The View from Scotland: Dealing with Diversity in the Classroom[1]

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The challenge of teaching today

One of the greatest challenges in teaching today lies in the diversity of the pupils who enter classrooms each day. In the majority of educational systems around the world, pupils are organised into the year groups based on their age. However this does not guarantee homogeneity. Each individual pupil brings with them a different set of knowledge, attitudes and experiences. The task for classroom teachers is to take account of this diversity and still provide meaningful learning experiences for each of these individuals within their classroom. This is not an easy task.

Aim of the Article

This article aims to examine the challenge of diversity in classrooms though two main discussion themes. Sedimented discourses of segregation, integration and inclusion remain current in schools and influence how classroom teachers operate. Awareness of how these sedimented discourses operate can facilitate more informed pedagogical decision making. It has been suggested that learning about other educational systems have chosen to deal with this challenge of diversity can assist classroom teachers to understand their own context better and thereby make more informed pedagogical decisions. A description of the educational context of Scotland is therefore provided. Although historically and culturally this may differ from other educational systems, it is hoped that readers will find resonances within their own country's educational provision.

Following this description of the Scottish educational context, an alternative for dealing with the challenge of diversity is proposed. This proposal outlines collaborative research work conducted by a number of academics in the United Kingdom with classroom teachers. Inclusive Pedagogy is proposed as an effective alternative classroom practice which acknowledges the diversity within our classrooms whilst seeking to retain the dignity of all individuals within the learning community of the classroom (Florian and Black-Hawkins, 2011). Exemplars of what Inclusive Pedagogy might look like in a number of different Scottish classrooms are included.

Background to the educational context in Scotland- segregation, integration and inclusion

It has been suggested that the task of providing meaningful learning experiences for all the pupils in our classrooms has become more challenging with the promotion of the 'inclusion agenda'. This 'inclusion agenda' is a worldwide movement as evidenced by documentation such as the Salamanca Declaration (1994). During the last fifty years, a number of societies have moved from a system which *segregated* those who were

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different, to a system which began to *integrate* them to a system which seeks to *include* all humans in society; including mainstream education.

Within Scotland in the mid-twentieth century a psycho-medical understanding of difference prevailed. Those pupils diagnosed as having a sufficiently low IQ were deemed uneducable and were considered the responsibility of the medical services. Additionally for those who entered educational provision, a decision was made that those who would not be expected to perform sufficiently well academically would have alternative educational provision often on separate sites.

During the 1970s and 80s, ideas that promoted that all young people had the right to be educated were prevalent (Department of Education and Science, 1978). Resultant policy changes permitted movement towards the *integration* of all young people to educational services. This addressed each individual's right to be educated within appropriate provision. Additionally, within Scotland, the presumption of mainstreaming was advocated. Policy assumed that all young people would be educated in the mainstream schools provided on a community basis unless a robust case could be made for placement in alternative provision.

The enactment of the policy of *integration* was diverse across Scotland. For many of the pupils with severe and profound educational needs, provision was moved from separate sites to units attached to a mainstream school. However physical integration of these pupils often did not guarantee genuine social and academic integration in the life of the mainstream schools.

 For other pupils, policy changes related to integration brought an end to the system of secondary moderns and grammar schools. No longer were pupils physically divided into those who would follow an academic curriculum and those who followed a technical curriculum. The proposal was that all pupils in a community would attend a comprehensive secondary school which would provide opportunities for all. However the reality proved to be different for many pupils as the practice of streaming and setting and the constriction of curricular choices continued to limit to the potential achievements to which individual pupils might aspire (Hart, 1998).

In recent years in Scotland, as in many other countries, the term *inclusion* has been proposed as an aspiration to replace *integration*. In line with the idea that we must foster a more inclusive society which facilitates opportunities for all citizens to participate in their communities, schools are encouraged to become more inclusive as they welcome and meet the needs of *all* young people in the community.

Developing an inclusive society is generally accepted as challenging to enact. Even the term *inclusion* is challenging to define. Black-Hawkins has referred to the term *inclusion* as 'a slippery, elusive term' (Black-Hawkins, 2010) which is open to a multitude of interpretations. However there is general agreement that *inclusion* means that all young people and adults should be included in mainstream society irrespective of race, religions disability etc. It is also accepted that inclusive schools help the development of those communities where all individuals are equally valued and have the same opportunities of participation. Finally it is generally acknowledged that the inclusion process must be an ongoing process rather than a one-off individual event. None of these definitions makes the enactment of inclusion in the classroom less challenging however.

As stated previously, this ongoing process of *inclusion* is a challenge facing all classroom teachers. Each new class composed of individual pupils presents a new range of diversity to be taken cognisance of in providing the meaningful learning they seek to provide for their pupils. Indeed Youdell (2006) refers to 'multiple constellations of identity' as she proposes that many pupils present not only one element of difference to the 'norm' but may be composed of a number of differences from what is considered the norm – for example differing gender <u>and</u> race – which marks them to teachers as additionally different to other pupils in their year group.

The educational context in Scotland – achievement agenda

The challenge of providing for the diversity of individuals within the classroom is exacerbated by pressure on teachers to maintain high standards of achievement. The associated issues of achievement and accountability have a specific manifestation within the Scottish educational system. Many countries have groups of young people who are excluded or underachieve. This can lead to long term social and economic consequences of all of society. Research points to links between poor educational outcomes, poverty and additional support needs.

A poor educational outcome for some young people is a particular concern for Scottish education. International reports have indicated that the highest achieving pupils in the UK compare with the best in the rest of the world (UNICEF, 2007). Indeed when considering these top 20% of pupils, Scottish pupils perform better than their English counterparts. However at the other end of the achievement spectrum, the UK has one of the longest tails of underachievement in the developed world. When comparing the 20% lowest achieving pupils in Scotland with their counterparts across comparator nations (UNICEF, 2007), Scotland as a nation performs most poorly. In addition, Scotland has some of the highest levels of disengagement from education at the post-15 stage.

Scottish teachers are under twin pressures; the challenge of providing for a wide range of diversity in their classrooms and the challenge of maintaining and raising standards, particularly for those who are currently in the 20% lowest achieving category. There have been a number of Scottish Government policy responses to these challenges.

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, the public consultation and resultant implementation of the new 'Curriculum for Excellence' has been a major driver for change in Scottish schools by the Scottish Executive (2004). Based on an aspiration to develop the 'four capacities' of successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors, the new curriculum aims to prepare all our 'children and young people in Scotland to develop the knowledge, skills and attributes they will need if they are to flourish in life, learning and work, now and in the future' (www.educationscotland.gov.uk).

Recent critiques have been levelled at both the underpinning principles and implementation of the new Curriculum for Excellence by a number of academics (Priestley and Humes, 2010). It has been suggested that the curriculum reform was not sufficiently radical to effect the required change. In contrast, many teachers have expressed deep seated anxieties both about the many changes that have emerging during the implementation of the new curriculum and the speed at which the teaching workforce have been forced to implement them.

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Nevertheless it is generally agreed that the need for some change was essential. Whether the many changes heralded as part of Curriculum for Excellence including the attempts to re-professionalise the teaching profession will prove to meet the needs of all young people sufficiently to prepare them adequately for life in the twenty-first century remains to be seen.

In addition to the implementation of a new curriculum to meet the needs of all 21st century learners, the Scottish Government has passed a number of other pieces of legislation which aims to assist teachers to meet the twin challenges of the diversity within their classrooms and raise standards of achievement for all. A significant piece of legislation in this regard is the Additional Support Needs Act (Scottish Government 2004, revised 2009).

This legislation radically refigured how additional support needs were met in Scottish schools. The legislation proposed the idea that additional support provision would not only be required by a limited and specifically identified group within the system. Instead it proposed that all young people in the Scottish educational system would potentially require additional support of some sort at some time to allow them to continue to progress in their studies.

Reasons for requiring this additional support might be from a wide range of circumstances; issues relating to family circumstances such as temporary homelessness, illness or temporary problems arising in a specific curriculum area. For the duration of the temporary need, the legislation necessitated the school system to provide the additional support to that individual for as long as was required.

The legislation acknowledged that there may be some individual pupils who required long-term additional support to facilitate progress in their studies. Often these individual pupils required multiple agency support involving not just educational services but also medical and social work services. The opportunity to work in a collaborative manner to ensure all these services are working effectively with the child at the centre is provided for by the interagency policy 'Getting it Right for Every Child Legislation' (Scottish Executive 2007, Scottish Government 2012).

Summary of Scottish Educational context

To summarise the background information related to meeting the needs of young people in our Scottish educational system, Scottish teachers face many of the same challenges that their counterparts face in other Western countries; the internal challenge of meeting the diverse needs of the pupil and the external demands of maintaining and raising achievement levels for all the pupils in their classroom.

Scotland faces specific challenges as 20% of their school population are amongst the lowest achievers compared to comparator nations (UNICEF, 2007). In particular Scotland faces the problem of a high level of post-15 disengagement from education resulting in high levels of NEETS; young people 'Not in Education, Employment or Training'.

In response to these challenges the Scottish government have taken several steps. Significant of these is the introduction of a new curriculum called 'A Curriculum for Excellence' which seeks to prepare Scottish young people for life in the twenty-first century. In addition, the Scottish government implemented changes in

how support needs were met within the Scottish educational system. The term 'special educational needs' was replaced by 'additional support needs' indicating that any pupil in Scottish schools may potentially require additional support at times during their school career as a result of a number of different circumstances. The 'Getting It Right for Every Child' interagency policy aims to facilitate all professionals working together with the individual child at the centre of their discussions.

Underlying assumptions of Policy and Practice

Despite these policy changes in Scotland and other Western nations, the practical challenges for teachers working each day in their classrooms attempting to implement the ideas of inclusion whilst maintaining and indeed raising the achievement levels of all their pupils' remains. Inclusion has been stated to be an ongoing process and therefore with each new class of pupils, teachers continue to seek answers to how inclusion might be implemented in their classrooms; that is, how they might facilitate meaningful participation and learning for all pupils.

This paper seeks to describe one potentially radical and yet at the same time subtle answer to this challenge. For the purposes of this article, it is set against the backdrop of the legislation and curricular advice currently implemented within Scotland but has been utilised effectively within the wider UK and further afield. It is based on ideas developed by a number of academic researchers in the UK.

Prior to describing the proposed way of working in classrooms to meet the needs of all young people in more detail, it is essential to consider a range of assumptions related to ability and achievement. These assumptions are often held implicitly by teachers and other key stakeholders in education without being overtly articulated as guiding decisions about how to organise or operate in classrooms.

Susan Hart (1998) proposes that many teachers hold an assumption that a person's 'ability' is both inherent and unchangeable. Linked to this, is the belief that 'ability' is normally distributed across the general population.

These views can be traced back to work done by psychologists in the early part of the twentieth century. At the beginning of mass compulsory schooling, the school medical service took the opportunity to begin to measure and categorise children's physical development. From this process, they began to hypothesise what might be considered 'normal' physical development for all children; thereby creating the scenario where some children were identified as 'not normal' or 'abnormal'.

In the same manner, it was considered possible to measure aspects of the children's internal development such as intelligence or ability. This gave rise to the use of intelligence tests which claimed to measure the innate and immutable intelligence quotient of each pupil in the school. A single score (IQ) made possible comparison between children as one could determine how close to what has been deemed 'normal' development level they were. Once determined, the IQ was considered unchangeable, it was then considered possible to plot where on a normal curve of distribution each child was located; the Bell Curve (see figure 1).

Figure 1
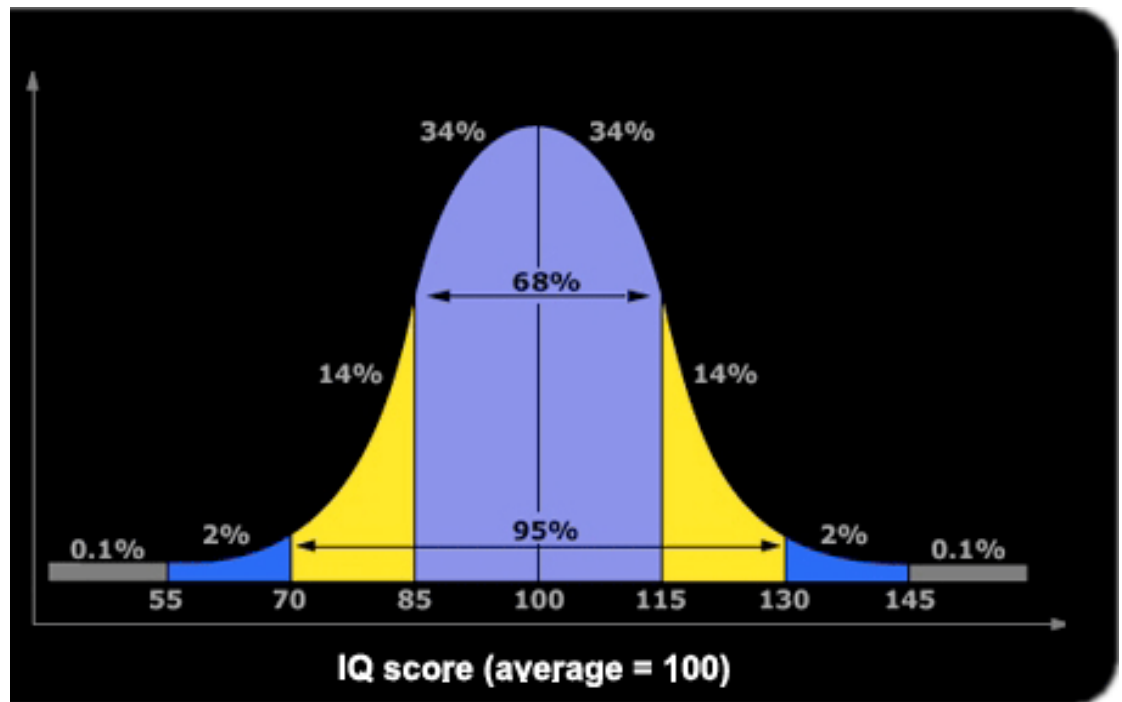
What is referred to as bell-curved thinking began to dominate teachers' thinking. Bell-curved thinking influenced how teachers viewed individual pupils in their classrooms. Unconsciously, many teachers and educationalists believe that they could plot where on the graph an individual pupil was located. As this type of thinking was allied to the idea that 'ability' is immutable, it allows them to make predictions about the future development that individual child was likely to make.

As Hart (1998) explains, if bell-curved thinking guides the choices a teacher makes on a daily basis, then there is an assumption of a fixed relationship between present and future about a child's 'potential'. This is a powerful, although often unarticulated, discourse in many educational circles and one that it is hard to challenge.

However more recent research has challenged the assumptions implicit within the 'Bell Curve' including the idea of 'ability' being innate and immutable' (Fendler and Muzzafar, 2008). Yet, the research challenging the 'Bell Curve' is not widely disseminated in educational circles. Indeed many practices based on the assumption proposed by bell-curved thinking in schools in Scotland and elsewhere are so deeply ingrained and naturalised, that they are rarely questioned by teachers.

Hart (1998) outlines many of the implications of the retention of assumptions of the bell-curved distribution of 'ability' on our schools and teachers. These assumptions have implications for how our schools are organised. Use of the 'Bell Curve' justifies the use of ability groups within classrooms and setting across year groups in secondary schools for a range of curricular areas. This practice is based on the idea that once a qualified teacher has measured the attainment of an individual pupil in a certain curricular area, that same

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teacher or group of teachers will be able to predict the future potential learning of that same pupil allowing them to place the pupil in a group or class of 'similar' pupils who can all be predicted to progress at the same rate.

Additionally Hart (1998) points out that retention of bell-curved assumptions of 'ability' can be used to justify the presence of academically different provision for any pupil who has not previously demonstrated the same progress as others who would be considered 'normal'. This may mean provision of activities 'additional or different to' those provided for the majority of the class (Florian and Black-Hawkins, 2011). It may even provide the justification of physically separate provision for some pupils with either profound and multiple learning needs; either temporarily or permanently.

As Hart (1998) points out, assumptions of bell-curved distribution of 'ability' have implications for the organisation of our schools. They have implications for teachers' expectations of their pupils. For example, once in the lowest set for a specific school subject, with bell-curved thinking, it is challenging to consider that the pupil will make sufficient progress to be successful at the advanced levels of work some pupils are engaged with. Hart (1998) also identifies bell-curved assumptions of 'ability' having implications for expectations the pupils may have of themselves. Once a pupil is located in the primary school group who are identified as poor readers, it may be challenging for them to change their learner identity to one in which they believe they have made sufficient progress to consider themselves successful readers.

Indeed in extreme cases, Hart (1998) suggests that assumptions of bell-curved thinking of 'ability' might have implications for teachers' beliefs in their own capacity to bring about improvements in the learning occurring in their classrooms.

The Dilemma of Difference

In contrast to bell-curved thinking, a number of recent academics have proposed an alternative way of viewing diversity in classrooms. They propose that instead of considering diversity within the classroom as an inhibitor to achievement, teachers should instead consider it an enabler. This idea is summarised in a policy statement on inclusive education by the Council of Disabled Children (1996).

> *"A philosophy which views diversity of strengths, abilities and needs as natural and desirable, bringing to a community the opportunity to respond in ways which lead to learning and growth for the whole school community and giving each and every member a valued role. Inclusion requires striving for the optimal growth of all pupils in the most enabling environment by recognising individual strengths and needs."*

(www.councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk – accessed March 2014)

These writers seek not to deny the differences that many pupils bring to classrooms but encourage teachers to view the differences - be they different achievement levels, different ways of learning, different ethnic backgrounds - to be opportunities to enrich the learning community.

Indeed writers such as Norwich actively questioned the educational worth of labelling pupils in any manner.

> *"It is one thing to describe symptoms, impairments or conditions such as Down's syndrome or autism. It is another matter to use labels to identify those children who are entitled to additional or different educational provision from that made available to most children. There is no connection between labels of impairment and labels of required educational provision. Two children with Down's syndrome may have different kinds of additional educational needs depending on their settings and other personal characteristics."*

> *(Norwich, 1999: 179)*

This leaves us with the question of how teachers are expected to celebrate these differences. One might ask what practical organisational and pedagogic practices might be employed to bring about this valuing of diversity whilst maintaining or even raising of standards of achievement. Norwich contrasts two differing ways in which having pupils who would seem to require different support in learning might be treated.

> *"This tension can be seen as posing a dilemma in education over how difference is taken into account - whether to recognise differences as relevant to individual needs by offering different provision, but that doing so could reinforce unjustified inequalities and is associated with devaluation; or, whether to offer a common and valued provision for all but with the risk of not providing what is relevant to individual needs."*

> (Norwich 1994:293)

The first way of dealing with difference described by Norwich is that the individual who would seem to have differing learning needs to the majority in the classroom is given alternative provision in order to meet those needs or indeed remediate the difference. This is the manner adopted by many educational services of meeting the needs of those who are not as yet achieving the same standards in learning as their peers. However the potential result of this course of action may mean that the individual is clearly marked out as different or indeed perhaps inferior to his peers. Bibby et al. clearly state negative messages about their learning can 'impact powerfully on people's sense of self and the potentially costly economic and personal impacts of negative learner-identities and concomitant withdrawal from learning opportunities' (Bibby et al, 2007: 16).

In contrast Norwich (1994) highlights that provision of a common curriculum for all avoids the potential for developing negative learner identities but also risks not providing what might be relevant for individual needs. However the concept of Inclusive Pedagogy developed by a number of academics aspires to meet both the need to provide for individual difference whilst not marking individuals as different.

Inclusive Pedagogy

Inclusive Pedagogy was conceptualised by Black-Hawkins and Florian (2011) through a study of the 'craft knowledge' of teachers who were committed to inclusion and strove to find ways in order to enact inclusive ways of working in their classrooms. Black-Hawkins and Florian (2011) developed a theoretical framework, from observations of practice in a range of classrooms. Subsequent studies of probationer teachers have consolidated this theoretical framework of Inclusive Pedagogy (Florian and Linklater 2010, Florian and

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Spratt 2013). Further work is being done to develop the framework further as colleagues in a number of Universities seek to explore complex reciprocal relationships between practice, research and teacher education. However the driving force behind their work is to find ways in which teachers successfully begin to enact Inclusive Pedagogy in their classrooms which can then be used to inform other teachers in their search for ways of accommodating difference between learners in ways which preserve the dignity of all individuals.

In essence, Inclusive Pedagogy seeks to reject the traditional approach to additional support needs which provides learning opportunities for *most* of the class and 'something additional or different' for *some* of the class (Florian and Black-Hawkins, 2011). Instead the Inclusive Pedagogical approach suggests that teachers should provide learning opportunities for *everybody*. This approach is based on three underpinning principles.

☒ *Shifting focus away from differences among learners to learning for all children.*

☒ *Rejecting deterministic beliefs about ability as fixed and the idea that the presence of some holds back the progress of others.*

☒ *Seeing difficulties in learning as challenges for teachers rather than as deficits in learners which encourages the development by teachers of new ways of working.*

Looking in more detail at the first of these principles, Inclusive Pedagogy proposes that it is necessary to create learning opportunities sufficiently available for *everyone*, so that all pupils may participate in the learning community of the classroom. This means extending what is ordinarily available for *all* learners rather than teaching and learning strategies suitable for *most* alongside something 'additional' or 'different' for *some* pupils who experience difficulties or differences. This means that teachers must focus on what is being taught and how it is being taught rather than on who is to learn it.

Looking at the second of the underpinning principles, this relates to the belief that all pupils will make progress, learn and achieve if we provide them with the conditions in which they will be able to enact this. This belief in all pupils' ability to make progress if the learning conditions are right is the opposite of bell-curved thinking which suggests that 'ability' is innate and immutable. To allow pupils to make progress in their learning, it is suggested that teachers should focus on teaching and learning activities which stress what the pupils can already do rather than what they cannot. It involves organisational strategies such as grouping pupils to support everyone's learning rather than creating 'ability' groups to cluster pupils in groups where the teacher has already predicted the future learning potential of those pupils. It involves using pedagogic strategies such as formative assessment to support learning (Black and Wiliam 1998, Hayward in Florian 2013).

The third of the underpinning principles encourages teachers to seek and experiment with new ways of working to support the learning of all pupils. This means being committed to continuing professional development as a means of developing more inclusive practices. However it also means being willing to work in collaborative ways with other professionals to develop ways of respecting the dignity of all members of the learning community of the classroom (Black-Hawkins and Florian, 2012).

Concept of Transformability

These underpinning principles are based on the concept of transformability. This concept was developed by Susan Hart and her colleagues subsequent to studying the pedagogical choices made by nine teachers in a study described in the book 'Learning without Limits' (2004). All nine teachers were invited to join the study as they clearly stated that they rejected deterministic or bell-curved thinking. As Hart and her colleagues observed the pedagogical decisions each of these nine teachers made, they noted that although the contexts differed, they noted similarities between the choices the teacher made. These choices seemed all to be based on the

> *"firm and unswerving conviction that there is potential for change in current patterns of achievement and response, that things can change and be changed for the better, sometimes even dramatically as a result of what happens and what people do in the present."*

> (Hart et al. 2004: 166)

Hart and her colleagues referred to this conviction as the concept of transformability.

In contrast to bell-curved thinking, transformability rejects the assumed stable relationship between the present and the future implied by ability judgements with their resultant labelling processes. Transformability assumes that what happens in the present can impact positively on learning in the future. This has clear implications for the responsibility teachers hold for how they work with pupils in the present. This is the result of replacement of the static concept of ability with the more flexible concept of learning capacity. All nine teachers in the study held a firm belief in the potential learning capacity of all pupils in their classes and that it was their task to provide the conditions for those pupils to fulfil that learning potential.

Practical Examples of Inclusive Pedagogy

Each of the nine teachers was invited to contribute a chapter in the book describing the research study. This provides both authenticity to the study but also provides teachers with practical examples of how it has been implemented in classrooms. Further examples have been subsequently collected to provide further illustrations of what Inclusive Pedagogy might look like in Scottish classrooms. These examples range from those provided by current student teachers who are engaged in professional study of how they will provide for the range of classes and pupils they will be meeting during their early school experience to experienced teachers who return to study at Masters level seeking solutions to dilemmas posed by the classes they meet on a daily basis.

To demonstrate how differently the underpinning principles of Inclusive Pedagogy are being implemented in Scottish classrooms, the following two examples are provided.

Example 1 - Edith

Edith was a student teacher enrolled on the Further Professional Studies module entitled 'Learning without Limits' as part of the one year Professional Graduate Diploma of Education at University of Aberdeen. The PGDE course involves an equal number of eighteen weeks on the University campus engaged in academic learning and eighteen weeks in schools engaged in practical learning of how to be a teacher in school.

Following her first four week block on school experience, Edith expressed a disappointment in her experience as she believed that many of the teachers in her placement school held bell-curved thinking about some of the pupils in their classrooms. She enrolled on the 'Learning without Limits' module seeking answers to how she might retain her own belief in the future potential of the pupils she was working with and practical knowledge and understanding of how she might facilitate this learning for all.

The module involved tutorial sessions weekly throughout the rest of the year and so the student teachers were able to describe the Inclusive Pedagogical strategies they explored on their subsequent school experiences as they took responsibility for teaching and learning.

On her second return from school experience and following engagement with the 'Learning without Limits' module, Edith exhibited a much happier and positive demeanour. She explained that she had been assigned one class of fifteen year olds who were described by the teachers as 'basically a waste of space'. The class were described as merely waiting to leave school and in the view of their usual teacher, due to their ability level and lack of application, unlikely to attain any national qualifications. Indeed on her first morning as she watched the class interact with the teacher, the pupils did seem uninterested in the curricular subject.

However Edith retained her belief in transformability. She believed that the pupils' achievement was not static but that they held the learning potential to change their chances of attaining a national qualification. Edith believed that by changing what she was doing in the present, she could change the future for these pupils. She believed that only by providing the right learning opportunities could she engage the pupils and meet their needs. In this case, she noted that the pupils were all extremely motivated in relation to their mobile phones. Indeed the use of mobile phones in class had been a source of conflict between the teacher and pupils.

The class were due to begin to revise for the upcoming national examinations and Edith chose to use the pupils' motivation to use technology to provide conditions where the pupils would choose to engage with the learning on offer. Rather than simply provide them with examination examples in a paper format, Edith linked examples of previous examination questions with QR codes - Quick Response Codes - which are a type of two-dimensional barcode often used as an application on mobile phones. These were printed out on large sheets of paper and attached at intervals around the classroom walls.

Edith explained that she believed that the pupils had the potential to perform well in the upcoming examinations but that they would perform better if they worked to assist each other with the preparatory learning. She indicated that she trusted them to work in teams to support each other's learning and explained that the pupils would work in teams during the lesson to scan each of the QR codes with their phones and then work together as a team to solve the linked examination question. Edith explained that not all of them would have all the answers but that by working with each other's strengths, she believed they could answer all of the

questions. The class teacher had been sceptical of the lesson planning but the class immediately engaged with the task. The resultant lesson was noisy but productive.

In collaboration with the pupils, Edith employed similar teaching strategies throughout the four weeks of her school experience – developing strong relationships with her classes and providing learning opportunities for all. Edith herself would be the first to admit that not all her teaching and learning strategies were successful. Nevertheless, the class teacher admitted to Edith that her view of the learning potential of those pupils had changed dramatically.

Example 2 - John

In contrast John was an experienced teacher who had recently become an additional support teacher in a large city secondary school. He joined our Masters in Inclusive Practice programme as he was increasingly frustrated by the manner in which classroom teachers tended to separate their pupils into two groups; those who were progressing satisfactorily and those giving cause for concern. John was increasingly frustrated that he was only permitted to work with those causing concern although he believed that his knowledge and skills would benefit a wider range of pupils.

As part of his studies, John was introduced to the principles of Inclusive Pedagogy. In a similar manner to Edith, he was excited at the potential it offered for changing the ways in which he might work with all pupils to facilitate learning. However his enactment of those principles on the surface seems entirely different. Instead of focusing on learning, John decided as a project for his next assignment, to focus on assessment. He believed that the school was not working in an inclusive manner in regard to assessment processes which benefited all pupils.

The Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA) which governs the administration of all national examinations had recently introduced text-to-voice software for use during the upcoming Senior Phase examinations. This introduction was in response to concerns expressed about the quality of scribes across Scotland. Pupils in Scotland, often with a diagnosis of dyslexia, are legally entitled to a scribe should they have documentation to prove that they will be adversely affected without one in comparison to their peers. It was suggested that different pupils were experiencing different levels of support dependent on the skill of their assigned scribe.

The SQA hoped that provision of software would negate the need for scribes for those pupils who could access the text aurally. John suggested that this facility might be appropriate for more pupils than those with a diagnosis of dyslexia. Instead he persuaded the other teachers in his school to offer the text-to-voice software as an option for all pupils. Rather than thinking of this way of working being offered only to some pupils, it was offered to all. Rather than offering something additional or different (Florian and Black-Hawkins, 2011) only to some pupils, John chose to offer it to all pupils trusting them to have agency and knowledge of their own learning style to choose the most suitable mode of accessing the examinations questions (Florian and Black-Hawkins, 2011).

At the time of writing the article, the SQA examinations have only just begun. However John has reported that a number of pupils have chosen to take up the offer of the software. He and the classroom teachers are surprised that not only are those pupils originally identified as likely to benefit from use of the software performing better than expected on practice examinations but also those who would not have been originally chosen but had subsequently opted in to the offer. In this instance, John has demonstrated that software initially designed for some pupils because they had different learning needs from the majority of their peers, has actually benefited a much wider range of pupils; a genuine instance of diversity of need and provision leading to learning and growth for the whole school community.

It should be noted again at this point that it is the firm belief of those researchers working in this field that the implementation of Inclusive Pedagogy will be enacted in different classrooms, with different teachers and with different pupils in entirely different manifestations. The Inclusive Pedagogical approach is not an approach which can be replicated exactly in each different learning context. Instead teachers are encouraged to explore the underpinning principles of the approach and enact them in ways which are meaningful in their own practice. This is demanding for any practitioner who is looking for the easy solution to the challenge of diversity. However it is also a strength of the approach as it can be tailored to the immediate context and needs of the individual pupils and suit the teaching personality of the practitioner.

Nevertheless, although the enactment differs, the underpinning principles are common across all the teachers and pupils enacting them.

Underpinning Principles - Learning without Limits

The underpinning concepts outlined by Hart et al. (2004) are summed up in three key pedagogical principles: co-agency, everybody and trust. These three key pedagogical principles facilitate affective, social and intellectual purposes within the classroom. Affective purposes are described by Hart et al. (2004) as strengthening confidence, security, control and competence of the learning community. Social purposes are described as increasing acceptance, belonging and community. Intellectual purposes are described as ensuring access to learning opportunities, enhancing relevance, meaning and reasoning. Together these three principles work together to guide decisions about what to do and also what not to do in order to enhance learning capacity.

Although described separately the three underpinning principles of co-agency, everybody and trust do not exist in isolation from each other but interact. These concepts are practical as they guide the practices that teachers choose to achieve their purposes. They are also deeply pedagogical concepts rooted in decisions made within the classroom context. Finally as underpinning principles, they are deeply rooted in ethical ideas about how teachers should engage with pupils.

Co-agency

Hart et al. (2004) believed that fostering co-agency was a hallmark of all nine of the teachers the team observed. The teachers enacted transformability by considering learning as a joint activity with the pupils rather than something teachers did to the pupils. The teachers made connections with their pupils by trying to

understand the classroom from the pupils' perspective. Edith worked in this manner when she motivated the pupils with the use of mobile phones.

The teachers extend an invitation to all pupils to join them in the learning enterprise and value the contribution that the pupils make to the activity. This may mean that at times the teachers must learn to value the contribution made by the pupils even when it is not the contribution may be different from that originally expected by the teacher. This allows valuing of diversity through co-agency.

Pupils often view learning activities differently from teachers but as the teacher can never predict how the curriculum they offer will be experienced by the pupils, it is best to view it as an open-ended process (Osberg and Biesta, 2010).

Everybody

The concept of everybody is a key principle of Inclusive Pedagogy. It is essential that teachers value both individual and collective dimensions of learning. Rather than providing activities for most pupils and some alternative activities for some, it is essential that the learning offered can be accessible to all.

This may mean that the teacher offers choice of activity so that the individual pupils may make their own decisions about the appropriate level for them. It may mean that the learning is organised in such a manner that the pupils are permitted to work in teams to support each other in the learning process. Again Edith enacted this principle in the lesson described earlier as she encouraged the pupils to access the QR codes and solve the examination questions in groups to support and learn from each other.

This permitted the diversity of pupils' knowledge, understanding and experience to be viewed as an asset to the learning of all. It is suggested that only by valuing everybody's contribution to this learning process, can a learning community be created which operates as a supportive team where respect for the dignity of each individual is preserved (Linklater, 2013).

Trust

Finally teachers in the 'Learning without Limits' study trusted all learners to make meaning of what they encounter as part of the learning process. They trusted the pupils to find their own relevance and purpose in learning activities offered to them. Most importantly the teachers trusted that the pupils would take up the invitation to be co-agents in the learning process if the teachers ensured that the conditions were right for the pupils to do so.

John enacted this principle when he trusted the Senior Phase pupils to make the right choice about whether to use the text-to-voice software to enhance their examination experience.

Summary

Within this article, we have looked at a number of educational issues. We began by pinpointing a significant challenge facing many classroom teachers in the current educational context; that of facilitating meaningful learning for all pupils within their classrooms whilst acknowledging the diversity of those same

pupils. This challenge is set against pressure to maintain and indeed raise standards of achievement and attainment for all pupils.

Scotland's current educational policy context was reviewed in light of specific drivers for Scottish teachers related to achievement in light of their standing to other comparable countries. It was noted that despite the introduction of a new curriculum and supportive additional needs legislation, the challenge remains for teachers as to how to meet the needs of all the pupils in their classrooms in an inclusive manner.

We reviewed two different underpinning sets of beliefs about difference in the classroom. The first of these was bell-curved thinking based on research conducted in the early part of the twentieth century but now so naturalised as a way of considering difference in the classroom. As a result many teachers do not seek to challenge the underpinning principles of bell-curved thinking. It was noted that bell-curved thinking has now been robustly challenged in academic circles but that this has been sufficiently disseminated at practitioner level. As a result, many teachers, and indeed educational leaders, continue to use bell-curved thinking to guide decision making about pupils' learning potential and how learning is organised in educational systems.

In contrast the concept of Inclusive Pedagogy was introduced. Inclusive Pedagogy as outlined by its founders, Lani Florian and Kristine Black-Hawkins, rejects ideas of determinism in learning potential and seeks to find ways in which all pupils can participate meaningfully in learning in ways which preserve their dignity.

Building on ideas outlined in 'Learning Without Limits' by Susan Hart et al. (2004), it was suggested that how Inclusive Pedagogy is enacted is likely to differ in each new educational context. However all enactments of Inclusive Pedagogy as a means of enhancing learning for all are underpinned by three key pedagogical principles; co-agency, everybody and trust.

The challenge remains for classroom teachers. In seeking to explore Inclusive Pedagogy as a viable means of facilitating meaningful learning for all, the onus lies with classroom teachers to consider how this way of working with pupils might be enacted within their particular context. In order to begin this exploration, classroom teachers should perhaps consider four reflective questions:

- ☒ *How much does the practitioner recognise Inclusive Pedagogical ways of working in their own practice already?*

- ☒ *How might Inclusive Pedagogical ways of working change the practitioner's practice?*

- ☒ *What might be the benefits of working in this way?*

- ☒ *What might be the challenges of working in this way?*

In considering the claims of Inclusive Pedagogy and seeking to ask these questions of themselves, teachers may find that the basis on which they have grounded their previous decisions about teaching and learning to be deeply shaken. However only by adopting this professional enquiring stance, will the profession begin to meet the needs of all individual pupils with the diversity they bring to our educational establishments.

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