared values" (p. 1376). They identify a number of factors as contributing to the achievement of consensus among the teaching community such as the degree of teaching experience, the position one occupies within the school as well as the gender of the educator and the subject one teaches. Although there are convergent views about the issue of how to establish "a common language" throughout an institution, they argue that a shared culture of inclusivity reinforces the sense of community and belonging within an educational setting (Moliner Miravet & Moliner García 2013). The question remains on how to achieve this.

How does a school community come to embrace a common set of objectives and values? This is a long-term goal which can only be achieved through a passionate, committed, joint and continuous effort and involves challenging taken for granted assumptions, transgressing boundaries, orthodox views and methods. Attitudes are shaped through socialisation and learning at home and at school, through media influence, social

experiences, and observation, and while they may become ingrained, it does not mean that they are incapable of change (Cherry, 2024).

The Recommendation on promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching (Council of the European Union, 2018) suggests that educational staff should be able " to promote common values and deliver inclusive education, through:

(a)	measures to empower educational staff helping them convey common values, and promote active citizenship while transmitting a sense of belonging and responding to the diverse needs of learners; and
(b)	promoting initial and continued education, exchanges and peer learning and peer counselling activities as well as guidance and mentoring for educational staff".

Heads of school play an important role here as they are often the drivers behind a change in attitudes. Acting as both role models and facilitators, heads of schools who facilitate openness, accessibility, critical feedback, democratic participation and involve all members of the school community are more likely to bring about an attitude change towards inclusion (Osiname, 2018). Embarking on a project which strives to bring about a change in attitudes towards diversity within a school setting may necessitate both direct and indirect interventions as well as strategies targeting different processes and practices. These include; developing an inclusion policy and multicultural curriculum as well as indirect ways through which messages about inclusion, acceptance, equality and social justice are conveyed, e.g., through the use of images in class or, if working with small children, through the use of dolls, soft toys or puppets having different body shapes or skin colour and hair textures (Juvonen et al., 2019). The hidden curriculum is a primary tool through which inclusivity may become a way of thinking within an educational institution.

Changing attitudes towards diversity could be encouraged by facilitating communication among members of diverse groups. This helps to reduce negative stereotypes and biases about those who are different. Within their classrooms, teachers may find ways of encouraging inter-group interaction, e.g., through seating arrangements or group work. Interaction across groups may also be encouraged through extracurricular activities or themed clubs which attract students from different backgrounds. It may also be encouraged through a peer mentoring system (Juvonen, 2019, Killen & Rutland, 2022). Creating a school and classroom context where students interact with those who are different from themselves is an excellent opportunity to promote openness to diversity. Intergroup interaction enables young people to see both the differences and the similarities that exist between them and their peers, and to appreciate differences as alternative realities rather than as threats (Bayram, Özdemir & Boersma, 2021).

Research suggests that how educators respond to diversity in schools and in their classrooms is of utmost importance since their attitudes are reflected in their classroom practices and will have an effect on student social wellbeing and educational performance (Wang et al., 2022). Garmon (2004) suggested six factors that seem to carry central

significance in bringing about effective transformation in the attitudes of teachers towards diversity. These factors include openness, self-awareness/self-reflection and commitment in terms of disposition and intercultural, educational, and support group experiences. As societies and classrooms continuously change and become more diverse, teachers need to be equipped with the necessary skills, knowledge and attitudes to address these realities in an effective way. They need constant training and preparation to address the needs of all learners and to promote inclusivity in their everyday practices and interactions with students and colleagues (Fine-Davis & Faas, 2014; Mallia Borg, 2007). The importance of revisiting teacher education has also been recognised. In light changing demographics of our education systems, many Europeans countries are reforming teacher education policies to ensure that teachers will be equipped to face the challenges of inclusive education (Florian & Camedda, 2020)

Initiatives aimed at attitudinal changes towards diversity strive to eliminate biases, negative stereotypes and other exclusionary practices that have negative consequences on both victims and perpetrators. During the transition from childhood to adolescence, students become increasingly aware of social inequalities and of the possible links between social stereotypes and of being unjustly treated by peers or other members of the school community (Killen & Rutland, 2022). Adolescence is an age where youngsters are trying to better understand the world around them and to form opinions and attitudes about it. Research suggests that as they become more independent of their parents, they tend to be more open to ideas about diversity and that schools have an important role to play in fostering positive attitudes about diversity (Bayram, Özdemir & Boersma, 2021). At such a sensitive stage in their development, school experiences can have a significant impact on attitudes of adolescents towards classmates, according to Eckstein, Miklikowska & Noack (2021). They also note that school climates which promote democratic participation and supportive attitudes towards classmates tend to minimise prejudice among young adolescents. The authors also suggest that schools should take into consideration differences in students and across the school context. For example, student age when implementing initiatives which may facilitate the development of positive intergroup attitudes (Eckstein, Miklikowska & Noack, 2021).

Students in preschool and primary school are actively developing their attitudes and understanding about their culture and society. They learn from both their own direct experiences as well as from their exposure to their environment, media, and other people around them. Additionally, experiences that young students have in their primary social groups, like school, have a great impact on their attitudes (Triandis, Adamopoulos & Brinberg, 1984).

For example, a range of research has shown that gender stereotyping becomes embedded in young children's experiences in education and in life more generally from their earliest days. This video shows examples of how adults subtly and not-so-subtly direct children's attention towards gender stereotyped toys, often unconsciously: Girl toys

vs boy toys: The experiment – BBC Stories – YouTube. Children may internalise these messages about what is 'right' for them based on their gender, and so begin to choose gender stereotyped activities, perpetuating behaviours and limiting their opportunities for learning, development and play. For example, Coyne's research has explored how exposure to stereotyped super-hero content (Coyne et al., 2014) or Disney Princess content (Coyne et al., 2016) influences children's play and gender stereotypical behaviour. Perhaps even more worrying is evidence that children's attitudes towards children who play in gender atypical ways (as traditionally defined) tend to be negative, and children may police each other's gender conforming behaviour, even to the extent of bullying (O'Toole and Hayes, 2020). Kuvlanka and colleagues (2014) also showed that gender non-conforming and trans children can be at risk of difficult peer interactions. This emphasises the importance of educators reflecting on their practice to ensure that they are not consciously or unconsciously communicating discriminatory messages to children. Practice that helps to counter such narratives in education includes ensuring to offer equal experiences to students regardless of gender, choosing resources mindfully (for example books in which characters challenge gender stereotypes) and ensuring opportunities for all genders to mix together so that stereotypes can be challenged through direct experience (see Sex/Gender Education chapter of this book).

These examples apply to multiple dimensions of diversity. Studies have found, for example, that direct contact experiences with students with disabilities in primary school positively influenced non disabled students' attitudes about inclusion (Allport, 1954; Diamond et al., 1997; Okagkai et al., 1998; Pettigrew, 1998). Students who had contact with a peer with a disability or had a family member with a disability had more positive attitudes towards students with disabilities compared to students who were simply attending an inclusive class who did not have any direct contact with peers with disabilities or had a family member with a disability (Goncalves, 2014; Schwab, 2017). The Human Library approach described in the example case is one strategy to support this.
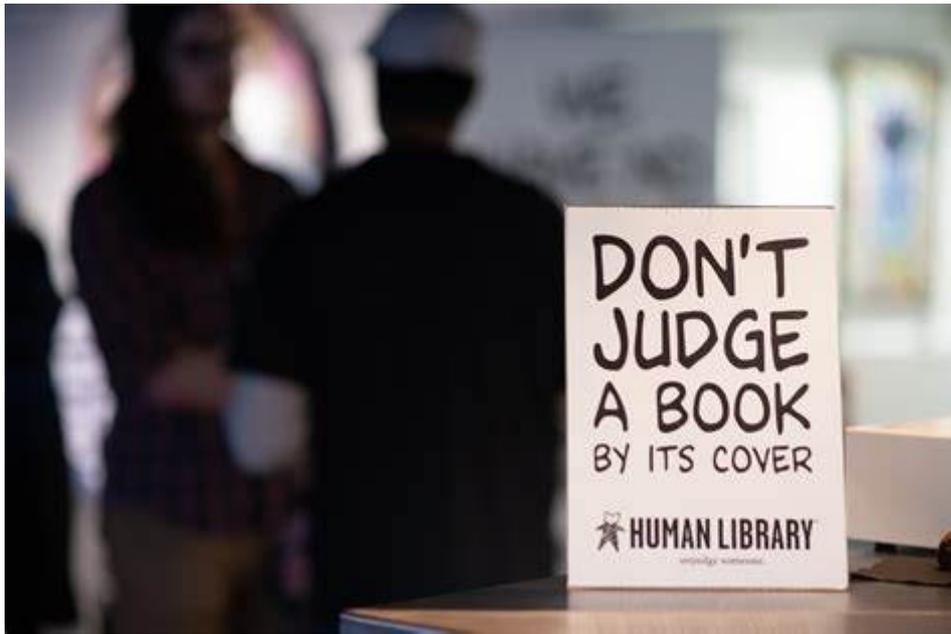
Source: Unjudge someone – The Human Library Organization

A Human Library may be simply described as a library where instead of books, there are people who are willing to share their stories with readers. These human books are volunteers and would typically represent social categories of people that tend to be the target of stigma, discrimination, prejudice, hate, bullying and marginalisation due to factors including colour of skin, religion, body shape, disability, gender nonconformity, sexual orientation, health status, beliefs and so on. The aim of a human library is to challenge stereotypical ideas, attitudes, feelings and beliefs about these social groups through contact and dialogue.

Visitors to a Human Library, such as members of the school community, teachers, students and parents should be informed beforehand of the significance and scope of the activity. Apart from the practical dimensions of this, the school has the opportunity to put the organisation of the library within its broader agenda of promoting positive attitudes towards diversity as part of a holistic, inclusive school culture.

'Books' sit around small tables or on an armchair where visitors can join to listen to the stories. Some 'books' might also sit on carpets and visitors could sit in front of them on cushions on the floor. Each book should have a sign, representing the book title indicating the social category that is being represented. At the entrance to the library, there could be a colourful visual displayed with the list of books available on the day.

Source: Unjudge Someone – The Human Library Organization
Example of Human Library with children and teenagers: Kids Meet A Deaf Person | HiHo Kids – YouTube

Evidence exists of the effectiveness of such approaches to contact and dialogue for reducing stigma and prejudice. For example, early exposure to information about peers with disabilities can increase children's acceptance of peers with varying abilities (Okagaki et al., 1998). Loeber and colleagues (2022) also found that "learning new information about peers with non-compliant classroom behaviour by students can correct their negative views and existing misconceptions and ultimately lead to positive attitudes" (Loeber et al., 2022, p. 4). These findings were reflected in a study by Ostrosky et al., (2013) where preschool students spent time reading and discussing books with characters with disabilities in their classroom as well as at home with their families. The study found that preschool students had an increase in their positive attitude from the combined effect of contact with peers with disabilities and from information shared through books (Ostrosky et al., 2013).

This type of intervention on inclusion can be extrapolated to other dimensions of diversity and is likely to result in desired outcomes such as developing positive attitudes towards inclusion. As young students are exposed through direct contact experiences in addition to literature and multimedia, they are also developing their sense of the world and their understanding of how things work together.

CHALLENGES TO ATTITUDE CHANGE

The benefits of having a shared set of values and attitudes which are positive and open to inclusion are widely recognised. Yet, bringing about an attitude change is not an easy task. Despite the importance of implementing, and sustaining, an inclusive school culture, schools face a number of challenges. While School leadership and the teaching staff are

major drivers of change, some may not be open to change or be unwilling to embrace inclusion themselves, or act as role models in the process. Existing literature highlights where teachers may be less receptive to the idea of inclusive education (Revelian Steven & Tibategeza Eustard, 2022). School leaders, or any agents of change within the school, are likely to face resistance (Zimmerman, 2006) and lack of resources or legal frameworks may also pose difficulties. Teachers may resist change for various reasons such as an unwillingness to change their habits, or because they lack the knowledge and resources or necessary skills to implement change (Yılmaz & Kılıçoğlu, 2013). Changing cultural attitudes is demanding in any context. Nevertheless, it is a key driver to facilitating change and in light of the social and cultural realities of our schools.

Collaboration

Inclusive school culture can be supported and developed through a collaborative approach with school staff, children, families and the wider school community. Collaboration in schools is rooted in, and depends on, the relationships that are made up from repeated interactions across time (Pianta et al., 2003). It could be argued that relationships underpin all learning, and that a focus on creating positive relationships (or in German 'Beziehungsarbeit') is a crucial element of an inclusive school (see Relationships chapter of this book). In terms of collaboration, each participant in an inclusive school brings different orientations, knowledge, expectations, priorities, and interests (Foong et al., 2018). In the context of supportive relationships, such diversity can be leveraged so that these become more than the sum of their parts, but within hostile, defensive or disrespectful relationships these differences can become a source of tension. Recognising this and working towards the creation of inclusive school collaboration, does not suggest that we all have to agree with each other or be homogenous in our thinking. In fact the opposite may be true: for example in an inclusive setting the needs and wishes of individual parents may not always align with the needs and wishes of the community as a whole or of individuals within the school. However, the negotiation, rather than avoidance, of these tensions is part of a democratic society (O'Toole, Dowling & McElheron, 2023) and an inclusive school climate allows for them to be deconstructed in respectful ways. This is just one of many ways in which relationships impact on the inclusivity of a school culture. Some examples of collaborative approaches for the establishment of inclusive school cultures include communities of practice and co-teaching.

Communities of Practice

A Community of Practice (CoP) is just one way to support and foster collaboration within a school environment. A CoP consists of a network of people who frequently come together to share, learn, and work to achieve agreed targets or goals. A CoP is important as it also allows educators and other educational professionals to assemble and share insights

from their previous experiences (Ostrowski et al., 2017). The development of a CoP can be a complex undertaking as it tends to have a multitude of moving parts and requires buy-in and time investment from other stakeholders. From a leadership perspective, CoP provide a safe space for school leaders to learn, gain new perspectives, test new ideas and engage in meaningful, authentic feedback and reflection (Bickmore et al., 2021). This type of safe space can foster deep conversations and build educator confidence (Patton & Parker, 2017).

CoP can also play a monument role in igniting and driving teacher professional development (Schlager & Fusco, 2003). Evidence has shown that the adoption of a teacher CoP can result in more positive views of teacher professional development and enhanced leadership behaviours (Bickmore et al., 2021). Moreover, for some teachers, a CoP provides teachers with the opportunity to engage in dialogue with others on topics including research, teaching practice, and student learning (Patton & Parker, 2017). As a CoP gradually matures, it may also begin to produce its own cultural artefacts, norms, and values (Schlager & Fusco, 2003). Schlager & Fusco (2003) contend that an effective CoP can enact policies, spread innovation and foster change. They further argue that a significant characteristic of a successful CoP is its ability to flourish, evolve, and reproduce its membership where new members can begin a journey towards mastery and leadership. However, some concerns have been highlighted around the use of CoP. For example, a dysfunctional CoP can have a detrimental effect on a school environment. Rather than driving collaboration, they are hijacked and employed to resist progress, impede innovation or subvert policies (Schlager & Fusco, 2003). In this instance, leadership is essential to ensuring communities of practice are not co-opted in this way.

Co-teaching

Another means to foster collaboration within a school community is by facilitating and empowering teachers to co-teach (see Teamwork in the classroom chapter of this book). Firstly, it is important to recognise that there are many models of co-teaching including; whole class team teaching, parallel teaching (with either heterogenous or homogenous groups), one teach and one assist, station teaching, or whole class and small group instruction (Brendle et al.,, 2017; Solis et al., 2012). As co-teaching is an intimate relationship, it requires the teachers to first agree on the model that they will be using. Agreement on the roles and responsibilities before beginning to teach results in better outcomes for both students and teachers who have co-taught (Trent et al., 2003).

Figure 1: Models of co-teaching

Models of Co-Teaching

One Teach, One Observe

One Teach, One Assist

Teaming

Alternative Teaching

Station Teaching

Parallel Teaching
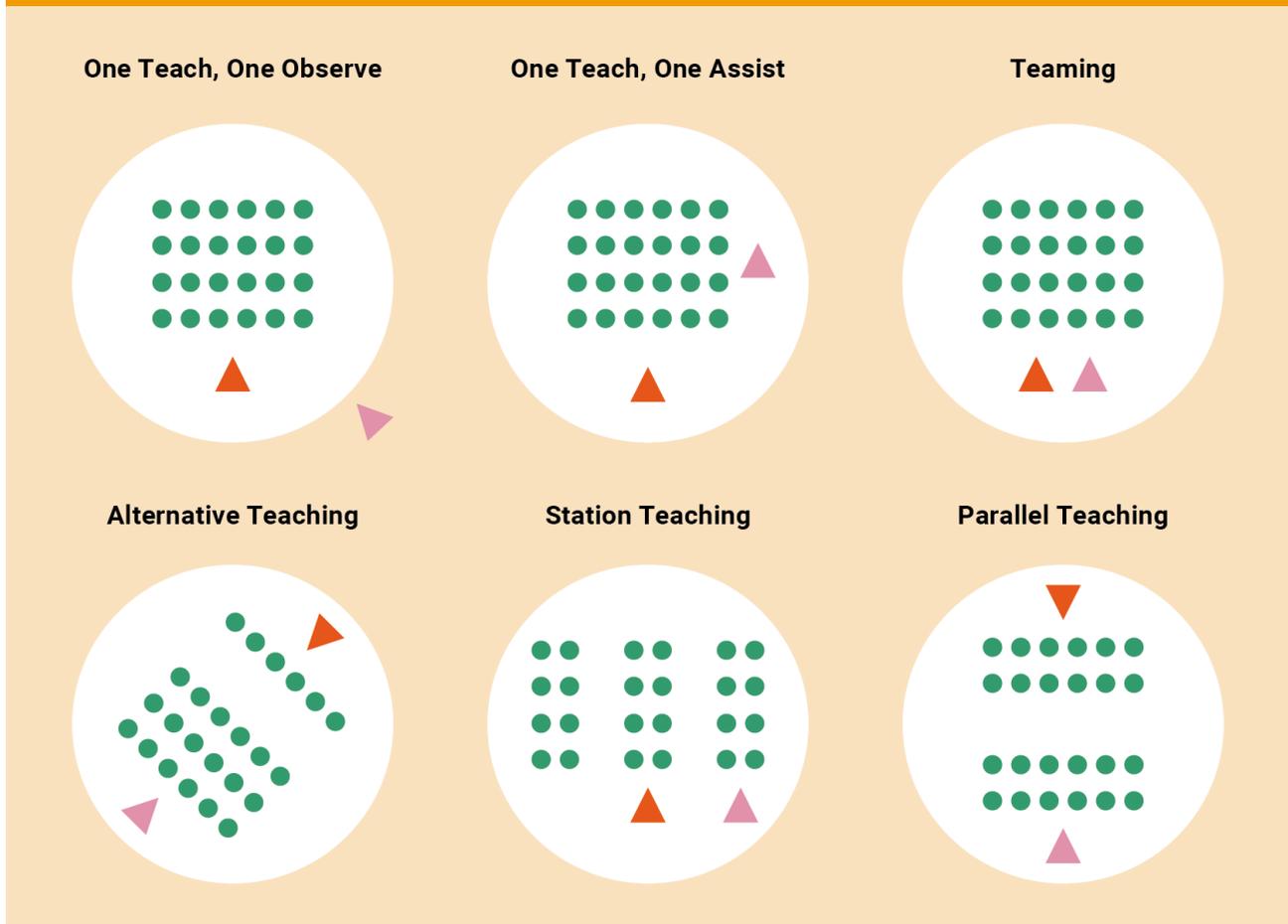
Source: Friend & Bursuck, 2009, p. 88.

After the model is determined, teachers can then collaborate on how to meet the outlined curriculum objectives and execute their plan. The highly collaborative nature of co-teaching draws on the strengths of both the teachers and has been shown to provide positive outcomes for students, specifically those with disabilities (Brendle et al.,, 2017). Co-teaching has also been proven to increase positive attitudes of teachers towards the inclusion of students with disabilities (Solis et al., 2012).

There are many challenges to effective co-teaching such as time and expertise. The role of administrators in advocating and allowing for collaborative planning time is critical to ensure that co-teachers have sufficient time to plan together. It also has been well documented that teachers lack that knowledge of how to effectively co-teach (Brendle et al.,, 2017; Solis et al., 2012, Trent et al., 2003). Further practice and coaching on how to co-plan, co-teach, and co-assess is necessary for the success and positive outcomes to be measured.

Juvonen and colleagues (2019) make similar arguments. They consider challenging the norm and adopting a proactive approach in promoting a culture of social inclusion. Like

Killen and Rutland (2022), they also call for the facilitation of interaction among members of diverse groups which helps to reduce negative stereotypes and biases concerning those who are different. Within their classrooms, teachers may also find ways of encouraging inter-group interaction, e.g., through seating arrangements or group work. Interaction across groups may also be encouraged through extracurricular activities or themed clubs which attract students from different backgrounds. It may also be useful to have a peer mentoring system (Juvonen, 2019).

Knowledge

In order for a school to develop an inclusive culture, the educators, administrators, and the school staff must first know about their community and the community that they serve. To know a community requires knowledge about all the dimensions of diversity that affect the unique makeup of that population such as race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, language, nationality, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, geography, disability, and age.

Multi dimensional

The interplay of the different dimensions of diversity is complex and requires an awareness of the implications of certain elements of diversity. For example, as seen in Figure 2, there are elements of someone's profile (as seen in the inner portion of the wheel) that are more or less fixed and potentially visible to the wider community. There is a recognition here that gender and gender identity may not be fixed, but fluid for some people. The outer portion of the wheel indicates pieces that evolve over time or are not necessarily visible to the outside observer.

Figure 2: John Hopkins University Diversity Wheel

Source: See for example Hawkins et al., 2017

Knowledge of school and wider community demographics is just the first step in this process. It is also necessary to analyse that knowledge to understand how power dynamics affect one's experience in that community. Fostering and promoting inclusion in a school setting requires knowledge about social exclusion and how to prevent it and address it on different levels (Razer, Friedman & Warshofsky, 2013). As deeper learning is acquired regarding the dynamics of a community, the resulting implications become more clear. For example, if there is a large community of non-religious families in an otherwise predominantly Muslim area, what implications does that have on the inclusion of these families into the school culture?

Fostering and promoting a culture of inclusion may necessitate both direct and indirect interventions and strategies targeting different processes and practices. Educators need

constant training and preparation to enable them to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to be able to cater for the needs of all learners as well as to promote values of inclusivity in their everyday practices and interactions at school both with students and colleagues (Mallia Borg, 2007).

In-depth knowledge of the multiple dimensions of inclusion must begin with pre-service teacher training (Bishop & Jones, 2022). As Yuan (2017) states, "It is central to educate pre-service teachers and students in teacher education programs in a culturally responsive way, as well as to facilitate teacher candidates construct effective teaching pedagogies which draw on experiences and knowledge developed in their professional training processes" (2017, p. 3). This knowledge comes from the composition of the community as well as from examination of one's own background. Whether as an educator, staff member, or administrator, each person brings their own experiences and beliefs with them to the school community.

Learning and developing culturally responsive or inclusive practices does not conclude with pre-service teacher training. While it is important that teachers are exposed early on, it is equally important that it continues throughout a teacher's career. Continuing professional development is critical for teachers in order to grow their understanding of how to be as inclusive as possible (Carrington and Elkins, 2002; Uçan, 2016). The act of being inclusive is an ongoing process. As the community evolves, so too do their needs, and inclusive school cultures must reflect that. Furthermore, the need for constant evolution does not rest only on teachers, it is necessary that the administrators of the school, as well as school staff and parents, continue to develop their multi-dimensional understandings of their community.

For example, when a community welcomes an increasing number of refugee families over the course of a year, what can be done to understand their cultural or linguistic needs? More recently, there has been an increase in students identifying as LGBTQIA+ and we must question how we can adapt to support their needs. We want to be more inclusive of students with disabilities, therefore what needs to be done to promote more teacher training? What types of programmes do working parents, for example, need to have in order to feel supported?

Members of the community can also be encouraged to explore areas of need within the community. Recognising shifting demographics or evolving concepts in the wider society are essential to having an open attitude towards inclusion, but further research is necessary to fully understand how that change affects a specific school community (Hawkins et al., 2017; Raffo & Gunter, 2008).

Juvonen and colleagues (2019) cite research which shows that when members of minority groups are in larger numbers, the negative effects, such as lower achievement or mental health issues, are reduced. Although this is not possible in many educational settings, it points to the importance of relative student representation (and ethnic characteristics) which may lead to stigma and discrimination (Juvonen et al., 2019). When

members of a school community understand this important point, policies can be enacted that reflect the school population and include minority students in the community.

Intentional

An inclusive school culture does not happen spontaneously. There is a great deal of intentionality behind gathering knowledge and using the information to create policies, programs, and practices that foster inclusion and continue to reflect the community that they serve (Carrington & Elkins, 2002). For example, as administrators are intentional about setting up spaces for teachers to collaborate, teachers are proactively seeking to understand the cultural make-up of their new class community or in the instance of the parent community reaching out to new members of the community, we see the thread of intentionality playing an integral role in creating an inclusive school culture.

When an inclusive curriculum is implemented, intentional choices are made including having an understanding of the school's community characteristics and being committed to including everyone. For example, schools that use Universal Design for Learning (UDL) are one means of ensuring all students, and not just those with disabilities or learning differences, are included and highly engaged (see UDL chapter of this book).

Intentionality is implicit in the use of language and vocabulary to explicitly include those otherwise marginalised. In the classroom, teachers' use of inclusive language sends a strong message to students such as respect for students' preferred pronouns. Gender-neutral language is important in terms of challenging gender inequalities and including students who are non-binary or gender non-conforming (Bastian & Rohlik, 2022). In order for teachers to be able to implement this level of inclusivity in their classrooms, they first must understand their community's needs and how it works.

We can examine the intentionality of our inclusion by understanding accessibility and what barriers to access may exist for some students. Barriers to access include attitudinal barriers (whether intentional or unintentional), environmental or structural barriers, technological barriers, policy and communication barriers (Pivik, McComas & Laflamme, 2002). When we use this lens to examine what students with a disabilities experience in school, teachers perceptions concerning issues such as lack of access to the classroom or a belief that coursework is too demanding and therefore inaccessible for the student, or that the technology (i.e., screen reader or a assistive device) required by the student is not available, can all prevent inclusion. Viewing barriers to access and participation through an individual's lens can further promote inclusion.

Another facet of intentional inclusiveness comes from who, and what, is visible and represented in the school environment. This shows a newcomer what is valued in the school community (Ryan, Jerome & Lynch, 1994). Examples of this can be seen by who is represented on the school's marketing or external communication materials – for instance, is there a variety of races, ethnicities and genders? Are individuals with disabilities visible?

What else does the school's physical environment show us about who is included? Does the physical space demonstrate who is valued here? For instance, accessible bathrooms, parking spaces, classrooms, and offices show that there has been an intentional thought into who makes up this school community. Books and resources that depict multicultural values including different cultures and languages and other visible signs of inclusion. Using culturally responsive teaching practices increases student participation, and has a positive outcome on student achievement as well as the student's understanding of their own identity (Byrd, 2016; Larson et al., 2018; Piazza et al., 2015). The use of flags – such as pride flags or indigenous flags – can also be an outward sign of the inclusivity of the school culture, provided that they are not used as tokenism, but rather have come from the community (Wolowic, 2017).

Challenges

The greatest challenge is the need to maintain an inclusive school culture. There is a constant need to build knowledge around the evolving nature of a school population. While there are elements of an inclusive school culture that persist over the years, e.g., the policy on inclusion or the ramps and elevators that allow physical access, however, the language used and representations of who makes up a school community will evolve.

The knowledge of legal frameworks and the resulting implications on inclusion within regional or national settings can be challenging. If, for example, there is explicit policy which does not acknowledge one group, religion, or language, it can pose possible legal challenges to how to actively include the entire school population effectively. The policies surrounding education are political by nature and are at risk for change, either to the benefit or detriment of the people, according to changes in political power.

Lastly, maintaining adequate resources is always a challenge. In the case of knowledge building, affording teachers the time, and accompanying financial compensation for their time, to continually increase their knowledge is not always a primary goal for schools given limited budgets. There may not be the financial resources available to purchase materials, equipment, and resources that represent and support the current population of the school.

So, what can a teacher do with these challenges?

Start where you are. Use what you have. Do what you can. Inclusion may not be big sweeping initiatives supported by a whole school community. Inclusion might be small acts within a classroom of a teacher that welcomes all children in with an open mind and actively builds their own knowledge. Schools play a critical role in reducing vulnerability to exclusion by developing pupils' sense of self-efficacy, self-worth, and sense of belonging (Raffo & Gunter, 2008) and that can happen on a small scale if necessary until the movement of inclusion grows into a greater school culture.

Leadership

Leadership plays a crucial role in the development of an inclusive school culture (see Leadership chapter of this book). Zollers and colleagues (1999) contend that an inclusive school culture is born through three key characteristics: a broad vision of the school community, a shared language and values, and inclusive school leadership. They further argue that a thriving school culture may be needed to ensure inclusion flourishes within a school (Zollers et al., 1999). However, creating an inclusive school campus is complex and so often requires a fearless leader (Ainscow, 2001). Strong inclusive leaders explore ways to ensure a collaborative and engaging school environment where everyone is valued, and where staff and students feel safe and have a true sense of belonging. Inclusive leadership's primary focus is on achieving inclusion and ensuring the necessary processes and goals are in place to achieve that inclusion (Ryan, 2006). Despite what one might think, leadership and inclusion tend not to be mutually inclusive, but instead focuses on a number of factors to create a synergy between them (Ryan, 2006). These include how leadership is understood and planned, and how roles and activities for fostering inclusion are allocated (Ryan, 2006). Promoting and fostering inclusive school culture is a leadership choice, with schools choosing to move in a clear philosophical direction. However, it is often school principals, or the school heads, who are involved in making this decision.

Principals are often viewed as leaders in driving school culture (Francis et al., 2016). Principals are seen as having the most knowledge, access to resources and are in the best position to drive change (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1990). As a result, principals play a key role in the development of inclusiveness ethos within that school culture. An inclusive principal must be morally strong and advocate for inclusion for both staff and students. Evidence suggests that these types of principals are also more likely to support creativity and allow extended levels of risk to be taken (Black & Simon, 2014). Being a leader often requires making difficult decisions. Moreover, promoting an authentic inclusion environment means making daily decisions that include or exclude students and staff (Banks, 2023).

To foster inclusive practices and attitudes, principals should mirror the inclusive practices in their everyday practice. Principals also need to understand, recognise, and value the individuality and diversity of the student population (Ainscow, 2001). They also need to understand that the path to an inclusive school culture is a continuous journey and not a predefined destination. Inclusion is never complete; schools can always learn more ways to be more inclusive. Causton-Theoharis and Theoharis (2008) echo this by arguing that inclusion should be viewed more as a way of thinking than a set school target to be achieved. Moliner Miravet and Moliner García (2013) also contend that two essential components are necessary to foster an inclusive and intercultural culture in schools. These components are a set of objectives agreed on by the educational community and a set of shared values.

However, Ryan (2006) reasons that inclusive leadership is underpinned by a specific

set of practices. He purports that these practices include advocating for inclusion, the education of all stakeholders, encouraging debate and discourse, developing critical consciousness, and implementing inclusive decision and policymaking strategies. They also state that inclusive leadership should promote the adoption of whole-school approaches with a particular focus on student learning and classroom practice. Others such as Ainscow (2020) have championed this whole-school approach. The practices mentioned above highlight how inclusive school leadership is very much an intentional process. However, inclusive leadership is only one part of the inclusive culture. For inclusive leadership to have an optimal impact, all stakeholders must promote and support inclusive ideals that foster an inclusive school culture (Ryan, 2006). From a cultural perspective, it is important that leadership examines the cultural needs of not just the students but also parents and teachers alike (Khalifa et al., 2016).

Staff values and attitudes also play an integral role in the creation of an inclusive school culture. Schools need to be staffed by teachers who believe all students can learn and have a responsibility to teach and support every learner (Rose, 2023). These values should include openness and celebration of diversity if teachers are to include and support the participation of every student (Kugelmass, 2003). Sometimes, it is about understanding the climate that is already present within your school. Principals have noted that inclusive leadership can be about knowing what the school's current baseline is and working from there (DeMatthews, 2021). Moreover, Black and Simon (2014) argue that teachers need to critically reflect on their assumptions and behaviours, inclusive practice and build partnerships with parents and others in the community. They further note how principals are responsible for leading these processes of reflection and collaboration that shape teacher values.

Inclusive practice and the development of an inclusive culture is a shared enterprise. From a sustainability perspective, leadership needs to plan and develop a sustainable approach that commits to the inclusive agenda that is everyone's responsibility (Black & Simon, 2014). To achieve this goal, a certain level of cooperation and collaborative work is required. This collaboration is at the core of inclusive school cultures and leaders play a critical role in supporting and developing a collaborative culture within a school.

Ryan (2006) states that "for leadership to be genuinely inclusive, it must foster equitable and horizontal relationships that also transcend wider gender, race and class divisions" (p. 8). However, for openness and more fluid collaboration and relationship building, leadership needs to facilitate relationships across both the horizontal and the vertical. These relationships, partnerships and collaborations should not be limited and include, for example, parents, caregivers, teachers, educational professionals, community partners, students and researchers. Collaboration is not a new phenomenon as we can see from examples of co-teaching and communities of practice earlier in this chapter. Many teachers are enthusiastic about working in teams and already collaborate in teams to solve problems, but often they require a strong leader to initiate and support these types of

collaborations (Clark et al., 1995). Strong leaders also recognise the need for teamwork, collaboration, and discourse. In addition to collaboration, Banks (2023) notes the influence of dialogue between stakeholders in shaping and reforming inclusive education and practice. Furthermore, collaboration need not be confined within the school. Evidence shows that a school's capacity to support learner diversity can be better achieved through school-to-school collaboration diversity (Muijs et al., 2011). Likewise, Carrington and Robinson (2006) maintain that a principle of development of a more inclusive school community lies in collaborating and valuing external partners such as parents and the wider community.

School policies have a significant impact on how a school culture and inclusion are created within a school. Inclusive culture requires policymakers and senior staff across educational structures to share similar visions for inclusive education in terms of differences, collaboration and supporting every student. After all, promoting and fostering inclusive practices is everyone's business, and so all stakeholders, including the students themselves, should be included when developing policy (Ainscow, 2020). However, while the development of policies is one goal, the implementation of these policies is another. There are often inconsistencies about how policies are implemented, so leadership plays a key role in ensuring implementation is successful across the school (Black & Simon, 2014). Ainscow (2020) agrees and notes that policy changes related to inclusion require an effective strategy for implementation to ensure barriers affecting marginalised cohorts are removed. Moreover, all leadership processes should be designed and planned to advocate and support inclusion (Ryan, 2006). Inclusive leaders need to be consistent and clear when it comes to policy. Policies should clearly state what is meant by terms such as inclusion and equity (Ainscow, 2020). However, inclusive school policies that promote inclusive culture may mean little without the resources required to embed a school's inclusive agenda.

School leadership plays a pivotal role in the acquisition of resources for schools. These include resources that are pivotal to inclusive education, such as aides, technologies and additional staff, including those with specific expertise (Black & Simon, 2014). Shevlin (2023) argues that in an inclusive utopia, schools would have the appropriate resources and accessible spaces so schools could ensure everyone experiences a sense of belonging. However, many inclusive-centric accommodations and supports often require schools to have the financial resources to achieve inclusion, resources schools may not have. Time is another resource often required to accommodate or support a student or colleague in promoting or facilitating inclusive practice. With competing priorities, inclusive leaders need to be proactive and deliberate in acquiring the resources they need. They also need to be cognisant of the additional time often required to facilitate more inclusive agendas and to recognise the value of supporting staff initiatives that focus on creating a more inclusive culture.

From a curriculum standpoint, school leaders must understand that the adoption of

inclusive pedagogical frameworks such as Universal Design for Learning (UDL) or Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) may require the allocation of resources – human, physical and otherwise. These resources include time and formal acknowledgement within performance reviews (Fovet, 2023). It may also have additional financial requirements, such as the acquisition of tools and technologies. However, teachers have identified systematic support from leaders and senior management as essential in obtaining the resources to address barriers to inclusion (Woodcock & Marks Wolfsen, 2019). They also noted the role leadership plays in terms of attitudinal barriers and managing competing demands such as time. Adopting new frameworks requires an understanding of the intricacies of these new approaches. Therefore, knowledge is important when changing inclusive practices and promoting new ways of engagement.

This chapter has already discussed the importance of knowledge in terms of developing an inclusive school culture. However, it is crucial that leaders and senior staff are knowledgeable about inclusive practice and creating an inclusive climate within schools. Worryingly, despite the high level of university-based leadership preparation programs, concerns have been raised about their lack of focus on special education and inclusion (DeMatthews et al., 2020). If leaders are not being trained to understand and mirror the values of inclusive leadership, it may never take hold across educational organisations – a key practice of inclusive leadership. Inclusive leadership needs to be educational as the leader must educate stakeholders across campus on all issues pertaining to inclusive and exclusive practices (Ryan, 2003).

'Safe space'

Another element that leadership plays a critical role is the nurturing of a 'safe space'. As noted from the beginning of this chapter, an inclusive school culture can often be an intangible aspect of educational settings, and may be something that is subjectively felt rather than objectively articulated. Inclusive attitudes within collaborative relationships and possession of appropriate knowledge and awareness, guided and resourced by inclusive leaders, can combine to create a school culture that feels safe for all. There is a rich literature dating back to the 1960s on this concept of the intangible 'felt' elements of cultures in workplaces using the term 'psychological safety' (Schein & Bennis, 1965). This is increasingly being applied to educational settings (e.g. Xie et al., 2022). Equally, there is a range of literature using the term 'safe space' that originated in the 1970s in women's and LGBT movements and which referred to safe physical meeting places. This has more recently been applied to learning environments characterised by respect and safety (Flesner & Von der Lippe, 2019). In this chapter, in recognition of the fact that a truly inclusive school culture needs not just a psychological sense of safety, but also a physical one, we mostly use the term 'safe space'. However, in defining this intangible element of inclusive school culture we draw on literature that uses either term.

Edmondson, Higgins, Singer and Weiner (2016) state that a sense of safety is particularly crucial in settings characterised by high stakes, complexity, and essential human interactions, and name educational settings as one such type of environment. They indicate that school climate is a key predictor of how people within schools will act, respond, adapt and learn. In schools characterised as safe spaces, individuals feel able to take a risk to try something new or to be themselves. People are able to contribute without fear of being embarrassed or rejected and so within such spaces there is trust, mutual respect and people are comfortable being themselves (Duhigg, 2016). This participation builds a sense of belonging within a community leading to inclusion.

A well-known study on the effects of mutual respect and team dynamics was conducted by the company Google, who explored why some teams were more successful than others. This study, called 'Project Aristotle', funnelled millions of dollars into gathering a dizzying array of data measuring almost every aspect of their employees' lives in an attempt to quantify what constituted the 'perfect team' (Duhigg, 2016). They investigated aspects such as how often colleagues ate together, characteristics of effective leaders, gender balance across teams, personality characteristics like introversion and extroversion, and found no common points of data across successful teams or across unsuccessful teams. It was only when they began to investigate the more intangible elements of team culture that they discovered what distinguished successful teams from unsuccessful ones – the way people treated each other. 'Psychological safety', broadly defined as people being comfortable expressing and being themselves without fear of embarrassment or retribution, and 'social sensitivity' whereby people showed empathy for each other's perspectives and needs, combined to create inclusive cultures conducive to learning, creativity and success (Edmonson, 2018).

This has implications for inclusive school culture, and it may be the reason that the four elements we identify (attitudes, collaboration, knowledge, and leadership) are so effective in developing inclusive school culture and creating safe spaces for the whole school community. For example, Zhou and Pan (2015) linked psychological safety to transformational leadership and highlighted the necessity of cultures of communication to enhance employee creativity and participation.

There are many problems and difficulties that face inclusive leadership, particularly when it comes to changing cultural norms. The attitude section of this chapter highlighted the attitudinal barriers that must be faced when promoting a more inclusive culture. This leadership section also discussed how policies and financial restrictions might impede the inclusive process. Ainscow (2020) notes how these competing pressures add to the difficulty of developing a more inclusive culture within a school. He further claims that problems around promoting inclusive and equitable school culture stem from three key areas, which focus on issues with schools, issues between schools and issues external to schools (such as family issues and policy-related problems).

Inclusive leadership is paramount in the implementation of an inclusive school culture as

it impacts so many facets of the school environment, and models the values of the school or schools it represents. Ryan (2006) contends in order to make the world a better place, schools need to practise inclusive leadership. However, difficulties with inclusive-friendly leadership have been documented and have resulted in a move towards more distributed leadership approaches rather than the traditional hierarchy approach (Ryan, 2006). Ainscow notes that schools must acknowledge that leadership is often the responsibility of a multitude of staff and not just a small number of individuals. For true inclusion, school leaders must foster an inclusive school culture where responsibility for inclusion is everyone's business, and where an approach based on multiple leaders is encouraged.

Ultimately, moving towards more inclusive ways of operating and thinking takes time and affects an entire school system. However, Ainscow (2020) argues that this can lead to significant changes within schools and classrooms. Additionally, Rose (2023) also notes that to sustain this inclusive change, schools must be respectful of those who are required to implement the change and acknowledge the current climate and culture that exists. After all, inclusive educational change involves dialogue and compassion towards others, but more importantly, a changing of attitudes, actions, beliefs and behaviours, which school leaders are in the optimal position to achieve this inclusive change.

Conclusion

The idea of creating, adapting, or changing a school culture may seem like a daunting task. To make the shift from exclusive to inclusive is not a quick process. It cannot happen in isolation, nor can it be forced on an unwilling participant. There are many interlocking pieces that fit together over time and amongst many members of the community to create a whole school with a commitment to an inclusive culture. Yet each of those cultures starts with one step.

It has been established in this chapter that the attitudes, collaboration, knowledge, and leadership in a school interact to create an inclusive school culture. But the question remains where do you begin? How then does an educator contribute towards the ever evolving concept of an inclusive school culture?

Importantly, teacher training is a key part of this process, yet many teachers feel unprepared or lack confidence on how to effectively include the wide range of students in their classrooms (Florian & Camedda, 2020). This is where the journey of 1,000 steps starts. These are the steps that you begin with today. We can be motivated by the big picture of inclusion, but it can be easy to get discouraged by the enormity of the task and choose not to act at all. Choose to act.

Local contexts

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=533#h5p-49

Closing questions to discuss or tasks

- Consider the role that you currently play, or hope to play, in your school culture. What is one thing that you can do to increase the level of inclusion in the school? Where is one area that you can make a change to build a greater sense of inclusion? What is one area that you need to know more about? What are practices that ensure sustainability of inclusive school culture?
- How could you evaluate the effectiveness of inclusive measures in your school?
- What is the most effective way for you to address resistance to building an inclusive school culture?
- How could you foster collaboration with all the stakeholders of your school – the immediate local community, families and caretakers, educators, administrators, staff, specialists, and students?
- What can you, as a student teacher or a pre-service teacher, do now to make your school culture more inclusive?

Literature

Allport, G. W. *The Nature of Prejudice*. Cambridge: Addison-Wesley, 1954.

Bastian, M. J. S., and L. N. Rohlik. "Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Mental Health Training and Knowledge for High School Staff: A Scoping Review." *J Sch Nurs*, August 15, 2022. https://doi.org/10.1177/10598405221120440.

Bayram Özdemir, S., M. Özdemir, and K. Boersma. "How Does Adolescents' Openness to Diversity Change Over Time? The Role of Majority-Minority Friendship, Friends' Views, and Classroom Social Context." *J Youth Adolescence* 50 (2021): 75–88. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-020-01329-4.

Bishop, A., and P. Jones. "Promoting Inclusive Practice in Primary Initial Teacher Training."

British Journal for Learning Support 17, no. 2 (2002): 10–15.

Brendle, J., R. D. Lock, and K. E. Piazza. "A Study of Co-Teaching Identifying Effective Implementation Strategies." *International Journal of Special Education* 32 (2017): 538–50.

Byrd, C. M. "Does Culturally Relevant Teaching Work? An Examination from Student Perspectives." *SAGE Open* 6, no. 3 (2016): 1–10.

Carrington, S., and J. Elkins. "Bridging the Gap between Inclusive Policy and Inclusive Culture in Secondary Schools." *Support for Learning* 17, no. 2 (2002): 5–19. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9604.00236.

Cherry, Kendra. "The Components of Attitudes," 2023. https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-attitude-in-psychology-definition-formation-changes-2795901.

Deal, Terrence E., and Kent D. Peterson. *Shaping School Culture*. 3rd ed. John Wiley & Sons, 2016.

Diamond, K. E., L. L. Hestenes, E. S. Carpenter, and F. K. Innes. "Relationships between Enrollment in an Inclusive Class and Preschool Children's Ideas about People with Disabilities." *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*17, no. 4 (1997): 520.

Domínguez-Martínez, Tecelli, and Rebeca Robles. "Preventing Transphobic Bullying and Promoting Inclusive Educational Environments: Literature Review and Implementing Recommendations." *Archives of Medical Research*50, no. 8 (2019): 543–55.

Eckstein, K., M. Miklikowska, and P. Noack. "School Matters: The Effects of School Experiences on Youth's Attitudes toward Immigrants." *J Youth Adolescence* 50 (2021): 2208–23. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-021-01497-x.

Fine-Davis, M., and D. Faas. "Equality and Diversity in the Classroom: A Comparison of Students' and Teachers' Attitudes in Six European Countries." *Social Indicators Research* 119 (2014): 1319–34.

Florian, Lani, and Donatella Camedda. "Enhancing Teacher Education for Inclusion." *European Journal of Teacher Education* 43, no. 1 (2020): 4–8. https://doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2020.1707579.

Friend, M., and W. D. Bursuck. *Including Students with Special Needs: A Practical Guide for Classroom Teachers*. 4th ed. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2009.

Garmon, M. "Changing Preservice Teachers' Attitudes/Beliefs about Diversity: What Are the Factors?" *J. Teach. Educ.*55 (2004): 201–13. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487104263080.

Gonçalves, T., and M. Lemos. "Personal and Social Factors Influencing Students' Attitudes towards Peers with Special Needs." *Procedia Soc. Behav. Sci.* 112 (2014): 949–55.

Hahn, Hans P. "Material Culture." In *International Encyclopedia of Anthropology*, Vol. 8, 2018.

Hawkins, Blake, Martin Morris, Tony Nguyen, John Siegel, and Emily Vardell. "Advancing the Conversation: Next Steps for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Queer (LGBTQ) Health Sciences Librarianship." *Journal of the Medical Library Association* 105 (2017). https://doi.org/10.5195/JMLA.2017.206.

Juvonen, Jaana, Leah M. Lessard, Ritika Rastogi, Hannah L. Schacter, and Danielle Sayre Smith. "Promoting Social Inclusion in Educational Settings: Challenges and Opportunities."

Educational Psychologist 54, no. 4 (2019): 250–70. https://doi.org/10.1080/00461520.2019.1655645.

Killen, M., and A. Rutland. "Promoting Fair and Just School Environments: Developing Inclusive Youth." *Policy Insights from the Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 9, no. 1 (2022): 81–89. https://doi.org/10.1177/23727322211073795.

Larson, K. E., E. T. Pas, C. P. Bradshaw, M. S. Rosenberg, and N. L. Day-Vines. "Examining How Proactive Management and Culturally Responsive Teaching Relate to Student Behavior: Implications for Measurement and Practice." *School Psychology Review* 47, no. 2 (2018): 153–66.

Mallia Borg, Felicienne. "Developing Inclusive Practices in a Secondary School: Challenges and Opportunities for Responding to the Diversity of Students' Needs." University of Malta, 2007.

Moliner Miravet, Lidon, and Odet Moliner García. "The Role of Teachers' Shared Values and Objectives in Promoting Intercultural and Inclusive School Cultures: A Case Study." *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 26, no. 10 (2013): 1373–86. https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2012.731535.

Osterman, K. F. "Students' Need for Belonging in the School Community." *Review of Educational Research* 70, no. 3 (2000): 323–67.

Ostrosky, M. M., C. Mouzourou, E. A. Dorsey, P. C. Favazza, and L. M. Leboeuf. "Pick a Book, Any Book." *Young Exceptional Children* 18, no. 1 (2013): 30–43. https://doi.org/10.1177/1096250613512666.

O'Toole, L., G. Dowling, and T. McElheron. "A New Publicness for Early Childhood Education and Care in Ireland." In *The New Publicness of Education: Democratic Possibilities after the Critique of Neoliberalism*, edited by G. Biesta and C. A. Säfström. London: Routledge, 2023.

Pettigrew, T. F. "Intergroup Contact Theory." *Annual Review of Psychology* 49, no. 1 (1998): 65–85. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.49.1.65.

Pianta, R. C., B. Hamre, and M. Stuhlman. "Relationships between Teachers and Children." In *Handbook of Psychology: Educational Psychology*, edited by W. M. Reynolds and G. E. Miller, 7:199–234, 2003.

Piazza, S. V., S. Rao, and M. S. Protacio. "Converging Recommendations for Culturally Responsive Literacy Practices: Students with Learning Disabilities, English Language Learners, and Socioculturally Diverse Learners." *International Journal of Multicultural Education* 17, no. 3 (2015): 1–20.

Pivik, J., J. McComas, and M. Laflamme. "Barriers and Facilitators to Inclusive Education." *Exceptional Children* 69, no. 1 (2002): 97–107.

Raffo, C., and H. Gunter. "Leading Schools to Promote Social Inclusion: Developing a Conceptual Framework for Analysing Research, Policy and Practice." *Journal of Education Policy* 23, no. 4 (2008): 397–414. https://doi.org/10.1080/02680930801923799.

Razer, Michal, Victor J. Friedman, and Boaz Warshofsky. "Schools as Agents of Social Exclusion and Inclusion." *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 17, no. 11 (2013):

1152–70. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2012.742145.

Revelian, Steven, and Eustard Tibategeza. "Effective Implementation of Inclusive Education in Enhancing Quality Education in Public Primary Schools in Tanzania: The Role of School Culture." *Journal of Humanities and Education Development* 4, no. 1 (2022): 190–99. https://doi.org/10.22161/jhed.4.1.19.

Ryan, Richard M., Jerome D. Stiller, and John H. Lynch. "Representations of Relationships to Teachers, Parents, and Friends as Predictors of Academic Motivation and Self-Esteem." *The Journal of Early Adolescence* 14, no. 2 (1994): 226–49.

Schein, E. H., and W. G. Bennis. *Personal and Organizational Change through Group Methods: The Laboratory Approach*. New York, NY: Wiley, 1965.

Schwab, S. "The Impact of Contact on Students' Attitudes toward Peers with Disabilities." *Res. Dev. Disabil.* 62 (2017): 160–65.

Solis, M., S. Vaughn, E. Swanson, and L. McCulley. "Collaborative Models of Instruction: The Empirical Foundations of Inclusion and Co-Teaching." *Psychology in the Schools* 49 (2012): 498–510. https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.21606.

Spencer-Oatey, H. "What Is Culture? A Compilation of Quotations." GlobalPAD Core Concepts, 2012.

Trent, S. C., B. L. Driver, M. H. Wood, P. S. Parrott, T. E. Martin, and W. G. Smith. "Creating and Sustaining a Special Education/General Education Partnership: A Story of Evolution, Change, and Uncertainty." *Teaching and Teacher Education* 19 (2003): 203–19. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0742-051X(02)0014X.

Triandis, H. C., J. Adamopoulos, and D. Brinberg. "Perspectives and Issues in the Study of Attitudes." In *Attitudes and Attitude Change in Special Education: Theory and Practice*, edited by R. L. Jones, 21–40. The Council for Exceptional Children, 1984.

Uçan, S. "The Role of Continuous Professional Development of Teachers in Educational Change: A Literature Review." *Harran Maarif Dergisi* 1, no. 1 (2016): 36–43. https://doi.org/10.22596/2016.0101.36.43.

Utomo, Utomo, and Hayatun Thaibah. "The Benefits of Inclusive Education in Terms of the Character Perspective of Regular Students in Elementary Schools." *JPPI (Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Indonesia)* 7, no. 2 (2021): 328–35. https://doi.org/10.29210/020211261.

Wang, Jui-Sheng, Yu-Chen Jesse Lan, Rezeda R. Khairutdinova, and Chulpan R. Gromova. "Teachers' Attitudes to Cultural Diversity: Results from a Qualitative Study in Russia and Taiwan." *Frontiers in Psychology* 13 (2022): 1–13.

Xie, R., J. Jiang, L. Yue, L. Ye, D. An, and Y. Liu. "Under Psychological Safety Climate: The Beneficial Effects of Teacher–Student Conflict." *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 19, no. 15 (2022): 9300.

Yılmaz, Derya, and Gökhan Kılıçoğlu. "Resistance to Change and Ways of Reducing Resistance in Educational Organizations." *European Journal of Research on Education* 1, no. 1 (2013): 14–21.

Yuan, H. "Preparing Teachers for Diversity: A Literature Review and Implications from

Community-Based Teacher Education." *Higher Education Studies* 8, no. 1 (2017): 9. https://doi.org/10.5539/hes.v8n1p9.

Zhou, Q., and W. Pan. "A Cross-Level Examination of the Process Linking Transformational Leadership and Creativity: The Role of Psychological Safety Climate." *Human Performance* 28, no. 5 (2015): 405–24.

Zimmerman, J. "Why Some Teachers Resist Change and What Principals Can Do About It." *NASSP Bulletin* 90, no. 3 (2006): 238–49. https://doi.org/10.1177/0192636506291521.

About the authors

Angele Deguara

Angele Deguara is a resident academic and subject co-ordinator of Sociology at the Junior College of the University of Malta. She also lectures in gender and sexuality within the Department of Gender and Sexualities, Faculty for Social Wellbeing. She conducted her PhD research in the anthropology of religion and sexuality with LGBT Catholics in Malta and Palermo, Sicily. She is the author of *Life on the Line: A Sociological Investigation of Women working in a Clothing Factory in Malta* as well as a number of other published works. Her main research interests are gender, homosexuality and religion. She co-founded and chaired the Diversity Committee at the Junior College for a number of years. She is an activist for social justice and civil rights with Moviment Graffitti and has previously volunteered with other organisations such as the Malta LGBTIQ Rights Movement and within the Fair Trade movement.

Jessica Lament

Jessica Lament is a specialist in inclusive practice, especially for students with disabilities. She has worked in schools in the US, Singapore, and France supporting teachers – from pre-k to secondary school to teachers in higher education training programs – always with the same goal, to increase the implementation of research-based inclusion.

Thomas Joseph O Shaughnessy

Thomas is a graduate of the University of Limerick at both undergraduate (BSc. in Computer Systems) and postgraduate level (MSc. in Software Engineering). With a background in accessibility, teaching and assistive technology, Thomas has extensive experience promoting and facilitating inclusive practice in primary, post-primary and post-

secondary education. Thomas has experience guest lecturing at undergraduate and postgraduate levels in assistive technology, accessibility, and Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Thomas's interests include wider institutional approaches to inclusive practice, the role of third space professionals in higher education and the use of communities of practice in fostering and promoting more inclusive practice.

Leah O'Toole

Dr Leah O'Toole is Associate Professor of Early Childhood Education in the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education in Maynooth University, Ireland. With an academic background in Psychology, her research interests include early childhood education, particularly accessing the voices of the youngest children from birth, relational pedagogy, bioecological theory and working with parents and communities. Inclusion across multiple dimensions is central to all elements of this work.

RESTORATIVE PRACTICE IN SCHOOLS: IMPLEMENTING RESTORATIVE APPROACHES TO RESOLVE CONFLICTS AND BUILD POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Andrew Campbell; Emer Byrden; Seán Gleasure; and Leah O'Toole

---

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://book.all-means-all.education/ ama-2025-en/?p=645#oembed-1

Example Case

Food for thought before we begin:

Traditional school example

Three children rush up to the teacher at the end of free-play time. All three are shouting and pushing each other aside, clearly wanting to say something urgently. The teacher holds up her hand and says, 'All of you have broken the rule of no running in the corridor and no shouting. For all of you that will mean no token earned for the next part of the day.' With that, one child bursts out crying, pushes another one over and says, 'Now look what you did. I'm going to make you pay!' That child falls awkwardly and starts screaming. The third child runs off in the confusion.

Now the teacher has one violent, furious child, one injured, furious child and one missing, furious child on her hands, not to mention the other 23 children waiting for her in the classroom.

Does this sound familiar to you as a teacher? If so, you may be interested in this chapter.

Restorative school example

Three children rush up to the teacher at the end of free-play time. All three are shouting and pushing each other aside, clearly wanting to say something urgently. The teacher holds up her hand and says, 'Ok, we all might just need to stop for a second. I can see you all want to talk to me, I can see it's urgent. It looks like you are all pretty upset. You know by now that my brain can only hear one voice at a time. Do you think you could help me out? Could you all sit with a friend while the class eats lunch? If we can all agree with this, I will chat to you all one by one and then maybe we can work this out.'

Now the teacher still has three upset children on her hands, but the process of de-escalation has started. The three children have something new to think about (lunch with a friend!) and there is a clear path ahead. Any harm that has been done to relationships can now be repaired, starting with the teacher's conversations with each child.

Does this sound like a ridiculous dream? If so, you may be interested in this chapter.

In the examples above we see the contrast between a traditional, rules-based, reward-and-punishment approach to solving a typical everyday problem in a school context and a restorative approach to the same problem. The teacher in the traditional example did nothing wrong, she followed the school's policy: the children had broken the rules; she administered the punishment equally and clearly. Crucially however, the children also did not do anything wrong. They just reacted as children to a situation of asking for help, albeit in a way that adults tend not to like or to recognise. They were met with a punishment, because they asked in a way the teacher did not like. Thus everyone, the children and the teacher, found themselves in a much worse situation pretty quickly. If you have worked in a school, this type of situation is probably not new to you. Approaching the problem restoratively asks that we, as teachers, are aware of and communicate our own needs and feelings clearly, recognise or try to recognise the feelings and needs of students, and focus the energy of all parties on the restoration of relationships, rather than the allocation of blame, consequences, and punishments (Hopkins, 2011). We invite you to read on if you would like to learn more.

Initial questions

1. What do we mean by Restorative Practice as a way of being in schools?
2. Who are you and how do you understand yourself as a restorative teacher?
3. What does Restorative Practice look like in practice and what are the benefits for all members of the learning community?
4. What are the common critiques of Restorative Practice? What are the common myths?
5. How can Restorative Practice foster inclusion and challenge inequalities?

Introduction to Topic

In this chapter, we will consider restorative practice (RP) in schools and think about how to implement restorative approaches in order to build positive relationships and resolve conflicts when they arise within the school community. In the collaborative writing process for this chapter, we started with five foundational questions above.

These questions formed the basis of our discussions, which we then mapped onto the chapter structure for this handbook of inclusive education. The first question will be answered in this Introduction, the other questions will be woven through the subsequent sections. We understand RP as a return to practices of being together in a community that can be traced back to at least 2000 BCE (Thorsborne, 2014) – or, indeed, as old as human history, as suggested by Zehr (2014). Much research situated in the North American context cites First Nations people as the originators of a restorative approach, but similar practices have been ongoing in many different cultures, which will be discussed further on in this chapter. Within public discourse around schools, there is often a quest for something new that will solve all the problems which arise in the classroom. While many new interventions have been tried, research shows that groups work best at all levels in society when value is placed on intentional relationship building (Ganotice et al., 2022; New York Times, 2016). Classrooms are first and foremost groups, but they are also groups which must come together day after day after day. Therefore, finding a way of building connection and repairing the almost inevitable interpersonal hurt or harm that arises between group members is essential.

In the broadest sense, RP represents "a broad term that encompasses an array of non-punitive, relationship-centred approaches for addressing and avoiding harm" (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020: 295). Fronius et al. (2019: 1) describes RP as "a growing social movement to institutionalise non-punitive, relationship-centred approaches for avoiding and addressing harm, responding to violations of legal and human rights, and collaboratively solving problems." Anfara and colleagues (2013) clarify the relationship between values and practice with respect to RP, highlighting that restorative values serve to guide the delivery of RP. Within schools, practising restoratively takes on a particular nuance. It is more

than something that is done only in a specific instance of harm, it represents a way of being throughout the whole day. Traditional punitive systems of behaviour management and discipline in schools have borrowed heavily from the criminal justice system (Hopkins, 2011; Zehr, 2014) – perhaps, with a kinder hand. It is important to note that the context of school requires that individual actors can continue to share each other's space in the aftermath of harm caused and experienced. Therefore the response to harm must address the issue of how to repair the damaged relationship.

Structural disadvantages in traditional behaviour systems and how RP can address them

Traditional punitive or retributive models (Burnett et al, 2015) of dealing with discipline in schools reinforce dominant societal power structures, replicate hierarchies and structural disadvantage, and normalise violence as just and fair (Gregory et al., 2013; Nolan & MacRuairc, 2022). As a result, children internalise their place in the social order as one of compliance to avoid harm, learn to repress their feelings and needs, and begin an endless quest for approval from a significant adult irrespective of how that adult treats them. Schools have favoured punitive, behaviourist approaches borrowing heavily from criminal justice systems with the justification of managing behaviour and maintaining order and discipline (Hopkins, 2011; Nolan & MacRuairc, 2022; Rogers, 2000). Within this, the language of criminal justice prevailed (Zehr, 2014), with terms such as 'rules,' 'consequences,' 'victim,' 'perpetrator,' 'blame,' and 'guilt' being prominent. As part of this, conflict between children in schools has traditionally been resolved through the teacher's mediation in administering some form of consequence for a behaviour deemed to be undesirable or problematic – with little emphasis on repairing the damage that has occurred to the relationships between members of the community. Such disciplinary and exclusionary approaches have been demonstrated to be ineffective and harmful, while also being associated with racial disparities which exacerbate structural inequalities and contribute to challenges across the lifespan. In one report citing the connections between prisoners' childhood and family background, on discussing school experiences, noted that 63% had been suspended or temporarily excluded, and 42% stated that they had been permanently excluded or expelled (Williams, Papadopoulou, and Booth, 2012). In another report, the Chief Inspector of Prisons for England and Wales found in its annual report for 2017-2018 that 89% of detained (or 'imprisoned') children and young people aged 12-18 have reported being excluded from school (Perera, 2020). By contrast, research has established that restorative schools demonstrate reductions in disciplinary disparities with respect to racial and ethnic groups discussed above (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Gregory et al., 2013; Zakszeski & Rutherford, 2021). Traditional approaches have also been characterised as creating power imbalances between children and educators which is detrimental to their voice and empowerment (Tyler, 2006; Zehr, 2014). As educators we must be knowledgeable and mindful of the historical racial disparities and the impact of

institutional racism and how it shows up in our classrooms, especially in the areas of suspension and expulsion.

Reflection

It is important to consider whether teacher disposition could be a reinforcer of structural disadvantage. We all have our own commitments and values that guide us. It takes some honest reflection on the self as a teacher to answer the question of whether RP is something that we are going to be able to engage in.   This is a very important question for all of us as educators to reflect on and be intentional about. Who we are impacts how we lead. Without this honest reflection and self-examination, often our work in inclusion and equity becomes performative and a checked-box approach. We believe that when you can answer those questions honestly, then you are a more authentic and valuable member of that learning community. Oftentimes, as we engage in classroom practices and engagement philosophies, that real knowing of self is lacking. We all come to situations and events with our identities, lens, vantage points, cultures, values, biases and beliefs. These all play a role in how we not only interpret incidents, but how we solve them.

By contrast to traditional approaches rooted in a mindset of 'behaviour management,' a restorative approach actively seeks to intentionally resolve structural inequalities and harm that occurs in the classroom. In our writing of this chapter, we drew on the analogy of a whirlwind to represent the nature of this process, reflecting the multidirectional manner in which interactions occur between members of the learning community, and the tensions and complexities which are involved. By recognising that damage to relationships can be intentional or unintentional, it instead focuses on the needs and feelings being communicated in a given situation. Being restorative encourages empathy, connection and belonging at all levels of practice. RP in schools seek to disrupt the replication of harm in the following key ways (Thorsborne and Blood, 2013):

- Establishing shared values.
- Fostering empathy, belonging, and connection.
- Using restorative language.
- Focusing on feelings and needs rather than behaviour.
- Using restorative conversations, circles and meetings to respond to harm and repair relationships.

Furthermore, RP can challenge inequalities and foster inclusion by creating brave spaces with a strong sense of belonging (Campbell and Eizadirad, 2022). A brave space is one with opportunities for students to speak up, to express their feelings, to be heard, to listen to each other, to understand and respect differences, to make mistakes, and to correct those mistakes. A brave space must be cultivated and sustained, and the onus is on us as educators to do so. RP supports the creation of brave spaces by laying the groundwork for and relentlessly practising inclusive and non-violent communication in all interactions.

Key aspects

Situating RP as a cross-cultural ancient practice

As noted previously, the roots of RP can be traced to ancient times. It has been highlighted that indigenous South Pacific and American cultures took an approach to conflict centred on taking accountability for one's responsibility in causing harm and the subsequent reparation of the ruptured relationship (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Zakszeski & Rutherford, 2021). Indigenous cultures from First Nations to Maori, from many African and Aboriginal to Celtic cultures practised the fine art of sitting together peaceably to resolve harm and repair the group so that it could continue (Grinnell College, 2022). As survival outside of the group was not possible, banishment meant certain death. In order to survive, one had to be prepared to make amends for harm caused and not shy away from hearing the stories of those who were harmed. There is a curious symmetry between this and the modern-day classroom. Expulsions from school are incredibly harmful acts that have often lifelong impacts (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Gregory et al., 2022), and many, who are harmed by peers or adults in school, feel that the traditional, punitive system directs its attention to those that cause harm, and little or no attention to those who have been harmed – their stories are less heard. RP is not an adaptation of the carceral justice system for schools, rather it is a practice that attends to all members of the community in order to foster belonging and strengthen community bonds.

RP as a relational, inclusive problem-solving continuum

RP in schools involves a relational approach to problem solving using a robust continuum of processes and models (Thorsborne & Blood, 2013). Below we identify some of the elements of this continuum which are essential to the approach. While a pattern exists across the RP literature whereby the approach is ill-defined (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Zakszeski & Rutherford, 2021), several fundamental elements consistently arise, as will be explored:

- Each group or community ideally shares a set of core values (Hopkins, 2011) that need to be established together. This gives the group clear direction and makes the intention of the group visible to all. If, for example, a class group of young children values respect, tearing up another's work does not honour that value. The values become the terms of reference for all interactions in the group. They are also very useful for teachers for self-reflection (i.e., Am I showing respect? Does my action display empathy?). These values can be established by the whole school community, or by an individual class group, depending on the implementation plan for RP in the school. Either way, it is imperative that all members of the group are aware of the shared values and ideally have been given the opportunity to contribute meaningfully

to the agreement on values.

- Restorative language, or the language of non-violence (Rosenberg, 2013), is the gold standard for interactions. Shaming and blaming words are replaced with factual observations and an honest request for a solution that would work for all. This language work requires pre-teaching and practice. Ideally the teacher would be modelling the use of restorative language throughout the day. Here are some examples to illustrate the difference:

Blaming and shaming	Restorative
Why did you kick your classmate?	What happened?
I hate it when you shout. You are a bad, angry person.	You are shouting. I feel scared because I don't feel safe.
Why are you always late?	I see you have trouble getting to class on time. Is there something we can do about that?

- Restorative circles invite members of the learning community to share information about themselves and build a sense of community and belonging (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). For example, they may share their energy levels at the start of the day to foster an awareness in the group of how everyone is that day and express something about their interests or preferences which can forge bonds in the group. This forging of empathy and connection is the backbone of RP.
- Restorative conversations or meetings occur when conflicts or tensions arise in relationships between members of the learning community, as they inevitably do in all human relationships (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Zakszeski & Rutherford, 2021). Depending on the extent or severity of the situation a two-way conversation or a more formal meeting are both scaffolded by the following six essential questions, which seek to repair the damage which has occurred:

1. What happened?
2. What were you thinking at the time?
3. What have you thought about it since?
4. Who has been affected and in what way?
5. How could things have been done differently?
6. What do you think needs to happen next?

These six questions (or localised versions of them) are common to all iterations of RP in schools. There can be variation in the order of the middle four questions, but all approaches start and end with the same two questions. It is recommended that all six questions are asked in this order for the practitioner starting out. As experience builds the practitioner

listens out for answers to these questions being given without prompting. In this case, the particular question that has been addressed is skipped. The key message is to shift the opening question from *why* to *what* happened when harm occurs, to give all actors the chance to tell their story via the middle four questions, and to move forward with the final question (Restorative Practice Ireland, 2018).

Dispelling myths about RP

Letting people off the hook

The most common critique of RP is that it lets people off the hook (Anfara et al., 2013; Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). In practice, however, when a person truly accepts and understands that they have caused harm, intentionally or unintentionally, they usually want to make amends and restore the relationship. If the person does not do so, the practice of a restorative conversation or meeting can be offered to prompt them to do so, not because they have to, but because they see the value in it. It is key that the participants are willing to partake. Forcing someone to partake in RP totally undermines the whole process and tears away its integrity. There is high accountability in RP. People without exception are called to answer for their actions and to be accountable to themselves and to their community. Accountability, responsibility, and healing are the core values of RP (Burnett et al., 2024).

Quick-fix circles

Circle work in RP can suffer from being considered an early childhood practice that has no place as individuals progress through education. Firstly, we can learn a lot from early childhood practice. Secondly, circles form just one part of RP. The role of the facilitator in the circle is key. The circle needs a clear intention and willing participation, or it will be inauthentic and it will not work. This can be a common stumbling block. A teacher may try a circle, decide it did not work because the children did not listen, and then give up on all aspects of RP. Circle work can only be done by invitation, and with willing participants, otherwise it is coercion, not connection. Circle work also takes practice. The aim of circles is to establish and live the values of community, strengthen connections, build empathy and offer a space for true belonging. They are also a space wherein we get to practice restorative language or nonviolent communication (Rosenberg, 2013). This is not the language that surrounds us on the whole, certainly in Western society. We are so inured to the harm caused by the shaming and accusatory language we use, that the restorative language of honest feelings and needs can feel uncomfortable and unnatural at first. This is why it is a practice and not a quick fix intervention. When we become more fluent in this language and can communicate with each other without causing harm, we begin to talk meaningfully about making amends and repairing relationships where harm has been done.

A waste of time?

All practice takes time. RP takes time, but what is more important and powerful in education than creating and cultivating an inclusive respectful classroom culture and climate built on a sense of belonging and community? These are fundamental skills that will impact everyday learning inside and outside of the classroom. RP is not something to distract from the curriculum or the teaching and learning equation, but something that will build and strengthen the teaching and learning process (Hopkins, 2011; Zakszeski & Rutherford, 2021). Consider how much time is spent by the teacher on a daily basis 'correcting' and 'referring' behaviour issues under the punitive model, wherein only the teacher can decide what needs to be done. Consider how much time may be freed up for the teacher to teach by enabling children to have the confidence and skills to navigate their own conflicts in a non-harmful way. The reality is that it will take some time for this practice to become embedded. RP is not just fixing something, but rather building those foundational skills needed for our students to engage effectively in their learning community and beyond. RP brings an attitude and aptitude to the individual and to the larger society as a whole when these aspects can be generalised beyond the classroom.

Discussion of the key aspects of RP

Despite the proliferation of RP in schools in recent years, research in the area remains limited – albeit growing, especially in the US context (Acosta et al., 2019; Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). As Zakszeski and Rutherford (2021: 382) note, "the 'cart' appears to be before the 'horse' when it comes to research on school-based restorative practices," whereby limited research exists evidencing the effectiveness of the approach despite its growing prominence. In spite of this practice-to-research gap, however, the extant literature demonstrates a range of benefits associated with RP, including improved school climate, gains in children's social/emotional skills, improvements in children's behaviour, reductions in punitive disciplinary practices, and greater levels of academic engagement (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Gregory et al., 2013; Zakszeski & Rutherford, 2021). Some evidence also exists of reductions in bullying incidents, improved child attendance, and gains in children's academic performance in schools which take a restorative approach (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Gregory et al., 2022). Notably, research has also established that restorative schools demonstrate slight reductions in disciplinary disparities with respect to racial and ethnic groups discussed above (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Gregory et al., 2013; Zakszeski & Rutherford, 2021). Importantly, as well as building a strong sense of community and belonging which lessens the likelihood of conflict, the restorative approach supports all members of the learning community to demonstrate accountability for their actions, for their role in conflict in relationships, and for their responsibility to take measures to repair any damage that has occurred.

While one teacher alone can make a difference by using RP, another teacher may realise

that something interesting is happening in a particular class and the practice can grow from there. Ideally, however, a whole-school approach with strong support from the school management team is preferable. An individual teacher who is working in a school that does not support RP still retains the choice of how to interact with students. As a sole practitioner in an unsupportive structure, it is important not to become despondent. If you are aware that a system is harmful, consider to what extent you are going to replicate that harm for the sake of keeping your job. Choosing the words that you speak and the nature of interactions for the day-to-day operation of the classroom remains in the gift of the teacher. The individual teacher may not be able to change a punitive system, but they do get to choose what words are spoken by them as a teacher. The act of showing another way of being to students is nonetheless powerful.

It has been argued however, that RP is most effective when it constitutes a comprehensive change in the overall philosophy and culture of a school, altering the shared assumptions, values, and beliefs among stakeholders (Gregory & Evans, 2020; Zakszeski & Rutherford, 2021). Such an approach typically involves the training of all children and school personnel, thereby supporting intentionality and whole-school commitment (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). However, Zakszeski and Rutherford (2021) caution against such a 'train-and-hope' approach to professional development with respect to RP, questioning the fidelity of all educators in a school to the principles of the approach. In this regard, it is also important to note that the integration of RP into the philosophy and practices of a given school will vary in correspondence with the size of the institution (Sumner et al., 2010), with research highlighting that it may take up to five years to become embedded (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Gregory et al., 2022).

In summary, a restorative approach is best represented not as an optional menu of practices for teachers and schools, but as a philosophy embedded within the culture of a school and members of the school community, consisting of a number of key ingredients based on shared values and restorative language. The restorative circles are an essential element in building community, respect, and belonging. Importantly, they serve to lessen the likelihood of conflict between members of the learning community and damage to the relationships which they share. Restorative conversations and meetings – depending on the extent of circumstances or situation – crucially avoid the language of judgement, criminal justice, and violence. Instead, they scaffold the repair of any damage that has occurred between members of the learning community. This is not something that can be implemented tokenistically or without clear intentionality – it flourishes with meaningful commitment and buy-in from all members of the learning community. It represents a profound shift and invaluable opportunity in how we understand relationships in schools.

Local contexts

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=645#h5p-34

Closing questions to discuss or tasks

To conclude this chapter, we share a series of questions for teachers who may be considering implementing a restorative approach in their work, or who are already doing so. These questions are a prompt and a provocation that will hopefully foster curiosity about the benefits to RP in schools.

1. What training and support do you need to effectively implement restorative approaches to resolving conflicts within the school setting?
2. What resources and infrastructure will you need to support the implementation of restorative approaches, including space for restorative circles or meetings, dedicated staff time, and ongoing professional development?
3. How can you educate your school community on the principles and benefits of RP to ensure buy-in and support for the implementation process?
4. What criteria will be used to determine when restorative approaches are appropriate? Is there a time when they would not be appropriate?
5. How can the effectiveness of RP be measured and evaluated? What strategies will be put in place to continually improve and refine the process?
6. How will you encourage collaboration and teamwork among students to build a sense of community and belonging?
7. How will you work intentionally to cultivate and create a braver and safer environment where individuals feel comfortable expressing themselves and share their thoughts and feelings?
8. How will you work at recognising and celebrating diversity within your school community, honouring the unique backgrounds, and experiences of all individuals?

Literature

Anfara, Vincent A. Jr., Katherine R. Evans, and Jessica N. Lester. "Restorative Justice in

Education: What We Know so Far." *Middle School Journal* 44, no. 5 (2013): 57–63.

Brummer, Joe, and Margaret Thorsborne. *Building a Trauma-Informed Restorative School: Skills and Approaches for Improving Culture and Behavior*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2021.

Burnett, Nick, Margaret Thorsborne, and Nancy Riestenberg. *Restorative Practice and Special Needs: A Practical Guide to Working Restoratively with Young People*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2015.

Campbell, Andrew B., and Ardavan Eizadirad. "Cultivating Brave Spaces to Take Risks to Challenge Systemic Oppression." In *Counternarratives of Pain and Suffering as Critical Pedagogy*, 19–37. Routledge, 2022.

Campbell, Andrew B., and Kristopher Watson. "Fostering Belonging." *Principal Connections* 24, no. 3 (2021): 10–11.

Carter, Erik W., and Elizabeth E. Biggs. *Creating Communities of Belonging for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities*. Belonging Series. University of Minnesota, TIES Center, 2021.

Darling-Hammond, Sean, Trevor A. Fronius, Hannah Sutherland, Sarah Guckenburg, Anthony Petrosino, and Nancy Hurley. "Effectiveness of Restorative Justice in US K-12 Schools: A Review of Quantitative Research." *Contemporary School Psychology* 24 (2020): 295–308.

Deloitte. "Inclusive Leadership: Will a Hug Do?," 2012. https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/au/Documents/human-capital/deloitte-au-hc-diversity-inclusive-leadership-hug-0312.pdf.

Finnis, Mark. *Restorative Practice: Building Relationships, Improving Behaviour and Creating Stronger Communities*. Independent Thinking Press, 2021.

Fronius, Trevor A., Sean Darling-Hammond, Hannah Persson, Sarah Guckenburg, Nancy Hurley, and Anthony Petrosino. "Restorative Justice in US Schools: An Updated Research Review." WestEd Justice & Prevention Training Center, 2019.

Ganotice, Fraide A. Jr., Linda Chan, Xiaoai Shen, Angie Ho Yan Lam, Gloria Hoi Yan Wong, Rebecca Ka Wai Liu, and George L. Tipoe. "Team Cohesiveness and Collective Efficacy Explain Outcomes in Interprofessional Education." *BMC Medical Education* 22, no. 1 (2022): 1–9. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12909-022-03886-7.

Gregory, Anne, Kathleen Clawson, Alycia Davis, and Jonna Gerewitz. "The Promise of Restorative Practices to Transform Teacher-Student Relationships and Achieve Equity in School Discipline." *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation* 26, no. 4 (2014): 325–53. https://doi.org/10.1080/10474412.2014.929950.

Gregory, Anne, and Katherine R. Evans. "The Starts and Stumbles of Restorative Justice in Education: Where Do We Go from Here?" National Education Policy Center, 2020. https://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/28/magazine/what-google-learned-from-its-quest-to-build-the-perfect-team.html.

Gregory, Anne, Francis Huang, and Amber R. Ward-Seidel. "Evaluation of the Whole School Restorative Practices Project: One-Year Impact on Discipline Incidents." *Journal of School*

Psychology 95 (2022): 58–71. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2022.09.003.

Grinnell College. "History of Restorative Justice," 2022. https://www.grinnell.edu/about/leadership/offices-services/restorative-practices/history.

Hopkins, Belinda. *The Restorative Classroom: Using Restorative Approaches to Foster Effective Learning*. Optimus Education, 2011. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003423935.

Nolan, Ursula, and Gerry Mac Ruairc. "Codes and Control: Explicating Pedagogic Communication in Classroom Practice." *Irish Educational Studies* 41, no. 3 (2022): 531–49. https://doi.org/10.1080/03323315.2022.2093522.

Perera, Jani. "How Black Working-Class Youth Are Criminalised and Excluded in the English School System." Institute of Race Relations, 2020. https://irr.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/How-Black-Working-Class-Youth-are-Criminalisedand-Excluded-in-the-English-School-System.pdf.

Restorative Practices Ireland. "What Is Restorative Practices?," 2018. https://www.restorativepracticesireland.ie/faqs/.

Rogers, Bill. *Cracking the Hard Class: Strategies for Managing the Harder than Average Class*. Paul Chapman Publishing, 2000.

Sumner, Michael D., Carol J. Silverman, and Mary Louise Frampton. "School-Based Restorative Justice as an Alternative to Zero-Tolerance Policies: Lessons from West Oakland." University of California, Berkeley, School of Law, 2010.

Thorsborne, Margaret, and Peta Blood. *Implementing Restorative Practice in Schools: A Practical Guide to Transforming School Communities*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2013.

Tyler, Tom R. "Restorative Justice and Procedural Justice: Dealing with Rule Breaking." *Journal of Social Issues* 62, no. 2 (2006): 307–26.

Williams, Kathryn, Vasiliki Papadopoulou, and Natalie Booth. "Prisoners' Childhood and Family Backgrounds." Ministry of Justice Research Series, 2012.

Zakszeski, Brittany, and Laura Rutherford. "Mind the Gap: A Systematic Review of Research on Restorative Practices in Schools." *School Psychology Review* 50, no. 2–3 (2021): 371–87.

Zehr, Howard. *The Little Book of Restorative Practice: Revised and Updated*. Good Books, 2014.

About the authors

Andrew Campbell

Andrew B. Campbell (DR.ABC) is an Assistant Professor, Teaching Stream, in Leadership for Racial Justice in Teacher Education in the Master of Teaching Program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto OISE. He is the Coordinator for the Black Future Educators' Program (BFEP) and the Director of the Centre for Black Studies in Education (CBSE). DR. ABC is known to the OISE

and broader community for his leadership on advancing equity, leadership, 2SLGBTQIA+ community, and teacher education. He presently teaches courses in anti-discrimination education, leadership, educational change, urban education, and Black Educators' Identity and Pedagogy. He has presented at numerous conferences and has delivered many presentations as a keynote speaker, motivational speaker, and workshop facilitator. He loves people, food, fashion, travelling and bringing his community together for a good meal.

Emer Byrden

Emer Byrden is the Deputy Principal of a primary school in south-east of Ireland, and is doing a PhD in the School of Education in Maynooth University, Ireland. Her interests are relational pedagogy, inclusive education and restorative practice, particularly where these areas intersect. Her current research is on the relational soundscape of the primary school classroom. Emer is contributing a chapter on relational research to the upcoming Routledge Handbook of Relational Pedagogy.

Seán Gleasure

Seán Gleasure is an educational researcher in the field of sociology of education. With a background as a primary school teacher, his research focuses nurture and care in schools, particularly those serving working-class communities, as well as pedagogy in schools more broadly, with an emphasis on children's rights, voice, and participation. He lectures on issues related to in/equalities in children's learning and children's rights, voice, and participation.

Leah O'Toole

Dr Leah O'Toole is Associate Professor of Early Childhood Education in the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education in Maynooth University, Ireland. With an academic background in Psychology, her research interests include early childhood education, particularly accessing the voices of the youngest children from birth, relational pedagogy, bioecological theory and working with parents and communities. Inclusion across multiple dimensions is central to all elements of this work.

INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

Cynthy K. Haihambo; Penny H.C. Dinh; Jane O'Toole; Lisa Marie Rosen; and Nika Maglaperidze

---

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://book.all-means-all.education/ ama-2025-en/?p=631#oembed-1

Example Case

"Countries around the globe have different ways of curriculum-making for their school and higher education. In some countries, school curricula are a responsibility of committees, mostly composed of staff in the departments responsible for education. Although there could be some form of consultation with teachers, parents, and communities, the final curriculum is often centralised, and the power lies in the hands of the departments of education.

In Namibia, the prescribed or planned curriculum is mainly the responsibility of the ministry which is responsible for basic education. Basic education in Namibia is from Grade zero/ pre-primary education which is normally at the age of 6 to Grade 10, which is normally when the child is 16 years of age. This Ministry would appoint various working groups consisting of the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture officials, subject experts and teachers serving on subject panel committees hosted by the National Institute of Education Development. These working groups hold regional consultations with community members, which often assume the form of meetings held at specified venues in the communities. Often, members of communities do not view themselves as stakeholders in curriculum making and thus do not attend. A classic example is that of the latest basic education curriculum in Namibia which was implemented in 2014. Many parents and community members started to complain about the curriculum when it reached Grade 10 and Grade 11 level, and according to the new curriculum, not all students can proceed to Grade 12 Advanced Subsidiary Level. Many parents and community members were

taken by surprise because they never attended those meetings, and neither could the majority remember having been invited to these meetings. This demonstrated a gap in the process of curriculum-making as well as in communities' agency to participate and inform the curriculum rather than taking the position of receivers of the curriculum.

The Higher Education planned curriculum-making in Namibia involves a more clearly defined process, guided by the Namibia Qualification Authority's framework. At the beginning of the process, the higher education institutes establish curriculum review committees, which evaluate the current programmes and propose curricula transformation or review. Once these committees have drafted the proposed programmes, they share them with their stakeholders, who include but are not limited to other higher education organisations, government offices, civil society organisations, current and former students and communities. This process rarely includes students and parents. Their voices become secondary as they are represented by teachers and other adults who use an authoritarian lens (Freire, 1968) which deprives them of their democratic role to influence curriculum making through a process of co-production (Reed et al, 2023).

In addition to the planned curriculum from pre-primary to higher education, the lived curriculum plays out in the day-to-day interactions in schools, classrooms, playgrounds, cafeteria, and in communities. These are the lenses through which we see whether the curriculum is inclusive to the needs of a wide array of learners or not, and what role the stakeholders could play in making the curriculum suit their context while forging acceptance, belongingness, participation and achievement (Ainscow, 2016) across a diverse group of learners, teachers and communities."

Initial questions

In this chapter you will find the answers to the following questions:

1. What is the curriculum and how does it come about?
2. What is curriculum-making?
3. What does 'inclusive' mean in inclusive curriculum-making?
4. What is inclusive curriculum-making? And what is not?
5. What does inclusive curriculum-making mean in relation to the assessed curriculum?
6. What are the constraints educators are experiencing in relation to the enactment of

inclusive curriculum-making?

7. How might educators/ teachers/ learning communities respond to these constraints?

Introduction to Topic

This Chapter discusses the meaning of the concepts: curriculum, curriculum-making and inclusive curriculum making.

What is the curriculum, and why do we need it?

The term curriculum *is many things to many people (Aoki, 1984: 94)*

As the quote above by the prominent curriculum scholar Ted Aoki suggests, the term "curriculum" holds diverse meanings, and a universal definition remains elusive – nor would such a definition be desirable given the complex nature of educational practice. Tracing the etymological roots of "curriculum" reveals its Latin origins in the word *currere*, meaning "to run the course" or "the running of the course" (Oxford English Dictionary). This etymological foundation offers an important conceptual starting point for understanding the curriculum's fluid nature. While the traditional notion of curriculum in English and Anglo-American contexts acquired mainly organisational attributes, concerned with objectives/outcomes, vertical and horizontal integration, scope and sequence, subject content, and units (Clandinin and Connelly, 1992; Westbury, 2000;), the concept of *currere* reintroduces the importance of personal and subjective experience in education. We believe that this approach is crucial for inclusive curriculum making, as it recognises the diverse experiences of students and teachers alike and emphasises reflection and dialogue, key to creating a curriculum that is responsive to all. This helps us understand that curriculum is not just about what we plan to teach, it is about how students and teachers experience learning together (Pinar, 2019).

Before examining inclusive curriculum-making in detail, this chapter first explores the diverse conceptualisations of curriculum and the critical distinction between curriculum development and curriculum-making—a shift that positions teachers as active agents rather than passive 'implementers.' Through analysing various curriculum types and reconceptualising inclusivity beyond mere integration, we examine the potentialities and constraints of curriculum-making in addressing educational inequities. The chapter progresses from theoretical frameworks through practical implementations, culminating in strategies for organising collective action towards more democratic educational practices.

Building upon this understanding of curriculum as lived experience, curriculum scholar Ted Aoki suggests the curriculum takes on various dimensions that reflect the complexity

of the educational process. We shall briefly cover these dimensions, with a focus on the enacted curriculum, which is central to inclusive curriculum-making.

Curriculum conceptualisations can be categorised under two broader categories: narrow and expansive. Narrow definitions, aligned with strict constructionist views, see the curriculum as a structured course of study with a specific scope and sequence. Expansive definitions, aligned with life experientialist views, consider the curriculum as a subjective and all-encompassing experience, shaped by the feelings, perceptions, and attitudes of individuals and groups (Ellis, 2014). This expansive view aligns closely with the concept of *currere*, emphasising the curriculum as a lived experience, continuously reconstructed through individual reflection and dialogue.

Under narrow definitions, we can group the planned curriculum (Porter, 2012), which encompasses the outcomes and understandings that teachers aim to achieve with their students. The taught curriculum (Glatthorn et al., 2019) refers to the way content is taught by teachers, often at the discretion of the individual teacher and regardless of its alignment with the planned curriculum. The assessed curriculum (Porter, 2012) captures the aspects of learning evaluated through diagnostic, formative, and summative assessment strategies, while the learned curriculum (ibid.) denotes what students genuinely absorb from their educational experiences.

Under expansive definitions, we can group the lived curriculum (Aoki et al., 2005), which reveals the unpredictable and complex manner in which the planned curriculum emerges within the classroom environment. The hidden curriculum (Jackson, 1990; Willis, 1997) consists of the implicit lessons imparted through the routines of school life, such as unacknowledged assumptions, tracking systems, and community discourse about schools. The null curriculum (Flinders et al., 1986) highlights the implications of omitting significant topics from the school curriculum. The experienced curriculum (Connelly and Clandinin, 1988; Dewey, 1928) represents holistic learning derived from a student's interactions with people, materials, and the social and emotional climate they encounter throughout their education. Finally, the enacted curriculum (Snyder et al., 1992; Zumwalt, 1988) refers to the educational experiences co-constructed by students and teachers, drawing on externally mandated materials and strategies but adapted to fit the teachers' backgrounds and the specific cultural and structural contexts of the classroom. As Popkewitz, Tabachnick, and Wehlage (1982) note, curriculum enactment isn't just about transmitting knowledge but about understanding how "schooling modifies unanticipated and unintended consequences" shaped by ideology and context. This view highlights the teacher's active role in continuously building educational experiences with students in a dynamic, interactive way. It has to be noted that while expansive definitions aim to include diverse student experiences, they can still perpetuate exclusion. As Nind (2005) argues, inclusive education requires more than adopting an inclusive mindset – it demands a dynamic, co-constructed curriculum that challenges entrenched power structures (more on this below).

As we can see, there are a multitude of definitions and conceptions around the

curriculum, making it difficult to find a universal definition. However, Glatthorn et al. (2012) provide a framework that can be argued to be encompassing. This framework serves as a blueprint for educational experiences, articulated in documents that guide teaching practices and influence the dynamics of learning experiences. They emphasise the complex nature of education, which includes both the intended plans and the diverse ways in which these plans are experienced and interpreted by students within various educational settings.

Inclusive curriculum making happens across various sites, not just in schools or ministries, but also through the work of organisations such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), United National Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), and the World Bank at the supra level, where transnational policies are shaped. Some of these bodies, like UNESCO, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Global Partnership for Education (GPE) have a stronger focus on inclusive education, and actively promote it through international guidelines, frameworks, programmes and projects. At the meso-level, NGOs or government semi-autonomous agencies often work directly with schools and governments to ensure marginalised groups are included in educational policy. This broad range of actors reflects how inclusive curriculum making is a complex social practice, involving distinct roles, and priorities across different sites of curriculum making (Priestley et al., 2021).

Overall, the curriculum can be said to consist of three aspects. First, curriculum as a social practice, as it is something participated in and enacted by practitioners and other actors working collaboratively; second, it is something that happens across and within multiple sites of education systems, for instance, schools, local municipalities, NGOs, and policymakers. The third dimension concerns the structuring, sequencing, and selecting teaching content and approaches, integrating curricula, resources, and pedagogical methods to create a cohesive and inclusive learning experience for all students (ibid.).

1

2

---

1. For more comprehensive overviews of curriculum conceptualisations, the reader is advised to refer to Ellis (2014), Jung and Pinar (2016) and Short (2023).

2. However, it has to be added that different cultures have conceptualised curriculum in diverse ways, shaped by varying educational philosophies, societal values, and historical contexts. For more, refer to Paraskeva (2021), and Eppert & Wang, (2008).

Key aspects

The Centrality of the Teacher in Inclusive Curriculum Making

Our approach deliberately steers away from a static conception of curriculum that envisions teachers as 'passive conduits implementing…somebody else's curriculum product' (Priestley et al., 2021: 2). Instead, we recognise the central role of teachers as agentic actors in the complex process of inclusive curriculum making. This perspective aligns with Clandinin and Connelly's (1992: 323) view of the 'teacher as the integral part of the curriculum constructed and enacted in classrooms,' acknowledging that every school is 'unique and that curricular needs are…largely idiosyncratic' (Kelly, 2009: 9). However, it is crucial to understand that teacher agency in inclusive settings is not merely about individualautonomy. As Pantić (2017) argues, teacher agency is deeply embedded in socio-cultural and institutional contexts. Teachers navigate complex networks of power relations, policy mandates, and diverse student needs, which both enable and constrain their agency (Biesta et al., 2015). In the context of inclusive education, this agency becomes even more intricate, requiring teachers to move beyond thinking about 'most' and 'some' students to considering 'all' students (Florian & Spratt, 2013).

The professional knowledge informing teachers' judgments in inclusive curriculum making extends beyond traditional pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1987). It encompasses what Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011) term "inclusive pedagogical knowledge," which includes not only subject matter expertise but also an understanding of how to create learning opportunities accessible to all students, regardless of their perceived differences. Moreover, the concept of "funds of knowledge" (Moll et al., 1992) highlights how teachers in inclusive settings need to recognise and leverage the diverse cultural and linguistic resources that students bring to the classroom.

Collaborative curriculum making is central to inclusive practice. This involves not just collaboration among teachers but also with students, families, and community members (Artiles & Kozleski, 2016). Such collaboration challenges traditional power dynamics and aligns with the principles of democratic education (Apple & Beane, 2007).

By implication, we're steering away from a conception of curriculum that views education as guiding learners towards specific, predefined goals or outcomes. Traditional education, often seen as socialising and normalising individuals to fit into an existing framework of values and norms, can be problematic for inclusion. This ends-oriented model promotes certain interests and values at the expense of others, potentially marginalising those who do not conform to these predefined outcomes (Biesta, 2009; Osberg & Biesta, 2010; Slee & Allan, 2001).

Instead, we embrace a complex definition of education that rejects the notion of predefined educational ends. In this chapter, we outline a conception of an inclusive curriculum that is fundamentally open-ended and focuses on creating openings rather

than reaching closures. Judgments about what emerges from the educational process are made collaboratively and continuously, supporting a democratic space where diverse possibilities are critically assessed (Osberg & Biesta, 2010). This approach has significant implications for teacher education and professional development. Preparing teachers for inclusive curriculum making requires a shift from transmissive models of teacher education to more reflexivity (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). This includes developing critical consciousness about the issues of power, privilege, and oppression in education (Gorski, 2009).

Recognising the centrality of teachers in inclusive curriculum making means acknowledging their role not just as implementers, but as key agents in a complex, collaborative, and continuously evolving process. This perspective allows for the continuous renewal of ways of being-in-the-world-with-others, making education an adaptive and inclusive practice rather than a rigid, goal-oriented process. It challenges us to rethink not only how we conceptualise curriculum but also how we prepare and support teachers in their critical role of fostering inclusive educational environments.

> **Reflection activity**
>
> Think about what you learn in school, college or university. What or who determines what you learn? Do you think that what you learn and how you learn it is important to you and your peers? How different would you like to see it? For example, do you think teachers, parents, learners and community members should participate in the curriculum-making process? If yes, why and how? Discuss the answers with your peers. You can also get the opinion of any of your lecturers.

What does 'inclusive' mean in inclusive curriculum-making?

As highlighted above, in this chapter, we are attempting to move away from a narrow and deterministic conception of curriculum making where teachers are seen as mere conduits of the mandated curriculum that has to be 'delivered' or 'implemented' in the classroom. We think that this kind of conception of curriculum making would also have implications as to what we mean by 'inclusive'. Osberg and Biesta (2010) argue that curriculum and curriculum making are crucial to inclusive education because the curriculum guides the educational process. Traditional, deterministic views impose predefined norms, and this can limit inclusivity by excluding those who do not or cannot conform to these expectations. Such an understanding implies that people can only be included in a set of norms defined in advance by those who are already 'on the inside' who have decided what it is that is 'normal.'

This critique of normative inclusion finds theoretical resonance in Rancière's (1995) conceptualisation of democracy as inherently sporadic and disruptive. He argues that true democracy occurs in specific moments of disruption that challenge the established order, and these disruptions often come from outside the existing structures. Rancière helps us to see that we should understand democratic inclusion not in terms of adding more people to the existing order, but rather as a process that necessarily involves the transformation of *that* order itself. As long as we restrict our inclusive efforts to those who are known to be excluded, we only operate within the existing order (ibid.). This perspective suggests that achieving inclusivity in education requires similar external disruptions to challenge and transform entrenched norms and practices from the outside in. Through this reconceptualisation, we move beyond approaches to democratic inclusion that remain embedded within colonial frameworks of thought. Such frameworks perpetuate the imposition of predefined norms and hierarchies that systematically exclude diverse perspectives and lived experiences from educational spaces. The criticisms highlighted by Slee and Allan (2001) further emphasise that inclusive education has often been misappropriated by traditional special education paradigms, leading to further exclusion rather than genuine inclusivity. The current policy context, characterised by neoliberalism, marketisation, and standardised testing, often reinforces exclusionary practices. To genuinely achieve inclusive education, it is necessary to move beyond these traditional models to ensure that the curriculum is open to (or indeed inclusive of) transformations and disruptions that challenge existing power structures and knowledge hierarchies.

Defining *inclusive* curriculum-making is not straightforward given the various interpretations of the concept of curriculum-making, and the broad remit of the principle of inclusion both itself and in relation to curriculum-making specifically. Inclusive education can be defined as an education system and process whereby "all children in the same classrooms in the same schools" (UNICEF, 2024) learn, and where real opportunities for learners who have been previously excluded are provided (UNICEF, 2024). All learners include not only children with additional needs, but also speakers of minority languages and learners from diverse cultural backgrounds (UNICEF, 2024). Inclusive systems respect and value the contributions that learners from all backgrounds bring to the classroom and enable diverse groups "side by side to the benefit of all" (ibid).

An inclusive school, for example, may be defined as "a place where everyone belongs, is accepted, supports, and is supported by his/her peers and other members of the school community in the course of having his/her educational needs met" (Johnson, 2020: 115). At school level, a central challenge is how to build and maintain a bridge between the principle of inclusion and practices related to individual pupils as partners in a joint class or group.

UNESCO identify curricula as the "central means for enacting the principles of inclusion and equity" (2017: 19) which underlines the importance of both mandated curricula, and the process of enacting curricula by educators in terms of an avenue, process and means of prioritising inclusive practice on many levels. Johnson (2020) explores the concept a

curricular approach to inclusive practice at institutional level, and identifies seven key areas of a *curricular approach*: (i) **the pupil/s, (ii) educational intentions, (iii) educational content, (iv) methods and organisation, (v) assessment, (vi) communication and (vii) care**, all of which are framed by the school's own context (Johnson, 2020: 123) These seven aspects are concerned with the school's inner activities; and represent the teaching-learning context and processes on a micro level, and are representative of a 'bottom-up' approach whereby students and their curricula are the central focus of the educators serving the school community (Johnsen, 2020). In terms of making the curriculum accessible to all, adaptation of curricula to meet the needs of individual learners which represents an established school-level approach internationally. It is argued that the cornerstone of inclusive practices at school level is based on "making, implementing and continuously revising individual educational curricula" (Johnsen, 2020: 119).

What is inclusive curriculum-making? And what is not?

Teaching is a political act. What is included in and excluded from what is taught in the classroom? And who gets to make the decisions around this?

The exclusion of Black History, the history of Africa, the Caribbean, and their diasporas, from the mainstream curriculum of the Global North is a clear example of a systematically exclusionary curriculum. This exclusionary practice in curriculum settings has been documented in several countries. For example, in 2020, in Wales, a curriculum working group set up by the government found…

"no clear evidence on the extent to which existing school curricula address issues of race and diversity (or indeed any other specific issue or theme) within history or any other subject."

And additionally,…

"There are major gaps in the available resources which support the teaching of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic themes across the curriculum. A review of Hwb identified only eleven resources with a black history focus, and the majority of these are considered by the Group to be outdated, lacking in supporting material for teachers, and of little relevance to Wales."

(Welsh Government, 2020)

Similar to the History curriculum, the lack of inclusivity has also been demonstrated in other subjects. Research into the English Literature curriculum at UK secondary schools by Lit in Colour (a collaboration between the publisher Penguin Random House and the think tank Runnymede Trust) found that an overwhelming 82% of children surveyed did not recall ever studying a text by a Black, Asian or minority ethnic author (Elliot et al., 2021). Runnymede's research into the secondary level curricula of art-based subjects at UK schools found a similar pattern:

- − "[…] Work by white artists represents 89.2 percent of mentions whereas work by minority ethnic artists represents only 10.8 per cent.
- − […] Named white artists make up 91.6 percent (1,371 mentions) of all exam board mentions but minority ethnic artists only 8.4 percent (125 mentions).
- − Only 2.3 percent of references to named, stand-alone artists are from Black or South Asian backgrounds, this is made up of 0.74 percent South Asian (11 mentions) and 1.54 percent Black (23 mentions) artists" (Begum, 2024).

These examples of the exclusion of topics within history, and the lack of diverse authors and artists taught at schools in the UK have led to urgent calls for the decolonisation of the curriculum. In its "Framework for developing an anti-racist approach" (2022), the National Education Union (UK) defines decolonisation as follows:

What does 'decolonising education' mean?

Decolonising is a way of thinking that interrogates how colonisation shapes the way we think, our education system and the curriculum. The legacy and ongoing impact of the ideas that shaped colonisation and the actions of the British Empire contribute to contemporary racial inequalities. Discussions about decolonising education is one essential step to developing anti-racist educational spaces. Understanding the context for today's immigration debates is impossible without understanding that large numbers of people who came to the UK did not actually come as migrants; they came from colonies and former colonies as citizens. A representative and relevant education system should reflect Black children's histories, achievements, culture and politics. All children deserve to see themselves reflected in their books, schools and communities and to achieve this we must rethink both curriculum and assessment. (NEU, 2022)

Writing in the Higher Education context, Leon Moosavi argues that "decolonising" the curriculum or creating a more inclusive curriculum is often understood as "trying to address the Western Centrism of teaching content by incorporating perspectives that have often been excluded because of coloniality" (Moosavi, 2023).

However, is this act of "diversifying" the curriculum with marginalised perspectives adequate in creating a truly inclusive curriculum? What happens when we simply add one or two lessons about Africa to the syllabus, leaving the entire syllabus unchanged? What if a school introduces a Black History Month where students learn and celebrate the history of Africa and its diasporas, with the rest of the year's lesson plans remaining unchanged? Moosavi (2023) further argues, "While a mere diversification does not necessitate a

decolonial shift, introducing students to scholars, theories, topics, solutions, case studies, or concepts that have been relegated to the periphery due to coloniality is a common approach to decolonising the curriculum."

Indeed, while initiatives such as Black History Month can be helpful, tokenistic additions to an otherwise exclusionary curriculum does not make the curriculum inclusive. An inclusive curriculum is where the inclusion of marginalised knowledge and people are integral to the curriculum as day-to-day practice. If the history of Africa, Asia, and elsewhere beyond Europe is included in the curriculum as normal practice, if historical figures of Black, Asian, and Indigenous heritages are frequently introduced to learners all year round, tokenistic initiatives such as Black History Month would become redundant. These initiatives would not be needed without the systemic exclusion of marginalised voices and knowledge from the mainstream curriculum.

A truly inclusive curriculum also goes beyond diversification of topics and historical figures introduced to learners. Writing about the under coverage of race and racial diversity in the secondary school curriculum in England, Remi Joseph-Salsbury argues:

"Under a reorientation of values, schools would begin to move beyond the (important) racial diversification of school curricula, towards the implementation of an anti-racist curriculum. […]

An anti-racist curriculum would involve showing how the history of modernity is shaped by racism, coloniality and white supremacy. So, while diversity might stop at the inclusion of BME people, anti-racism would urge learners to look at the socio-political context of BME people in relation to white people…" (Joseph-Salisbury, 2020)

The same argument can be made for the discussion of other marginalised identities, and other systems of oppression in the curriculum. For example, in addition to introducing female scientists to learners, a truly inclusive science curriculum would also invite learners to critique why women are often excluded from science in the first place and explore consequences of the exclusion of women in scientific and medical research.

Making an inclusive curriculum requires the teacher to critically challenge and debunk dominant narratives in the curriculum, which cannot be done through adding marginalised voices to the curriculum alone. Writing about state-making propaganda in education in the Australian contexts, Arathi Sriprakash and colleagues argue:

"[The pedagogy of the state] brings certain histories into the present in order to secure particular futures. This pedagogical work can take multiple forms, […] in the messages relayed through public holidays and memorialisation, in public images and narratives, and in commemorations of national 'leaders' and dates of the past. These enter into education curricula and systems."

In a truly inclusive curriculum, the teacher or educator would not just present propagandic narratives that glorify empires alongside a handful of marginalised voices. They would go further by recognising and critiquing the problematic nature of the dominant narrative in the curriculum.

Black Feminists such as Patricia Hill Collins have attributed exclusionary biases in the knowledge that is produced, legitimised, and taught in the curriculum, to the exclusion of marginalised and minoritised people in academic institutions. Writing in the US contexts, Hill Collins argues,

"Because elite White men control Western structures of knowledge validation, their interests pervade the themes, paradigms, and epistemologies of traditional scholarship. As a result, U.S. Black women's experiences as well as those of women of African descent transnationally have been routinely distorted within or excluded from what counts as knowledge."

(Hill Collins, 2014: 251)

Inclusive curriculum-making requires the teacher or educator to have an awareness of historical, social, and political contexts that produces and reproduces suppression of marginalised knowledge. Thus, one strategy for inclusive curriculum making is the involvement of and consultation with a broad range of stakeholders, including learners and their wider community. An inclusive curriculum recognises the credibility and importance of learners and their wider community in shaping knowledge, in deciding what's important enough to be taught in the classroom.

What does inclusive curriculum-making mean in relation to the assessed curriculum?

The implementation of "child-, disability-, and gender-sensitive" and for "providing safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments" (UNESCO 2017: foreword) has been defined as the 4th Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) and taken up in national, local and institutional policies. This is just one example of how the goal of inclusion is promoted through educational policies worldwide. On the one hand, the planned curriculum defined in national policy frameworks is only a single element that shapes the students' experiences – teacher skills and attitudes, infrastructure, pedagogical strategies and many more factors are also relevant in forming the co-constructive classroom experience (cf. UNESCO 2017: 13, see above). At the same time, both the way in which a curriculum is constructed and its interactive implementation in the classroom are powerful processes that can have a serious impact on the culture of learning and learners' opportunities.

Bearing in mind the knowledge-forming dimension of curricula (see above), it makes sense to explore the differences between the assessed curriculum (examination (results)), grades and other documents that are supposed to quantify and document learning' progress) and the inclusive curriculum (encompassing the dimension of in- and exclusion unfolds in relation to the lived experiences, which emerge from within, between and beyond school institutions (see above, Ainscow 2016: 148ff.)) a little further.

From a theoretical point of view, a key dimension of the inclusive variant of the curriculum

may be defined as an achieved reflection of the written curriculum with regard to the diversity within the student body as well as contextual factors (ibid.).

Regarding curriculum *making*, as the example of decolonisation (see above) shows, inclusivity can only be triggered if the dominant discourse inscribed in curricula and teaching and learning patterns is exposed. Hence, there is a need to overcome existing hierarchies in collaborative practices. According to Baron (2018: 340), a circular and recursive mutual exchange may allow for ongoing self-critical and bias-sensitive examination of in- and exclusion dynamics at all (micro-, meso-, macro-) levels, based on trust and understanding:

"Since a conversation is not one-sided, there should not be a dominant discourse. Variety and mutual learning are valued as the curriculum and understandings surrounding the curriculum are embraced and adjusted by other worldviews" (Baron 2018: 334).

To build anti-hierarchic, "heterarchical" relations (Baron, 2018), teachers may look for significant others in their professional environments on policy, practice and relevant intermediate levels to share, exchange, discuss and adjust ideas on how to make the curriculum inclusive as communities of practice (or professional learning communities).

These professional or learning communities can seek to exchange their ideas with other groups and stakeholders in feedback-loops and, in a best-case scenario, establish a dialogical exchange between students, teachers, management and policy makers. In the sense of co-construction of agency as a highly, "situated achievement" (Priestley, Biesta & Robinson, 2014: 151), curriculum making can be carried out as an iterative, co-constructive process between teachers and pupils that can unfold and adapt in a continuous and circular way. In addition, a relational exchange can be installed at the institutional level (ibid.: 157) to promote professionalisation and further training.

With regard to curriculum *enactment*, the objective of critical agency, would avoid seeking a universal formula for the design or implementation of an inclusive curriculum. Regarding the objective of avoiding tokenistic addictions to a curriculum (but seek for a reorientation of values instead). As an alternative, a critical agency can be built by accounting for the high dependency on contextual conditions from which grades and learning outputs emerge. A democratic and participatory process of co-construction and reflection on forms of in- and exclusion that are caused or reinforced by the existing curriculum in the medium to long term can enable teachers to take the experiences of diverse learners and their learning needs into account. Hence, general teaching tools and standardised approaches should be reflected regarding their in- and exclusionary potential within a particular setting based on engagement with the students' experiences. To do so, it is also necessary that teachers are given the opportunity to learn about their own potentials and limits regarding their experiences and knowledge about structural barriers and their ability to problematise existing forms of exclusion in the individual setting.

In addition, inclusive enactment of curricula may require the adjustment of standardised assessment tools or even working with alternative approaches, such as interviews and

conversations, self-evaluation, logbook or diary, portfolios, etc. (Johnsen 2020: 131-2). Such individualised assessment techniques can support continuous adaptation of curriculum enactment to changing requirements in the classroom. Also, this might allow schools to start moving beyond the (important) racial diversification of school curricula, as criticised above, and thus feed back into the process of curriculum making as a form of participatory knowledge.

Regarding limits and potentials, it should be noted that many schools include the requirement to realise inclusion in their mission statements without providing support structures for teachers to put this claim into practice. Hence, the distinction between the assessed and inclusive curriculum may be diluted and developing inclusive and participatory routines may be left to the individual teachers. Responsibilitisation, however, is not the same as critical teacher agency. In responsibilisation, teachers are given sole responsibility for implementing the curriculum, thereby ignoring the institutional setting as a basic condition and the exclusionary structures that exist within it. This may lead to the fact that implementing a given curriculum in a non-exclusive way can be particularly challenging for teachers, while at the same time being put under high pressure to "perform" as in present good examination outcomes.

"Agency ,[…] is not to be understood as something that people can have; it is something that people do. It denotes 'quality' of the engagement of actors with temporal-relational contexts-for-action, not a quality of the actors themselves" (Priestley, Biesta & Robinson 2014: 150).

It is thus crucial to account for the difference between the inclusive and assessed curriculum to analyse inner and contextual constraints and opportunities to adjust pedagogical routines to make them more inclusive. Critical teacher agency would account for the inclusive curriculum dimension in a way that respects aspects of participation, which "relates to the quality of their experiences whilst they are there and, therefore, must incorporate the views of the learners themselves" (Ainscow 2016: 147). From a critical teacher agency point of view, "'achievement' is about the outcomes of learning across the curriculum, not merely test or examination results" (ibid.). It is useful for teachers to develop strategies and techniques to review the assessed curriculum for the potential of exclusion and make adjustments where necessary to move closer to an inclusive curriculum. The aim of such an approach would be to engage in a critical and practical agency, based on both the learners' needs and contextual requirements.

What are the constraints educators experience in relation to the enactment of inclusive curriculum-making?

It is recommended to readily identify barriers to inclusion (Ainscow, 2020) as a proactive strategy to inform how educators and education systems can seek to address such constraints.

- The growth of neoliberalism at government level globally which in turn influences (inclusive) education policy.
- Curriculum overload- the weight of content and business of teaching schedule detracts from creating space to discuss and critically analyse mandated curricula at school level and explore philosophical stances such as the development of inclusive practices. In most cases, school and higher education curricula are subjected to examination-oriented assessment systems that overlook actual skills and competencies. The unfortunate outcomes of this are that educators are pushed to tick off these academic targets and, in the process, miss out on the actual humanity goals. In the delivery of the curriculum, a lot of time is spent on "learning to pass" rather than "learning to be." Learners' needs might not be identified or there is limited time to develop support strategies that could serve as support for a variety of learning needs. The learning experiences of these learners could be marked with loss of identity, bullying and marginalisation. These are the opposite of an ideal inclusive curriculum in which every role-player should thrive (Ainscow, 2016).
- Lack of access to and provision of continued professional development in relation to inclusive curriculum-making.
- Lack of clarity, trust and support between education partners regarding the enactment of policy at school/ institution level.

Organising for inclusive curriculum-making

This chapter has provided some suggestions for teachers to implement inclusive curriculum-making at the classroom level while also acknowledging the challenges and constraints of implementing an inclusive curriculum. One way to overcome some of these challenges is through organising and campaigning with other teachers and educators, as well as the wider community outside of educational establishments.

Writing in the context of HE, Moosavi (2023) reflected on his experience of implementing a decolonial curriculum for his module and expressed regrets over the missed opportunities in encouraging colleagues in the broader programme to examine their curriculum and pedagogy. He writes, "[I]f students only experience a decolonised curriculum in a small part of their overall studies, we may still be complicit in being part of an educational programme that is Western-centric and that we have not done enough to subvert."

Additionally, Abu Moghli and Kadiwal (2021) have argued for the importance of institutional changes in the power structure of educational institutions, that individual inclusive curriculum practices alone cannot take place in a vacuum, detached from other symptoms of an exclusionary education system. Similarly argued by Moosavi (2023), "even better than recruiting one's colleagues to engage in academic decolonisation, it may be better to lobby one's university for institutional changes in implementing academic decolonisation at a more strategic level."

Historically, teachers and educators have also worked with the wider community to campaign for inclusive curriculum practices. The establishment of Black Studies at US colleges in the Civil Rights Movement, bringing "previously excluded knowledges" (Andrews, 2018) to the HE curriculum, was a clear example of where this has happened. Chronicling the movement for Black Studies in the US, Kehinde Andrews (2018), the first professor of Black Studies in Europe writes: "Establishing Black Studies was a political act, supported by communities because it was seen as a progressive step that could improve the lives of African Americans."

In fact, Andrews believes that community support was integral to this academic movement and that African American scholars alone could not have established Black Studies in the US.

"Black Studies spoke to so many because it set out to transform the accepted knowledge base. The movement was far more substantial than simply asking for more Black people to be hired, it insisted on recognising previously excluded knowledges."

(Andrews, 2018)

Case study: The National Education Union and its campaigns for inclusive curriculum in the UK.

The National Education Union (NEU) is the largest trade union of workers in the education sector in the UK. The NEU represents not only qualified teachers but also those in training as well as other professions, such as teaching assistants and school support staff.

In addition to representing members in the workplace, the NEU also campaigns for issues within the sector, such as poverty, anti-racism, as well as teachers' pay and workload. The union has consistently called for inclusive curriculum reforms in their campaigns. For example, in their manifesto leading up to the 2024 general election in the UK, the NEU demanded that the next UK government must

"Ensure the changes to the curriculum are engaging and inclusive, and that teachers have access to professional learning to embed antiracism and guarantee all pupils access to a broad range of subjects, including the arts and PE"

(NEU, 2024).

Additionally, as previously cited, the NEU has also created an anti-racism framework (2022) to support and empower members in advocating for this agenda at school, especially in creating an inclusive curriculum at school level. The framework covers anti-racism in five core themes, posing a series of questions to help guide NEU members in examining anti-racism in their practice and local school context. Under "teaching and learning", readers of the guide were invited to reflect on the following:

"Is the curriculum being used to:

- Challenge race inequality
- Achieve cultural inclusion

- Respond to the differences in children's lives caused by racism, poverty and discrimination?" (NEU, 2022).

In addition to the written guidance, the NEU also provides training sessions to facilitate the implementation of the framework to members' workplaces.

Joining trade unions such as the NEU is a fantastic way for teachers and educators to advocate for inclusive curriculum making beyond the class-room – at their school and even at a national level. One single teacher cannot campaign for inclusive curricula on their own. However, when the mass collective of teachers organise for progressive curriculum reform, this objective is a lot less difficult to achieve.

Local contexts

> *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*
>
> *https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=631#h5p-50*

Closing questions to discuss or tasks

- *Are you a member of a teachers' union?*
- *What is your union's policy on inclusive curriculum?*
- *Have they got any campaign on inclusive curriculum making that you can take part in?*

Literature

Ainscow, Mel. "Diversity and Equity: A Global Education Challenge." *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies* 51 (2016): 143–55. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40841-016-0056-x.

———. "Promoting Inclusion and Equity in Education: Lessons from International Experiences." *Nordic Journal of Studies in Educational Policy* 6, no. 1 (2020): 7–16. https://doi.org/10.1080/20020317.2020.1729587.

Andrews, Kehinde. "The Black Studies Movement in Britain: Becoming an Institution, Not Institutionalised." In *Dismantling Race in Higher Education*, edited by Jason Arday and Heidi

Safia Mirza. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.

Apple, Michael W. *Education and Power*. Routledge, 2012.

Baron, P. R. "Ethical Inclusive Curricula Design: Conversational Teaching and Learning." *South African Journal of Higher Education* 32, no. 6 (2018): 326–50. https://doi.org/10.20853/32-6-2987.

Begum, S., M. Wylie, H. Anwari, and S. Hood. "Visualise: Race and Inclusion in Secondary School Art Education," 2024. https://www.runnymedetrust.org/publications/visualise-race-and-inclusion-in-secondary-school-art-education.

Biesta, Gert. "Sporadic Democracy: Education, Democracy, and the Question of Inclusion." In *Education, Democracy, and the Moral Life*, 101–12, 2009.

Camica, Steven P. *Critical Democratic Education and LGBTQ-Inclusive Curriculum: Opportunities and Constraints*. New York, Oxon: Routledge, 2016.

Clandinin, D. Jean, and F. Michael Connelly. "Teacher as Curriculum Maker." In *Handbook of Research on Curriculum*, 363–401, 1992.

Collins, Patricia Hill. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge, 2014.

Coyle, D., K. Bower, Y. Foley, and J. Hancock. "Teachers as Designers of Learning in Diverse, Bilingual Classrooms in England: An ADiBE Case Study." *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 26, no. 9 (2021): 1031–49. https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2021.1989373.

Elliott, V., L. Nelson-Addy, R. Chantiluke, and M. Courtney. "Lit in Colour: Diversity in Literature in English Schools," 2021. https://www.runnymedetrust.org/publications/lit-in-colour.

Ellis, Arthur K. *Exemplars of Curriculum Theory*. Routledge, 2014.

Eppert, Claudia, and Hongyu Wang. *Cross-Cultural Studies in Curriculum: Eastern Thought, Educational Insights*. Routledge, 2008.

Johnsen, Berit H. "A Curricular Approach to Inclusive Education. Some Thoughts Concerning Practice, Innovation and Research." In *Theory and Methodology in International Comparative Classroom Studies*, edited by Berit H. Johnsen, 115–63. Cappelen Damm Akademisk, 2020. https://doi.org/10.23865/noasp.130.

Joseph-Salisbury, Remi. "Race and Racism in English Secondary Schools (Runnymede Perspectives)," 2020. https://www.stoppestennu.nl/sites/default/files/uploads/runnymede_secondary_schools_report_final.pdf.

Jung, J., and William F. Pinar. "Conceptions of Curriculum." In *The SAGE Handbook of Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment*, 2:29–46, 2016.

Kenny, N., S. McCoy, and G. Mihut. "Special Education Reforms in Ireland: Changing Systems, Changing Schools." *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 2020, 1–20. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2020.1821447.

Moosavi, Leon. "Turning the Decolonial Gaze towards Ourselves: Decolonising the Curriculum and 'Decolonial Reflexivity' in Sociology and Social Theory." *Sociology* 57, no. 1

(2023): 137–56. https://doi.org/10.1177/00380385221096037.

Muller, Johan, Bronwyn Davies, and Ana Morais. *Reading Bernstein, Researching Bernstein*. London: RoutledgeFalmer, 2004.

National Education Union. "Framework for Developing an Anti-Racist Approach," 2022. https://neu.org.uk/sites/default/files/2023-04/NEU2532%20Anti-racist%20framework%202022%20WEB%20v1.pdf.

———. "NEU Cymru Manifesto for Education," 2024. https://neu.org.uk/latest/library/neu-cymru-manifesto-education.

Osberg, Deborah, and Gert Biesta. "The End/s of Education: Complexity and the Conundrum of the Inclusive Educational Curriculum." *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 14, no. 6 (2010): 593–607.

Paraskeva, Joao M. *Conflicts in Curriculum Theory: Challenging Hegemonic Epistemologies*. Springer Nature, 2021.

Pinar, William F. *A Praxis of Presence in Curriculum Theory: Advancing Currere Against Cultural Crises in Education*. Routledge, 2022.

———. "Currere." In *Key Concepts in Curriculum Studies*, 50–52. Routledge, 2019.

———. *The Character of Curriculum Studies: Bildung, Currere, and the Recurring Question of the Subject*. Springer, 2011.

Popkewitz, Thomas S., B. Robert Tabachnick, and Gary Wehlage. *The Myth of Educational Reform: A Study of School Responses to a Program of Change*. University of Wisconsin Press, 1982.

Porter, Andrew C. "Curriculum Assessment." In *Handbook of Complementary Methods in Education Research*, 141–59. Routledge, 2012.

Priestley, Mark, Gert Biesta, and Sarah Robinson. "Teachers as Agents of Change: Teacher Agency and Emerging Models of Curriculum." In *Reinventing the Curriculum: New Trends in Curriculum Policy and Practice*, edited by Mark Priestley and Gert Biesta. London, New Delhi, New York, Sydney: Bloomsbury, 2014.

Reed, Howard, Sarah Murphy, and Richard Evans. "Optimising a Co-Production Framework for Developing Public Health Interventions: Application and Testing of School-Health Research Action Groups." *Health Research Policy and Systems* 21, no. 133 (2023). https://doi.org/10.1186/s12961-023-01086-3.

Short, Edmund C. *Toward a Grammar of Curriculum Practice: Embracing New Conceptions of Curriculum and Curriculum Planning*. State University of New York Press, 2023.

Snyder, Jon, Frances Bolin, and Karen Zumwalt. "Curriculum Implementation." In *Handbook of Research on Curriculum*, 40:402–35. 4, 1992.

Sriprakash, Arathi, Sophie Rudolph, and Jessica Gerrard. *Learning Whiteness*. London: Pluto Press, 2022.

Stentiford, Liam, and Georgios Koutsouris. "Critically Considering the 'Inclusive Curriculum' in Higher Education." *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 43, no. 8 (2022): 1250–72. https://doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2022.2122937.

UNICEF. "Inclusive Education," 2024. https://www.unicef.org/education/inclusive-education.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). "A Guide for Ensuring Inclusion and Equity in Education," 2017. http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002482/248254e.pdf.

Westbury, Ian. "Teaching as a Reflective Practice: What Might Didaktik Teach Curriculum?" In *Teaching as a Reflective Practice: The German Didaktik Tradition*, edited by Ian Westbury Stefan Hopmann and Kurt Riquarts, 15–40. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 2000.

About the authors

Cynthy K. Haihambo

Cynthy Kaliinasho Haihambo Ya-Otto is a teacher-educator at the University of Namibia. Her teaching and research areas are in Educational Psychology and Inclusive Education.

Penny H. C. Dinh

Penny H. C. Dinh is first and foremost a social justice activist – an active campaigner for decolonial and antiracist education within her trade and students' unions. She is currently researching teacher activism and anti-racist education in Wales as part of her PhD at Cardiff University.

Jane O'Toole

Jane O'Toole is a primary school teacher who specialises in language education. Jane's doctoral research explored student and parent engagement with the Irish language utilising a participatory action research methodology. Jane has also served as a school principal and has a special interest in inclusive education and curriculum. Jane has been a coordinating member of the Collaborative Action Research Network (CARN) since 2016.

Lisa Marie Rosen

Lisa M. Rosen is a University researcher and teacher at PhD level, working on the topic of various forms of (policy-based) concepts of diversity and

inclusion and their contextualized enactments in educational settings from comparative and intersectional perspectives.

Nika Maglaperidze

Nika Maglaperidze is an English teacher and a beginning educational researcher from Georgia. A first-year PhD student from the Department of Education, Maynooth University. His research focus centres on teacher education, social justice in education, curriculum making and philosophy of education.

ADVANCING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: POLICY, PRACTICE AND STRUCTURAL CHANGES'

Jean Karl Grech; Nika Maglaperidze; and Akangshya Bordoloi

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://book.all-means-all.education/ ama-2025-en/?p=441#oembed-1

Example Case

"We would first like to bring in the case study of Malala Yousafzai from Pakistan a 17-year-old education activist who won a Nobel Peace Prize in 2014 for her work in female education which makes her the world's youngest Nobel Prize Laureate. She is credited with highlighting the importance of an inclusive education policy. However, we would like to refocus the attention towards her father Ziauddin Yousafzai who was an education activist himself and worked vehemently towards bringing about equal basic education for all, including women. It was and still is considered quite a radical perspective in a Taliban-dominated country like Pakistan that justifies violence against anyone who dares to defy their radical Islamic policies. However, her father's bravery and zeal for inclusive education motivated Malala to bravely face all kinds of discrimination and violence-including getting shot by a Taliban gunman (UN, 2017).

If we consider Malala and her father to be conscious educators then, it is crucial that we chart out what makes them relevant educators and how can those characteristics be inculcated among young researchers and intending educators. It would then help us in understanding the significance and impact that our roles as educators can have on policy in education."

In this chapter, you will find answers to the following questions:

1. What are policies and how should we read them?
2. What is the contemporary significance of an inclusive teacher education policy and what impact do we expect from such an inclusive policy?
3. In what ways do structural disadvantages manifest within educational institutions, and how do existing educational policies both contribute to and fail to address these inequalities, thereby impacting the realisation of inclusive education?

Introduction to Topic

There are an estimated 240 million children with disabilities worldwide. Yet children with disabilities or any other 'different kinds' of children are often overlooked in policymaking, thereby, limiting their access to education and their ability to participate in social economic and political life. Worldwide, these children are among the most likely to be out of school and/or face discrimination, stigmatisation and violence. Robbed of their right to receive a proper education, such children are also often denied the chance to take part in their community activities, the workforce and the policy decisions that mostly affect them. Inclusive education is thus considered as the most effective way to give all children a fair chance to go to school, learn and develop the skills they need to thrive. By maintaining a focus on transforming teachers/educators into active agents while formulating policy and implementing the curriculum-inclusive education very simply means that children from different backgrounds can grow and learn in the same classroom. The concept is popularised widely by UNICEF, and it has requested all the member states to implement it in ways that would address their distinct needs (UNICEF, 2001).

The most crucial, however, is the outcomes of the 48th Session of the International Conference on Education (ICE) held in Geneva in November 2008. It presented a broadened concept of inclusive education as a holistic reform strategy for education systems aiming to achieve quality education for all. They are of the view that "a broadened concept of inclusive education can be viewed as a general guiding principle to strengthen education for sustainable development, lifelong learning for all and equal access of all levels of society to learning opportunities" (UNESCO, 2008). Within the context of this broadened concept of inclusive education, a key role for inclusive teachers has been recognised and developed

around the need to meet diverse learner's needs and promote inclusion. This consensus is built on a rights-based perspective of education and considers the startling numbers of learners excluded from education around the world (Opertti and Brady, 2011).

This has led to the right to basic and equal education irrespective of age, class, geographical location, culture, politics, religion and other factors to be lacking in many countries even in the contemporary times. It might be quite difficult to chart out the core reason behind this due to the complex intersectionality shared by the three major institutions of society, i.e law, politics (both domestic and international) and religion. However, key issues include the widening gap in learning outcomes, that is closely related to social and economic conditions; the increasing diversity of classrooms with respect to cultural and linguistic origins; the shortage of experienced teachers working where they are needed and how their services are required; the difficulties in recruiting teachers from diverse social backgrounds; and the low pay and status of the teaching profession (Opertti and Brady, 2011). Thus, through this proposed policy, we are trying to articulate and justify this approach and create an inclusive teaching policy that can address the contemporary distinct needs of its students and break the power imbalance between the educator and the students.

Key aspects

Structural Disadvantages

Having explored the broader concept of inclusive education and the role of policy in addressing structural disadvantages, this chapter now focuses on the specific forms these disadvantages can take. In this next section, the concept of 'Structural Disadvantages' in education is explored in more depth. This exposes common mistakes in policy, where surface-level goals don't match the realities students often face.

Structural disadvantage in education describes the circumstances where specific groups of children and young people experience marginalisation or disadvantage within educational institutions like schools, universities, kindergartens, etc. This is often a result of social divisions that create and perpetuate inequalities (Unterhalter, 2021). These are students who often have limited access to educational opportunities or are subjected to low-quality education (Matsumoto, 2013). These disadvantages are entrenched in societal structures and exacerbated by ineffective education policies, permeating the very classrooms where we teach, and as a result inhibiting the implementation of inclusive education. As a teacher, you will likely observe that these structural disadvantages originate due to various factors, including your students' socioeconomic status, race and ethnicity, gender, disability, and geographical location, among others. It is also important to draw our attention to how inequalities can also be embedded into our teaching practice (Unterhalter, 2021). Even within deeply unequal systems, individuals strive to combat structural

disadvantages in education on a daily basis. A powerful example of this is Malala Yousafzai and her father Ziauddin, who defied entrenched gender restrictions on education in Pakistan. Despite immense barriers, they championed equal basic education for all, including women. This case exposes how the transformative power of education depends on policy shifts; even the bravest individuals struggle alone against systemic barriers.

Intersectionality offers a lens to examine the complex interplay of these different factors and illustrates the multi-faceted nature of inequalities and how they can play out in your classroom and the school (Crenshaw, 1990). This intersectional lens reveals limitations in policy responses that treat each disadvantage in isolation (ethnicity-focused programmes that ignore poverty, etc.). Further, it underscores how socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, gender, and geography can intersect and interact in ways that exacerbate educational disparities. For instance, a student from a low-income, ethnic minority background might face compounded challenges due to both economic constraints and systemic racial biases. Similarly, gender disparities in education can be influenced by a combination of societal norms, educational policies, and socioeconomic factors, which can vary significantly across different geographical contexts. Furthermore, these policy-exacerbated disparities are not isolated but can reinforce each other, creating a complex web of inequality that is deeply embedded in our educational systems (Matsumoto, 2013; Unterhalter, 2021).

A wealth of research evidence now suggests that socioeconomic disparities have a broad range of impacts on children's learning, with the effects of socioeconomic disadvantage being felt both within and outside of school (Hirsch, 2007). One of the most conspicuous manifestations of these disadvantages in schools and classrooms is through educational outcomes. In fact, it's striking that 60% of the variance in assessment outcomes can be attributed to out-of-school factors, such as those previously mentioned (Haertel, 2013). For instance, children from impoverished and disadvantaged backgrounds typically perform significantly worse than their peers from more advantaged backgrounds. A primary contributor to child poverty in many instances is the lack of opportunities available to parents with limited skills and qualifications. Such parents are less likely to be employed and have the necessary income and resources to meet the financial demands of raising a family.

Consequently, children from disadvantaged households are less likely to acquire the necessary qualifications that could help them escape the cycle of poverty and achieve social mobility. This highlights the failure of our system to address the root causes of underachievement. Current policies often focus on individual achievement within the school system, neglecting the broader societal factors that contribute to disadvantage. This narrow approach fails to address the root causes and perpetuates existing inequalities. If societal support to overcome economic disadvantage is absent, even motivated students suffer, revealing the need for holistic policies beyond the classroom. These systemic inequities manifest in varied ways across contexts: In wealthy nations, parental lack of opportunity might prevent buying school supplies and resources. Additionally, in low-

income countries, such as Kenya, parents with low literacy levels may not fully understand the long-term benefits education offers their child. This lack of understanding can sometimes lead to children not attending school consistently or at all, perpetuating the cycle of poverty across generations (Unterhalter et al., 2012). These varied socioeconomic barriers illustrate how disadvantage in education has different roots depending on context, yet with sadly similar consequences. In response to these socioeconomic disadvantages, certain policies have been enacted to address these and other educational inequalities. For instance, the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education enacted in India can serve as a good example as was mentioned earlier in this chapter.

Building on the idea that educational outcomes vary among different social groups, particularly those from diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds (Hirsch, 2007), it is important to delve deeper, albeit briefly, into the mechanisms behind these disparities. One of the most prominent factors is represented in the concept of racialisation, which is when people's relationships with each other are influenced by their racial identities, which has a big impact on education (Bajaj & Scott, 2022). Racialisation leads to systemic biases and prejudices that are deeply embedded in educational systems, biases often left unaddressed by current policies due to a focus on individual teacher 'bad apples' rather than institutional failings. This bias affects teacher responses, grading, limiting student belief in their own ability regardless of true effort, affecting the quality of education received by students of different racial and ethnic backgrounds. This can manifest in various ways, such as differential access to resources, biased curriculum content, and discriminatory practices within the school environment (ibid.). Further, in some instances, some ethnic groups tend to be positioned far from the centre of power, which will affect their access to both the quality of schooling they receive and the curriculum that alienates them and omits material of cultural significance for them.

Gender differences in education persist even in high-income nations. For example, in Germany, Luxembourg, and Switzerland, boys are more likely to leave school prematurely compared to girls, and girls typically achieve higher school grades than boys. However, interestingly, in these same countries, girls are less likely than boys to pursue higher education several years later (Hadjar & Buchmann, 2016(a); 2016(b)). This trend coincides with a lack of robust government support systems, such as affordable childcare or flexible work arrangements, which disproportionately hinder a mothers' pursuit of higher education. This pattern can be attributed to a combination of intersectional factors. Socialisation and cultural norms, educational systems and policies, and socioeconomic factors play significant roles in these gender disparities. Societal expectations and stereotypes about gender roles can influence students' educational choices and performance. The structure of educational systems, particularly those that sort students into different tracks early (as in Germany, Austria and Switzerland), can exacerbate these inequalities. Lastly, socioeconomic factors, such as increased educational motivation among girls and women due to expanding opportunities in the labour market, also contribute to these trends.

This focus on enrolment reveals a common limitation in education policy: despite good intentions, strategies focused on surface-level equality often bypass deeper structural causes (Unterhalter, 2008). For instance, the 'get girls in' mindset overlooks how gender bias impacts student experience itself and persists well after graduation due to limited career opportunities and discriminatory hiring practices. This mismatch between stated equality goals and the barriers girls actually face underscores how structural change isn't achieved through simplistic initiatives, making deeper reform strategies vital.

Another significant area of structural disadvantage in education pertains to students with disabilities, who often face multiple challenges that can limit their access to quality education even after multiple charters on the right to quality education in a number of human rights conventions such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989) and the Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons (UN, 1975). For example, the development of mass education systems throughout the 20th century where grand proclamations of education for all in truth meant education for some (De Bruin, 2021), reflecting deeply unequal policy implementation. While international commitments exist, insufficient funding and flawed inclusion programmes reveal low policy priority for true empowerment. According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2017), in Cambodia, the out-of-school rate for children with a disability is 57%, which stands in a stark contrast to the 7% rate for neuro-typical children. Similarly, in the Maldives and Uganda, children with a disability are more than twice as likely to be out of school. Furthermore, only 44% of Cambodian adolescents with disabilities complete primary education, compared to 72% of their neuor-typical counterparts. Even in Western nations, the situation is far from ideal, for instance, in England, students with special needs were more than nine times likely to face permanent exclusion (UNESCO, 2020). These disparities underscore the structural disadvantages that children with disabilities encounter in accessing education.

Moreover, the challenges do not just end with access to education. Once in school, students with disabilities often face additional obstacles. For instance, teachers may lack the necessary training to effectively teach these students, which leads to unclear responsibilities and limited collaboration with support personnel. Discrimination and segregation can further exacerbate feelings of exclusion. Inadequate resources, inconsistent policies and practices, and dismissive and indifferent attitudes towards inclusion can also impact the quality of education received by students with disabilities and their overall school experience (UNESCO, 2020). These factors create a complex web of challenges that can significantly impact the educational experiences and outcomes of students with disabilities.

This is also evident when looking into the experiences of LGBTIQ+ students in schools and the likelihood of increased absenteeism and thus the limited access to education this has for such individuals. This is likely attributed to varying factors mainly to do with safety in schools and visibility within schools. As Goldstein, Russell & Daley (2007) explain, safety refers here to the ability for all students including LGBTIQ+ students to feel safe being

themselves and understanding their identity in school. On the other hand, visibility refers to schools clearly being inclusive and welcoming to their LGBTIQ+ communities through teaching and social practices which are visible in the school. While safety for LGBTIQ+ students is on the rise (ILGA, 2022), policy and pedagogical practices, which ensure the visibility just described and inclusive sex education on gender, sex and sexuality, remain a big challenge in schools. This is often a result of a gradual politicisation of the subject which leads to either policymakers remaining silent on the matter or otherwise enacting specific policies to regulate and exclude the visibility of the LGBTIQ+ community in schools in order to gain political popularity.

Building on the understanding that structural flaws hinder educational access and equality, we must examine how these injustices materialise within the seemingly inert walls of the classroom. Curriculum, far from a neutral tool, acts as a vessel for deeply embedded policy priorities. Indeed, Basil Bernstein (2003:77) argued that 'how a society selects, classifies, distributes, transmits and evaluates the educational knowledge it considers to be public, reflects both the distribution of power and the principles of social control.' Through textbook omissions of some histories, to rigid curriculum pacing mandates struggling students are left with no recourse, however policy creates the illusion of equal opportunity (Bertram, 2012). Teachers are then scapegoated as the problem, when it's precisely a lack of anti-racist resources or flexibility in policy that perpetuates inequity. Decisions regarding which historical figures, scientific disciplines, and literary voices matter are not made in a vacuum. They are enshrined in policy under the guise of objective knowledge, potentially perpetuating systemic exclusion.

The Role of Teachers and Policymakers

As an educator, it is crucial to recognise that teachers, while critical agents in fostering inclusive learning environments, often navigate complex limitations imposed by these very structures. While recognising and understanding the specific challenges their students face is crucial, their ability to make significant curricular changes can be constrained by factors like limited resources, mandated standardised testing regimes, and a lack of professional development opportunities focused on culturally responsive pedagogy. Adding to the challenges faced by teachers is the common practice of policymakers and reformers to exclude teachers and students from key decision-making processes directly related to their profession. This is often accompanied by undervaluing teachers' expertise and professionalism, leading to their opinions being dismissed out of hand.

Around the world, there is a rising trend of distrust towards teachers, with policies increasingly designed to scapegoat them, subject them to surveillance, and compel them to adhere strictly to teacher-proof lesson plans and curricula (Niesz, 2018). In this context, teacher agency becomes a nuanced concept (see below), requiring not just individual initiative but also systemic support and policy shifts that set educators free to challenge the status quo and create truly equitable learning experiences. Despite the daunting nature of these structural disadvantages, teaching remains our most promising activity in addressing

them so far as education policy is concerned (Jones, 2019; Wiliam, 2018). For example, developing pre-service teachers who are socially just in their beliefs and practices has been emphasised and to this end, numerous relevant and potentially impactful policy strategies have been suggested to equip teachers with the necessary tools to navigate and mitigate the challenges presented by the structural disadvantages and inequalities prevalent in our schools (Mills & Ballantyne, 2016). For example, Berliner (2019:187) proposes that in addition to teachers acquiring in-depth curricular content knowledge, instructional skills and classroom management skills, teachers must also be trained 'to promote the success of their students by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context in which they lived and work.'

In response to all of these challenges, we think that the teachers themselves should feel empowered to achieve agency to affect change on multiple levels starting from the classroom and school level and extending their impact to the structural and systemic levels. We believe that teacher education policy could be a way for achieving this. For example, Berliner (2019) advocates for teacher education policy to emphasise the social activist element for teachers to become better representatives of students and their families and indeed themselves. Teacher education institutions need to stress the politics of education as much as more technical aspects of teaching and learning (Jones, 2019). Given the significant influence of curriculum in educational settings, it is crucial for teachers to achieve agency and become advocates for liberatory curriculum (Le Fevre et al., 2016). This involves challenging narrowly defined, standardised, and teacher-proof curricula. By doing so, teachers can take on essential roles as curriculum activists, confronting problematic policies and crafting a curriculum that addresses the needs of their students and communities.

Education, with its multifaceted nature, necessitates the formulation of policies to reduce its complexities and make it more manageable. However, an over-simplification and reduction of these complexities can lead to an education system that is overly focused on outcomes, thereby risking the neglect of inclusive teaching practices. Therefore, a balanced approach is essential in the development and implementation of education policies. Moreover, policymaking is not a value-neutral process. It is deeply influenced by the values, intentions, and perspectives of those who craft them. Hence, it is crucial to critically examine who is involved in policymaking, how these policies are formulated, and the purposes they are intended to serve. This nuanced understanding can help ensure that policies are not only effective but also equitable, promoting an education system that truly caters to the diverse needs of all students.

As we delve deeper into the complexities of structural disadvantages in education, it becomes increasingly clear that these issues are not confined to the classroom but are deeply intertwined with broader societal structures and policies. The role of policy in shaping educational practices and outcomes cannot be overstated. Policies determine not only what is taught in schools but also how it is taught, and by whom. They are the invisible

hands that guide the actions of teachers and the experiences of students in the classroom. However, the process of policymaking is not a straightforward one. It involves a multitude of stakeholders, each with their own interests, perspectives, and power dynamics. The following section will explore the intricate world of educational policies, shedding light on who gets to decide what is included in them and how they impact the everyday realities of teachers and students. This chapter will also delve into the role of various stakeholders, from local institutions to supra-entities, in shaping educational policies and practices. By understanding these dynamics, educators can better navigate the policy landscape and advocate for more equitable and inclusive educational practices.

The Role of Teachers and Policymakers

As an educator, it is critical to be aware of the causes and effects of these systemic disadvantages. Being cognisant of these allows you to better understand the specific challenges your students may be facing and use your discretion as a teacher to make appropriate curricular changes that address each of your student's needs. It also equips you with critical insights to advocate for crucial changes within your school and the wider education system that could help alleviate some of the disadvantages faced by students and the challenges you will face as an educator. Despite the daunting nature of these structural disadvantages, teaching remains our most promising activity in addressing them so far as education policy is concerned (Jones, 2019; Haertel, 2013). For example, developing preservice teachers who are socially just in their beliefs and practices has been emphasised and to this end, numerous relevant and potentially impactful policy strategies have been suggested to equip teachers with the necessary tools to navigate and mitigate the challenges presented by the structural disadvantages and inequalities prevalent in our schools (Mills & Ballantyne, 2016). For example, Berliner (2019:187) proposes that in addition to teachers acquiring in-depth curricular content knowledge, instructional skills and classroom management skills, teachers must also be trained 'to promote the success of their students by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context in which they lived and work.'

Adding to the challenges faced by teachers is the common practice of policymakers and reformers to exclude teachers from key decision-making processes directly related to their profession. This is often accompanied by undervaluing teachers' expertise and professionalism, leading to their opinions being dismissed out of hand. Around the world, there is a rising trend of distrust towards teachers, with policies increasingly designed to scapegoat them, subject them to surveillance, and compel them to adhere strictly to teacher-proof lesson plans and curricula (Niesz, 2018).

In response to all of this, we think that the teachers themselves should feel empowered to exercise agency to affect change on multiple levels starting from the classroom and school level and extending their impact to the structural and systemic levels. We believe

that teacher education policy could be a way to achieving this. For example, Berliner (2019) advocates for teacher education policy to emphasise the social activist element for teachers to become better representatives of students and their families and indeed themselves. Teacher education institutions need to stress the politics of education as much as more technical aspects of teaching and learning (Jones, 2019). Given the significant influence of curriculum in educational settings, it is crucial for teachers to exercise their agency and become advocates for liberatory curriculum (Le Fevre et al., 2016). This involves challenging narrowly defined, standardised, and teacher-proof curricula. By doing so, teachers can take on essential roles as curriculum activists, confronting problematic policies and crafting curricula that cater for the needs of their students, and which are created together with the students.

Education, with its multifaceted nature, necessitates the formulation of policies to reduce its complexities and make it more manageable. However, an over-simplification and reduction of these complexities can lead to an education system that is overly focused on outcomes, thereby risking the neglect of inclusive teaching practices. Therefore, a balanced approach is essential in the development and implementation of education policies. Moreover, policymaking is not a value-neutral process. It is deeply influenced by the values, intentions, and perspectives of those who craft them. Hence, it is crucial to critically examine who is involved in policymaking, how these policies are formulated, and the purposes they are intended to serve. This nuanced understanding can help ensure that policies are not only effective but also equitable, promoting an education system that truly caters to the diverse needs of all students.

As we delve deeper into the complexities of structural disadvantages in education, it becomes increasingly clear that these issues are not confined to the classroom but are deeply intertwined with broader societal structures and policies. The role of policy in shaping educational practices and outcomes cannot be overstated. Policies determine not only what is taught in schools but also how it is taught, and by whom. They are the invisible hands that guide the actions of teachers and the experiences of students in the classroom. However, the process of policymaking is not a straightforward one. It involves a multitude of stakeholders, each with their own interests, perspectives, and power dynamics. In the following section, we will explore the intricate world of educational policies, shedding light on who gets to decide what is included in them and how they impact the everyday realities of teachers and students. We will delve into the role of various stakeholders, from local institutions to supra-entities, in shaping educational policies and practices. By understanding these dynamics, educators can better navigate the policy landscape and advocate for more equitable and inclusive educational practices.

What are policies and who gets to decide what is included in them?

Although policies shape a lot of the subjects and styles of teaching that teachers adopt

in schools, teachers might not know much about the powerful role these documents play in institutions of education around the world. This is especially the case if policy development and policy implementation are not respectively discussed and reflected on as topics during one's initial teacher training education. However, educators need to recognise that '[education] does not exist in a vacuum – it is exercised in a policy context, shaped decisively by its historical and cultural location' (Bell & Stevenson, 2006:7). Thus, as a profession, teaching is not an act which relies only on the students and the teacher in a classroom but is a product of different forces acting on it to achieve their desired outcomes. The forces or entities which shape what takes place in schools are referred to as, stakeholders, meaning that they have a share, interest, or involvement in deciding what is taught in schools, how it is taught and to whom. Some examples of stakeholders include ministries, local or international organisations, and other private entities.

The example mentioned above is only a small sample of how stakeholders impact the learning that takes place in formal schooling through curricula. Generally, this applies to all areas of schooling which are largely organised and maintained by a government or another institution, including inclusion and addressing structural disadvantages such as the ones described in the previous section. As schools directly engage with their policies, they must also fulfil those established by external forces. External forces do not only refer to local institutions such as the government but include different entities which also extend outside of national borders. Priestley et al (2021) refers to these entities as sites of activity and classifies them into five main levels. At the heart of this model lies the educator and the students in the classroom, but by looking outwards, one may note how the events taking place at the nano level are part of a web of established policies by different entities. Who are these entities?

The role of supra-entities in policymaking is usually to do with influencing and flowing ideas across different nations. A clear example of these entities is UNESCO which we have mentioned in the example case above. By establishing competency frameworks, country reviews and standardised objectives for national policies to absorb, supra-entities are active key players in various education systems around the world. This is evident through popular country reviews which compare countries participating in international studies such as the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), conducted by the OECD. Since the year 2000 PISA has conducted seven rounds of assessments which focus on literacy, mathematics, and science with the aim of testing the knowledge and skills of the students from participating countries with a metric that is collectively agreed upon (Schleicher, 2019:3). Consequently, the results obtained by low-performing countries have over the years pushed national policies to adopt strategies and targets which are believed to be effectively working in other countries topping the charts of PISA and other similar studies. This process is usually known as policy borrowing and has over the years been increasingly used in education as countries adopt strategies and programs which were proven successful elsewhere (Mundy & Verger, 2016: 375-6).

Supra:
OECD, UNESCO, EU

Macro:
Ministries

Meso:
Education
Departments

Micro:
Schools

Nano:
Classroom

< >
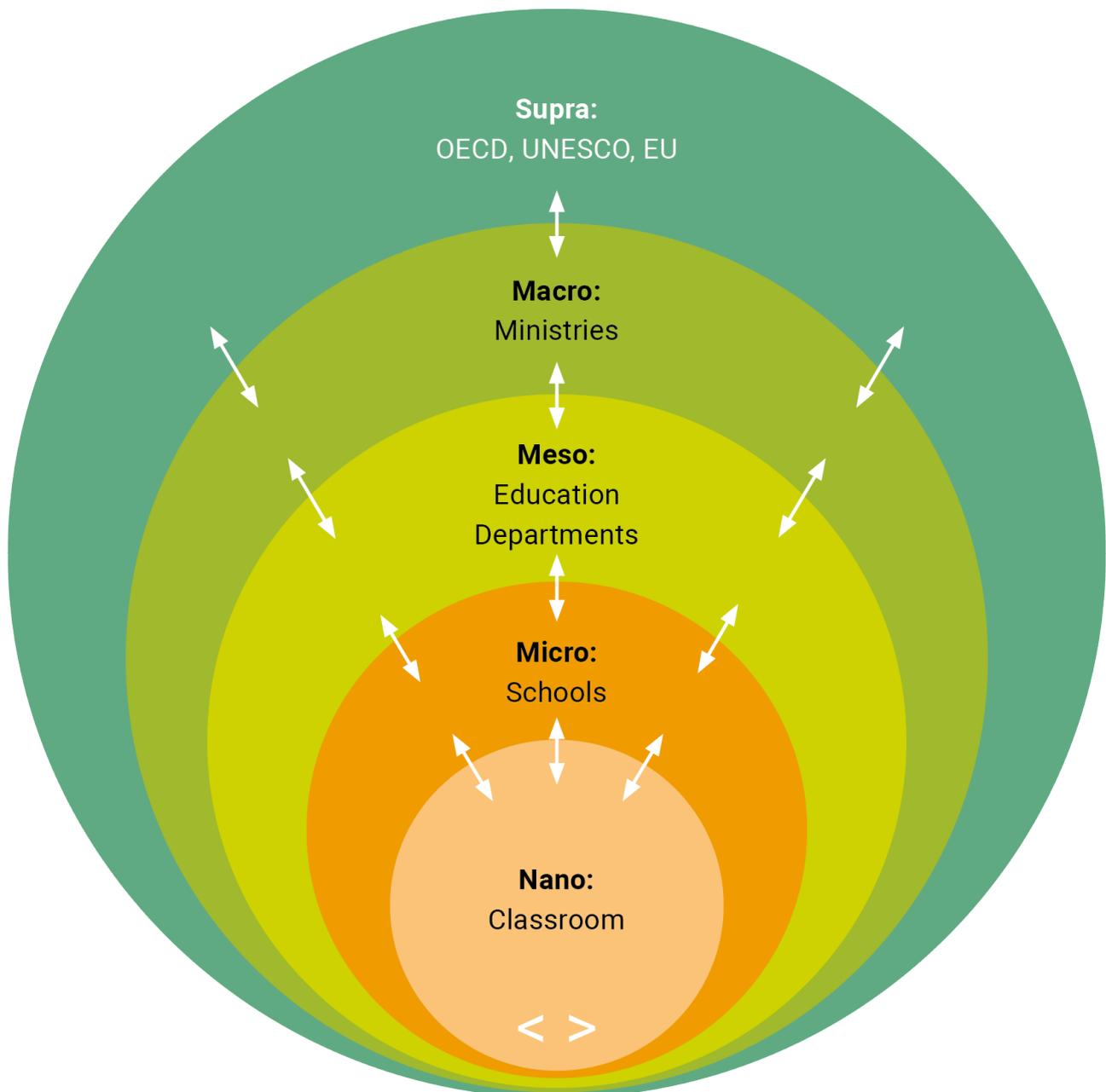
Therefore, the OECD, through PISA, is policy-oriented because it provides scores and analyses to guide decisions taken by education entities in the participating countries. Despite not having direct legislative and financial power on the other levels, the OECD has contributed to many changes in policies and curricula around the world. The same cannot be said for entities such as the World Bank which is, 'the largest single international provider of development finance to governments … and source of education finance' (Mundy & Verger, 2016: 335). The World Bank has since the 1970's obtained direct financial power as it establishes policy requirements as part of financial packages dealing with different countries (Mundy & Verger, 2016:339). This influence on different states around the world stems from the belief that such institutions are assessing and ensuring co-operation and increasing efficiency in a globalised world driven by large economic forces. This is visible in some of the policies that the World Bank has pushed which include ensuring equal

education for all, improving learning outcomes and quality of education, developing early childhood programmes, and focusing on skill-based vocational education. These are said to ensure the needs of the future labour market are met. Having said this, bearing such institutional power over curricula in schools requires extensive critique. This is explored in the upcoming parts of this paper.

On a macro level the policies implemented by the ministries do not only consider the directives and results published by the supranational entities mentioned above. Ministries must also consider the input of different stakeholders involved on a national level. These include the government and its ministries, local universities, teachers' organisations, unions, and other local entities. It is through this level that, 'state-mandated programs of study present authoritative statements about the social distribution of knowledge, attitudes, and competencies seen as appropriate to populations of students' (Priestly et al, 2021:17). Once a policy is designed and agreed upon by the stakeholders, Education Departments, or broadly the mesosystem, ensure that these policies are implemented by directly supporting schools and their staff members. Usually, departments organise teacher training, post-implementation assessments and observations to monitor the effectiveness of a particular policy. In sum, 'meso-curriculum making sits between the production of policy … and the curriculum making arenas in practice settings such as schools' (Priestly et al, 2021:19).

Although these levels have been explained here in succession it is important to bear in mind that they collectively operate with one another and influence each other. In fact, these levels can be defined as sites of activity, metaphorically presented by a spider's web. 'Policy making may be informed in a particular context by both supra discourses and by diverse local imperatives [and] a variety of mediating factors' (Priestly, 2021:12-14). This captures the complexity behind the transactions that happen between each of the levels described. Moreover, it is important for the reader to grasp how such contentious, interconnected, and multidimensional arenas, do not necessarily produce and implement policies successfully all the time (Honig, 2006:2). In fact, as identified in the previous section, policies can have a devastating impact on students, teachers and/or even a state's education system.

Where does the teacher fit into all this?

However, if formulated and implemented inclusively, policy also has the capacity to bring about great positive changes with a focus on a more wholesome welfare for the targeted population. For example, when we bring back the discussion about Malala and how she was influenced by her father to brave against all odds and fight for a change in the education policy of Pakistan we witness the importance of the educator as an active agent, and the range of possibilities that opens because of it. Her story also proves the urgent need for an inclusive education in government education policies of all countries. This we believe will not only be able to challenge the established, often discriminatory status quo during policy

formation, but if implemented properly, would also be able to address the various social evils of the respective countries-exactly like Malala (UN, 2017).

So, what is required here is focus on four key areas that has been promoted by UNICEF:

- Advocacy: that promotes inclusive education in discussions, high level events, and other forms of outreach geared towards policymakers and the general public.
- Awareness-raising: that shines a spotlight on the needs of children with special needs by conducting research and hosting roundtable workshops and other events for government partners.
- Capacity-building: that builds the capacity of education systems in participating countries by training teachers, administrators, and communities while also providing technical assistance to governments.
- Implementation support: to monitor and evaluate partner countries to close the implementation gap between policy and practise (UNICEF, 2005).

In addition to that, UNICEF has also published a checklist of actions that all participating governments must comply with to make inclusive education a reality. Known as 'progressive realisation' it includes: committing all government departments to work towards active inclusion, introducing laws and policies to end discrimination and guarantee the right to inclusive education, deciding the course of action, timetable and a curriculum for introducing inclusive education, ensuring that enough resources are available to enable the transition to inclusion, collecting data and measuring progress and growth, providing early childhood care and education, providing adequate teacher training for inclusive education, introducing inclusive testing and assessment and introducing complaint procedures (UNICEF, 2017). Now, although not everything might be possible straight away, there are certain things that States could act on immediately. It primarily includes compulsory, free primary education for all-much like the RTE Act in India, proper sensitisation programs for all so that children from all kinds of backgrounds feel welcomed, and transforming teachers/educators to be an active agent in both policy formulation and implementation (UNICEF, 2017).

It is the third point that our proposed policy is focussing more on. Taking inspiration from Foucault's very famous argument of 'knowledge being power, wherein power is based on knowledge and makes use of it to create and recreate its own field of exercise' (Hewett 2004:10). We argue that all educators need, can and should, play a powerful active role in promoting societal inclusion and equity for all kinds of learners (Li and Ruppar, 2021). The common responsibilities/expectations would include being included during policy formulation, possessing the power and recognition in amending existing education policy, being provided the space and autonomy to implement said policies in ways that fits the demography and needs of their children, and having a safe space and/or creating opportunities to familiarise themselves with the backgrounds and distinct needs of the

children in their class. However, as teacher agency is considered under-theorised and variously constructed in the education reform literature, conceptual models of agency have been developed by drawing on broader theories of human and professional agencies. Drawing from Li and Ruppar's (2021) work on attempting to map out the empirical significance of theorising teacher agency, we would like to chart out the factors that have a strong influence on how teacher agency is understood and practised:

Table 1: *Teacher Agency for Inclusive Education*

Teacher Agency for Inclusive Education

Interaction

Personal histories:

- Biographical histories

Professional histories:

- Teacher education experience
- Professional development experience
- Years of teaching experience
- Years of teaching dealing with the diverse needs of students.

Practical-Evaluate

Structural (rules and policies implicated in the production of systems)

- School's organizational set-up or education system structures
- Partnership beyond schools
- Relationships within schools
- Parallel operation of special education, general education and second language education.

Cultural (ideational contexts and traditions)

- School cultures or broader societal views of what is ability.
- Heavy-duty accountability mechanisms.
- Culture of performativity based on high-stakes testing results.
- Societal and institutional views of inclusion.
- School and socially perceived professional roles.

Material:

- Resources (books, curricula), physical spaces, teaching assistants, and assistive/ augmentative technology

Projective

- Visions of their students in mainstream higher education institutions, inclusive job fields and independent living communities.
- Visions of their professional work around inclusive education

The above figure provides an empirical framework that could be used to establish the practicality and relevance of the theory of teacher agency in inclusive education. Moreover,

the adapted conceptual framework follows socio-cultural theory, which treats teacher agency as a result of the interplay among individual teacher's capacity and environmental conditions, along with the interaction of the teacher's past experiences, current practise and future orientations. We believe that an explicit way of theorising teacher agency for inclusive education can help future empirical studies treat teacher agency as 'an analytical category in its own right' and hence, crucial while discussing education policy. It would also assist in cementing the proposal of including teachers/educator's opinions during policy formulation while providing flexible spaces in the curriculum for the policies to be implemented in what ever unique and creative ways the teachers/educators deem to be fit for its students (Li and Ruppar, 2021). Such an approach will be able to contribute towards a more sensitive and inclusive social education policy that is global (popularised by British sociologist Roland Robertson in the 1990s and later developed by Zygmunt Bauman) in its approach (Mambrol, 2017).

Why should a teacher want to know about and be involved in policymaking?

Before proceeding with this section, let's take some time to revisit what has been established thus far in this paper. The example case mentioned in the first section refers to a policy for inclusion in education as established by UNESCO. We later learned that the latter is one of the many supra-national entities which, as established in part three, has the capacity to influence goals for education on a global scale. We saw this in practice through India's Education Act of 2009, which was introduced to absorb some of these principles established by UNESCO. The second section sheds light on different types of structural disadvantages that students in our schools are still experiencing because of varying factors which policies have either failed to recognise or address in their implementation. We then took a closer look into the different stakeholders that exist and influence policy in education. These ranged from international entities with direct or indirect financial power over education, to also local ministries, institutions, and organisations. This large and complex web of different sites influencing education can often feel daunting and exclusive of the teachers' experiences and needs in schools. It often feels that decisions and new directives come and go and teachers bearing the change and challenges in the classroom are not considered in the process of designing new policies and strategies. This is best summed by Robinson in saying that, historically, 'the most consistent overarching theme which has dominated teacher education has been its relationship to the state. It has been externally controlled and shaped by governments and their agencies – and not by the teaching profession itself' (UNESCO, 2017:16).

Therefore, educators should know about policy because, despite their potentially good intentions, such institutional documents, may not necessarily be as effective as intended.

This could be a result of different factors ranging from inadequate funding, potential clashes between stakeholders involved, or expediently misguided strategies. The latter is

alarming since it is more likely to be less effective for the institutionally disadvantaged groups mentioned above. Therefore, policies are in themselves, powerful and political tools which may not necessarily be used to ensure equal access to education. On the contrary, as Malala's story very well portrays, policies and laws can be used to further solidify levels of structural disadvantages to ensure an individual or group's dominance over another. This becomes ever more likely when the complex web of sites influencing policies becomes increasingly inundated with different forces acting on it, most of which coming from outside of the classroom.

On the other hand, despite their often-felt sense of external and authoritative force, policies can be instrumental in addressing these difficulties especially when teachers are not just implementors of their goals but also writers and thus, active agents in the decision making. In Malala and her father's actions, we can witness the impact that praxis and active involvement can have in addressing structural disadvantages through education. This is why the previous section gradually shifted our focus to teachers as active agents and not just deliverers of content. Teaching, in its nature, gives educators the opportunity to interact with the structural disadvantages described above and understand the impact and challenges that students face. Freire (1970) sees both the students and the teachers as constructors of knowledge together through interaction. If it were not for human interactions, teaching would be lifeless and thus policies should reflect that same interaction.

Therefore, similar to the previous section, we have gradually shifted our perspective on policy to a critical one whereby the educator is encouraged to not only read and be aware of policy but to reflect on its point of being. We aspire to have the readers appreciate their potential not only as educators with students simply following established forms of knowledge and pedagogical practices, but as powerful professionals striving to improve the lives of others because they have lived and learned about others. 'For the critic, the important thing is the continuing transformation of reality, in the continuing humaniaation of men' (Freire, 1970:65). This is why the educator is here encouraged to question who is benefiting the most from the currently established systems designed over the years through curricula and policies as we know them and how these can be changed to benefit all through education. Thus, as we proceed to the coming sections, we aim for the reader to further equip themselves with strategies and tools they may use to become active agents in policymaking, to become critical readers of policies and frameworks, and consequently key contributors in this process.

How can a teacher become a reflective and critical agent in the decision-making process?

Understanding the complex web of the different stakeholders involved in writing up and implementing policies can be a daunting task. To critically do this may feel even more

challenging for an educator who aspires to address the needs of their students but is too perplexed by a system which feels bigger and stronger than them. However, this does not need to be the case, because teachers can and have become active agentic individuals in changing the system and not just implementing it. Critically reading policy is far from an untapped field in academia and has over the last thirty years greatly expanded to investigate the 'opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in [the] language' contained within policy documents (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000:448).

The field is denoted by the term Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and it is particularly appropriate for critical analysis of policies because it allows a detailed investigation of the relationship of language to other social processes, and of how language works within power relations' (Taylor, 2004: 436). In practice, this means that words contained in policies are no longer just read but examined for their implications and the powers they establish. Through a CDA framework for a systematic analysis, [one] can go beyond speculation and demonstrate how policy texts work' (Taylor, 2004: 437). Critical discourse is mainly two types: The first sees the analysis take place at a textual level where the words, pictures, and language used are analysed. For example, one may investigate the number of times words such as "inclusion" and "needs" are used in a document and reflect on how much importance is being given to these words. Otherwise, one may investigate the style of language being used in a policy; is it authoritative in its style of writing by using declarations such as, "teachers must" or is it emancipatory by including words such as, "we need" or "we should" (Simons, Olssen & Peters, 2009).

The second, broader critical analysis examines the social and historical context of the space in which the policy was implemented. In sum, this does not analyse the words themselves but the power that lies within them, those who wrote them, and the context in which they were made. Policies are here seen as 'instruments and effects' of discourse' and therefore power. This approach takes a Foucauldian understanding of 'language and concomitantly power relations which assumes that these are manifest[ed] in material and anthropological forms, that is, in policy objects (artefacts as we call them in the book), architectures, subjectivities and practices' (Ball, 2015: 307). These two branches of CDA do not need to be mutually exclusive but have over the years been used together. Taylor (2004) encapsulates these two aspects of critical discourse analysis as tools to 'explore the relationships between discursive practices (language), events, and texts, and wider social and cultural structures, relations, and processes' (Taylor, 2004: 435). Hence, the use of CDA in policy is also instrumental when one is analysing policies and institutional structures pertaining to inclusion and inclusive strategies designed for schools. For example, it is not uncommon for such policies to fail at incorporating the voice of whom they are intended to cater for, thus retaining the discourse and the decision making in the hands of dominant groups. This is often observed through the use of CDA. Our first example case in the next

section provides an example of this and proceeds to explain how it was mediated by a group of students and teachers together.

Although CDA is assumed to analyse what is written (visible discourse), it can also exert its critical nature by looking into potential silences which may be present in a policy. As established earlier, writing, and implementing policy are both in themselves political moves. Therefore, policymakers often try to choose the right words, while leaving out others, to achieve a desired goal, while simultaneously making sure that the language used does not disappoint or anger one or many stakeholders involved. This is often done using instances of silence which leave the policy open to interpretation by those implementing it. Moreover, such instances of silences can be indicative of policymakers failing to consider the experience of marginalised groups and the impact such policy could have on them.

Critical discourse analysis has been of great use when it comes to analysing policies which are established by supranational entities and ministries. Over the years such entities have become increasingly involved in determining the social role and purpose that education plays across different countries. With increasing power over education, the decisions taken by these entities have consolidated an 'articulation and re-articulation of orders of discourse [which] is correspondingly one stake in a hegemonic struggle' (Fairclough, 1992: 93). The latter implies that as education policy has over the years become increasingly guided by these entities, the latter have consolidated their power in determining the purpose of education. Simply put, such entities now have a great say in establishing what we, as educators, are teaching and why we need to teach it.

The latter may be briefly demonstrated through the impact that international studies such as PISA and PIRLS have had on teaching. As more countries participate in these studies, governments from countries performing below average became concerned and have borrowed policies from countries faring well with the hope of getting better scores in the next round of tests. This can certainly be said for Malta, which after its "worrying results" in such studies, saw a rapid change in its education policies to shift towards those present in Scandinavian countries such as Finland. Caruana (2020: 81) used CDA on policies to focus on this shift and noted that 'there is no clear indication as to how the policies will affect teacher recruitment, and whether it will be necessary to have Continuing Development Programmes or re-training of teachers already in employment.' A few years down the line, the implementation of these policies saw numerous challenges, especially for students, educators, and parents. This included increased paperwork and workload for teachers, teachers' unions taking legal action by issuing directives to school staff, and parents not grasping the new system to help their children. Through this example, we can see how the silences pointed out by Caruana and left unaddressed by policymakers, led to a turbulent process of implementation which has greatly impacted school life in Malta (Caruana, 2020).

As Zaalouk (2011: 139) explains, through such entities, there has been a gradual shift towards managing education and defining its purpose to primarily 'fit the capitalistic

demands of the labour market.' Policies often end up being hyper focused on fulfilling this need by devoting their attention to the production of a high-skilled future workforce. Having such a high skilled workforce is not something inherently problematic and can help individuals to flourish. However, in the process of establishing what is needed from education, such entities have had the power to narrow down what is to be considered as useful knowledge and the point of being in school. Over the years, this has continuously homogenised the purpose, and strategies for teaching this same knowledge whilst failing to recognise education as an act of liberation, humanisation, and emancipation. As the example of Malta suggests, educators have become hyper-focused on delivering the content established and limiting their space to understand and use the stories of the students in front of them as a form of education. Students are prepared to become small parts of a larger whole rather than holistically whole beings in themselves. This mostly impacts the students experiencing structural disadvantages. As Freire aptly puts it, 'to glorify democracy and to silence the people is a farce; to discourse on humanism and then negate it is a lie' (1970: 64).

Now that CDA has been established as a useful strategy which can be used by educators as they read policies and established curricula, we can look into how this together with other strategies can be used by educators so that they can become active contributors to the formulation of education policy. As authors of this paper, we believe that this can be exemplified through three individual case studies in which we ourselves have critically analysed policy to show how, through its practices or lack thereof, education was failing to address the needs of different structural disadvantages.

Case Studies

(i) Pedagogy of Coming Out, A Queer-Positive Policy

This pedagogy was recently designed to address the shortcoming of policies focusing on the safety and visibility of the LGBTIQ+ community in schools across the Maltese islands. Malta has in the last ten years recognised many rights pertaining to marriage equality, adoption, and also gender identity. Consequently, this has seen the country topping the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex Association (ILGA) European index for several years. However, over the same decade, studies focusing on the experiences of the same community in school continued showing concerning results in terms of safety and visibility in Maltese schools. 61.9% of students still experienced derogatory language pertaining to the LGBTIQ+ community and 49.6% felt unsafe attending schools (Pizmony-Levy, 2019). The experiences of rainbow families have also shown instances of stigmatisation by different members of the school community (Schembri, 2020). So, what went wrong?

As many of these rights were being recognised, a framework containing several policies under the name *Respect for All*, was implemented in Maltese schools to mitigate various

challenges experienced in schools by various disadvantaged groups (Ministry of Education and Employment, 2014). These also promised to address the *learning to be* and *learning to live* pillars of education as explained by UNESCO (2023) through the promotion of values of inclusion and respect for diversity. Applying a critical analysis of the discourse of the text, suggested that often these policies did not properly address the diverse needs of different disadvantaged groups. For example, while the first to locally recognise the LGBTIQ+ community as a group likely to experience bullying, it failed to elaborate on how this is to be proactively addressed by schools. Moreover, this silence on the matter was further exacerbated when the Minister for Education refused to include books containing LGBTIQ+ narratives in schools and ensuring the public that these will be kept at the ministry (Times of Malta, 2015). Therefore, these policies, as also shown by the data in the following years, failed to address the needs of specific disadvantaged groups such as the LGBTIQ+ community. To not cause too much of a stir over the inclusion of such topics in schools, the ministry's policy left instances of silence which failed to properly address such instances of structural disadvantage.

Figure 2: Front Page of Pedagogy of Coming Out

Source: A pedagogy of Coming Out (Grech, 2022)

A Pedagogy of Comin Out, was therefore designed together with local LGBTIQ+ students and teachers. The latter were recruited as participants to not only talk about their experiences in schools but to apply these to the design of a practical policy which can be easily implemented by schools (Grech, 2022). This was also presented to heads of schools to gather their insight on the challenges which can be met in implementing such a policy. The final document includes clear strategies for teachers and other stakeholders involved to ensure that these structural disadvantages are addressed. Moreover, the document leaves its implementation open to adaptation in order to allow schools to adopt practices which best work for their community, and to ensure continuous reflection and assessment of the policies' implementation. This work was also then presented to various governmental and non-governmental organisations in Malta at a symposium.

Therefore, from this first example mentioned here, we can note how educators and students have become active agents in policy development and implementation to address structural disadvantages pertaining to the LGBTIQ+ community in schools. Using CDA, gathering insight and other experiences of educators and students, organising oneself and presenting the work to local entities, educators have designed a practical document which addresses these needs locally. However, analysis and critique of policymaking and implementation do not only need to take place in an academic arena. As educators and implementors of policies in schools, we must ensure that there is clear, bilateral, and continuous communication between those establishing policies and teachers delivering them.

(ii) Inclusion of Migrant Children through Curricula.

In response to the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, numerous European nations have initiated policies aimed at integrating migrant children into their school curricula. Among these, the approach adopted by Ireland offers a noteworthy example.

The Irish Department of Education has issued guidelines to schools, advocating for the needs of the child to be central in decisions related to curriculum provision, programme access, and support. These decisions are also intended to incorporate students' current and future needs, including their readiness for key transition stages in the Irish education system (DoE, 2022).

To facilitate this, the department has provided schools with information about the Ukrainian education system, aiming to help them recognise and validate the prior learning and educational experiences of these children. However, the practical implementation of this recognition and its impact on the students' integration and progression in learning are yet to be determined.

For primary schools, the aims of this policy effort are to place the student in a class that best suits their age, with staff using observations and insights from the students and their families to determine the best way to meet the student's immediate and emerging needs. For instance, in post-primary schools, the student should ideally be placed in a year group that aligns with their age, with engagement from the students and their parents to ascertain the student's educational experience to date.

The role of teachers in this process is crucial. They are on the front lines of implementing these policies and are responsible for creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment for these migrant children. However, the effectiveness of these policies largely depends on the resources, training, and support provided to these teachers, which is an area that needs further exploration and evaluation.

(iii) Intersectionality at play: Is it possible for policy to be fully inclusive?

Absolutely not. It will be an extremely utopian expectation for one policy to be completely inclusive and address the complexity of intersectionality and marginalisation that any given individual might be facing at a given time. However, what we are trying to do here is attempt to include as many as possible and create a respectful methodology that is flexible

enough to address the multiple identities, difficulties, and discussions, as they come. I would like to bring in the example of a 22-year-old social media influencer Gabe who was born in Brazil and has a severe form of Hanhart syndrome, a rare condition that caused her to be born without legs or arms, and was put up for adoption at 9 months old. She recently came out as transgender and was adopted by a family in Utah. She now has over 180,000 followers on Instagram and about 4 million followers on TikTok where she shares makeup tutorials, beauty challenges and 'Get Ready With Me' videos, along with offering her followers glimpses of her day-to-day life without limbs with a big smile on her face. She claims that her life changed when she came out as gay at 19 years of age to her parents. She also told her parents that she wasn't going to change and if they wanted to be in her life, they would have to accept her as she is-and they did. This really motivated her to continue being herself with confidence and pursue her career as a beauty blogger (Hopkins, 2023).

She credits her adoptive family's unconditional love and support for helping shape her into a confident, independent and capable person. She also thanks her school and her teachers for helping her shape her personality and pushing her towards achieving her dreams. This gave her the confidence to work as a motivational speaker, after finishing school and then touring schools and businesses to try and make a difference in her community (Hopkins, 2023). Her successful business, confident personality, and zeal to help others like herself is based on the support she received from both her adoptive parents and her educational institution. Moreover, she also would not have been able to develop a healthy emotional and mental personality if she was not motivated by her teachers and her peers. This is exactly what an inclusive education policy should do. By providing a safe flexible space for teacher agency and identifying the distinct needs of its students, it should have the capacity to nurture the true talents and persona of its students.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided an exploration of inclusive education, its significance and the unabating challenges it faces. It has underscored the role of teachers as active agents in implementing inclusive policies and the need for their involvement in the policymaking process. The chapter has also highlighted the structural disadvantages that certain groups of students face within the educational system, emphasising the need for a more equitable approach to education.

The chapter, through the case study of Malala Yousafzai and her father, underscores the transformative power of inclusive education and its potential to overcome societal barriers and promote equality, while also acknowledging the complexities and challenges that arise, particularly in contexts where social divisions and inequalities are deeply entrenched. It highlights the need for a nuanced understanding of educational policies and their impact on the everyday realities of teachers and students, advocating for a balanced approach in

the development and implementation of these policies to ensure they are not only effective but also equitable.

Local contexts

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=441#h5p-45

Closing questions to discuss or tasks

Finally, we would like to conclude the chapter by leaving the reader with questions for reflection as the issues discussed in this chapter certainly do not provide comprehensive answers to all the related questions. Furthermore, it's important to note that the issues highlighted will present themselves differently in each teacher's unique context:

- Reflecting on your current teacher training and knowledge base, in what ways do you feel prepared to enact inclusive teaching strategies in your classroom?
- Considering the structural disadvantages that your students in your classroom might face, what policies and services in your local context can help you to address these challenges?
- How do you plan to address the effects of structural disadvantages in your classroom to ensure an equitable learning environment for all students?

Literature

Ainscow, Mel, and Susie Miles. "Making Education for All Inclusive: Where Next?" *PROSPECTS* 38, no. 1 (2008): 15–34. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11125-008-9055-0.

Bajaj, Monisha, and Janelle Scott. "Introduction: Racialization and Educational Inequality in Transnational Perspective." In *World Yearbook of Education 2023*. Routledge, 2022.

Ball, Stephen J. "What Is Policy? 21 Years Later: Reflections on the Possibilities of Policy Research." *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 36, no. 3 (2015): 306–13.

https://doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2015.1015279.

Bell, Les, and Howard Stevenson. *Education Policy: Process, Themes and Impact*. Routledge, 2006.

Berliner, David Charles. "Inequality and Poverty: Their Powerful Effects on Society, Schooling, Teaching and Teacher Education." In *Poverty and Education*, 2019.

Bernstein, Basil. *Basil Bernstein: Class, Codes and Control*. Routledge, 2003.

Bertram, Christopher. "Rousseau's Legacy in Two Conceptions of the General Will: Democratic and Transcendent." *The Review of Politics* 74, no. 3 (2012): 403–19.

Blommaert, Jan, and Chris Bulcaen. "Critical Discourse Analysis." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 29, no. 1 (2000): 447–66. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.anthro.29.1.447.

Caruana, Sandro. "A Bridge Too Far? Reflections on Theory in Educational Practice," 2020.

Crenshaw, Kimberle. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color." *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1990): 1241–1300.

De Bruin, Kate. "Multi-Tiered Systems of Support: A Roadmap for Achieving an Inclusive Education System." In *The Inclusion Dialogue*. Routledge, 2022.

Department of Education. "Looking at Our School 2022: A Quality Framework for Primary Schools and Special Schools," 2022.

Department of School Education and Literacy. "Right to Education," 2021.

Early Childhood Ireland. "Staff Shortages in the Early Years Sector," 2023.

Fairclough, Norman. *Discourse and Social Change*, 1992.

Fleming, Brian, Judith Harford, and Áine Hyland. "Reflecting on 100 Years of Educational Policy in Ireland: Was Equality Ever a Priority?" *Irish Education Studies* 41, no. 3 (2022): 441–55. https://doi.org/10.1080/03323315.2022.2085765.

Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. *Toward a Sociology of Education*. Routledge, 1970.

French, Geraldine, and Grainne McKenna. "Literature Review to Support the Updating of Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework." Dublin City University, 2023.

Goldstein, Tara, Vanessa Russell, and Andrea Daley. "Safe, Positive and Queering Moments in Teaching Education and Schooling: A Conceptual Framework." *Teaching Education* 18, no. 3 (2007): 183–99. https://doi.org/10.1080/10476210701533035.

Grech, Jean Karl. "A Pedagogy of Coming Out: A Comparison of Experiences Concerning Gender, Sex, & Sexuality in Maltese Schools," 2022.

Hadjar, Andreas, and Claudia Buchmann. *Education Systems and Gender Inequalities in Educational Attainment*. Bloomsbury, 2016.

Hadjar, Andreas, and Christiane Gross. *Education Systems and Inequalities: International Comparisons*. Policy Press, 2016.

Haertel, Edward H. *Reliability and Validity of Inferences about Teachers Based on Student Scores*. *William H. Angoff Memorial Lecture Series*. Educational Testing Service, 2013.

Hewett, Martin. "Michel Foucault: Power/Knowledge and Epistemological Prescriptions," 2004.

Hirsch, Donald. "Chicken and Egg: Child Poverty and Educational Inequalities," 2007.

Honig, Meredith I. "Complexity and Policy Implementation: Challenges and Opportunities of the Field." In *New Directions in Education Policy Implementation: Confronting Complexity*. State University of New York Press, 2006.

Hopkins, Steve. "Trans Woman Born Without Limbs and Abandoned as a Baby Now Inspires Millions with Makeup Tutorials," 2023.

ILGA. "Annual Review of the Human Rights Situation of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex People in Europe and Central Asia," 2022.

Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO). "Survey Highlights Acute Teacher Shortages Impacting Vulnerable Children," 2023.

Jones, Stephanie. "A New Focus on Social Class: Teacher Education in a Grossly Inequitable Society." In *Poverty and Education*, 2019.

Le Fevre, D., H. Timperley, and F. Ell. "Curriculum and Pedagogy: The Future of Teacher Professional Learning and the Development of Adaptive Expertise." In *Curriculum and Pedagogy*, 2016.

Levy-Pizmony, Oren. "The 2017 Malta National School Climate Survey Report." MGRM, 2017.

Li, Lingyu, and Andrea Ruppar. "Conceptualizing Teacher Agency for Inclusive Education: A Systematic and International Review." *Teacher Education and Special Education* 44, no. 1 (2021): 42–59. https://doi.org/10.1177/0888406420926976.

Mambrol, Nadrullah. "Glocalization," October 10, 2017.

Matsumoto, Mitsuko. *Education and Disadvantaged Children and Young People*, 2013.

Mills, Carmen, and Julie Ballantyne. "Social Justice and Teacher Education: A Systematic Review of Empirical Work in the Field." *Journal of Teacher Education* 67, no. 4 (2016): 263–76. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487116660152.

Ministry of Education and Employment. "Respect for All Framework." Ministry of Education and Employment, 2014.

Mundy, Karen, and Antoni Verger. "The World Bank and the Global Governance of Education in a Changing World Order." In *The Handbook of Global Education Policy*, 335–56. John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., 2016. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118468005.ch18.

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA). "Background Paper and Brief for the Review and Revision of the Transition Year Programme Statement For Consultation," 2022.

———. "Consultation Report on the Draft Transition Year Programme Statement," 2024.

———. "Primary Curriculum Review, Phase 1 Final Report with Recommendations," 2005.

———. "Primary Curriculum Review, Phase 2 Final Report with Recommendations," 2008.

Niesz, Tricia. "When Teachers Become Activists." *Phi Delta Kappan* 99, no. 8 (2018): 25–29. https://doi.org/10.1177/0031721718775674.

Opertti, Renato, and Jayne Brady. "Developing Inclusive Teachers from an Inclusive Curricular Perspective." *PROSPECTS* 41, no. 3 (2011): 459–72. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11125-011-9205-7.

O'Toole, Leah, Glenda Walsh, and Liz Kerrins. "A Consultation with Babies, Toddlers and Young Children to Inform the Updating of Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework (NCCA, 2009)." Maynooth University, Stranmillis College, Early Childhood Ireland, 2023.

Priestley, Mark, Daniel Alvunger, Stavroula Philippou, and Tiina Soini. "Prelims." In *Curriculum Making in Europe: Policy and Practice within and Across Diverse Contexts*, i–xi. Emerald Publishing Limited, 2021. https://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-83867-735-020211001.

Robinson, Wendy. "Teacher Education: A Historical Overview." In *The SAGE Handbook of Research on Teacher Education*, 49–67. SAGE Publications, 2017.

Schembri, Heathcliff. "LGBTQ Supportive Climate: The Inclusion of LGBTQ Families in Maltese Primary Schools," 2020.

Schleicher, Andreas. *PISA 2018: Insights and Interpretations*. OECD Publishing, 2019.

Schleicher, Andreas, and Pablo Zoido. "The Policies That Shaped PISA, and the Policies That PISA Shaped." In *The Handbook of Global Education Policy*, 374–84. John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., 2016. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118468005.ch20.

Simons, Maarten, Mark Olssen, and Michael A. Peters. "Re-Reading Education Policies: The Critical Education Policy Orientation." In *Re-Reading Education Policies*, 1–35. Brill, 2009. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789087908317_002.

Taylor, Sandra. "Researching Educational Policy and Change in 'New Times': Using Critical Discourse Analysis." *Journal of Education Policy* 19, no. 4 (2004): 433–51. https://doi.org/10.1080/0268093042000227483.

Times of Malta. "'Gay Books' Will Not Be Distributed in Schools," October 16, 2015.

UNESCO. "Education and Disability," 2017.

———. "Inclusion and Education | Global Education Monitoring Report," 2020.

———. "Inclusive Education: The Way of the Future; Conclusions and Recommendations of the 48th Session of the International Conference on Education (ICE)," 2008.

———. "What You Need to Know about Inclusion in Education," 2023.

UNICEF. "Inclusive Education: Including Children with Disabilities in Quality Learning: What Needs to Be Done?," 2017.

———. "The State of the World's Children 2001," 2001.

———. "The State of the World's Children 2005," 2005.

United Nations. "Convention on the Rights of the Child," 1989.

———. "Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons," 1975.

———. "Malala Yousafzai. Messengers of Peace," 2017.

Unterhalter, Elaine. *Addressing Intersecting Inequalities in Education*. Bloomsbury, 2021.

———. "Cosmopolitanism, Global Social Justice and Gender Equality in Education." *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education* 38, no. 5 (2008): 539–53. https://doi.org/10.1080/03057920802351291.

Unterhalter, Elaine, Chris Yates, Herbert Makinda, and Amy North. "Blaming the Poor: Constructions of Marginality and Poverty in the Kenyan Education Sector." *Compare: A*

Journal of Comparative and International Education 42, no. 2 (2012): 213–33. https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2012652386.

Walsh, Thomas, and Noírín Hayes. *Early Childhood Education and Care in Ireland: Charting a Century of Developments (1921-2021)*. Peter Lang, 2022.

Wiliam, Dylan. *Creating the Schools Our Children Need: Why What We're Doing Now Won't Help Much (and What We Can Do Instead)*. Learning Sciences International, 2018.

Zaalouk, Malak. "Transforming Education, Transforming Lives in the MENA Region." In *Educators of the Mediterranean……Up Close and Personal*, 131–40. Brill, 2011.

About the authors

Jean Karl Grech

Jean Karl Grech is from Malta. A gay primary teacher with a particular passion for inclusion and cultural integration. A recent graduate with a Master's in Euro-Comparative Education. In his studies at the University of Malta, he focused on the inclusion and visibility of the LGBTIQ+ community in schools through subjects and daily school practices.

Nika Maglaperidze

Nika Maglaperidze is an English teacher and a beginning educational researcher from Georgia. A first-year PhD student from the Department of Education, Maynooth University. His research focus centres on teacher education, social justice in education, curriculum making and philosophy of education.

Akangshya Bordoloi

Akangshya Bordoloi is an Assamese Indian social researcher from Department of Sociology, Maynooth University, Ireland. Her research interest lies in gender, sexuality, deviancy studies and social movement. She is also interested in classical sociological theory and considers herself a Foucauldian. She has been awarded the John and Pat Hume Doctoral Awards, the Department of Sociology Teaching Studentship, and the National University of Ireland Travelling Scholarship for my doctorate research.

LEADERSHIP FOR INCLUSION

Angeline Aow; Bhuvan Israni; Emma Pearson; and Heidrun Demo

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://book.all-means-all.education/ ama-2025-en/?p=639#oembed-1

Example Case

"Kezia is a 12-year-old girl from the Roma community, who recently started Year 7 at her local secondary school. Kezia is the eldest in her family with two younger siblings and she lives with her extended family. Kezia has an aptitude for mental Maths calculations and is a critical and creative thinker.

Despite a successful first half of the academic year, since the beginning of semester 2, Kezia has been increasingly absent from school and when she was at school she appeared withdrawn. She also struggled with her end of term exams, and her peers have started to exclude her from classroom activities and social interactions during recess times.

Ms Lee, a new social studies teacher in their second year at the school, is concerned about Kezia's declining connection with school and academic struggles. She suspects that Kezia may have an undiagnosed literacy need and brings these concerns to a Year 7 grade level meeting. Instead of addressing the issue, other teachers resort to harmful stereotypes about the Traveller community, undermining Kezia's academic abilities and associating her difficulties with assumed, unconfirmed family challenges. The Year 7 leader, facilitating the meeting, fails to challenge these views, frustrating Ms Lee, who feels helpless.

During a check-in meeting with Mr Schmidt the school principal, Ms Lee raises her concerns about Kezia and the lack of an inclusive school culture. Ms Lee also shares that she has looked at the school's policies and found them unhelpful and difficult to navigate, and is unsure about

the support structures that Kezia can access, if any. She was reluctant to share her struggles with the head of school, however her desire to serve all students under her care superseded her desire to fit in with her colleagues that she was starting to lose trust in. Ms Lee was hoping to find an ally in Mr Schmidt as the school's mission states that "we value diversity and create inclusive learning environments where all learners thrive".

Mr Schmidt and Ms Lee are considering their next steps. They want to take decisive action to foster an inclusive learning culture that respects intersectional identities to serve all learners (youth and adults), including marginalised community members like Kezia. They recognise that the school's policies need strengthening, and that providing training to staff on inclusion related topics, cultural competence and the harmful effects of stereotypes would strengthen the school's capabilities to be more inclusive. Ms Lee leaves their meeting with some immediate steps she can take, such as reaching out to Kezia's family to learn more about her difficulties and engaging the school counsellor. Mr Schmidt is contemplating his next steps and has placed strengthening inclusion as a priority on the agenda for the next leadership team's meeting."

Initial questions

This chapter explores the following questions:

- What is leadership in school?
- Who are leaders in school?
- What are guiding principles that underpin inclusive leadership?
- What do schools need a shared understanding about?
- How can inclusive leaders best manage and accelerate change?
- What makes a policy inclusive?
- How can we move from an inclusive policy to inclusive practices?
- How can leaders nurture inclusive cultures for diverse identities to feel safe and grow?
- How can leaders support partnerships for inclusion?

Introduction to Topic

Central to this chapter is the belief that leadership is a skill that everyone can develop. From this standpoint, all members of a school community have influence as leaders. Both adults and students can become leaders for inclusion, by understanding they have the power to influence their environment. To do so, school community members need to see themselves as learners about inclusion, facilitators of inclusion and leaders for inclusion.

Building on this belief about leadership and the positions community members hold, this chapter outlines four possible pathways to make leadership for inclusion happen. The first pathway addresses the importance of co-constructing shared meaning about foundational concepts related to inclusion. With a shared understanding of inclusion, the second pathway explores how policies can be developed and operationalised to shape expectations, accountability and inclusive cultures. Thirdly, a culture of care that is underpinned with safeguarding diverse identities is described as essential for cultivating inclusion. Finally, the fourth pathway shows how shaping partnerships within and outside the school can strengthen inclusive practices.

Key aspects

Leadership in Inclusive Schools

Leadership in an educational setting serves the purpose of shaping the mission, vision, and values and how these aspirations will be achieved. When a clear and compelling vision of what inclusion looks like within a school is articulated, this can align efforts and guide initiatives toward a common goal. Inclusive leaders inspire and empower others to achieve shared goals by leveraging their influence to foster an inclusive learning culture. Leaders who are committed to cultivating an inclusive school take risks and are willing to challenge the inequitable status quo (Morrison, 2018). They are ethically driven to bring about change that shapes existing cultural norms towards more inclusive ones that serve all learners.

It is important to be clear that leadership is not limited to formal titles and roles; it is a set of capabilities and behaviours that all members of a school community can develop. Leadership in inclusive schools fosters an environment where everyone sees themselves as potential leaders, capable of developing the necessary skills and attributes to drive inclusion and contribute to collective growth and development (Dimmock, 2011). Therefore, leaders in a school need to see themselves as lifelong learners, as facilitators of learning, and as leaders of learning. For example, a school principal who values what they learn from the start, teachers will be able to make better decisions by gaining new perspectives. At times, a coordinator in a school may be facilitating meetings where educational practitioners are learning together about a strategic initiative and how they can contextualise theory into practice. Teachers are leaders when they reflect on the way they

teach, listening to colleagues' observations and students' feedback. Children who articulate their learning preferences and interests to inform learning and teaching decisions are leaders who determine their own learning experiences. Everyone in a school contributes to building inclusive cultures by modelling key values and behaviours as learners, facilitators and leaders of learning.

Inclusive leaders play a crucial role in cultivating school culture and ensuring the safety of all community members. They nurture environments where individuals feel safe to express their authentic selves, thus creating the psychological safety that is necessary for fostering an inclusive school culture. Leaders can build trust through integrity, transparency, and consistency in their actions. These actions set the tone for inclusion through modelling behaviours that demonstrate genuine care, empathy, active listening, and respect for diverse people and perspectives. Open communication, where feedback is encouraged and valued, helps identify and address issues related to inclusion promptly. By promoting a collective growth mindset and demonstrating that intelligence and leadership capabilities can be developed through hard work and dedication, leaders set expectations and norms that inspire others. This holistic approach ensures that a school community thrives within an inclusive, supportive, and growth-oriented environment.

Students and Educational Practitioners as Leaders

When leadership is defined as a person's role in shaping an inclusive learning environment, by default, all members of a school community are leaders as everyone has the potential to positively impact school transformation. In this section, we explain how both teachers and students can make important contributions in strengthening inclusion in educational settings.

First and foremost, educational practitioners serve the needs of students and as such, practitioners need to refocus students' needs as leaders by elevating learner agency and involving students in decisions that affect them (Rodriguez and Villarreal, 2003). The concept of students as leaders should not be a performative and superficial notion. The same can be said about teacher agency, because there is no learner agency without teacher agency. When decisions have already been made without the input of student or educational practitioners, this can lead to trust being lost and demotivation. Rather, schools need to intentionally develop all community members' leadership capabilities and strive to create meaningful ways for all to contribute to school decision-making (Quaglia and Corso, 2014).

A common misconception is when a school considers students as leaders resulting in students assuming executive decision-making power and responsibility. However, how students are viewed by teachers, and other members of the school community, is essential for the decision-making process. As highlighted above, by encouraging students to articulate their own learning interests and preferences and then incorporating this in

pedagogy and curriculum, teachers are providing students with opportunities for shaping and leading their learning. While inclusive practices are about empowering all students, this does not mean that students have complete executive decision-making responsibilities. Students as leaders involves meaningful integration of student voices into decision-making around a broad range of experiences that they encounter at school. It is a co-constructive process that values diversity of perspectives and contributions from those who are experiencing the schooling system that educational practitioners create to serve them (Rudduck, 2007).

An example of meaningful student leadership comes from a German secondary school where a student-driven "Schule Ohne Rassismus" (School Without Racism) project was initiated and implemented by student activists. Student leaders interviewed peers and found that acts of racism were prevalent across the community. This highlighted the need to shift cultural norms, hence teachers collaborated with students to successfully lead the secondary school towards gaining a Schule Ohne Rassismus status. As a part of this initiative, students led staff training sessions, were invited to contribute to strengthening the school's safeguarding policy, and the secondary students also shared their initiative with the primary school's student council and primary teachers.

By valuing students as leaders, educational practitioners hear their needs, maintain relevance and are able to evolve their practices to serve the children and youth under their care (Diamond and Spillane, 2016). Schools that are responsive to student input, are underpinned by democratic values that respect student voice and can lead to academic performance benefits and reduced rates of absenteeism (Kahne, Bowyer, Marshall and Hodgin, 2022). An example of how this can be systematically established is by adopting a 'reverse mentoring' concept. This is when the traditional mentor-mentee role is flipped, for example, when students become the mentor to an educational practitioner or when a newly qualified teacher or teacher new to a school is a mentor to a principal or head of school. Reverse mentoring can offer fresh perspectives and fill in understanding gaps to help leaders enhance how they serve those under their care (Israni, 2022).

Table 1 provides an overview of who may be referred to when using the term educational practitioners. These are all roles and responsibilities in a school that influence inclusion practices and that impact student learning. All of the roles mentioned may have alternate names in various school contexts. It is not an exhaustive list, and should be used as a guide to exemplify the concept of how all roles can be embodied with a leadership perspective.

Table 1: List of Educational Practitioners

Educational Practitioners		
Governance and Senior/ Middle Leadership	Learning and Teaching	Support Staff

Head of School
 	
Director
   Principal
   Assistant/Deputy Principal
Coordinator
   Head of Department
	Homeroom Teacher/ Classroom Teacher
	
	Subject Teacher/
	   Specialist Teacher
	   Teaching assistant
	   After school activity leaders
	   Support teacher/special education teacher
		Counsellor
		
		Therapists
		   Secretary /
		Receptionists
		   Caretakers
		   Transport providers
		   School Nurse

Principles Underpinning Inclusive Leadership

Extensive research and literature have been written about leadership styles and the characteristics or dispositions leaders should possess. When considering leadership for inclusion, a combination of these capabilities is put into action by leaders who are hoping for maximum impact. A flexible and responsive approach to leadership is essential as success is grounded in, and responsive to, the unique contexts that leaders are operating in. Schools are shaped and driven by specific policies or initiatives that leaders operationalise and put into practice. For example, implementing safeguarding policies may involve directive leadership, while developing policies for engaging with community service providers and leaders requires dialogue and responsiveness. Meanwhile, when striving to transform learning and teaching with a school-wide adoption of universal design for learning, a leader would achieve more sustainable practices if adopting a relational and transformational leadership approach.

It is crucial that leaders have, at the heart of their adaptable leadership approaches, key principles that positively promote inclusion. Leadership for inclusion is not merely about enacting policy and practice; it is about embodying inclusive values. Guiding principles support leaders with 'living' inclusion, as they serve as foundational factors that underpin the inclusive behaviours that are modelled. Without a majority of these key principles, a leader may stray away from values that drive inclusion. For example, a leader can be democratic and take on a distributive leadership approach to implement segregating learners from one ethnic background, or who are perceived to have deficits with literacy or numeracy that results in greater othering and marginalisation . On the other hand, a leader with ethical principles driven by inclusive leadership would design for greater equity with initiatives that break down barriers for learning as opposed to creating more division.

The following guiding principles are organised around two components: inclusive leader characteristics and inclusive leadership styles. The principles chosen are based on leaders' experiences and leadership in schools' research.

Inclusive Leader Characteristics

Caring

Care is a specific activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our world so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, ourselves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web. (Fisher & Tronto, 1990, p. 40).

Inclusive leaders care deeply about their work and interactions with others. 'Leadership' in educational settings is not regularly associated with 'care', but 'ethics of care' are increasingly recognised as critical for leaders who seek to strengthen inclusive practice (Myende, 2023). The social change that is needed for genuine inclusion requires leaders who care about equity and social justice and how they interact with and influence people. For example, a school leader that is given space to care deeply about their work will be able to prioritise building relationships with the people they interact with.

Genuine care that leads to positive social transformation is an important aspect of how we operate in the world more broadly (Cook-Sather, 2020). A leader that embodies ethics of care holds themselves and others to account to move inclusion forward. To successfully care about ourselves, students, colleagues and our environment, leaders also need characteristics such as passion and self-awareness.

Passion

I get this feeling of passion, almost like a passion for the school.

I sense a feeling that she feels something that when the school achieves

that she has achieved in order for the school to be achieving

… she has always had a strong desire to maintain or improve standards and to better the school

… to see that people are able to achieve (Parent). (Day, 2005, p. 579)

The following excerpts are direct quotes taken from interviews that illustrate how parents, as well as children and school staff, appreciate leaders who are personally invested in, or connected, to their schools. When leaders convey their passion for cultivating inclusion, for their school community, for each individual under their care and for every learner to achieve their goals – this passion can embolden and encourage others to be active participants that contribute to furthering the school's inclusive mission.

The ability to care and lead with passion, has been identified as a characteristic that can sustain success in challenging learning contexts (Day, 2005). It plays an important role in shaping inclusive learning and teaching because passion includes and conveys: moral responsibility, optimistic enthusiasm, constant perseverance, urgency for action, genuine valuing of others and more (Caldwell and Okpala, 2022). Understanding the role of passion in building strong relationships has practical benefits for inclusive, caring and self-aware leaders.

Self-awareness

…teachers must spend time recognizing who they are, bring that authentic self into the class-room, and invite their students to do the same. In this process, it is important to note that the goal is not to be like our students. Instead, we must be as unapologetic, raw, and honest as we can be about who we are, while creating space for our students to express their authenticity and vulnerability in ways that have never been allowed before and that support their freedom to learn and become academically successful. (Sealey-Ruiz, 2022)

Self-awareness and the capacity to 'tune into' the range of lived experiences and perspectives of children, colleagues, and community members are essential. This begins with tuning into oneself as leadership for genuine inclusion requires openness and humility. Inclusive leaders are able to reflect on their own biases and comprehend diverse experiences through in-depth engagement and active listening. Being self-aware supports inclusive leaders in terms of leaning into their own identity and discomfort, particularly as this can often be a barrier for having conversations about race, gender, sexuality, religion, socio-economic status, etc (Talusan, 2023). The process of understanding one's own and others' lived experiences has been described as 'tuning', or becoming 'attuned'.

With self-awareness, leaders can recognise one's own socialisation that informs conscious and unconscious ways of knowing, doing and understanding the world. This includes recognising one's unconscious biases that can lead to having affinity with certain people and groups and that can also lead to polarising judgements and exclusionary behaviour. Being cognisant of the limitations of one's own lenses helps us move beyond our own perspectives to develop informed understandings from multiple perspectives (Cook-Sather, 2020). For example, a head of school who is aware of one's power and positionality can use it to prioritise inclusive hiring for greater representation of teachers from underrepresented groups. This does not suggest that power related to the position is used in a coercive and controlling way (power over), but rather the sharing of power (power with) is necessary in order to maximise every persons' unique potential (power within) and achieve shared goals (power to). A newly qualified teacher also has power and positionality to make a difference in their context and spheres of influence, for example a teacher has great power in the classroom and can intentionally form the content they choose to include or omit from their unit and lesson designs.

By understanding ourselves and others deeply, an inclusive leader will be able to bridge differences in order to develop shared ways forward that honours all intersectional identities in one's learning community.

Inclusive leadership styles

Leadership for inclusion encompasses various styles and approaches. The most effective style depends on the individual leader, the school, the wider community, and the leadership task at hand. Some key leadership styles discussed in literature around leadership for inclusion include transformative leadership, distributive leadership and ethical leadership.

For example transformational leadership nurtures the characteristics listed above as it focuses on educational practitioners' professional identity evolvement. Distributive leadership fosters collaboration among and between educational practitioners, students, families, governors, school evaluators and more. Ethical leadership ensures that decisions are driven by socially responsible motives that transform society for good. These three styles represent research-informed approaches that drive inclusion and foster a thriving school environment. To support further learning about each of these leadership styles Table 2 shares resources that serve as a starting point for your ongoing professional inquiry.

Table 2. Leadership Style Resources

Resource	Short summary
Transformative leadership	
Carolyn M. Shields & Kristina A. Hesbol (2020). Transformative Leadership Approaches to Inclusion, Equity, and Social Justice. Journal of School Leadership, 30(1), 3-22. https://doi.org/10.1177/1052684619873343	This article discusses how transformative leadership approaches can be utilised to promote inclusion, equity, and social justice within educational settings.
Carolyn M. Shields (2016). Transformative leadership in education: Equitable and socially just change in an uncertain and complex world (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.	This book explores how transformative leadership in education can bring about equitable and socially just changes in complex and uncertain environments.
Distributed leadership	
European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (2020). Inclusive School Leadership: A practical guide to developing and reviewing policy frameworks. (M. Turner-Cmuchal and E. Óskarsdóttir, eds.). Odense, Denmark. https://www.european-agency.org/sites/default/files/SISL_Policy_Framework.pdf	This guide offers practical advice for developing and reviewing policy frameworks to support inclusive school leadership through distributed leadership models.
Alma Harris (2012). "Distributed leadership: implications for the role of the principal", Journal of Management Development, Vol. 31 No. 1, pp. 7-17. https://doi.org/10.1108/02621711211190961	This article examines the implications of distributed leadership for the role of school principals, highlighting its potential to improve educational outcomes through shared leadership practices.
Ethical leadership	
Nina Sharma (January 2021). Paving the way for Ethical Leadership in Education. National Governance Association, UK. https://www.nga.org.uk/media/ylteeeuz/ethical-leadership-report-final.pdf	This report advocates for the integration of ethical leadership in education, emphasizing the importance of values-based decision-making in school governance.
Jorge Berges-Puyó (2022). Ethical Leadership in Education: A Uniting View Through Ethics of Care, Justice, Critique, and Heartful Education. Journal of Culture and Values in Education. 5. 140-151. https://doi.org/10.46303/jcve.2022.24	This article presents a comprehensive view of ethical leadership in education, incorporating ethics of care, justice, critique, and heartfelt education to unify various ethical perspectives.

In summary, inclusive leadership involves articulating contextually appropriate principles that emphasise care, passion, self-awareness and adaptable leadership styles. These principles help leaders create an inclusive school culture where everyone feels valued and supported, ensuring the safety and well-being of all. With these foundational principles, specific strategic priorities can be actioned in accelerated ways. The following pathways outline steps schools can take to cultivate sustainable inclusion.

Four pathways to inclusion

A shared understanding about leadership and inclusive leader characteristics as well as leadership styles helps to create clarity across the school community and that all members have a role to play in this process. Given these principles which underpin leadership for inclusion, a school also needs to co-construct aspects of the school to strategically move forward in order that inclusive cultures can be nurtured. To promote success among educators and in the school more generally, four pathways to inclusion are presented for leaders to address in contextually relevant ways in their learning communities, these are:

1. Developing shared understandings of key concepts related to inclusion.
2. Designing inclusive policies and implementation processes.
3. Nurture inclusive cultures for diverse identities to grow.
4. Cultivate partnerships to strengthen inclusion.

Each of these pathways has the potential to move a school forward if leaders provide support and opportunities for positive interactions. If any of these pathways are neglected, leaders will find that progress is likely to be hindered. In any school, multiple pathways can be developed simultaneously. Together, these pathways complement and support each other by providing multiple ways to achieve a goal when specific paths may be a barrier to reaching an inclusion-related goal. For example, let's take the example case of Ms. Lee's desire to support Kezia and the Roma community. It is clear that a shared understanding about how best to serve students with Kezia's background or policies, practices or partnerships is lacking and fostering respect and understanding is necessary to support Ms. Lee with achieving her goals. Consider how each of these pathways, if addressed with Kezia and Ms. Lee in mind, would promote leadership for inclusion.

   Each pathway's purpose and importance is explained and examples of practice are provided. These examples should be considered as starting points for strategic planning and development for a school. Through strategic planning and development these pathways can lay foundations so that steps can be taken towards embedding more inclusion in educators' daily practice.

Pathway 1: Developing shared understandings of key concepts related to inclusion

'Shared understanding' happens when the vision and core values in an educational setting are clearly articulated, regularly discussed, widely disseminated and well understood. When staff and students share an understanding about the importance, and key aspects of inclusion, they are able to take communal action in achieving an inclusive and caring environment.

   A shared understanding and commitment to inclusion is essentialas it enables communities to move beyond rhetoric in promoting meaningful participation of all

members, irrespective of their age, gender, race, colour, caste and religion. A shared understanding about inclusion is supported when there is space and opportunity for all perspectives in a school community to be noticed, heard and valued. By harnessing diverse perspectives and ideas, shared commitment to inclusion also leads to greater creativity and innovation.

It is important for schools and school policies to reflect a clear sense of how 'inclusion' is understood and enacted within their own contexts. Inclusion is a multifaceted concept and understandings of inclusion are constantly evolving to reflect broader changes in society and the world. One concept that has played a key role in shaping ideas about inclusion is the idea that education is a 'political act'. As Paulo Friere stated in his 1968 book Pedagogy of the Oppressed, "All education is political, teaching is never a neutral act" (Freire, 1968, p. 19). Decisions about what is taught in the curriculum reflect particular values and ideologies that do not always mirror the lived experiences of all children and their communities. For instance, emphasis on particular historical figures, the framing of historical events, the choice of language of instruction, are all political decisions. Teachers themselves might also make choices about topics that they teach, and how these topics are delivered, that reflect their own values, beliefs and understanding about how societies function. Politics are therefore intertwined with children's learning, and it is important that teachers are encouraged to reflect on their own teaching and learning choices, to ensure that they do not unintentionally marginalise or exclude.

Developing cultural competence among community members and leaders is also important for developing a shared understanding around inclusion, as this promotes awareness of how diverse cultures and values systems can be better incorporated, or at least considered, in planning and delivery. This could be achieved via continuous learning and by providing development opportunities for teachers, including open, constructive discussion of potential bias across all school policies and practices. Empowering community members to participate in development of inclusion policies promotes ownership of inclusion initiatives and ensures sustainability and relevance.

As part of developing a shared understanding about inclusion, it is important to have open dialogue across schools around the importance of justice. This includes differentiating between equality and equity. Traditionally, equality means treating everyone the same. However, recent educational literature emphasises the importance of equity (Hammond, 2014), in other words, a school environment provides resources and support tailored to address individual unique needs, thereby ensuring everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed. For example, providing extra language support for students who might face difficulties with accessing curriculum content taught in the language of instruction is an example of equity in action. This approach, supported by scholars like Ainsworth & Ladson-Billings (2018), promotes a more just and inclusive school community where all students can reach their full potential. According to Cobb and Krownapple (2019),

successful educational equity initiatives require a shared understanding that moves beyond diversity to fostering a culture of dignity and belonging.

Examples of how shared understandings can be disseminated and implemented

A shared understanding of, and commitment to inclusion facilitates action by ensuring that inclusive practices are integrated into the full range of school policies and practices. One example could be around creating a shared understanding of terminology related to gender. When leaders, educators, and community members are well-informed about and sensitive to diverse expressions of gender, this reduces stigma, promotes acceptance, and ensures that everyone feels valued and understood. Practical actions to demonstrate this shared understanding could include the possibility of Alias Careers that legitimate sexual identity in terms of subjective choice.

This second illustration draws on the concept of restorative practice, which is elaborated on in the chapter Restorative Justice in Schools: Implementing restorative approaches to resolve conflicts and build positive relationships within the school community. Shared understandings of inclusion that are widely discussed and practised across a school community can support heightened awareness among teachers, which is critical for acknowledging and addressing instances of exclusion and 'othering' that might not be overtly visible. For example, students from ethnic backgrounds that differ from the mainstream can be subjected to instances of microaggression or feeling disregarded. These experiences are not always immediately identifiable, but they can lead to behaviours that result in traditional disciplinary measures such as reprimanding both groups or the detention of some students from the majority group, which can further isolate the excluded student and might not resolve the issue. A more inclusive approach would be for the teacher to facilitate a restorative circle involving the excluded student and the dominant group. In the circle, an inclusive space can be facilitated for students to feel safe to discuss key values underpinning inclusion and share their perspectives. The excluded student can express their feelings of isolation, while the dominant group might become more aware of the harmful consequences of their behaviour. This open dialogue allows for empathy building and an opportunity to find solutions together.

By establishing core values, creating inclusive decision-making processes, prioritising well-being, embedding inclusivity in organisational practices, and continuously monitoring and evaluating outcomes, leaders can ensure their decisions foster a supportive, equitable, and thriving community. This comprehensive approach enhances individual well-being and promotes a culture of respect, engagement, and collective success.

Pathway 2: Designing inclusive policies and implementation processes

To foster sustainable growth, it is essential to outline a strategic direction that articulates the school's key purposes. A school's mission, vision and values are operationalised

through its organisational policies (Eredics, 2018). Policies provide clarity of shared beliefs, values and approaches which the school adopts to achieve its stated mission. Without this clarity, it can be difficult to achieve one's promise to students and their families and to hold each other accountable. As policies play such an important role in shaping a school's culture and learning ecosystem, it is vital that all policies are underpinned by inclusive values. A well-articulated policy has the power to promote development, change and to sustain an inclusive organisation.

In this section, we highlight two very important considerations in developing inclusive policies: the first focuses on the 'human aspect' of policy: the importance of tuning into, representing and engaging with, diverse perspectives in policy development and review. The second focuses on policy content and external influences.

The human aspect of policies

The first consideration centres around the importance of connections between policies and the communities that they are designed to serve. Successful policies 'speak to' people. They are highly valued, well understood and grounded in shared understanding about why they matter. As outlined earlier, some policies, such as safeguarding policies, may require a higher degree of top-down implementation that may be less open to democratic processes of development. However, effective implementation of such policies still requires a process of engagement with the school community, to ensure that they are widely understood and valued. In the case of policies that seek to promote genuine inclusion, these aspects are particularly important. Policies drive practice, so in the case of inclusion, policies need to incorporate diverse 'voices', carry meaning for diverse groups, and clearly articulate key values (including care, respect and dignity) outlined earlier.

In a school setting, leadership for inclusion requires that the diverse needs and capabilities of all students and staff across the school community are incorporated into policy development and review. Where possible, students should be given opportunities to participate in policy-related decision making. At the very least, the best interests and well-being of all children should drive policy making and review. Democratic structures like student councils or children's parliament can contribute to fostering student leadership and space for learners' voices to be heard.

As well as representing children, inclusive policies should consider and reflect the interests of all members of a school community, including staff, parents and caregivers, and key stakeholders who share responsibility for supporting children and their well-being. Teachers need to understand and 'tune into' the importance of engaging with and embracing children's diverse lived experiences in classroom settings. Support staff need to engage with and understand the importance of inclusive language and a caring environment. Parents and caregivers need to be encouraged to participate in policy development at the school level, so that they understand the values that underpin regulations, pedagogical approaches and other key aspects of school life.

Policy contents and external influences

With regard to the second key consideration, developing inclusive policies in schools involves recognising the interconnectedness of various policy areas, such as gender, safeguarding, and human resources. Rather than viewing these policies as mere compliance checklists, schools should adopt a commitment-driven approach that emphasises growth and development (Wutschka and Lossen, 2022). This shift fosters a culture where policies are living documents that actively support inclusivity and equity. By integrating policies that address multiple dimensions of inclusion, schools can create a more cohesive and supportive environment for all members of the community.

Inclusive policies must also consider external parameters that may be exclusionary, including legal and cultural factors. For instance, Germany ranks highly on the legal index for LGBTQ+ rights according to Equaldex, but public opinion is less supportive (Equaldex, n.d.). This discrepancy highlights the need for school policies to bridge the gap between legal protections and societal attitudes. Schools must be proactive in creating an environment that upholds legal standards while also promoting a culture of acceptance and respect. Understanding these dynamics helps schools to tailor their policies to both reflect legal requirements and address cultural mindsets, ensuring that all individuals feel safe and valued (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2021).

Policies within a school can significantly promote or inhibit progress towards inclusion. For instance, a Language Policy that encourages multilingualism and honours home languages fosters an inclusive environment where all students feel valued and respected. Conversely, a policy mandating the use of English only (or another dominant language only) sends a message that one language is more valuable and powerful than other languages, potentially diminishing the cultural and linguistic identity of students (Blume, Gerlach, Roters and Schmidt, 2021). This can result in marginalisation and potential loss of a multilingual identity as students conform to a monolingual standard. On the other hand, when a school adopts a specific language for instruction, but also explicitly supports multilingualism and welcomes all languages, it aligns with research showing that students learn additional languages more effectively when they can connect new knowledge with their existing linguistic repertoire (Cummins, 2021). This approach will also ensure that students with limited proficiency in their school's language of instruction are fully able to comprehend their rights and responsibilities.

To be effective, policies must be accessible, realistic, and their implementation carefully monitored. Accessibility ensures that all members of the school community can understand and engage with the policies. Realistic policies are those that can be practically applied within the school's context (Cairney, 2023). Monitoring implementation is crucial to ensure that policies are not only put into practice but are also adapted as needed in order to remain effective. By focusing on these aspects, schools can develop inclusive policies that

truly support the diverse needs of their students and staff, fostering an environment where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

Managing and accelerating change

Managing and accelerating change to achieve inclusion requires leaders to strike a balance between driving transformation at a pace that challenges and inspires, while also ensuring that the community feels supported and capable of keeping up with changes (Abrams, 2019). Distributive and transformative leadership are universally acknowledged approaches that will inclusively involve all community members in enacting change in non-hierarchical ways (Gómez-Hurtado, Valdés, González-Falcón, Jiménez Vargas, 2021).

Successfully managing change in democratic ways means providing opportunities for everyone to have a say in decisions that affect them. When community members understand reasons for decision-making, they are more likely to accept the legitimacy of decisions and feel more ownership to act. Transparent sharing of decision-making processes brings more visibility and builds trust. Additionally, when community members have a role in decision-making, they can clearly see future opportunities for participation to act on change initiatives (Santana, Rothstein and Agnes, 2016). In order to ensure that policies are transparent and visible, they may need to be translated into multiple languages and formats, to reach diverse communities. Careful dissemination of policies can enable parents and students to understand the importance and nature of school regulations, academic requirements, and available resources.

Fullan (2000) highlights the need for ongoing monitoring and support for successful policy implementation. It is very important to gather feedback from teachers, staff, students, and families to identify challenges and areas for improvement. On-going collection of key data should inform policy review and development. For example, if school data indicates low scores for students who come from lower socio-economic backgrounds, then immediate actions should be undertaken to understand the needs of those students and to provide appropriate support. Another example could be that a school policy could mandate bi-annual anonymous surveys and quarterly feedback sessions for all teachers to assess school climate and operational effectiveness. For instance, a monthly "Feedback Friday" could be established, where teachers and students provide input through easily accessible online forms and in-person meetings, ensuring continuous and inclusive improvement. For the students, a feedback wall could be established in the school enabling students to provide feedback on important questions that might guide policy development. Once this data is collected and analysed, a summary report highlighting key findings and action steps should be shared with all stakeholders, and follow-up meetings should be scheduled to address any urgent issues and track the progress of implemented solutions. If the findings show inequity, then further analysis should be undertaken to understand what caused it. A thorough action plan responding to the analysis should be made and

implemented. The plan could consist of communicating and then allocating resources equally to ensure that everyone's needs are met.

On-going reflection on how policies are working across the school, and how they are viewed by staff and students, is important to regularly assess policies' effectiveness in achieving an inclusive environment for all students. Furthermore, it is important to review and update the policies so as to ensure that it is aligned with the goals and the vision of the community. More information can be found in the chapter on Policy Development and Implementation.

Pathway 3: Nurture inclusive cultures for diverse identities to grow

Nurturing diverse identities within school communities is at the heart of leadership for inclusion. We use the term 'nurturing' here intentionally, as it reflects the importance of on-going development and growth in valuing and embracing human diversity as a core component of inclusive cultures and thriving classrooms. Genuine inclusion is an on-going process that requires all members of the school community to take responsibility for recognising, supporting and responding to diverse ways of knowing, being and belonging. Schools are places where student and teachers' identities evolve, and addressing the following aspects helps to provide preventative measures that foster inclusive mindsets and behaviours so that curative steps are less needed.

For example, if students are exposed to diverse role models in their curriculum, such as black women as presidents, Roma girls as heroine characters in books and trans-activists as role-models, students will then see possibilities for themselves which can positively inform their future identities and decision-making. These steps contribute to mental health and well-being and reduce biased, harmful behaviour from students and adults in schools. As you engage with the following aspects, consider how these preventative aspects can be cultivated to support the curative work that arises in schools.

Designing an inclusive curriculum

Even schools with little autonomy for developing inclusive curricula, can determine how curriculum is implemented in their own context. Collaborative approaches that incorporate insights from children, teachers and parents in planning, implementing, monitoring and revising the curriculum can lead to curriculum content that reflects diverse perspectives and life experiences, and that all children can connect with.

As teachers plan lessons, they play a key role in determining the extent to which curricula are delivered to reflect and present diverse groups. In many schools, time for teachers to reflect on the extent to which their lessons represent diverse knowledge and learning interests is often limited. Allocating time for teachers to engage in shared planning on a regular basis creates space and autonomy for teachers to work collaboratively in generating culturally-responsive ideas for learning that draw on diverse interests and lived experiences

of students in their own context. On the other hand, teachers who are regularly presented with pre-determined lesson plans that prescribe overly standardised lesson outcomes, can become disempowered. Teaching becomes a process of technical delivery that provides limited opportunity for connecting with and responding to diverse interests and needs.

A range of frameworks are available for providing guidance on the inclusive implementation of curriculum. Some frameworks, such as Universal Design for Learning focus on cognitive aspects of inclusive curriculum. The Index for Inclusion (Booth and Ainscow, 2011) advocates for a spiral curriculum where both locally and globally relevant topics (like food security, mobility and the arts) are regularly addressed through interdisciplinary learning. Other, more philosophical frameworks, provide insights into indigenous world views on education. For example, the African philosophy of Ubuntu, applied to education, emphasises inter-connectedness and 'humanism' in education. Four key principles of Ubuntu can support implementation of inclusive practices in implementing curricula: solidarity and interdependence; coexistence and harmony; compassion and concern, and respect and dignity (Ngubane and Makua, 2021). There are many other educational philosophies from different parts of the world that engage seamlessly with key concepts of inclusion and we would encourage readers to explore these.

Identifying and addressing barriers to learning

While it is important to recognise that schools cannot be held accountable for meeting all children's needs, where there are needs that are impacting on a child's right to safe, secure and positive learning experiences, schools and educational settings must meet this challenge. As Adelman and Taylor (2018) have highlighted, barriers to learning must be understood as stemming from a combination of environmental factors, or deficits, as well as the 'needs' of an individual child and their family.

An interactional view of 'need' that acknowledges potential exclusionary factors is important as it enables leaders to identify where school policies and / or practices might be exacerbating, or creating, barriers. For example, if communication channels with parents and caregivers are only available via a single, majority language, this could exclude parents from linguistically diverse backgrounds and affect their child's access to various resources and / or activities. If children are not able to see representations of themselves in the curriculum, or in everyday practices at school, they are less likely to develop a sense of belonging, safety and / or trust in school policies and procedures.

In earlier sections, we referred to the importance of the leader's ability to 'tune into' the experiences of students, colleagues and community members in order to achieve inclusion. This ability to genuinely listen to, understand and connect, with a diverse range of experiences and perspectives, is key to achieving success in the inclusive implementation of curriculum, and in identifying and addressing barriers to learning. One example is how a school, during the COVID-19 pandemic, addressed a structural barrier for one kindergarten child which subsequently benefited all the children. Multiple entrances were activated and

coloured lines on the floor were introduced to guide children to their class and prevent a feeling of disorientation. The strategy was developed to support the needs of a child diagnosed on autistic spectrum disorder and proved useful in allowing all children to gain autonomy.

Valuing open and shared decision-making

An inclusive, participatory approach to decision-making that is grounded in democratic student leadership practices, serves as a preventative measure for nurturing inclusive spaces where diverse identities can thrive. By involving students in decision-making processes, schools foster a sense of belonging and empowerment among students, which is crucial for their social and emotional well-being. This approach also encourages students to take an active role in shaping their educational environment, ensuring that their voices are heard and their needs are addressed. Research by DeMatthews and Mueller (2022) highlights how inclusive leadership, that promotes student participation and collaboration, can significantly enhance the inclusivity of school environments and support positive identity development among students with diverse backgrounds. These practices are effective in preventing identity-based harm, as they cultivate a culturally responsive school culture where all students feel safe, respected, and valued, ultimately contributing to their academic and personal growth.

Nurture a sense of belonging

Members of a school community experience a sense of belonging when they feel valued, cared for and represented in policy and practice. Fostering a sense of belonging for all intersectional identities is a complex process, as it requires leaders to engage authentically with a range of possible factors that might cause some children to feel 'othered' or excluded. These might include gender, ethnicity, race, language and disability. Children may also experience a sense of detachment if they lack confidence, are made to feel that they are not meeting academic expectations (or 'underperforming'), or do not feel connected to the school community.

Educational leaders and practitioners can support a sense of belonging for all children and colleagues, by building relationships based on dignity, respect, trust and intercultural understanding that nurture inclusive spaces for diverse identities to grow. This involves creating a school culture that values every student's unique background and experiences, ensuring not only that diverse voices are heard and respected, but that this diversity is made visible.

For instance, schools can adopt culturally responsive and sustaining teaching methods, provide professional development for staff on issues of diversity and inclusion, and establish support groups for various identity groups within the student body (Paris and Alim, 2017).

Caring about human resources

Creating a school environment where identities can evolve, learn, and thrive involves inclusive human resource practices. Schools need to prioritise hiring, retaining, and supporting teachers with a diverse range of intersectional backgrounds that reflect both one's learning community and society at large (The Leadership Academy, 2021). Some schools have autonomy over who to hire, forming teaching teams and selecting school leaders. There are also schools that have external bodies, such as local or state authorities, that determine staffing in their institution. Whether a school has the authority to seek individuals who possess both inclusive mindsets and skillsets or not, it is important to intentionally further develop educational practitioners' inclusive mindsets, understandings and skills.

By intentionally cultivating practitioners who value inclusion, schools can build a community where every individual feels represented, respected and valued. Leaders that foster a culture of care need to also intentionally foster well-being among their colleagues and across their learning community. Leaders need to understand that burnout is often caused by environmental factors and is not a problem of the individual themselves, and they can therefore act accordingly to ensure support is available for themselves and their colleagues. The key to avoiding burnout is just better self-care but also having an understanding of the impact of school-based factors on their working practices and taking steps to create a working environment where all colleagues can flourish (Kelly, 2023).

While the effectiveness of self-care is limited unless an imbalanced work environment is addressed, leaders and practitioners can also take steps to maintain their wellbeing. Leaders and practitioners would benefit from regularly engaging in four types of recovery activities during their rest periods: psychological detachment from work, relaxing, choosing how to spend their free time, and doing non-work activities that give a sense of achievement.

It is very essential to nurture an understanding of the importance of emotional, physical and mental health. Some examples of healthy habits are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Building Resilience for Leaders

Physical Health	Emotional Health	Mental Health
Good Sleep	Self-awareness: Reflection through journaling	Psychological Detachment from Work
Exercise and balanced nutritious diet	Regulate emotions by managing work life balance	Practising mindfulness

Self-care plays a vital role in nurturing well-being. By enhancing emotional resilience, improving decision-making and empathy, ensuring sustainable leadership, and creating a culture of care, self-care enables leaders and practitioners to support and promote an inclusive and respectful environment effectively. When leaders and practitioners prioritise

their well-being, they set a powerful example and create the conditions necessary for a thriving, diverse community.

Engage in professional learning that values diversity

Professional learning and development are also critical in nurturing inclusive spaces for identities to flourish. Leadership training should focus on developing inclusive mindsets, and encouraging leaders to understand and empathise with the diverse experiences of their community members, particularly those from minority groups (Talusan, 2023). Leaders must also be equipped with the skills to manage difficult conversations on race and other sensitive topics, as addressing these issues is crucial for fostering an inclusive environment (Singleton, 2015). Additionally, managing social change involves more than implementing new curricula or management systems; it also requires a fundamental shift in values that impacts both personal and professional identities.

Creating a continuous professional development culture within schools is essential for fostering an environment where ongoing critical reflection, questioning, and mistake-making are embraced as key components of growth and learning. Leaders in schools can support this culture by implementing practices and strategies that encourage continuous professional development, collaboration, and a mindset that views mistakes as opportunities for learning. These spaces provide a safe forum where everyone can creatively express their thoughts and ideas and where diversity is celebrated.

Faculty development plays a vital role in supporting identity-conscious practitioners. Educators should be trained to affirm learners through identity-centered learning and culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogies. Recognising that practitioners continue to evolve their professional identity development is also essential for leaders. These approaches humanise all identities and honour's each learner's background (both students and practitioners) by valuing diverse ways of knowing, doing and understanding in the learning process.

Identify and address exclusionary practices

To nurture safety for diverse identities to evolve, learn, and thrive, schools must cultivate a critical awareness and affirmation of learners' identities among educational practitioners (Wickner, 2020). This involves recognising and addressing exclusionary practices that cause identity-based harm, such as bullying, violence, and other forms of discrimination. By actively identifying these harmful practices within the school community, educators can take proactive steps to ensure a more inclusive and supportive environment for all students.

Strengthening safeguarding practices is an essential part of this process. Schools need to develop comprehensive safeguarding policies that specifically address identity-based harm. This includes creating inclusive spaces and trusted systems where students feel secure and supported. Additionally, educators should be skilled in equity-centered, trauma-

informed practices, which are crucial for effectively supporting students who have experienced identity-based trauma (Venet, 2021). Restorative practices is an inclusive approach to improving and repairing relationships and social connections among people who are victims or perpetrators of harm. These approaches ensure that the unique needs of each student are met with sensitivity and understanding, promoting inclusive and nurturing learning environments.

Implementing these measures requires a commitment to continuous professional development for educators. Training in recognising exclusionary practices, developing robust safeguarding policies, and practising equity-centered, trauma-informed care are all vital components. By equipping educators with the necessary skills and knowledge, schools can create an environment where diverse identities are not only protected but also celebrated, allowing all students to fully engage in their learning and personal development.

Pathway 4: Cultivate partnerships to strengthen inclusion

Educational settings do not operate in a vacuum. Any agency that has an impact on a student's life experience and well-being, directly or indirectly shapes how a school operates. If students live in safe, thriving communities and have access to resources that support their learning, they are in a better position to fully benefit from, and contribute to, their experiences at school. Successful leadership for genuine inclusion therefore requires efforts on the part of schools to establish strong partnerships with community-based and other external agencies. In this section, we provide three diverse examples of how school communities can benefit from well-established partnerships and networks that connect schools with external bodies.

Schools as community resource hubs

Schools can play a very important leadership role in supporting parents to navigate systems of support that may not be available within the school itself, but are critical for children's learning and well-being. One example of where educational settings could provide important support for children and their families is in facilitating connections with service for children with disabilities and social support needs. For many parents and caregivers, navigating the complex network of government and non-government agencies involved in provision of services for children can be overwhelming. This can be especially so for families with linguistically diverse backgrounds, or families who have little experience of interacting with government agencies or administrative departments. This can result in children missing out on important interventions. In a similar vein, information about government subsidies and provisions for families on low incomes is not always readily available.

Schools that have active and on-going links to local government and non-government agencies that provide such services can play a crucial role in ensuring that equitable

access to learning (through the provision of targeted supports) is available to all children. In Ireland, the role of Family and Community Partnership Coordinator has been recently addressed across schools to enact these important home-school-community networks and partnerships, as part of the newly introduced New Start initiative (Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, 2024). A chapter on Collaboration with Parents outlines more ways to strengthen partnerships with parents.

Identifying and addressing diverse needs

Leaders can also support partnerships by tuning into family's needs and understanding the circumstances of families. This can be achieved by having an open dialogue with families in need and then implementing support services. Needs should be co-constructed so that actions implemented actually address specific needs – those which are not based on stereotypical assumptions about what families may or may not need. Sensitively managing access to services to avoid stigmatisation is a consideration leaders need to be aware of.

For example, a school where the majority of the student population come from lower socio-economic backgrounds has seen attendance rates drop as students feel stigmatised due to the lack of access to clean clothing.To address this challenge, schools could provide a laundry service, free of charge, and equipped with washing machines and dryers providing access to clean clothing and improving attendance.

Another example of meeting the needs of a diverse school demographic relates to affinity groups and organisations for practitioners with marginalised identities where the school demographic may not reflect them. In this instance, developing external partnerships for learning can significantly enhance a school's capacity to support and empower its staff, particularly in addressing gender and racial disparities within educational leadership. While women constitute approximately 70% of the teaching profession, they remain underrepresented in senior leadership positions. To address this gender gap, schools can partner with grassroots organisations like WomenEd, which aims to support aspiring and existing women leaders in education (About Us, n.d.). By providing mentorship, networking opportunities, and professional development resources. Such partnerships can help women educators advance into leadership roles, promoting greater gender equity within the profession.

Schools must also recognise and address the unique challenges faced by educators of colour, who often find themselves underrepresented among colleagues and across leadership positions. Navigating professional environments where one's background is not reflected in the broader community requires specialised support. Affinity groups, such as the Association for International Educators and Leaders of Color (AIELOC), offer vital spaces for educators of colour to connect, share experiences, and receive the support necessary to thrive (About Us, n.d.). Partnering with such organisations can provide educators of color with a trusted space, resources and community they need to navigate and succeed in predominantly white institutions.

By leveraging external partnerships with organisations like WomenEd and AIELOC, schools can create more inclusive and supportive environments for all educators. These partnerships not only help to narrow gender and racial gaps in educational leadership but also foster a culture of equity and inclusion within the school community. Through these partnerships for learning, schools can support all educators, with access to identity-affirming communities needed for them to advance and excel in their profession.

Local contexts

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=639#h5p-51

Closing questions to discuss or tasks

Whether you are studying to be a teacher, a newly qualified teacher or a seasoned practitioner, how you embrace and lean into your leadership capabilities will determine the impact you will have on students, colleagues, families and your whole school community. How will you nurture your leadership capabilities? How will you leverage your power and positionality in a school to make a positive, inclusive difference?

> The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don't have any
>
> (Walker, n.d.)

How will you proactively guide yourself and others to act ethically and with care to cultivate inclusive school cultures, policies, and practices?

Our sample case presented Kezia, a marginalised student in a school community that needed leadership to support a change process to enhance inclusion. Consider Kezia's needs and

the support Ms Lee needed to successfully meet these needs. Reflect on key understandings presented in this chapter and consider:

- How can Mr Schmidt and Ms Lee move forward with their next steps?
- What are some immediate steps that can be taken to support Kezia?
- What are some medium- or long- term goals that are needed to address policies and school systems and structures?
- Which pathways for inclusion should they advocate for as priorities to put into a school's strategic action plan and why?
- Which professional learning and development topics should be prioritised and budgeted for in this case?
- Which partnerships within and outside the school community can be leveraged to support Kezia?
- How can data and systems of accountability support Mr Schmidt and Ms Lee to meet their enhancement of inclusion goals?
- What leadership capabilities and styles do Mr Schmidt and Ms Lee need to activate to address the current needs of the school?

Now, consider the most marginalised student in a school community that you know well. Consider how you can lead others, from your position, to best support this student to access learning and be supported to succeed in an inclusive school.

Reflect on these questions to consider the actions you could take:

- What are practical ways you can foster a shared understanding of inclusion among all members of your school community?
- How best can you develop pathways towards inclusion that meets the most pressing needs of your school community?
- How best can all learners be safeguarded to learn in inclusive spaces that foster belonging and well-being?
- How can data inform the development of strategic priorities, decision-making and action taking?
- How can partnerships be leveraged, developed and/or sustained to support learners who have barriers to learning?

Elevating inclusion in schools is a complex process. It involves the development of mindsets and behaviours as well as systems and structures. Aspects of this complexity have been outlined in this chapter and topics related to inclusive schooling are given more texture in all of the chapters accessible through All Means All's materials.

Each child under our care deserves a leader who advocates for and promotes inclusion. **Will that leader be you?**

Literature

Abrams, Jennifer. *Swimming in the Deep End: Four Foundational Skills for Leading Successful School Initiatives*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press, 2019.

Adelman, Howard S., and Linda Taylor. "Addressing Barriers to Learning: In the Classroom and Schoolwide." UCLA Affordable Course Materials Initiative, 2018. https://escholarship.org/content/qt55w7b8x8/qt55w7b8x8.pdf.

Ainsworth, Larry, and Gloria Ladson-Billings. *Culturally Relevant Pedagogy 2.0: Akshon and Transformative Teaching*. Teachers College Press, 2018.

Association for International Educators and Leaders of Color. "About Us," n.d. https://aieloc.org/about-us/.

Blume, Carolyn, David Gerlach, Bianca Roters, and Torben Schmidt. "Mindsets and Reflection in Teacher Education for Inclusive Language Classrooms." *Zeitschrift Für Fremdsprachenforschung* 32, no. 1 (2021): 33–54.

Cairney, Paul. "Policy Analysis in 750 Words: Carol Bacchi's (2009) WPR Approach," February 7, 2023. https://paulcairney.wordpress.com/2019/10/08/policy-analysis-in-750-words-carol-bacchis-2009-wpr-approach/.

Caldwell, Cam, and Comfort O. Okpala. "Leading with Passion – What It Means, Why It Matters." *The Journal of Values-Based Leadership* 15, no. 2 (2022). https://scholar.valpo.edu/jvbl/vol15/iss2/9/.

Cobb, Floyd, and John Krownapple. *Belonging Through a Culture of Dignity*. Mimi & Todd Press, Inc., 2019.

Cook-Sather, Alison. "Respecting Voices: How the Co-Creation of Teaching and Learning Can Support Academic Staff, Underrepresented Students, and Equitable Practices." *Higher Education* 79 (2020): 885–901. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-019-00445-w.

Cummins, Jim. *Rethinking the Education of Multilingual Learners: A Critical Analysis of Theoretical Concepts*. Multilingual Matters, 2021.

Day, Christopher. "Sustaining Success in Challenging Contexts: Leadership in English Schools." *Journal of Educational Administration* 43, no. 6 (2005).

DeMatthews, D. E., and C. Mueller. "Principal Leadership for Inclusion: Supporting Positive Student Identity Development for Students with Disabilities." *Journal of Research on Leadership Education* 17, no. 4 (2022): 315–32.

Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth. "Equal Start: A Model to Support Access and Participation in Early Learning and Childcare for All Children," 2024. https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/293503/ec7f976c-294f-4c04-9e20-3035943f2b9f.pdf#page=null.

Diamond, John B., and James P. Spillane. "School Leadership and Management from a Distributed Perspective: A 2016 Retrospective and Prospective." *Management in Education* 30, no. 4 (2016): 147–54.

Dimmock, Clive. *Leadership, Capacity Building and School Improvement: Concepts, Themes*

and Impact. Routledge, 2011.

Eredics, Nicole. *Inclusion in Action: Practical Strategies to Modify Your Curriculum*. 5th ed. Brookes Publishing Company, 2018.

European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education. "Key Principles – Supporting Policy Development and Implementation for Inclusive Education." Edited by V. J. Donnelly and A. Watkins. Odense, Denmark, 2021.

Fisher, B., and J. Tronto. "Towards a Feminist Theory of Care." In *Circles of Care: Work and Identity in Women's Lives*, edited by E. Abel and M. Nelson. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990.

Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Seabury Press, 1970.

Ngubane, Nomlaungelo, and Manyane Makua. "Ubuntu Pedagogy – Transforming Educational Practices in South Africa Through an African Philosophy: From Theory to Practice." *Inkanyiso: Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 13, no. 1 (2021): 1–12.

Paris, Django, and H. Samy Alim. *Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies: Teaching and Learning for Justice in a Changing World*. Teachers College Press, 2017.

Quaglia, Russell J., and Michael J. Corso. "Principal Leadership," 2014. https://quagliainstitute.org/uploads/legacy/Principal_Leadership__Quaglia__Corso.pdf.

Rodriguez, Rosana G., and Abelardo Villarreal. "Promoting Student Leadership on Campus – Creating a Culture of Engagement." IDRA Newsletter, 2003. https://www.idra.org/resource-center/promoting-student-leadership-on-campus/.

Rudduck, Jean. "Student Voice, Student Engagement, and School Reform." In *International Handbook of Student Experience in Elementary and Secondary School*, edited by D. Thiessen and A. Cook-Sather, 587–610. Springer, 2007. https://doi.org/10.1007/1-4020-3367-2_23.

Santana, Luz, Dan Rothstein, and Agnes Bain. *Partnering with Parents to Ask the Right Questions: A Powerful Strategy for Strengthening School-Family Partnerships*. ASSN for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2016.

Sealey-Ruiz, Yolanda. "An Archaeology of Self of Our Times: Another Talk to Teachers." *English Journal* 111, no. 5 (2022). https://doi.org/10.58680/ej202231819.

Singleton, Glenn E. *Courageous Conversations About Race: A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Schools*. Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin, A SAGE Company, 2015.

Talusan, Liza A. *The Identity-Conscious Educator: Building Habits & Skills for a More Inclusive School*. Hawker Brownlow Education, 2023.

The Leadership Academy. "School System Equity Self-Assessment," 2021. www.leadershipacademy.org/resources/school-system-equity-seif-assessment/.

Venet, A. *Equity-Centered Trauma-Informed Education*. W. W. Norton & Company, 2021.

Walker, A. "The Most Common Way People Give Up Their Power Is by Thinking They Don't Have Any [Quote]," n.d. https://alicewalkersgarden.com.

Wickner, Daniel. "Entrust Students with Their Own Identities," August 14, 2020. https://schoolrubric.com/entrust-students-with-their-own-identities/.

WomenEd. "About Us," n.d. https://womened.com/.

Wutschka, Karsten, and Karin Lossen. "Promoting Commitment: The Influence of School Culture and Work-Related Emotional Variables on the Affective Commitment of Teachers at German All-Day Schools." *International Journal for Research on Extended Education* 10, no. 1 (2022): 19–40.

About the authors

Angeline Aow

Angeline is an international educator, author, consultant and pedagogical leader. She has undertaken multiple roles within schools, as a teacher, curriculum coordinator, accreditation coordinator and professional learning and development coordinator. Angeline is an advocate of inclusion, coaching, concept-driven learning and teaching and contributes as an active citizen on social justice issues through her role as a country network leader of WomenEdDE, facilitator of the Humanising Pedagogy Committee of the International Schools Anti-discrimination Task Force and work with the Council of International Schools. Her book, Becoming a Totally Inclusive School: a Guide for Teachers and School Leaders was published by Routledge in November, 2022.

Bhuvan Israni

Bhuvan works as an Assistant Lecturer at Technological University Dublin. Before joining Technological University Dublin, she worked at DBS, ECBM, and IBAT colleges in Ireland. She holds a Bachelor's (Hons) and a Master's degree in Psychology, both with first-class honours, and is currently completing her doctorate.

With over five years of experience as a Special Educational Needs (SEN) teacher in India and Ireland, Bhuvan is deeply passionate about Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI). Her research in this field has been featured at both national and international conferences. A strong advocate for continuous professional development (CPD), she is actively engaged in advancing her academic and professional journey.

Bhuvan has contributed multiple publications to RTE Brainstorm and maintains an active ResearchGate profile, where her work continues to make a meaningful impact.

Emma Pearson

Emma Pearson works in the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education at Maynooth University in Dublin. Her research and outreach work centres around understanding and documenting the perspectives and experiences of children and families from under-represented communities. During the past

15 years, she has worked with a range of international, regional and national government and non-government early childhood agencies (including UNICEF, UNESCO, Plan International and the UK Department for International Development / FCDO) to advocate for policies that promote community-centred, equitable access to early childhood education and development supports.

Heidrun Demo

Her work centers on equity in education, with a particular focus on supporting diverse learners, fostering inclusive teaching practices, and driving inclusive school development. She is deeply involved in research and teacher training, dedicated to creating and sustaining inclusive learning environments.

SCHOOL ASSESSMENT IN AN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION SYSTEM - DO WE MEASURE WHAT WE VALUE OR DO WE VALUE WHAT WE CAN MEASURE?

Vana Chiou; Catherine Reid; Leslie-Ann Webster; and Merve Ayvalli Karagoz

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://book.all-means-all.education/ ama-2025-en/?p=667#oembed-1

Example Case

A school in a neighbourhood wants to build an inclusive educational environment. The school wants to promote inclusive education through recognising and celebrating the diversity of young people and staff. For example, it has made significant steps to organise its physical environment for facilitating access for all. Teachers use a variety of teaching and assessment strategies, depending on students' unique needs and preferences.Through a variety of activities it aims to support the socio-emotional needs of the students and to enhance its connections and collaborations with families and communities. The national education authority has issued a policy requirement for schools to engage in internal assessment. The school is in front of a big challenge. How to organise an assessment process that will be aligned with its priorities? Which are the important voices that should be heard in the context of its assessment? How to collect the data? How to analyse them? In which ways should these results help the school to reflect on its practices?

In this chapter you will find the answers to the following questions:

1. What are the core principles of inclusive education, and how do they relate to system/school assessment?
2. Which steps are necessary to assess inclusive education?
3. How can system/school assessment be designed to promote inclusive education?
4. How can school assessment promote social justice and equity in education?
5. What is the role of stakeholders (teachers, students, parents, policymakers) in system/school assessment for inclusive education?
6. How can technology be leveraged to support system/school assessment in inclusive education settings?

Introduction to Topic

This section will explain why we have focused on school-level assessment of inclusion. We will discuss different approaches to school assessment and how they can support inclusive practice in the light of diverse understandings of inclusion across schools and countries. We will show why assessments designed and conducted by individual school communities can be particularly effective in supporting inclusive practice.

This chapter will support schools to reflect on why evaluation might support their inclusive practice, what key areas they might wish to explore, what indicators of inclusive practice might be used within particular key areas, and how effective school system assessment might be explored through an action research model. We believe teachers are "'meaning makers'; they bring creativity and commitment" (Ball et al., 2012) to the work of envisioning, enacting and assessing inclusive practice. Our chapter will support school communities in developing forms of assessment that reflect their values of inclusion, in planning assessment that help school communities to answer questions that are important and meaningful for them (drawing on resources like the Index for Inclusion (Ainscow & Booth, 2002), the Framework for Inclusion (Scottish Universities Inclusion Group, 2022) and the many resources available through the UN and the EU in collecting and analysing useful data and – most importantly – in putting this new information to work in improving inclusive practice in schools.

Types of assessment

There are many types of assessment associated with schools, some of which are very familiar to teachers and learners, and others which can seem more distant and – perhaps – less relevant to the everyday work of teaching and learning.

Many teachers are familiar with individual level assessment. This can be assessing pupils' attainment through formative and summative assessment, or identifying various learning differences such as dyslexia. Individual level assessment is a hugely important part of inclusive practice – how can assessment be made more accessible for individual pupils? How can identification be used equitably and fairly to support pupils' learning? There are also some important questions about whether identification practices can reproduce existing social inequalities. For example, Holmqvist (2020) describes how identification of dyslexia was used to support the attainment of pupils in an elite school in Sweden. Likewise, some groups (particularly affluent young people) may be more likely to be identified as gifted than other equally gifted young people (Ambrose, 2013). Schools do not always find it easy to recognise high ability in all. Looking beyond the individual level of assessment could help us to recognise – and perhaps change – patterns of educational injustice.

Another form of assessment familiar in many education systems is top-down assessment, from local educational authorities or national governments. This kind of assessment can allow for schools to be compared to each other within a particular education authority or country. This kind of comparison can be very valuable when engaged in international comparisons and when considering national policies in relation to international frameworks produced by bodies such as UNESCO, but it can also have some drawbacks. There are some particular methodological challenges when attempting to assess inclusion internationally, including varying approaches to identification, assessment and support, alongside definitional differences (D'Alessio and Watkins, 2009). Even within one particular country, schools could be assessed on national measures which do not necessarily match their own local concerns or challenges. This kind of assessment can also often be quite time consuming. For example, in Scotland the "How Good Is Our School" (HGIOS) document is 69 pages long and includes 15 sections, each of which is further broken down into multiple themes, illustrations and lists of features of effective practice and challenge questions (Education Scotland, 2015). This exhaustive approach to school assessment can make quite high demands on teacher time, and consume resources which might otherwise have been used in teaching and learning. But there are also other concerns. There is a danger that top down assessment such as HGIOS can also change school community practices and even values – schools can end up focusing on meeting the demands of the external assessment and national policy rather than focusing on the enactment of their own values (Ball et al., 2012).

International assessments are one of the most prestigious forms of educational

assessment, and PISA results will often make national news (Picken, 2023). For example, PISA 2018 Results (Vol. V) (2020) examines, school polices and practices in a relations to performing materials and school staff and different types of assessment. However, there are some questions around PISA and inclusive education. PISA has historically extremely low rates of participation for young people identified as having special educational needs (SEN). LeRoy et al. (2019) report historical rates of inclusion for young people with SEN as being below 3%. The PISA rules also allow for (and even require) the exclusion of some young people (Guez et al., 2024), permitting exclusions of up to 5% of the population. These levels of exclusion are not a good match with how SEN is understood in many countries, which can lead to much higher numbers of pupils identified as having additional support needs. For example, in 2022 40.1% of Scottish secondary pupils (aged 11-18) were identified as having additional needs (Scottish Parliament Education, Children and Young People Committee, 2024).

It is also possible that some nations may inappropriately exclude large numbers of young people. PISA has many rules about how many young people can be excluded from testing, how many must be included and how many schools must respond to tests. These can be misunderstood and misapplied by testers, and results can differ from requirements without questions necessarily being raised by the OECD (Andersson & Sandgren Massih, 2023). There are also more fundamental questions which can be raised about the validity of international comparisons. Given the unique history and context, resource availability and cultural attitudes to education in different systems, is it meaningful to use the same metrics to assess them? Kamens (2013) criticises the idea that 'a school is a school is a school', that all schools are fundamentally the same and that the same metrics may be used to evaluate them, no matter their context.

In any case, external evaluation provides valuable data and feedback to educational institutions, which can contribute to enhancing inclusion in schools through reflective and improvement practices.

Finally, teacher evaluation is another type of evaluation taking place within school. Although models of teacher evaluation are significantly differentiated across different education systems due to diverse educational philosophies and legislation frameworks, teacher evaluation generally refers to the process of assessing the teaching effectiveness of educators that was found to be improved after evaluation procedures (Taylor & Tyler, 2012). One main objective of teacher performance evaluations is to enhance the learning experience for students, and on these premises, teachers evaluation can be used as a valuable source for identifying factors that may affect inclusion-related issues in schools such as challenges faced, need identification, and so on.

School communities and assessment

While we acknowledge that all these approaches to assessment can be very useful, we are going to focus on how school communities assess themselves and their systems in terms of inclusion. In particular, we will show how teachers can use this kind of meaningful and specific assessment to improve their inclusive practice using teacher enquiry (Alves et al., 2024). However, we are not going to dictate one form of assessment that should be used in every school as what counts as meaningful assessment – and how we understand inclusion – can vary from practitioner to practitioner, and from school to school.

We define school assessment as an enquiry undertaken by a school community to understand and improve some aspect of their practice – in this case, inclusion. School community members such as learners, teachers, families and communities will work together towards a shared understanding of an educational value, creating an environment which supports agency (Biesta et al, 2015). They will plan and conduct an enquiry into how their practice reflects their values. The resulting information will then be used to improve inclusive practices.

The Evolving Concept of Inclusion

Although inclusion has been part of the work of schools for a long time, busy educators may not always have had time or resources to consider what inclusive practice is, and what it can look like in their school. We consider one of the most important benefits of school assessment to lie in the opportunity for school communities to consider and to discuss what inclusion is, and what it looks like in their context.

Inclusion is an evolving concept and has taken many forms in different times and in different contexts (McCulloch & Sutherland, 2018). International definitions of inclusion have exerted tremendous influence, such as the UNESCO Salamanca statement, which had its 30th birthday recently (UNESCO, 1994). The Salamanca statement proposed that all children should be educated in the same schools – schools for all – as part of a movement towards Education for All. This was in contrast to previous approaches to education for children with SEN, which had often focused on special teaching, special classes and special schools (Lewis & Norwich, 2005). Salamanca offered an educational, a social and an economic justification for inclusive schools and, along with other legislation such as the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, 2006), has had a meaningful impact on how young people are educated (Ainscow et al., 2019). Another significant UN initiative is the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 (UNDP, 2024), whose 17 ambitious goals underline a commitment that everyone is included, and no one is left behind. Understanding this international context can be tremendously useful for schools as they interpret their own national and local policy.

The European Union has also shown a long term commitment to inclusive education, including both policy commitments and support and guidance. For example, the European

Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2024) offers support for members on how to implement and assess inclusive education. The European Commission also offers detailed support for policy makers and governments who are interested in using school self-evaluation alongside top-down school assessment to support inclusive practices (European Commission & Directorate-General for Education, 2020).

As well as looking at definitions and guidance from international organisations, school communities may explore other resources to help establish their understanding of inclusion. One important tool is the Index for Inclusion (Ainscow & Booth, 2002), which is a resource designed to help school communities develop their inclusive practice. The Index for Inclusion for schools is available online in many different languages (Index for Inclusion, n.d). Other guidance may be found at a national level. For example, in Scotland, the National Framework for Inclusion (Scottish Universities Inclusion Group, 2022) offers challenge questions for student teachers, teachers, and experienced teachers to reflect on their practice.

Constructing school community understandings of inclusion

While grappling with all these, many definitions can seem intimidating or even overwhelming, it is important to see all of the above as resources for schools to put to work in ways that are meaningful for them. Using resources such as the frameworks, indices, supports and policies above can help school communities shape their shared understanding of inclusive practice. It is our belief that through thoughtful, critical engagement (rather than compliance) with national and international ideas of inclusion, school communities can build a shared understanding of inclusion. Teachers, learners, families and communities can come together to build a strong foundation of shared values to their assessment of their practice.

A strong shared understanding of inclusion can also support schools to determine which aspects of their inclusive practice they wish to explore, and what kinds of assessment would be appropriate and proportionate for the time and resources available. We think it is important for schools to determine their own assessments because inclusion can look very different in different contexts. This can mean national contexts, but we suggest that inclusion can even look different in different parts of the same schools – teachers may understand and practice inclusion in different ways due to resources, teacher education, disciplinary requirements, personal and professional ethics and external pressures such as accountability (Ball et al., 2012). School communities, including learners, teachers and adults in schools, families and communities should be empowered to explore their own values and to understand and assess their own practices, and to plan for improvement.

Key aspects

Inclusive education aims to create an education system that can meet the unique needs of

each student. To achieve this goal, a multifaceted school evaluation is essential to ensure the effective implementation of inclusive practices. This evaluation process can include many areas, but in this book chapter we will address the following five key areas that form the cornerstones of an inclusive educational environment and possible indicators for their assessment:

a. School environment
b. Staff
c. Curriculum
d. Learners
e. Family and community.

A comprehensive assessment of these five key areas allows schools to identify their strengths, identify areas for improvement and ensure that they are on track to create a fair and equitable education system for all students.

School Environment

Assessment of the school environment focuses on providing a safe, accessible and supportive atmosphere for all students. Some possible indicators for school environment assessment are mentioned below.

Safety

Physical safety requires that school buildings and facilities are safe and accessible, as well as the establishment of emergency plans and procedures (Florian, 2019). Emotional and psychological safety requires that students feel safe, respected and accepted, and that the school provides psychological counselling and support services (Sharma & Salend, 2016). One of the important criteria to have in the school environment is a sense of both physical and socio-emotional safety felt by students, teachers, parents and other school members. It is important that all school members feel safe and believe that the school is physically and socio-emotionally safe for everyone. Indicators of the sense of safety can be physical violence, verbal abuse, harassment, bullying, and others. Practices that provide students and adults with a sense of safety from physical abuse, verbal abuse, bullying and exclusion (Darling-Hammond, L., & Cook-Harvey, 2018; Dary & Pickeral, 2013; Hoffmann et al., 2021) are supportive practices that contribute to a safe school environment and promote inclusion within the school (McCarthy, 2019; Shareefa, 2016).

Accessibility

The accessibility of inclusive educational environments is critical to meeting the educational needs of all learners. The physical environment of the school should provide a safe and accessible learning environment for all. The physical environment of the school can be defined as buildings, spaces and equipment (St Leger et al., 2014, Wilson, 2017). The physical environment and infrastructure of schools should be made accessible to all students. It can be said that accessibility refers to the extent to which something is available to everyone. When something is accessible, everyone has the opportunity to use it or participate in it. Accessibility happens when we discover and break down barriers and create opportunities for everyone to participate fully in their schools and communities. For example, something that can be used by everyone, such as an automatic door, ramp or wide corridor, is considered accessible. In addition to that, physical access to facilitate inclusive school physical environments should be enabling and enriching for optimal learning and social experiences.When these elements are not present, all students, especially disadvantaged students, are deprived of full participation and an equitable educational experience. According to St Leger et al. (2014) social accessibility is also essential. The social environment of a school is also a composite of the quality of relationships between staff and students. It is about building quality connections between and among all key stakeholders in a school community. Consequently, when the physical and social environment is accessible to all students, they can make the most of and participate in all aspects of school life.

Resources

Resources in the school environment can be listed as human resources, physical resources, technology materials, educational materials resources, and curriculum. While physical resources ensure physical access and safety of school members, educational resources support the learning process and provide education that is appropriate for different needs. Effective use of resources is critical to the success of inclusive education. The issue of resources for inclusive education is theoretically intertwined, taking place at different levels and within different academic disciplines, such as policy making, district, school, classroom, students, parents and teachers (Goldan et. al., 2022). When assessing their resources, schools can take the opportunity to identify opportunities and barriers to resource provision, and to think about how best to maximise the resources available to them within their particular policy and funding context. Educational spaces used in inclusive education should be designed in accordance with the needs of all students. These spaces should support students' learning processes while also meeting their physical and emotional needs. However, schools may struggle to access the resources required to create such spaces, and may be required to make choices about what aspects of inclusive

educational space to prioritise. Educational resources are teaching, learning and research materials in digital or non-digital media and provide students with an additional platform for learning (UNESCO, 2017). Areas such as individualised education programmes, assistive technologies, libraries, computer labs, sensory rooms, art and music rooms, sports halls, science labs, multi-purpose halls, and guidance and counselling rooms are critical to the success of inclusive education. However, learning management systems (LMSs) allow students to choose their own learning paths through a course in a non-classroom environment and share information through tools such as forums, e-mails, chat rooms and discussion groups (García et. al., 2009). Consequently, the accessibility of educational resources is crucial for students to have equal opportunities by creating an inclusive teaching environment.

School Assessment Key Areas and Examples of Questions		
Key evaluation areas	Possible indicators	Examples of questions
School environment	Safety	Does the school provide a safe learning environment?
		Does the school have security policies and how are they implemented?
		Does the school have programmes or services to ensure the psychological safety of learners at school?
	Accessibility	Is the physical structure of the school (stairs, corridors, classrooms) suitable for everyone?
		Does the school have arrangements in place in the school to facilitate inclusive education?
	Resources	Does the school have tools and technologies that take into account the diversity of students and are they suitable for everyone?
		Does the school have educational materials suitable for use by all students?
		Does the school have sufficient staff to support disadvantaged students?
		Does the school have library resources (e.g. Braille books, audio books, e-books, digital resources, research centres) available to all school members?
		Does the school have mentoring and guidance programmes to support the education of all students?

Staff

In the establishment of an inclusive school system, staff resources are recognised as a key factor. All staff (teachers, administrators, psychological counsellors, administrative staff, etc.) should be adequately trained and equipped about inclusive education. All staff should recognise the diversity of learners (cultural, linguistic, physical, etc.) and know how to take

advantage of diversity positively in the educational process. Teachers should be able to develop teaching strategies appropriate to different learning needs and use technology and other educational materials to make the classroom environment more inclusive. They should be able to create a positive learning environment and prepare a flexible learning environment according to student needs and should be able to communicate effectively, be collaborative, open and sensitive to innovations. Schools should also consider how they work with outside agencies or school staff, such as social workers, educational psychologists and community paediatricians, to meet the psychological, social and emotional needs of learners. In addition, having crisis management skills is another important qualification. Administrative staff, as school members, are also an important part of inclusive education. Staff need good communication and organisational skills. In inclusive education, managers should have good leadership qualities. They should be leaders who set a vision that embraces all students, encourage collaboration, support teachers and other staff, create a fair and equitable environment, empathise and advocate continuous improvement (Hitt and Tucker, 2016; McCarthy, 2019).

Professional development of staff on inclusive education practices is very important. Staff should be able to benefit from professional development opportunities in a fair manner without any discrimination. Instructional leadership is one of the important variables that contribute to the professional development process (Cooc, 2019), therefore the school management should offer these development opportunities to staff.

System/school Assessment Key Areas and Examples of Questions		
Key evaluation areas	Possible indicators	Examples of questions
Staff	Teachers	Do teachers have adequate training in inclusive education?
		Do teachers provide education taking into account the different learning styles (e.g. visual, auditory, kinesthetic) of students?
	Managers	Are the values of diversity and inclusion embraced by the manager?
		Do managers have leadership skills to support inclusive education policies and practices?
		What strategies and resources do administrators use to improve the school's inclusive education practices?
	Psychological Consultants	Do psychological counsellors have the necessary knowledge and skills to meet the emotional and social needs of students?
		Do they have crisis management skills?
		Do psychological consultants have knowledge about bullying prevention programmes and methods?
	Administrative Staff	Do the administrative staff have effective communication and organisational skills?
		Are administrative staff informed about inclusive education practices?
	Professional development	Do staff have opportunities for continuous professional development to enhance inclusive education practices?
		Are the resources for professional development of staff for inclusive education professional development sufficient?

Curriculum

Curriculum is a foundational part of school education, but it can often pass unquestioned by teachers. As working professionals, we can tend to accept curriculum as a natural

part of our working lives rather than critically engaging with it as a document produced by a particular society in order to achieve a particular educational purpose. And yet the work of the curriculum is tremendously complex and interactive. For Priestley et al. (2021), curriculum involves "interpretation, mediation, negotiation and translation, across multiple layers or sites of education systems." This includes both the developers of the curriculum, schools, teachers and learners. Kelly (2009) asserts the importance of the need for teachers to have the tools to engage critically with curriculum "as a defence against the imposition on them of policies framed by amateurs". This is perhaps particularly important when assessing inclusion, where curriculum can be used as a tool to include or exclude groups in society (Kelly, 2009). This section will invite you to explore to what extent your curriculum includes and excludes all learners.

Indicators – Curriculum Content

The following questions, and their accompanying notes, may be helpful when engaging critically with the curriculum in your school.

Question One – What educational purposes shaped this curriculum? Does the curriculum match the stated or implicit educational purposes of the curriculum?

- Schiro (2013) emphasises the connection between educational purpose and curriculum. What are the purposes of education in your context? Are they explicitly stated, or implicit in the curriculum itself?
- Biesta (2009) suggests three purposes for education – qualification (earning examination results, valued knowledge and skills – including vocational skills), socialisation (learning to live in your society) and subjectification (becoming a unique, independent person). Do you think that the curriculum in your context helps school communities achieve these educational purposes?

Question Two – Is inclusion fundamental to your curriculum?

- Does your curriculum address inclusion explicitly? Does it include inclusive principles implicitly?
- To what extent does your curriculum teach learners about inclusion?
- The Index for Inclusion (Ainscow & Booth, 2002) offers some suggestions into how the curriculum can support inclusion – or can exclude young people.

Question Three – Is the curriculum informed by educational research? How often is this reviewed to reflect changes in the research literature?

- In the Scottish National Framework for Inclusion, section 2 (Scottish Universities Inclusion Group, 2022) you can find questions to help teachers reflect on their use of research to support inclusive practice. Consider whether these questions make sense for your context, and whether your curriculum draws on recent, relevant research.
- How do teachers access educational research in your context? Do they have time and resources set aside to support this? Is research engagement supported with practitioner enquiry ?

Question Four – Does the curriculum focus on the histories and stories of one particular group in society to the exclusion of others?

- Does the curriculum include education about historical and ongoing social injustices and inequities such as the history of colonialism or the oppression of marginalised groups due to race, gender, and sexuality?

- In their blog, Johnson and Mouthaan (2021) identify the role of teacher education and professional development in decolonising the curriculum and working towards anti-racist curricula. Does their approach fit with your context? Or would your school require a different approach?
- When thinking about histories and stories, consider whether the teacher collaboration approach outlined by Olsson Rost (2022) reflects your current practice, or whether this could be a model that might fit your school community.

Question Five – Which voices are included in determining the curriculum?

- Is this curriculum: pupil centred, teacher determined, subject discipline centred, assessment focused? Whose voice is included and whose voice is excluded in determining what is taught to whom?

- Messiou and Ainscow (2021) suggest the Inclusive Enquiry technique as a method for making classroom lessons more inclusive, and as a way forward to promote equity. The Inclusive Enquiry technique joins the lesson study approach with a reflective centring of young people's voices. To what extent does your school community view curriculum as a negotiation between learners and teachers?
- If your curriculum is centrally determined, how much flexibility do learners and

teachers in your community have about how it is enacted?

Question Six – How does the curriculum navigate individual differences?

- Must all young people learn the same material at the same time in the same way? How much flexibility is available within the curriculum? What measures are in place to ensure that learners are able to access the curriculum equitably?

- Does your school community insist that all learners learn with peers of the same age, or do you offer opportunities for young people to learn with cognitive peers? How much flexibility does your curriculum have to support learners who are different to their peers? The World Giftedness Council proposed some principles for learners who are more able (World Giftedness Council, 2021) – how would your school community navigate these learners' learning needs?

- To what extent does the curriculum include sufficient breadth and depth to allow young people to make meaningful choices about what they learn?

System/school Assessment Key Areas and Examples of Questions		
Key evaluation areas	Possible indicators	Examples of questions
Curriculum	Content	What educational purposes shaped this curriculum? Does the curriculum match the stated or implicit educational purposes of the curriculum?
		Is inclusion fundamental to your curriculum?
		Is the curriculum informed by educational research? How often is this reviewed to reflect changes in the research literature?
		Does the curriculum focus on the histories and stories of one particular group in society to the exclusion of others?
		Which voices are included in determining the curriculum?
		How does the curriculum navigate individual differences?

Learners

Assessment, as it is known, captures the learners' progress throughout their educational journeys by identifying their ever-growing knowledge and understanding. Additionally, it supports the educators to reflect on and enhance their pedagogical practices. It is considered one of the most powerful pedagogical processes. However, due to external pressures at times, from policy makers, families and educators in some contexts, the social skills and attributes of learners are often overlooked (European Union, 2024). Experiences throughout education teaches us many interpersonal, intrapersonal and life skills. There is a responsibility on educational settings to promote these skills among the learners, so that they have an understanding of the everyday experiences of 'life' (McMullen & McMullen, 2018). However, Zaman et al. (2023) state that both life and social skills are the least focused within educational settings where a strong focus is aimed at the development of deep critical thinking and problem-solving skills. A key component of nurturing and supporting social development skills of learners is the educator.

Within an inclusive school environment, learner assessment remains a critical component that ensures all learners, regardless of their backgrounds, circumstance or differing abilities, are provided with equitable opportunities to thrive and succeed in the learning environment. An inclusive approach to learner assessment recognises the many diverse needs of all learners and places a strong emphasis on the importance of tailored, individual assessments that capture their ongoing achievements, skills, participation and engagements. This type of inclusive assessment not only identifies the progression of academic abilities, but also takes into consideration the social and emotional development of the learners (Nieminen, 2019). Educators can create and utilise a variety of assessment tools and strategies that creates an environment in which every learner can have the opportunities to demonstrate their strengths and receive the support they need to succeed.

Incorporating holistic perspectives towards these areas of evaluation and indicators within school assessment, foster a supportive and collaborative environment that promotes the full potential of all learners. The following indicators, while not exhaustive, may be useful to consider within your practice.

Achievements

A variety of methods and tools can be used to capture the diversity of learners' achievement. (Andersen, 2023; O'Neill & Padden, 2021). Some of them are presented as follows.

- Individual Educational Plans (IEP) to support all learners with diverse learning needs to co-create specific, personalised learning goals to meet.
- Portfolios that have compiled collections of the learners' work over the learning period. This can be showcased throughout the year to support the learner to reflect on

their growth, new and extended learning, skills and abilities.

- Reflections and self-assessments where all learners are encouraged to engage in their own form of self-reflection and given opportunities to foster their personal growth.
- Collaborative assessment between learners where they assess each other's work. This builds a collaborative environment where learners are exposed to diverse feedback.
- Parent/guardian and learner feedback that is taken into consideration and incorporated into the curriculum.
- Reflections and self-assessments where all learners are encouraged to engage in their own form of self-reflection and given opportunities to foster their personal growth
- Formative assessments including observations to see and document learners' progression through group work, quizzes, and class discussions.
- Summative assessment methods to include various paths for students to allow them a fair chance to show what they could achieve.

Life skills and social skills

- Observations play a key component in assessing learners' life and social skills. Educators can observe learners in various environments and scenarios. There are opportunities to document interactions, communication styles, behaviour towards self and others.
- Reflective journals through various written, digital or creative formats that encourage thinking, feeling, awareness and creativity.
- Role-play, when carefully planned and sympathetically handled to strengthen collaboration, knowledge and understanding of learner's responses to various scenarios.
- Group projects that require teamwork, collaboration and communication skills.

Engagements

- Learner voice and choice in the assessment process, having a say in their learning and choosing the methods in which they participate i.e. assignments, routines, creative projects.
- Mentoring supports where learners work in pairs with other faculty, older learners and members of the community to attain guidance, support and encouragement.
- Interactive learning through technology with fun, engaging learning platforms and to extend on the learners existing knowledge.
- Positive reinforcement through recognising and celebrating the learners' progressions and achievements that enhances engagement and motivation.
- Regular check in with learners to discuss progress, social-emotional well-being and

any issues that they may be facing.

- Signposting services for learners who may be or feel at risk of disengagement such as counselling and mental health support (Thompson & Carello, 2022).

School Assessment Key Areas and Examples of Questions		
Key evaluation areas	Possible indicators	Examples of questions
Learners	Achievement	How do we measure all learners' progress?
		Are there alternative assessments in place to capture diverse learning outcomes?
	Skills	How do we assess the development of learners' life skills and social skills?
	Participation	What strategies are used to ensure that all learners participate in classroom activities?
		Are there opportunities for learners to provide feedback on their own participation and engagement?
	Engagement	How do we involve all learners in setting their own learning goals and reflecting on their own learning progress?
		What initiatives are embedded to increase or enhance all learner engagement, particularly those who are at risk of disengagement?

Families and Communities for school assessment

Family involvement remains a key component in relation to a learner's education. Through the recognition of family involvement, particularly within the assessment process, provides excellent opportunities to understand the learner's ongoing development.Theoretically speaking, at the beginning of early childhood education we identify the importance of family involvement through the educational and community systems that are surrounding the child (Rutland & Hall 2013). However, it must be noted that in order to have good engagement with families, strong relationships must be built. Strong relationships are considered a key underpinning to a sense of identity, belonging and part of a community, particularly in creating and fostering inclusive environments (National Council for Curriculum and

Assessment, 2009). Rutland and Hall (2013) further recognise the importance of family involvement and highlight the limitations of their roles, lack of relationships within educational settings.

Henderson and Mapp (2002) emphasise the benefits of parental and community engagement including consistent retention rates and positive social skills. Epstein's six type involvement model highlights how family and community engagement between educational settings promote a deep sense of responsibility and collaboration. These partnerships may further create a more inclusive educational environment where all diverse perspectives are valued, and resources are allocated efficiently to meet the individual needs of all learners. She further states that family and community involvement not only enriches their educational experiences, but also strengthens the social development of the community therefore, fostering a culture of continuous learning and collaborative support (Epstein, 2011). The following indicators, while not exhaustive, may be useful to consider within your practice.

Communication

- Regular meetings and discussions in relation to the learner's individual progress.
- Ensuring that all families receive information in relation to their child's learning through modes of communication in which they can interpret and understand.
- Quarterly information days/evenings surrounding news and updates about the educational setting, trips, activities, parental and community involvement.
- Seeking family volunteering opportunities for further engagement.
- Developing parental committees and supporting shared decision making towards policies, curriculum design and support services.

Connections

- Providing learners with real- world experiences through shadowing programmes where they can attain professional skills and identify career paths.
- Developing partnerships with local businesses for sponsoring, funding, extra-curricular activities and projects.
- Engaging in the design and implementation of community-based projects that ensure involvement of all families and learners.
- Promotion and incorporation of the arts in the educational setting and community to inspire creativity, a sense of belonging and identity.
- Development of cultural events and programmes that celebrate diversity and cultural heritages
- Collaboration with community resources and wellness organisations
- Signposting for family resources within the community that navigates their understanding of the education system.

Engagement

- Designing types of surveys, suggestion areas and questionnaires for distribution to families and communities highlighting key areas for discussion for example; inclusivity, policy, feedback, improvements.
- Maintenance of communication- consistent with families through various modes.
- Focus groups and meetings to conduct with families and community members to attain a deeper insight into enhancing/supporting ongoing engagement.

School Assessment Key Areas and Examples of Questions		
Key evaluation areas	Possible indicators	Examples of questions
Family and Community		How can educational settings facilitate collaboration between educators, parents and staff?
		What methods of communication are used to keep all families informed and involved?
		How is feedback from families incorporated into the decision-making process?
	Connections	What partnerships exist between the school and community organisations?
		What events are organised to foster a sense of community, identity and belonging among learners, parents and staff?
	Engagement	How are families encouraged to participate in school activities?
		What supports are available to help families engage with the educational setting?
		How does the educational setting assess the level of family and community engagement?
		What measures are taken to improve/enhance it?

Process of school assessment in an inclusive education environment

The development of effective school assessment models has received increasing attention

in recent decades. European education systems and many others globally have prioritised the school assessment as a powerful means to accomplish the quality assurance of the education provided. The new trends in school system evaluation do not consider the external and the internal assessment as two distinguished procedures, highlighting them as complementary and beneficial to each other (Brown et al., 2018; OECD, 2013).

In regard to the internal assessment where primarily this work focuses, a recent empirical review (Mason & Calnin, 2020) stresses out the added value of the internal school assessment with respect to the improvements in school quality, teaching and advances in learners' outcomes. In literature, we meet a range of school assessment models (Brown et al., 2021; Cambridge University International Assessment, 2021; Irish Department of Education and Science, 2004; Msezane, 2020; NZMoE, 2016; Patil & Kalekar, 2014; OECD, 2019;Şahin & Kılıç, 2018) that usually are differentiated in their approaches depending on the mission of the school, the objectives, the context of the evaluation, and the legislative frame that guides the process.

Different education systems or schools may follow different or similar approaches when it comes to assessing their systems in regard to inclusion (Aziz et al., 2018; Brown et al., 2021). The process of school internal assessment consists of different phases and each of them play a significant role in its consistency and its quality. Typically, all the assessment phases are meaningful and include various activities that aim to contribute to the successful completion of the assessment process. An overview of different assessment models indicates that there are some commonalities in regard to the basic steps or phases of the assessment. The common phases we usually find are described as follows.

First phase: The planning and development phase which involves the following steps and actions.

1. Identify the focus of the assessment and the priorities. At this first step, it is important for the school to identify what it values highly as an inclusive school environment, and how it thinks an effective inclusive school looks like. This identification of the basic mission and vision of the school along with its priorities set out will build the basis for the next steps of the assessment.
2. Define the objectives. In this step, the school defines the objectives of its assessment which should be aligned with the focus and the priorities of the assessment and what the school values highly.
3. Design the methodology of the assessment. Next, the schools design the methodology of the assessment. The methodology refers to all steps that will be taken to ensure the quality of the process. When designing the methodology, various factors are taken into consideration based on goals of the assessment such as:

- period and timeline of evaluation
- information sources
- areas and indicators of evaluation
- tools used to gather the data
- the process of data gathering, and
- the methods of data analysis.

4.   Define the areas and the indicators of the assessment. The school defines the areas of assessment and the respective indicators that should be in line with assessment goals. The assessment areas and indicators should be chosen in a way that ensures that different aspects of the school are covered according to the school's evaluation goals and no exclusions are applied.

5.   Determine the information sources. Next, the schools decide on the information sources that will be used to derive the evaluation data. In an inclusive environment, it is crucial that all voices will be heard and all stakeholders and members of the school community will contribute to the assessment process. The plurality of sources will support the gathering of diverse data which should be considered in an inclusive education system. Possible information sources could be the school staff (principal, teachers, assistant teaching staff, other specialties working in school such as psychologists, social workers, cuisine staff, cleaners, etc.), students, parents, educational counsellors or institutions, other community members or community organisations that have cooperated with the school. It is crucial for inclusivity reasons the school to take care to inform all participants on time and to ensure that all will have access to the assessment process. If needed, for diversity reasons, the school should ensure that different assessment paths are provided for people with different needs and capacities.Here it is important to note that schools should adhere to GDPR issues as they are addressed by EU data privacy guidance and/or national legislation frames. The protection of the personal data of all people engaged in the evaluation process should be protected by the schools. Data should be used exclusively for the evaluation reasons and anonymity of participants should be protected. To motivate possible participants to take part in the school evaluation, it is crucial to communicate the aforementioned rules on the GDPR.

6.   Select assessment tools. In this step, the school selects the appropriate tools that will effectively contribute to the gathering of the data. Such tools can be interview protocols, questionnaires, focus groups, observations, reports, and others.

7.   Define the assessment moderators. At the end of this phase, it is helpful for the school to have defined the assessment moderators, the people who will be responsible for the assessment moderation and the procedure followed as has been designed.

Second phase: The implementation phase of the assessment. In this phase, the schools activate the procedure of gathering and analysing the data according to the initial assessment plan set out in the planning phase.

1. Gather evidence. Based on the assessment design, the schools deploy the tools to gather data. The data will be selected from all the information sources defined at the planning phase.
2. Analyse the data. Using appropriate methods, the school analyses all the data to produce the assessment results. These results will provide them with evidence on their effectiveness and quality as an inclusive school system. The results will help the school to answer fundamental questions in regard to its inclusivity as well as practices and policies related to inclusion.
3. Document the results of the assessment. Last but not least, the school documents the results in a way that is helpful and accessible to all stakeholders interested in it. These findings can be presented with respect to the objectives set out initially and the basic mission and priorities of the school. The overview of the results should give a clear picture of the strong and weak elements the results revealed in relation to the focus and the priorities of the assessment. The assessment results could be used by different parties and for different purposes including the schools themselves for improvement purposes, central educational or governmental organisations for the external assessment, and by local educational authorities for management purposes or for reporting to higher authorities (EACEA, 2015).

Third phase: Reflection and Action Plan phase. This phase follows the assessment results and comes to add in the next actions needed to follow.

1. Reflect on the results. Following the report of the assessment results, the school should reflect on the findings. Some reflective questions that might be helpful in this stage are: What do the results show? What has been done well so far? What elements need improvement? What did the school expect from the results? What has to be done to improve the level of inclusivity in school? What were the effective strategies so far? Which inclusive strategies seemed to work well and which not? What we learned from the results? Reflective practices will help all schools indepedently of their inclusivity level to problematise and think of possible actions that can improve the inclusion level of the school.
2. Design an improvement action plan. Based on the assessment results, schools can design an improvement action plan, if needed. The action plan should focus on different aspects of the school which need some improvement, ensuring

spontaneously that all participants will benefit from the changes that will be promoted.

3. Put action in plan. Upon the completion of the action plan, the school put it into action. This improvement plan will be assessed following the same assessment procedure as it has been described above.

It is comprehendible that the process of the assessment is cyclical. It starts and ends from the point it starts. It is a continuous process where each phase gives feedback to the other. The assessment process is briefly presented in the table below.

Fundamental Phases and Steps of a School Assessment Model	
First phase	The planning and development 　1. Identify the focus of the assessment and the priorities. 　2. Define the objectives 　3. Design the methodology of the assessment 　4. Define the areas and the indicators of the assessment 　5. Determine the information sources. 　6. Select assessment tools. 　7. Define the assessment moderators.
Second Phase	The implementation 　1. Gather evidence 　2. Analyse the data 　3. Document the results of the assessment
Third phase	Reflection and Action Plan 　1. Reflect on the results 　2. Design an improvement action plan 　3. Put plan into action

Conclusion

The purpose of this work was to shed light on the school assessment in inclusive education systems. Inclusive education is a door open to achieving social, economic and cultural inclusion for all members of the school community and its foundation is a means for an inclusive society (The Centre for Inclusive Education, 2021). From this perspective, the quality of the education, the policies and practices adopted in an inclusive education system can be explored thoroughly via a well-designed school assessment. As Cambridge

Assessment (2021) mentions, the school evaluation is "an essential part of helping schools to understand how effective they are".

Recent research has demonstrated the advantages of school assessment for various areas of schools (Mason & Calnin, 2020) which support them in "establishing an accurate view of their performance against a clearly defined set of standards" (Cambridge Assessment, 2021). It is important for schools to determine the standards that are meaningful for them and do not depend exclusively on external evaluation standards that might not be in line with their priorities and their inclusion vision. Their assessment goals should be defined mindfully in accordance to their focus, mission, vision and priorities. Without no doubt, in inclusive education systems, it is fundamental that a wide range of key areas will be assessed along with the use of a variety of indicators and diverse information sources across the school context. This will maximise the opportunities that all school voices will be heard and contribute equitably to the school assessment as a whole. The design of a school assessment in inclusive environments should adhere to the basic phases and steps, as outlined previously to ensure reliability and validity issues.

However, the question "Do we measure what we value or do we value what we can measure?" is one of the crucial concerns that an inclusive school needs to address in the context of a school assessment. It is important for the school to define at the preliminary phase of the assessment what it values mostly as an inclusive school and what an ideal inclusive school looks like. The areas or aspects that are valued as the most important for its inclusivity should be defined as the key areas for assessment. This process of identification encourages schools to consider the fundamental areas, the information sources and the indicators that are of high value for their mission to achieve inclusion and ensure equitable participation for all school community members. Otherwise, if the school do not define clearly its inclusion priorities during the planning phase of the evaluation and do not determine the appropriate goals of the assessment which should be aligned with its inclusion mission, there are high possibilities to value what the school can measure based on other cases of evaluations or examples or guided exclusively by the indicators of an upcoming external evaluation. In such a case, the school is distancing itself from its goals and ends up evaluating what it can really measure. Such an evaluation can lead to results that cannot contribute to a substantial reflection toward the school's achievements with respect to its inclusion vision.

To conclude, the school evaluation is a challenging but also important process for all schools that aspire to establish a clear view on their accomplishments and their inclusion related achievements. It is a means to reflective practices that can support improvements in school inclusive environments and work effectively with external evaluations.

Local contexts

> *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*
>
> *https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=667#h5p-57*

Closing questions to discuss or tasks

- How can system/school assessment be used to identify and address systemic barriers to inclusion?
- Do we measure what we value or do we value what we can measure?

Literature

Ainscow, M., & Booth, T. (2002). Index for inclusion. Developing learning and participation in schools. CSIE.

Ainscow, M., Slee, R., & Best, M. (2019). Editorial: The Salamanca Statement: 25 years on. International Journal of Inclusive Education, 23(7−8), 671−676. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2019.1622800

D'Alessio, S., & Watkins, A. (2009). International Comparisons of Inclusive Policy and Practice: Are We Talking about the Same Thing? Research in Comparative and International Education, 4(3), 233-249. https://doi-org.ezproxy2.lib.gla.ac.uk/10.2304/rcie.2009.4.3.233

Alves, I., Christodoulidis, A., Carpenter, J., & Hogg, V. M. (2024). Practitioner Enquiry as Lifelong Teacher Education for Inclusion. Education Sciences, 14(3), Article 3. https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci14030268

Ambrose, D. (2013). Socioeconomic Inequality and Giftedness: Suppression and Distortion of High Ability. Roeper Review, 35(2), 81−92. https://doi.org/10.1080/02783193.2013.766960

Andersen, K. (2023). What Inclusive Instructors do: Principles and Practices for excellence

in College teaching. Journal of College and Character, 24(3), 300–302. https://doi.org/10.1080/2194587x.2023.2224578

Andersson, C., & Sandgren Massih, S. (2023). PISA 2018: Did Sweden exclude students according to the rules? Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice, 30(1), 33–52. https://doi.org/10.1080/0969594X.2023.2189566

Aziz, S., Mahmood, M., & Rehman, Z. (2018). Implementation of CIPP Model for quality Evaluation at school level: a case study. Journal of Education and Educational Development, 5(1), 189. https://doi.org/10.22555/joeed.v5i1.1553

Ball, S. J., Maguire, M., & Braun, A. (2012). How schools do policy: Policy enactments in secondary schools. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203153185

Biesta, G. (2009). Good education in an age of measurement: On the need to reconnect with the question of purpose in education. Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability, 21(1), 33–46. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11092-008-9064-9

Biesta, G., Priestley, M., & Robinson, S. (2015). The role of beliefs in teacher agency. Teachers and Teaching, 21(6), 624–640. https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2015.1044325

Brown, M., McNamara, G., O'Hara, J., O'Brien, S., Faddar, J., & Young, C. (2018). Integrated co-professional evaluation? Converging approaches to school eval- uation across frontiers. Australian Journal of Teacher Education,(12), 43. http://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2018v43n12.6

Brown, M., Gardezi, S., Del Castillo Blanco, L., Simeonova, R., Parvanova, Y., McNamara, G., O'Hara, J., & Kechri, Z. (2021). School self-evaluation an international or country specific imperative for school improvement? International Journal of Educational Research Open, 2, 100063. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedro.2021.100063

Cambridge Assessment – International Education. (2021). Education bried: School evaluation. Cambridge University Press & Assessment. Available at:https://www.cambridgeinternational.org/Images/637044-education-brief-school-evaluation.pdf

Cooc, N. (2019). Teaching students with special needs: International trends in school capacity and the need for teacher professional development. Teaching and Teacher Education, 83, 27-41.

Darling-Hammond, L., & Cook-Harvey, C. M. (2018). Educating the Whole Child: Improving School Climate to Support Student Success. Learning Policy Institute.

Dary, T., & Pickeral, T. (2013). School climate: Practices for implementation and sustainability. New York, NY: National School Climate Center.

Education Scotland. (2015). How Good Is Our School? Education Scotland. https://education.gov.scot/media/2swjmnbs/frwk2_hgios4.pdf

Epstein, J. L. (2011). School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Preparing Educators and Improving Schools. Westview Press.

European Union/ Eurydice. (2024). Quality Assurance in Early Childhood and School Education.https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/ireland/

quality-assurance-early-childhood-and-school-education.

European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education. (2024). About the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education. https://www.european-agency.org/about-us

European Commision/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015. Assuring Quality in Education: Policies and Approaches to School Evaluation in Europe. Eurydice Report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Commission.

European Commission, & Directorate-General for Education, Y., Sport and Culture. (2020). Supporting school self-evaluation and development through quality assurance policies – Key considerations for policy-makers – Report by ET2020 Working Group Schools. Publications Office. https://doi.org/10.2766/02550

Florian, L. (2019). The SAGE Handbook of Inclusion and Diversity in Education. In M. J. Schuelka, A. J. Artiles, G. Thomas, & C. J. Johnstone (Eds.), Sage Publications.

García, E., Romero, C., Ventura, S., de Castro, C. (2009). Evaluating Web Based Instructional Models Using Association Rule Mining. In: Houben, GJ., McCalla, G., Pianesi, F., Zancanaro, M. (eds) User Modeling, Adaptation, and Personalization. UMAP 2009. Lecture Notes in Computer Science, vol 5535. Springer, Berlin, Heidelberg. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-02247-0_5

Goldan, J., Loreman, T., & Lambrecht, J. (2022). Resources for inclusive education – impacts of funding and provision. International Journal of Inclusive Education, 1–3. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2020.1821452

Guez, A., Ketan, & Piacentini, M. (2024). Mapping study for the integration of accommodations for students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) in PISA (OECD Education Working Papers 308). OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/ed03c717-en

Henderson, A. T., & Mapp, K. L. (2002). A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement. Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.

Hitt, D. H., & Tucker, P. D. (2016). Systematic review of key leader practices found to influence student achievement: A unified framework. Review of educational research, 86(2), 531-569.

Hoffmann, L., Närhi, V., Savolainen, H., & Schwab, S. (2021). Classroom behavioural climate in inclusive education–a study on secondary students' perceptions. Journal of research in special educational needs, 21(4), 312-322.

Holmqvist, M. (2020). Medical diagnosis of dyslexia in a Swedish elite school: A case of "consecrating medicalization". The British Journal of Sociology, 71(2), 366–381. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12737

Index for Inclusion. (undated). Index for Inclusion—Developing learning and participation in schools. Index for Inclusion. https://index-for-inclusion.org/en/

Irish Department of Education and Science (DES) (2004) School self evaluation guidelines. http://schoolself-evaluation.ie/post-primary/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2016/09/

sse_guidelines_post_primary.pdf.

Johnson, M., & Mouthaan, M. (2021, June 25). Decolonising the curriculum: The importance of teacher training and development. Runnymede Trust. https://www.runnymedetrust.org//blog/decolonising-the-curriculum-the-importance-of-teacher-training-and-development

Kamens, D. (2013). Globalization and the Emergence of an Audit Culture: PISA and the search for 'best practices' and magic bullets. In H.-D. Meyer & A. Benavot (Eds.), PISA, power and policy: The emergence of global educational governance.

Kelly, A. V. (2009). The curriculum: Theory and practice (Sixth). SAGE Publications Ltd. https://go.exlibris.link/gb08SMfC

LeRoy, B. W., Samuel, P., Deluca, M., & Evans, P. (2019). Students with special educational needs within PISA. Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice, 26(4), 386–396. https://doi.org/10.1080/0969594X.2017.1421523

Lewis, A., & Norwich, B. (2005). Special teaching for special children?: Pedagogies for inclusion. Open University Press.

Mason, S. & Calnin, G. (2020). Supporting Successful Programme Evaluation at the IB. Available at: https://www.thinkib.net/mb/embed?mbtest=1&ref=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thinkib.net%2Fleadership%2Fpage%2F32087%2Fhow-is-ib-evaluation-changing

McCarthy, M. (2019). Factors predicting teacher attitudes toward inclusive education. Indiana State University.

McMullen, J. D., & McMullen, N. (2018). Evaluation of a teacher-led, life-skills intervention for secondary school students in Uganda. Social Science & Medicine, 217, 10–17. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2018.09.041

Messiou, K., & Ainscow, M. (2021). Inclusive Inquiry: An Innovative Approach for Promoting Inclusion in Schools. Revista Latinoamericana de Educación Inclusiva, 15(2), 23–37.

Msezane, S.B. (2020). School Evaluation: Approaches, Frameworks, and Indicators. In: Leal Filho, W., Azul, A.M., Brandli, L., Özuyar, P.G., Wall, T. (eds) Quality Education. Encyclopedia of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-95870-5_8

McCulloch, M., & Sutherland, M. (2018). The Evolving Concept of Inclusion. In M. Carroll & M. McCulloch (Eds.), Understanding Teaching and Learning in Primary Education (2nd ed.).

New Zealand Ministry of Education (NZMoE). (2016). Effective school evaluation. How to do and use internal evaluation for improvement. Available at: https://www.ero.govt.nz/publications/effective-school-evaluation/

Nieminen, J. H. (2022). Assessment for Inclusion: rethinking inclusive assessment in higher education. Teaching in Higher Education, 1–19. https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2021.2021395

OECD review (2019) Developing a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system.

https://www.izm.gov.lv/images/aktualitates/OECD_MONITORINGS_PDF.pdf

OECD (2020). PISA 2018 Results (Volume V): Effective Policies, Successful Schools, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris. https://doi.org/10.1787/ca768d40-en.

Olsson Rost, A. (2022). Strengthening teacher networks: Decolonising secondary school history curricula. British Educational Research Association. https://www.bera.ac.uk/publication/strengthening-teacher-networks-decolonising-secondary-school-history-curricula

O'Neill, G., & Padden, L. (2021). Diversifying assessment methods: Barriers, benefits and enablers. Innovations in Education and Teaching International, 59(4), 398–409. https://doi.org/10.1080/14703297.2021.1880462

Picken, A. (2023, December 5). Scottish education performance falling, says study—BBC News. BBC Scotland News. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-67580173

Priestley, M., Alvunger, D., Philippou, S., & Soini, T. (2021). Curriculum making in Europe: Policy and practice within and across diverse contexts (First). Emerald Publishing Limited. https://doi.org/10.1108/9781838677350

Rutland, J., & Hall, A. (2013). Involving families within the assessment process. Clemson University.

Şahin Ş, Kılıç A (2018) School self evaluation model suggestion. Int J Instr 11(3):193–206. https://doi.org/10.12973/iji.2018.11314a

Schiro, M. (2013). Curriculum theory: Conflicting visions and enduring concerns (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications, Inc.

Scottish Parliament Education, Children and Young People Committee. (2024). Additional Support for Learning (ASL). https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/committees/current-and-previous-committees/session-6-education-children-and-young-people-committee/business-items/additional-support-for-learning-asl

Scottish Universities Inclusion Group. (2022). National Framework for Inclusion (3rd Ed).https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/653fc30601a80aefd5668009/65fd9c8e7b644045bcdbdc5f_GTCS_National-Framework-3rd-Edition-2022.docx

Sharma, U., & Salend, S. J. (2016). Teaching assistants in inclusive classrooms: A systematic analysis of the international research. Australian Journal of Teacher Education (Online), 41(8), 118-134.

Shareefa, M. (2016). Institutional and teacher readiness for inclusive education in schools of Hithadhoo, Addu, Maldives: A study of the perceptions of teachers. International journal of scientific & Technology research, 5(7), 6-14.

St Leger, A. S., Lawrence, L., Blanchard, I., & Perry, C. (2014). Promoting health in schools: From evidence to action. International Union for Health Promotion and Education (IUHPE). http://www.iuhpe.org/images/PUBLICATIONS/THEMATIC/HPS/Evidence-Action_ENG.pdf

Taylor, E.S., & Tyler, J.H. (2012).Can Teacher Evaluation Improve Teaching? Evidence of systematic growth in the effectiveness of midcareer teachers. EDUCATION NEXT, 79-84. https://www.educationnext.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/

ednext_XII_4_taylor_tyler.pdf

The Centre for Inclusive Education. (2021). Submission in response to the 2021 Disability Royal Commission Promoting Inclusion Issues Paper. Available at:https://research.qut.edu.au/c4ie/wp-content/uploads/sites/281/2021/06/DRC-Promoting-Inclusion_C4IE-Submision.pdf

Tompson, P., & Carello, J. (2022). Trauma Informed Pedagogies: A guide for responding to crisis and inequality in Higher Education. Springer Nature: Switzerland

UNESCO. (1994). The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000098427

UNESCO. 2017. "Open Educational Resources (OER)'. UNESCO. Accessed April 22 2020. https://en.unesco.org/themes/building-knowledge-societies/oer.

UNDP. (2024). Background on the goals | United Nations Development Programme. United Nations Development Programme. https://www.undp.org/sdg-accelerator/background-goals

United Nations. (2006). Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Treaty Series, 2515, 3.

Wilson, J. D. (2017). Reimagining disability and inclusive education through universal design for learning. Disability Studies Quarterly, 37(2). https://doi.org/10.18061/dsq.v37i2.5417

World Giftedness Council. (2021). Global Principles for Professional Learning in Gifted Education. https://world-gifted.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/professional-learning-global-principles.pdf

Zaman, S., Dar, H., & Arshad, S. S. (2023). Assessing Students' Life Skills and their Sources of Learning. Review of Education, Administration and Law, 6(2), 167–179. https://doi.org/10.47067/real.v6i2.323

About the authors

Vana Chiou

Vana Chiou loves teaching and training future teachers on contemporary teaching methods and techniques. Her research interests include contemporary methods of teaching and assessment, teacher training, inclusion and education. Her published work includes editing books, chapters in books and articles in Greek and international journals.

Catherine Reid

Catherine Reid is a lecturer in Teacher Education at the University of

Glasgow. Her research focuses on widening participation in Higher Education for young people from areas of high deprivation. She is particularly interested in highly able learners and the role of teacher knowledge in education.

Leslie-Ann Webster

Leslie-Ann Webster is a lecturer in Early Childhood Teaching and Learning at Maynooth University, Ireland. She has a deep passion for educating and values the power of transformative education. Her research interests include children and educator well-being, relationships, progressive teaching methods and a specialised focus towards embedding trauma informed practices within educational settings.

Merve Ayvalli Karagoz

Merve Ayvalli Karagöz works as a lecturer at Akdeniz University in Antalya, Turkey. She has a Ph.D. in educational measurement and evaluation. Her areas of expertise include psychometric applications, educational assessment practices, and item response theory. Her scholarly work focuses on advancing robust assessment techniques that enhance the reliability and validity of educational evaluations, contributing to higher standards in educational measurement.

QUALITY DEVELOPMENT OF INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE EDUCATION ON SCHOOL LEVEL

Heidrun Demo; Rosa Anna Ferdigg; Valerio Ferrero; and Veronica Punzo

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=444#oembed-1

Example Case

For some years, a vocational school in a city suburb has been experiencing the drop out of a considerable number of students. Both teachers and school leaders are worrying, but they feel quite powerless to change the situation. The students' population is characterised by a wide heterogeneity. The school leader, the teachers and the parents are complaining about the high fluctuation of teachers and about frequent violent episodes at school. Especially students with lower performances or disadvantaged social backgrounds are often victims of mobbing and, as a consequence, some of them leave school.

Looking deeper at the situation and talking with teachers, the impression is that teachers choose the school only to have a job, with the purpose of moving to another school as soon as possible, because they feel overwhelmed by the challenging context. "I'm really not prepared for such a job, I'm a good mathematics teacher, but I can't deal with all these social and educational problems," said a teacher who applied from another school.

The external evaluation pointed out the low inclusive quality of the school.

1. What is meant by the quality of inclusive and equitable education?
2. Which processes sustain the quality development of inclusive and equitable education?
3. What is the teacher's role in quality development of inclusive and equitable education?
4. How do students participate in the quality development of inclusive and equitable education?
5. Which actors are more important for the quality development of inclusive and equitable education?

Introduction to Topic

In this chapter, we focus on the quality development of equitable and inclusive education on the level of single educational institutions, like a school or a kindergarten. In an attempt to develop a theoretical-practical reflection useful for future teachers, we want to emphasise how the commitment to inclusion and equity should not only concern specific categories, but all students. Furthermore, we see it as a systemic issue: the individual work done by teachers and students in their own classroom needs to be accompanied with the reflection and improvement of school cultures and organisational practices so that the quality development of inclusive and equitable education becomes structural and is understood as a recursive circle.

After having clarified on a theoretical-conceptual level what we mean by quality development of inclusive and equitable education, we focus on processes that can be activated. The emphasis is on the participation of all actors, since equity and inclusion are not only to be understood as aims, but also as approaches that foster the various improvement paths. In doing so, the focus on the students' contribution is crucial: inclusion-development cannot exclude the school's main protagonists. This can be challenging within the asymmetric relationship between adults and children and youth at school. Also, for that reason, the quality development of inclusive and equitable education is a process that has never been completed once and for all, and which urges us to imagine virtuous paths to be co-designed for a democratic education.

Key aspects

Quality of Inclusive and Equitable Education: a definition and a frame of reference

With the combined use of the terms inclusion and equity we intend to refer, as other authors also do (Ainscow, 2020; Florian, 2017), to a broad understanding of inclusion as described in the Sustainability Development Goal 4 of the UNESCO Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. As elaborated in the "Education 2030 Framework for action" (2015) the Goal 4 lays inclusion and equity as the foundations for high quality in education and stresses that all forms of exclusion, marginalisation, discrimination and inequalities in access, participation and learning need to be addressed. This implies the development of democratic educational communities committed to offering to all learner's high quality participation opportunities and differs from narrow conceptualisations of inclusion focusing on the specific social and academic needs of children with so-called Special Educational Needs (SEN) in mainstream settings (Göransson & Nilholm, 2014).

We understand inclusive and equitable education as a process that is continuously oriented to increase presence, learning progress and participation (Ainscow, 2020) of all learners, with a specific attention to those that experience more barriers in the actual school system and are therefore more at risk of exclusion, underachievement or marginalisation. In doing so, we refer to the idea of social justice in education that calls for a constant commitment to ensure that everyone receives an excellent education that supports the development of the capabilities that are indispensable to lead a fulfilling life and exercise citizenship.

The contribution of post-colonial studies (Aman, 2017; Ashcroft et al, 2013; Young, 2020) and intersectional theory (Crenshaw, 2017; Hill Collins, 2019) allow us to emphasise the need to decentralise our gaze and to consider the multiple variables that come into play in people's educational and life paths: the commitment to equity only becomes concrete if we do not give in to compensatory logics whereby there is a norm to strive for and if quality standards are contextualised and not given once and for all (Kyriakides et al., 2020).

The development of inclusive and equitable education is complex and requires, this is our view, a systemic understanding (Ainscow, 2005; Kinsella & Senior, 2008). This understanding implies that change towards inclusion and equity in schools cannot be simplified as rules, action plans, single activities expected to impact linearly on all students' learning and participation. Rather, change requires "social learning processes within a given workplace that influence people's actions and, indeed, the thinking that informs these actions" (Ainscow, 2005: 113). Within a school these processes, as suggested in Bronfenbrenner's ecological understanding of organisations (1979), needs to be activated at several levels: the individual level of teachers and other professionals, the team level of classes or other collegial working groups, the whole school level, up to the level of the

school within the networks of its community. Furthermore, even if this moves beyond the intentions of this chapter, the single school institution needs to be recognised as part of a school system and of a society, that set principles and regulations that can influence – sustain or hinder – the quality development. Summing up, the systemic understanding of inclusive development warns of failure, there is a risk of over-simplified representations of the process and points out the importance of considering several levels of the educational system and their interactions.

For the definition of quality towards which development processes head to, we refer to the Index for Inclusion (Booth & Ainscow, 2011). The tool, explicitly designed for the development of inclusive schools, was firstly published in 2000 and then successfully translated and adapted into more than 30 languages. It shares the broad and systemic understanding of inclusion and equity in education outlined above and declines it in a set of indicators that describe how inclusive and equitable education looks in everyday life in schools. Indicators are organised on three main dimensions:

1. the dimension of inclusive cultures, with indicators related to values and relationships in the school;
2. the dimension of inclusive policies, that comprehends indicators addressing organisational aspects of school;
3. the dimension of inclusive practices, where indicators on the way learning and teaching is organised are collected.

Processes that sustain the quality development of inclusive and equitable education: reflection, research, and evaluation in a participatory pathway

The international community recalls the importance of quality education and training to improve the living conditions of individuals, communities, and societies. The quality development of inclusive and equitable education should be promoted by educational policies and supported by ethical values within schools, school leadership, and teachers' teaching practices. The perspective of inclusive and equitable education, in its broadest sense as a perspective of valuing the differences of each element (cultural, individual, contextual), involved in the educational and social process emphasises shared inclusive values. In other words, the prerequisite for being able to speak of processes that support an inclusive and equitable education is the commitment to certain pedagogical principles and values that are ethically coherent with the idea of inclusion and equity. Therefore, authentic attempts to foster agreement around these common values are necessary for the development of high-quality, inclusive, and equitable education. This can be reached with an open and constructive dialogue among all parties involved in the educational process, including teachers, students, families, and school administrators.

A framework that can help in the promotion of an inclusive dialogue on values within a

school is provided by the Index for Inclusion (Booth & Ainscow, 2011), already introduced above. The work puts forward a set of inclusive values: equity, rights, participation, community, respect for diversity, sustainability, non-violence, trust, compassion, honesty, courage, joy, love, hope, optimism, and beauty. They can inspire and invite to critically reflect on inclusive values and tailor them to their own educational context. In this way, the Index for Inclusion turns into a useful instrument for enabling a value-based school development where every student can experience a sense of acceptance, worth, and agency in their own education.

Reflective and research-oriented processes

The value system described in the Index requires actors in the educational context at all levels to take an approach oriented toward reflection and research for solutions by participatory change. Proceeding in the exploration of the processes that support the quality development of inclusive and equitable education highlights the importance of cultivating an overarching reflective attitude within school communities. Reflective practice is a concept that should be introduced into the operational dimension of the school as it is very important for its improvement (Maksimović & Osmanović, 2018). This means that all actors in the educational context spend time planning and reflecting on what they want to achieve, what the advantages and disadvantages are, what works well, and what needs to be changed and improved. Besides the fact that reflective practice influences the introduction of positive changes in educational practice, it is also a process for developing the quality of inclusive and equitable education. Reflective practice guides the work of the actors in the educational context toward finding the positive changes they want to produce in planning actions for the quality development of inclusive and equitable education (Ainscow, 2005).

Consequently, the reflective process, both during the planning and during the work itself, is directly connected with the pedagogical research process of concrete actions to remove the obstacles that hinder the development of inclusive and equitable education. The research process is not linear as developing the quality of inclusive and equitable education is always something more complex and challenging because each educational institution has its own specific needs and characteristics, its own unique resources and capacities.

Self-Evaluation in the quality development process

Reflective and research-oriented development usually contains an evaluation phase, within schools taking a look at the "state of the art." It is an unavoidable step that needs to be taken for monitoring the achievement of the goals identified during the reflection and research processes. Basically, evaluation, if understood with a formative function, should be oriented towards a quality development of inclusive and equitable education. Its aim is not

to produce rankings or to force competition between classes or teachers. School leaders have a great responsibility to lead the evaluation processes and results in a formative way.

Evaluation can have different starting points. "Concepts for self-evaluation are often combined with external evaluation as a new task for local and regional school authorities" (Buhren in Nevo, 2002: 262). Self-evaluation at school level can be mandatory or not for schools, but usually schools have a large range of choices about the topics to be evaluated, instruments and methodological approaches. According to MacBeath (1999) self-evaluation of schools should be led by a framework based on criteria referring to the essential purposes of education, which involves all parties involved by creating an inclusive climate, which provides starting points and guidelines without being prescriptive and which is flexible enough to use in a variety of contents and ways. In order to develop the quality of a single school or kindergarten, the reference to an inclusive focused framework, such as the Index for Inclusion, is needed. The methodological approach can be quantitative, qualitative or mixed, where the indicators become items for questionnaires or the values objects for discussions within the school community. Tannenbergerovà et al. describes useful formulations of indicators (Tannenbergerovà et al., 2018) based even on the Index for Inclusion and gives a rich overview of selected studies about quantitative and qualitative tools – mainly questionnaires – for evaluating school quality. The choice of the instruments mainly depends on the skills of the teachers in-charge (of course the school can also appoint evaluation experts from outside to develop the evaluation design and as support for the more technical part) or even on the dimension and complexity of the topic that should be evaluated (Simons in Nevo, 2002). An important precondition for a successful evaluation is to conduct the process following a structure like this (Kempfert & Rolff, 2018; Pfeil & Müller, 2020; Stockmann, 2007):

1. Focus on the topic
2. Definition of the target group
3. Choice of the instruments
4. Data collection
5. Evaluation of the collected data
6. Data presentation to the school community
7. Interpretation of data in a cooperative approach
8. Conclusion and derivation of changing measures
9. Evaluation of the applied measures after a while

Participation: the key element of inclusive and equitable quality development

Participation is a key element of democratic and inclusive practice. All forms of participation share an important pedagogical relevance because they are important tools for active citizenship education in a heterogeneous society (Sant, 2019).

For this reason, it is important to reflect on a number of issues, such as the function of participation in sustainable development and the place of schools in educating for participation and thus for democracy (Lysgaard & Simovska, 2015).

The presented reflections highlight that an important characteristic of participation forms and sharing processes is the relevance of the school sphere as a context for participatory action.

The school context is a sphere/place of action for effective qualitative change through participatory practices in which all school actors are "everyday makers" (Bang, 2005).

At the basis of this engagement is the reconstitution of collective identity based on the project of change towards qualitative improvement.

In order to build participatory development, it is necessary to have cultural resources and practices oriented towards constructive interaction in the sign of a reciprocal, non-hierarchical, open-to-listening, conflict-transforming confrontation. In general, a participatory development process is based on an approach of recognition, negotiation and cooperation in which interests and not positions are focused on (De Jong et al., 2019). In a participatory development process, an exploratory mode prevails in order to make everyone open to express their thoughts in order to include the many different points of view involved (Forester, 1999) and to build an active trust constantly sustained in a process of openness to the other, reciprocity and reflexivity (Giddens, 1994).

At the heart of the processes for seeking changes in school practice is the development of a common language and sharing values where members of the community can talk to each other about their practice and experience (Ainscow et al., 2013) in an exchange that, as discussed below, starts at the class level/group level (i.e., in smaller groups, class teams, multi-professional teams, subject working groups) and goes all the way up to broad participatory practices such as at school/organisation level due to the presence of school leaders who are committed to inclusive values and a leadership style that encourages a range of teachers to participate in leadership functions (Ainscow et al., 2013).

Inclusion is a process, an ongoing search for new and better ways to respond to diversity by experiencing how to live with and learn from differences (UNESCO, 2005).

In addition to actively involving teachers, the participatory process encourages critical reflection and a redesign of practices by all actors in the school community. This process begins with a rethinking of specific collegial moments in everyday life (such as various working groups, parents' meetings, student assemblies, and school councils), from which a series of methodological and pedagogical focus points arise. The goal is to improve participation that is based on the quality of relationships and mutual listening while also valuing the contributions of each member of the school community (Hugo Suárez, 2019).

In this way, the participatory process becomes a tool for the continuous improvement of the school institution, fostering the well-being and growth of all.

Students who actively participate in decisions affecting school life may feel more responsible and involved in their own learning process, which can lead to increased

motivation, academic performance, and a sense of belonging to the school. Parents can also contribute significantly to the school by sharing their experiences and knowledge, as well as actively participating in decision-making processes as members of collegial bodies. Of course, administrative, technical, and auxiliary staff play an important role in the school's day-to-day operations; their input into decision-making can help improve the efficiency and effectiveness of school services. Finally, school leaders are responsible for creating an inclusive and participatory school environment by encouraging dialogue among the various actors in the school community and promoting participatory initiatives.

These considerations, apparently trivial but often implicit and responsible for dysfunctional communication and relationships, could be translated into specific attention aimed at building an effective participatory process at the level of the entire school community. These actions could concretely include:

– care in the preparation of events, focusing not only on cognitive content but also on social, communicative, and affective dimensions.

– the ability to identify the most appropriate actions to materially and operationally translate intentions, values, and ideas.

– the ability to show what is done from a pedagogical point of view through documentation and the conscious use of communicative mediators.

– the ability to strategically solicit the motivation to participate in all actors.

The success of this perspective necessarily passes through the continuum in the involvement of all members of the community. In reflection and in the search for attitudes and practices aimed at improvement in the awareness for all that they are part of the change being sought.

The teacher's role in quality development of inclusive and equitable education

Teachers and other professionals working with learners in educational institutions such as kindergartens and schools are in the key-role of modelling attitudes related to inclusive and equitable education in everyday life in their classrooms. The closer the contact and relationship and the longer the time spent together, the stronger is the impact on learners in experiencing inclusion and equity or the opposite of them.

Coherently with a systemic understanding of education institutions, the teacher's role for improving inclusive and equitable education needs to be considered on more levels (Bernstein et al., 2010). At *the individual level* it is important for teachers to develop awareness about their own attitudes, their guiding values, their beliefs and even their struggles related to diversity, but also to be open for developing personal competencies and skills. Referring to the Profile for Inclusive Teacher Professional Learning (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2022), the central areas of competencies can be described in: valuing learner diversity, supporting all learners, working with others, personal

and collaborative professional development, support all learners' well-being and listen to learners' voices.

In a more personal and self-reflecting approach, Kricke and Reich suggest going through a question-checklist (see attachment at the end of the chapter), trying to examine the own strengths and weaknesses for working in an inclusive setting (Kricke& Reich, 2015: 206-207).

The development of new skills and the awareness of "blind spots" in their own daily practice need a permanent reflection on the effects of their actions for quality of inclusive and equitable education. At the same time, the active personal participation in development and evaluation processes at school level is the task of every single teacher.

At *the collegial relationship level/group leve*l teachers that work cooperatively in smaller groups: i.e., class teams, multiprofessional teams, subject working groups, topic-oriented working groups or professional learning communities are addressed. At this level, it is essential that all teachers and other professionals go into dialogue valuing professional and personal diversity and using it to develop reflective and development practices. A target-oriented cooperation needs some basic requirements, such as reciprocal trust, openness to the unusual, the joy of experimenting, communication skills and high commitment (Kricke & Reich, 2015). To improve the quality of inclusive and equitable teaching, formats where the daily work can be reflected, analysed and where new solutions can be developed together through a research approach, can support and develop the teaching quality (Bernstein et al., 2010).

As far as *the school/organisation level* is concerned, there is a need to engage in a preliminary reflection on the role of governance and the most suitable models with respect to quality development of equitable and inclusive education. School governance is called upon to formulate educational policies at school level that are clearly oriented towards equity and inclusion (Karlsson et al., 2019; Ward et al., 2015). Adopting a distributed leadership facilitates these processes (Hickey et al., 2022; Mincu, 2022): the school leader is no longer a "one individual in charge," but responsibility is shared with the school community, who formulate proposals combining the level of classroom life with the institutional dimension of schools. This commitment takes on ethical contours (Peters, 2015) since it involves constructing a vision that is then operationalised and in which terms such as inclusion, equity, social justice are not neutral, but take on a precise and situated meaning. Associating distributed leadership with the construct of ethical leadership (Brown et al., 2005) can be useful in highlighting the need for a shared commitment to the common good (De Hoog & Den Hartog, 2009) that takes into account everyone's personal characteristics, the relational nature of educational processes and the impact that actions and policies can generate. It is precisely the ethical bent of the distributed leadership model that emphasises the participatory nature of quality development processes for inclusive and equitable education (Ahmad et al., 2017; Liu & Hin, 2023): only with the contribution of all is it possible to have systemic improvements.

According to the leadership model outlined here, middle management is of crucial importance. To keep the quality development process alive and permanent, as "into the on-going structure of the school" (Simons in Nevo, 2002: 25), it is crucial to designate teachers or teacher groups at the middle-management level and to delegate the tasks within the school structure. Specific working groups are given the formal role to constantly monitor the quality of inclusive and equitable education (Nevo, 2002). The task is to initiate, accompany and support a school-internal process of development, maybe starting with a (self-evaluation process focused on specific indicators), i.e., from the Index for Inclusion, or even starting with a new school program (see above under "evaluation"). Although the main responsibility for activating and nourishing the process lays on the designated teachers or groups of teachers, the whole school community is in charge to cooperate actively in promoting and developing the quality: Every piece counts.

Students' participation in the quality development of inclusive and equitable education

We see students' participation as a key lever for the development of inclusive and equitable education. If inclusion defines the process of improving all learners' participation opportunities, then listening to children's and youth's voices becomes a concrete inclusive act (Messiou, 2019). The idea is neither new nor original: many studies refer to such examples (Sandoval & Messiou, 2022). At their basis there is the idea of schools as communities where teachers, students and other partners collaborate in a democratic manner in order to constantly improve the quality of their own school. This requires a new definition of roles, both for students and for teachers (Fielding, 2011) as the adults' role strongly influences the actual impact of students' participation.

As a premise to it, having in mind the way power fosters relationships in most schools in western countries, it is important to recognise consciously that the teacher-student relationship is asymmetric. This means that in order to have "student voice" meaningfully involved in development processes teachers' validation and authorisation is required for students to express freely their opinion on the different aspects of school lives and to have the power to actively make proposals for changes that can improve the quality of their school experience (Fletscher, 2005; Robinson & Taylor, 2013). This can only happen if teachers and other professionals in school create a space for students' participation and share the power they have. This can happen in several ways, with students being sources of data, active respondents, co-researchers or researchers (Fielding, 2001).

The fact that it is an adults' responsibility to offer opportunities for participation also implies some risks. As it was clearly described in the popular ladder of children's participation by Hart (1992), adults' power can also lead to children's and youth's voices to be manipulated or to be used in a "decorative" manner, making their presence visible,

but not authentically considered as potential levers for change and development or only listening to what already meets the adults' expectations.

In this chapter, we argue that learners' genuine participation can sustain quality development of inclusive and equitable education from at least two points of view. As a first step, students can give feedback on learning and teaching processes. If evaluation is seen with a formative function, then data collected through evaluation are important in order to understand what works and what does not in learning and teaching. Students can develop learning strategies on the basis of this reflective process, but this is also important for developing the quality of teaching. If students self-evaluate the reached skills and competences and to evaluate the way teaching and learning was organised, they have some evidence on the fact that their offer is (or not) reaching all the students. Interesting examples of this form of participation have been collected in the Students' Voices Toolkit of the three-year project (2017-2020) funded by the European Union 'Reaching the hard to reach: inclusive responses to diversity through child-teacher dialogue' (https://reachingthehardtoreach.eu/pupil-voice-tool-kit/).

Second, students can also become co-researchers for quality development processes. As part of being directly involved in evaluation processes, they can take an active role in the planning of change, working together with adults in selecting development priorities and designing strategies to reach them. A recent research review (Sandoval & Messiou, 2022), identified by means of the analysis of 28 studies highlights a list of steps that are typical for development processes that employ student researchers approaches:

- 1) Initially, learner-centred activities activate and sustain all student's interest for school development.
- 2) Usually on a voluntary basis, but often also on the basis of shared criteria, some students decide to invest more in school development becoming co-researchers.
- 3) Student-researchers are trained.
- 4) Student-researchers collect data in order to evaluate/reflect on the school actual situation, usually having other students as targets.
- 5) Findings are shared within the whole school community.
- 6) Student researchers are involved together with adults in the process of change planning and implementation.
- 7) In very few studies, students are also involved in the phase dissemination of the research experience.

A good example of an approach that strongly supports the role of students as co-researchers, is the Inclusive Inquiry (Messiou & Ainscow, 2020). The approach promotes the creation of working groups composed both of students and of teachers for the development of high quality inclusive and equitable lessons. The group plans a lesson, a teacher teaches it while the rest of the group (students and teachers together) observe.

After the lesson, the same group reflects on what went well and on what can be improved in the lesson. Together, the group aims at planning lessons that succeed in reaching all students. Teachers' and students' perspectives go into dialogue trying to identify barriers for learning and to overcome them.

Thinking systemically: other actors involved in the quality development process of inclusive and equitable education

Teachers and students certainly play a crucial role in the quality development of inclusive and equitable education, but it is essential to refer to other actors involved in this process, not least because they enter into dialogue with students and teachers and make their own contribution to this improvement process. This attention is indispensable precisely because of the systemic nature of inclusive and equitable development (Roszak, 2009; Scheerens et al., 2003), as we mentioned at the beginning of this chapter: a culture of inclusion and equity can only be built through participatory processes that bring different visions into dialogue and find a common synthesis.

Within the school, school leaders play a crucial role in orchestrating participatory processes of quality development of inclusive and equitable education in which equity and inclusion are not only aims but also methods of action (Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005; Jean-Marie et al., 2009). As we said before, distributed leadership needs to be combined with elements of ethical and inclusive leadership (Kuknor & Bhattacharya, 2022; Ryan, 2006; 2007; Thompson & Matkin, 2020): the participation of all members of the school community needs to be co-constructed and planned day by day.

Parents can also be key actors in the quality development of inclusive and equitable education (Anderson & Minke, 2007). They are indirectly involved in their children's school experience and thus can provide important feedback on the level of equity and inclusiveness of schools (Stelmach, 2016). However, it is necessary to take into account the different socio-economic and socio-cultural backgrounds that may influence beliefs and values with respect to these issues (Dusi, 2012; Lawson, 2003): here again, the bringing together of different worldviews is preparatory to the co-construction of a common imaginary that allows everyone to identify with a constant virtuous path for improvement. They are not simple processes: conflict is always lurking, as well as the presence of perspectives that are difficult to reconcile. The challenge of educational co-responsibility, also on an institutional level, is to place students at the centre by enhancing the uniqueness of each one (Daniel, 2011; Yull et al., 2014): families and education professionals have complementary but well-defined tasks, so there must be no reciprocal encroachment.

In a systemic logic, also the contribution of other partners, such as municipalities, local school authorities, health system, social services and counselling services are crucial (Coombs et al., 2013; Gidley et al., 2010; Valeo, 2008). Aspects such as the accessibility of infrastructures and the removal of architectural barriers, the drafting of clear guidelines

and regulations that define inclusion not as something aimed only at specific diversities but at everyone's uniqueness, the planning of structural funding to support schools and out-of-school activities in the planning of initiatives with social impact, counselling support for teachers, students, families and parents, the development of protocols and evaluation tools require the cooperation of the school with other institutions in the local community. Schools cannot manage all these aspects alone, they must become objects of shared, collaborative and participatory planning instead (Bottrell & Goodwin, 2011; Feldman & Khademian, 2007). Particularly interesting in this area of cooperation is also networking with other schools that makes it possible to work in synergy on the co-creation of inclusive contexts even beyond the strictly school environment, in addition to fostering the exchange of virtuous practices on an institutional and classroom life level (Wohlstetter et al., 2003).

Furthermore, universities can play an important role in supporting schools in virtuous paths of improvement in terms of equity and inclusion. They can give schools methodological support, do research with them and not on them (Burton & Greher, 2007; Griffiths, 1998; Walsh & Backe, 2013): methods belonging to the action-research family (Baum et al., 2006; Catelli et al., 2000) are forms of educational research that on the one hand enable knowledge advancement and on the other hand make teachers and professionals protagonists of a sustainable improvement development process (Kyza et al., 2022), in a recursiveness between theory and practice that contributes to the improvement of school life in organisational terms and in terms of students' daily experience (Hine & Lavery, 2014; Mertler, 2019). The synergy between school and university through change-oriented research paths makes it possible to systematise innovations and improvements without them being lost over time (Ainscow et al., 2004; Calhoun, 2002). The process-oriented and participatory nature of these paths supports the professional development of teachers and managers and the transformation of school culture in a bottom-up logic.

Concluding, the role of teachers as members of a democratic school community has been discussed at several levels. Some changes at higher level require a political commitment outside school in order to be in dialogue with policymakers so that education policies are co-constructed with those who live schools on a daily basis (Whorton, 2017). Furthermore, in connection with the need to enhance the students' voice emphasised in the previous section, it would be useful for their perspective to carry political weight as well (Brooks et al., 2020).

Local contexts

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it

online here:

https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=444#h5p-41

Closing questions to discuss or tasks

- Think of your experience as a child in kindergarten or/and as a student in school and list some situations in which you have actively participated in quality development.
- Think of your first professional experiences in school (for example in the context of internships) and list situations you could observe in which teachers were involved in processes of the quality development of inclusion and equity.
- Look at the indicators of the Index for Inclusion (Booth & Ainscow, 2011) and select those that can support the reflection of:

1. the individual attitudes towards inclusion and the single teachers' competence to develop equitable lessons;
2. a class team competence in responding to learners' diversity.

Attachment: Checklist for Self-Evaluation for Inclusive Teachers

Every teacher in inclusive settings should also constantly reassess for themselves whether they are suitable to take on the challenging tasks for themselves and in the team.

The following list of questions may be helpful to check where your own strengths and possible weaknesses lie, firstly for yourself and then in dialogue with the team and others. If all these questions can be answered in the affirmative, then you are fundamentally suitable as a teacher for an inclusive school. If you have difficulties with individual points, these will have a negative impact on the chances of effectively implementing inclusion in your communicative, cooperative and teaching-related activities.

1. "Am I fundamentally willing and open to be an advocate and defender for a diverse culture, by working with families and learners from very different cultural backgrounds, with individual forms and values, with disadvantages and disabilities as well as with talents and peculiarities, by cooperating and communicating with those involved in order to promote and encourage the growth of all and support the growth

of all abilities of the learners? (my pedagogical basic attitude)

2. Are my actions fundamentally designed to be participatory, and can I avoid any know-it-all attitude, even if I may know more than others, in order to work together with the people involved in education and training in my inclusive school to combine existing resources with successful solutions? (my basic democratic attitude)

3. Can I adequately put into perspective my own cultural norms and values of my own socialisation and accept that families and people develop different attitudes, in order to develop a common respectful approach and mutual tolerance within the framework of a democratic culture? (my basic cultural attitude)

4. Do I have the highest expectations of all learners, and do I value the opportunities that each individual learner has? Do I value their efforts and successes in my communication with them and do I help them develop their personal excellence? (my pursuit of excellence rather than mediocrity)

5. Am I prepared to educate myself fully about the diversity of my learners and the current culture in order to bridge the gap between closeness and remoteness to education and to find measures that can help to bring inclusive development and education available to all? (my attitude towards equal opportunities)

6. Are the learners at the centre of my efforts to provide cooperative, communicatively successful forms to encourage all learners, even those with different backgrounds, to find their own ways of learning, to work together with others, to achieve successful results? (my learner-centred approach)

7. Am I prepared to use teaching methods that help to convey topics and contents in such a way that an external subject perspective with average expectations is not taken as the primary measure of success, but rather targeted on the basis of the different preconditions of the learners, which are to achieve their own personal excellence, in order to achieve the greatest possible progress in all culturally relevant areas of learning? (my realistic performance attitude)

8. Do I enable learners to have different perspectives and approaches to learning in order to reach learning outcomes, to present them and to share them with others? (my methodological support approach)

9. Do I ensure that the curriculum is related to the world of life and work and oriented to the learners, connected with their cultural backgrounds and with relevant topics in culture, science and technology as well as with the social living environment? (my realistic learning expectations)

10. Am I prepared to contribute with my knowledge and behavior constructively to a teaching and support team, to adapt to the needs and wishes of others, to creatively create and adopt a communicative, cooperative, helpful and supportive attitude towards all persons in the inclusive school? (my positive team attitude)

Source:

Kricke, Meike, and Kersten Reich. "Teams in Der Inklusion." In *Teamteaching. Eine Neue Kultur Des Lehrens Und Lernens*, 206–7. Weinheim/Basel: Beltz, 2015.

Literature

Ahmad, Israr, Yongqiang Gao, and Shafei Moiz Hali. "A Review of Ethical Leadership and Other Ethics-Related Leadership Theories." *European Scientific Journal* 13, no. 29 (2017): 10–23.

Ainscow, Mel. "Developing Inclusive Education Systems: What Are the Levers for Change?" *Journal of Educational Change* 6, no. 2 (2005).

———. "Promoting Inclusion and Equity in Education: Lessons from International Experiences." *Nordic Journal of Studies in Educational Policy* 6, no. 1 (2020): 7–16. https://doi.org/10.1080/20020317.2020.1729587.

Ainscow, Mel, and Tony Booth. *Index of Inclusion. Developing Learning and Participation in Schools*. Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education (CSIE), 2002.

Ainscow, Mel, Tony Booth, and Alan Dyson. "Understanding and Developing Inclusive Practices in Schools: A Collaborative Action Research Network." *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 8, no. 2 (2004): 125–39.

Ainscow, Mel, Alan Dyson, and Saira Weiner. *From Exclusion to Inclusion: A Review of International Literature on Ways of Responding to Students with Special Educational Needs in Schools*. Reading: CfBT, 2013.

Aman, Robert. *Decolonising Intercultural Education: Colonial Differences, the Geopolitics of Knowledge, and Interepistemic Dialogue*. New York: Routledge, 2017.

Anderson, Kellie J., and Kathleen M. Minke. "Parent Involvement in Education: Toward an Understanding of Parents' Decision Making." *The Journal of Educational Research* 100, no. 5 (2007): 311–23.

Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. *Postcolonial Studies: The Key Concepts*. New York: Routledge, 2013.

Bandura, Albert. *Self-Efficacy: The Exercise of Control*. New York: W. H. Freeman and Company, 1997.

Bang, Henrik. "Among Everyday Makers and Expert Citizens." In *Remaking Governance: Peoples, Politics and the Public Sphere*, edited by Janet Newman, 22-Mar. Bristol: Policy Press Scholarship Online, 2005.

Baum, Fran, Colin MacDougall, and Danielle Smith. "Participatory Action Research." *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* 60, no. 10 (2006): 854.

Berkemeyer, Nils, and Sabine Müller. "Schulinterne Evaluation – Nur Ein Instrument Zur Selbststeuerung von Schulen?" In *Handbuch Qualität Und Evaluation*, edited by Herbert Altrichter and Katharina Maag Merki. Waxmann, 2010.

Booth, Tony, and Mel Ainscow. *Index for Inclusion: Developing Learning and Participation in Schools*. Third revised edition. Bristol: Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education (CSIE),

2011.

Bottrell, Dorothy, and Susan Goodwin. *Schools, Communities and Social Inclusion*. South Yarra, Australia: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

Bronfenbrenner, Urie. *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979.

Brooks, Rachel, Achala Gupta, Sazana Jayadeva, Jessica Abrahams, and Predrag Lažetić. "Students as Political Actors? Similarities and Differences across Six European Nations." *British Educational Research Journal* 46, no. 6 (2020): 1193–1209.

Brown, Michael E., Linda K. Treviño, and David A. Harrison. "Ethical Leadership: A Social Learning Perspective for Construct Development and Testing." *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 97, no. 2 (2005): 117–34.

Burton, Suzanne L., and Gena R. Greher. "School–University Partnerships: What Do We Know and Why Do They Matter?" *Arts Education Policy Review* 109, no. 1 (2007): 13–24.

Calhoun, Emily J. "Action Research for School Improvement." *Educational Leadership* 59, no. 6 (2002): 18–24.

Cambron-McCabe, Nelda, and Martha M. McCarthy. "Educating School Leaders for Social Justice." *Educational Policy* 19, no. 1 (2005): 201–22.

Catelli, Linda A., John Costello, and Kathryn Padovano. "Action Research in the Context of a School–University Partnership: Its Value, Problems, Issues and Benefits." *Educational Action Research* 8, no. 2 (2000): 225–42.

Coombs, Tim, Angela Nicholas, and Jane Pirkis. "A Review of Social Inclusion Measures." *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry* 47, no. 10 (2013): 906–19.

Daniel, Graham. "Family-School Partnerships: Towards Sustainable Pedagogical Practice." *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education* 39, no. 2 (2011): 165–76.

Dusi, Paola. "The Family-School Relationships in Europe: A Research Review." *Center for Educational Policy Studies Journal* 2, no. 1 (2012): 13–33.

Feldman, Martha S., and Anne M. Khademian. "The Role of the Public Manager in Inclusion: Creating Communities of Participation." *Governance* 20, no. 2 (2007): 305–24.

Fielding, Michael. "La Voz Del Alumnado y La Inclusión Educativa: Una Aproximación Democrática Radical Para El Aprendizaje Intergeneracional." *Revista Interuniversitaria de Formación Del Profesorado* 70 (2011): 31–62.

———. "Students as Radical Agents of Change." *Journal of Educational Change* 2, no. 2 (2001): 123–41.

Fletcher, Adam. "Meaningful Student Involvement Guide to Students as Partners in School Change," 2005.

Florian, Lani. "The Heart of Inclusive Education Is Collaboration." *Pedagogika* 126, no. 2 (2017): 248–53.

Forester, John. *The Deliberative Practitioner: Encouraging Participatory Planning Processes*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999.

Giddens, Anthony. *The Consequences of Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991.

Gidley, J., G. Hampson, L. Wheeler, and E. Bereded-Samuel. "Social Inclusion: Context, Theory and Practice." *The Australasian Journal of University Community Engagement* 5, no. 1 (2010): 6–36.

Ginsburg, Mark B., and Sangeeta G. Kamat. "The Political Orientations of Teachers." In *International Handbook of Research on Teachers and Teaching*, edited by L.J. Saha and A.G. Dworkin, 231–41. Berlin: Springer, 2009.

Giroux, Henry A. "Teachers as Transformative Intellectuals." In *Thinking about Schools*, edited by E. Blair Hilty, 183–89. New York: Routledge, 2018.

Göransson, Kerstin, and Claes Nilholm. "Conceptual Diversities and Empirical Shortcomings–a Critical Analysis of Research on Inclusive Education." *European Journal of Special Needs Education* 29, no. 3 (2014): 265–80.

Griffiths, Morwenna. *Educational Research for Social Justice. Getting off the Fence*. Buckingham: Open University Press, 1998.

Guy Kempfert, Hans-Günter, and Hans-Günter Rolff. *Handbuch Qualität Und Evaluation. Ein Leitfaden Für Pädagogisches Qualitätsmanagement*. Beltz, 2018.

Hart, Roger A. "Children's Participation: From Tokenism to Citizenship." Innocenti Essay, No. 4. International Child Development Centre, Florence, 1992.

Hickey, N., A. Flaherty, and P. Mannix McNamara. "Distributed Leadership: A Scoping Review Mapping Current Empirical Research." *Societies* 12, no. 1 (2022): 15.

Hine, Gregory S., and Shane D. Lavery. "Action Research: Informing Professional Practice within Schools." *Issues in Educational Research* 24, no. 2 (2014): 162–73.

Hugo Suárez, Daniel. "Teacher Participation and Pedagogical Research in the Educational Sphere." In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education*, 2019.

Jean-Marie, Gaetane, Anthony H. Normore, and Jeffrey S. Brooks. "Leadership for Social Justice: Preparing 21st Century School Leaders for a New Social Order." *Journal of Research on Leadership Education* 4, no. 1 (2009): 1–31.

Jong, Loes de, Jacobiene Meirink, and Wilfried Admiraal. "School-Based Teacher Collaboration: Different Learning Opportunities across Various Contexts." *Teaching and Teacher Education* 86 (2019): 1–14.

Jong, Loes de, Tom Wilderjans, Jacobiene Meirink, Wouter Schenke, Henk Sligte, and Wilfried Admiraal. "Teachers' Perceptions of Their Schools Changing toward Professional Learning Communities." *Journal of Professional Capital and Community* 6, no. 4 (2021): 336–53.

Karlsson, Jenni, Gregory McPherson, and John Pampallis. "A Critical Examination of the Development of School Governance Policy and Its Implications for Achieving Equity." In *The State, Education and Equity in Post-Apartheid South Africa*, edited by E. Motala and J. Pampallis, 139–77. New York: Routledge, 2019.

Kinsella, William, and Joyce Senior. "Developing Inclusive Schools a Systemic Approach." *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 12, no. 5–6 (2008): 651–65.

Kricke, Meike, and Kersten Reich. "Teams in Der Inklusion." In *Teamteaching. Eine Neue*

Kultur Des Lehrens Und Lernens. Weinheim/Basel: Beltz, 2015.

Kuknor, Sunaina Chetan, and Shubhasheesh Bhattacharya. "Inclusive Leadership: New Age Leadership to Foster Organizational Inclusion." *European Journal of Training and Development* 46, no. 9 (2022): 771–97.

Kyriakides, Leonidas, Bert P. Creemers, Anastasia Panayiotou, and Evi Charalambous. *Quality and Equity in Education: Revisiting Theory and Research on Educational Effectiveness and Improvement*. New York: Routledge, 2020.

Kyza, Eleni A., Adria Agesilaou, Yiannis Georgiou, and Andreas Hadjichambis. "Teacher–Researcher Co-Design Teams: Teachers as Intellectual Partners in Design." In *Teacher Learning in Changing Contexts*, edited by A. Castro Superfine, S. R. Goldman, and M. M. Ko, 175–95. New York: Routledge, 2022.

Lawson, Michael A. "School-Family Relations in Context: Parent and Teacher Perceptions of Parent Involvement." *Urban Education* 38, no. 1 (2003): 77–133.

Liu, Shengnan, and Hongbiao Yin. "How Ethical Leadership Influences Professional Learning Communities via Teacher Obligation and Participation in Decision Making: A Moderated-Mediation Analysis." *Educational Management Administration & Leadership* 51, no. 2 (2023): 345–64.

Lysgaard, Jonas Andreasen, and Venka Simovska. "The Significance of 'Participation' as an Educational Ideal in Education for Sustainable Development and Health Education in Schools." *Environmental Education Research* 22 (2015).

MacBeath, John. *Schools Must Speak for Themselves: The Case for School Self-Evaluation*. Routledge in association with the NUT, 1999.

Maksimović, Jelena, and Jelena Osmanović. "Reflective Practice as a Changing Factor of Teacher Quality." *Istrazivanja U Pedagogiji* 8, no. 2 (2018): 172–89.

Mertler, Craig A. *Action Research: Improving Schools and Empowering Educators*. London: Sage Publications, 2019.

Messiou, Kyriaki. "The Missing Voices: Students as a Catalyst for Promoting Inclusive Education." *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 23, no. 7–8 (2019): 768–81.

Messiou, Kyriaki, and Mel Ainscow. "Inclusive Inquiry: Student–Teacher Dialogue as a Means of Promoting Inclusion in Schools." *British Educational Research Journal* 46, no. 3 (2020): 670–87.

Mincu, Monica. "Why Is School Leadership Key to Transforming Education? Structural and Cultural Assumptions for Quality Education in Diverse Contexts." *Prospects*, 2022, 1–12.

Mockler, Nicole. "Beyond 'What Works': Understanding Teacher Identity as a Practical and Political Tool." *Teachers and Teaching* 17, no. 5 (2011): 517–28.

Needs, European Agency for Special, and Inclusive Education. "Profile for Inclusive Teacher Professional Learning: Including All Education Professionals in Teacher Professional Learning for Inclusion." Edited by A. Lecheval A. De Vroey and A. Watkins. Odense, Denmark, 2022.

Nevo, David, ed. *School-Based Evaluation: An International Perspective*. Routledge, 2002.

Peters, Richard Stanley. *Ethics and Education*. New York: Routledge, 2015.

Pfeil, Patricia, and Müller Marion. *Evaluation in Der Sozialwirtschaft*. Springer, 2020.

Robinson, Carol, and Carol Taylor. "Student Voice as a Contested Practice: Power and Participation in Two Student Voice Projects." *Improving Schools* 16, no. 1 (2013): 32–46.

Rolff, Hans Günter. *Schulentwicklung Auf Den Punkt Gebracht*. Frankfurt/Main: Debus, 2019.

Roszak, M. T. "Systemic Approach to Problems of the Quality in Education." *Journal of Achievements in Materials and Manufacturing Engineering* 37, no. 2 (2009): 751–58.

Ryan, James. "Inclusive Leadership: A Review." *Journal of Educational Administration and Foundations* 18, no. 1–2 (2007): 92–125.

———. "Inclusive Leadership and Social Justice for Schools." *Leadership and Policy in Schools* 5, no. 1 (2006): 3–17.

Sandoval, Marta, and Kyriaki Messiou. "Students as Researchers for Promoting School Improvement and Inclusion: A Review of Studies." *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 26, no. 8 (2022): 780–95.

Sant, Edda. "Democratic Education: A Theoretical Review (2006–2017)." *Review of Educational Research* 89, no. 5 (2019): 655–96.

Scheerens, Jaap, Cees A. Glas, and Sally Thomas. *Educational Evaluation, Assessment, and Monitoring: A Systemic Approach*. New York: Taylor & Francis, 2003.

Simons, Helen. "School Self-Evaluation in a Democracy." In *School-Based Evaluation: An International Perspective*, edited by David Nevo, 81–96. Routledge, 2002.

Singh, Michael V., and Zeus Leonardo. "Educators as Decolonial Intellectuals: Revolutionary Thought from Gramsci to Fanon." *Critical Studies in Education*, 2023, 1–18.

Speck, Marsha. *The Principalship: Building a Learning Community*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1999.

Stelmach, Bonnie. "Parents' Participation on School Councils Analysed through Arnstein's Ladder of Participation." *School Leadership & Management* 36, no. 3 (2016): 271–91.

Stockmann, Reinhard, ed. *Handbuch Zur Evaluation: Eine Praktische Handlungsanleitung*. Münster: Waxmann, 2007.

Tannenbergerová, Monika, Petr Fučík, Karel Pančocha, and Martin Vrubel. *Evaluation of School Inclusion. Mission (Im)Possible*. Münster: Waxmann, 2018.

Thompson, Herb, and Gina Matkin. "The Evolution of Inclusive Leadership Studies: A Literature Review." *Journal of Leadership Education* 19, no. 3 (2020): 56–72.

UNESCO. "Education 2030 Framework for Action," 2015. http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/ED/ED_new/pdf/FFA-ENG-27Oct15.pdf.

———. "Guidelines for Inclusion: Ensuring Access to Education for All. EFA Global Monitoring Report." Paris: UNESCO, 2005.

Valeo, Angela. "Inclusive Education Support Systems: Teacher and Administrator Views." *International Journal of Special Education* 23, no. 2 (2008): 8–16.

Walsh, Mary E., and Sarah Backe. "School–University Partnerships: Reflections and Opportunities." *Peabody Journal of Education* 88, no. 5 (2013): 594–607.

Ward, Sophie C., Carl Bagley, Jacky Lumby, Philip Woods, Tom Hamilton, and Amanda Roberts. "School Leadership for Equity: Lessons from the Literature." *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 19, no. 4 (2015): 333–46.

Whorton, Lindsay. *Teachers' Unions and Education Reform in Comparative Contexts*. New York: Routledge, 2017.

Wohlstetter, Priscilla, Courtney L. Malloy, Derrick Chau, and Jennifer L. Polhemus. "Improving Schools through Networks: A New Approach to Urban School Reform." *Educational Policy* 17, no. 4 (2003): 399–430.

Young, Robert J.C. *Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020.

Yull, Denise, Lisa V. Blitz, Tonia Thompson, and Carla Murray. "Can We Talk? Using Community-Based Participatory Action Research to Build Family and School Partnerships with Families of Color." *School Community Journal* 24, no. 2 (2014): 9–32.

About the authors

Heidrun Demo

Her work centers on equity in education, with a particular focus on supporting diverse learners, fostering inclusive teaching practices, and driving inclusive school development. She is deeply involved in research and teacher training, dedicated to creating and sustaining inclusive learning environments.

Rosa Anna Ferdigg

Rosa Anna Ferdigg earned her degree at Bologna University in Italy and has since had a long career in the South-Tyrolean (Italy) school system, holding various positions such as teacher, headmaster, inspector, and evaluator. In addition to these roles, she collaborates with universities in Italy and Germany on inclusion topics. Rosa Anna is also a consultant for inclusive school development on an international level. Her interests are focused on system changing and development, exploring how people can learn and develop their skills, and how they can contribute to changing systems in an inclusive direction with their individual influence.

Valerio Ferrero

Valerio Ferrero does research in the field of intercultural education, focusing on equity and inequality in schools. He is also interested in community

philosophical practices, on which he also carries out training activities. Before starting his research work, he was a primary school teacher.

Veronica Punzo

Veronica Punzo is attorney at the Macerata Bar. Dealing with the governance and regulation of personal and non-personal data and ethical-legal consulting, her research area focuses on the domains of artificial intelligence and education with a focus on dignity, equality and fundamental rights enhancement and protection.

GENDER AND SCHOOL POLICY

Ayana Pathak; Cennet Engin; Hannah Solley; and Sam Blanckensee

---

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://book.all-means-all.education/ ama-2025-en/?p=647#oembed-1

Example Case

"Bella came out to her parents at age 8. She was born with a boys' name and used he/him pronouns before she came out. She used the name Bella at home for a long time but not at school. When she started 5th class (the penultimate class of Primary School in Ireland) at age 11 she started using the name Bella and girl's pronouns at school as well as at home. She was accepted by her friends and classmates with the help and support of the school.

Bella is starting secondary school in September and her new school has been told about her story and that she is starting school as a girl, even though her birth certificate still says she is male. The school has a lot of questions around how Bella should be treated at her new school. What uniform should she wear? What bathroom should she use? Should her peers be informed of her history? What if the parents of other students ask questions? Are there specific accommodations that Bella will need?"

Initial questions

In this chapter you will find the answers to the following questions:

- How does gender manifest itself in schools?
- How does gender interact with school policy?
- Who and what influences gender policies in schools?
- How can schools integrate gender sensitivity into their policies and practices?

Introduction to Topic

Gender can mean different things to different people, referring to the assigned sex at birth and/or the gender someone identifies with.

For the purposes of this chapter, we will use the World Health Organisation (n.d.) definition of gender which looks at the characteristics of women and men, girls and boys that are socially constructed. It describes gender as the norms, behaviours and roles of women, men, girls and boys, with associated notions of masculinity and femininity. Gender differs from society to society and it changes over time. Gender is hierarchical, and produces inequalities. Gender also intersects with other characteristics such as ethnicity, socioeconomic status, disability, age, geographic location, gender identity and sexual orientation, among others.

Gender is different but connected to sex, which refers to the different biological and physiological characteristics of females, males and intersex persons, such as chromosomes, hormones and reproductive organs. Gender is also connected but separate to gender identity, a person's internal sense of gender which may or may not correspond with sex assigned at birth.

How we look at gender in the education system and the areas of priority differ from context to context. In some contexts, the primary focus is on the inclusion of women and girls in education and the gendered experiences of all students in school. In other contexts, there is a focus on the inclusion of gender diverse students, the interactions of trans, non-binary and gender non-conforming students with gendered policies, and how potential discomfort can be relieved.

What does school policy encompass and how does gender affect school policies?

Policies are essentially a collection of ideas or plans that a group of people have officially agreed to follow under specific circumstances. In the context of education, policies serve as formal documents outlining the procedures and values that guide schools in their everyday practices. These educational policies are designed to create safe and supportive

environments where students can learn and thrive. Educational policies are set at different levels:

Global/international level educational policies are set by the international organisations such as UNESCO (Education for All) or the EU (Gender Equality Strategy). The UNESCO Gender Equality Monitoring Report (UNESCO, 2017), outlines who is responsible for what in ensuring gender equality in schools. The Education for All (EFA) Framework for Action emphasised that "gender-based discrimination remains one of the most intractable constraints to realising the right to education" (World Education Forum, 2000, 6). After all these years, although the context has evolved, addressing gender inequality in education remains a crucial focus of the global agenda.

Macro Level- National level policies are developed by the central governments. In some countries they are the only documents and are implemented by all schools in all contexts. For example, in Turkey, all public schools are under the authority of the Ministry of Education. Private schools are also closely regulated by the Ministry regarding curriculum implementation, rules, and other activities. As a result, decisions related to gender policies are made by the central authority.

At a national level in any country, governments are responsible for formulating and implementing policies that directly affect every aspect of the education sector. For example, policies related to admission requirements, free public school, providing different types of schooling (girls or boys school), staffing, teacher training, admission of teachers and the well-being of students are all national level policies in different contexts.Governments are generally responsible for developing policies related to sanitation facilities, gender sensitive teacher programs, non-discriminatory curricula, regulations and other policies (UNESCO, 2017).

Intermediary level policies are developed by regional governments, city councils, managerial bodies, religious groups and any local communities. For example, schools in Ireland generally have a patron body who makes decisions on policies for all schools under its ethos (see the section on the Irish context for more detail).

Institutional level policies are the school level policies that are related to daily operations of school to create a supportive, inclusive and gender sensitive environment conducive to learning. These include, for example, policies related to creating a positive school culture, operational efficiency to be sure that schools operate smoothly and curriculum policies at school and classroom level. Schools are responsible for respecting the regulations, training teachers and providing a comprehensive sexuality education, developing an inclusive bathroom policy and dress code (UNESCO, 2017). Some district and school administrators might not be aware of the requirements of trans children or lack expertise working with them. As a result, they might not think to create a policy in the school to address the needs of young people who identify as transgender, non-binary, or gender non-conforming (Meyer & Keenan, 2018).

This chapter will focus on gender and how it interacts with school policy. The way

policies are written and implemented at a school level has an impact on learners' and teachers' experiences of gender and the formation of gender roles and stereotypes at a more structural level.

Key aspects

How does gender manifest in schools?

In today's world, attending school essentially functions as a rite of passage for young children. In many ways, it is seen as the institution which shapes and instils in them ideas and values that are thought necessary as part of our social existence. This brings within its ambit the wide range of values, morals and ideals that a school seeks to ingrain among the students. Gender, as a form of identity, is inherently also a product of our relations and interactions with other people, including people from other genders. The manner in which people from a particular gender are treated, or "schooled", or expected to behave, all go on to shape the understanding of gender for young children. Young children going to schools are often made aware of the differential expectations in terms of their gender, as well as the requirements to qualify as a member of the binary gender system (McLeod, 2019). The legitimacy of the knowledge imbibed in schools is often unchallenged. "The very fact that certain traditions and normative 'content' are construed as school knowledge is prima facie evidence of their perceived legitimacy" (Apple & King, 1977, 342). The things taught in school, therefore, are treated by children as the objective truth of the world. This goes on to imply that schools have an important role to play in introducing and imposing gender on its students.

The ideas of gender, features and attributes of masculinity and femininity, are all parts of things that are understood in people's relationships and interactions with one another. In this context, therefore, it is important to identify the role of the school as a socialising agent. This comes with the understanding that gender is essentially something which is 'taught' or 'learned', in the context of culture and community. This is essentially a function of the hidden curriculum in schools. "Hidden curriculums are covert lessons that schools teach, and they are often a means of social control" (Martin, 1998, 498). Schools, in this sense, function as a primary agent which helps to impart ideas on gender, whether through overt policies of the education system, or through subtle aspects of the hidden curriculum. Moreover, by means of aspects of the hidden curriculum, teachers and administrators subtly reinforce gender stereotypes, roles and expectations, by means of comments and opinions which reflect traditional ideas of gender.

Masculinity and femininity are often treated as two opposing features which necessitates a strict separation between the two. The differentiation and separation that occurs, thereby relaying a binary idea of gender, is one of the primary ways in which gender is enforced. Schools tend to function in a way that effectively sets out differential roles and expectations

by categorising children into either of the categories. This has connotations for the manner in which girls and boys going to school receive different treatment. This can especially be in terms of disciplining mechanisms; the subconscious nature of our gendered mindset is reflected in the ways in which girls and boys are disciplined in schools. The disciplining of girls and boys as per their gender is very often the narrative which drives towards the ideal of man and women, as it is expected by society. This is reflected in the form of commands or punishments, which function to enforce the same. A girl speaking in a loud voice in a classroom may be silenced on the grounds that girls are expected to be docile and soft spoken, whereas the same for a boy would only be in the name of maintaining the required decorum within a classroom. Such acts or commands subtly reinforce the expectations from each gender, thereby contributing to the idea of an ideal masculinity or femininity. In many cases, the differentiation is also played out in terms of the kind of books or games that children are expected to read or play. Disciplinarian systems in schools function as nets of social control, the deviation from which invites sanctions in the form of punishment. This helps to ensure that there is gender conformity in terms of the ideals and values that are prescribed or expected of each gender in the particular community environment. The differentiation also exists in terms of sex education classes and sports activities, in which children are made to feel aware of the differences amongst them.

"I remember an incident in secondary school where a friend of mine was suspended for punching a boy. The incident that occurred happened in the corridor during break time. My friend was walking down the corridor when the boy came up behind her and lifted her skirt, showing her underwear, and then ran off laughing with his friends. My friend was obviously embarrassed and enraged, and so chased the boy and punched him. She got suspended for a day, and he got nothing other than "don't' do it again". Where is the justice and equality in that?" Hannah, Ireland.

In terms of school policy of single gendered schools, it is important to understand how spaces come to be gendered. Some schools view gender as the same as the sex assigned at birth, and therefore work to put people in boxes and curtail freedom of gender expression. Mixed schools, on the other hand, might have more equality inclusive policies, but these can also be restrictive in terms of the strict separation between male and female, and the lack of space for identities that do not fall within the binary. The differentiation and separation is also very often followed by a precedent for an enforcement of heteronormativity that seeks to understand relationships amongst children only in a singular pattern. In many Asian countries especially, fearing the development of romantic relationships in case of intermingling amongst boys and girls, this differentiation is further reinforced. This is dictated by the concern surrounding the protection of female sexuality, which imposes strict restrictions on their mobility as well as their agency and autonomy. "Formal education or schooling involves moving into public spaces, interaction with males (in coeducational schools and with men teachers); or being socialised (through the curriculum) as boys, and supposedly moving away from the eventual goal of wifehood and motherhood" (Chanana,

2001, 38). The idea is to keep the two genders apart, to ensure that the focus of children going to schools is only on their studies and not in other avenues. The policy or underlying principle of schools to maintain separate seating, separate entrance as well as other playtime activities on the basis of gender can also be argued to be driven by this mindset. The existence of same gender schools also overarchingly reflects this world view, with many parents opting to send their children to such schools, especially in the name of safety for young girls.

In same gender schools, there are disciplinarian processes which are in place to ensure conformity to behavioural patterns associated with a particular gender. For example, girls would be asked to comply with notions of how to sit, how to speak, how to conduct oneself in a classroom, the length of the skirt (if the skirt is a part of the uniform), and the manner in which hair is arranged. All of these are mostly associated with typifications into categories. All of these categorisations focus on different aspects of behaviour, which underlie the community notion of the ideal standard of femininity, that is to be aspired to. Even in the case for all boys schools, there is an ideal of masculinity which is sought to be strived for. In schools with co-educational learning, it is the strict separation between the two genders upon which most of the disciplinary practices are based. Any fusion of gender identities runs the risk of threatening the gender divide, which is crucial for dominant groups to perpetuate the hegemony of the male over the female sex. This also functions to typify relations amongst children in a singular pattern and thereby creates the idea of the 'other' in terms of opposing gender identities.

The attitudes and beliefs of teachers can reinforce gender roles and impact how teachers view the abilities of students. For example, a teacher is more likely to overrate a boy's ability in maths and underrate a girl's, recreating the status quo. Horizontal segregation can determine the subjects that girls and boys select, where girls may be discouraged from taking subjects perceived as male, and teachers may reinforce the gender stereotypes that exist in society (McCracken et al., 2015).

One of the key factors in developing educational policies that creates gender inequality in the schools is the feminisation of the teaching profession, where teaching in early childhood education and in elementary school has historically been dominated by women. At secondary level internationally, the percentage of women teachers is lower than at earlier levels. This global trend is deeply connected to factors such as economic development, urbanisation, women's societal roles, cultural definitions of masculinity, and the value placed on children and childcare (Drudy, 2008). The reasons suggested for the dropping numbers of male primary teachers indicates a bias towards seeing the ideal primary teacher as female, based on an essentialist belief that a woman's nature tends to make her better with children. This belief may be stronger among male pre-service teachers than among female pre-service teachers (Drudy, 2008). The feminisation of the teaching profession has raised concerns, particularly the belief that boys need male teachers as role models to develop properly, both academically and personally (Carringthon & McPhee,

2008; McGrath, Moosa, Van Bergen & Deevia 2019). This concern is often tied to the perceived underachievement of boys compared to girls in standardised examinations like PISA (OECD, 2019).

"As a parent with children in both primary and secondary school, I see a distinct difference in the percentages of male and female teachers in each of these school settings. Traditionally, my childs' primary school has always had predominantly female teachers, with perhaps only one male teacher within the school, often with no male teacher. On the other hand, my other childs' secondary school has a high percentage of male teachers with a ratio of approximately fifty percent. As long as women are seen as carers and nurturers in society, these 'soft' roles will always be dominated by women. Children need to see more male role models in their primary education ." Hannah Solley, Ireland

How does gender stereotyping impact students?

Neuroscientists have shown that there are very few structural differences between the male and female brains at birth. Cordelia Fine (2005), describes how "our minds, society and neurosexism create difference. Together they wire gender. But the wiring is soft, not hard. It is flexible, malleable and changeable." Further criticism of the notion of a male and female brain builds on this to suggest that by centering the brain as the only thing to explain behaviour, we then ignore the role of the body and the social environment, suggesting that it is not just neurosexism but neurocentrism that is the difficulty (Halberg, 2022). Society creates gendered patterns of behaviour that people then follow which shapes them. By imposing strict ideas of masculinity and femininity on children, we shape their entire lives and for many this causes difficulties and harm (School of Education and Social Work, Birmingham City University, n.d.).

"The first time I remember really noticing I wasn't "one of the boys" was on the playground. At lunch most of the girls would play skipping and the boys would play football. I remember how it felt to be told by the boys that they didn't want me to play because I was a girl. It hurt doubly due to what I later realised was gender dysphoria (a feeling of distress and discomfort around my gender), but besides that, the gender stereotypes at play meant that I was put at a distance from boys from then on. Our class in primary school was completely socially segregated by gender from about the age of 7 and your gender was meant to define your likes and dislikes. As a trans person, I constantly felt like the odd one out among groups of girls but there was no other option for me at school."
Sam, transmasculine, Ireland

Gender stereotypes impact on mental health for all genders. While girls crying or talking about their feelings is celebrated for emotional openness, boys often mask painful or distressing emotions, either through silence or behaviours designed to disrupt. Distress in girls may be diminished and taken less seriously, while distress in boys is missed entirely as a result of this stereotyping and lack of awareness of difficulties. The message that

boys should 'man up' prevents boys from speaking about their emotions and difficulties and sends a message that these are things that should not cause a problem or impact them so they should work through it themselves (Stentiford et al., 2024).

The lack of discussion of gender diversity and rigid gender roles also cause difficulty for trans and gender diverse (TGD) youth, with one study showing how the marginalisation of gender diversity "inhibited TGD youth's self-understanding and left some feeling confused, frustrated and alienated from their peers" (McBride et al., 2020, 13). TGD youth have been shown to have a higher rates of prevalence of depressive disorders, suicide ideation and self-harm than their peers (Becerra-Culqui et al., 2018). Studies suggest that social support, particularly from parents is associated with reduced symptoms of depression, anxiety, self-harm and suicide ideation (Tankersley et al., 2021). Studies have also shown that feeling unsafe in bathrooms was associated with greater levels of problematic anxiety in the past year. The experience of being unable to safely use a bathroom in school may cause or exacerbate anxiety, absenteeism, and a lack of belonging for transgender and gender non-conforming students (Weinhardt et al., 2017).

Of course, like all the dimensions of diversity discussed in this book, this issue needs to be understood through the lens of intersectionality. Poverty has a role in determining gender equality in schools due to the direct and indirect costs of sending children to school. Providing free education can address gender inequality in education but needs to be done alongside strategies to improve the wider social factors that influence familial decisions to send children to schools. In turn, the reduction of gender inequality in education has a significant impact on society. The increase of women's access to education improves health outcomes for all, particularly lowering maternal and infant mortality rates, preventing childhood malnutrition and reducing the rates of new HIV diagnoses (Bertini and Ceretti, 2020).

Making sure that all school-age children and youth (boys and girls) have equitable access to education is one of the concerns that should be taken into account when discussing gender policy in education. Girls face disproportionate exclusion and disadvantage in school in many nations, while boys underperform and drop out at higher rates than girls in other countries. Although there has been progress since 2000, through initiatives such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals, gender-related barriers continue to combine with other socioeconomic barriers to prevent girls and boys (and women and men) from accessing and benefiting from quality education and learning opportunities. Around the world, 119 million girls are out of school, including 34 million of primary school age, 28 million of lower-secondary school age, and 58 million of upper-secondary school age (UNICEF, n.d). Women make up only 35% of higher education students in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) (UNESCO, 2017a). The reasons vary among countries and communities. The most common reasons are poverty, child marriage, gender-based violence, traditions, religious beliefs etc. In general, poor families often favour boys when investing in education. In addition, in some contexts schools do not meet

the safety, hygiene or sanitation needs of girls and this may lead to drop out. In others, teaching practices are not gender-responsive and result in gender gaps in learning and skills development. Moreover, in countries affected by conflict (e.g. Yemen, Palestine), girls are more than twice as likely to be out of school than girls living in non-affected countries (Bentaouet Kattan, Khan, and Merchant, 2023).

Teachers and schools from early years onward have a significant part to play in the experiences of gender stereotyping. Teachers can consider gender in the toys available, the pictures and examples shown in books including textbooks for all subjects, as well as how they speak about subjects and address behaviour. We will give some examples for positive steps teachers can take later on and some resources that you may wish to look at.

How does gender interact with school policy?

Having discussed in detail the idea of gender and the definition of school policy, it is crucial to understand the point at which they interact. Gender as a form of identity is the most ubiquitous across all identities, and therefore, any school policy is bound to have connotations for gender and the way it impacts gender. National curriculum policies, for instance, are pivotal in how gender is depicted, as they have the effect of shaping ideas, expectations, roles and responsibilities through representations present or absent. In most cases, the national curriculum is adopted at the national level and implemented at all schools within the nation. This brings in important questions about cultural differences and context specificity. The manner in which the curriculum is designed is especially important in this context. Appropriate gender depiction, as well as adequate gender representation, needs to be addressed within policies which shape curriculum frameworks. Extensive cultural influence is at play when it comes to building the curriculum, thereby leading to social roles and expectations in schools. This kind of cultural imposition also functions to reinforce unequal gender roles, which can be in the form of gendered division of labour, for example the mother being depicted in curriculum materials as the home-maker, and the father as the breadwinner . Such representation tends to influence career goals and aspirations for children to a large extent, who may feel they do not belong to certain professions based on the lack of representation in school textbooks. With more awareness, the overall curriculum of the school can be largely inclusive and representative, and highlight aspects of equality and respect among people.

However, even when formal aspects of curriculum strive for gender equality, as noted above with regard to discipline, the hidden curriculum may still be one of the key drivers through which gender differences are carried forward by the school. Often, formal school curricula preach inclusivity and equality, and it is only by the attitudes of teachers and administrators that the hidden curriculum plays out. Largely reflected in the mindset of people within systems, the hidden curriculum is enforced and instilled through regular patterns of behaviour and attitude which perpetuate gender stereotypes and roles.

In terms of religious schools, school policy has connotations for the manner in which gender is handled and conceived. A narrow and traditional view of orthodox religions might

have the effect of being less open to diversity, and intolerant of diversity, or differential gender expectations and role assigning. In the context of India, for instance, the religious underpinnings tend to focus on female sexuality, and the need to protect it, along with notions of purity and impurity, which are linked to caste status and honour of kin groups (Chanana, 2001). As such, the influence of religion tends to have the effect of reinforcing and perpetuating gender norms and roles. In the case of non-religious schools, they are more likely to adopt policies which are more inclusive and tolerant, and more accommodating of gender differences in terms of identity or expression.

"In a convent school where moral science was a part of the curriculum and a compulsory subject to be studied, values suggesting morality were an important part of the course. This included the imparting of the idea of premarital sex as a sin, and something to be frowned upon. This, however, is also in direct contrast to the science subject which involves lessons on reproduction, and along with it- sex education, thereby sharing knowledge on safe sex practices. Such conflicts between religion and science are especially more visible in the context of school education for us growing up and studying in those schools and imbibing those values" Ayana (she/her), India.

Another important school policy to be analysed in the context of gender, as noted briefly above, is uniform. The policy on school uniform has connotations for the manner in which gender is treated, and thereby communicated to children. Such examples are measuring the length of girls skirts, making sure they are covering themselves in a way that does not draw attention.

"In an all-girls' convent school, a lot of emphasis was laid on 'decency' and acceptable ways of wearing our uniform. In order to enforce this, we were encouraged to wear a long slip underneath our shirts, to ensure that the transparency of white shirts concealed our underwear. As part of the disciplining process which consisted of checking the uniform, the skirts of all the girls would be lifted, to check the slip, or the length of it. In doing so, what started out as a process to maintain modesty entailed the violation of the basic dignity of all girls" Ayana (she/her), India.

Gender-specific school uniforms convey messages about gender separation and expectations based on gender. They also fail to be inclusive in their approach towards non-binary or trans students. A policy which aims at gender-neutral uniforms for students could be seen as the way forward, in an effort to be gender inclusive in their approach, and this is explored further below with regards to trans students.

The important thing to be noted in this regard is that policies need to take into account expressions of gender identity, which also includes within it, an expression of religious or other kinds of identity.

How are trans, gender-diverse and gender-non-conforming students affected by gender policies?

"Cisnormativity is deeply entrenched in societies and institutions, with children assigned from birth into a rigid binary. This system is reinforced throughout the school ecosystem in cisnormative policies, approaches, assumptions and cultures, with particularly negative consequences for trans children" (Horton, 2023, 86).

Cisnormativity is the assumption that everyones' gender aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth, and therefore all people are cisgender. This assumption permeates all societal systems, including school systems. It is ingrained in the school system with institutional cisnormativity operating without active or conscious effort. It is an invisible system that goes unnoticed by cis teachers, educators and students.

When gender is considered within school policies, specific and hidden policies, it automatically implies gender in a binary sense i.e. boys/males and girls/females. It also implies that gender is the same as sex assigned at birth, so the assumption is that all students are cisgender. This means that schools privilege cisgender young people who identify with their assigned birth gender (McBride & Neary, 2021) , whilst inherently excluding transgender, non-binary and gender non-conforming students from all school policies unless specifically mentioned, simply by not actively thinking about these students.

For instance when creating invisible bathroom policies in which segregated girls and boys bathrooms are the norm, it is already assumed which bathroom should be used by whom, but it is not automatically assumed that trans girls and boys will be allowed to use those bathrooms. Through the assumed cisgender lens, trans and non-binary students experience difficulties when trying to access appropriate bathroom facilities because they are omitted from being actively included in these policies. A study of institutional cisnormativity in primary and secondary schools in the UK saw that some trans pupils were denied access to appropriate facilities such as toilets throughout their time at primary school (Horton, 2023). Another study looking at the experiences of trans and gender diverse students in secondary schools in Ireland found that many students "experienced barriers accessing a bathroom facility that they felt comfortable and safe using following their transition" (McBride et al., 2020, 4), or "were prohibited from using (or felt unsafe using) the toilets that aligned with their gender identity" (McBride & Neary, 2021, 1100).

Another layer to the cisnormative culture within school bathrooms means that many schools only have male and female options for bathroom facilities which eliminates choice for non-binary students and some trans students who may not feel comfortable in gendered bathrooms and would prefer to use a gender neutral option.

Inclusive bathroom options are only recognised once a specific gender inclusive policy is incorporated into a school, and bathroom usage is looked at through a gender sensitive lens that incorporates gender diversity in all forms. You can find examples of gender inclusive

bathroom policies on the Gender Inclusive Schools website, as well as on the University of Limerick website.

Trans exclusionary policies can also be seen within school uniform policies. If a school has a uniform policy, it is usually a gender-specific one, with schools implementing a boys' uniform and a girls' uniform. Many trans and non-binary students find uniform policies to be "restrictive, while some were prevented from wearing a uniform that aligned with their gender identity" (McBride et al., 2020, 4). There may not be a gender-neutral option available unless a non-binary or trans student requests one. It may also be assumed that all trans and non-binary students will only wear a gender-neutral uniform option and that gendered uniforms may be excluded as an option for trans students, especially trans girls.

"There was greater contention around trans girls/women wearing skirts than there was for trans boys/men wearing trousers. Some schools permitted students assigned female at birth to wear either trousers or skirts, but only permitted students assigned male at birth to wear trousers. Such uniform restrictions made it more difficult for trans girls/women to wear a uniform that aligned with their gender identity and that they felt comfortable wearing" (McBride et al., 2020, 26).

It can be especially difficult in single gendered schools, which often have a rigid uniform policy in place:

"When I was 18 and almost finished secondary school, I told a teacher in my all-girls school that I was trans. Her response was to prioritise telling me that I would need to wear the school uniform including the skirt until I finished my final exams. At that point, I was really struggling at home and in school and would have really appreciated an adult who asked me about any of that. Instead, I found a rigid system that seemed to put the picture of the school before my wellbeing. Today, that school has a trouser option, and they have supported a number of trans students. I am relieved that other students will not share my experience"

Sam, transmasculine, Ireland.

Another area of exclusion for trans students is Physical Education And Sports (PES) choices, especially in secondary schools. Secondary schools sometimes approach PES in a very gender segregated mindset, with boys and girls being separated from doing sports together, as well as gender-specific sports uniforms that can make trans students feel uncomfortable. The barriers to PES participation shows that "TGD youth's gender presentation, the normative gender culture of PES and gendered sports uniforms, affect how trans youths use sports facilities and can lead to experiences of exclusion and harassment" (McBride et al., 2020, 35).

Gendered sports policies always exclude non-binary students who are forced to choose a gender with which to play in a team, even though they do not identify exclusively as male or female. They can also often exclude binary trans students, who can be excluded from playing with the peer group they identify with if appropriate policies are not in place, thereby excluding, disenfranchising and harming trans pupils (Horton, 2023).

Trans and non-binary students can be included in school policies positively by having a dedicated Gender Identity and Expression or Trans Inclusive policy that can be referred to when a student wants to transition whilst in school or if a trans student is starting in the school. Through having a policy dedicated to gender identity and expression, a school can then use this to inform all other policies in which gender is explicitly or implicitly implied. This should be taken into consideration when thinking about bathrooms, sports, uniforms, curriculum and anti-bullying policies.

However, a trans inclusive policy only works on the basis of a trans student identifying themselves to staff and therefore the school putting procedures in place to support the individual with accommodations. In this way a trans inclusive policy is still exclusionary because it is only ever in reaction to a person asking to be accommodated or welcomed into a cisnormative space, which actually "results in a fundamental silencing of and failure to address broader systemic impacts of institutionalised cisgenderism and cisnormativity" (Martino et al., 2020, 768). It also "highlights the need for knowledge about cisgenderism and cisnormativity to inform both policy and practice – that are designed to support trans youth specifically and gender diversity more broadly" (Martino et al., 2020, 768)

When schools gain more insight into the ways that cisnormativity affects the systematic marginalisation of trans and non-binary students, they can then use this to inform policies proactively that encompass all forms of gender and ways of expression, without the need of the embodied personal experience to enact change.

Who and what influences gender policies in schools?

Gender policy at schools is influenced by a complex interplay of various factors and stakeholders. Here are the key influencers:

- Government and Legislation: In many countries, there are laws prohibiting gender discrimination in educational institutions. In many countries constitutions guarantee equality or non-discrimination across sex and/or gender.
- Administrators: Elected or appointed bodies make policy decisions, including the policies related to gender.
- Educational Organisations and Unions: Professional organisation groups like the National Education Association (NEA) advocate for inclusive policies and provide resources and training for teachers and other stakeholders.
- Unions: Teacher and staff unions often negotiate policies related to gender equality and non-discrimination.
- Parent-Teacher Associations (PTA's) and Community Groups: These groups can influence school policies by advocating for inclusive practices and supporting specific initiatives.
- Students and student organisations: Students councils can push for changes in gender policy by voicing the needs and concerns of the student body in the community and in schools.

- Activist groups and student-led groups, such as LGBTQI+ alliances, can drive policy changes through activism and advocacy and be powerful voices for gender inclusivity in schools.
- Research and Academic Institutions: Studies conducted by educational researchers and reports from universities provide evidence-based recommendations for gender policies. Think Tanks focusing on education policy often publish guidelines and research that shape public opinion and policies in education.
- Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Advocacy Groups: NGOs work to influence gender policy through advocacy, litigation, and public education. Advocacy groups may focus on issues such as gender identity, sexual orientation, and gender equality in education.
- Media/social media: Portrayals of gender issues in the media can shape public opinion and pressure schools to adopt more inclusive policies.
- Social Movements: Broader social movements, such as feminism and LGBTQI+ rights movements, "Me Too" movement have a significant impact on schools' gender policies.

In summary, gender policy in schools is shaped by a diverse array of actors and influences, ranging from governmental bodies and educational organisations to grassroots activism and international standards. Each of these components plays a role in ensuring that schools are inclusive and equitable environments for all students and creating gender sensitive schools.

What is the impact of anti-gender politics on gender-sensitivity in schools?

Anti-Gender politics has seen an increase over the last number of years and can have a direct impact on schools and educational initiatives, sports and cultural programmes, healthcare and social services, and the use of public spaces in general.

The term 'anti-gender' refers to concerted and deliberate efforts, by certain groups of people, to undermine policy and legal provisions for such things as reproductive rights, gender-affirming care, sexuality and relationships education, and LGBTQI+ rights. Anti-gender politics will often position itself as a helpful and benign entity that is trying to protect traditional family values and children, whilst at the same time, attacking freedom of speech, freedom of identity and expression, sexuality and bodily autonomy (RESIST Project Team, 2024).

Ideologically, it refers to movements that see gender equality and diversity, sexual freedom, and feminism as threats to the sanctity of family and of national morality. This is a global movement involving networks of politicians, religious groups and media outlets, amongst others, that have overlapping interests and can work together through the availability of online networks and social media. These different groups often find gender

to be a common, unifying ground, as gender is constructed as an attack on either nature (religious actors), nation (nationalistic actors) or normality (conservative actors) (Kuhar and Zobec, 2017).

One of the core directives of anti-gender politics is to frame 'gender' as an ideology or theory rather than a factual part of the human experience that can be interpreted in a variety of different ways. In this way, gender itself can be attacked as a political ideology that is threatening family values, putting children's lives at risk and harming religious doctrines that this movement often stands for. One of the most important targets of the anti-gender movement in Europe is public schools and the educational process. Schools are often accused of brainwashing students or imposing the teaching of gender ideology (Kuhar and Zobec, 2017). This perspective can directly impact how schools approach gender equality and gender diversity – the latter defined as the recognition and respect for a range of gender identities beyond the traditional male-female binary. It also influences how schools create gender-sensitive environments. By framing gender as an imposed ideology, the anti-gender movement seeks to silence discussions about gender and sexuality, portraying them as threats to the safety of innocent children.

Anti-gender movements are also present in higher education in some countries. For instance, deans from several medical schools at Turkish universities have sought to remove the term "sexual orientation" from the universal Hippocratic Oath taken during graduation ceremonies. This change could have resulted in medical doctors refusing to examine LGBTQI+ individuals in hospitals.

The issue of access to bathrooms in schools and public spaces, explored above from a trans perspective above, often comes to the forefront in public discussions from an anti-gender perspective also, usually focusing on the question of who is allowed to use certain spaces and who is not. Trans and gender-diverse students frequently face exclusion from gendered bathrooms, where they are either perceived as a potential threat, or are advised not to use certain facilities under the guise of "protecting" their own safety. These arguments ultimately deny gender-diverse students not only access to bathrooms, but also autonomy over their own bodies and the right to choose spaces where they feel most comfortable. This treatment reduces them to an abstract notion of gender – one constrained by narrow definitions of "real" gender – instead of recognising them as people with valid and lived experiences.

The focus on "traditional" values by the anti-gender movement can exacerbate the policing of school uniforms described above, often (as already noted) subjecting the girls to more scrutiny than the boys. Within the anti-gender movement, uniforms can be politicised, so the legitimacy of who has rights to wear such uniforms becomes a political standpoint. Non-binary people are often left out completely of any uniform choice unless they are willing to fight for a neutral uniform policy within their particular school. Morwana Griffiths has made it clear that, "for any group of people to get an education of their own, the first need is to have a say and be listened to" (Griffiths, 2003, 34). Sadly, some, if not most, educational

systems are not willing to be flexible in their approach. Voices of marginalised groups are often stifled, which in turn 'others' trans people and fosters an environment of exclusion.

In some countries, the idea of gender as an ideology has been politicised so much that the word gender cannot even be discussed in schools and is seen as something that does not exist. For instance, a conservative/fundamentalist newspaper in Turkey argued that the traditional Turkish family unit was threatened by the term 'gender'. The argument's foundation is the notion that the term gender denotes gender equality, supports feminist movements, and affects young people's sexual orientation. By the influence of the campaign started by this particular newspaper and supported by religious groups, the term gender was forbidden to be mentioned in many of the governmental offices and various institutions started to remove the Gender Equality Policy Documents from their web pages. https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-turkiye-47610198

People are often reduced to their physical anatomy, reinforcing rigid gender roles that limit expression for everyone—girls, boys, men, women, trans, and non-binary individuals alike. Although anti-gender discourse claims to protect traditional values, it imposes restrictive boundaries on how individuals can express their identities.

Reducing gender diversity to an 'imposed ideology' strips it of legitimacy, denying society a richer understanding of gender as a valid and natural spectrum of identities. This politicisation of gender undermines schools' ability to discuss gender openly and to teach relationship and sex education meaningfully, impacting students' understanding and acceptance. By framing gender as an ideological threat, anti-gender politics also erases the real, lived experiences of trans people, invalidating their identities and forcing them into a framework that dismisses gender as a core aspect of personal identity.

How can schools integrate gender sensitivity into their policies and practices?

Programmes to embed gender sensitivity and equality in schools and education systems require a whole of institution approach.

In the Higher Education Sector, work is ongoing where an institution will look at the data available in its context, analyse that data and then start to develop gender equality plans that apply to the specific institution. One of the programmes that looks at this is Athena Swan Charter, which is present in Ireland, the UK, Canada and Australia.

Athena Swan requires an organisation to bring together the quantitative data available relating to gender for students and staff, in relation to educational experiences and employment. The organisation will also collect qualitative data through surveys and focus groups to understand more the experiences of women, men and non-binary people across the organisation in every role. After collecting data, the organisation undertakes a self-assessment, analysing and reflecting on how the findings apply to its specific context. This process involves thorough self-reflection to identify priority areas for action. Additionally,

the data should be examined through an intersectional lens wherever possible, considering other factors that may contribute to inequalities and identifying targeted actions to address these intersecting disparities.

The next step is to create an action plan that addresses the areas relevant to the organisation's self-assessment. This action plan should be developed from the data collected, and should include specific, trackable objectives that can be continuously assessed to ensure ongoing improvement. While the areas covered will vary by institution, common focuses include employment practices, organisational culture (such as efforts to address gender-based violence), career progression, achievement, and intersectional considerations. For Athena SWAN, these plans are then peer-reviewed by colleagues from other organisations to ensure that the action plan is both ambitious and thorough, and that the organisation has critically examined its own challenges and areas for growth.

For primary and secondary schools, there are also some programmes in place, Gender Action is an award programme based in the UK that "promotes and encourages a whole-school approach to challenging stereotypes" (Gender Action Schools Award, 2023). Gender Action follows a similar approach to Athena Swan, focusing on Reflection, Evaluation and Planning at multiple stages from supporter, to initiator, to champion and finally as a beacon.

To synthesise the discussions throughout this chapter, below are some actions that schools may wish to consider and assess how relevant these are to their contexts.

Policy Review with a gendered lens:

All school policies encompass gender in some way. When policies are reviewed with gender sensitivity, it is important to take certain elements into account. Firstly, it is important to understand that children do not necessarily fit into specific gender stereotypes with a narrow set of social roles and behaviours that they are expected to comply with. It is important for children and young people to know that all emotions, roles, careers etc. are applicable to all genders. Secondly, it is vital to avoid the assumption that gender means only two things, male and female, and consciously include gender diversity in all ways of being and expression. To achieve this, the awareness level of teachers, students, parents and administrators need to be raised in a collaborative way. Thirdly, it is important to tackle the overarching cisnormative and heteronormative culture that is ingrained in the education system and school policies. When there is a comprehensive understanding that not everyone identifies as cisgender or heterosexual, this awareness will be reflected in the development of school policies that consider the diverse family dynamics and the needs of all children and young people in educational settings.

Period Dignity and Sanitary Policies:

To enhance gender equality, schools can implement policies regarding the availability of period products and sanitary bins. For instance, providing free sanitary products in bathrooms and installing bins in all facilities ensures proper sanitation for everyone (Department of Education, 2024). This approach accommodates not only menstruating

students but also boys who may need to use incontinence pads, as well as women, trans, and non-binary individuals.

Uniform:

Schools who choose to have a uniform may also consider the option of having an open, uniform policy that has lots of individual items available. This can make every student feel comfortable. The school could have a variety of items available for each student to choose which items of clothing they want to wear as part of the school uniform. This creates a universally inclusive clothing option for students.

Curriculum:

Curriculum is a key factor that should be included when discussing gender in relation to school policies. Recognising the importance of gender, a gender lens should be applied when addressing development and reviewing the curriculum. Key considerations include the diversity of the group developing the curriculum, the representation of individuals in the texts being created, and whose ideas and stories are valued. It is crucial that the curriculum does not reinforce stereotypes.

The Fawcett Society's report outlines this, calling for this issue to become a Government priority. From an education standpoint, they recommend that the early years sector should be valued better, with an increased investment in professional development for educators, improved salaries, funding for inclusive resources, and taking a whole-school approach to embedding gender equality (Fawcett Society, 2020).

Pedagogical practices:

These are the individual practices of teachers in the classroom, how we teach and what we teach. As a school, there may be policies about what language should be used in the classroom, but teachers should be conscious of this and their discourse. For teachers working in areas without the ideal policies, this is an opportunity for teachers to influence change and integrate gender inclusivity into the school and its policies. Teachers can create an environment that integrates gender inclusivity through their teaching materials, the language they use, how they support participation, challenging gender norms and creating a safer space for all genders (Teachers.Institute, 2024).

Local contexts

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=647#h5p-53

Closing questions to discuss or tasks

- Think about your own school or a school you have worked in, what policies exist that interact with gender?

- Are there any additional policies you think could be introduced?

- Are there any changes you would make, and how might you implement these?

- What are the barriers to gender policy implementation in schools in your own country and/or community?

- How can you think about school policies with a gender sensitive lens? And how does this change your interaction with these policies?

Literature

Apple, M. W., and N. R. King. "What Do Schools Teach?" *Curriculum Inquiry* 6, no. 4 (1977): 341–58.

BBC News. "What Do Associations Opposed to Gender Equality in Education Say?," 2019. https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-turkiye-47610198.

Becerra-Culqui, Tracy A., Yuan Liu, Rebecca Nash, Lee Cromwell, W. Dana Flanders, Darios Getahun, and Shawn V. Giammattei. "Mental Health of Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Youth Compared With Their Peers." *Pediatrics* 141, no. 5 (2018): e20173845. https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2017-3845.

Bentaouet Kattan, Raja, Myra Murad Khan, and Melissa Merchant. "Achieving Gender Equality in Education: Examining Progress and Constraints." World Bank Group Gender Thematic Policy Notes Series: Evidence and Practice Note, November 2023. https://doi.org/10.1596/40595.

Bertini, Catherine, and Alyssa Ceretti. "Women and Girls as Change Agents: The Global Mandate for Girls' Education," 2020.

Carrington, Bruce, and Alastair McPhee. "Boys' 'Underachievement' and the Feminization of Teaching." *Journal of Education for Teaching* 34, no. 2 (2008): 109–20. https://doi.org/10.1080/02607470801979558.

Chanana, K. "Hinduism and Female Sexuality: Social Control and Education of Girls in India." *Sociological Bulletin* 50, no. 1 (2001): 37–63.

Drudy, Sheelagh. "Gender Balance/Gender Bias: The Teaching Profession and the Impact of Feminisation." *Gender and Education* 20, no. 4 (2008): 309–23.

Education, Department of. "Period Product Scheme for Schools and Colleges." GOV.UK, September 2024. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/period-products-in-schools-and-colleges/period-product-scheme-for-schools-and-colleges-in-england.

Fine, Cordelia. *Delusions of Gender: The Real Science Behind Sex Differences*. Icon Books, 2005. https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=JbdkAgAAQBAJ.

Gender Action School Award. "Gender Action Schools Award," April 2023. https://www.genderaction.co.uk.

Griffiths, Morwana. *Action for Social Justice in Education: Fairly Different*. Oxford University Press, 2003.

Halberg, Claus. "Neurosexism, Neurofeminism, and Neurocentrism: From Gendered Brains to Embodied Minds." *NORA – Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research* 31, no. 3 (2023): 279–91. https://doi.org/10.1080/08038740.2022.2155244.

Horton, Cal. "Institutional Cisnormativity and Educational Injustice: Trans Children's Experiences in Primary and Early Secondary Education in the UK," 2023. https://doi.org/10.1111/bjep.12540.

Kuhar, Roman, and Aleš Zobec. "The Anti-Gender Movement in Europe and the Educational Process in Public Schools." *Center for Educational Policy Studies Journal* 7, no. 2 (2017): 29–46. https://doi.org/10.26529/cepsj.168.

LeCompte, M. "Learning to Work: The Hidden Curriculum of the Classroom." *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 9, no. 1 (1978): 22–37.

Martin, K. A. "Becoming a Gendered Body: Practices of Preschools." *American Sociological Review* 63, no. 4 (1998): 494–511.

Martino, Wayne, Jenny Kassen, and Kenan Omercajic. "Supporting Transgender Students in Schools: Beyond an Individualist Approach to Trans Inclusion in the Education System," 2020. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2020.1829559.

Maynooth University. "Brief Report on Reviews of Athena Swan," 2022. https://mural.maynoothuniversity.ie/15695/1/Brief%20Report%20on%20Reviews%20of%20Athena%20Swan%202022%2003%2007.pdf.

McBride, Ruari-Santiago, and Aoife Neary. "Trans and Gender Diverse Youth Resisting Cisnormativity in School." *Gender and Education* 33 (2021): 1090–1107. https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2021.18842.

McBride, Ruari-Santiago, Aoife Neary, Breda Gray, and Vanessa Lacey. "The Post-Primary School Experiences of Transgender and Gender Diverse Youth in Ireland," 2020. https://teni.ie/reports/.

McCracken, Katie, Elaine Unterhalter, Sergio Márquez, and Agata Chełstowska. "Empowering Women and Girls through Education," 2015. https://dspace.ceid.org.tr/xmlui/handle/1/857.

McGrath, Kevin F., Shaaista Moosa, Penny Van Bergen, and Deevia Bhana. "The Plight of the

Male Teacher: An Interdisciplinary and Multileveled Theoretical Framework for Researching a Shortage of Male Teachers." *The Journal of Men's Studies* 28, no. 2 (2019): 1–16. https://doi.org/10.1177/1060826519873860.

McLeod, J. "The Discovery of Sexism in Schools: Everyday Revolutions in the Classroom." In *Everyday Revolutions*, edited by M. Arrow and A. Woollacott, 37–61. ANU Press, 2019. https://doi.org/10.22459/ER.2019.03.

Meyer, E.J., and H. Keenan. "Can Policies Help Schools Affirm Gender Diversity? A Policy Archaeology of Transgender-Inclusive Policies in California Schools." *Gender and Education* 30, no. 6 (2018): 736–53. https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2018.1483490.

OECD. "PISA 2018 Results (Volume II): Where All Students Can Succeed," 2019. https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/f56f8c26-en.pdf.

RESIST Project Team. "Anti-Gender Tactics in Europe: The RESIST Project Research Findings," 2024. https://theresistproject.eu/.

School of Education and Social Work, Birmingham City University. "Gender Stereotypes in Childhood: What's the Harm?," July 2024. https://www.bcu.ac.uk/education-and-social-work/research/cspace-blog/gender-stereotypes-in-childhood-whats-the-harm.

Society, Fawcett. "Gender Stereotypes Are Limiting Children's Potential And Causing Lifelong Harm," December 2020. https://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/News/gender-stereotypes-significantly-limiting-childrens-potential-causing-lifelong-harm-commission-finds.

Stentiford, Lauren, George Koutsouris, Tricia Nash, and Alexandra Allan. "Mental Health and Gender Discourses in School: 'Emotional' Girls and Boys 'at Risk.'" *Educational Review*, 2024. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2024.2306947.

Tankersley, Amelia P., Erika L. Grafsky, Janey Dike, and Russell T. Jones. "Risk and Resilience Factors for Mental Health among Transgender and Gender Nonconforming (TGNC) Youth: A Systematic Review." *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review* 24, no. 2 (2021): 183–206. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10567-021-00344-6.

UNESCO. "Various Reports on Gender Equality and Education," 2017.

University of Exeter. "Gender Stereotypes in Schools Impact on Girls and Boys with Mental Health Difficulties, Study Finds," April 2024. https://phys.org/news/2024-04-gender-stereotypes-schools-impact-girls.html.

Weinhardt, Lance S., and et al. "Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Youths' Public Facilities Use and Psychological Well-Being." *Transgender Health* 2, no. 1 (2017): 140–50. https://doi.org/10.1089/trgh.2017.0020.

Woods, Ross. "Progress on Gender Equality in Irish HEIs 2016-2019," 2020. https://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2019/07/Progress-on-Gender-Equality-in-Irish-HEIs-2016-2019.

About the authors

Ayana Pathak

Ayana Pathak is an aspiring academic, currently pursuing her doctorate in the Department of Education from the University of Oxford. Her research interests surround the area of qualitative aspects of gender education in developing countries, with a focus on school education. This largely draws upon various theoretical concepts of sociology of education, as well as the concept of the hidden curriculum, through which the social construction of gender as a category is aimed to be evaluated. Her academic background is in the discipline of Sociology, having done her Bachelor's and Master's in the same, before embarking on an MPhil in Education and thereafter, the current DPhil programme at Oxford. She is a passionate feminist who aims to study questions of inequality in the field of education- through the lens of gender based reproduction theory.

Cennet Engin

Cennet Engin is a full professor who teaches undergraduate and graduate courses related to education, curriculum, social foundations of education, needs assessment and classroom management at the Faculty of Education. She worked as an expert and consultant at various international projects, on inclusion, gender equality in education, gender sensitive schools, strengthening democratic culture in primary education, prevention of domestic violence against women and digital citizenship. Her academic works included girls' education, democratic schools, inclusive education, democratic citizenship and human rights education, child labour and education and gender policy in education. She was awarded a Fulbright Senior Research scholarship and conducted research at the University of Wisconsin, Madison.

Hannah Solley

Hannah Solley (she/her) is a qualified Dramatherapist who has worked in the area of youth, family and mental health for over fifteen years. She has designed and implemented mental health awareness programmes as well as working in anti-bullying programmes in schools. She has been working with the trans community for several years, providing family and teen support, as well as educational guidance to schools and organisations in Ireland. This includes trans inclusive policies, best practice ways to support gender diverse students and peer education in gender diversity and allyship. She is

passionate about youth mental health and creating positive changes to help young people reach their full potential.

Sam Blanckensee

Sam Blanckensee (they/he) is a equality, diversity and inclusion practitioner based in Ireland with extensive experience in equality in Higher Education through their role as the Equality Officer at Maynooth University. Sam holds an MA in management for the nonprofit sector. Sam has worked within Irish LGBTQ+ organisations in voluntary and professional roles since 2013. Sam's work covers a broad range of equality, diversity, inclusion and interculturalism initiatives including LGBTQ+ matters, gender equality, anti-racism, disability awareness and access for those within the international protection system. Sam is a non-binary trans person who is also neurodivergent and queer, All Means All is a project where the personal meets professional for Sam.

TEACHING AND LEARNING DURING CRISIS AND UNREST: STRATEGIES FOR SUSTAINING EDUCATION FOR ALL

Dua Jabr Dajani; Julia Schlam Salman; Mridula Muralidharan; and Pamela February

---

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=663#oembed-1

Example Case

Below are three cases presented by people who were or remain involved in a crisis in their country.

Note: For the sake of clarity for the reader, we have amended the direct transcript in the examples. For the exact words, please watch the full interview with Sara, Gunalp and Baprinran. See the link to the video above.

Case Example 1: Italy (COVID pandemic)

Sara (2020-2021)

"In the context of the beginning of the COVID crisis in Italy at the very beginning, everything was evolving, and nobody knew what was happening. They were closing schools and all the public buildings at the end of February, and we were in lockdown at the beginning of March. Nobody knew how to handle this emergency, especially the teachers and the children. The situation was really confusing and what was especially important at the beginning was to understand the needs of the children at that time and how, as a researcher, I could have a good impact on the situation and give my help in dealing with this. There was no possibility of returning to school, having access to materials and teachers were struggling to reestablish the normal course of

education. The first thing we did as researchers was to work with a group of student teachers who were in their last year of the Masters in Primary Education. They started collecting the needs of the teachers they were in contact with. We interviewed teachers and saw they had a huge workload. In terms of the technical side, there was a lack of technical know-how and infrastructure. They struggled to keep contact with the kids because they did not have contact with some families before COVID. From the children's side, they were constantly saying that they really wanted to go back to school; not to be at school, but to be in contact with their friends. We also collected the needs from the parents' side. For example, a mother was very sad to see that not every class was possible for her child. For some children, it appeared as if some teachers just disappeared. Not many from my experience, but it was also possible to hear stories like that where there was no contact. So we focused on their need for contact and relationships, and we built a project based on it.

It was very common in our context that we woke up with news of something and we talked about this with our students. We usually sat down with our students and just asked them, "how much do you know about the situation"? We just wanted to make sure what they knew and if we needed to add something to it or just clarify something about the situation. We didn't want to hide issues from them, but also we did not want to give them extra information that could scare them. This also happened with families, so we sat down and talked to their parents and just asked them, how much do your children know about the situation? Or do you want us to maybe elaborate more on it? Do you want us to clarify something that it's not easy for you to do it? So I think we acted as supporters in this sense."

Case Example 2: Turkey (natural disaster)

Gunalp (6 February 2023)

"On the 6th of February 2023, we experienced a huge catastrophe in the southeastern part of Turkey and northern Syria where two huge earthquakes and a series of smaller ones hit the area. As an educator in Turkey, we found ourselves in the middle of this crisis where we didn't know how many people we had lost. Education completely stopped in the region. Schools were closed. We couldn't access the teachers that we are working with inside our community. As far as we know, there were around 50,000 individuals who lost their lives during this earthquake and a lot of people needed basic necessities, for example, access to clean water, food and nourishment. A lot of buildings were destroyed, the city centre was completely destroyed, and some regions were not accessible to the public because the roads were destroyed as well. So, humanitarian aid couldn't go there. A lot of rescue missions couldn't be organised in some regions. So we have lost a lot of people that way as well.

Teachers who found themselves in this zone were also the victims of the catastrophe as well, but they were trying to help each other, as they were trying to survive. An organisation called Teachers Network supported the region, where the educators in our community tried to focus more on teachers, learners, and others in the region by supporting them psychologically

and socially. We battled disinformation in the communication networks through critical digital literacy. We started to analyse the messages, and WhatsApp groups and fact-checked every piece of information. We discussed with educators what could be done with the students, learners, and children because people were living in tent cities. So together as communities of practitioners, we created a series of activities for psychosocial support, to be implemented in the region, outside of the school settings.

One great example I would like to share is about this one old woman attending one of the workshops. She claimed that she had this granddaughter. She said that "I'm attending this workshop because I want to help her, in whatever ways I can". So she joined us. She attended every meeting that was being implemented by our teachers. Afterwards, we found that she lost everyone in her life during the earthquake and she didn't have a granddaughter. Actually, I don't know if she had one before the earthquake, but we realised that she just needed contact with other individuals.

I think educators are the only ones in society in times of crisis that can detect a need like that because other people focus on basic needs, building infrastructure and so on. So I think through that programme that our teachers and the community of practitioners inside that region created, we could reach out to a lot of people and try to help them make sense of this catastrophe and normalise the situation in some way. I want to mention the power of community in times of crisis. As a person who is working with communities of practitioners all the time, I see that individuals in solidarity can change anything. Basically, as individuals, I know we have some power, but I think that as communities, while connecting, and forming interpersonal relationships, that makes a huge difference. I think that changes everything."

Case Example 3: Iran (alternative schooling as a strategy for sustaining democratic principles in education)

Baran (current)

"Our crisis is an ongoing situation. I'm from Iran, and as a country in the Middle East, we have so many social unrest situations in the region. We are always in contact with so many situations and circumstances that require care for our children. I am mainly focusing on the overall picture of the situation in Iran in terms of education and how our school functions within the situation. So we really try to incorporate the holistic approach in these kinds of situations where psychological care is as important as education. So as much as the information is necessary for our students to know about the situation, we also need to know how they feel about it, and how they are reacting to it. Thus, the holistic approach is important. I think in our context, since it's a continuous situation, it's not a crisis like you would also describe, there is no specific training that we could give to our teachers so they would be equipped in these situations. The only support that I can confidently say that we are constantly trying to provide to our teachers is mental health support. It's very important what they do to support the students

and their families, but at the same time, they need support. They need to also talk about their feelings, and how they feel, because they're also affected by the situation, of course. "

Note: We have condensed the interviews somewhat to capture the gist of the speakers. Please see the full interviews via the link above.

Initial questions

In this chapter you will find the answers to the following questions:

1. How do we define a complex concept such as " a crisis"?
2. What are the potential challenges for sustaining teaching and learning during times of crisis?
3. How do we respond to the educational challenges brought on by the crisis?
4. How can teachers be agents of change in a crisis?

Introduction to Topic

The authors acknowledge the complexity of crises, and the difficulty in addressing every crisis situation (i.e war) within the scope of this chapter. Thus, here we focus on the teacher's role in creating a safe welcoming space where meaningful learning takes place in addition to focusing on strategies for sustaining education for all during times of crisis and unrest.

Crises, by definition, are disruptive to the school environment. They affect planning, stability, and continuity, as well as teacher and learner safety and well-being. In this chapter, we present a framework for teachers and teacher educators to navigate both isolated incidents of crises and prolonged periods of duress. We begin by defining crises, highlighting variations in scope and severity and acknowledging the increasing impact of instability on regions, countries, communities, and schools. Building on the VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity) framework (for further information see Bennett & Lemoine 2014; Stein, 2021), we then present some of the short-term and long-term challenges, which may arise during crises. Based on case studies from Turkey, Italy, and

Iran, and examples from across the globe, we outline guiding principles and practices for sustaining teaching and learning during times of crisis. The chapter concludes with additional references and resources for teachers.

Key aspects

Defining crises

Defining a crisis is not merely a matter of describing events; it can involve a complex and politicised process. The term "crisis" lacks a singular, universal definition, as these events are multifaceted and can affect individuals and groups in varying ways. What one person may view as a disaster, another might see as an opportunity for positive change. This diversity in perception stems from differing values, perspectives, and priorities. As a result, managing crises becomes challenging for governments and authorities, as there is no singular rulebook to follow. Instead, various groups, including political parties, activist organisations, the media, and citizens, interpret and respond to crises in their own ways.

The concept of a crisis encompasses a wide range of events and situations that significantly disrupt society and threaten stability across economic, social, political and educational sectors. From acute emergencies such as natural disasters to prolonged circumstances such as ongoing famine. These events share characteristics of destabilisation and the need for rapid and effective responses. Understanding the many aspects of crises is essential for creating effective strategies that reduce their impact and strengthen resilience, the ability to adapt, recover, and grow stronger in the face of adversity.

As societies continue to face complex challenges, from pandemics, to armed-conflicts to climate-related disasters, the ability to adapt, respond, and recover will become increasingly important. This underscores the need for continued research, preparation, and collaborative efforts across sectors and nations to build a more resilient global community. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict provides a powerful example of this complexity. The events of 1948 mark the Palestinian Nakba and Israeli Independence. For Palestinians, the Nakba (meaning "catastrophe" in Arabic) represents a profound crisis marked by the mass displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, the destruction of villages, and the loss of their homeland. From this perspective, the Nakba is a disaster with enduring consequences, symbolising a crisis of identity, loss, and ongoing struggle for rights and recognition. Conversely, for Jews, the same period is celebrated as a declaration of independence from the British Mandate and a return to their historic homeland after 2000 years of exile. From this viewpoint, the events of 1948 are seen as a triumphant moment of nation-building and self-determination. The crisis for Jews was the survival of their people and the creation of a sovereign state, which was achieved through the founding of Israel. These differing interpretations reflect how deeply political and value-laden the process of defining a crisis can be. What is seen as a devastating loss by one group can be perceived as a

historical victory by another. As a result, managing crises like these becomes challenging for governments and authorities, as there is no straightforward rulebook to follow. Instead, various groups, including political parties, activist organisations, the media, and the global community, interpret and respond to crises in their own ways, influenced by their unique historical narratives and contemporary realities.

Post-crisis debates often centre around what caused the crisis, its severity, and the lessons that can be drawn. These discussions are not just about the facts; they are also about broader worldviews and what actions should be taken. Therefore, terms like "crisis," "disaster," or "emergency" are not neutral descriptors but are embedded within a larger political discourse about how society understands and addresses major events (McConnell, 2020).

A crisis can be understood as a significant and destabilising event or phase that drastically affects key aspects of society, including the quality of life and future prospects of individuals, particularly the youth (Bojović et al., 2020). For instance, the COVID-19 pandemic severely disrupted educational systems, posing a threat to societal stability and progress. This situation necessitated rapid and effective responses from institutions, including a shift from traditional to remote learning models (Bojović et al., 2020).

Similarly, a crisis can refer to a substantial event or series of events that disrupt society and hinder development, often characterised by conflict, economic turmoil, political instability, and social upheaval. In Ukraine, the crisis brought on by war has profoundly impacted the education system, prompting swift modernisation and the adoption of crisis-responsive educational models. This situation hinders sustainable growth and liberal values, displaces communities, and calls for a reassessment and reinforcement of core values and national identity through education (Lavrysh et al., 2022).

Moreover, a crisis is an intense event that significantly affects societal structures, such as educational activities, by posing challenges related to infrastructure, mental health, security, and communication. The earthquake in Kahramanmaraş, Turkey, on February 6, 2023, exemplifies such a crisis, requiring immediate action from educators and policymakers to address the various challenges faced by teachers and students. This crisis highlights the need for both individual and collective strategies to restore normalcy and enhance preparedness and crisis management for the future (Arıcı et al., 2023). Furthermore, a crisis can manifest as a widespread and persistent problem that greatly disrupts societal well-being and development, often involving severe issues like hunger and malnutrition. In many African nations, the hunger crisis has been a persistent challenge over the past three decades, as evidenced by various Global Hunger Index (GHI) scores. This crisis is exacerbated by factors such as undernourishment, stunted growth, and wasting in children, and is linked to broader issues of human development, social security, and terrorism (Otekunrin et al., 2020).

The politics of crisis terminology is a nuanced and strategic aspect of political communication. The term "crisis" encompasses various events such as accidents,

emergencies, and disasters, typically characterised by high threat, uncertainty, and urgency. However, the absence of a universally accepted definition reflects the diverse ways societies and political actors attempt to understand and address extreme events. The language of crises is a powerful tool used by governments and opposition groups to shape public perception and influence responses. Governments may invoke crisis rhetoric to justify extraordinary measures, promote unity, or advance policies, sometimes for political gain. Opposition groups use it to highlight issues, pressure the government, or push for change. The framing of crises, through terms that emphasise scale, urgency, or causes, shapes how the public perceives and reacts to events. Recognising this political dimension is crucial for critically analysing how crises are presented and their broader societal impact.

Crisis language may be used to criticise opponents, accusing them of being unfit to lead during critical times or failing to support the country. In extreme cases, it may be used to suppress dissent, with the argument that criticism during a crisis can hinder effective problem-solving. Overall, crisis language is a powerful tool that governments use to drive change, silence critics, and shape public perception during challenging times.

The key takeaways in understanding the complexity of defining a crisis are:

1. Diversity of Crises: Crises vary widely, including health emergencies, conflicts, natural disasters, and persistent societal issues.
2. Impact on Society: They affect multiple facets of society, particularly vulnerable populations such as youth and marginalised communities.
3. Disruption of Education Systems: Crises often severely disrupt education, necessitating innovative approaches to ensure continuity and adaptation.
4. Necessity of Crisis Management: Effective crisis management requires both immediate action and long-term strategic planning to build resilience.
5. Opportunities for Transformation: Crises can present challenges as well as opportunities for societal transformation and the reinforcement of core values.
6. Global Interconnectedness: The interconnected nature of modern society means that crises often have far-reaching consequences beyond their immediate geographic location.

What are the potential challenges for sustaining meaningful teaching and learning during times of crisis?

Sustaining teaching and learning for all during times of crisis presents multiple challenges. Numerous factors can impact the quality and the conditions of the learning environment as well as the welfare of both the teachers and the students. Because crises are seen as disruptive, they jolt educational systems and impact the broader social and family equilibrium. This imbalance affects learners' immediate and long-term needs including physical needs, social needs and, ultimately, integrative needs (Prince & Howard, 2002).

The VUCA Framework

One model that can be helpful in understanding the challenges that stem from crises is the VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity) framework. Initially conceived of as a mindset for leadership development in complex military and later executive business systems (McNulty, 2015), this paradigm has since been applied to a range of fields including crisis management. The COVID-19 Pandemic, for example, exemplified VUCA conditions and this framework provided a lens for helping leaders and decision-makers to navigate the health crises.

In the following section, we discuss how actors within educational systems (such as teachers, students, school administrators and support staff) can use VUCA thinking to respond to crises. Although some scholars have critiqued the VUCA framework for its limited applicability in societies where volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity are widespread (Eoyang & Jenkins 2020), we aim to demonstrate how this system of thought can be applied to both specific incidents of crisis, such as a school shooting, and prolonged periods of crisis, such as ongoing armed conflicts and war. In both circumstances, volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity are present. How individuals and, specifically educators, respond to VUCA conditions can impact educational continuity as well as both short-term and long-term challenges that stem from crises.

Crisis Challenges through a VUCA Lens

Notwithstanding the complexity of a crisis, all crises exhibit degrees of volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity, and can be classified on a continuum from low to medium to high (Mladjan & Cvetković, 2012). Examining crisis situations using VUCA categories can help determine how to act in similar circumstances.

Volatility generally refers to the surrounding environment where circumstances can be unpredictable and demand urgency. Changes can be sudden and difficult to prepare for and feelings of helplessness may ensue. To counter volatility, teachers need to set expectations and then adjust them based on the situation at hand. Doing and achieving become antidotes to helplessness as well as a means for fostering resilience among learners (Schlam Salman & Schvarcz, 2024). An important caveat when assessing volatility, concerns the degree of threat and uncertainty present. When threats are high, as in an active earthquake or a barrage of missiles, immediate action is required. Educational frameworks, particularly those in areas of ongoing crises, may already have plans in place for managing the volatility characteristic of crises. Sustaining learning through definitive, yet malleable, expectations, even in extreme circumstances, fosters positive self worth and the possibility of a return to stability and calm.

Uncertainty remains a feature of crises, in particular calamities characterised by widespread injury, destruction and, in the most extreme cases, death. A VUCA framework advocates for action despite uncertainty. This is necessary to preserve learners' social and

emotional wellbeing and to find a balance between scholastic goals and general welfare. It has been well-documented that learning is a cognitive, social and emotional undertaking that involves more than the mere transmission of knowledge (Zembylas, 2007). In order to manage and respond to the uncertainties present during crises, educators need to complement expectations with empathy and care. In particular, the model of Maslow's hierarchy of needs can help assess degrees of uncertainty and appropriate expectations. Learners whose basic physiological needs are not being met require modified and/or scaffold expectations as well as additional flexibility and out-of-the-box pedagogy. Nevertheless, maintaining learning and some scholastic expectations, even in the face of uncertainty and turmoil, is key to resilience and a return to societal functioning where attending school is the general and optimal norm.

Complexity exemplifies crisis situations. Both local, isolated incidents and major, geopolitical disasters tend to be dynamic and multifaceted with interdependent, and sometimes competing parts. Rarely do such circumstances fit into neat or simple "good-bad" slogans but instead reflect complex, interdependent interests and concerns. Complexity requires vigorous assessment of evidence as well as clarity and critical thinking. Teachers must grapple with information and misinformation fuelled, in part, by social media platforms where non-experts can easily disseminate "news" that may not be totally accurate. Teachers play a key role in helping learners to navigate complexity in crisis first by ensuring that the facts about the situation are descriptive and accurate and then by encouraging their learners to challenge hearsay and to check multiple information sources. See the example provided by Sara (Case Study 2 – COVID Pandemic in Italy) when describing how "news" was discussed with learners and their parents.

Ambiguity is present in most crisis situations and therefore demands a shift away from rigid predictions and control. Instead, it calls for fostering competencies that enable individuals to effectively navigate volatility, uncertainty and complexity.

In this context, critical and affective literacy can be pivotal. Critical literacy involves understanding socio-historical contexts and acknowledging how crises disproportionately affect certain ethnic and indigenous communities. Affective literacy entails teachers providing the opportunity to learners to reflect on personal desires and emotions and them taking responsibility for their consequences. Together, these literacies can empower individuals to confront discomfort without succumbing to it and to ultimately envision alternative futures. Thus, teachers need to acknowledge the ambiguity of the experience for all affected alongside a commitment to evidence-based information as this is imperative for mitigating duress in order to cope to some extent as this is ultimately important for sustaining education during times of crisis.

Unpacking the Challenges of Crises

A VUCA framework can be helpful in clarifying features that generally accompany crises,

namely volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity. These also contribute to and inform the challenges that stem from crises. In general, such challenges can be divided into (1) immediate or short-term challenges and (2) long-term challenges that persist even after the crisis has subsided. In addition, the ramifications stemming from the challenges generally correspond to the magnitude of the crisis (low, medium or high).

Short-Term Challenges

Short-term challenges for teaching and learning during times of crisis tend to revolve around basic physiological and safety needs. This is the case for many kinds of crises including natural disasters, health pandemics and armed conflicts. At times, school spaces may no longer be functional or safe. In these cases, there might be governmental bodies, which regulate the initial challenges such as determining whether it is safe for children to go to school at all. In the event that school spaces are not viable, determining where, physically, children can attend school is another immediate challenge. Solutions sometimes require creative and out-of-the-box solutions such as mobile schools or community-based schools. Another viable alternative, assuming connectivity and access to digital resources is online or hybrid learning. Yet another urgent short-term challenge pertains to infrastructure for ensuring children's safety. Schools being conducted in war zones, for example, ideally have bomb shelters or areas where children can take cover if necessary. This is also the case for natural disasters such as hurricanes and tornadoes. In all these cases, schools may have a crisis response policy, which ideally is familiar to all involved stakeholders. In their comprehensive article on maintaining education during wars, Salha et al (2024) outline different educational responses to short-term challenges focusing on the importance of maintaining education despite unrest.

Long-Term Challenges

Long-term challenges for teaching and learning during times of crisis tend to have lasting implications that correlate with socioeconomic levels and parental education levels (Blaskó et al., 2022). Long-term challenges can be divided into three broad categories: long-term scholastic challenges, long-term cognitive challenges and long-term psychological challenges.

Long-term scholastic challenges relate to specific knowledge gaps that impact future academic achievement. For example, children who have missed significant parts of first grade, where foundational literacy skills are often acquired, may continue to demonstrate delays in reading and literacy years later. Delays in scholastic skills may overlap with long-term cognitive challenges, which can include delays in abstract and critical thinking as well as delays in stages of development. Long-term psychological challenges may also overlap with academic and cognitive challenges, in particular those stemming from sustained volatility, uncertainty, violence and trauma. Mental health issues such as anxiety, stress

and depression may be pervasive. In addition, enduring ongoing crisis and unrest may result in other psychological conditions that impact learners' ability to maintain day-to-day functioning.

Addressing long-term challenges requires assistance from trained professionals who can guide teachers and other educational stakeholders. Several chapters in this modular open source textbook can provide further resources. They are linked here as follows:

*Teacher agency and inclusion

*Inclusive Education in diverse contexts (See section on Refugee Camps)

*Restorative Practice in School: Implementing restorative approaches to resolve conflicts and build positive relationships within the school community

*Breaking the silence: Empowering schools in the practice of trauma informed education

The impact of education on conflict and its resolution

As much as crises have an impact on education in terms of learning and teaching, education in turn can play a crucial role in shaping societies and can significantly influence both the emergence and resolution of conflicts. Understanding the dual nature of education, its potential to reinforce divisions or promote peace, is essential for fostering stable and harmonious communities.

How education reinforces, exacerbates, and prolongs conflict:

1. Reinforcing dominant narratives: Education systems can perpetuate dominant narratives, stereotypes, and ideologies that fuel conflict. For example, education in some areas may emphasise a particular ethnic or religious identity, creating divisions between groups. For instance, in Myanmar, educational curricula often emphasise a Buddhist-nationalist perspective, marginalising ethnic minorities such as the Rohingya. This has contributed to longstanding tensions and violence against minority groups as the educational system entrenches a singular national identity rather than promoting inclusivity.

2. Intensifying inequality: Inequalities in access to education can widen existing social and economic gaps, leading to resentment and feelings of marginalisation. For example, the educational disparities during Apartheid in South Africa and Namibia served to entrench social stratification and disenfranchise Black South Africans. The unequal provision of "Bantu Education" not only maintained the regime's control but also fueled uprisings, particularly among students who sought equal rights. Similarly, in Colombia, limited access to quality education in rural areas exacerbated inequality and drove the youth towards armed groups, perpetuating the cycle of violence.

3. Promoting polarising curricula: Educational materials can be biased or one-sided, promoting a particular political or ideological agenda, which can deepen divisions and fuel conflict. For example, History textbooks in Namibia and South Africa portrayed a biased view which did not include the history of the oppressed people. Similarly, the

use of biased history textbooks during the ethnic conflict in the former Yugoslavia contributed to entrenched ethnic divisions, as each group received a version of history that portrayed them as victims and the other groups as aggressors. Such curricula hampered reconciliation efforts and perpetuated animosities long after the war had ended.

4. Lack of critical thinking skills: Education systems that focus solely on rote learning or memorisation may leave students ill-equipped to navigate complex conflicts. In authoritarian regimes, such as North Korea, where the education system emphasises obedience and ideology over critical thinking, individuals lack the tools to question and challenge the status quo. This not only perpetuates existing conflicts but also stifles potential avenues for peaceful change and progress.

How education promotes peace and positive influences:

1. Fostering tolerance and understanding: Education can promote cross-cultural understanding, empathy, and tolerance by incorporating diverse perspectives and experiences. For instance, in post-genocide Rwanda, educational initiatives have included curricula that address the history and implications of the genocide while promoting unity and understanding among different ethnic groups. Programmes that encourage dialogue and shared experiences have been instrumental in fostering reconciliation.

2. Critical thinking and problem-solving: Education that emphasises critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration can help individuals develop skills to address conflicts constructively. In Finland, educational reforms highlight project-based learning and cooperative tasks that encourage students to think creatively and work together, equipping them to approach conflicts with innovative and collaborative solutions.

3. Conflict resolution skills: Education can impart conflict resolution techniques, such as mediation, negotiation, and dialogue, to help individuals manage disputes effectively. Programmes like "Peace Education" in various conflict-affected zones, such as Gaza and Israel, teach students how to engage in dialogue, manage disagreements, and seek collaborative solutions, fostering a culture of peace.

4. Social cohesion: Education can promote social cohesion by emphasising shared values, common goals, and a sense of shared humanity. In countries like Lebanon, initiatives that bring together students from different religious and cultural backgrounds through joint learning opportunities can build bridges and foster mutual respect, laying a foundation for a more harmonious society.

Recommendations for maximising the positive impact of education

To maximise the positive impact of education in crisis and conflict-affected contexts, it's essential to:

1. Develop inclusive curricula that promote critical thinking, tolerance, and understanding. Curricula should promote critical thinking, tolerance, and understanding, integrating diverse perspectives to foster an environment of mutual respect.
2. Provide access to education for all individuals, regardless of their background or circumstances. Ensuring access to education for all individuals, regardless of their background or circumstances, is essential in preventing marginalisation and resentment.
3. Foster safe learning environments that prioritise student well-being and protection. Learning spaces must prioritise student well-being and protection, encouraging open dialogue and resilience in the face of adversity.
4. Encourage community engagement and participation in education planning and implementation. Actively involving communities in educational planning and implementation can foster a sense of ownership and relevance, ensuring that the education system aligns with the needs of the populace.

By acknowledging and addressing the complex role of education in both perpetuating and resolving conflict, we can work towards building more peaceful, inclusive, and resilient societies. Through strategic interventions in education, we can lay the groundwork for understanding, empathy, and collaboration in the face of division and discord. (Adapted from Di Maio, Brück & Miarri, 2022).

How do we respond to the educational challenges brought on by the crisis?

In times of crisis, the role of teachers and educators extends beyond the physical boundaries of the school walls and being the mere convenors of structured and formalised academic content. The examples provided at the beginning of the chapter help us understand that crises such as health pandemics, natural disasters, or social and political upheaval tend to not only disturb but could potentially also disrupt a student's traditional learning environment, creating unprecedented challenges for teachers. It is here that we acknowledge the centrality of 'care' in education, for its role has become more prominent and apparent. The chapter relies on two pedagogical approaches that have emerged as crucial in addressing the various challenges of teaching during different crises. These are 'pedagogy of care' (Noddings 1992; Mortari, 2016; Mehrotra, 2021) and 'trauma-informed pedagogy' (Brunzell et. al, 2019), and they are used as the foundational theories for addressing the challenges since they recognise and emphasise the emotional and psychological needs of the students during these unusual times.

As stated earlier, both 'pedagogy of care' and 'trauma-informed pedagogy' recognise 'care' as a core principle that guides and dictates the pedagogical interventions. Care is essentially fundamental in education, particularly during times of crisis. This section, therefore, will attempt to define the theories briefly. Drawing from the two theories, the chapter will shed light on the various principles, values, and strategies educators can adopt during these difficult periods.

Pedagogy of Care

The theory of pedagogy of care is widely used in education and emphasises empathy, nurturing, and creating enduring bonds between teachers and pupils. Emerging from feminist theories, humanistic education, ethics of care, and particularly Nel Noddings' (1992) work, it highlights the centrality of 'care' in education. It sheds light on previously ignored emotional and mental needs of students, alongside their academic needs, as a way to promote a more comprehensive education and pedagogical system. We recognise and acknowledge the need for it in today's time, which are often dictated by unprecedented events and crises. The pedagogy of care, therefore, has regained its importance.

The foundational idea of the pedagogy of care is rooted in the philosophy of ethics of care, which emphasises relational dynamics over individualism. Nel Noddings (1992), a proponent of the theory, argued that education should prioritise caring relationships between teachers and students. For her, care is both a moral and educational imperative. Noddings (1992) highlights that students thrive in environments where they feel valued, respected, and emotionally supported. Ethics of care is the philosophical and foundational principle of pedagogy of care. It prioritises and emphasises the building and development of nurturing connections between educators and learners, providing care as both morally and educationally necessary (Noddings, 1992). These educational settings, therefore, foster a sense of worth, respect, and emotional support that are conducive to students' well-being.

A critical aspect of the pedagogy of care is the emotional labour required by educators. As Mortari (2016) suggests, care involves nurturing emotions that contribute to a healthy, respectful relationship between the 'caregiver' (educator) and the 'care receiver' (learner). In an educational context, this means that teachers must be emotionally attuned to their students' needs, providing them with a sense of safety and belonging, which facilitates learning. However, what lies at the core of this progressive pedagogy is the emotional labour that educators must perform. According to Mortari (2016), providing care entails fostering feelings that support a positive, mutually respected connection between the care provider and the person receiving it. This implies that in an educational setting, educators have to be sensitive to the emotional needs of their pupils to provide them with a sense of security and acceptance, which promotes learning, which given the uncertain circumstances of crisis is an important aspect. Mortari (2016) further investigates how

care in educational environments nourishes students' emotional and intellectual growth. The focus is on seeing care as an active, continuous process that calls on teachers to develop relationships of trust with learners to foster a conducive and thriving learning environment. This care is not solely for learners but should be extended to communities of care for all educators who operate in the learning environment because without their well being catered for, they cannot in turn care fully for their learners.

Ba (2022) highlights the importance of fostering community and well-being, even in the face of mass disruption and loss, and how the duty of care, during such times, is not merely about delivering structured academic content but ensuring the mental and emotional well-being of students, due to heightened anxiety and stress levels. Arguing on similar lines, Mehrotra (2021) reflects on the need for collective well-being and community care in educational space while emphasising the importance of co-creating meaning and fostering a sense of belonging, the practice of care, herein, is not a peripheral concern but central to the educational mission, especially in times of widespread distress. This educational philosophy is also closely tied to the belief in social justice, wherein we recognise and acknowledge how the various systematic and institutional barriers disproportionately affect marginalised students. Therefore, when we attempt to centre 'care', educators resist the commodification of learning and create spaces where students are seen as whole persons, bringing their identities and the challenges that come along with it, rather than mere consumers of knowledge (Noddings, 1992; Mehrotra, 2021).

Trauma-informed Pedagogy

Another key theory that compliments the theory of pedagogy of care is Trauma-informed pedagogy. It has emerged as an essential framework in modern educational systems to support learners who have experienced adverse life events and therefore is relevant to learners in citations of crises (Brunzell et al., 2019). It is grounded in principles of psychological safety and therefore gives importance to mental and emotional well-being, empathy and understanding. The strength of this theory lies in acknowledging the deep impact of the trauma of an event or a crisis on the learners' ability to be part of a structured academic program and therefore impacting their learning and ability to be a part of a formalised academic setting. This educational theory is rooted in the understanding that trauma is not a rare event, unfortunately. Hence, it is necessary for educators to incorporate trauma-informed practices into their teaching to create an environment where the learners most importantly feel physically and mentally safe, supported and a flexible model of learning is offered to them (Brunzell et al., 2019).

The implementation of trauma-informed pedagogy necessitates more than just a mere understanding of trauma but rather involves understanding how a shift in how educators approach teaching and interacting with students ought to occur. As Brunzell et. al (2019) suggest, trauma-informed strategies can include flexible learning environments, emotional

regulation activities, and practices that prioritise relational connection over academic content alone. This includes, firstly, an effective strategy for developing safe classrooms, where the learners are encouraged to express their feelings without fear of judgement. This could include creating routines, open and safe communication, and practices that ease the stress (Brunzell et al., 2019). Most importantly, however, is that this approach incorporates positive behaviour and restorative practices. Understanding that behaviours of 'indiscipline' during the classes may stem from trauma allows teachers to respond with empathy and support rather than punishment (Cramer, 2018).

Trauma-informed pedagogy represents a vital shift in how educators approach teaching, wherein they prioritise safety, trust, and empowerment in situations of crisis, whether short-lived or ongoing therefore, these educators create classrooms that are not only spaces of academic learning but also places of healing and growth (Brunzell et al., 2019).

The educational response to different crises can be as varied as the nature of crises themselve varies. As the term crisis implies, a significant disruption affects the normal functioning of a society, leading to immediate challenges that require urgent response and recovery efforts. Also, crises can take many forms, including natural disasters, armed conflicts, pandemics, and socioeconomic upheavals. Each type of crisis can have profound implications for education systems, necessitating tailored responses that consider the specific context and needs of affected populations. Thus, the authors do not claim that the responses discussed below are the only viable ones.

In the next section, we will explore how educational institutions and stakeholders can respond to the challenges posed by crises, focusing first on the principles and values of care, followed by practical response measures involving various stakeholders.

Principles and Values of Care in Education

1. Empathy and Understanding:

In times of crisis, it is essential to cultivate an educational environment that prioritises emotional well-being. Research suggests that supportive educational environments contribute to better mental health outcomes for students and can mitigate the negative impacts of stress and trauma (Brymer, et al., 2012). Schools can introduce comprehensive support systems where teachers are trained to recognise and respond to emotional distress.

2. Inclusivity and Equity

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted existing inequities within education systems worldwide. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) stated that marginalised groups are disproportionately affected by educational disruptions

(UNESCO, 2020). Emergency educational responses must ensure equitable access to learning resources, particularly for vulnerable populations.

3. Flexibility and Adaptability

Education systems must demonstrate flexibility to adapt to rapidly changing circumstances. The World Bank emphasises the importance of agile education systems that can switch between various modes of learning (World Bank, 2022). This flexibility could involve using online learning platforms, hybrid models, or community learning hubs to ensure continuity in education.

4. Collaboration and Community Engagement

Stakeholder collaboration enhances the effectiveness of educational responses. Evidence shows that schools engaged with parents and the community during crises saw improved educational outcomes and student engagement (Epstein & Sheldon, 2022). Building partnerships with local organisations can also facilitate resource-sharing and support programs.

5. Safety and Protection

Ensuring safety in educational settings is paramount, particularly in crisis situations. The Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack emphasises the necessity of implementing protective measures and protocols to safeguard students and teachers from violence and trauma (Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, 2019). This could include training educational staff in crisis response and establishing secure infrastructures.

Response Practices for Different Stakeholders

1. Governments and Policy Makers

Governments must lead in establishing frameworks for educational continuity during crises. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) outlines the necessity for responsive policy frameworks to secure educational planning and resource allocation even in emergencies (UNICEF, 2020). This guidance leads to actionable steps in prioritising education during and after crises.

2. Schools and Educators

Schools need to adopt trauma-informed approaches to education as part of their crisis response. Research indicates that trauma-informed practices positively affect academic

performance and student behaviour (Casale & Linderkamp, 2024) Educators trained in understanding trauma can create supportive learning environments to help students recover and engage meaningfully.

3. Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)

NGOs often fill gaps when governmental responses may falter. They have the expertise and flexibility to implement programs targeting unique educational needs during crises. For instance, organisations like Save the Children provide emergency education responses that adapt to the changing conditions in conflict and disaster zones (Save the Children, 2021).

4. Families and Communities

Families and communities are integral to educational success, particularly during crises. Communities can play a vital role in advocating for educational needs while establishing networks for support. Research has shown that family engagement positively influences children's academic achievement (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

4. How can teachers be agents of change in a crisis?During times of crisis, teachers play a crucial role as agents of social change, assuming multifaceted responsibilities that go beyond traditional and expected educational duties. Such challenging times create an environment of heightened stress, fear, and uncertainty. The safety and well-being of learners, especially those from socially marginalised communities, are often compromised (Davis et al. 2021). Classrooms, embedded within the fabric of the community and society, reflect this diversity, encompassing students of various social identities, such as class, caste, gender, religion, ethnicity, and disability. See the chapter on Teacher Agency

Teachers are essential in fostering physically and emotionally safe spaces where learners feel secure. This involves providing emotional support to alleviate anxiety and stress. They must ensure the safety and security of all learners while maintaining a sense of 'adaptive normalcy' and providing targeted support in the case of learners with specific educational needs.

One of the essential tasks for teachers during crises is to unpack the nature of the crisis thoughtfully and respectfully. This includes but is not limited to facilitating discussions that explore the crisis, encouraging critical thinking and promoting empathy among students, helping them process complex emotions and develop nuanced perspectives on current events. This has to be done in an age-appropriate manner (UNESCO, 2020).

Extending learning beyond the confines of the school is another critical role for teachers. Teachers make education more relevant and impactful by embracing the pedagogy of care (Noddings, 1992; Mortari, 2016; Mehrotra, 2021) and trauma-informed pedagogy (Brunzell et al., 2019), as discussed in the previous sections, by moulding school knowledge and linking it to real-world events. This approach fosters a sense of purpose and engagement,

helping students see the value of their education in real-life contexts. The curriculum must adapt to accommodate diverse learning styles, ensuring meaningful engagement for all students.

Teachers also serve as role models, demonstrating empathy, resilience, acceptance, and flexibility and encouraging respect and morality (Cappy 2016). By embodying these traits, teachers reinforce positive coping mechanisms and encourage adaptive behaviours among students. Creating a safe and inclusive classroom environment, coupled with open communication and empathy, is crucial. It also fosters a sense of belonging and mutual respect. As discussed, these practices are at the core and embodiment of 'care'.

Mindfulness practices can help both teachers and students manage stress and maintain focus amidst uncertainty. Lastly, collaboration among teachers is essential for enhancing support systems and promoting effective crisis response strategies (Ba, 2022). By sharing resources and best practices, educators can better meet the evolving needs of students and the community.

Conclusion

In times of crisis, whether due to global pandemics, natural disasters, or societal upheavals, the role of education becomes more critical than ever. This chapter has examined the multifaceted challenges faced by educators, students, and communities during these troubled periods, and it has highlighted strategies for maintaining meaningful education amidst such adversity.

Key insights include:

1. The importance of understanding crises through frameworks like VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity) to better anticipate and respond effectively.
2. The vital role of teachers as change-makers, going beyond academic instruction to offer emotional support, create safe spaces, and nurture resilience.
3. The necessity of adopting learner-centred pedagogies, such as the 'pedagogy of care' and 'trauma-informed pedagogy,' which emphasise students' emotional well-being in tandem with academic development.
4. The need for adaptability and flexibility in educational methods, including the use of technology and alternative learning models when traditional approaches are disrupted.
5. The power of collaboration between educators, families, communities, NGOs, and policymakers to create robust support systems that prioritise teachers' and students' learning and well-being.

As we navigate an increasingly unpredictable world, the ability to sustain education during crises is essential for educators and educational systems. By fostering empathy, inclusivity,

and flexibility, we ensure that learning continues to thrive even in the most challenging conditions.

The lessons from global crises reveal that education is not just about imparting knowledge, but also about building resilience, fostering community, and nurturing hope. As we move forward, let us embrace these insights, continually supporting educators who, despite being overwhelmed, remain committed to their work and break the silence on their challenges.

Refaat Alareer, a distinguished Palestinian professor and writer, dedicated his life to amplifying Gazan voices through literature and initiatives like "We Are Not Numbers." Tragically killed in a Gaza airstrike on December 7, 2023, his legacy endures. If his work and poems teach us anything, it's that even in the darkest times, education preserves stories and keeps alive the hope that one day, these voices will be heard, Refaat Alareer wrote:

> If I must die,
> you must live
> to tell my story
> to sell my things
> to buy a piece of cloth
> and some strings,
> (make it white with a long tail)
> so that a child, somewhere in Gaza
> while looking heaven in the eye
> awaiting his dad who left in a blaze —
> and bid no one farewell
> not even to his flesh not even to himself —
> sees the kite, my kite you made, flying up above,
> and thinks for a moment an angel is there
> bringing back love.
> If I must die
> let it bring hope,
> let it be a story.
>
> REFAAT ALAREER

Alareer's poem, despite the immense tragedy that it is related to, gives us a message of hope and love. It teaches us that at the heart of every crisis, human beings suffer, and despite this suffering, human beings are resilient.

Local contexts

> *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*
>
> *https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=663#h5p-39*

Closing questions to discuss or tasks

Having read the chapter, discuss in small groups your own experience(s) with a crisis situation/crises. Reflect on:

1. What makes it a crisis? Use the definitions discussed under 1. Understanding the complexity of defining a crisis to assist you in formulating your answer.
2. What challenges did you and your community encounter?
3. How did these challenges influence learning and teaching during/after the immediate crisis?
4. What was the response to these challenges? (See 3. How do we respond to the educational challenges brought on by a crisis?)
5. In your opinion, how can these responses be improved in crisis situations?
6. How can you as a prospective teacher be an agent of change so that inclusive strategies can reach all learners in your class/school/community to mitigate to some extent the far-reaching impact of a crisis?
7. Once your groups report back to the whole class, take note of how the challenges and responses are different based on the different types of crisis.
8. More importantly, take note of how the challenges and responses are similar across the various crises.

Literature

Arıcı, Faruk, Hasan Bozkaya, Ekrem Cengiz, and Memet Kuzey. "Education in Disaster Situations: The Impact of the Kahramanmaraş Earthquake on Teachers' Experiences." *Sakarya University Journal of Education* 13, no. 4 (2023): 650–84.

Attack, Global Coalition to Protect Education from. "Education Under Attack 2024," 2024.

https://protectingeducation.org/wp-content/uploads/eua_2024_execsum_eng.pdf.

Ba, Oumar. "When Teaching Is Impossible: A Pandemic Pedagogy of Care." In *Pandemic Pedagogy: Teaching International Relations Amid COVID-19*, 113–25. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2022.

Bennett, Nathan, and G. James Lemoine. "What VUCA Really Means for You." *Harvard Business Review* 92, no. 1/2 (2014): 27.

Blaskó, Zsuzsa, Patricia da Costa, and Sylke V. Schnepf. "Learning Losses and Educational Inequalities in Europe: Mapping the Potential Consequences of the COVID-19 Crisis." *Journal of European Social Policy* 32, no. 4 (2022): 361–75. https://doi.org/10.1177/09589287221091687.

Bojović, Živko, Petar D. Bojović, Dušan Vujošević, and Jelena Šuh. "Education in Times of Crisis: Rapid Transition to Distance Learning." *Computer Applications in Engineering Education* 28, no. 6 (2020): 1467–89.

Brück, Tilman, Michele Di Maio, and Sami Miaari. "Learning the Hard Way: The Effect of Conflict on Education." In *Global Economic Consequences of the War in Ukraine: Sanctions, Supply Chain, Sustainability*, 175–80, 2022. https://cepr.org/voxeu/columns/learning-hard-way-effect-conflict-education.

Brunzell, Tom, Helen Stokes, and Lea Waters. "Shifting Teacher Practice in Trauma-Affected Classrooms: Practice Pedagogy Strategies within a Trauma-Informed Positive Education Model." *School Mental Health* 11, no. 3 (2019): 600–614.

Brymer, Melissa, Matt Taylor, Pia Escudero, Anne Jacobs, Mindy Kronenberg, Robert Macy, Lou Ann Mock, Linda Payne, Robert Pynoos, and Juliet Vogel. "Psychological First Aid for Schools: Field Operations Guide (2nd Ed.)." National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2012. https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/pfa_for_schools_no_appendices.pdf.

Cappy, Christina Lane. "Shifting the Future?: Teachers as Agents of Social Change in South African Secondary Schools." *Education as Change* 20, no. 3 (2016): 119–40.

Casale, Gino, and Friedrich Linderkamp. "Global Perspectives on Trauma-Sensitive Schools: Context, Challenges, and a Heuristic Model for Future Directions." *International Journal of School & Educational Psychology*, 2024, 1–7. https://doi.org/10.1080/21683603.2024.2444462.

Cramer, Neva V. "Using Trauma-Informed Pedagogy to Make Literacy and Learning Relevant and Engaging for Students of Poverty." *Texas Association for Literacy Education Yearbook* 5 (2018): 77–83.

Davis, Cassandra R., Philip Berke, M. Diamond, Megan R. Holloman Ebanks, Sarah Griffard, Evan Haynes, Zeynab Johnson, and et al. Warraich. "Support Strategies for Socially Marginalized Neighborhoods Likely Impacted by Natural Hazards." Coastal Resilience Center, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2021.

Eoyang, Glenda, and Michelle Jenkins. "Finding Simplicity in Chaos: Beyond VUCA." *People Matters: Leading Through Crisis* 11, no. 5 (2020): 34–43.

Epstein, Joyce L., and Steven B. Sheldon. *School, Family, and Community Partnerships:*

Preparing Educators and Improving Schools. 3rd ed. Routledge, 2022. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429400780.

Lavrysh, Yuliana, Iryna Lytovchenko, Valentyna Lukianenko, and Tetiana Golub. "Teaching during the Wartime: Experience from Ukraine." *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 2022, 1–8.

McConnell, Allan. "The Politics of Crisis Terminology." *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*, 2020. https://oxfordre.com/politics/display/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228637-e-1590.

McNulty, Eric J. "Leading in an Increasingly VUCA World," October 27, 2015. https://www.strategy-business.com/blog/Leading-in-an-Increasingly-VUCA-World.

Mehrotra, Gita R. "Centering a Pedagogy of Care in the Pandemic." *Qualitative Social Work* 20, no. 1–2 (2021): 537–43.

Mladan, D., and V. Cvetkovic. "Classification of Emergency Situations." In *Conference Proceedings of International Significance*, 275–90. Academy of Criminalistic and Police Studies, Belgrade, 2013.

Mortari, Luigina. "For a Pedagogy of Care." *Philosophy Study* 6, no. 8 (2016): 455–63.

Noddings, Nel. *The Challenge to Care in Schools: An Alternative Approach to Education*. 2nd ed. Teachers College Press, 2015.

Otekunrin, Olutosin Ademola, Oluwaseun Aramide Otekunrin, Barbara Sawicka, and Idris A. Ayinde. "Three Decades of Fighting against Hunger in Africa: Progress, Challenges and Opportunities." *World Nutrition* 11, no. 3 (2020): 86–111.

Prince, Debra Lindsey, and Esther Howard. "Children and Their Basic Needs." *Early Childhood Education Journal* 30, no. 1 (2002): 27–31.

Salha, S., A. Tlili, B. Shehata, X. Zhang, A. Endris, K. Arar, S. Mishra, and M. Jemni. "How to Maintain Education during Wars? An Integrative Approach to Ensure the Right to Education." *Open Praxis* 16, no. 2 (2024): 160–79. https://doi.org/10.55982/openpraxis.16.2.668.

Schlam Salman, Julia, and Bridget Schvarz. "Teacher Education during 'Unteachable' Times: Teacher Preparation and Induction in Areas of Intractable Conflict and War." *The Teacher Trainer: A Practical Teacher Education Journal* 37, no. 1 (2024).

Stein, Samuel. "Reimagining Global Citizenship Education for a Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous (VUCA) World." *Globalisation, Societies and Education* 19, no. 4 (2021): 482–95.

The World Bank. "Learning in Crisis: Prioritizing Education & Effective Policies to Recover Lost Learning," 2022. https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/immersive-story/2022/09/16/learning-in-crisis-prioritizing-education-effective-policies-to-recover-lost-learning.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). "Supporting Teachers and Education Personnel During Times of Crisis," 2020. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373338.

United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF). "Education in Emergencies," 2020. https://www.unicef.org/education/emergencies.

Zembylas, Michalinos. "Emotional Ecology: The Intersection of Emotional Knowledge and Pedagogical Content Knowledge in Teaching." *Teaching and Teacher Education* 23, no. 5 (2007): 355–67.

About the authors

Dua Jabr Dajani

Dua Jabr Dajani, Ph.D., is the regional counselor for English language teaching at East Jerusalem School and holds a lecturer position at the David Yellin College of Education. Her research interests encompass enhancing critical thinking in schools, exploring the impact of schooling on cognitive development, English teaching methodologies, and preparing educators to lead professional learning communities effectively.

Julia Schlam Salman

Julia Schlam Salman, Ph.D., is a lecturer and teacher educator at the David Yellin Academic College of Education in Jerusalem. She also teaches in the MA TESOL program and the Division of Languages at Tel-Aviv University. Her research interests include language education, language learning and teaching, and English language learning in areas of intractable conflict. She lives near Jerusalem with her spouse and four children.

Mridula Muralidharan

Mridula Muralidharan is a sociologist and social worker specialising in education, disability, and gender studies. Her doctoral research focuses on inclusive schooling practices for students with disabilities in India. In addition to her academic pursuits, she serves as the Digital Outreach Manager for the National Platform for the Rights of Disabled (NPRD), a pan-India cross-disability rights organisation.

Dr. Pamela February

Dr Pamela J. February is a senior lecturer in the Department of Early Childhood Education and Care in the School of Education at the University of Namibia. Her areas of interest and expertise include inclusive education practices; early childhood education and care; deaf education; how learners/students learn and how we should assess them; reading acquisition and fluency; vocabulary acquisition; mathematics

education and the use of technology to enhance inclusive learning. In addition, she has written articles and book chapters and supervised postgraduate students in these areas.

INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS FOSTERING OR HINDERING EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Baran Yousefi; Kristina Pennell-Götze; and Linjie Zhang

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://book.all-means-all.education/ ama-2025-en/?p=655#oembed-1

Example Case

"The Peace School"

"The concept of The Peace School originated in 2005 in Iran as an innovative and alternative approach to education. Despite its progressive vision, the school faced significant challenges, as neither the government nor other organisations supported or approved of its methodology. Consequently, students graduating from the school were left without official diplomas and had to take mainstream assessment tests independently. After 19 years of suppressed operations in Iran, without national or international support or a platform for a voice, a new branch of The Peace School began operating in Toronto, Canada, in 2024 as a private, international elementary school.

The primary goal of establishing this new branch was to support Iranian students by providing them with recognised diplomas for their continued studies. The Peace School is a hub for international students, offering a unique environment where students from diverse backgrounds can learn, share experiences, and influence one another. The school's philosophy centres on a humanistic, child-centred approach, anticipating that students will be motivated to learn beyond mainstream educational requirements.

Collaboration in decision-making and lesson planning is emphasised, involving families, students, and teachers to create a supportive learning environment. We believe unilateral decisions by any single group — students, parents, or teachers/staff — can compromise education. Regular communication among all parties helps tailor personalised curricula that cater to each child's unique needs, abilities, and interests. We focus on sparking curiosity and creativity through project-based learning rather than a linear, textbook-driven approach. Instead of conventional numerical grading, we employ a descriptive evaluation process to assess a child's progress. This holistic approach comprehensively explains each child's growth and development.

We believe peace is not merely the absence of war; it encompasses principles such as love, empathy, and compassion, which must be learnt during childhood. Our vision is to create a community of positive, optimistic citizens equipped to make transformative impacts on their own lives, the lives of others, and society as a whole. We aim to nurture children who are aware of and engaged with the world, capable of addressing obstacles with innovative solutions, and can contribute meaningfully to a more compassionate and equitable global community."

Initial questions

1. International schools are microcosms of society. What are some of the gaps that exist within international schools?
2. Diversity is the core of international schools. How can international schools effectively integrate diversity, equitable practices and foster inclusion?
3. Students are agents for change. How can international schools empower students to better foster diversity, equity and inclusion?

Introduction to Topic

In this chapter, we focus on international schools and how they foster or hinder diversity, equity and inclusion. Through examining international schools as microcosms of society, clearly gaps exist within some international school ecosystems. What are the cultural, economic and social gaps? In addition, diversity is a core strength of international schools,

so how can diversity, equity and inclusion be fostered? Finally, with an understanding that students are agents for change, how can international schools empower students to better foster diversity, equity, and inclusion as they develop as global citizens?

In an increasingly globalised world (Bittencourt & Willetts, 2018), the international education industry continues to develop and expand in countries around the world (Bunnell et al., 2017; Hayden & Thompson, 2015). Highly influenced by colonialism (Poole & Bunnell, 2021), neoliberalism (Robertson, 2003) and capitalism (Rojo & Percio, 2020), international schools historically cater to the elite social class (Silva-Enos et al., 2022), typically populations of international expatriates from diplomatic, missionary, military, and multinational business organisations (MacDonald, 2009). Over time this has increasingly shifted to include a higher proportion of local host nation upper-middle class children and their families (Hayden, 2011; MacDonald, 2009). However the purpose of international schools has largely remained the same on paper, which is to educate and develop individuals who were socially competent and accepting of political differences, while also highlighting the human rights of all people (UNESCO, 1974).

Some researchers began noticing differences and developed three distinct definitions for the types of international schools that exist (Thompson & Hayden, 2013). These are described below.

The definitions of international school types

"'Type A' 'traditional' international schools: established principally to cater for globally mobile expatriate families for whom the local education system is not considered appropriate" (Thompson & Hayden, 2013: 5).

'Type A' example: The first documented international school is the International School of Geneva (Ecolint), founded in 1924 by visionaries and officials of the League of Nations and International Labour Organisation (Ecolint, 2024). It was founded to cater for children of expatriate and transient families who often change from year to year (Heyward, 2002). These mobile students might also include a percentage of children referred to as Third Culture Kids (TCKs) or transnational youth (Tanu, 2018). 'Type A' international schools, like Ecolint, are often private institutions that cater to the diverse elite and globally advantaged (Gardner-McTaggart, 2018). International mindedness and global citizenship are overarching values of 'Type A' international schools (Tarc, 2018) due to their associations with accrediting bodies such as the Council of International Schools (CIS), Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), and New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC). These schools also tend to adopt an international curriculum such as the International Baccalaureate (IB) (Silva-Enos et al., 2022), but may also specialise in more regional curriculums such as the French Baccalauréat, American Common Core or the British National Curriculum, with students aiming to complete their Baccalauréat (BAC)

diploma, Advanced Placement (AP) courses, General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), or Advanced Level (A-Level) qualifications (Bates, 2011).

"'Type B' 'ideological' international schools: established principally on an ideological basis, bringing together young people from different parts of the world to be educated together with a view to promoting global peace and understanding" (Thompson & Hayden, 2013: 5).

'Type B' example: 'Type B' international schools are established with a clear vision of bringing together young people from different parts of the world to be educated in a shared environment. By doing so, they aim to foster a sense of global citizenship and mutual respect among students from diverse backgrounds. These institutions are not just centres of academic learning but are also hubs fostering cultural diversity, where students from various nationalities blend in, sharing their unique experiences while developing new, universal ones with their peers in the host country. In these 'Type B' schools, such as The Peace School, the emphasis is on creating a collaborative and inclusive atmosphere that transcends traditional educational boundaries. Students are encouraged to engage with each other's cultural perspectives, leading to a richer understanding of global issues and the promotion of international harmony. This approach aligns with the schools' ideological foundation, as they actively work towards building a more peaceful and interconnected world. By nurturing these values, 'Type B' international schools play a critical role in shaping the next generation of well-equipped leaders to navigate and contribute positively to our increasingly globalised society.

"'Type C' 'non-traditional' international schools: established principally to cater for 'host country nationals' – the socio-economically advantaged elite of the host country who seek for their children a form of education different from, and perceived to be of higher quality than, that available in the national education system" (Thompson & Hayden, 2013: 5).

'Type C' example: The initial step in the development of Type C international schools was recognising the growing demand among wealthy local families for an education that could provide a global perspective and competitive edge for their children. This demand was fuelled by the perception that the national education system was not adequately preparing students for the globalised world (Thompson & Hayden, 2013). To meet this demand, these schools designed a hybrid curriculum that integrates elements of internationally recognised programs, such as the International Baccalaureate (IB) or Cambridge International Examinations, with aspects of the local education system. This blend ensures that students receive a comprehensive education that respects local traditions and requirements while also providing a global outlook. Singapore International School (SIS) in Vietnam exemplifies the emergence of 'Type C' international schools. Established to cater primarily to the children of affluent Vietnamese families seeking a globalised education, SIS recognised the growing demand for an alternative to the traditional local curriculum (Nguyen, 2017).

International education's illusion of an accurate definition is the result of the diverse and varied contexts schools are situated in (Poole & Bunnell, 2021), however it is acknowledged

that international schools predominantly deliver curriculum in English, both in- and outside of English-speaking countries (Brummit & Keeling, 2013). It can be seen then that international schools are intricate social contexts (Grimshaw & Sears, 2008).

Defining diversity, equity and inclusion

Diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) has become public discourse across many industries. Much like international schools, defining DEI is a contentious topic, with various scholars and practitioners debating each component and its importance. Variations of DEI that you may come across include:

- Diversity, equity, inclusion, justice (DEIJ)
- Justice, equity, diversity, inclusion (JEDI)
- Diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging (DEIB)
- Equality, diversity, inclusion (EDI)
- Inclusion via diversity, equity, antiracism (I-DEA)
- Diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility (DEIA)
- Anti bias anti racist (ABAR)

For the purposes of our chapter, we will be using these definitions as defined by Arsel et al. (2022: 920):

"Diversity refers broadly to real, or perceived physical or socio-cultural differences attributed to people and the representation of these differences in research, market spaces, and organisations. Equity refers to fairness in the treatment of people in terms of both opportunity and outcome. Inclusion refers to creating a culture that fosters belonging and incorporation of diverse groups and is usually operationalised as opposition to exclusion or marginalisation."

Key aspects

International schools: A global industry

The number of international schools is rapidly rising with currently over 5000 worldwide (Bates, 2023). According to Brummitt (2007, 2009), the most rapid growth is occurring in Asia (especially China), Europe and Africa. However, these figures may not reflect true reality due to the highly contested definition of international schools (Tanu, 2018). Our working definition for this chapter refers to three types of international schools as defined by Thompson & Hayden (2013; see above), and when discussing the rise of these types of international schools, two factors can be attributed. First, as a result of globalisation and the growth of the middle class in so-called developing countries (World Bank, 2007), there is support for the expansion of the 'international school industry' as theorised by Bunnell

(2007) and MacDonald (2006), from an elite status to a more general status. Second, the education industry is generally gaining recognition as a global service industry worth billions of dollars (Bates, 2023), and its prospects for privatisation and commercialisation are highly valued (Susan Robertson, 2003). As a result, international schools are a global multi-billion dollar industry with double bottom lines, one educational and one business (MacDonald, 2006).

The growth of international schools is not purely numerical, as it has also coincided with the evolution of neoliberal ideologies in reorganising societies and social relations (Bates, 2023). Robertson (2008) elaborates that neoliberalism has three main goals:

"(1) the redistribution of wealth upward to the ruling elites through new structures of governance, (2) the transformation of education systems so that the production of workers for the economy is the primary mandate and (3) the breaking down of education as a public sector monopoly, opening it up for strategic investment by for-profit firms" (Robertson 2008: 12)

With this in mind, international schools vary widely, and the identities of these schools often deal with the tension between being market driven and ideology driven or falling on the spectrum between the two (Hayden & Thompson, 2008). As international schools are largely considered to be diverse hubs that are internationally minded and foster global citizenship (Tarc, 2018), the major issues that shape complex international school contexts and practices arise from the dichotomy between global culture and local culture in a global market (Bates, 2023). Tanu (2018: 5) explains that "international schools catered mainly to the children of expatriates, who made up 80 percent of the student body more than thirty years ago, rather than to local children, the trend has been reversed in recent years with local students making up 80 percent of the student demography." It is clear that international schools are ecosystems full of tensions, differing interests and bottom lines.

Existing gaps in international schools

When international schools were first created and developed, the identity of these schools were often determined by Western countries, such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia and Canada (Bates, 2011). With the specific target audience and clientele being largely expatriate, these international schools emerged to create a "school from home, away from home" (Gibson & Bailey, 2023: 410). As private institutions, international schools are complex social contexts (Grimshaw & Sears, 2008) that often form a community of diverse racial, cultural, and ethnic families (Brooks & Watson, 2019). In an increasingly globalised world (Bittencourt & Willets, 2018), where cultural, economic, and social divisions continue to widen (Putnam, 2015), schools need to be environments where diversity, equity and inclusion is fostered for all students (Riley, 2019). Interestingly though, Hayden (2011: 221) notes that "it is ironic, then, that schools that developed originally to promote greater social harmony and understanding between different people, as well as

to facilitate mobility, seem to be contributing to a growing educational gap between social groups and thus to growing inequality in societies."

Students spend a large portion of their youth at school, and developing a sense of inclusion and belonging is important (Maslow, 1954). At international schools, students are often forced to assimilate to the dominant culture, which is largely white and Western (Datnow & Park, 2008), and Anglo-Christian (Gardner-McTaggart, 2019). Reinforcing neoliberal and neocolonial ideologies, education sustains white supremacy at the most structural and societal levels, indoctrinating the dominant culture of whiteness and white privilege (Genao & Mercedes, 2021). This can lead to a divide between global and local culture, and identity confusion. Belonging, defined as being in a physical or virtual space where one can be confident and safe in one's identity, while also feeling valued and at ease (Flewitt et al., 2017; Riley, 2017), is an important aspect within international school communities. Despite the need for international schools to foster belonging through diversity, equity and inclusion, across OECD countries there is a declining trend with 1 in 4 international school students feeling that they do not belong (OECD, 2017). This could be due to the dynamic and transient nature of expatriate international teachers (Caffyn, 2010), or the understanding that the diverse cultural, social and racial make-up of the school population adds another complex layer to developing a sense of belonging in a global community (Brooks & Watson, 2019). It is no longer enough to assume that diverse student populations (Khalifa et al., 2016) and core values of global citizenship and international mindedness (Hill, 2014; Tarc, 2018) are markers for belonging in international schools.

What are some of the gaps that exist in international schools that are hindering diversity, equity and inclusion?

Socio-cultural gaps

"International schools hold great potential as transformative spaces to initiate planetary action for peace, equality, justice and environmental change" (Gardner-McTaggart, 2020: 1).

International schools, particularly those offering the International Baccalaureate (IB), operate within a unique global space that is independent of any single nation-state's political aims (Bourdieu 1996). Yet, while these institutions are unbound from national power structures, they often perpetuate a neoliberal ideology that has gained prominence in so-called Western democracies over recent decades (Gardner-McTaggart, 2020). This neoliberal orientation manifests as a form of cultural hegemony, where the international school landscape replicates Western, particularly Anglo European, values and norms under the guise of global education (Gardner-McTaggart, 2020). This globalised model not only reinforces social privilege and power but also promotes a largely uncritical adherence to Western ideals, cultivating a specific worldview in students that prioritises individual achievement and market-based values over communal or locally contextualised perspectives.

Despite a veneer of inclusivity, international schools often maintain an underlying framework of whiteness that pervades their curricula, staffing, and institutional culture. Predominantly led by white educators and operating with an unexamined Anglo-centric perspective, these schools risk advancing a limited view of global citizenship that may inadvertently obscure systemic issues such as colonial legacies and racial inequities. Even well-meaning initiatives, such as advisory programs and assemblies, that aim to address racism can fall short, treating it as an individual rather than a systemic problem, and leaving foundational power structures unchallenged (Bartoli et al., 2016). By examining the implicit racial and cultural biases embedded in international education policies and practices, it becomes evident that these schools play an active role in maintaining a globalised, Western hegemony, repackaging it as progressive education while neglecting critical interrogations of race and privilege (Gardner-McTaggart, 2016).

"How often did we as international students feel unrepresented in the course topics that were assigned to us? And how many of us, upon the death of George Floyd, felt the jolt of realisation that we know nothing about systemic racism, colonialism and its undiscussed modern successor?" (David, 2020: website)

In so-called developing countries, IB schools are typically private and cater to privileged demographics, whereas in Anglo European countries, the IB program is increasingly integrated within public (state) schools, appealing to middle-class families seeking high academic standards (IBO, 2012a; Resnik, 2012). Both of these reflect Type A and Type C international schools. This trend underscores the cultural capital linked to IB enrolment, which offers a sense of distinction and academic prestige (Bourdieu, 1984). The IB's mission promotes so-called Western humanist ideals, encouraging intercultural understanding and lifelong learning with an appreciation for diverse perspectives (IBO, 2020a, 2020b). As part of a loosely regulated global market, IB schools are prized for their IB World School status, which positions them competitively within a neoliberal marketplace that capitalises on the demand for globalised, elite education.

Socio-economic gaps

Being international is an ideology that has shaped international schools and the transnational and national class structures of the global economy (Tanu, 2018). The theme of social class is not unusual in the literature on international education. Class analysis in the research on international education has been underscored to reveal the role of elite institutions in reinforcing the privilege of the elite class (Gaztambide-Fernández & Howard, 2010; Howard & Kenway, 2015; Kenway & Koh, 2015; Koh, 2014; Stevens, 2009). Therefore, the study of social class and international education overlaps with the research on elites and elite education to a large extent (Ball, 2015; Howard & Kenway, 2015; Weis, 2014; Weis & Dolby, 2012). The concentration of wealth in both so-called Western and developing countries has enabled emerging elites or ruling classes to afford enrolling their children

in international schools. These parents hope their children will gain the qualifications and networks necessary to access their social class or the global professional labour market. MacDonald (2006: 198) estimated that these schools generate over 5.3 billion US dollars annually in tuition revenue. He also found that the average annual fee for international schools' ranges from US$6,429 to US$10,451, with the highest recorded fee being US$54,264, which surpasses the fees of the British public-school Eton (MacDonald, 2006: 198). These statistics indicate that international school programs, regardless of their specific nature, are predominantly, though not entirely, attended by the wealthiest segments of the global population.

In contradiction with this line of research, Young's (2018) case study on a type C international secondary school in Beijing discovered that most families under study held precarious social positions in an accelerating divergent society: most were members of 'new rich' entrepreneurial class or internal migrants. While these groups have a certain amount of economic capital, they lack other kinds of capital (for example social/cultural capital) to enable their children to progress or gain an academic advantage in the standard/ local education system. For these families, the initial reason for enrolling their children in international education is not to obtain an 'elite' education or global citizenship mindedness, but to enable their children to pursue higher education. This type of international school provides a remedial rather than international environment when it comes to its academic program, which is a noticeable departure from the elite institutions depicted in the academic literature and popular media. In this case, the 'new rich' class families use their economic capital to help children accumulate cultural capital. This suggests that international education may accomplish different goals for different social groups, but financial resources are the condition for this education phenomenon.

Therefore, the socio-economic gap plays a significant role in shaping access to and participation in international education. On one hand, elite international schools tend to reinforce social class privileges by catering primarily to the wealthiest families, enabling their children to build the networks and accumulate the capital necessary for maintaining or improving their social status. These institutions serve as vehicles for the perpetuation of elite class structures and global economic advantages. However, not all families in international education fit this elite mould. As seen in Young's (2018) study, some families, particularly from emerging entrepreneurial classes or internal migrant backgrounds, enrol their children in international schools as a way to overcome deficits in cultural or social capital. For these families, international education is viewed more as a remedial strategy to improve academic outcomes and secure future educational opportunities, rather than a path toward elite status. The primary unifying factor, however, is that financial resources remain the key determinant for accessing international education, although the motivations and benefits of such education differ across socio-economic groups.

In contrast to Type A and Type C international schools, Type B schools are less recognised as institutions that prepare students for advanced studies or an elite

educational pathway. Instead, Type B schools primarily emphasise ideals of global citizenship, cultural diversity, and promoting peace through collaborative learning rather than exclusively prioritising academic advancement. This focus can create certain challenges for families when choosing these schools, as not all parents are primarily concerned with academic elitism or their child's pursuit of advanced higher education. Some families may even consider alternatives, like homeschooling, to align more closely with their values and priorities.

Families choosing Type B schools often value a globally minded education and a supportive, inclusive learning environment. These parents may seek a balanced approach to education, one that combines personal growth with exposure to diverse perspectives, rather than focusing solely on academic achievement. It is difficult to categorise Type B school families within any particular socio-economic bracket. While not necessarily wealthy, these families prioritise a meaningful, well-rounded education and are willing to invest in it, even if it may require financial sacrifice. Ultimately, Type B international schools appeal to families who believe that fostering their children's global awareness and intercultural understanding is as essential as traditional academic success.

There is yet to be a definitive solution to address the financial gaps faced by families considering Type B international schools. While some schools may offer financial aid or flexible payment plans to accommodate families from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, others provide no such support, leaving families to bear the total cost. Additionally, in certain countries, governments may offer financial assistance or tax reductions for families pursuing alternative education options; however, this is not universally available. Unfortunately, there is no consistent, globally applicable solution or support system for families interested in these schools, as Type B international schools are neither the dominant educational model nor widely recognised and supported by the public or governments.

Integrating diversity, equitable practices and fostering inclusion

Striving for diversity, achieving equitable practices, and fostering inclusion are essential components of a holistic educational framework that enhances learning and promotes belonging for all students. Holistic education recognises each learner's uniqueness and diverse backgrounds, creating an environment where everyone feels seen, heard, and empowered. By incorporating diversity into the curriculum and facilitating collaboration among all participants, students are exposed to various viewpoints that foster empathy, respect, and appreciation for differences.

The Peace School emphasises the importance of collaboration in decision-making and planning, involving caregivers, students, and teachers and all staff. The school believes that education can be compromised if decisions are made unilaterally by any single group and

underscores that people possess more power and ideas when collaborating, brainstorming, and sharing a common goal.

In traditional schooling, education and curriculum planning decisions in a behavioural approach or behaviourist schools are made solely by specialists. Education-specialised individuals decide what students should learn or study throughout their school years. The plan and schedule are mainly predetermined, with limited flexibility based on what students want to learn. In contrast, schools that follow a high-scope approach mostly rely on a student-centred approach, where curriculum and lesson planning revolve entirely around the students.

However, at The Peace School, we follow a humanist educational approach, where educational planning happens through the collaboration of all entities involved, including specialised people, teachers, parents, students, and even the community they live in. The curriculum is continuously prepared and adapted through ongoing interaction and collaboration among all entities, who constantly communicate to make the best decisions for the benefit of students.

We have a framework we call the 'Triangle' (Figure 1). On the Triangle, the student is placed at the top, with parents and teachers/staff at the base, and the community in the centre. This triangle represents an ongoing, collaborative process among these three corners of education, connecting learning to our community and daily life. Each corner requires training, conversation, time, and a voice to express opinions without judgement.

Figure 1: 'The Triangle'

Student

Curriculum

Community

Parents

Teacher/ Staff
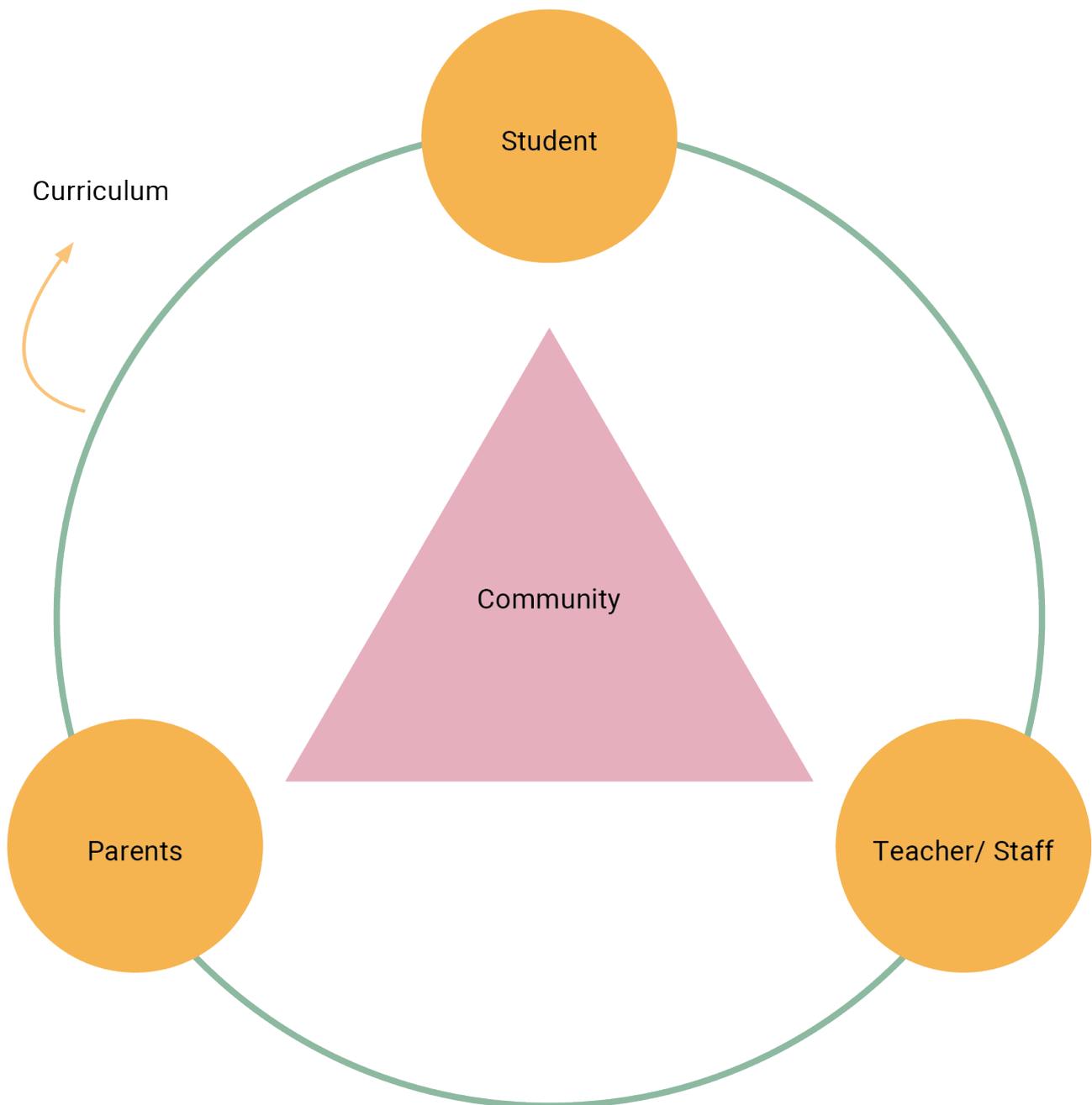
Our approach begins with the child's starting point, catering to their specific needs, abilities, and interests. We focus on sparking curiosity and creativity, emphasising project-based learning rather than a linear, behavioural approach based on universal textbooks. Teachers and staff provide valuable input on the educational process, as they spend several hours with students, observing their interests in learning. Parents' input is also crucial as they can offer learning opportunities outside the school environment. Therefore, the essence of connectedness among these three corners is critical. The Triangle approach ensures a holistic, collaborative, and student-centred educational experience, fostering a strong sense of community and shared responsibility for each child's growth and development.

Figure 2: 'The Triangle' – what each agent (student, parents, teachers/staff) bring to the classroom

Needs
Interests
Doubts
Skills
Questions

Student

Curriculum

Community

Parents

Needs
Skills
Concerns
Expectations
Beliefs
Requests
Backgrounds

Teacher/ Staff

Perspective
Evaluation
Concerns
Skills
Questions
Understanding
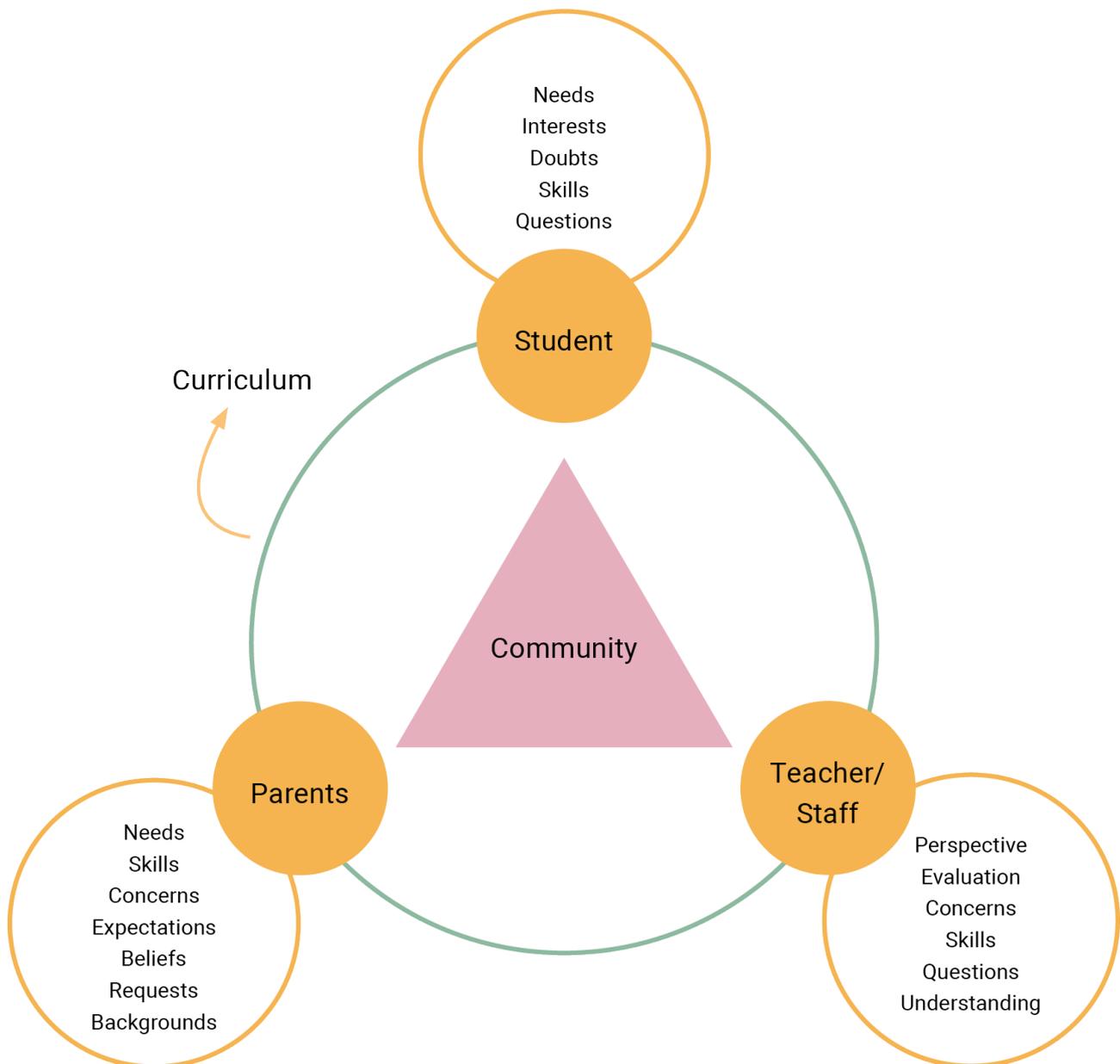
Enrolment

Enrolment differs in each school type and requires its own specified process. The Peace School, a Type B international school aiming to foster collaboration and participation and committed to a humanist educational approach that integrates the principles of a culture of peace and living values, strongly encourages families to enrol their children early, ideally starting in preschool or Grade 1. The school's experience has shown that students who join in the upper grades often face significant challenges in adapting to the unique educational system, which differs markedly from mainstream approaches.

To ensure that prospective families are fully informed and aligned with the philosophy, the school strongly emphasises caregiver involvement during the enrolment process. This

begins with a general introduction session where they present the school's values and educational approach. Following this, they invite families to participate in a 20-session camp held over 20 days, with each session lasting 2 hours specifically designed for new families. Each session focuses on a key principle or aspect of our educational philosophy, offering families a deep and comprehensive understanding of our school's approach. This camp also provides an opportunity for families to meet and interact with the entire school community, including management, staff, and teachers.

The primary objective of these sessions is to equip families with the knowledge and insight necessary to make an informed and deliberate decision about their child's education. Following the family sessions, the school conducts approximately ten orientation sessions for new students over the summer, with each session lasting an entire school day and held once a week, ensuring they are well-prepared and comfortable before the school year begins.

These orientation sessions are crucial in helping families and children acclimate to the school environment and culture. By making an informed decision after experiencing the school firsthand, parents and children can determine whether the school's educational approach aligns with their expectations and aspirations.

Making an informed decision – after experiencing the school firsthand – caregivers and their children can decide whether the humanist educational approach aligns with their expectations and aspirations for their education.

Ultimately, this process fosters a strong partnership between the school and families, ensuring a smoother transition and a shared commitment to the child's learning journey.

Recruitment

Like many educational institutions, The Peace School has evolved and refined its recruitment process over the past twenty years. While they have a preferred process in place, it remains flexible and can be adapted based on the individuals and circumstances involved. The school encourages all prospective teachers to immerse themselves in their school community by participating in regular department meetings. Each department, including science, mathematics, arts, literature, and more, holds weekly meetings where staff discuss lesson plans, share ideas, and develop collaborative projects across various grades.

In addition to these regular meetings, the school also holds inter-departmental sessions where, for example, science teachers may attend art department meetings to brainstorm and develop interdisciplinary projects for the students. It is essential for prospective teachers to attend these meetings before formally joining our teaching staff. This allows them to become familiar with the school's methods and participate in several projects before they begin teaching classes.

The school also strongly encourages new teachers to enrol in a bespoke teacher training

course. The course consists of ten classes over ten days, totalling 60 hours, and covers a wide range of topics, including educational approaches, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, living values and the culture of peace, children's literature, play and games, drama, early childhood development, art, storytelling, project-based learning, and more.

This type of commitment to fostering collaboration and continuous professional development not only enhances the quality of education but also creates a supportive community where teachers can thrive and make a meaningful impact on their students' lives.

Curriculum

As dictated by law, many international school teachers are working in schools and countries in which there are limitations on the kind of content educators can share with students. These limitations may range from content that accurately depicts shared racialised and ethnic history, to content that affirms LGBTQ+ identities. This is an acknowledged reality. Engaging in any approach to teaching and learning that centres diversity, equity and inclusion is going to be in direct opposition to the system that employs educators (Reid, 2024). Educators must continue to engage anyway, especially in international school contexts where the student body has a diversity of social identities in a myriad of ways.

For example, recent discussions of global citizenship education as a way to counter the "single narrative story" have noted the lack of critical analyses of global power relations and colonial histories that has left educators without frameworks to address the structures of inequality that shape students' experiences of difference (Dyrness 2023). Taking a case study of an international school in Costa Rica, a typical Type A international school, many students perceived the IB's formal curriculum as Eurocentric, finding it conflicted with the school's goals for embracing diverse perspectives. An Eastern European student expressed disappointment that the curriculum sidelined cultural learning in favour of content dominated by Western perspectives. Another student from Asia, highlighted the prevalence of Western case studies in her Global Politics course, reinforcing the idea that the "global" is often framed through the lens of the Global North. Such critiques indicate a disconnect between students' diverse lived experiences and the knowledge deemed valuable or relevant within the IB structure (Bourdieu, 1984). Students also noted how these limitations in the curriculum diminished opportunities to discuss pressing issues within their own communities, reflecting an implicit prioritisation of so-called Western knowledge systems.

In contrast, students found that co-curricular activities, such as Regional or Culture Weeks, allowed more space for sharing diverse perspectives, though they critiqued these events for their focus on celebratory and performative aspects of culture. A student from an Afro-Caribbean background, explained that these events often reduced cultural appreciation to superficial encounters with food, dance, and costumes, neglecting deeper issues like colonial histories or ongoing socio-political struggles. Similarly, a student from North Africa

noted that while the school provided a platform to showcase culture, it rarely supported discussions of the challenges faced by their communities. Such events, as students observed, align with Melamed's (2006) critique of "neoliberal multiculturalism," where cultural diversity is idealised but stripped of discussions on race, class, and power. This sanitised approach to diversity promotes a form of "domesticated" tolerance (Andreotti, 2011) that leaves structural inequities unchallenged.

Students are crying out for a more affirming curriculum that really represents the diversity within the world, rather than an Anglo European or so-called Western perspective that is rampant in international schools across the globe, whether they teach the IB curriculum or any other internationally recognised state systems.

Assessment

In Type-A and Type-C international schools, one of the pervasive issues with assessment practices is their overwhelming focus on university admission requirements, which often distorts the broader educational experience. These schools tend to align their curricula and assessments with the standards set by higher education institutions, particularly international universities, rather than focusing on holistic learning or fostering critical thinking (Brummitt & Keeling, 2013). This phenomenon is especially pronounced in East Asia, where Type-C international schools cater to families seeking an alternative to the highly competitive local education systems. In these schools, teaching is often oriented toward preparing students for standardised tests, such as the SAT, A-levels, or IB exams, and meeting the specific criteria for applications to prestigious universities in the West (Bunnell, 2016). This narrow focus on assessment not only restricts the curriculum but also places students under immense pressure to perform academically, sidelining other important aspects of education such as creativity, emotional development, and extracurricular engagement (Doherty, 2009). Consequently, while these schools may provide a pathway to higher education, they contribute to an educational environment driven by instrumental goals rather than comprehensive learning.

At The Peace School (Type-B example of international schools) believes that the traditional model of individualised evaluation through exams and grades is inherently inhumane. The schools reject the behaviourist approach to education, which emphasises exams and grades as the primary tools for assessment. Instead, they advocate for evaluation methods that genuinely support students in deepening their understanding of subjects. In their view, evaluation should involve a collective effort that includes students, parents, teachers, staff, and the broader community.

Their assessment process is designed to focus on students' holistic development, taking into account their emotional, social, ethical, and academic needs. They believe assessing aspects of a student's growth that are often overlooked, such as their character, needs, interactions, and other values, is crucial.

However, they also recognise the importance of being mindful of our evaluation. What aspects of a child's development should be the focus? Should we assess only their academic achievements or also their personal growth and memory? In humanistic schools like The Peace School, evaluation criteria are detailed, extensive, and adaptable. These criteria evolve over time and involve input from teachers, students, and families. For example, one student might be evaluated on their courage and encouraged to exhibit more courageous behaviours, while another might be guided toward greater patience and carefulness. In other words, the evaluation process is personalised to suit each student's unique needs.

The schools employ various methods of assessment, including:

1. **Observation:** A diverse group of observers, including teachers, administrative staff, counsellors, and families, continually assess students throughout different periods. This evaluation extends beyond the classroom to include observations during breaks, lunchtime, field trips, and other activities. Observing students in various contexts gives us a more comprehensive understanding of their development. All staff members are encouraged to share their insights and observations about students.

2. **Student Engagement:** One of the most effective assessment methods is to involve students directly. This does not mean traditional verbal exams but rather engaging them in meaningful conversations. We ask questions that help identify their needs: Are there areas where you require additional support? Do you need to learn new skills? Are you struggling with certain subjects? This approach helps students become aware that their challenges have been noticed, and we are here to support them.

3. **Group Dialogue:** Frequent group discussions where students can share their opinions and engage in discussions on various topics. This method allows the school to collaboratively assess their knowledge, awareness, and viewpoints.

4. **Collaborative Review:** Teachers, staff, and caregivers – parents and on some occasions other family members, including the grandparents – meet regularly to discuss students individually and in groups. By gathering diverse perspectives, the team gain a holistic view of each student's development and can tailor our approach to meet their specific needs.

These are just a few examples of how The Peace School integrates evaluation into our educational model, moving beyond quantitative assessment to create a more humane and comprehensive approach to student development.

How can international school teachers empower students?

In an increasingly interconnected world, international schools have a unique opportunity and responsibility to nurture global citizenship beyond traditional academic metrics. By

embedding values such as diversity, equity, and inclusion into their curricula, international schools can empower students to become agents of positive social change. Programs like the International Baccalaureate (IB) facilitate this mission through courses and experiential learning opportunities that engage students in real-world challenges, such as the Theory of Knowledge (TOK) and Creativity, Activity, Service (CAS). Through these frameworks, students explore pressing global issues and cultural diversity while developing empathy, critical thinking, and a commitment to social responsibility. Partnerships with local organisations, initiatives on intercultural understanding, and active home-school collaboration further reinforce these values, allowing students to apply their learning toward creating inclusive communities. By integrating global citizenship into both academic and co-curricular activities, international schools prepare students to address systemic inequalities and advocate for a more equitable world.

Integrating Global Citizenship Beyond Academic Metrics in International Schools

International schools could play a vital role in nurturing global citizenship as a means of empowering students to become agents of change, particularly in promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion. Global citizenship education focuses on fostering a deep understanding of cultural diversity, social responsibility, and global interconnectedness. Implementation of the International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum could embed these principles through both academic and extracurricular activities. In the Theory of Knowledge (TOK) course, there are opportunities for students to critically examine global challenges, such as climate change, migration, and inequality, from multiple perspectives. Additionally, the Creativity, Activity, Service (CAS) program requires students to engage with real-world issues by participating in service projects that promote social justice and environmental sustainability. Teachers in their daily teaching practice need to be aware of the importance of implementing these values, rather than solely focusing on the quantitative results related to university admissions. For example, students at the International School of Geneva have engaged in projects to support Syrian refugee families through educational initiatives, helping to bridge language and cultural gaps while addressing immediate social needs. These experiences enable students to translate abstract concepts of global citizenship into concrete actions that promote equity and inclusion (Savva & Stanfield, 2018).

Intercultural understanding is another key component of how international schools promote global citizenship. By bringing together students from diverse cultural, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds, these schools offer daily opportunities for cross-cultural interactions. Schools often encourage these exchanges through structured programs like cultural festivals, language immersion days, and collaborative global projects. For instance, at the United World Colleges (UWC), students are deliberately recruited from different parts of the world to live and learn together, fostering an environment where intercultural dialogue is not just encouraged but is integral to the learning experience. UWC students are tasked

with solving real-world problems collaboratively, often addressing issues such as global poverty, human rights abuses, or climate justice. One specific example is the UWC in Costa Rica, where students designed a sustainable community garden that integrates agricultural techniques from different cultures while addressing food security for marginalised local communities. Through this hands-on approach, students learn to see diversity not as a challenge but as a strength in solving global problems (Hill, 2012).

Furthermore, international schools can empower students to address systemic inequalities by integrating discussions of race, gender, and class into their academic programs. This helps students develop a critical understanding of how these issues manifest both globally and locally. For example, the British International School in Cairo offers a program called "Global Issues Network," where students engage in debates and workshops on topics such as gender equality, racial justice, and economic disparity. These forums not only raise awareness but also require students to design and implement projects aimed at tackling inequities within their own communities. One notable project involved students working with local NGOs to develop an educational campaign addressing gender-based violence in rural Egypt, combining their academic knowledge with practical action. Through these initiatives, students are equipped with the skills and confidence to challenge discriminatory practices and advocate for more inclusive environments (Yosso, 2005).

Additionally, international schools can also support global citizenship through partnerships with local organisations that focus on social equity. The International School of Manila, for example, has partnered with Gawad Kalinga, a local nonprofit dedicated to eradicating poverty, to engage students in service-learning activities. Students not only participate in the construction of homes for underprivileged families but also work directly with community leaders to understand the social and economic barriers these families face. This kind of collaboration teaches students about systemic inequities and empowers them to take meaningful actions to address them. Such experiences help students see the interconnectedness of global and local issues, encouraging them to become advocates for change in diverse contexts (Gaudelli, 2016).

Empowering: A New Framework on Empathy, Compassion, and Responsibility

Every individual possesses a full range of human qualities, such as empathy, compassion, responsibility, freedom, etc. What matters is which of these qualities we nurture and provide opportunities for growth and expression. Many human values should be practised with children, allowing them to experience them. If we do not offer students these opportunities, we hinder their chance to develop and allow positive traits to emerge. As Gramsci (1971) states, "Men are not born free; they become free." This illustrates that no values are inherently present in humans; rather, they require active engagement and practice to be acquired.

To provide opportunities to learn and practice values such as empathy, compassion, and responsibility, The Peace School dedicates classes titled "Understanding Living Values," following the curriculum recommended by the Foundation for Living Values. However, they recognised that these important topics should be open to more than just one class. Subjects like empathy, love, respect, co-operation, and kindness are universal themes that should be woven into the fabric of every lesson across all subjects. This realisation led them to explore how to integrate discussions, or dialogues, on empathy, compassion, and responsibility into subjects like science, history, literature, mathematics, and beyond. While classes like art, literature, and history naturally aligned with this initiative, maths and science teachers were initially uncertain about how to incorporate these themes into their lessons.

In the science department, one class began by reading Frans de Waal's insightful book on empathy and designed lessons, activities, and discussions around the concepts it introduced. However, many maths teachers initially wondered whether topics like empathy and compassion were relevant in a maths class. Despite these reservations, the school's team discovered a unique way to experience and teach empathy through mathematics.

While preparing a lesson on percentages, one teacher posed practical questions to the students: What percentage of the school's students are girls? What percentage are between the ages of 9 and 10? What percentage of parents are doctors? The students analysed various data points and calculated the percentages accordingly. One set of data focused on the mortality rate in traffic accidents, specifically the statistic that one out of every hundred people worldwide die due to a car crash. For some students, this 1% statistic didn't seem particularly alarming; many believed that the death of one person out of a hundred was not cause for concern. Sensing the need for deeper reflection, the maths teacher encouraged the students to consider the human story behind this statistic.

Together, they began to ask: Who is this one person? They reflected that this individual, reduced to a mere number in the statistic, could be someone's mother, father, sister, brother, or child. Is this "one" just a number for that person's family? What if this one person out of a hundred was someone close to us? Would it still be just a number? What if this one person was you or me? Can we say that one person out of a hundred isn't significant and doesn't warrant concern?

This line of questioning sparked a transformative project. The students, guided by their teacher, reached out to families who had lost loved ones in traffic accidents. They listened to these families recount the emotional impact of their loss and how they coped in the aftermath. For a parent who has lost a child, is the number "one" in maths merely a number?

This project expanded into a broader initiative focused on preventing traffic-related deaths. Following this experience, the students' empathy for the news and statistics they encountered grew significantly. They began to connect more deeply with the data on children suffering from malnutrition, those caught in war zones, displaced by conflict or facing other life challenges.

In the maths class, numbers took on a new, profound meaning. No longer could anyone dismiss a percentage as too small to matter. Even if just one person is harmed to these students, it is one too many.

In conclusion, by embedding values such as empathy, compassion, and responsibility into the curriculum, schools like The Peace School not only enhance students' academic learning but also prepare them to become compassionate, engaged citizens. This holistic approach fosters a deeper understanding of the world and promotes the development of a caring and responsible community. Ultimately, cultivating these values from an early age empowers students to make meaningful contributions to society.

The Role of Home-School Collaboration

In international schools, the relationship between families and schools serves as a foundational pillar for empowering students to become agents of change, particularly in the realm of fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). This collaborative effort between educators and parents creates a dynamic environment where inclusive values are consistently modelled and reinforced, both at school and at home. Research has demonstrated that active parent engagement enhances student outcomes by promoting a shared understanding of the educational and social goals, including the importance of DEI in students' daily experiences (Hill & Tyson, 2009). In the context of international schools, which often cater to diverse student populations from various cultural, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds, the family-school relationship is even more critical. By aligning the home environment with the school's DEI mission, students are better equipped to internalise these values and apply them in their communities.

A key element of this partnership is clear and sustained communication between the school and parents. International schools can facilitate this through regular workshops, informational sessions, and open forums where issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion are discussed openly. For example, the International School of Kuala Lumpur (ISKL) has established a "Parent Engagement Program" where parents are invited to participate in DEI workshops alongside educators. These sessions provide a platform for both parties to discuss strategies on how to address and support diverse identities within the school community. The outcome of such communication fosters a collective responsibility for nurturing an inclusive school culture. Students, observing the collaboration between school and home on issues of DEI, are more likely to see these values as integral to their own actions, thus enhancing their capacity to be agents for social change. Indeed, while fostering a shared commitment to inclusive values is beneficial, it's also essential to recognise and respect the diversity of perspectives that families may bring to the table. Acknowledging and navigating these differences can, in fact, enrich the learning environment, as it helps students understand and engage with the complexities of diverse worldviews and value systems. This approach not only prepares students to handle real-

world contradictions but also underscores for teacher candidates the importance of flexibility and cultural humility in promoting DEI.

Moreover, international schools often encourage parents to participate in co-curricular activities that celebrate and promote cultural diversity. For instance, some schools, like the United Nations International School (UNIS) in New York, organise annual "International Fairs" where families can represent their respective cultures through food, performances, and art. These events highlight cultural diversity in a positive, celebratory manner and actively involve the school community in appreciating and respecting different cultural backgrounds. Through such involvement, parents help create a school culture that celebrates diversity, thus showing students the value of inclusion through action. The presence of parents at these events as active participants reinforces the idea that diversity is not simply an abstract concept discussed in classrooms but a lived experience that needs to be nurtured within the community. This can though, as discussed earlier in the curriculum section, be seen as performative, and should therefore be done in conjunction with a robust and diverse curriculum that sits alongside the co-curricular program.

In addition, governance structures such as parent diversity committees or advisory boards provide another avenue for parental involvement in DEI efforts. Schools that establish diversity committees with parent participation, such as the American School in London (ASL), empower both parents and students to take leadership roles in creating more equitable school environments. These committees often work on policy recommendations, develop anti-bias training, or spearhead initiatives like inclusive curriculum development. When students witness their parents contributing to such initiatives, they are more likely to view themselves as stakeholders in efforts to promote equity and inclusion. This active parental involvement not only enhances the school's DEI initiatives but also serves as a practical demonstration for students on how they can take leadership roles in their communities and beyond.

Finally, home-school collaboration enhances students' leadership and advocacy skills by fostering an environment where critical thinking about global inequities is encouraged. For example, at the International School of Brussels (ISB), the school's collaboration with parents on sustainability and social justice projects empowers students to address global challenges in meaningful ways. Parents are invited to participate in and mentor student-led initiatives such as the "Green Schools" project, where students take the lead in reducing the school's carbon footprint. By working alongside their parents and teachers, students gain the confidence and skills to advocate for global change on issues related to environmental sustainability, which directly aligns with broader DEI goals, as climate justice is deeply intertwined with social equity.

In conclusion, the collaboration between international schools and parents is essential for cultivating students who can act as agents of change in promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion. Whether through enhanced communication, participation in cultural events, involvement in governance structures, or collaboration on global initiatives, parents play a

crucial role in reinforcing the DEI values that schools seek to instil. By involving parents in meaningful ways, international schools not only create a supportive environment for students but also empower them to take these lessons into the world, advocating for inclusivity and equity in their future endeavours.

Reflection on the Concept of "International Schools"

The notion of "international schools" often conjures images of a globalised educational environment, designed to cater specifically to expatriate communities and students from diverse backgrounds. However, it is imperative to critically examine the implications of emphasising this concept. Why should the label of "international schools" be confined to certain institutions, and what does this mean for inclusivity within education?

Emphasising the international nature of these schools can inadvertently create a form of exclusion. By designating certain institutions as "international," there is a risk of marginalising local educational systems and the students who belong to them. This distinction can foster a perception that international students are inherently different or superior to local students, leading to a bifurcated educational landscape (Perkins & Neumayer, 2014). The reality is that educational inclusivity should transcend these labels, as effective education is fundamentally about embracing diversity in all its forms.

The differences between international and local students often revolve around cultural, linguistic, and experiential factors. International students may come from various cultural backgrounds and possess different educational expectations and experiences compared to their local counterparts. Nevertheless, the distinction is not as clear-cut as it may seem. Local students may also embody significant cultural diversity and linguistic variations that deserve recognition and accommodation within the educational framework (De Jong & Harper, 2021). Therefore, the dichotomy between international and local students often oversimplifies the complex tapestry of student identities and experiences.

As educators committed to advancing inclusive education, it is crucial to recognise that the strengths of international schools lie not only in their global focus but also in their ability to embrace the rich diversity of students' backgrounds. Respecting and valuing the different cultural, linguistic, religious, gender, sexuality, class and ideological perspectives of all students is essential for fostering an inclusive educational environment. This approach not only enriches the learning experience but also prepares students to navigate an increasingly interconnected world (Banks, 2019).

In conclusion, while the concept of "international schools" holds significance in promoting a globalised education, it is vital to approach this label with caution. Educators must strive to dismantle the barriers that these distinctions can create and work towards fostering an environment where all students, regardless of their backgrounds, feel valued and included.

Local contexts

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=655#h5p-55

Closing questions to discuss or tasks

As authors of this chapter, we have only scratched the surface of international schools and their ability to foster or hinder diversity, equity and inclusion. Further questions that could be explored include:

1. What are the specific impacts of the three types of international schools on inclusion? Do they offer different perspectives for the future or are they in "different stages of development?"
2. How do educators deal with diversity, equity and inclusion in international schools within the neoliberal field of the education industry on a global scale?
3. How can international schools grapple with the impact and influence of whiteness on power structures, hiring, curriculum and co-curriculum?
4. What hidden curriculum is being perpetuated across international schools?
5. How will international schools impact the future of so called developed and developing countries? What are the challenges, and do they pose issues of white saviourism?
6. How can democratic education impact international schools?

Literature

Andreotti, Vanessa. "(Towards) Decoloniality and Diversality in Global Citizenship Education." *Globalisation, Societies and Education* 9, no. 3–4 (2011): 381–97. https://doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2011.605323.

Arsel, Zeynep, David Crockett, and Maura L. Scott. "Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in the Journal of Consumer Research: A Curation and Research Agenda." *Journal of Consumer Research* 48, no. 5 (2021): 920–33. https://doi.org/10.1093/jcr/ucab057.

Ball, Stephen J. "Elites, Education and Identity: An Emerging Research Agenda." In *Elites,*

Privilege and Excellence: The National and Global Redefinition of Educational Advantage, edited by A. van Zanten and with B. Darchy-Koechlin S. Ball, 233−40. New York, NY: Routledge, 2015.

Banks, James A. *An Introduction to Multicultural Education*. 5th ed. Pearson, 2019.

Bartoli, Eleonora, Michael Ali, Keisha Bentley-Edwards, Howard Stevenson, Rachel Shor, and Shannon McClain. "Training for Colour-Blindness: White Racial Socialisation." *Whiteness and Education* 1, no. 2 (2016): 125−36. https://doi.org/10.1080/23793406.2016.1260634.

Bates, Richard. *Schooling Internationally: Globalisation, Internationalisation and the Future for International Schools*. Routledge, 2011. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203834800.

Bittencourt, Tiago, and Alexandra Willetts. "Negotiating the Tensions: A Critical Study of International Schools' Mission Statements." *Globalisation, Societies and Education* 16, no. 4 (2018): 515−25. https://doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2018.1512047.

Bourdieu, Pierre. *Distinction: A Social Critique on the Judgement of Taste*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984.

———. *The State Nobility: Elite Schools in the Field of Power*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996.

Brummitt, Nicholas. "International Schools: Exponential Growth and Future Implications." *International Schools Journal* 27, no. 1 (2007): 35−40.

Gardner-McTaggart, Alexander. "International Schools' Leadership and Christianity." *Globalisation, Societies and Education* 17, no. 4 (2019): 458−73.

———. "Washing the World in Whiteness; International Schools' Policy." *Journal of Educational Administration and History* 53, no. 1 (2021): 1−20. https://doi.org/10.1080/00220620.2020.1844162.

Gaudelli, William. *Global Citizenship Education: Everyday Transcendence*. Routledge, 2016.

Gaztambide-Fernández, Roberto A., and Andrew Howard. "Introduction: Why Study Up?" In *Educating Elites: Class Privilege and Educational Advantage*, edited by Andrew Howard and Roberto A. Gaztambide-Fernández, 1−12. Rowman & Littlefield, 2010.

Genao, S., and Y. Mercedes. "All We Need Is One Mic: A Call for Anti-Racist Solidarity to Deconstruct Anti-Black Racism in Educational Leadership." *Journal of School Leadership* 31, no. 1−2 (2021): 127−41. https://doi.org/10.1177/1052684621993046.

Gibson, Mark T., and Lucy Bailey. "Constructing International Schools as Postcolonial Sites." *Globalisation, Societies and Education* 21, no. 3 (2023): 405−16. https://doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2022.2045909.

Gramsci, Antonio. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. Translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith. International Publishers, 1971.

Grimshaw, Trevor, and Coreen Sears. "'Where Am I from?' 'Where Do I Belong': The Negotiation and Maintenance of Identity by International School Students." *Journal of Research in International Education* 7, no. 3 (2008): 259−78. https://doi.org/10.1177/1475240908096483.

Hayden, Mary. "Transnational Spaces of Education: The Growth of the International School

Sector." *Globalisation, Societies and Education* 9, no. 2 (2011): 211–24.

Heyward, Mark. *From International to Intercultural: Redefining the International School for a Globalized World*. *Journal of Research in International Education*. Vol. 1. 1, 2002. https://doi.org/10.1177/147524090211002.

Hill, Ian. "Evolution of Education for International Mindedness." *Journal of Research in International Education* 11, no. 3 (2012): 245–61. https://doi.org/10.1177/1475240912461990.

Hill, Nancy E., and Diana F. Tyson. "Parental Involvement in Middle School: A Meta-Analytic Assessment of the Strategies That Promote Achievement." *Developmental Psychology* 45, no. 3 (2009): 740–63. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0015362.

Howard, Adam, and Jane Kenway. "Canvassing Conversations: Obstinate Issues in Studies of Elites and Elite Education." *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 28, no. 9 (2015): 1005–32.

Kenway, Jane, and Aaron Koh. *Sociological Silhouettes of Elite Schooling*. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*. Vol. 36. 1, 2015.

Koh, Aaron. "Doing Class Analysis in Singapore's Elite Education: Unravelling the Smokescreen of 'Meritocratic Talk.'" *Globalisation, Societies and Education* 12, no. 2 (2014): 196–210.

MacDonald, James. "Balancing Priorities and Measuring Success: A Triple Bottom Line Framework for International School Leaders." *Journal of Research in International Education* 8, no. 1 (2009): 81–98. https://doi.org/10.1177/1475240908100682.

Maslow, L. A. *Motivation and Personality*. Harper, 1954.

OECD. "PISA 2015 Results (Volume III): Students' Well-Being," 2017. https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264273856-en.

Poole, Adam, and Tristan Bunnell. "Developing the Notion of Teaching in 'International Schools' as Precarious: Towards a More Nuanced Approach Based upon 'Transition Capital.'" *Globalisation, Societies and Education* 19, no. 3 (2021): 287–97. https://doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2020.1816924.

Local Literature

Yousefi, Nasser. *Humanistic Education* آموزش پرورش انسانی نگر. First Edition ۱۴۰۱ چاپ اول. Iran: کارگاه کودک, Kargah Koodak 2022.

About the authors

Baran Yousefi

Baran Yousefi holds a degree in Health Studies from York University in Toronto, Canada. As a graduate of the Participatory School, Iran's first

alternative and democratic school, she brings extensive hands-on experience in educating children through a humanistic approach. Currently, she serves as the coordinator and a key member at the Peace School in Toronto, and she is a board member of Humanist Kids. Baran is deeply committed to promoting humanistic values and fostering a culture of peace through education. She has completed numerous courses in educational methodologies, UN sustainable development programs, and participatory systems, all of which align with her dedication to humanistic psychology and UNESCO's peace charter. Her unique blend of lifestyle, educational philosophy, lived experiences, and academic background has positioned her to make a meaningful impact in the field of children's education.

Kristina Pennell-Götze

Kristina Pennell-Götze (she/they) (M.Ed) is a queer Filipino-Australian social change agent, focusing on diversity, equity, inclusion, justice and antiracism (DEIJAR) in international education. She is an educator and leader with experience working in public, private and international schools in England and Germany. She is the facilitator of the student Social Justice Committee and the Gender and Sexuality Alliance groups, providing support and opportunities for students to lead. Kristina is a leader within Association of International Educators and Leaders of Color (AIELOC), and a former fellow of the organisation, providing guidance and support to educators and leaders who are AIELOC school and community members, in addition to creating space for BIPOC to lead and share. Additionally, Kristina founded the Association of German International Schools' (AGIS) Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice (DEIJ) working group and developed the first DEIJ student-led conference hosted at the Bavarian International School in 2024. She has led multiple workshops and keynoted on topics related to DEIJAR at various conferences around the world and online.

Linjie Zhang

Linjie Zhang is a researcher at the University of Vienna. Her primary research interests encompass structural inequality within the educational system, the development and management of international schools, elite education, neoliberalism and globalization, educational policy, and the application of capital theory in education.

PART VII

CONCLUSION: LOOKING AHEAD—INSPIRING IDEAS FOR SCHOOLS OF TOMORROW

UTOPIAS - WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE? INSPIRING IDEAS FOR SCHOOLS OF TOMORROW

Aga M. Buckley; Georga Dowling; Kerstin Merz-Atalik; and Maryam Mohammadi

---

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=643#oembed-1

Example Case

"Utopia as an ongoing process that embodies values and visions, rather than merely a final destination" (Maryam Mohammadi, Tehran, Iran)

The example below is a true story of how one family's vision, with the support and help of their community, created a Participatory School in Tehran, Iran. A concern with Iran's traditional system is its focus on a singular approach, leaving no room for diverse educational methods. The formation of the Participatory School was an effort to diversify approaches within Iran's educational system and to make educators and teachers realise that not all students are meant to follow a single method, model, or approach to teaching and learning. Their Participatory school is their inspiring vision toward the creation of a Utopia. The content of the case example

is inspired by Dr Nasser Yousefi's [1]'Humanistic Education' book[2], coupled with an educational journey of co-creation of the Participatory School in Teheran. Maryam, an Art Teacher, Executive Director and Advocate for Children, shares her story to inspire thinking of Utopia:

*I am proud to discuss our work on Utopia as a representative of the Participatory School founded by Dr. Nasser Yousefi approximately 18 years ago and rooted in a Humanistic Philosophy. **A crucial question we must ask ourselves is: where does true education take place, and what constitutes the best educational environment?** Most discussions focus on traditional educational centres—schools with specific buildings that adhere to certain standards, adequate lighting, classrooms with tables and chairs, or libraries. These discussions put emphasis on the physical structure of the classroom and the idea that all educational activities occur within the school, minimising the need for external engagement (Yousefi, 2022). In our school, however, **we redefine what the school can be**. We do not view it as a confined space with walls dominated by systems of control. Instead, we believe that the entire community serves as the school. Every aspect of our community, including museums, parks, sports clubs, shops, and even parents' workplaces, is considered part of the educational environment. In our philosophy, a school is any place where a child can engage in diverse experiences. The entire local community becomes part of the learning journey, allowing children to learn from real-life contexts. **We do not insist on concentrating all urban facilities within the confines of the school; instead, we believe it is essential to cultivate a sense of freedom in students. The resources and spaces within our community are integrated into the educational experience**. In a diverse learning environment, children come to understand that not everyone thinks or lives in the same way. This awareness supports the freedom to express individuality while respecting others' differences. At our school, listening to the voices of others and fostering an environment conducive to dialogue is of utmost importance. We recognise that each child is unique, and education must start from where they are. Considering children's differences, one of the most rewarding aspects is the intrinsic connection between education and real life. When individuals are provided with opportunities to explore their interests, talents, abilities, self-esteem, empathy, and inner peace, these qualities naturally manifest in their personal and professional lives. Key concepts such as participation, commitment, choice, togetherness, and problem-solving within the life context are fundamental to our educational approach. These principles form the core of our identity, and we consistently integrate them into our curriculum and teaching methods.*

1. Dr. Nasser Yousefi was the Principal of the Peace School in Toronto, Canada (2023) and Participatory School in Tehran, Iran(2005-2024)

2. Yousefi, Nasser. (2022). Humanistic Education. Kargah koodak.

Our school represents Utopia, not only for its founder and his family but also for many others. Dr. Yousefi's personality, vision, and belief in human agency, with unwavering commitment and responsibility for education,have motivated me to continue working within this inspirational educational ethos.

The example from the Participatory School in Tehran (Iran) shows that a school community can follow its dreams and visions, even in the face of contexts not conducive to supporting their enduring educational values. At the selected school, it was initially the fundamental values and expectations of one family who had set themselves the goal of playing a decisive role in shaping the educational biography of their own daughter. This shows the power of individual key figures who, as pioneers, have influenced policy and practice of (inclusive) education worldwide (Boban & Hinz, 2008; Merz-Atalik, 2022). However, the fact that the 'Participatory School' exists today and represents these values within its' educational ethos was only possible because the founder sought allies and fellow campaigners who shared his vision to develop their inclusive approach to education together.

Initial questions

The following questions have guided the chapter.

- What is a utopia?
- What significance do utopias have or could have concerning the transformation and development of educational institutions?
- How can visions (based on utopian designs of a 'better school and education for tomorrow') inspire educational transformation?
- What options and methods exist for using Utopias to develop transformative professionalism in teacher and educator training?
- What can we learn from individual schools and peoples' Utopias to influence change that will have a lasting effect on a school or the education system?

Introduction to Topic

There are many definitions of Utopia. This chapter aims to aid reflection on Utopias and

the 'Schools of Tomorrow.' It does not intend to give any final definitions nor commit to one theoretical framework. Instead, it invites the reader to embark on a journey of theorising and co-creating Utopia in educational spaces, within learning and teaching, reflecting on past, future and existing educational practice, philosophy and theory. Considering individual values, unique human perspectives and contexts, the chapter starts an exploration of the authors' belief in inclusive education and, presents the authors' idea that

There are as many Utopias as there are people in the World.

The word utopia is derived from the Greek oὐ (not) 'τόπος' (tópos), translating to non-place. If the word ending is switched to *eú* from *oú,* the positive, optimistic side becomes visible in a 'good' *eutopia,* making its exceptional power better understood (Hennerfeind et al., 2020). Sir Thomas More first proposed the ideal, imaginary nature of utopia in his 1516 novel written in Latin and titled *"De Optimo Republicae Statu deque Nova Insula Utopia"*. Sir More's search for justice led to a Utopian World where everyone's needs are always met, with little to no hierarchy. His proposed ideal society does not experience a power struggle or greed, keeping morality, fairness and equality at its core. Hennerfeind et al. (2020) reflect on the difference between Thomas More's historical, already-existing yet distant, perhaps difficult-to-reach Utopian entity (in a satirical sense) versus more current understandings of Utopia. These are explored in this chapter, tentatively suggesting *"the positive development of something that does not yet exist (…)"*; more so, seeing Utopia as a dynamic *"vision of the future"* (Hennerfeind et al., 2020: 92).

Utopianism brings mixed emotive responses in people, and there is controversy around its meaning and intention. Considering largely Western societies, Manuel and Manuel (1979) take *utopia* with Thomas More from the fifteen and sixteen century Renaissance through Rousseau and Kant in the Enlightenment Era. Nineteenth-century utopian socialism leads to Karl Marx and his counter-opposition via Engels or Comte, ending in the not-so-modern (anymore) times of Darwin and, later even Freud. Admired and criticised for not considering distinct disciplines, such as psychology, sociology, economy, or politics, in human societies, Manuel and Manuel's *'major utopian constellations'* (1979:13) explore meanings of utopia over time, albeit failing to explain why they existed (Kilminster, 2014). While education undeniably features as a distinct discipline, its evolution cannot be separated from the evolution of human societies and interdisciplinary influence. Hence, considering a wide variety of educational contexts worldwide, against (more current and specific to education) global neoliberal rhetoric that impacts most active attempts of change, *utopia* as a wordmay feel uncomfortable, archaic or purely naive (Busby, 2015).

Paradoxically, the thought of one person's Utopia, understood as ideal, becoming another person's Dystopia seems ever so possible in the reality of 21st-century society. Following the dystopian theme, Bauman (1976), as the 'sociologist of misery' (Dawson, 2012: 556), warns about the *'corrosive nature'* of tomorrow. Still, in his notion of *'active utopia'* Bauman's sociology draws a line between the pessimistic and optimistic views of future morality. Focused largely on choice and fate in society least concerned with the morality of human

action, Bauman makes historical links to the moral decisions of 20th-century humans, with numerous examples of turmoil, war and unrest, some of which resemble inconsolable differences and continuous conflicts so apparent in the reality of current times worldwide. The chapter's opening example features a similar schism. Although it introduces what is understood by authors as a 'realised utopia' in the form of the existing Participatory School, its social and political context is characterised by a strong divide of opinions and controversy. Despite the powerful impact of religious beliefs impressing political autonomy with directives limiting educational freedom, utopian dreams become a reality and continuously inspire hope and possibility. Jacobsen and Poder (2008: 208) provide a helpful take on the nature of utopian thought:

"Utopianism has remained a continuous and conspicuous yet always ambivalent presence in social and political thought. It has been "praised and castigated, valourised and condemned, worshipped and ridiculed, and yet it has, in some form or other, survived and continued to inspire thinking, dreaming and action throughout most parts of human history."

Busby (2015) explores tenets for the '*pedagogy of utopia*' in her work, drawing on Paul Ricoeur's thinking that proposes a critical recognition of the current reality, with an immense desire and a possibility to change it, where **'the utopia is not only a dream, it is a dream that wants to be realised'** (Ricoeur, 1986: 289). There is a strong indication of *change transformation* in Busby's account of Ricoeur's original thought. She further parallels the philosophical tenets of bell hooks's (2003) Pedagogy of Hope, supported by Henri Giroux (2004), highlighting their dynamic nature and anticipation, a promise of different possibilities (Busby, 2015: 414). Ricoeur (1986) attributes the same possibility to 'social imagination', arguing it is responsible for human critical exploration of the status quo (present) to develop an image of an alternative (future). He insists that utopia intends to change or disrupt, proposing three levels, illustrated in Figure 1, below.

Figure 1: Three Levels of Utopia by Paul Ricoeur (1986)

Three levels of utopia

Fancy

Utopia is completely unattainable, the first level of emerging utopia.

Construct

Utopia as an alternative to the present power is the second level in which the 'better' power replaces the existing one.

Exploration

Utopia as an exploration of the possible, the third level in which real change becomes possible.
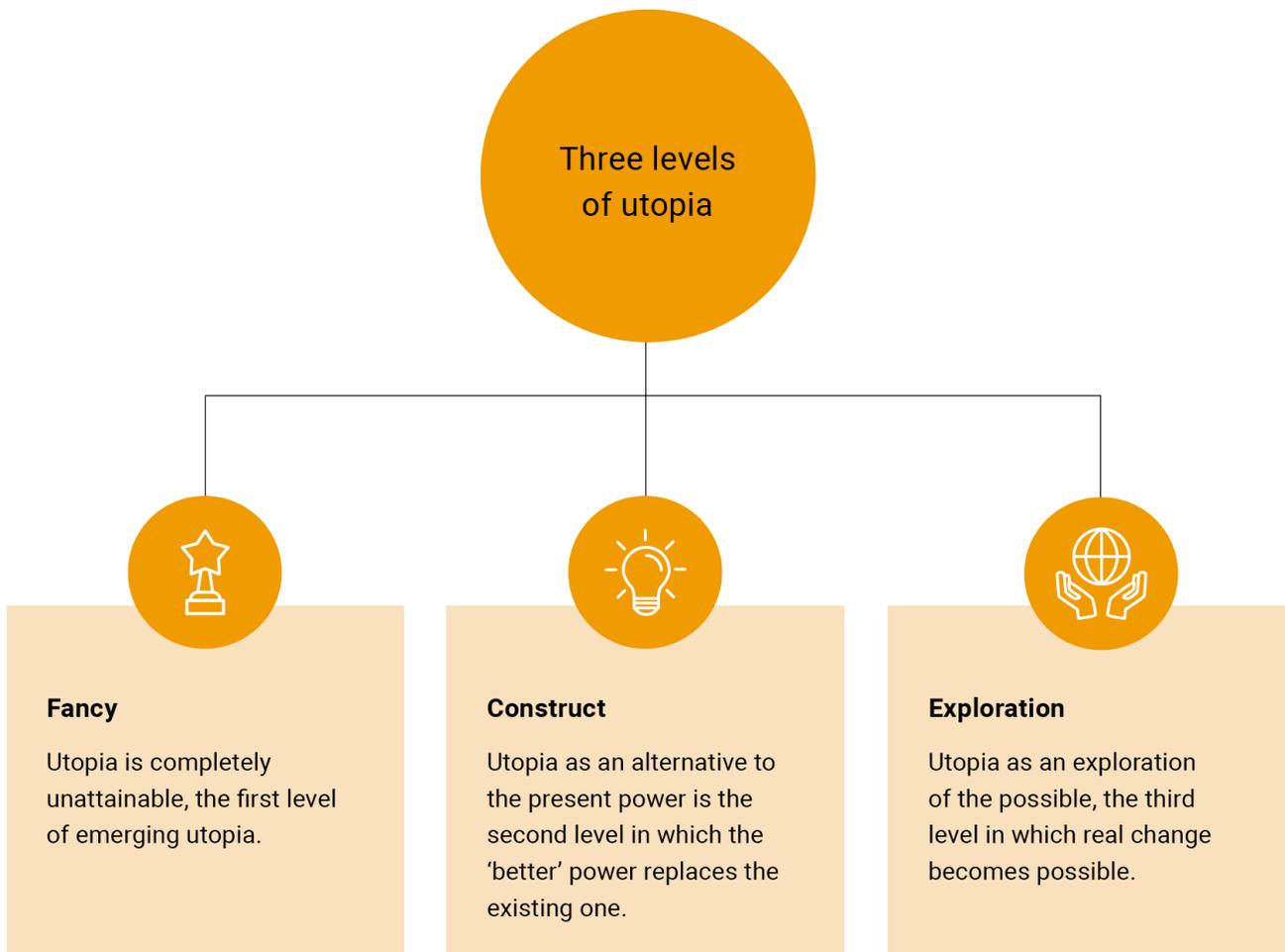
**by Paul Ricoeur (1986) adapted from Busby (2015)**

Based on Busby (2015);

Ricoeur's notion of Utopia may be formulating an ultimate goal or blueprint, but there is an argument that it can be conceptualised as a *method* (Levitas, 2013). Instead of an ideal destination, Utopia as a method provides a way to reconceptualise the present for an alternative future (Levitas, 2013; Van Dermijnsbrugge & Chatelier, 2022). Since utopia explores the contexts of human flourishing, the rationale for understanding it as a method provides an opportunity for dedicated, active work through the reconstruction of 'doing' and 'being' education, critically reflecting and questioning the dominant current status of education and the educational system (Van Dermijnsbrugge & Chatelier, 2022). Moreover, the notion of Utopia as a method can be seen as a crucial element in teacher education, as the concept reflects future teachers' values and ideas about their ideal school and professionality. Considering how frequently inclusive education is left behind, students in teacher education today may translate it as a Utopian idea, challenging to anchor within the complex reality of everyday school education experiences (based on the contextual environment). It is expected to see inclusive education perspectives conceptualised as illusive, as a never-to-be-reached goal failing against the rigid complexity of educational

systems that leave little to no room for inclusion. Störmer (2021:19) discusses this area of tension in his "Inclusion between Utopia and Reality," suspecting that the concept of inclusion is frequently accompanied by an empty promise or, as some authors prefer to describe an "inclusion lie" or "false magic" moving towards a more dystopian picture. Part 3 of this chapter further explores 'Utopia as a method' while considering inclusive education and inclusion as an overarching aim.

Piezunka et al. (2017: 208) described the postulation of four understandings of inclusive education in schools in German-speaking countries, further illustrated in Figure 2., below. Firstly, the reference to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) places inclusion near the legal footing, showing many countries' commitment to confront discrimination, with still variable implementation into individual countries' domestic laws, policies and educational practice. A pragmatic understanding of individual performance development, with a frequent focus on children with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND), provides a second prism to grasp. Piezunka et al. (2017) further add that each child's participation, recognition, and well-being are central to performance development and go beyond the performance principle, as inclusion is an ongoing process. The fourth understanding defines **inclusion as a Utopia**, an ideal of complete inclusion (Piezunka et al., 2017: 213, 216-217).

Figure 2: Four understandings of inclusive education, adapted from Piezunka's (2017)
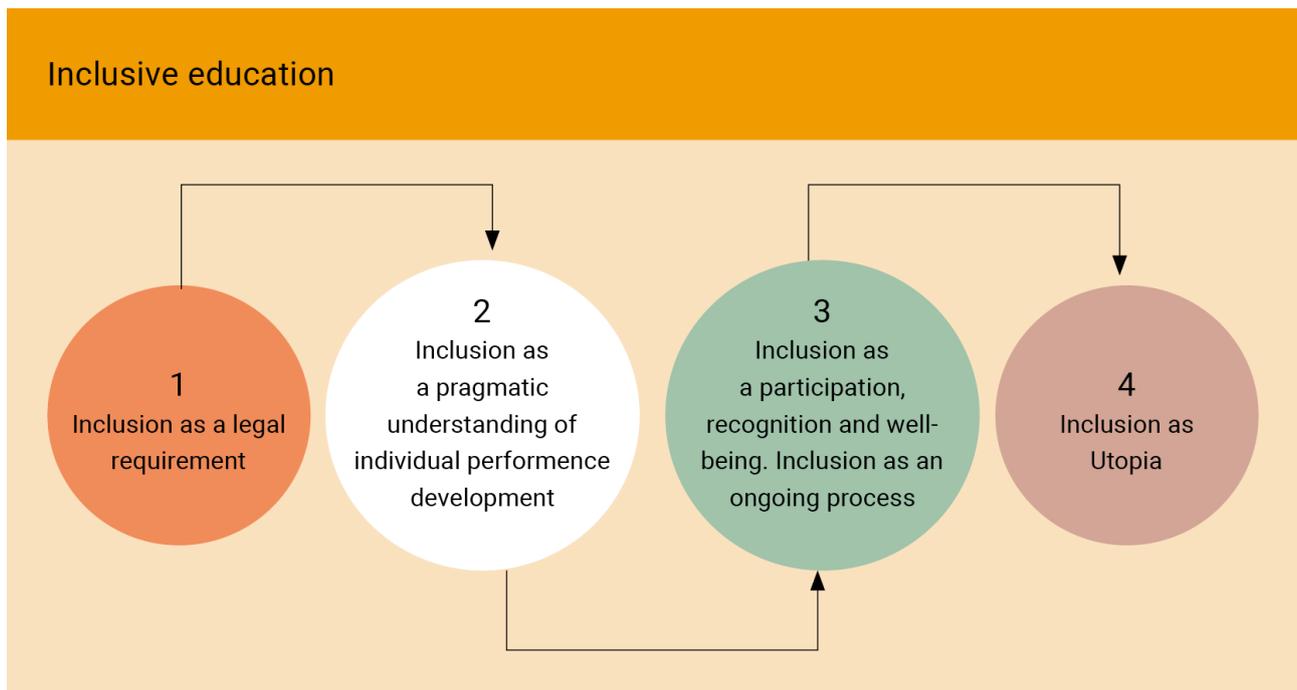
4 Understandings of Inclusive Education adapted from Piezunka (2017)

Source: Created by Merz-Atalik (2024)

Barriers to a Utopian Educational Journey

Many barriers and different beliefs exist within the multiple layers of global educational

systems. This causes tensions between different stakeholders and their perspectives, legal and political aspects frequently associated with resources and funding, and the mismatch in the value placed on inclusion, its meaning, and its place in education. While authors acknowledge a vast disparity among approaches to inclusive education worldwide, selected pressures are briefly explored here to encourage reflection on where these overlap with the same relevance globally and consider alternative pathways.

Key aspects

Hidden Politics and Neoliberal Rhetoric

The overwhelming weight of the current neoliberal ideology in education is frequently 'tangled' with the politics of funding and resources that fuel its performative culture. Such reality created by the dominant discourse in education makes Ricoeur's (1986) 'social imagination' a vital starting point, inviting the possibility of utopia into the dominant ideology. Reflecting on what it is to be human, recognising one's values and core beliefs that make us who we are when faced with the reality of now, provides the opportunity to imagine an alternative. Yet, back in the 'real world,' neoliberalism is undeniably an embedded feature of modern education. Many argue that its aspects are necessitated by progress, modernity, and growth and that profit-oriented focus is simply a pragmatic approach essential to organisational survival. In the meantime, the social and economic barriers become more visible, with education systems and their educators continuously seeking, integrating and fighting value approaches and principles that directly oppose each other (Ball, 2016).

The idea of the 'Politics of Education' is far from new, and any further considerations of methods, models or frameworks proposed in this chapter are likely to be at least inspired, if not well rooted, in Freire's pedagogical thinking. Well theorised in his 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed' (1968), critical pedagogy is undoubtedly a cornerstone of modern educational thought, continuously revisited, critiqued and reinvented throughout the second half of the twentieth century and prevails with much relevance in today's reality. Freire (1968) understood education as largely political in its shape and form, seeing the *banking model of education* as a politically necessary way to retain societal power imbalance and oppression. The banking model of education remains visible across higher education institutions, certainly within Western-centric societies. Existing neoliberal ethos sees students as consumers purchasing specific services, where knowledge is expected to be 'deposited,' at the price of students' own independence, skill development and critical thinking ability. Associated with Marxist thinking yet aligned more with radical liberal thought, Freire's pedagogy seemingly has a less direct focus on inclusive education as it is understood today. Yet, his insistence on the role of education as *"the practice of freedom"* (Freire, 1968:62) and a vehicle to raise the *critical consciousness* of all learners through *problem-posing education* feeds directly into the modern vision of inclusive teaching and learning.

Freire's belief in the creative power of *dialogue*, underpinned by a profound love for the world and the people in it, remains a recurrent theme in negotiations of inclusion.

Despite all the reforms, interventions and proclamations for inclusive education, most school systems internationally do not change (significantly) (Kruschel & Merz-Atalik, 2022: 2). There are manifold reasons attributed to this, and three aspects are selected to explore their systemic nature. They can be seen as barriers to utopian thinking as well as barriers to the implementation of utopian visions. 1) the loose coupling of the systems; 2) the recontextualisation by the actors; and 3) the path dependency of developments (ibid.). The education system comprises many loosely coupled systems, institutions and organisations. Changes and reforms need to be considered in terms of their concrete effects on all the different levels and parts of the system. Therefore, it seems crucial that all actors actively participate in constructing the vision behind the process and the process itself. Path dependencies exist; all actors have contributed and invested in the system. The causes of these phenomena are to be found in historical developments and settings with which paths have been taken in the education system in terms of norms, structures, or cultures. These paths have led to firmly anchored rituals of action and arrangements at all levels of the system, which can now only be abandoned with great effort and solid impulses for change (Kruschel & Merz-Atalik, 2022). Institutional arrangements and institutionalised activities are complicated to change (Blanck et al., 2013: 270) in the long run. Government policies define education and offer guidance and support, but they can also constrain it. Some government policies are used to 'measure' the benefits of education (Goodson, 2003). Walsh (2006) claims that this measurement of performance has led to critical voices not being heard at policy level. Tensions further arise when the school's ethos does not marry with the political agenda of government policies (Hayes, 2013).

Culture, Ethos and Professional Identity

Further pressures arise when teachers realise that the school's ethos is not aligned with their individual, professional ethos (Hayes, 2024). Creating spaces where the teachers can grow, feel valued, connected, and empowered is imperative (Hagenah et al., 2022). The development of professional learning communities allows like-minded educators to follow their Utopian thinking by sharing experiences, collaborating, and offering solutions that further benefit the students in the classrooms. There is an acknowledged tension between the initial idealism or Utopias of new teachers embarking on their careers, and the realities experienced teachers face (Buxarrais, 2021). The development of teachers' professional identities can get lost in the current testing and results-driven climate that has engulfed education (Furnera and McCulla, 2019). The bureaucratic nature of box-ticking and exam readiness has led to a focus on outcomes instead of learning, somewhat reminiscent of Freire's (1968) concern with the nature of the *banking model of education* and, more

importantly, its purpose. As ethos within schools succumbs to this global neoliberal trend, the value system, by default, alters.

The ethos of a school is defined as *"those values and beliefs that the school officially supports"* (Donnelly, 2002: 34). Therefore, as the school supports a value, it becomes ingrained into the school's culture. Tensions arise when the ethos in the school does not marry with the political agenda of government policies (Hayes, 2013) or other ideological differences, as illustrated in the chapter's example. This leads to a lack of educator agency (Robinson, 2012) with a primary focus on the constraints of paperwork related to complying with policies. The level of administrative burden increases as the system becomes more outcome-focused, leaving teachers burnt out and questioning their professional identities. The disparity between the 'ideal' and the 'reality' continues to widen when the ethos and culture of the educational institution are at odds with the teacher's ethos (Robinson, 2012), leaving a limited scope for Utopian thinking. Such tensions break down the foundation of professional identities and moving forward to create a shared vision becomes harder to realise.

Following the case example earlier in the chapter, its second part expands on the importance of culture, ethos and teachers' professional identity.

Example case 2/3:

According to the example of the Participatory School, it is essential to highlight that diversity in the educational environment makes a significant contribution and can play a crucial role in overcoming obstacles. ***In this system, there is a strong belief that diversity is critical incultivating a vibrant and dynamic society.Embracing diverse perspectives and experiences fosters a culture of creativity and innovation.****Individuals exposed to and accepting of diversity are more likely to develop enhanced creative thinking skills. Furthermore, diversity is instrumental in promoting peace by encouraging understanding and acceptance of different lifestyles, beliefs, and values. Recognising and respecting these differences is essential for nurturing harmonious coexistence. Embracing diversity enriches human relationships by fostering communication and mutual understanding, encouraging individuals to make deliberate efforts to understand one another and thereby strengthening social bonds. This educational model posits that classroom diversity enhances the learning experience for all students. By fostering an inclusive environment where differences are celebrated, and every student is given equal opportunities to participate, inclusive education promotes social cohesion and eliminates barriers to learning.*

On the other hand, a critical factor in overcoming obstacles and tensions in the educational path through a humanistic approach is the participation of families in educational programs. We advocate for involvement in social programs that include travel, exploration, scientific inquiry, and knowledge creation. Educational programs should be culturally, socially, and environmentally aligned, ensuring they resonate with and enrich everyday life. ***Sustainable education thrives when it originates and evolves in harmony with life, shaping and being***

shaped by its continuous processes. *Understanding the audience's perspectives on human life, existence, and education is essential. Life and education are interconnected and filled with challenges, doubts, contradictions, and complexities. Emphasising interdisciplinary perspectives enriches the educational dialogue. The active involvement of families in educational programs helps integrate life-centred ideas into educational practices.*

*Another important and noteworthy point is that dreaming and a sense of wonder through ideas and imagination can be seen as forbidden or hindering factors in traditional educational paths. In conventional educational systems, children are often asked to follow a specific, linear path. However, we must recognise that this rigidity can be one of the obstacles to creating a utopia. This is where the humanistic approach fosters a sense of wonder and encourages students to approach every phenomenon with curiosity and exploration. Certainty can inhibit curiosity and limit students' ability to perceive the world as a realm of possibilities. By nurturing curiosity and wonder, students are motivated to engage in discovery, creation, and experiences that continuously shape and evolve their understanding of reality through social interactions and life experiences. The goal is to develop an educational system that produces knowledgeable students and cultivates wise, capable, and compassionate individuals who are prepared to impact the future positively. Achieving this vision requires substantial changes in mindset, curriculum, teaching methods, and school culture. Nonetheless, this vision is worth pursuing, as it inspires and motivates both educators and students. In this educational context, there is a belief that personal dreams are crucial and significantly contribute to individuals' learning and academic processes. **The school and the school community provide opportunities for everyone to pursue their dreams to the fullest extent possible.***

As a private institution, we operate independently of government approval, which sets us apart from the traditional educational system. Our school serves approximately 240 students, both boys and girls aged 6 to 18, a practice that diverges from the prevailing educational norms in our country. To further support our students and advance our educational objectives, we recently established a new branch of the school in Toronto, Canada, called "The Peace School." This branch is a member of several international organisations, including the European Democratic Education Community, the Alternative Education Resource Organisation, and Humanist Kids (You can find out more about Toronto Peace School in the International Schools chapter).

Utopias as a method: Impact on transformative actions

Creating a Vision

Hennerfeind et al. (2020: 94) consider vision as more tangible than utopia, pointing out its limited reach over truly transferable change aspired for:

"Although the word is also used to describe something that has not yet happened, it is visible from afar. It is more likely to concede the possibility of coming true than utopia. It is

closer to events and more comprehensible. What makes it possibly inferior to utopia is its reach. Due to its closer perception, it seems to be associated with less risk. This makes it more attractive in fast-moving times. So, when it comes to quick, short-term changes, people tend to think of visions rather than utopias. However, if far-reaching and sustainable change is required, the vision would be too short-sighted."

The starting point for any change is a critical reflection on educational practices, their history, and the evolution of differential approaches and understandings of education and its purpose, role and meaning for learners (that includes teachers). Here again, Freire's (1968) concept of critical consciousness relates to the development of the learner's critical, questioning mindset, more importantly, however, the necessity to revisit educators' own 'conscientizacao' (Freire, 1968: 55). Problem-posing education invites learners to consider their relationship with the world around them and transformative role of dialogue, enables educators learning, from and with the students they teach. Education becomes a transformative process, anchored in the learner's reality, where education cannot take place unless all actively participate.

"True dialogue cannot exist unless the dialoguers engage in critical thinking -thinking which perceives reality as a process, as transformation, rather than as a static entity- thinking which does not separate itself from action, but constantly immerses itself in temporality without fear of the risks involved. (…) For the critic, the important thing is the continuing transformation of reality." (Freire, 1973: 92)

This inquiry then leads to consultation with and consideration of all parties to reimagine alternative tomorrows, with a critical pedagogic lens inviting (if not challenging) student teachers to think critically about their practice and learning. Values, biases, and opinions of all participants are considered, and more importantly, how they are considered matters. Biesta's (2012; 2013) framework for public education suggests three lenses: 'for the public', 'of the public', and 'in the interests of the public' (Biesta 2012; 2013). Education 'for the public' is an education aimed at the public, where the public is instructed on how to think and act. This erases plurality and ensures that all learners are equal. Education systems are assumed to know what is best for the public and will teach it to them (O'Toole, Dowling and McElheron, 2023). Education 'of the public' emphasises learning rather than instruction, moving towards a system based on citizenship, emancipation, and visibility. Consultation and incorporating the voices of educators, children, parents, and communities into pedagogy, policy, and planning are carried out. However, Biesta (2013) argues there is a flaw within this viewpoint that 'everyone's voice is equal'; some voices may not be fair or inclusive. 'In the interest of the public' allows us to question which voices are helpful to living together in unison and which are hindering (O'Toole et al., 2023). Using Biesta's framework with national and international diversity, equality, and inclusion charters (UNCRC, 1989; UNESCO, 1994) supports the inclusivity of voices through an inclusive lens. O'Toole et al. (2023) argue that consultation is insufficient to ensure a fair and equitable narrative becomes visible. Instead, the 'consideration' of all parties should be reviewed. They further

argue that these considerations are not discrete and must be understood in dynamic synergy. There are, of course, often tensions between different perspectives. Negotiating these tensions is part of a democratic society (O'Toole et al., 2023).

To 'consider' all parties, their voices must be accessed, heard and used to enact change. Lundy's Model of Participation (2007) can be used to access students' voices. This model conceptualises Article 12 of the UNCRC, which states, **"I have the right to be listened to and taken seriously"** (UNCRC, 1989) through the lens of accessing children's voices. Lundy's model (2007) requires four elements: Space, Voice, Audience and Influence. Space for children/students to feel safe to voice their opinions is essential to ensure meaningful engagement. Children and young people will express their voices in spaces where they feel safe and where the relationship is caring and nurturing. Creating a trusting and healthy relationship prior to utilising techniques to access voices will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter. It is imperative to ensure the children/students have an audience that includes people who would and could take them seriously and support getting their opinions brought to decision-makers. The children/students should be seen as co-decision makers where appropriate. The final element is influence. This is where the children/student's voice and opinions influence practice. Therefore, practices are altered to consider the views of children, students, and young people.

Creating a space to explore and co-create utopias for inspirational, inclusive practices of tomorrow

Koenig et al. (2022) speak of a teaching dilemma in teacher education – we are teaching for an inclusive education system that does not widely exist today. Even if a highly inclusive aspiration has been developed during studies or training, it is often almost impossible to put it into practice in insufficiently inclusive organisations in education today. Nick Peim has restated recently that **_education has not been delivering on equality: inequality is precisely what it is for!_** (Peim, 2023: 2).

Peim has long argued that it is the socially disadvantaged who are particularly ill-served by the so-called 'gift that keeps on giving'. For many people, the offer they cannot refuse is often one they are not in a position to accept, partly because this is someone else's aspiration. Although there are obvious parallels to Freire's (1968) work in Peim's account, bell hooks (1994) was more explicit in highlighting the point about meaningful sharing of education relevant to creating the space to explore and co-create. Her work was much inspired by Freire's insistence on common, mutual human growth, with privileged and less privileged influencing each other to transform. Seeing 'education as the practice of freedom', bell hooks understood the flaws of education systems in their frequent omission of learners' social reality (class, gender, sex, racialised positionalities and relevant experiences). Thanks to Freire, education opened up a possibility 'to move beyond boundaries, to transgress,' making a true, authentic difference in the world (hooks, 1994:207). This raises the question of educators' understanding of the role they play in

the dynamic nature of learning and teaching, seeking to transform their own practice and thinking, continuously learning from each other as much as their students.

"Inclusion [presupposes] a change of pattern [...] – understood as an intentional process of turning away from a mode of optimising, which in a way would only mean a further affirmation of the status quo. Instead, a transformative understanding of inclusion requires actors (in organisations) to be both aware of the way current structures have become and to intentionally shape an active process of 'future-forming' (Gergen, 2015) and reflexive future work" (Koenig et al. 2022: 22).

Sharpe et al. (2016) consider that people can develop forms of future consciousness and, thus, of changing patterns. Teachers and all other participants of education systems should be empowered to continuously and proactively develop approaches, knowledge and skills that make it more likely for them to be able to:

- Orient themselves in the permanent – neither foreseeable nor linear – transformation process towards a more inclusive education system, in the sense of the vision in a self-reflective, networked and more targeted manner.
- Meet the challenges associated with the recognition of human diversity and diverse educational pathways in organisations and institutions with diversity-sensitive and inclusion-oriented attitudes and practices.
- Position themselves as a transformative actor for more equality and educational justice in the constantly changing education system and be able to simultaneously remove barriers to participation and learning for all (Booth & Ainscow 2017).
- Develop a willingness to further professionalise themselves by the changing demands posed by the diversity of learners and the living conditions in our society within the framework of their professional biography (Merz-Atalik, 2024).

Danforth (2017) says successful inclusive educators are characterised by a unique approach:

"They do not ignore the gap between their ethical beliefs and their daily work in schools. They intentionally toil in the gap. They enter into that uncomfortable space, explore their commitments and behaviour, and figure out how to better enact their most cherished ideals" (Danforth, 2017: 8).

Epistemic knowledge alone cannot facilitate the levels of change needed to address contemporary societal challenges, and according to Sharpe et al. (2016), other forms of practical knowledge are required. The adaptation options for the potentially adaptive human system can be based on the past and the future. Sharpe et al. (2016) claim that without such "reframings", it is practically impossible to reconcile the "objective" world out there with people's subjective perceptions of the future. Sustainable solutions are not only related to political will and action.

They "also require **a collective ability to co-create and convene spaces for genuine**

transdisciplinary co-operation and participation across the full spectrum of human diversity and difference in order to address the question "what type of society [do] we want to live [in] and who [is] the 'we' […] answer[ing] that question (Abbott et   al., 2017: 815)" (Koenig et al., 2022: 127; highlighted by the authors).

Utopias cannot be traced back to previous experiences from the past, either from the perspective of the individual or the system, as there is still no (organisational) memory for such experiences (Koenig & Strasser, 2022), for example, with inclusive education. Therefore, when embarking on co-creating Utopia, the authors want to bring people together to go on a journey that will be characterised as a collective intelligence creation process. Two critical points must be present for an authentic and meaningful shared vision to be created: it must be possible to reach all people and levels of the system (Whole-System-Approach), and all individuals involved must be able to contribute to the change (participation in the process). Koenig et al. (2018: 34) consider that **"the potential for transformation lies in the flexibility to think about the future beyond the continuation of the past."**

When revisiting Ricoeur's (1986) levels of utopia within classrooms, coupled with a whole system approach where all individuals can participate, the created space allows positive relationships to flourish (Lundy, 2007). Positive relationships are integral to children's and young people's education (Ebbeck & Yim, 2009). Supportive and warm interactions throughout the classroom, teacher and student, and peer interactions lead to a productive learning environment (Wubbles et al., 2012). When all opinions of the children, students, parents and educators/teachers are sought, the commonalities can be reviewed, and a shared vision can be created. This shared vision becomes how the classroom looks and feels.

Defining shared value

Considering value systems starts with a reflection of personal values. These values are individual to each person and frequently relate to how people construct their identities. Intrinsically, each person 'knows' what matters most to them…or at least they think they know until they are confronted with questions, situations or circumstances that challenge these deeply integrated ideals and are forced to reconstruct, change, or transform their thinking. This begins with a personal journey of discovery where each person uncovers which values are important to them. Deconstructing these personal assumptions and biases is an integral element of understanding one's own personal value system (Brookfield, 1995).

Creating a space where students can discuss their values and co-create shared values allows essential questions to be answered. Establishing the importance of individual and personal values and how they may interact with the educational context supports the ability to reconcile, at times problematic, alignment of personal and professional lenses. A deeper

level of reflection may support further understanding of how these individual values may be translated into inclusive educational practice.

Referring back to the authors' starting proposal that ***there are as many Utopias asthere are People in the World***highlights that every person's vision of their Utopia is different. Therefore, reflection on understanding one's own values before inviting other people's perspectives and values is necessary. Linking individual utopias within a group to create a shared vision often engages working with deeply personal values to co-create a space where Utopian visions can be realised. Common values associated with educational systems are community, democracy, love, relationships, uniqueness, play, identity and belonging, compassion, equity, empathy, advocacy, passion, agency, and autonomy. These shared values within a classroom can lead to the overall values of the school. Creating a cohesive vision from learners and educators and the wider community to principals and boards of management and leaders shows how these shared values can bring about considerable change.

Example case 3/3:

"Based on the values mentioned above, the vision for future education in a participatory school focuses on areas that benefit everyone, especially children, as outlined below."

*In this way, there is a desire that we plan in detail how to support an educational environment, especially for the benefit of children and adolescents, and it helps us move forward to **co-create a path for the creation of children's/student's utopia**.*

One significant focus is on young children, particularly those up to two years of age. We aim to develop resources to identify their needs and create diverse experiences from birth to two years old. This involves organising continuous training courses for educators of young children, enabling them to address essential topics and shift their perspectives on child development and education. These programs are designed to be child friendly. We are also working to establish connections between organisations involved in child development, including government and non-governmental organisations, charities, schools, the private sector, and individuals interested in enhancing children's lives. This initiative aims to create a collaborative network that promotes the well-being of children and fosters a cooperative environment among various stakeholders. Another goal is to emphasise diversity in educational approaches, encouraging families to advocate for schools to incorporate children's voices and opinions into educational programs. Enhancing children's health, safety, and care is another goal, particularly addressing the high incidence of accidents, from natural disasters to road and traffic accidents. There is a lack of official co-operation and commitment to developing child-friendly, safe urban environments. Despite our efforts in this area, progress has been limited, and we remain hopeful for future advancements in ensuring children's health, safety, and care. In addition, promoting environmental sustainability is a priority. We advocate for planting trees and developing forests, leveraging the extensive potential of children and their families nationwide to contribute to forestry efforts. Another

initiative we are considering is the prevention of malnutrition among children. This project aims to engage governmental and non-governmental organisations to determine their role in addressing this issue.

*Supporting the family unit is also a crucial objective. While the definition of family forms may evolve, the core principles of co-operation, love, empathy, and care remain fundamental. We aim to promote and strengthen these principles within society. To this end, a Family Education Working Group was established years ago to conduct regular meetings, focusing on improving knowledge and awareness through group readings and critical thinking. Finally, we seek to deepen our understanding of the culture, art, and heritage of our land. This involves introducing teachers, coaches, families, and children to the cultural background of our region, fostering a greater appreciation and connection to their cultural roots. Understanding and promoting a culture of peace among children through Augmented Reality (AR) can be a significant objective of future educational programs. **Teaching childrento listen to and accept othersis crucial for fostering an environment where peace, equality, and diversity coexist.** Additionally, there is a critical need to focus on support and educational programs for children with special needs. This encompasses all children requiring special care, whether in the short or long term, including those in crisis, children from rural areas, immigrant children, minorities, and other vulnerable groups.*

In alignment with the goals above, our efforts aim to broaden the educational horizons of children and teenagers. We assist them in moving toward their utopias, encouraging them to envision and articulate their dreams. Through workshops and programs, we foster collective dreaming, empowering them to travel fearlessly toward the utopian future that represents our aspirations today.

Models and methods of reflection

If we define Utopia "as a defining property of any educational experience that wishes to retain a genuinely contestatory power" (Lyotard, 1993; Readings, 1995), utopias could thus not be an anticipation in any 'natural' or logical sense. We can use different methods and follow different concepts or starting points to anticipate an ideal future. There are various tools for working with the future, so we would first like to stress some fundamental frameworks.

Figure 3: Tools for working with the future adapted from Sharpe et al. (2016)

Tools for working with the future

High

Complexity

Agency

Roadmaps

Pathways

Forecast Plans

Scenarios

Low

High
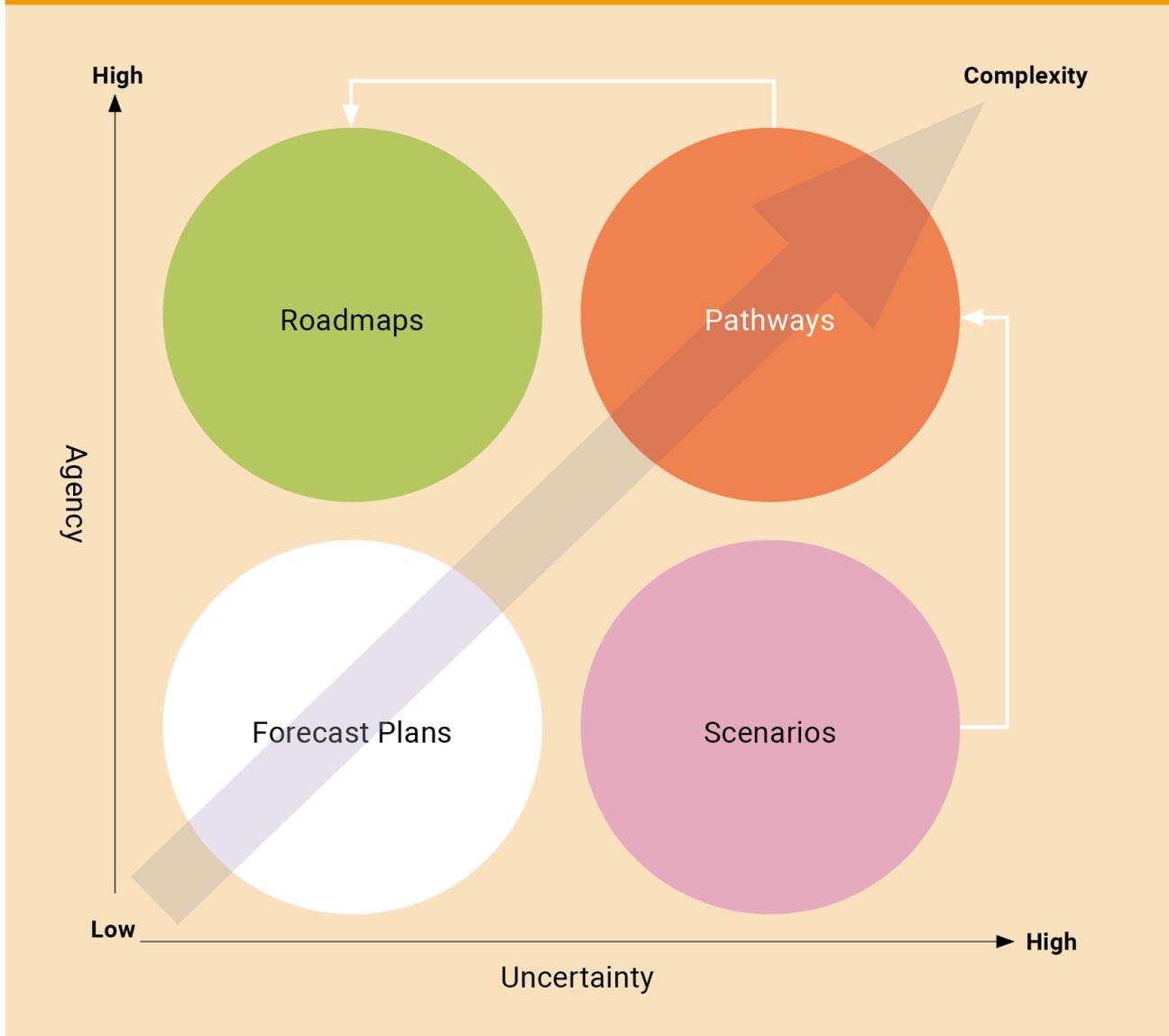
Uncertainty

Adapted from Sharpe et al. 2016

Based on Sharpe et al. (2016)

Some tools for working with the future tend to focus on a clear goal (like a final destination or status), which brings a lower capacity of uncertainty, as the goal is clearly defined and shared in the contextual environment of the change process. For example, to just add new aspects into the curricula instead of changing its basic structures and values. In other change processes, like inclusive school reforms in the whole education system, we find a relatively high demand for agency and feelings of uncertainty because the reform itself is complex and has to include many different levels of the system, stakeholders and agents. The number of players involved in the transformation processes is almost unmanageable. Pathways approaches attempt to deal with complexity and raising agency, for example,

PATH (Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope). The method has been developed as a strengths-based, person-centred planning process by John O'Brien, Marsha Forrest and Jack Pierpoint. The PATH process is designed to help a focused person establish their own vision for their life and imagine what support and connections will help them achieve this vision. PATH is also intended to be a community-building opportunity and is not limited to systems. Therefore, it focuses on an individual and their personal tomorrows and dreams. The process starts with creating a picture of the future (the North Star) and then going backwards, what should be developed three months before, six months before, and so on.

"Don't be afraid of utopia and vision if you are not trapped in them; they are both helpful, strategic tools without which there would have been no significant further development of humanity" (Hennerfeind et al., 2020: 95).

Brookfield's model of critical reflection:

Through critical reflection, a sense of one's value system, beliefs, and assumptions are interrogated. Brookfield refers to these as "hunting assumptions" (Brookfield, 2021: 7). He argues that understanding one's assumptions is highly challenging and often resisted. Further contesting that "assumptions frame our thinking and determine our actions" (Brookfield, 2021: 1). He reviews three types of assumptions: paradigmatic, prescriptive and causal assumptions:

Paradigmatic Assumptions: These assumptions are the hardest of all to uncover, and, when critically reviewed, they are the ones that have the most significant impact on our lives. These worldview assumptions relate to how we see and order the world. They are fundamental to how we live our lives, which is why they are so hard to uncover. An example of a paradigmatic assumption could be that children are independent learners who learn through taking risks and exploring their environment.

Prescriptive Assumptions: These are what we think should happen in different situations. These are grounded in our paradigmatic assumptions but are more accessible to uncover. To follow the paradigmatic assumption mentioned earlier, a prescriptive assumption could be that educators/teachers should provide challenging environments for children to show their independence and encourage them to take risks.

Causal Assumptions: These assumptions are the easiest to uncover and understand. They are assumptions about how things work and about the conditions under which these can be changed and how we can impact those processes. Our causal assumptions are also grounded in our paradigmatic and prescriptive assumptions. Following on from the paradigmatic and prescriptive assumption given above, a causal assumption could be: That children should take risks, although these risks may cause a minor injury, because this encourages their independence and understanding of the world around them. Throughout our lives we are making causal assumptions, be them conditional or retroactive (historical). If the assumption is conditional, then we assume that if we do one thing another will happen. If the assumption is retroactive, it means that we are assuming this because

historically this is what happens (Brookfield, 2021). By unpacking these assumptions, we create opportunities and a willingness to understand them, which in turn creates an understanding of our value system and allows for critical reflection.

Embarking on a Utopian Journey

"If you want to build a ship, don't drum up the men and women to gather wood, divide the work, and give orders. Instead, teach them to yearn for the vast and endless sea" (Saint-Exupéry, 1943).

The following framework is an easy-to-follow guide, where the elements are grounded in research that allows individuality for each group to establish their utopian journey. This is supposed to be a framework that utilises **U**nderstanding, **T**ransformation, **O**pportunities, **P**erspectives, **I**nclusion and **A**dvocacy.

A framework to support a Utopian journey

Figure 4: Framework to support a Utopian Journey in education.
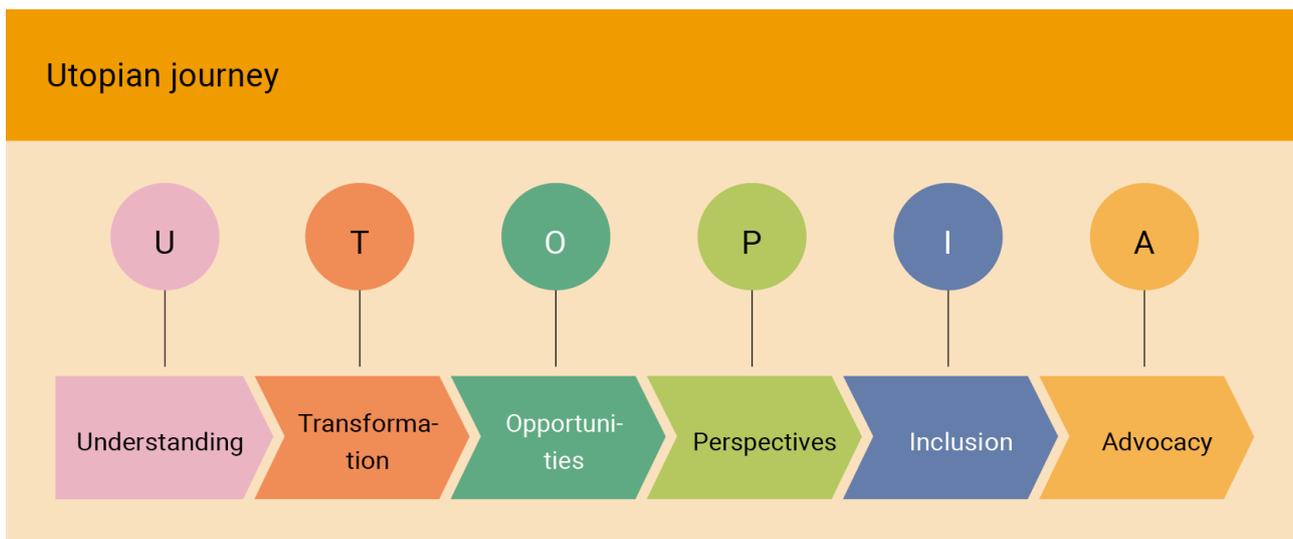
"The most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or touched, they are felt with the heart"
Antoine De Saint-Exupery

U – 'Understanding': At the beginning of the journey, it should be ensured that mutual 'understanding' is recognised as an essential starting condition for the joint reflection process by all actors involved. The attitude and the activities should always be geared towards identifying the individual perspectives and histories of all persons and groups involved. To this end, guiding principles should be developed and recognised for the methodological approach, interactions and communication. Mutual understanding and trust are fundamental prerequisites for beginning to design and create shared visions for a

school of the future. These 'understandings' involve building relationships within the group that are based on mutual trust and respect.

T – 'Transformation': Transformation is critical to embark on a journey to co-create utopia. Visions are the driving force behind "Transformations" in the sense of complex changes (for example, from a social norm-oriented, ableist to a subject-oriented, appreciative pedagogy) instead of purely adaptive changes. The willingness to change and transform a system to reflect the needs and desires of the group is essential. If there is no willingness to change, then alternatives for tomorrow will never be realised. This element involves deep reflection and transformation of practices and principles; therefore, the willingness and desire to change are essential.

O – 'Opportunities': Creating opportunities to ensure all actors feel safe and willing to participate, unpack, and share their opinions is an integral part of this framework. Fostering nurturing relationships and creating a safe and inclusive environment for the school community to openly and honestly feel they can share their opinions about what should change is challenging to achieve. Integrity, openness and a willingness to take on board people's views to change shows professional integrity, but it also takes courage and strength. This is easier to achieve in a learning community with like-minded professionals but can be developed in any group or constellation with the right considerations.

P – 'Perspectives': The perspectives of all actors must be unpacked and understood as all perspectives are critical to hear to gain a deep understanding of other people's value systems. However, not all perspectives are helpful, as discussed earlier in this chapter when reviewing Biesta's framework (2012). Ensuring that all perspectives taken onboard are embedded in inclusive strategies and inclusive policies nationally and internationally is crucial. This provides the foundation of a shared vision with the integral elements of rights, inclusion, agency, and equality.

I – 'Inclusion': Inclusion of all those involved in the educational process is integral to the journey. Deciding who is involved and ensuring that all are included is imperative. This network of actors who should be included in the transformation process of the education system are families, children, students and other social caregivers; this consists of all school specialists, teachers and other people involved in the management and organisation of the education system. Inclusion is a 'transformative task for the future' (Koenig et al, 2022). Inclusion is the path, the process and the goal. Inclusive education systems need transformative professional self-images or identities from the professions involved (Merz-Atalik, 2024). Utilising methods to ensure the inclusion of everyone consists of reflecting on how to access all voices of the actors involved. Ensuring inclusion involves embedding practice in inclusive, reflective practices that support all actors involved.

A – 'Advocacy': This is an essential element involving much thought and reflection. Discovering what you advocate for involves deeply understanding your views, opinions, and biases. Using Brookfield's model to uncover personal assumptions supports unpacking one's value system and allows one to realise who and what one advocates for (Brookfield,

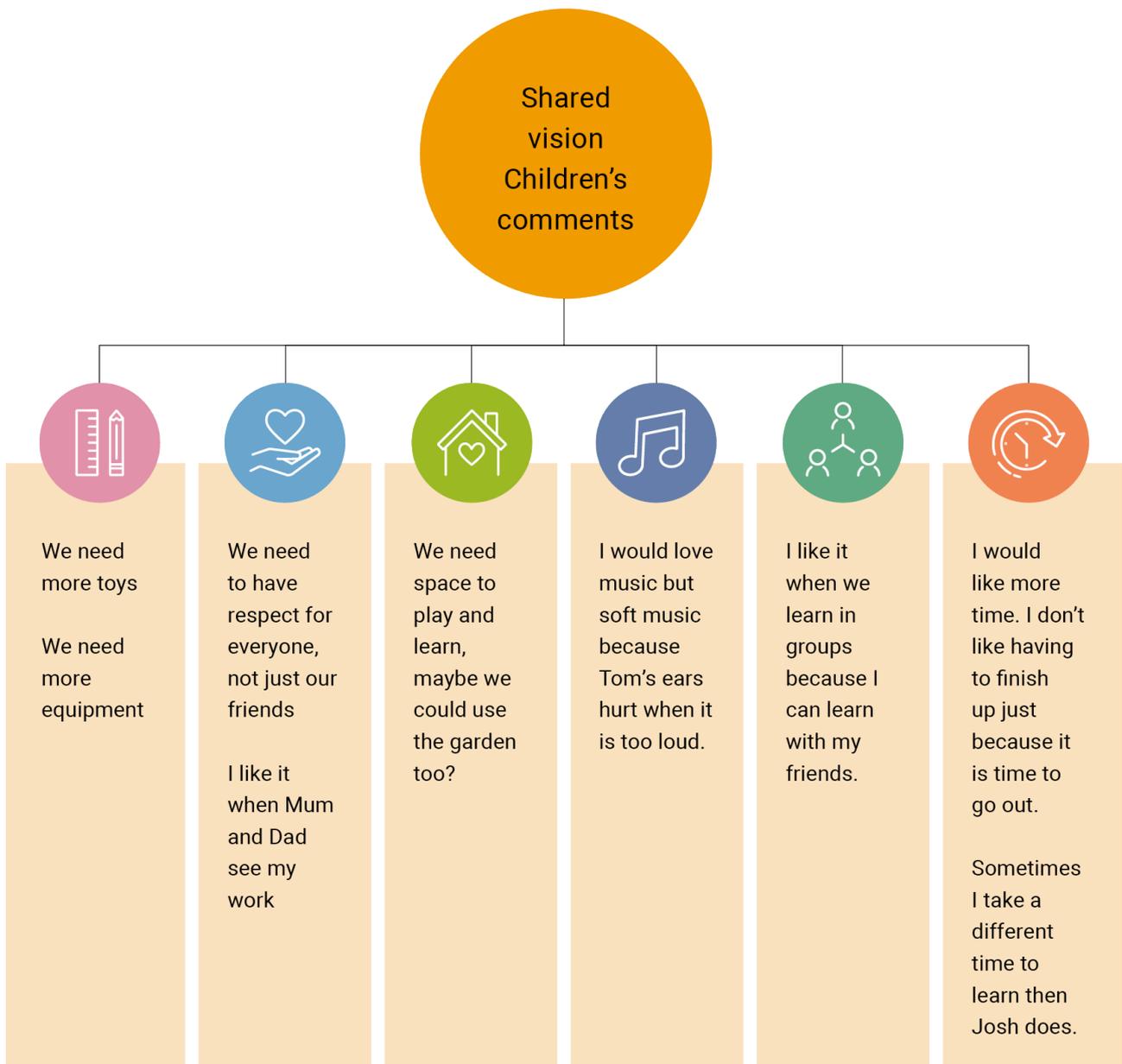2021). Ensuring there are shared values is an integral element of the utopian journey for all actors involved.

An example of creating a shared vision and values towards a utopian approach in a classroom

 "For any group of people to get an education of their own, the first need is to have a say and be listened to" (Griffiths, 2003: 34).

The following is an example from a Child Care Centre:

I would like to share some experiences from my work as a leader of two early childhood settings regarding using shared visioning methods to transform the educational environment and programme of our children, their parents, and our educators. Creating a shared vision and discussing our utopias was recently carried out in a class of mine with children aged 4 to 6 years. We began by talking about **'What each of us would like in the classroom to help us learn and play to the best we can.'** *Pseudo names are used throughout this example; the main comments from the children are shown in Figure 5. The parents' responses are illustrated in Figure 6, and the teacher's and educator's responses are illustrated in Figure 7 below.*

Figure 5: Shared Vision Example from Child Care Centre, Children's Comments

Shared vision Children's comments

| We need more toys

We need more equipment | We need to have respect for everyone, not just our friends

I like it when Mum and Dad see my work | We need space to play and learn, maybe we could use the garden too? | I would love music but soft music because Tom's ears hurt when it is too loud. | I like it when we learn in groups because I can learn with my friends. | I would like more time. I don't like having to finish up just because it is time to go out.

Sometimes I take a different time to learn then Josh does. |

'What each of us would like in the classroom to help us learn and play the best we can?'

Adapted from Dowling (2024)

Figure 6. Shared Vision Example from the Child Care Centre, Parents' Comments

Shared vision Parents' comments

'What each of us would like in the classroom to help us learn and play the best we can?'

My child needs lots of movement

My child needs to work in groups and talk to make sense of the world

Reading and writing skills are integral

Friendships are very important.
Communication is key. If there is an issue, I need to know

Creativity is important
Maths and logic are key skills

I want my child to love learning

Adapted from Dowling (2024)

Figure 7: Shared Vision Example from the Child Care Centre, Teachers and Educators responses
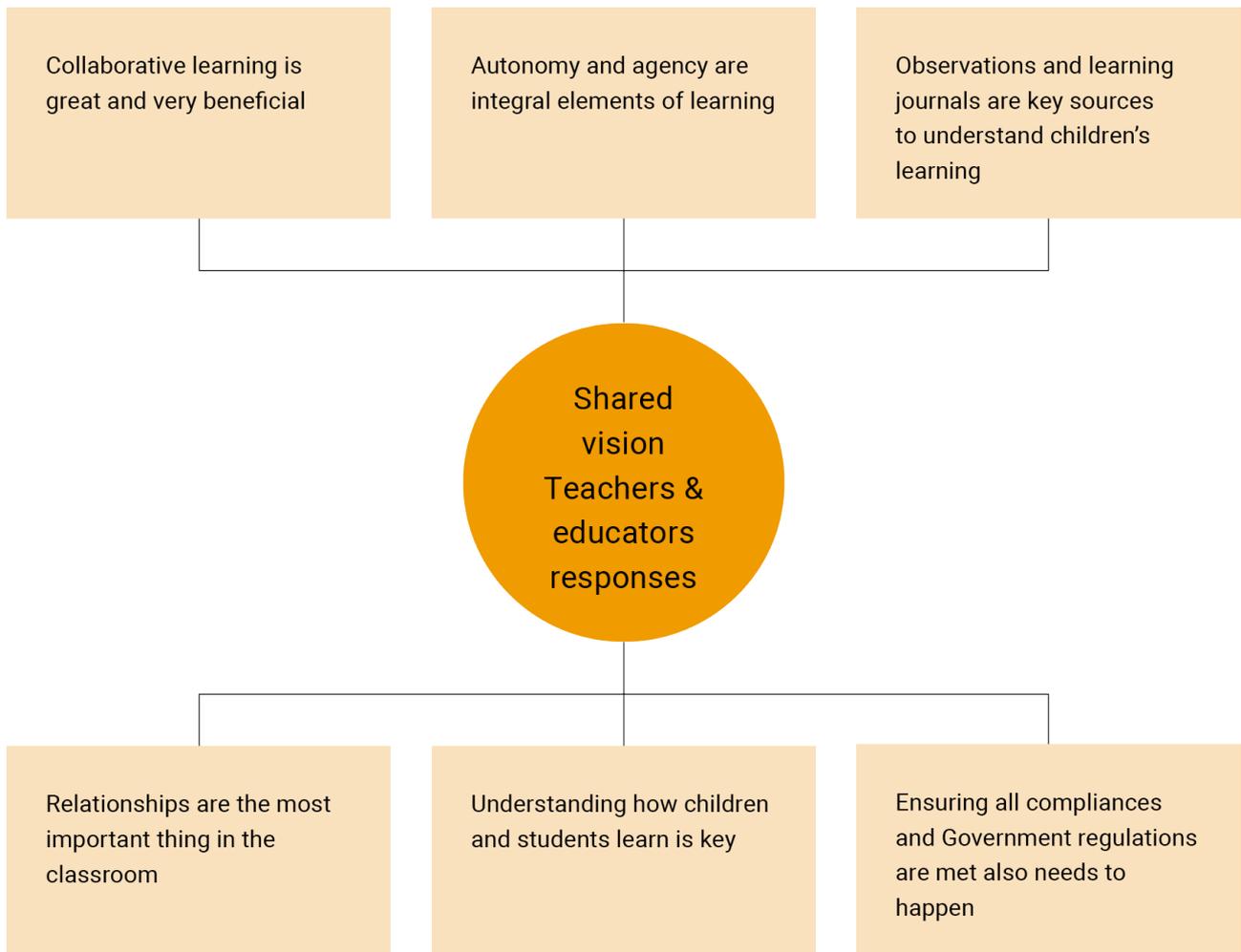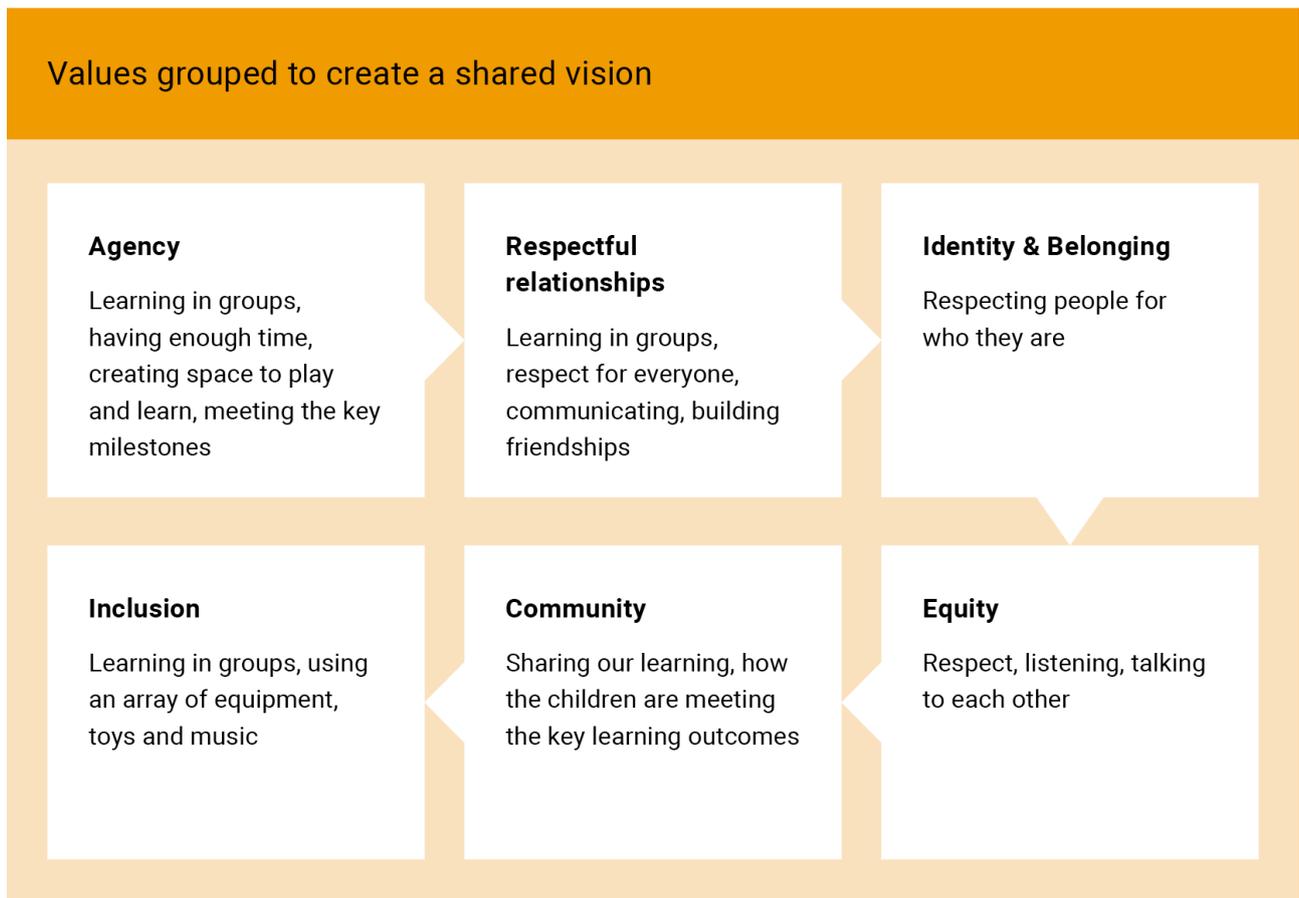
'What each of us would like in the classroom to help us learn and play the best we can?'

Adapted from Dowling (2024)

Thematic analysis was used to ensure all contributions were captured effectively and the nuances of their answers understood (Hejil and Petersen, 2024). These elements were then grouped to form our values and our shared vision that led to collaborative agreement illustrated in Figure 8 below.

Figure 8: Shared Vision Example from the Child Care Centre

Values grouped to create a shared vision

Agency

Learning in groups, having enough time, creating space to play and learn, meeting the key milestones

Respectful relationships

Learning in groups, respect for everyone, communicating, building friendships

Identity & Belonging

Respecting people for who they are

Inclusion

Learning in groups, using an array of equipment, toys and music

Community

Sharing our learning, how the children are meeting the key learning outcomes

Equity

Respect, listening, talking to each other

Child Care Centre, Ireland (2024)

Adapted from Dowling (2024)

Figure 9. Child Care Centre, Classroom Agreement
In our classroom, we agreed:

Source: Adapted from Dowling (2024)

When I reflected on my practice, I found that there were areas I needed to alter.

I reviewed how I could support the class to ensure I facilitated and created a space where they could best learn. The review of practice led to more project-based work with added time and flexibility, a universal design for teaching, and a review of the spaces we could utilise within the building and the community. I also reviewed how we could involve the community in sharing our learning, focusing on innovative ways to communicate our knowledge to others.

*This scenario showed how a teacher/educator used the UTOPIA framework above within her classroom. Mutual **'understanding'** was recognised as an essential starting point for the joint reflection process in this scenario. This **'transformative'** approach by engaging in critical reflection took place through fostering positive relationships and creating **'opportunities'** to gather information involves ensuring the environment is based on trust, respect and*

*inclusion. This created an avenue to ensure that honest **'perspectives'** were gathered that reflected the actual thoughts and feelings of the people involved. This ensured the **'inclusion'** of all and the integrity of inclusive charters and policies visible within the ideas. An insight into what all the actors were **'advocating'** for appeared, and a shared vision of alternative realities emerged. This example shows how teachers can quickly gather perspectives to create a vision and allow everyone to go on a utopian journey to better their learning.*

Conclusion

The Participatory School in Tehran (Iran) example shows that a school community can follow its dreams and visions, even in conditions and contexts that may not be conducive or supportive. At the selected school, it was initially the fundamental values and expectations of one family who had set themselves the goal of playing a decisive role in shaping the educational biography of their daughter. This shows the power of individuals is key worldwide (Boban & Hinz, 2008; Merz-Atalik, 2022). The Participatory School (Teheran) exists today, representing these values in its educational approaches because it co-created a more powerful collective voice that made the dream a reality, like many other schools internationally that went on a Utopian Journey.

Reflecting on one of the opening concepts, *'There are as many Utopias as there are people in the world,'* reinforces that utopia is different for everyone. This chapter highlights that it is not an elusive dream that cannot be achieved. Instead, it is a method and a journey that you, as a teacher, can choose to embark on with your students (on every level of education, including places of adult- or teacher-education). Beginning with conversations about what Utopia is to them and concretising that abstract into creating an environment in which they can see, hear, and feel. Defining shared values and creating shared goals allows these illusionary ideas to become an authentic environment where meaningful teaching and learning can occur. Then, the creation of alternative tomorrows becomes a reality.

3

Local contexts

| | *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it* |

---

3. On the Best State of the State or the New Island of Utopia

online here:

https://book.all-means-all.education/ama-2025-en/?p=643#h5p-52

Closing questions to discuss or tasks

- When creating a shared vision, who's voice would you access?
- How would you access these voices?
- What models would you use to reflect on your practice?
- How would you try to understand your students' UTOPIAS?
- Has the ethos and culture of your educational facility altered your professional identity?
- How would you bring your students on their utopian journey?

Literature

Abbott, Pamela, Claire Wallace, and Roger Sapsford. "Socially Inclusive Development. The Foundations for Decent Societies in East and Southern Africa." *Applied Research in Quality of Life* 12, no. 4 (2017): 813–39.

Ball, Stephen. "Neoliberal Education? Confronting the Slouching Beast." *Policy Futures in Education* 14, no. 8 (2016). https://doi.org/10.1177/1478210316664259.

Bauman, Zygmunt. *Socialism: The Active Utopia*. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1976.

Biesta, Gert. "Becoming Public: Public Pedagogy, Citizenship and the Public Sphere." *Social & Cultural Geography* 13, no. 7 (2012): 683–97.

———. "Making Pedagogy Public." In *Problematizing Public Pedagogy*, edited by J. Burdick, J. A. Sandlin, and M. P. O'Malley, 15–25. London: Routledge, 2013.

Brookfield, Stephen. *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1995.

———. *Teaching for Critical Teaching: Tools and Techniques to Help Students Question Their Assumptions*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2021.

Bruhlmeir, Arthur. *Head, Heart and Hand: Education in the Spirit of Pestalozzi*. Cambridge, UK: Sophia Books, 2010.

Busby, Selina. "A Pedagogy of Utopia." *Royal Central School of Speech and Drama*, 2015.

Buxarrais, María Rosa. "Teacher's Ethos and Moral and Professional Identity." In *The International Handbook of Teacher Ethos*, 125–43. Springer, 2021.

Child (UNCRC), United Nations Convention on the Rights of the. "Convention on the Rights of the Child," 1989. https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx.

Danforth, Scot. *Becoming a Great Inclusive Educator*. Lausanne: Peter Lang, 2017.

Dawson, Matt. "Optimism and Agency in the Sociology of Zygmunt Bauman." *European Journal of Social Theory* 15, no. 4 (2012): 555–70.

Department of Children, Integration, Equality, Disability, and Youth (DCEDIY). *Partnership for the Public Good: A New Funding Model for Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare*. Dublin: DCEDIY, 2021.

Disabilities (UNCRPD), United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with. "Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities," 2006. https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf.

Donnelly, Caitlin. "In Pursuit of School Ethos." *British Journal of Educational Studies* 48, no. 2 (2002).

Einarsdottir, J., A. M. Purola, E. M. Johansson, S. Broström, and A. Emilson. "Democracy, Caring and Competence: Values Perspectives in ECEC Curricula in the Nordic Countries." *International Journal of Early Years Education* 23, no. 1 (2015): 97–114.

Freire, Paulo. *Education for Critical Consciousness*. Vol. 1. Bloomsbury Publishing, 1973.

———. *Education for Critical Consciousness*. London: Continuum, 2008.

———. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. London: Penguin Books, 1968.

———. *The Politics of Education: Culture, Power and Liberation*. Critical Studies in Education. Bloomsbury Academic, 1985.

Furnera, Christine, and Norman McCulla. "An Exploration of the Influence of School Context, Ethos and Culture on Teacher Career-Stage Professional Learning." *Professional Development in Education* 45, no. 3 (2019): 505–19.

Gergen, Kenneth J. "From Mirroring to World Making: Research as Future Forming." *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 45, no. 3 (2015): 287–310.

Giroux, Henry. "When Hope Is Subversive." *Tikkun* 19, no. 6 (2004): 38–39.

Goodson, Ivor. *Professional Knowledge, Professional Lives: Studies in Education and Change*. Buckingham: Open University Press, 2003.

Griffiths, Morwena. *Action for Social Justice in Education: Fairly Different*. Maidenhead: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Hagenah, Sara, Julianne A. Wenner, Kimberley Tucker, Tyler Johnson, Hannah Calvert, and Lindsey Turner. "'Does Anyone Even Care That I'm Down Here?': Creating Shared Values in a District-Wide Physical Education Professional Learning Community." *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education* 41, no. 1 (2022): 50–59.

Hayes, Noírín. *Early Years Practice: Getting It Right from the Start*. Taylor & Francis, 2013.

———. *Early Years Practice: Getting It Right from the Start*. Taylor & Francis, 2024.

Hejil, Damgaard Ketil, Caecilie, and Esben Petersen Nedenskov. "Thematic Coherence in Classroom Discourse: A Question Centred Approach." *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 43, no. 6 (2024): 673–89.

hooks, bell. *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope*. New York: Routledge, 2003.

———. *Teaching to Transgress*. London: Routledge, 1994.

Jacobsen, M. H., and P. Poder. *The Sociology of Zygmunt Bauman*. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2008.

Kilminster, Richard. "The Debate about Utopias from a Sociological Perspective." *Human Figuration, Long-Term Perspectives on the Human Condition* 3, no. 2 (2014). http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.11217607.0003.203.

Koenig, Oliver, Megan Seneque, Bill Sharpe, Zahra Ash-Harper, Stefan Bergheim, Anthony Hodgson, and Asiya Odugleh-Kolev. "Three Horizons Meets Presencing for Inclusive, Just and Equitable Futures." *Journal of Awareness-Based Systems Change* 2, no. 1 (2022): 127–45.

Levitas, Ruth. *Utopia as Method: The Imaginary Reconstitution of Society*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

Lundy, Laura. "'Voice' Is Not Enough: Conceptualising Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child." *British Educational Research Journal* 33, no. 6 (2007): 927–42.

Lundy, Laura, and Lesley McEvoy. "Children's Rights and Research Processes: Assisting Children to (in)Formed Views." *Childhood* 19, no. 1 (2012): 129–44.

Maccarini, Andrea. "Human Rights and Multi-Level Governance: The Effect of Cultural Factors on the Education of Iranian Girls in Elementary School," 2023. https://thesis.unipd.it/bitstream/20.500.12608/50055/1/FINAL%20THESIS%20AIDA%20AZADI%20.pdf.

Manuel, Frank E., and Fritzie P. Manuel. *Utopian Thought in the Western World*. Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1979.

Merz-Atalik, Kerstin. "Canada as a 'Driving Force' for Inclusion Activists in European Countries?" In *European Perspectives on Inclusive Education in Canada: Critical Comparative Insights*, edited by T. M. Christou, R. Kruschel, K. Merz-Atalik, and I. A. Matheson, 9–34. Taylor & Francis: Routledge Research in International and Comparative Education, 2022.

O'Toole, Leah, Georga Dowling, and Tracy McElheron. *A New Publicness for Early Childhood Education and Care*. Routledge, 2023.

Pearpoint, Jack, John O'Brien, and Martha Forest. *PATH: A Workbook for Planning Positive Possible Futures: Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope for Schools, Organizations, Businesses, Families*. Inclusion Press, 1993.

Peim, Nick. *Rethinking the Politics of Education*. Routledge International Studies in the Philosophy of Education. Routledge, 2023.

Ricoeur, Paul. *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*. Edited by George Taylor. New York: Columbia Press, 1986.

Robinson, Sarah. "Constructing Teacher Agency in Response to the Constraints of Education Policy: Adoption and Adaptation." *The Curriculum Journal* 23, no. 2 (2012): 231–45.

Säfström, Carl Andres. "The Ethical-Political Potentiality of the Educational Present: Aristocratic Principle Versus Democratic Principle." *Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca* 33, no. 1 (2021): 11–33.

Saint-Exupéry, Antoine. *Le Petit Prince*. Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1943.

Sharpe, B., A. Hodgson, G. Leicester, A. Lyon, and I. Fazey. "Three Horizons: A Pathways Practice for Transformation." *Ecology and Society* 21, no. 2 (2016): 47.

United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). "The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education," 1994. https://www.european-agency.org/sites/default/files/salamanca-statement-and-framework.pdf.

Van Dermijnsbrugge, Elke, and Stephen Chatelier. "Utopia as Method: A Response to Education in Crisis?" *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 2022. https://www-tandfonline-com.may.idm.oclc.org/doi/full/10.1080/02188791.2022.2031870.

Wagner-Lawlor, J.A. "Anticipating Utopia: Utopian Narrative and an Ontology of Representation." In *Handbook of Anticipation*, edited by R. Poli. Cham: Springer, 2017. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-31737-3_63-1.

Walsh, P. "Narrowed Horizons and the Impoverishment of Educational Discourse: Teaching, Learning and Performing under the New Educational Bureaucracies." *Journal of Education Policy* 21, no. 1 (2006): 95–117.

Webb, Darren. "Where's the Vision? The Concept of Utopia in Contemporary Educational Theory." *Oxford Review of Education* 35, no. 6 (2009): 743–60.

Wilde, Oscar. *The Soul of Man under Socialism*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1894.

Wubbles, Theo, Perry Den Brook, Jan Van Tartwijk, and Jack Levy. *Interpersonal Relationships in Education*, 2012. https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/nuim/detail.action?docID=3034779&pq-origsite=summon.

Yousefi, Nasser. *Humanistic Education*. Kargah Koodak, 2022.

Local Literature

Blanck, Jonna M., Benjamin Edelstein, and Justin W. Powell. "Von Der Schulischen Segregation Zur Inklusiven Bildung? Die Wirkung Der UN-Konvention Über Die Rechte von Menschen Mit Behinderungen Auf Bildungsreformen in Bayern Und Schleswig-Holstein." Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung, 2013. https://bibliothek.wzb.eu/pdf/2013/i13-504.pdf.

Boban, Ines, and Andreas Hinz. "Inclusive Education – Annäherungen an Praxisentwicklungen Und Diskurs in Verschiedenen Kontexten." In *Begegnung Und Differenz: Menschen – Länder – Kulturen. Beiträge Zur Heil- Und Sonderpädagogik*, edited by Gottfried

Biewer, Mikael Luciak, and Mirella Schwinge, 445–329. Klinkhardt, 2008.

Booth, Tony, and Mel Ainscow. *Index Für Inklusion. Ein Leitfaden Für Schulentwicklung. Mit Online-Materialien*. Edited by B. Achermann, Donja Amirpur, M. Braunsteiner, H. Demo, E. Plate, and A. Platte. Weinheim: Beltz, 2017.

Hennerfeind, P., B. Hennerfeind, and R. Swoboda. "Utopie Und Vision." In *Soziale Aspekte Der Führung*, edited by P. Hennerfeind, B. Hennerfeind, and R. Swoboda. Wiesbaden: Springer Gabler, 2020. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-29510-3_10.

Koenig, Oliver, and Rosa Strasser. "Inklusive Zukünfte Antizipieren (Anticipating Inclusive Futures)." In *Inklusion Und Transformation in Organisationen*, edited by Oliver Koenig, 77–95. Bad Heilbrunn: Klinkhardt, 2022.

Kruschel, Robert, and Kerstin Merz-Atalik. "Einleitung: Von Der (Un-)Möglichkeit Der Steuerung von Inklusion Im Schulsystem." In *Steuerung von Inklusion⁉ Governance Prozesse Auf Den Ebenen Des Schulsystems*, edited by Robert Kruschel and Kerstin Merz-Atalik, 1–18. Reihe Educational Governance. Wiesbaden: Springer Verlag VS, 2023.

Merz-Atalik, Kerstin. *Die Inklusive Lehrperson. Leitlinien Einer Transformativen Lehrerbildung*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2024.

Piezunka, Anne, Tina Schaffus, and Michael Grosche. "Vier Definitionen von Schulischer Inklusion Und Ihr Konsensueller Kern. Ergebnisse von Experteninterviews Mit Inklusionsforschenden." *Unterrichtswissenschaft* 4 (2017): 207–22.

Störmer, Norbert. *Inklusion Zwischen Utopie Und Realität*. Inklusion Und Gesellschaft – Band 1. Berlin: Frank & Timme, 2021.

Yousefi, Nasser. *Humanistic Education*. Kargahe Koodak, 2022.

About the authors

Aga M. Buckley

Aga M. Buckley is a social pedagogue, social work academic, and doctoral researcher at Kingston University London, UK, where she leads the Master of Social Work programme. As a neurodivergent educator and a parent of children with learning differences, she favours relational, creative, and progressive approaches to learning and teaching. Aga is a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (SFHEA) and a lifelong learner, advocating for equity, inclusion, and human agency. She is part of Kingston's Network of Equality Champions and Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Action Group, as well as a member of the British Association of Social Workers (BASW) EDI Advisory and the Neurodivergent Social Worker Special Interest Group. Before joining Kingston's Department of Social Work and Social Care, Aga worked in acute psychiatric NHS settings, advanced statutory roles, and workforce development.

Georga Dowling

Georga Dowling is a Lecturer in Early Childhood Education in the Froebel Department in Maynooth University, Ireland and an experienced practising Early Childhood Educator. Her research interests include accessing the voices of young children from birth, examining their participation within their learning journey, inclusive teaching practices and innovative qualitative research designs. She is an advocate for children's rights, quality early childhood education and children's participation in their education. She has co-authored several chapters on these research topics.

Kerstin Merz-Atalik

Kerstin Merz-Atalik has been working as a special education support teacher in mainstream classes (in Berlin during the 90s). Since 1995 she was working at different German Universities as a researcher, her actual research focus is on teacher education for inclusion, governance of inclusive education and transformation processes in the actor network of education systems. Since 2004 she has a full professorship at the University of Education Ludwigsburg for "Education, considering disability and Disadvantage/ Inclusion" and is actively engaged into developing an inclusive teacher education.

Maryam Mohammadi

Maryam Mohammadi holds a master's degree in painting and brings 17 years of teaching experience as the Executive Director of the Participatory School in Iran. The school fosters a humanistic approach to education, focusing on alternative methods that emphasise active participation from children, parents, and teachers to promote the holistic development of young learners.

For years, Maryam and her colleagues have worked to build an inclusive environment where all students, regardless of their background or abilities, can thrive. Addressing individual needs, they help students cultivate self-awareness, confidence, empathy, and a deeper understanding of themselves and the world.

CONTRIBUTORS

Author

A community project from all-means-all.education

Contributors

Abdellatif Atif

Abdellatif Atif is a postdoctoral researcher at Galway University specializing in the intersections of political and educational theory. He is particularly passionate about exploring the instrumentality of education in general and within populist discourses in specific. Rather than dismissing populism and instrumentality as mere pathologies to be condemned, Abdellatif adopts a nuanced approach that examines their complex relationship with education. His work seeks to advance democratic education by offering updated and constructive responses to the challenges posed by populism.

Aga M. Buckley

Aga M. Buckley is a social pedagogue, social work academic, and doctoral researcher at Kingston University London, UK, where she leads the Master of Social Work programme. As a neurodivergent educator and a parent of children with learning differences, she favours relational, creative, and progressive approaches to learning and teaching. Aga is a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (SFHEA) and a lifelong learner, advocating for equity, inclusion, and human agency. She is part of Kingston's Network of Equality Champions and Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Action Group, as well as a member of the British Association of Social Workers (BASW) EDI Advisory and the Neurodivergent Social Worker Special Interest Group. Before joining Kingston's Department of Social Work and Social Care, Aga worked in acute psychiatric NHS settings, advanced statutory roles, and workforce development.

Akangshya Bordoloi

Akangshya Bordoloi is an Assamese Indian social researcher from Department of Sociology, Maynooth University, Ireland. Her research interest lies in gender, sexuality, deviancy studies and social movement. She is also interested in classical sociological theory and considers herself a Foucauldian. She has been awarded the John and Pat Hume Doctoral Awards, the Department of Sociology Teaching Studentship, and the National University of Ireland Travelling Scholarship for my doctorate research.

Akshita Rawat

Akshita Rawat is a PhD researcher at the University of Vienna. Her research focuses on social inequality and education in India. Her research interests include teaching-learning practices in classrooms, sociology of education and qualitative research methods. Her research aims to inform policies and practices that promote inclusivity and equity in education.

Alessandra Galletti

Alessandra Galletti is working as an educator in a secondary school, focusing on supporting students with learning difficulties. In addition to her role in education, she founded an association on Autism in Südtirol, GRETA. Her broader work centers on rethinking school spaces to ensure they are functional and inclusive, fostering a sense of well-being for teachers and students alike. She collaborates with educators, administrators, and designers to promote a culture of inclusivity in schools. By adopting a multidisciplinary approach, she integrates diverse expertise to create solutions that address the needs of the majority of users effectively.

Alessandra Imperio

Alessandra Imperio has a Ph.D. in General Pedagogy, Social Pedagogy, General Didactics, and Disciplinary Didactics. She has been a primary school teacher for about 18 years and is currently a research assistant at the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano, Faculty of Education. Her main research interests are formative and inclusive assessment, pedagogy of the question and dialogic teaching/learning, learning approaches for inclusion, and life skills development.

Alessio Di Paolo

Alessio Di Paolo is a PhD candidate in "Didactics, Special Pedagogy, and Technology for Inclusive Education" at the University of Salerno. His research interests focus on the inclusive potential of music in teaching-learning processes and the educational aspects it can have in formal and informal contexts, all following the theoretical framework of simplexity.

Alexandra Anton

Alexandra Anton, researcher specialising in teachereducation at the Åbo Akademi University. Her research is situated at the intersections of early childhood, teacher agency, and just pedagogies for multicultural and multilingual learners. She is an experienced practitioner in early childhood, language learning and teaching, and is involved in cross-cultural research projects.

Alison Stapleton

Dr Alison Stapleton is a multiply neurodivergent Chartered Psychologist, lecturer, and advocate. Alison co-founded the Association for Contextual Behavioural Science (ACBS) Neurodiversity-Affirming Research and Practice Special Interest Group, served on the ACBS Board of Directors (basic science Member at Large), and assists psychological services in identifying, accommodating, and supporting a range of neurotypes. Alison has published several book chapters and scientific articles, including contributions to The Oxford Handbook of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy and a systematic review of adults' experiences of being identified as autistic in adulthood.

Andreas Hinz

Andreas Hinz was a teacher. From 1999 to 2020 professor for Inclusive Education at Martin-Luther-University Halle-Wittenberg in Eastern Germany, from 1986 to 1999 member of a research team on 'integrative' school experiments in primary schools in Hamburg. Co-founder of a small inclusive hotel (barrier-free and with a mixed team of employees) in Hamburg, working since 1993. Active in Democratic Education since 2008, ten years cooperating with the Institute for Democratic Education at the Kibbutzim College for Education in Tel Aviv, joining lots of European and worldwide conferences of the Democratic Education movement. E-Mail: andreas.hinz@paedagogik.uni-halle.de.

Andrew Campbell

Andrew B. Campbell (DR.ABC) is an Assistant Professor, Teaching Stream, in Leadership for Racial Justice in Teacher Education in the Master of Teaching Program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto OISE. He is the Coordinator for the Black Future Educators' Program (BFEP) and the Director of the Centre for Black Studies in Education (CBSE). DR. ABC is known to the OISE and broader community for his leadership on advancing equity, leadership, 2SLGBTQIA+ community, and teacher education. He presently teaches courses in anti-discrimination education, leadership, educational change, urban education, and Black Educators' Identity and Pedagogy. He has presented at numerous conferences and has delivered many presentations as a keynote speaker, motivational speaker, and workshop facilitator. He loves people, food, fashion, travelling and bringing his community together for a good meal.

Angele Deguara

Angele Deguara is a resident academic and subject co-ordinator of Sociology at the Junior College of the University of Malta. She also lectures in gender and sexuality within the Department of Gender and Sexualities, Faculty for Social Wellbeing. She conducted her PhD research in the anthropology of religion and sexuality with LGBT Catholics in Malta and Palermo, Sicily. She is the author of *Life on the Line: A Sociological Investigation of Women working in a Clothing Factory in Malta* as well as a number of other published works. Her main research interests are gender, homosexuality and religion. She co-founded and chaired the Diversity Committee at the Junior College for a number of years. She is an activist for social justice and civil rights with Moviment Graffitti and has previously volunteered with other organisations such as the Malta LGBTIQ Rights Movement and within the Fair Trade movement.

Angeline Aow

Angeline is an international educator, author, consultant and pedagogical leader. She has undertaken multiple roles within schools, as a teacher, curriculum coordinator, accreditation coordinator and professional learning and development coordinator. Angeline is an advocate of inclusion, coaching, concept-driven learning and teaching and contributes as an active citizen on social justice issues through her role as a country network leader of WomenEdDE, facilitator of the Humanising Pedagogy Committee of the International Schools Anti-discrimination Task Force and work with the Council of International Schools. Her book, Becoming a Totally Inclusive School: a Guide for Teachers and School Leaders was published by Routledge in November, 2022.

Ann-Kathrin Arndt

Ann-Kathrin Arndt, research, teaching and developing teacher education in the field of inclusive education. PhD on collaboration between general and special education teachers (Leibniz University Hannover). Main research areas: Multidisciplinary teamwork, constructions of difference in inclusive classrooms, inclusive, diversity-sensitive teacher education.

Anna Frizzarin

Anna Frizzarin has a PhD in Pedagogy and Didactics and works as a researcher in the field of inclusive education. Her research focuses on inclusive teaching and learning, inclusive development processes of educational contexts, attitudes and social representations in relation to perceived diversity and the resulting implications for students' participation in schools.

Anne Piezunka

Anne is an educational researcher from Germany. In her research she is interested in educational relations, the implementation of inclusive education and the potential and limitations of data collection on discrimination. She is also involved in an initiative to improve educational relations called "Reckahner Initiative für Pädagogik".

Assimina Tsibidaki

Assimina Tsibidaki is an Associate Professor of Special Education in the Department of Primary Education at the University of the Aegean, Greece. Her research interests include students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), families raising children with SEND, home-school collaboration, social support networks, technology in inclusive education, and the portrayal of disability in children's literature and cinema. She has authored two books and contributed to edited volumes, academic journals, and conference proceedings. Additionally, she has presented her work at numerous national and international conferences.

Ayana Pathak

Ayana Pathak is an aspiring academic, currently pursuing her doctorate in the Department of Education from the University of Oxford. Her research interests surround the area of qualitative aspects of gender education in developing

countries, with a focus on school education. This largely draws upon various theoretical concepts of sociology of education, as well as the concept of the hidden curriculum, through which the social construction of gender as a category is aimed to be evaluated. Her academic background is in the discipline of Sociology, having done her Bachelor's and Master's in the same, before embarking on an MPhil in Education and thereafter, the current DPhil programme at Oxford. She is a passionate feminist who aims to study questions of inequality in the field of education- through the lens of gender based reproduction theory.

Baran Yousefi

Baran Yousefi holds a degree in Health Studies from York University in Toronto, Canada. As a graduate of the Participatory School, Iran's first alternative and democratic school, she brings extensive hands-on experience in educating children through a humanistic approach. Currently, she serves as the coordinator and a key member at the Peace School in Toronto, and she is a board member of Humanist Kids. Baran is deeply committed to promoting humanistic values and fostering a culture of peace through education. She has completed numerous courses in educational methodologies, UN sustainable development programs, and participatory systems, all of which align with her dedication to humanistic psychology and UNESCO's peace charter. Her unique blend of lifestyle, educational philosophy, lived experiences, and academic background has positioned her to make a meaningful impact in the field of children's education.

Beausetha Juhetha Bruwer

Beausetha Bruwer, instructor of inclusive education, deaf education, and sign language. Experiences as a teacher of deaf children and as a teacher and sign language interpreter trainer at college and university level. Her key areas of research interest include, among other things: language education, early literacy and language acquisition/development for deaf learners, sign language linguistics and practices, Deaf culture, mother tongue education, multilingual education, early childhood inclusive practices, play pedagogy, outdoor pedagogy, and teacher preparation for inclusive practices.

Becky Ward

Becky Ward, PhD, is a collaborative researcher in psychologically-informed practice. She pursues research with and for marginalised groups and individuals, but also has a particular interest in neurodiversity, homelessness and young people. She supervises and teaches both undergraduates and postgraduates in Psychology, including Clinical, Developmental and Educational Psychology. Her PhD from the University

of Southampton explored a collaborative model of co-producing school staff ADHD resources. She is an experienced youth worker, trainer and advocate with a demonstrated history of working with vulnerable young people.

Bhuvan Israni

Bhuvan works as an Assistant Lecturer at Technological University Dublin. Before joining Technological University Dublin, she worked at DBS, ECBM, and IBAT colleges in Ireland. She holds a Bachelor's (Hons) and a Master's degree in Psychology, both with first-class honours, and is currently completing her doctorate.

With over five years of experience as a Special Educational Needs (SEN) teacher in India and Ireland, Bhuvan is deeply passionate about Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI). Her research in this field has been featured at both national and international conferences. A strong advocate for continuous professional development (CPD), she is actively engaged in advancing her academic and professional journey.

Bhuvan has contributed multiple publications to RTE Brainstorm and maintains an active ResearchGate profile, where her work continues to make a meaningful impact.

Bodine Romijn

Bodine Romijn is a researcher and lecturer at Utrecht University. Her work focuses on equality, diversity and inclusion in early childhood and primary education. She studies professionals' intercultural competences and the role organisations play in supporting and facilitating their staff in implementing culturally sensitive and inclusive practices.

Brian Lynam

Brian Lynam was born and raised in Ireland and has experience of working in international education, specifically in the PYP International Baccalaureate program and International School Teacher training. He is passionate about inquiry based learning, inclusive education, UDL and the role of technology within education.

Büşra Gündeş Orman

Büşra is a researcher in early childhood education from Istanbul Aydın University in Turkey. She has experience teaching children aged 3-5 and has worked on various projects with children from diverse groups, especially those affected by poverty and migration. Currently, she supervises teacher candidates during their practicum.

Her research interests include school well-being, socio-emotional learning, children at risk, and inclusive education.

Carlos Moreno-Romero

Charlie's academic and professional journey spans across disciplines: philology (BA), anthropology (MA), and education (PhD). In 2019, he funded a democratic school (Suvemäe) within a public school (Tallinna Kunstigümnaasium) in Estonia, where he worked as head of studies until 2024. Furthermore, he has researched various topics (Educational Commons, Democratic Education and Social Justice, Nation-State Formation and Education) within the framework of Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020-funded projects. He currently works as a consultant on democratic education, self-directed learning, media literacy, and fostering social justice through education.

Catherine Reid

Catherine Reid is a lecturer in Teacher Education at the University of Glasgow. Her research focuses on widening participation in Higher Education for young people from areas of high deprivation. She is particularly interested in highly able learners and the role of teacher knowledge in education.

Cennet Engin

Cennet Engin is a full professor who teaches undergraduate and graduate courses related to education, curriculum, social foundations of education, needs assessment and classroom management at the Faculty of Education. She worked as an expert and consultant at various international projects, on inclusion, gender equality in education, gender sensitive schools, strengthening democratic culture in primary education, prevention of domestic violence against women and digital citizenship. Her academic works included girls' education, democratic schools, inclusive education, democratic citizenship and human rights education, child labour and education and gender policy in education. She was awarded a Fulbright Senior Research scholarship and conducted research at the University of Wisconsin, Madison.

Chee Shien Tan

Victor Tan Chee Shien has over ten years of experience in special education and is a trained counsellor and educational psychologist. He recently

received his Associate Fellowship in higher education from the University of Stirling. His research interests include special education, higher education, and international mobility (ORCID: 0009-0006-3403-4649).

Chloë Keegan

https://orcid.org/
0000-0001-9759-6370

Dr. Chloë Keegan is a Lecturer in the Froebel Department of Primary Education and Early Childhood in Maynooth University. With over a decade of experience in the early childhood sector as a researcher, lecturer, educator, content developer, and early childhood specialist, Chloë's passion lies in conducting qualitative research directly with young children and advocating for children's voices to be heard and reflected in policy and legislation. Her research has explored how power dynamics, educational structures, and shared environments between adults and children shape children's participation through her Doctor in Philosophy (Ph.D) in Education entitled "It's Like a Baby Jail!' The impact of regimented daily routines on children's participation in early childhood education". Chloë has led national and international campaigns and initiatives as an outdoor and nature specialist in early childhood education, contributed to Ireland's alignment with international practices, particularly for outdoor play, policy and provision, and is conducting research to inform national Irish policy and guidance for children and adults with disabilities.

Christine Carstens

Chris Carstens, based in Bremerhaven, brings extensive experience in teaching English and German, alongside certification as a trauma educator with a specialization in supporting children and young adults facing social and emotional challenges.

Claire O'Neill

Claire O'Neill is a writer and researcher with a background in education. Her research focuses on Neurodiversity and Neurodivergence. Core principals of the Neurodiversity paradigm and Universal Design inform her research, writing and approach to education.

Clíona O'Keeffe

An experienced educator, Clíona is Principal at a large all-boys primary school on the outskirts of Dublin. Having previously worked as a classroom

teacher, in curriculum development and in teacher education she has a wide range of research interests these include leadership selection processes in education, inclusive education particularly in relation to learners with additional educational needs, Catholic education and social teaching, and the teaching of History, Geography and Science.

Cynthy K. Haihambo

Cynthy Kaliinasho Haihambo Ya-Otto is a teacher-educator at the University of Namibia. Her teaching and research areas are in Educational Psychology and Inclusive Education.

Damini Sharma

Damini Sharma is an educator and researcher specialising in inclusive education and child development. She has worked as an inclusive facilitator at schools in India. Damini's work focuses on social justice, teacher education, and policy development, exploring inclusive practices and their implementation to promote equitable education.

Danielle Farrel

Danielle Farrel has both lived and professional experience in the field of disability. She has a passion for changing the narrative for disabled people and those from other marginalised groups. Danielle graduated with her PhD from the University of the West of Scotland in 2015 and her thesis was entitled 'The 2012 Child Abuse Scandal: The Multifuctional Nature of Online Discourse'.

Dean Vaughan

Dean Vaughan is an experienced primary school teacher in Ireland. He holds a Bachelor of Education, Master of Education and Postgraduate Diploma in Leadership & Management. Dean has spent most of his teaching career in the infant classroom where he is passionate about playful approaches to teaching and learning and works closely with student teachers as a research supervisor and part time lecturer in teaching training colleges. Throughout his M.Ed, he recognised a communication for all approach which focused on inclusive practices through Play in the classroom.

Declan Markey

Declan Markey works on a programme called Turn to Teaching, which provides an alternative pathway to becoming a teacher for students who have experienced educational disadvantage or are from communities who are under-represented in the teaching profession in Ireland. Turn to Teaching's objective is to diversify the teaching profession and support teachers and schools in becoming more inclusive teaching and learning environments. Through his work he constantly encounters the impact and legacy that teachers have on their students – be that teachers who inspire students to break-through societies preconceptions or judgements and reach their full potential or those teachers that uphold these prejudices and stereotypical beliefs, which then impact negatively on their students. All teachers have the opportunity and, it could be said, the responsibility to ensure that they become the former – the teacher that can inspire.

Deirdre Forde

Dr. Deirdre Forde is a distinguished lecturer in Inclusive Education at Maynooth University. With a background as a qualified primary teacher and a chartered child and educational psychologist, she brings extensive experience from various educational settings and psychological services to her role. Deirdre's research and teaching interests are diverse and encompass areas such as disability and the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion within educational and societal contexts. She is particularly passionate about amplifying children's voices, advancing relational education, and shaping policies related to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI). Her work is dedicated to fostering inclusive environments that acknowledge and celebrate diversity.

Dror Simri

MA, education counsellor and family and couples therapist, working from 1992 until 2018 at Hadera Democratic School as a teacher, mentor and mentoring supervisor.

Dua Jabr Dajani

Dua Jabr Dajani, Ph.D., is the regional counselor for English language teaching at East Jerusalem School and holds a lecturer position at the David Yellin College of Education. Her research interests encompass enhancing critical thinking in schools, exploring the impact of schooling on cognitive development, English teaching

methodologies, and preparing educators to lead professional learning communities effectively.

Eileen Schwarzenberg

Eileen Schwarzenberg is a qualified special education teacher. Eileen graduated with her PhD in 2013 and is since then working as a lecturer in inclusive education in a university in Germany. Before that, she worked as a research assistant and lecturer at various universities in the field of special education. Her research interests are teacher education, teaching assistants and inclusive education for students with profound intellectual and multiple disabilities and Augmentative and Alternative Communication.

Emer Byrden

Emer Byrden is the Deputy Principal of a primary school in south-east of Ireland, and is doing a PhD in the School of Education in Maynooth University, Ireland. Her interests are relational pedagogy, inclusive education and restorative practice, particularly where these areas intersect. Her current research is on the relational soundscape of the primary school classroom. Emer is contributing a chapter on relational research to the upcoming Routledge Handbook of Relational Pedagogy.

Emma Pearson

Emma Pearson works in the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education at Maynooth University in Dublin. Her research and outreach work centres around understanding and documenting the perspectives and experiences of children and families from under-represented communities. During the past 15 years, she has worked with a range of international, regional and national government and non-government early childhood agencies (including UNICEF, UNESCO, Plan International and the UK Department for International Development / FCDO) to advocate for policies that promote community-centred, equitable access to early childhood education and development supports.

Eva Kleinlein

Eva Kleinlein is a university assistant and PhD student at the Centre for Teacher Education at the University of Vienna, Austria. In her research and her work she mainly focuses on inclusive education in an international comparative /

transcultural perspective. Moreover, she is engaged in topics such as inclusive assessment, digital methods in qualitative research, inclusive teaching practices, and teacher diversity.

Evrim Çetinkaya Yıldız

Evrim Çetinkaya Yıldız is working as an associate professor at Akdeniz University, Türkiye, Department of Psychological Counseling and Guidance. Her research interests are inclusive education, prevention of student problem behaviours, and school counsellor education.

Fatma Kurker

Fatma is a PhD candidate in Psychological Counselling and Guidance and works as a research assistant. Her research interests include basic psychological needs, social media-mental health, international students' mental health, and racial microaggressions in the university environment.

Federica Festa

Federica Festa focuses on participatory practices in schools and conducts research on how to include individuals with predominantly or entirely non-verbal communication in such practices. She works as a special education teacher in upper secondary schools and teaches in specialization courses for special education teachers. Her teaching focuses on how to analyze oral and written texts in schools from a sociolinguistic perspective, aiming to design their accessible adaptation within an inclusive framework.

Fetiye Erbil

Dr. Fetiye Erbil is a researcher and a lecturer at Bogazici University. She completed her PhD at the Learning Sciences Program of Bogazici University. Her research interests include social-emotional learning, teacher professional development, children's rights and participation and educational policies.

Francesca   Mara Santangelo

Francesca Mara Santangelo is a pedagogist with expertise in disability, marginality, and Behavioral Neuroscience. Her research focuses on Special Education and Inclusion. As a musician and teacher trainer, she also works on designing and implementing

early educational interventions coordinating networks of schools, institutions, families, and various stakeholders. Her professional experience combines solid expertise with a continuous commitment to promoting inclusive education and fostering neuropsychological well-being starting with children.

Frank J. Müller
UNIVERSITY OF BREMEN
https://www.uni-bremen.de/en/
fb12/arbeitsbereiche/abteilung-
c-inklusive-paedagogik/sekundarstufe/team/
prof-dr-frank-j-mueller

Prof. Dr. Frank J. Müller is a professor for "Inclusive Education for Learning and Intellectual Development Impairments in Secondary Schools" following his work as a special ed teacher at the Grünauer Gemeinschaftsschule in Berlin.

He works on support structures for teachers in heterogeneous learning groups through inclusive open educational resources, research-based study programs to make the history of inclusive education accessible to future generations, and questions of including more dimensions of diversity.

Georga Dowling

Georga Dowling is a Lecturer in Early Childhood Education in the Froebel Department in Maynooth University, Ireland and an experienced practising Early Childhood Educator. Her research interests include accessing the voices of young children from birth, examining their participation within their learning journey, inclusive teaching practices and innovative qualitative research designs. She is an advocate for children's rights, quality early childhood education and children's participation in their education. She has co-authored several chapters on these research topics.

Graham Maher

Graham Maher is a teacher in a secondary school in Dublin, Ireland. He has been working in secondary schools around Dublin, ranging from private schools to DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) band 1. The reason he became involved in All Means All is to increase the diversity of teaching in Ireland. Graham is a white, middle class, highly educated, Irish national; and this is mirrored across most of the education sector in Ireland. The representation of diverse teachers must increase to better reflect the multi-cultural development of Ireland. This increase of diversity, he believes, will increase the inclusivity, diversity, and equality in Irish education.

Grit Alter

Grit Alter is a Professor of Teaching English as a Foreign Language at the University College of Teacher Education in Innsbruck, Austria. Her research focuses on using picturebooks in English language teaching, diversity education, teaching methodology and digital literacy in the primary English classroom as well as critical pedagogy. She is currently involved in research projects on critical textbook studies, teaching in Canada and the development of school quality.

Günalp Turan

Günalp Turan is an NGO professional and an educator with a focus on communities of practice and teacher empowerment. He has a BA in language education and has taken graduate studies in cultural studies. He has been managing and advising national and international projects and organizations on inclusive education, critical thinking, community building, and andragogy.

Halil Han Aktaş

Han is a researcher in the Curriculum and Instruction field. He has completed Ph. D. in the Curriculum and Instruction program at Middle East Technical University, in Ankara-Turkey with the dissertation titled "Constructing a democratic school community: A grounded theory study". He participated in the project "Increasing Participatory and Democratic Processes in Schools" funded by Friedrich Ebert Stiftung in Ankara. His scholarly and personal research interests include curriculum as a generative and generated force of cognition, reciprocality of culture and education, democratic education and alternative education.

Hannah Solley

Hannah Solley (she/her) is a qualified Dramatherapist who has worked in the area of youth, family and mental health for over fifteen years. She has designed and implemented mental health awareness programmes as well as working in anti-bullying programmes in schools. She has been working with the trans community for several years, providing family and teen support, as well as educational guidance to schools and organisations in Ireland. This includes trans inclusive policies, best practice ways to support gender diverse students and peer education in gender diversity and allyship. She is

passionate about youth mental health and creating positive changes to help young people reach their full potential.

Heidrun Demo

Her work centers on equity in education, with a particular focus on supporting diverse learners, fostering inclusive teaching practices, and driving inclusive school development. She is deeply involved in research and teacher training, dedicated to creating and sustaining inclusive learning environments.

Hermione Xin Miao

Dr Hermione Xin Miao was born at a rural village in China, raised by her maternal grandparents since she was eight. She stayed in her hometown for schooling while her parents migrated to a big city to make a living. She was one of millions "left-behind children" who experienced exclusion in education. Hermione is a first-generation university student in her family. She has developed research interests in curriculum making, teacher agency, climate change, inclusive education, and intersectional feminism. She has degrees in both geography and education, and a PhD degree from University of Stirling (2024). Hermione has been involved in creative and participatory methods in both research and community building, in particular early career researchers' network communities. Hermione also has started an Mapping Inspirational Women initiative from 2023 as open educational resources to re-tell women's contribution to the world.

Hazar Chaouni

Hazar Chaouni is a passionate disability rights advocate and a member of Feminists Against Ableism, an intersectional disability justice collective. She actively advises organizations on inclusive policies and accessibility, working to ensure that spaces and practices are inclusive and just for all. Through her essays, workshops, and speeches, Hazar aims to create awareness about disability and ableism, promoting intersectional justice and systemic change. Her advocacy is deeply rooted in her personal and professional experiences, and she emphasizes the importance of the principle "nothing about us without us" in all her work.

Ines Boban

Once teacher in so called Integration-Classes at a comprehensive school (Reformschule Hamburg Winterhude), from 2002 until 2017 researcher and lecturer for Inclusive Education at the Martin-Luther-University Halle-Wittenberg.

Ira Schumann

Ira Schumann works on the topic of inclusive school development at the University of Bremen. She also gives workshops on topics such as inclusion, diversity, racism/critical whiteness and fat acceptance/fat liberation.

Irati Sagardia-Iturria

Irati Sagardia-Iturria after completing her studies at Mondragon Unibertsitatea (Spain) in Primary Education and specialising in Special Education, she adopted the principle of creating inclusive environments and processes as a core value in her life. Motivated by this, she decided to further her education by pursuing both a master's and a doctorate at the same university, with a focus on educational transitions and inclusive processes. This academic journey provided her with a unique opportunity to actively engage in a research project led by the Zehar and Hazitegi groups, which also forms the context for her thesis, following the purpose of generating and transferring knowledge in the field of innovation and intervention in inclusive education. Additionally, she has gained experience as a university lecturer across various modules, aiming to raise awareness of the importance of the healthy development of all children (emotional, social, cognitive, motor, and linguistic), and the role of the educational community in that development and creating inclusive contexts (the role of the teacher, organisation of time and space).

Jane O'Toole

Jane O'Toole is a primary school teacher who specialises in language education. Jane's doctoral research explored student and parent engagement with the Irish language utilising a participatory action research methodology. Jane has also served as a school principal and has a special interest in inclusive education and curriculum. Jane has been a coordinating member of the Collaborative Action Research Network (CARN) since 2016.

Janneke Eising

Janneke Eising is an enthusiastic teacher trainer with a passion for learning and developing; and languages and literature. To foster inclusive education, she works on topics such as formative assessment, differentiation, classroom management, teaching adolescents and mentoring. Using practitioner research, for instance the Lesson Study approach, she works with (student-) teachers on how to enhance all students' learning in the classroom.

Jean Karl Grech

Jean Karl Grech is from Malta. A gay primary teacher with a particular passion for inclusion and cultural integration. A recent graduate with a Master's in Euro-Comparative Education. In his studies at the University of Malta, he focused on the inclusion and visibility of the LGBTIQ+ community in schools through subjects and daily school practices.

Jessica Lament

Jessica Lament is a specialist in inclusive practice, especially for students with disabilities. She has worked in schools in the US, Singapore, and France supporting teachers – from pre-k to secondary school to teachers in higher education training programs – always with the same goal, to increase the implementation of research-based inclusion.

Josefine Wagner

Josefine Wagner is a postdoctoral researcher at the Department of Education and Social Work at the University of Luxembourg.

She has completed several postdoctoral fellowships with a focus on inclusion and the origins of special needs education, including a visiting fellowship at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (2020), at the Departments of Education and Anthropology at the National University of Ireland, Maynooth (2024) and the Department of Teacher Education and School Research at the University of Innsbruck in Austria (2021-2024).

Jules Buendgens-Kosten

Dr. Jules Buendgens-Kosten is a researcher and teacher educator at Goethe University Frankfurt. Their research interests encompass computer-assisted language learning and inclusive education.

Julia Bialek

Julia Bialek is working as a research assistant at the University of Bremen in the "All Means All!" project. She is a pedagogist, has a degree in special education, and has been working in the field of trauma-sensitive education for many years. She teaches this topic at the university, in training courses for educational professionals, and works as a trauma therapist.

Julia Schlam Salman

Julia Schlam Salman, Ph.D., is a lecturer and teacher educator at the David Yellin Academic College of Education in Jerusalem. She also teaches in the MA TESOL program and the Division of Languages at Tel-Aviv University. Her research interests include language education, language learning and teaching, and English language learning in areas of intractable conflict. She lives near Jerusalem with her spouse and four children.

Karen Buttigieg

As a science educator, Karen Buttigieg is committed to advancing *Bildung*-oriented, transformative, and inclusive pedagogies within neoliberal contexts through research and practice. She believes in inclusion and the provision of quality education to every child and young person and strive to develop educational practices that are not only effective but also accessible to all learners. This conviction guides her approach to teaching and academic research. Karen is also an activist for women's rights and disability issues, trying to raise awareness, influence policy, and implement practices that bring about positive change towards equality and inclusion.

Katarina Rončević

Katarina Rončević has more than 10 years of experience in education for sustainable development and inclusive education and has been working on whole school approaches. Since 2019 she works for Greenpeace Germany in the education team and is a PhD Student at the University of Vechta(Germany). Katarina is a member of the international ESD Expert-Net and CO-Founder of The Turquoise Change e.V.

Kavyta Raghunandan

Kavyta is a course leader for the MA in Race, Education and Decolonial Thought and Senior Lecturer in Race and Education at Leeds Beckett University. Her teaching cuts across undergraduate and postgraduate levels and she teaches on Education Studies degrees, as well as contributing to undergraduate, masters, and doctoral degree supervision. Her teaching, writing and research interests lie in intersectional ways of thinking through race, gender and identity across multiple platforms namely education, popular culture, graphic novels and more recently nature spaces. Her work, so far, has also been influenced by anti-racist pedagogies and decoloniality as a theoretical framework to examine South Asian representation.

Kerstin Merz-Atalik

Kerstin Merz-Atalik has been working as a special education support teacher in mainstream classes (in Berlin during the 90s). Since 1995 she was working at different German Universities as a researcher, her actual research focus is on teacher education for inclusion, governance of inclusive education and transformation processes in the actor network of education systems. Since 2004 she has a full professorship at the University of Education Ludwigsburg for "Education, considering disability and Disadvantage/ Inclusion" and is actively engaged into developing an inclusive teacher education.

Konstantin Korn

Konstantin Korn is interested in subjects around critical political and civic education (in German schools). He wants to highlight overheard student-voices in educational settings and research about didactics. In particular, through participatory action research. His aim is to democratise education and society towards anti-discrimination and against neoliberalism.

Kristina Pennell-Götze

Kristina Pennell-Götze (she/they) (M.Ed) is a queer Filipino-Australian social change agent, focusing on diversity, equity, inclusion, justice and antiracism (DEIJAR) in international education. She is an educator and leader with experience working in public, private and international schools in England and Germany. She is the facilitator of the student Social Justice Committee and the Gender and Sexuality Alliance groups, providing support and opportunities for students to lead. Kristina is a leader within Association of International Educators and Leaders of Color (AIELOC), and a former fellow

of the organisation, providing guidance and support to educators and leaders who are AIELOC school and community members, in addition to creating space for BIPOC to lead and share. Additionally, Kristina founded the Association of German International Schools' (AGIS) Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice (DEIJ) working group and developed the first DEIJ student-led conference hosted at the Bavarian International School in 2024. She has led multiple workshops and keynoted on topics related to DEIJAR at various conferences around the world and online.

Laura Torres Zúñiga

Laura Torres Zúñiga is a lecturer and teacher trainer at the Department of Philologies and Didactics of the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (Spain), where she teaches English Language, Syllabus Design and Children's Literature in English to pre-service teachers of all educational stages. Her research interests center on contemporary short narrative forms, English language teaching and active learning methodologies.

Lea Bussas

Lea Bussas studied a bachelor's degree in history and Spanish with the option to become a teacher in Berlin and a master's degree in history at the University of Bremen. She then studied inclusive pedagogy for primary schools in Bremen.

Leah O'Toole

Dr Leah O'Toole is Associate Professor of Early Childhood Education in the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education in Maynooth University, Ireland. With an academic background in Psychology, her research interests include early childhood education, particularly accessing the voices of the youngest children from birth, relational pedagogy, bioecological theory and working with parents and communities. Inclusion across multiple dimensions is central to all elements of this work.

Leslie-Ann Webster

Leslie-Ann Webster is a lecturer in Early Childhood Teaching and Learning at Maynooth University, Ireland. She has a deep passion for educating and values the power of transformative education. Her research interests include children and educator well-being, relationships, progressive teaching methods and a specialised focus towards embedding trauma informed practices within educational settings.

Lina Render de Barros

Lina Render de Barros is a queer of color activist from Pernambuco and Münsterland. She completed her first state examination (teaching degree) and her master's degree in bilingual European education at the University of Education in Karlsruhe and her master's degree in sociology at the Goethe University Frankfurt. She researches, lives and works in Cologne, always with the aim of taking a stand against group focused enmity and contributing to a more peaceful coexistence.

Linjie Zhang

Linjie Zhang is a researcher at the University of Vienna. Her primary research interests encompass structural inequality within the educational system, the development and management of international schools, elite education, neoliberalism and globalization, educational policy, and the application of capital theory in education.

Lisa Johansson

Lisa Johansson is a lecturer of English within the teacher training programs at the University of Gävle. She teaches courses in proficiency, language structure, didactics, and world English across primary, secondary, and upper secondary school levels. She has a teacher's degree in English and history for upper secondary school and her interests cover sociolinguistics, language and gender dynamics and language and power.

Lisa Marie Rosen

Lisa M. Rosen is a University researcher and teacher at PhD level, working on the topic of various forms of (policy-based) concepts of diversity and inclusion and their contextualized enactments in educational settings from comparative and intersectional perspectives.

Ludovica Rizzo

https://orcid.org/
0009-0009-2371-5870

Ludovica Rizzo holds a Master's Degree in Primary Teacher Education from the University of Salento (Italy). She has been awarded a scholarship for a PhD Programme of National Interest in Teaching & Learning Sciences: Inclusion, Technologies, Educational Research and Evaluation. Her research field is twice-exceptionality, differentiated instruction for gifted

and twice-exceptional students, personalisation of teaching and learning processes and educational technologies.

Lydia Murphy

Lydia Murphy is a trained educator in Early Childhood Care and Education. Her special interests include relational pedagogy, love in education, empowering voices, and reflective practice. As an early years researcher she studies the role of the early years professionals supporting reciprocal relationships with themselves, babies /toddlers/children, their carers and educational environments/communities. Within this she explores potential deficit narratives that trickle into communities particularly those experiencing disadvantage.

Madhusudhan Ramesh

Madhusudhan Ramesh is an assistant professor in inclusive education. He heads a PG diploma programme in Inclusive Education designed for mid-career educators. His research interests include teacher agency, inclusive pedagogy, teacher professional development, and children's experiences of difference and disability.

Mahvand Sahranavard Espily

Mahvand is educated in English Literature. She is educated kids music teacher at Adamak institute (orff schulwerk association) in Iran. She is a vocal coach and kids music teacher around 21 years. She is teaching in an alternative school in Iran (kodakan Donya) from 2013 until now, also has experiences in working with kids 3-5 years old, Working with autistic children , low concentration children and hyperactive children. Managing many different kids event such as Pinocchio, Little black fish, Alice in wonderland, manage play week, nations celebration, manage many internal and external travels for kids, manage different visit for kids and invite many different musicians, manage many workshops for parents in different fields, member of literature work group,music work group, child friendly work group and report writer work group. She's got many certifications about vocal pedagogy, education and kids music in Iran and outside of Iran.

Mai Trang Vu

Mai Trang Vu is Associate Professor of TESOL Teacher Education, Department of Language Studies, Umeå University, Sweden. Her teaching and research areas include teacher education, teacher professionalism, teacher knowledge, critical pedagogy, and education policy. She has also conducted research on inclusive education, gender, and internationalisation.

Margaret Flood

Dr Margaret is an Assistant Professor in Inclusive Education and the MAP Academic Advisor for the Education Department. Her experience in inclusive and special education includes teaching, teacher professional learning design and delivery, policy development and curriculum design. She is a leading expert in UDL. Margaret's research interests include contextual dimensions and the role of teachers in inclusive policy and practice enactment, teacher engagement with professional learning for inclusion and student voice. As a Fulbright Scholar, in 2021 Margaret worked with Lynch School of Education and Humanities at Boston College and CAST to explore equity, diversity, inclusion, and social justice through the lens of UDL. Margaret is the creator and host of the Podcast 'Talking about all things Inclusion'.

Maria Moscato

Maria Moscato is deeply passionate about democratic human development and global citizenship. During her academic journey, she has specialised in Methodologies of Teaching and Special Education, concentrating on critical areas such as Inclusive Education, Outdoor Education, participatory and transformative processes, teaching strategies, and the professional development of teachers and educators. Her extensive experience as an educator, teacher trainer, and workshop facilitator for prospective teachers has further enriched her profile. Throughout her doctoral studies, she has had the opportunity to contribute to research and projects focused on Inclusive Education and inclusive strategies.

María Pilar Gray Carlos

María Pilar Gray Carlos was born and raised in Spain but spent over 20 years living and working in the United Kingdom, where she built a distinguished career in higher education. Her primary role was at the **University of Reading**, where she implemented, managed, and coordinated the Spanish program at the Institution-Wide

Language Centre. Under her leadership, the Spanish program became one of the most successful alongside French and Mandarin Chinese.

Pilar also held notable academic roles as a visiting lecturer at **Oxford University** and as an external examiner for Spanish programs at the **University of Manchester** and the **University of Sheffield**. Beyond teaching, she contributed to university-wide initiatives, including the **Electronic Management of Assessment (EMA)** project, which streamlined and digitized the submission and evaluation of assessments across all schools and programs at the University of Reading.

Pilar holds a **BA in English Literature and Linguistics**, an **MA in Translation**, and an **MSc in Digital Education**, reflecting her commitment to both language and technology-enhanced learning.

Currently based in Spain, she has worked as a consultant for online Spanish language teaching start-ups and as an associate professor of Spanish at **IE University**. Currently she teaches part-time at the **Universidad Autónoma de Madrid** and the **Universidad Internacional Menéndez Pelayo**.

Her career has been enriched by her dedication to social impact. Pilar has worked on community development projects in Mexico, raised awareness about endemic violence against children and women in the Middle East (Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan), and created programs for Spanish learners to enhance their language skills while participating in development projects with communities in Nicaragua.

Her current focus is on exploring the impact of technology on teaching and learning, particularly how shifts in delivery methods influence pedagogy, methodologies, and the experiences of educators and students.

Marie McLoughlin

Marie Mc Loughlin is a qualified primary teacher with experience of teaching in educational disadvantaged schools. She also worked as a national co-ordinator for a programme of teacher professional development and is currently working as a teacher educator in initial teacher education in a university in Ireland. Her research interests are play, early childhood education, organisational culture, mergers and teacher education.

Maryam Mohammadi

Maryam Mohammadi holds a master's degree in painting and brings 17 years of teaching experience as the Executive Director of the Participatory School in Iran. The school fosters a humanistic approach to education, focusing on alternative methods that emphasise active participation from children, parents, and teachers to promote the holistic development of young learners.

For years, Maryam and her colleagues have worked to build an inclusive environment where all students, regardless of their background or abilities, can thrive. Addressing individual needs, they help students cultivate self-awareness, confidence, empathy, and a deeper understanding of themselves and the world.

Melanie Eilert

Melanie Eilert has lived experience as someone living with personal assistants. Graduated with a Bachelor Professional in HR Management she is employed at a service provider that provides personal assistance to people with disabilities.

Melike Özüdoğru

Melike Özüdoğru completed her doctorate in the Curriculum and Instruction Department at Middle East Technical University (METU) in Turkey. She is interested in flipped learning, integrating technology into the teaching and learning process, differentiated instruction, teacher training, curriculum design, learning environments, teacher identity, situated learning, reflective thinking using videos in the teaching practicum, and curriculum evaluation. She obtained her associate professorship from the higher education institution in Turkey.

Merja Kauppinen

Merja Kauppinen is adjunct professor (language didactics and literature education) and senior lecturer of the pedagogy of L1, L2 (Finnish) and literature in the Department of Teacher Education at the University of Jyväskylä in Finland. In addition to this, she works as a poetry therapist. Her main work and research areas are multiliteracy, arts-based learning, creative methods in language learning, (reading and writing) literacy pedagogy, holistic literature education (Store® – Stories Make Readers -model) and poetry therapy in educational context. She works in both pre- and in-service teacher education in the levels from elementary to secondary education.

Merve Ayvalli Karagoz

Merve Ayvalli Karagöz works as a lecturer at Akdeniz University in Antalya, Turkey. She has a Ph.D. in educational measurement and evaluation. Her areas of expertise include psychometric applications, educational assessment practices,

and item response theory. Her scholarly work focuses on advancing robust assessment techniques that enhance the reliability and validity of educational evaluations, contributing to higher standards in educational measurement.

Miriam Cuccu

Miriam Cuccu, pedagogist and subject expert in general and social pedagogy at the University of Macerata (Italy). She is involved in projects focused on intercultural education with a community-based and arts-based approach. She collaborates in monitoring and evaluating interventions to counter educational poverty and in training for education professionals. Her main research interests include dialogue between cultures, community participation and empowerment through creative languages.

Miriam Sonntag

Miriam Sonntag, practitioner and researcher in the field of inclusive education, focusing on interdisciplinary and multiprofessional collaboration. Experiences as a special education teacher in inclusive schools, research associate, teacher trainer, in-service trainer, director of a pedagogical consulting centre for inclusive school development, lecturer at colleges and universities.

Mridula Muralidharan

Mridula Muralidharan is a sociologist and social worker specialising in education, disability, and gender studies. Her doctoral research focuses on inclusive schooling practices for students with disabilities in India. In addition to her academic pursuits, she serves as the Digital Outreach Manager for the National Platform for the Rights of Disabled (NPRD), a pan-India cross-disability rights organisation.

Nariko Hashida

Nariko Hashida is a Japanese educational researcher at Chiba University. She specialised in social education and lifelong learning and worked as a social education officer in a community learning centre. Her doctoral thesis was a study of learning activities for the inclusion of people with disabilities, based on fieldwork in Japan and the UK. She is the author of the book "Learning Activities to Develop a Sense of Agency around Disability Issues" (Akashi Shoten, 2024, in Japanese).

Nico Leonhardt

Nico Leonhardt is research assistant at the Leipzig University (Institute of Special Education). His work and research focuses are inclusive school development and social space orientation, inclusion-sensitive higher education development, accessible language, participatory research and teaching.

Nicola Ryan

Nicola Ryan, clinical nurse specialist in child & adolescent mental health, cognitive behavioural therapist, senior lecturer at Kingston University in the UK. Areas of interest and research include intersectionality, child and adolescent mental health, neurodiversity, psychological and behavioural therapies, education of autism and ADHD for students and educators.

Nika Maglaperidze

Nika Maglaperidze is an English teacher and a beginning educational researcher from Georgia. A first-year PhD student from the Department of Education, Maynooth University. His research focus centres on teacher education, social justice in education, curriculum making and philosophy of education.

Nina Goretzko

Nina Goretzko studied special needs education and democracy education in Cologne and Berlin. She worked as a teacher in different inclusive and special schools in Bonn and Berlin and as a research assistant at the university of Cologne and at the research institute anDemos in Dresden. Her work focuses on democracy education, theory of democracy, educational and social inequality and inclusion.

Nysha Chantel Givans

Nysha Chantel Givans is currently pursuing a Professional Doctorate in Education at the University of Wolverhampton, with a research focus on the educational challenges faced by marginalised communities from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Her work encompasses a range of topics, including navigating the English education system, decolonising education, and addressing Afro hair discrimination. Employing methods such as autoethnography, film analysis, and literary text examination, her doctoral thesis will delve into Shane Meadows' This Is England to illuminate the

educational barriers encountered by working-class individuals and explores the impact of communitarianism on these communities.

Outi Kyrö-Ämmälä

Outi Kyrö-Ämmälä, PhD, is a University Lecturer in Teacher Education at the University of Lapland, Finland. Her research interests include teacher education and teacher professional development, inclusive and special education, and students' cognitive skills. She has been involved in several national and international projects developing inclusive education and teacher education. Outi is also a member of the Finnish Teacher Education Forum.

Özge Özdemir

Özge Özdemir works in extracurricular political education with a strong focus on anti-racism, anti-discrimination and empowerment. During and after her studies of political science and sociology in Frankfurt am Main, she specialised in working with young people and adults in educational work. Her activist experiences form the basis for both her practical educational work and her academic career.

Dr. Pamela February

Dr Pamela J. February is a senior lecturer in the Department of Early Childhood Education and Care in the School of Education at the University of Namibia. Her areas of interest and expertise include inclusive education practices; early childhood education and care; deaf education; how learners/students learn and how we should assess them; reading acquisition and fluency; vocabulary acquisition; mathematics education and the use of technology to enhance inclusive learning. In addition, she has written articles and book chapters and supervised postgraduate students in these areas.

Patricia Kennon

Dr Patricia Kennon is an Associate Professor in children's and young-adult literature and youth culture at Maynooth University, Ireland. She is the General Editor of The International Journal of Young Adult Literature, and the Secretary of NAES (the Irish national section of the European Society for the Study of English). Her research interests include global citizenship education, power and childhood, and inclusive education.

Paty Paliokosta

Paty Paliokosta is an Associate Professor in Inclusive Education at Kingston University and a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. With over two decades of experience in the field of special and inclusive education, my journey has been dedicated to promoting social justice and empowering diverse learners, particularly those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEN/D). As an educator, inclusion manager, local authority advisor, researcher, and advocate she has actively contributed to shaping inclusive policies, leading innovative participatory research projects, and championing social justice within schools, local authority, higher education and the community. She leads the 'Inclusion and Social Justice' SIG and the 'Inclusivity, Anti-oppression and Underserved Communities' bidding network. Her full profile can be found here: https://www.kingston.ac.uk/staff/profile/dr-paty-paliokosta-730/

Penny H. C. Dinh

Penny H. C. Dinh is first and foremost a social justice activist – an active campaigner for decolonial and antiracist education within her trade and students' unions. She is currently researching teacher activism and anti-racist education in Wales as part of her PhD at Cardiff University.

Petra Auer

Petra Auer is a trained primary school teacher qualified to teach children with special educational needs. She holds a PhD in General Pedagogy, Social Pedagogy, General Didactics and Disciplinary Didactics. Her main research interests are diversity and inclusion in education settings, children's values, value transmission, and socialization and acculturation in the school context.

Petra Elftorp

Elftorp, Petra; Dr., Associate Professor, lecturer and course director of a Masters in guidance counselling and lifespan development at University of Limerick in Ireland. Key research interests relate to inclusive practices, person-centred approaches and career development. E-Mail: petra.elftorp@ul.ie

Ramona Thümmler

Ramona Thümmler is an educational scientist and child and adolescent

psychotherapist who works at various universities in Germany. She conducts research on refugee children, multi-professional cooperation and the professionalisation of teachers.

Rhianna Murphy

Rhianna is a former primary school teacher with international teaching experience. She has a background in educational research, with a focus on curriculum-making and teacher agency. She has also worked on a range of small scale research projects with British Educational Research Association (BERA) and has experience lecturing on a range of teacher education courses.

Rosa Anna Ferdigg

Rosa Anna Ferdigg earned her degree at Bologna University in Italy and has since had a long career in the South-Tyrolean (Italy) school system, holding various positions such as teacher, headmaster, inspector, and evaluator. In addition to these roles, she collaborates with universities in Italy and Germany on inclusion topics. Rosa Anna is also a consultant for inclusive school development on an international level. Her interests are focused on system changing and development, exploring how people can learn and develop their skills, and how they can contribute to changing systems in an inclusive direction with their individual influence.

Rose Ryan

Dr Rose Ryan is Director of Access at Maynooth University with responsibility for leading strategic change in relation to widening participation in higher education in Ireland. Dr Ryan leads the Maynooth University Access Programme (MAP) which works in partnership across the University and alongside under-represented learners, schools, and communities to increase equity of access and support student success.

Sam Blanckensee

Sam Blanckensee (they/he) is a equality, diversity and inclusion practitioner based in Ireland with extensive experience in equality in Higher Education through their role as the Equality Officer at Maynooth University. Sam holds an MA in management for the nonprofit sector. Sam has worked within Irish LGBTQ+ organisations in voluntary and professional roles since 2013. Sam's work covers a broad range of equality, diversity, inclusion and interculturalism initiatives including LGBTQ+ matters, gender equality, anti-racism, disability awareness and access for those within the international

protection system. Sam is a non-binary trans person who is also neurodivergent and queer, All Means All is a project where the personal meets professional for Sam.

Sandra Fietkau

Fietkau, Sandra; Dr., social worker, has been working on different projects promoting inclusive structures and societal development in the south of Germany for almost 20 years, researcher on support circles, more inclusive service settings and social space development, also a facilitator for Person Centred Planning and convinced of the generative power of these forms of planning and getting together. E-Mail: mail@sandra-fietkau.de

Sara Baroni

Sara Baroni is Doctor of Research in Pedagogy and Didactics and primary school teacher. She is interested in wellbeing and equity at school, education in emergency situations, teacher reflective practices and inclusive education. She is part of different research groups in Italy and abroad.

Sarah Volknant

Sarah Volknant is an educator and researcher from Germany with a passion for the topics of inclusion, multilingualism, and intersectionality with a focus on teacher education. Her work delves into prejudiced perceptions of language within educational contexts, aiming to uncover the underlying beliefs and socially constructed norms. Sarah's approach involves critically reflecting on and deconstructing biases by employing intersectional perspectives.

Seán Gleasure

Seán Gleasure is an educational researcher in the field of sociology of education. With a background as a primary school teacher, his research focuses nurture and care in schools, particularly those serving working-class communities, as well as pedagogy in schools more broadly, with an emphasis on children's rights, voice, and participation. He lectures on issues related to in/equalities in children's learning and children's rights, voice, and participation.

Sebastian Nemeth

Sebastian Nemeth teaches social education at VIA University College in Denmark. With a specialization in the philosophy of social education, he is actively involved in the Research Centre for Management, Organisation, and Social Sciences. Sebastian's work focuses on norm-critical perspectives in youth pedagogy, demonstrating his passion for exploring and addressing issues of diversity and inclusion. Beyond his academic pursuits, he enjoys engaging in creative projects and sharing his insights through various publications and podcasts, he has been involved with the LGBT+ in Denmark and is reward-winning for creating safe and meaningful spaces for youths and women in boardgame and roleplay communities across Denmark.

Seun Adebayo

Dr Seun Adebayo has over 10 years of experience and a diverse background in global education, equity and quality education, EdTech, research and policy advocacy. His dedication lies in cultivating transformative learning journeys that transcend barriers and amplify possibilities, particularly for learners from marginalized communities. His journey encompasses collaborations with international organizations, steering curriculum improvements, and integrating technology to establish an educational landscape that is both inclusive and poised for the future. His passion revolves around ensuring education's accessibility, equitability, and readiness for all.

Sevcan Karataş

Sevcan Karataş is a Assistant Professor in First and Emergency Aid Program, Istanbul Yeni Yuzyil University (Turkey). She completed her doctorate in Florence Nightingale Nursing Faculty Mental Health and Psychiatric Nursing Department, Istanbul University-Cerrahpaşa. Her research focuses on different topics in the field of mental health, especially sexual identity and sexual orientations.

Shichong Li

Shichong Li is a PhD candidate at the University of Leeds, UK, with a research focus on the Left-behind Children (LBC) in China and their agency in peer relationships. Her work challenges the dominant narrative of LBC's vulnerability and emphasises the importance of LBC's relational agency in peer relationships within and beyond the school setting. Holding a master's degree in curriculum and instruction from Southwest University, China, she has contributed to research projects on teacher training, an experience that has significantly shaped her current PhD research. She advocates for

incorporating children's perspectives into teacher training programs to support diverse learners better.

Silver Cappello

Silver Cappello has accomplished a PhD in General Education, General and Social Pedagogy at the Free University of Bolzano-Bozen (Italy). He is qualified as primary school teacher with a specialisation as support teacher and he has worked as primary school teacher (mainly teaching second language), as assistant for people with disabilities, and as research assistant on different research projects at the Competence Centre for School Inclusion of the Free University of Bolzano-Bozen.

Silvia Dell'Anna

Silvia Dell'Anna is a postdoctoral researcher in inclusive education, working at the Free University of Bozen/Bolzano. Her primary research areas include the evaluation of the quality of school inclusion, the design of inclusive teaching strategies, and the prevention of educational poverty, underachievement, and early school leaving.

Simon Klippert

Simon Klippert is a Berlin-based teacher and teacher trainer. He has been working in various educational contexts: coordinating youth exchange programs in France, teaching students at university in Colombia, giving classes for newcomer-students in Berlin. For the last 10 years, he has been working as a class teacher at a secondary school in Berlin-Neukölln, with a focus on language and political education, trying to empower less privileged students. Furthermore, he shares his experience as a teacher trainer in Berlin-Kreuzberg. Simon is a founding member of related (www.related-bildung.de), an initiative fighting injustices within the German school system.

Sofia Ahlberg

Associate Professor Sofia Ahlberg is Vice Dean at the Faculty of Languages, Uppsala University, with responsibilities for education and public engagement. Her research is in the intersection of literary studies and pedagogy. She is the author of Teaching Literature in Times of Crisis (Routledge, 2021) and Magic, Literature and Climate Pedagogy in a Time of Ecological Crisis (Bloomsbury, 2024).

Suzanne O'Keeffe

Suzanne O'Keeffe is Assistant Professor of Education in the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education, Maynooth University, Ireland. Her work focuses on sociological questions in education, with a particular interest in questions of gender and masculinities. Areas of interest include children and childhood, feminist research designs, and gender and sexualities. Recent publications include *Masculinities and Teaching in Primary Schools* (2022, Palgrave MacMillan).

Tamara van Woezik

Dr. Tamara van Woezik is assistant professor in teacher education with a focus on affective learning processes. She coordinates and teaches courses about pedagogy and teacher professionalisation. Her research focuses on sense of belonging, inclusion and autonomy-support using qualitative and arts-based methods.

Thomas Joseph O Shaughnessy

Thomas is a graduate of the University of Limerick at both undergraduate (BSc. in Computer Systems) and postgraduate level (MSc. in Software Engineering). With a background in accessibility, teaching and assistive technology, Thomas has extensive experience promoting and facilitating inclusive practice in primary, post-primary and post-secondary education. Thomas has experience guest lecturing at undergraduate and postgraduate levels in assistive technology, accessibility, and Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Thomas's interests include wider institutional approaches to inclusive practice, the role of third space professionals in higher education and the use of communities of practice in fostering and promoting more inclusive practice.

Tommaso Santilli

Tommaso Santilli conducts research in the area of Didactic and Special Pedagogy and holds a Master's Degree in Communication and Digital Cultures. He is a trained WOSM educator and a visual designer. His main research interests concern inclusive processes in educational and recreational settings, educational technologies, inclusive design practices and accessibility of cultural contexts.

Tracy Fletcher

Tracy Fletcher is a teacher in the subject of English, and researcher, originally from the U.K but has been based in Sweden for the last 14 years. She has experience of curriculum planning and management, co-ordinating CPD for teachers, as well as working to support newly arrived immigrant students integrate into a new school system. Her research interests include anti racist education, inclusive education, and student mental health. She is also an activist for autism awareness and trans rights.

Tracy McElheron

Tracy is a practising early childhood educator and Lecturer in Early Childhood Education. She has worked in the early childhood sector in Ireland for 25 years, teaching children from 2 to 5 years old. Her areas of expertise include curriculum and assessment for early childhood education, and the theory and practice of play as a pedagogy in the early years. Her doctoral work explores the implications of the hidden curriculum on children's articulation of gender in early childhood education. She is a passionate advocate for the transformative capacity of relational pedagogy to build child, family, and educator identity.

Ulla Sivunen

Ulla Sivunen is a doctoral researcher at the University of Jyva ̈ skyla ̈ (Finland), focusing on media use, multiliteracies, and linguistic agency among young deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals using signed languages, primarily Finnish Sign Language. Throughout her career, she has worked as a teacher, lecturer, in NGOs, and in the media. This diverse experience and being as a member of a minority group, the deaf community, has provided her with a broad perspective and deep expertise in her research areas.

Valentina Zambito

Valentina

Valeria Occelli

Valeria Occelli is a lecturer in psychology at Edge Hill University. Her work focuses on human sensory and cognitive processes, and how they are affected by individual variability in personality traits, beliefs, as well as neurodevelopmental

conditions. She is interested in the promotion of inclusive practices in higher education and scientific research environments.

Valerio Ferrero

Valerio Ferrero does research in the field of intercultural education, focusing on equity and inequality in schools. He is also interested in community philosophical practices, on which he also carries out training activities. Before starting his research work, he was a primary school teacher.

Valerio Rigo

Valerio Rigo is a PhD student at the Free University of Bozen/Bolzano and works on formative assessment from the perspective of the capability approach. He has a master's degree in philosophy and a second master's degree in education. He is coordinator of the Evaluation Team of the Movimento di Cooperazione Educativa (MCE, a movement inspired by the pedagogy of Célestin Frenet).

Vana Chiou

Vana Chiou loves teaching and training future teachers on contemporary teaching methods and techniques. Her research interests include contemporary methods of teaching and assessment, teacher training, inclusion and education. Her published work includes editing books, chapters in books and articles in Greek and international journals.

Veronica Punzo

Veronica Punzo is attorney at the Macerata Bar. Dealing with the governance and regulation of personal and non-personal data and ethical-legal consulting, her research area focuses on the domains of artificial intelligence and education with a focus on dignity, equality and fundamental rights enhancement and protection.

Wurud Jayusi

Dr. Wurud Jayusi is a senior lecturer, researcher, and the head of the Arab Academic Institute at Beit Berl College. Being a member of the Palestinian minority in Israel, Wurud Jayusi is passionate about fostering greater understanding and acceptance among diverse cultural groups. Through Wuruds research and academic work, wurud has published articles, presented at conferences, and co-edited two books on

diversity, including topics such as integrating Palestinian teachers into Jewish schools, peace education, and creating a shared society.

Wurud strongly believes in the power of diversity in teaching. A diverse teacher embodies various facets, such as being an ethnic minority educator in a predominantly different cultural setting in my case, or simply a teacher with cultural competence who fosters multiculturalism, equality, and respect for others who are different from them.

As a researcher Wurud has had the privilege of interviewing Palestinian teachers as part of the research on their integration into Jewish schools. Their stories are both enlightening and inspiring. The stories reflect Engaging, Being emotionally and culturally competent.

Yasemin Acar Ciftci

After working as a primary school teacher and principal for 20 years, Yasemin Acar Ciftci has been serving as a teacher educator for the past years. She is a faculty member at Istanbul Yeni Yuzyil University in the Child Development and Youth Services Department. Yasemin holds a PhD in Educational Sciences with a specialization in Curriculum and Instruction. Her PhD thesis focused on multicultural education and teacher competencies, and her academic work is primarily guided by critical theories.

Yuko Uesugi

Yuko Uesugi, Ph.D (American literature), a Japanese professor of English at Eikei University of Hiroshima, a newly founded public university located in the central part of Hiroshima. Yuko has over 20 years of teaching experience at a junior high school, high schools, the National Institute of Technology, and universities. Yuko has two specialties: one is American literature, and the other is global/ inclusive/ education. Yuko has obtained Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research from the Japanese government on Developing Global Collaboration and Intercultural Competencies for L2 Learners: The International BEVI Project. Yuko has dedicated her career to promoting CLIL and cross-cultural understanding, by conducting active learning communication lessons with partner universities overseas online.

Yuzhen Xu

Xu, Yuzhen; worked as an itinerant teacher in 2006, helping teachers to plan to profile and address the needs of students, and has chaired research programs on changes of special schools in the context of inclusive education, transition for the disabled children, etc. E-Mail: yzxu2003@163.com

Zeynep Karaosman

Zeynep Karaosman is a Palestinian-Syrian queer, feminist and peace activist and a teacher. She was born and grew up in Turkey. She studied English Language Teaching(BA) at Anadolu University and English Language&Literature at Istanbul Aydin University. After 8 years of teaching English in Turkey, she moved to Germany in 2020. She is currently a student in the Turkish language teaching department at the University of Essen and has been working as an Inclusion Assistant at a secondary school for 3 years. Apart from her teaching profession, she has been doing queer, feminist activism. She is also one of the founders of *Palestinian and Jews for Peace* activist group. Considering teaching as a political act, she advocates for anti-bias education for everyone.

Zhicheng Huang

Zhicheng Huang, is professor of Institute of International and Comparative Education in East China Normal University, Shanghai, China. His research interests include comparative education, international education theories, curriculum and instruction, teacher education, inclusive education, educational administration, Latin America education, Paulo Freire education theory, etc. In 2004 he published the first book in China on *Inclusive Education——All means all*. He was visiting scholar in Chile, Mexico, Spain, USA, UK, Germany and Japan. He has managed several national and international cooperative research projects on inclusive education and others topics. He was vice-dean of Faculty of Education, director of Department of Curriculum and Instruction, director of Institute of International and Comparative Education in East China Normal University. He was vice president of China Association of Comparative Education.