

Issues of Inclusive Education in the 21st Century

Chris FORLIN¹⁾
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There are many issues associated with the implementation of inclusive education in the international arena. Of key importance is the impact on the role of teachers and their capacity to enact the philosophy in an effective way. Considering the current effectiveness of teacher preparation for inclusion, preliminary data were collected from a university in Japan to identify the perceptions of pre-service teachers regarding inclusion and their perceived self-efficacy in being able to implement it. The discussion focuses on a range of initiatives to help overcome some of the challenges faced to implementing effective inclusive education. Consideration is given to reforming education systems to become inclusive; removing barriers to inclusion; restructuring schools for inclusion; preparing teachers; and the role of universities in teacher education.

Key words: inclusive education, pre-service teachers, teacher training, disability, Japan

Introduction

The movement towards an inclusive approach to education has been embedded within the principles of human rights, the promotion of social justice, the provision of quality education, equality of opportunity, and the right to a basic education for all (Kim & Lindeberg, 2012). Such a change in philosophy has resulted in new models of education, that are more complex and often require difficult changes in the way schools function and in the expectations for teachers (Forlin, 2012a). Even when teachers accept the philosophy of inclusion they frequently report a strong reluctance to implement it and they are particularly concerned when the level of support needed for individual children increases (Woolfson & Brady, 2009).

Inclusion is seen, however, as the most equitable and encompassing method for educating all children (Ainscow, Booth, & Dyson, 2006). An international definition of inclusion provided as the Salamanca Conference Resolution, an outcome of the *Return to Salamanca* conference (2009) stated that:

We understand inclusive education to be a process where mainstream schools and early

year's settings are transformed so that all children/students are supported to meet their academic and social potential and which involves removing barriers in environment, communication, curriculum, teaching, socialisation and assessment at all levels.

(Inclusion International, 2009)

In response to being signatories to international Conventions that support an inclusive approach to enabling education for all, governments are required to give assurances that disability and diversity are being addressed, especially within an inclusive educational domain (Donnelly & Watkins, 2011). To sustain long term change, though, it requires policy processes that are:

- Based on a clear and articulated concept of equity.
- Thorough and systematic, and recognize the complexities involved in achieving better educational outcomes for 'equity groups'.
- Founded on research and inquiry, and an appreciation of the different contexts in which educational practice operates.
- Tried and evaluated before being spread

1) The Hong Kong Institute of Education, Visiting Professor at Hiroshima University Graduate School of Education, Department Learning Science (Nov. 2012 – Feb. 2013)

widely.

- Wary about reinforcing the very inequities that they are designed to address.

Reid (2011, p. 4)

There is little doubt that the paradigm shift from a former segregated dual system to an inclusive education approach over the past four decades has made enormous impact on education systems, schools, and all stakeholders involved in education internationally. Major changes in thinking, expectations, and opportunities have occurred regarding the education of students with special learning needs (Forlin, 2012b). Previously, students with specialized needs have been educated in segregated facilities, often categorically aligned so that they could be educated with peers having similar needs. An evolution from these segregated schools to more inclusive placements has, though, dramatically changed the traditional role of teachers. Inclusive education, while initially focusing on providing for students with disabilities in mainstream schools, now encompasses a much broader designation that refers to all children who may have been historically marginalized from meaningful education, who come from varied multi-cultural and multi-diverse backgrounds, or who are at risk of not achieving to their potential (Forlin, 2010). This changed way of thinking has impacted more than anything on the task of teachers.

In many of the countries who have been involved with inclusion for some time, the expectations regarding including all students has made teaching very pressing, resulting in a teaching profession that is somewhat disillusioned and despondent with students also becoming disenfranchised with schooling, either dropping out or making life extremely disagreeable for their teachers (Rose, 2010). In countries who are only recently embracing inclusion, many learners are receiving free education for the first time, resulting in governments needing to provide education for a large increase in numbers of children; frequently without a strongly developed infrastructure, and with teachers who are poorly trained and ill-equipped to deal with the diversity of needs presented (Du Toit & Forlin, 2009).

Changed role for teachers

Inclusive education requires generalist teachers to be able to cater for the needs of the most diverse student populations academically, socially, and culturally (Rose, 2010) and for school leaders to be accepting of and committed to the philosophy (Sharma & Desai, 2007). An inclusive classroom is one in which all students, regardless of ability, are educated together in common educational contexts (Loreman, Deppeler, & Harvey, 2010). This may require modification of the environment, curriculum, and pedagogical methods. School populations world-wide include students with special educational needs such as a disability or learning difficulty but they also have learners with an enormous range of other needs that can impact on their capacity to engage with the regular curriculum and pedagogy, both academically and / or socially. These can include among others, students from different socio economic backgrounds, racial minorities, asylum seekers, refugees, those in poverty, and those who have mental health issues caused by internal or external influences (Forlin, 2012).

While inclusive education has been found to be an effective means of educating all children in a variety of educational domains including academic and social environments (Loreman, 2007), some educators have reported feelings of anxiety about the implementation of the approach (Macmillan & Meyer, 2006). Many teachers consider themselves to be under-trained and under-skilled to meet the demands of managing an increasingly diverse classroom (Andersen, Klassen, & Georgiou, 2007).

A key issue is how the move towards an inclusive approach is impacting on the beliefs of teachers and their attitudes towards becoming inclusive practitioners. It is clear that previous research indicates that if educators hold negative attitudes then educational reforms such as inclusive education are unlikely to meet with success (e.g. Beacham & Rouse, 2012; Sharma, Loreman, & Forlin, 2007). Prior positive experiences in teaching and interacting with students with disabilities have been found to provide increased support by teachers for inclusive education, (Ahmed, Sharma, & Deppeler, 2012). A difficulty for many teachers, though, is that when commencing inclusion as a new

initiative, there is generally a lack of opportunities to view good practices. Further, availability of support for inclusion is also a key factor in a teacher's willingness to become inclusive. According to Ryan and Gottfried (2012) the impact of perceived school support for inclusive practices should not be underestimated, as they note that:

...when conflicting values, attitudes, and beliefs are present amongst the members of the group over an issue (inclusion), or over the behaviours of a member (non-inclusive), the entire group can break down. Therefore, to successfully implement a program, such as inclusion, knowing the attitudes of the staff is vital as a program such as this cannot be successful without positive support. (p. 563)

Teacher Education for Inclusion

It would seem undeniable that teacher education is the quintessence of establishing more effective and inclusive schooling for all learners. A major focus of moving inclusion forward, thus, must be a greater emphasis on preparing teachers for an inclusive approach. Without effectual and proficient teachers, appropriate pedagogy and instruction is unlikely to be provided that can accommodate the needs of all learners. Similarly, without a positive approach towards inclusion and a genuine willingness to differentiate the curriculum to meet students' diverse needs, inclusion is unlikely to become anything more than rhetoric.

Teachers are, consequently, critical to the successful implementation and sustainability of an inclusive approach. Of vital importance is the need for teachers who are better trained to provide inclusive practices for learners with diverse needs (Forlin, 2012a). The lack of suitably qualified or trained teachers continues to be a major concern in many regions, contributing to the challenges faced by countries endeavouring to implement inclusion (Charema, 2010). Preparation of teachers for inclusion requires appropriate and effective training to be available both prior to and during the establishment of inclusion (Sharma, Forlin, Deppeler & Xu, 2013).

Research on teacher education for inclusion has taken many forms, including examinations of

insider perspectives (Jones, Forlin & Gillies, 2013), inclusive practices (Chien-Hui & Rusli, 2012), program content (Loreman, 2007), teacher education program delivery (Loreman, Forlin, & Sharma, 2007), teacher perceptions of self-efficacy (McGhie-Richmond, Barber, Lupart, & Loreman, 2009), and teacher attitudes and concerns (Sharma, Loreman, & Forlin, 2007).

Support for better preparing inclusive teachers has become a major focus in many regions, although strategies to improve this have not necessarily been implemented universally (Causton-Theoharis, Theoharis, and Trezek, 2007). Teachers continue to voice that they are unprepared for inclusion; however, the foundation of an effective inclusive practice relies almost entirely upon the readiness of staff to implement it. In the UK for example, there are already many new strategies put in place for ensuring that teachers are better prepared to cater for the needs of all learners. Building on the *Quality First Teaching* philosophy, resources for training about learners with special educational needs (SEN) and disability for initial teacher education and for teacher induction have been developed. Further, the recent *Inclusion Development Programme* is being disseminated throughout the UK. It is expected that these will significantly raise the awareness of new teachers about learners with SEN and disability and will enhance the capacity of schools to identify, assess, and provide for all children (Lamb, 2009).

Teacher's beliefs about Inclusion

Perceived teaching efficacy in being able to implement an inclusive approach to education is critical if teachers are to be able to enact inclusive policies developed at a government level (Forlin, Sharma & Loreman, in press). Self-efficacy is "... a belief in one's personal capabilities..." (Bandura, 1997, p. 4). There are four major ways in which perceptions of self-efficacy can regulate human functioning. These include:

1. Cognitive (aspirations, challenges undertaken, views and outcomes visualized);
2. Motivational (setting goals, planning courses of action, effort, perseverance and resiliency);
3. Mood or affect (levels and management of stress or depression experienced, risk

management, control over thoughts and toleration of anxiety and stress); and

4. Selective approaches (choosing activities one can succeed at, creating benign environments and career choices).

Bandura (1997)

The self-efficacy beliefs people have are formed by four main sources (Klassen, 2004). These include (a) mastery experiences in which a person has previously demonstrated competence and so assumes this will continue in the future; (b) vicarious experience where a person observes or is told by others that a task is manageable; (c) social persuasion where others communicate to another that they are efficacious in an area; and (d) a person's own physiological and/or emotional state. Perceptions of self-efficacy, therefore, often relate to a specific area; for example, being good at sport, achieving high academic results, succeeding as an artist, or any other area of human endeavour.

The confidence that teachers have in their own knowledge, skills and abilities to implement inclusive education is considered an essential aspect to the success of the approach, along with other factors such as positive attitudes and contextual variables. Teaching efficacy beliefs, according to Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk-Hoy (2001), are "...powerfully related to many meaningful educational outcomes, including teachers' persistence, enthusiasm, commitment and instructional behaviour, and student outcomes, such as achievement, motivation, and self-efficacy beliefs" (p. 783). Teachers working in diverse settings need to be persistent, enthusiastic, and especially adequately prepared to become competent instructors. Effective teacher education for inclusion would, thus, seem essential for improving teaching efficacy in inclusive practices (Forlin, Sharma & Loreman, in press). As an example of teacher preparedness for a nation-wide reform towards an inclusive approach, data were collected from all undergraduate teacher education students in a university in Japan.

The move towards inclusion in Japan

The government in Japan is embracing a paradigm shift towards implementing a more

inclusive educational system in the coming years. The Government has launched a new initiative which aims to highlight inclusive education as a major reform throughout the country from 2013. Given the research that has demonstrated the importance of teachers in implementing such a new change it is critical to identify whether teachers are ready for this new move towards inclusion.

A preliminary investigation was, thus, undertaken to identify the perceptions of pre-service teachers regarding their readiness for becoming inclusive practitioners. This initial study examined pre-service teachers' understanding about inclusive education, their attitudes towards including learners with a range of special learning needs, and their perceived teaching efficacy to become inclusive practitioners. This study is multi-layered as it reviews pre-service teacher perceptions about inclusive education, perceptions about including individual children with different learning needs, and their perceived efficacy in being able to manage effective inclusive classroom practices.

Methodology

Data were collected from all undergraduate teacher education students in Hiroshima University at the end of the 2012/13 academic year. An adapted and translated version of the *Sentiments, Attitudes and Concerns about Inclusive Education – Revised* scale (SACIE-R) (Forlin, Earle, Loreman, & Sharma, 2011) and the *Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practice Scale* (TEIP) (Sharma, Loreman, & Forlin, 2012) were employed. The Japanese versions of these scales were piloted with a small cohort of pre-service teachers. Modifications were made before the final version was used. The questionnaire collected demographic data and responses to items related to the inclusion of students with special educational needs or disability (SEND) and pre-service teachers' concerns about inclusion in regular schools in Japan. Data were also collected regarding their perceived teaching efficacy in managing behaviour, efficacy in collaboration, and efficacy to use inclusive instruction. Responses for all items were aligned by writing all items in the positive and recording them using a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly

Disagree); 2 (Disagree); 3 (Disagree Somewhat); 4 (Agree Somewhat); 5 (Agree); to 6 (Strongly Agree). Thus, higher mean scores indicated greater support for the item.

Results

A total of 619 useable questionnaires were obtained. All participants were less than 25 years old indicating that training for teaching was not being undertaken by any mature age people. Unlike many other countries where females tend to dominate in elementary teaching, 39% of these pre-service teachers were male. The pre-service teachers were representative of all four years of the undergraduate

program with 28% in Year 1, 27% in year 2, 24% in Year 3 and 21% in Year 4. Whilst the majority were undergraduates with a high school equivalent background, 23% were post graduates.

The pre-service teachers were asked about any previous training they had received and their understanding of inclusive education. Sixty two per cent indicated that they had received no training in teaching students with SEND. A very large proportion of the participants said that their understanding of inclusion was either very low (35%) or low (38%). A further 22% suggested average understanding while only 4% had a high understanding.

When asked about their perceptions of how

Table 1

Pre-service Teachers' Beliefs about Including Students with a Range of SENDs

Range of Students with SEND to be included	N	Mean	SD	Range
Students who frequently fail tests	612	4.28	.87	1-6
Attention and concentration problems	610	3.94	.82	1-6
Physical disability	609	3.93	.95	1-6
Social skills difficulties	613	3.83	.80	1-6
Language and communication difficulties	601	3.71	.80	1-6
Developmental Disorders	613	3.69	.85	1-6
Learning disorders	612	3.64	.87	1-6
Students who need individual plans	612	3.64	.87	1-6
Emotional or behavioural disabilities	610	3.62	.85	1-6
Communication needs e.g. braille; sign language	611	3.19	.91	1-6

Note. Mean responses range from 1 (Strongly Disagree); 2 (Disagree); 3 (Disagree Somewhat); 4 (Agree Somewhat); 5 (Agree); 6(Strongly Agree).

Table 2

Pre-service Teachers' Potential Concerns about Inclusive Education

	N	M	SD
I believe that elementary and junior high students with SEND will be accepted by their classmates.	614	3.73	0.93
It is not so difficult for me to pay appropriate attention to all students enrolled in an inclusive classroom.	614	3.01	0.92
Even if there are students with SEND enrolled in my class my stress would not be increased.	612	2.84	1.05
Even if there are students with SEND enrolled in my class my workload will not increase.	613	2.38	0.92
I have the knowledge and skills required to teach students with SEND.	613	2.49	1.04

Note. Mean responses range from 1 (Strongly Disagree); 2 (Disagree); 3 (Disagree Somewhat); 4 (Agree Somewhat); 5 (Agree); 6(Strongly Agree).

much support would be available to assist them in teaching students with SEND once they became teachers, their responses veered towards the positive. On the 6-point Likert scale, they indicated that they agreed somewhat (Mean = 4) that the school would provide support for teaching students with SEND and assist them in doing this. They also agreed somewhat that parents would also support them in teaching their students.

In response to which students with SEND that they believed should be included in regular classes in Japan there was a noticeable difference in responses. In Table 1 it can be seen that while they agreed somewhat with including students with most types of SEND they proposed that those who required specific communication devices such as braille

should not be included. They were also more positive towards including those with attention or social skills difficulties than including those with other types of disabilities or emotional and behavioural problems.

The pre-service teachers were also asked to respond to five items pertaining to potential concerns that they may have about inclusion in Japan. In Table 2 it can be seen that they were least concerned about the students with SEND being accepted by their classmates, indicating that they agreed somewhat that this would happen. Conversely, they disagreed somewhat that it would not be difficult to provide attention to all students and that their stress would not increase. Most noticeably they were very concerned about an increase in their workload if they had students with SEND included in their classes and

Table 3
Pre-service Teachers' Efficacy to Manage Disruptive Behaviour

	N	M	SD
I am able to get children to follow classroom rules	610	4.04	0.87
I can make my expectations clear about student behaviour	615	3.63	0.02
I am confident when dealing with students who are physically aggressive	614	3.35	0.97
I am able to calm a student who is disruptive / noisy	616	3.32	0.93
I can control disruptive behaviour in the classroom	615	3.25	0.95
I am confident in my ability to prevent disruptive behaviour in the classroom before it occurs	615	3.13	0.90

Note. Mean responses range from 1 (Strongly Disagree); 2 (Disagree); 3 (Disagree Somewhat); 4 (Agree Somewhat); 5 (Agree); 6(Strongly Agree).

Table 4
Pre-service Teachers' Efficacy to Work Collaboratively

	N	M	SD
I can collaborate with other professionals (e.g. itinerant teachers / speech pathologists) in designing educational plans for students with disabilities	614	4.13	0.97
I am able to work jointly with other professionals and staff (e.g. aides, other teachers) to teach students with disabilities in the classroom	614	4.07	0.89
I can make parents feel comfortable coming to school	612	3.88	0.94
I can assist families in helping their children do well in school	612	3.82	0.91
I am confident in my ability to get parents involved in school activities of their children with disabilities	614	3.80	0.95
I am confident in informing others who know little about laws and policies relating to the inclusion of students with disabilities	615	3.13	1.08

Note. Mean responses range from 1 (Strongly Disagree); 2 (Disagree); 3 (Disagree Somewhat); 4 (Agree Somewhat); 5 (Agree); 6(Strongly Agree).

their perceived lack of knowledge and skills required to teach these students.

In regards to the pre-service teachers' perceived efficacy in managing disruptive behaviour, working collaboratively with others, and in applying inclusive instruction, there were noticeable differences. While they agreed somewhat that they perceived they were able to get children to follow classroom rules and to be able to make their expectations clear about student behaviour, they were less confident about managing disruptive behaviour by the students (Table 3).

When asked about their ability to work collaboratively with a range of other stakeholders when implementing inclusive education, they were somewhat positive. They were, however, uncertain about their ability to inform others about inclusion (Table 4). This finding is not surprising as 73% of the pre-service teachers, as reported above, had indicated that their own understanding of inclusion was low.

To be able to provide an effective inclusive classroom teachers will need to implement appropriate inclusive instruction. When the pre-service teachers were asked about their perceived efficacy in being able to do this, they indicated that they mostly agreed with the statements. They considered they were able to use suitable explanations, organise group work, and extend the curriculum to meet the needs of students whom they deemed to be very capable (Table 5). They also agreed somewhat that they could accurately

gauge students' understandings and apply a range of assessments to evaluate this. They were, though, less positive about their confidence in designing learning tasks to accommodate the individual needs of students with SEND.

Discussion

From this preliminary study an overview of pre-service teachers' perceptions about inclusive education in one university in Japan were obtained. Even though Japan is about to embark on education reform towards more inclusive educational practices as seen internationally, it would appear that currently teachers in training do not yet have the necessary understanding about inclusion; only a rather minimal support for including students with different types of SEND; and only emerging teaching efficacy. As all of these are essential to support an inclusive movement in regular schools it would appear that some urgent intervention is needed to ensure that the preparation of teachers for inclusion is more effective.

The following discussion focuses on a range of initiatives to help overcome some of the challenges faced to implementing effective inclusive education. Consideration is given to reforming education systems to become inclusive; removing barriers to inclusion; restructuring schools for inclusion; preparing teachers; and the role of universities in teacher education.

Table 5

Pre-service Teachers' Efficacy to Use Inclusive Instruction

	N	M	SD
I am able to provide an alternate explanation / example when students are confused	615	4.01	0.88
I am confident in my ability to get students to work together in pairs / in small groups	615	3.99	0.87
I can provide appropriate challenges for very capable students	615	3.96	.91
I can accurately gauge student comprehension of what I have taught	610	3.88	.88
I can use a variety of assessment strategies (e.g. portfolio assessment, modified tests, performance-based assessment, etc.)	615	3.82	0.86
I am confident in designing learning tasks so that the individual needs of students with disabilities are accommodated	614	3.49	0.91

Note. Mean responses range from 1 (Strongly Disagree); 2 (Disagree); 3 (Disagree Somewhat); 4 (Agree Somewhat); 5 (Agree); 6(Strongly Agree).

Reforming education systems to become inclusive

As education systems aim towards greater inclusiveness there are many aspects of change that need to be ratified. Initially, policy needs to be firmly embedded and informed by local research that addresses the specific needs of a region by considering cultural differences between ethnic groups and city and rural situations, fiscal constraints, support structures, and the capabilities of those who are to implement it. To enact an inclusive approach requires appropriate preparation of all stakeholders. This particularly applies to the training of staff at all levels from the system to the classroom. To assume the wording from international declarations into local policies, without considering the implications for implementation that will vary enormously based on regional needs, will not produce an effective system-wide inclusive approach to education. All regions are unique in their requirements and thus they require policy that reflects this and above all else is manageable by those who are going to be required to implement it.

Even when policy does exist, the translation of this into good practice that is sustainable and culturally and contextually appropriate, is often underestimated for effective inclusion to occur. In 2009, UNESCO developed a set of guidelines to assist countries in firming their focus on inclusion by developing strategies and plans for inclusive education through strengthening policy development. They proposed a number of important steps as being necessary to move inclusive policy forward including:

- Carrying out local situation analyses on the scope of the issue, available resources and their utilization in support of inclusion and inclusive education
- Mobilizing opinion on the right to education for everybody
- Building consensus around the concepts of inclusive and quality education
- Reforming legislation to support inclusive education in line with international conventions, declarations and recommendations
- Supporting local capacity-building to promote development towards inclusive education
- Developing ways to measure the impact of

inclusive and quality education

- Developing school- and community-based mechanisms to identify children not in school and find ways to help them enter school and remain there
- Helping teachers to understand their role in education and that inclusion of diversity in the classroom is an opportunity, not a problem

(UNESCO, *Policy Guidelines on Inclusion in Education*, 2009, p.14)

Being able to understand what this involves by viewing good practice examples is critical for governments and policy-makers. A collaborative project between

two international organizations working in the field of inclusive education: the *United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation* (UNESCO) and the *European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education*, led to the development of an international web resource in 2010 for policy makers working to develop equity and equal opportunities within global education systems. The examples of policy and practice illustrate the UNESCO guidelines in a concrete way (see, <http://www.inclusive-education-in-action.org/iea/>) and provide an excellent resource for regions embracing inclusion. With Japan moving towards a more inclusive education system the collection and dissemination of good practice situations in the Japanese context would seem critical. To be able to implement effective inclusion, teachers in Japan need to be able to view inclusive practices from which they can draw upon ideas and develop their own models of inclusion.

Removing barriers to inclusion

The first World Report on Disability published in 2011 documented widespread evidence of barriers to inclusion for people with disabilities, including the following:

- Inadequate policies and standards not taking into account the needs of people with disabilities or not being enforced
- Negative attitudes, beliefs and prejudices
- Lack of provision of services
- Problems with service delivery such as poor

coordination among services, inadequate staffing

- Inadequate funding with limited resources allocated for implementing policies.
- Lack of accessibility
- Lack of consultation and involvement with people with disabilities being excluded from decision-making.
- Lack of rigorous and comparable data and evidence on disability and programs

(World Health Organization (WHO), 2011)

The report proposed nine recommendations as the way forward to removing these barriers so that the disadvantages associated with disability could be overcome:

1. Enable access to all mainstream policies, systems and services
2. Invest in specific programs and services for people with disabilities
3. Adopt a national disability strategy and plan of action
4. Involve people with disabilities in decision making
5. Improve human resource capacity
6. Provide adequate funding and improve affordability
7. Increase public awareness and understanding of disability
8. Improve disability data collection
9. Strengthen and support research on disability
(WHO, 2011, pp. 264-267)

The suggestions focused on greater awareness at both national and local levels of the needs and rights of people with disabilities, by promoting a range of initiatives. In particular, the Report recommended that clear national policies on the education of children with disabilities were essential for the development of more equitable education systems. The Report placed emphasis on the need for building teacher capacity by better trained teachers with opportunities to share experiences and expertise. Positive teacher attitudes were also considered essential to ensure that barriers to inclusion were eliminated and that children with disabilities could be included in all regular classroom activities.

Based on the data obtained in this study it would seem that considerably more work is needed to ensure that newly graduating students have a better understanding about inclusion and the opportunity to explore their feelings about inclusive education as a means to developing more positive attitudes.

Restructuring schools for inclusion

To implement an inclusive education system that will ensure equity and equal opportunities for all children and youth requires schools to implement a range of initiatives to support the enactment of the philosophy. At a government level legislation reinforced by appropriate policy is required to not only ensure equity of access but to also provide guidance to schools regarding their responsibility towards all learners. The development of effective inclusive schools requires a school to have the capacity for implementing systemic policy. To be effective in doing this there are a range of approaches that could be taken including:

1. Developing a positive school ethos that values diversity
2. Developing a positive and collegial attitude towards inclusion;
3. Providing appropriate and relevant training for teachers;
4. Employing continuous problem-solving or Response To Intervention;
5. Applying universal design for curricula;
6. Employing effective child focused pedagogies;
7. Providing alternative assessments to cater for different learning styles;
8. Use diverse outcomes to demonstrate learning;
9. Develop good support structures;
10. Ensure the use of learner-centred approaches which recognize that each individual learns differently
11. Have a multi-agency approach; and
12. Provide the flexibility to be able to make changes as needed to best meet the shifting diversity of their student population.

To ensure that inclusive educational approaches address the needs of all learners at a school level and that execution through policy development is manageable and practicable, a proactive systemic approach is needed that is supplemented by local

community input and involvement.

To assure support for the changing role of teachers, a public and community awareness program is, therefore, imperative and should be developed concomitantly with teacher training programs. People fear what they do not know, and this is often the case with inclusion. It is clear that this cohort of pre-service teachers has only a minimal understanding of inclusion and is not confident about informing others about inclusive practices. If support is to be gained from the community then in addition to better preparing teachers all stakeholders also need to have an understanding about the proposed process and an opportunity to raise questions and to discuss expected outcomes. An inclusive education system cannot work in isolation. Developing awareness of inclusive practices within a whole school community; engaging peripatetic staff, parents, and community members in change; developing and initiating inclusive curricular and pedagogies; and working in collaboration with all stakeholders, are all essential features of moving inclusion forward.

Preparing teachers for inclusion

Given two conflicting spheres of influence of supporting equity while achieving accountability, how can diverse regions around the globe ensure that teachers are appropriately prepared to establish and enact an inclusive educational approach that ensures sustainability; has the support of all stakeholders; and provides a positive outcome for all involved? This is further complicated in many instances by a lack of a suitable road map, conflicting expectations and demands regarding other innovations, and insufficient attention to the broad range of issues that need to be addressed. These combine to make implementation of inclusion challenging for many teachers. I am, therefore, proposing five levels of staff training that need to occur:

1. Leaders/Advisors: principals, consultants

In establishing an inclusive whole school approach the principal is a key player in enabling a positive outcome for all (Sharma & Desai, 2010). There is considerable research that identifies the significant role that principals play in leading inclusion (Harpell, & Andrews, 2010). To facilitate this

effectively requires leaders who have an in-depth understanding of the philosophy, exhibit positive attitudes and beliefs, are aware of the needs of their staff in implementing inclusive practices, and can take a proactive position to empower others to achieve (Jones, et al., 2013). Greater emphasis should be placed on leadership training in preparing personnel to act as advocates for inclusion.

2. Institutions/schools: teacher educators: university lecturers, teacher training institutions, or agencies.

In regard to training for inclusion, the focus has mainly been on preparing principals, teachers, and other staff, and there has been little emphasis on preparing teacher educators to undertake this training. Yet these are vital players in providing this. Regions should revisit the role of teacher educators to ensure that their training needs are also being met. In Vietnam, for example, before they implemented training for teachers, a country wide program was to upskill all teacher educators so that they had the necessary skills, curriculum and pedagogical knowledge to train teachers for inclusion (Forlin & Dinh, 2008). A similar model may be needed in other regions such as Japan.

3. Initial Teacher Education: Teachers in training, pre-service undergraduate or postgraduate students.

Undergraduate training would seem to be a key time for preparing teachers to cater for diversity. Nonetheless, while many regions are now providing compulsory preparation in this essential area, there are many others who either choose to ignore this in lieu of other discipline demands, or who suggest that this is embedded within all of their practices. There is a dearth of research on the efficacy of existing courses for preparing teachers for inclusion, and new graduates continue to suggest that they are inadequately prepared for the real world of schools and classrooms. This must be rectified if teachers are going to gain the most benefit from their initial training.

4. Professional learning: teachers in practice; in-service teachers.

For teachers who are already working in schools it is, similarly, critical that they are provided with access to relevant and evidence-based professional learning. Teachers must have the necessary skills and expertise to develop appropriate curriculum and implement effective pedagogies to meet all students' needs. The Lamb Inquiry suggests that all schools should plan to have at least one teacher who has expertise in the major areas of SEN to ensure appropriate identification and effective interventions can be developed. In many regions a specialist teacher is employed to take on this role (e.g. SENCO in the UK).

5. Peripatetic / parents: other school staff, education assistants, visiting teachers, administrators, parents.

While principals and teachers need to be effectively prepared for inclusion, likewise, there are many other staff, parents and the students themselves who require training about inclusion. Teachers have to work with a wide range of stakeholders; and this requires specific training in collaborative skills. In the U.K., for example, the Every Child Matters legislation proposes that the involvement of children and parents should be fundamental to achieving appropriate outcomes and that this should occur through a multi-agency approach. Nonetheless, throughout much of the Asia-Pacific region this approach has not been adopted. Parents traditionally avoid contact with schools; there is a lack of infrastructure to support a multi-agency approach; and almost no involvement of the children themselves in any decision making (Forlin, 2008).

(Adapted from Forlin, 2012c, pp 178-180)

The role of universities

The perspectives of this cohort of pre-service teachers indicate that they have very limited knowledge about inclusion. Although data are not yet available from other universities in Japan it would seem germane to assume that findings are likely to be similar, as there are as yet no formal requirements

across all prefectures for preparing teachers for inclusion. How can universities then better support the preparation of teachers for inclusive education and in catering for diversity? If teachers are to be effectively prepared for inclusion the role of universities who continue to undertake the major training programs for teachers, needs to be reviewed to ensure that courses are better aligned with the practical needs of teachers and schools.

The number of courses generally offered in undergraduate pre-service teacher education programs has increased intensely as universities often struggle to gain the student edge by preserving their enrolments in difficult financial times. Further, government requirements increasingly require undergraduates to complete a range of new initiatives to meet current demands by employers. At the same time, many institutions are facing severe cutbacks in staffing, while being pressured to produce outcomes by way of research publications that are more likely to bring additional funds to help them cope with this changing dynamic. University educators are, therefore, likely to be reluctant to include specific courses on educating students with SEND within such an already crowded curriculum. Yet if Japan is to embrace the Government's education reform to implement inclusion then teacher education must change.

There are many options for universities to reform their teacher training programs so that teachers are better prepared for inclusion. The following suggestions are proposed as key aspects that need to be addressed:

1. Universities should lead the debate by enacting more research into the outcomes for teachers engaged in inclusive schooling;
2. Universities have to accept greater responsibility for providing courses that meet the needs of teachers to become inclusive;
3. Teacher education courses must be related to the practicality of implementation, rather than simply focusing on the theoretical underpinnings of the paradigm, or government policy that dictates the direction for change;
4. All teacher educators themselves need to be trained about inclusive education before they can appropriately prepare teachers;

5. Course content should take greater account of the opinion of principals and teachers and the approaches that they have found useful and manageable in supporting inclusion;
6. Courses should provide appropriate content using innovative methodologies and especially engage teachers with the new technologies;
7. Pedagogies should be based on research that justifies that these will lead to the desired outcomes of teachers having appropriate knowledge, skills, and attitudes to become inclusive practitioners;
8. Inclusive education should be considered as part of all training courses and embedded across all curricular areas, not just offered in an exclusive stand alone course;
9. Pre-service teachers training for both regular and special schools should have more opportunities to work collaboratively during their training; and
10. A greater connectedness between governments and policy makers, training institutions and schools in which teachers work, is essential.

In doing this a word of caution is essential. Much of the evidence obtained up to the present time regarding pre-service teachers' preparedness and support for inclusive education is limited and has been circumstantial and gathered from small samples in narrow contexts (Sze, 2009). Until decisions regarding course content for teacher education for inclusion are based on a strong research foundation, it will be very difficult to justify ad hoc reform of courses, or to presume that these new versions will address the needs of teachers.

The preliminary study outlined in this paper highlights the current status of teacher preparedness for inclusion and the work to be done to better prepare new teachers for an inclusive approach to education. Although this study was only undertaken in one university in Japan it is anticipated that this will reflect the perceptions of teachers in training in most other prefectures to a greater or lesser degree.

While many countries and regions within them have embraced a range of training models to prepare teachers for inclusion, there is, invariably, enormous diversity between these in both duration and quality (Sharma, et al., 2013). Government

systems are increasingly trying to have greater input into course development for teacher training by influencing the content through specifying key competencies or skills that all teachers should acquire, and in some instances demanding program registration and accreditation. To improve teacher education involves consideration of how these key competences will subsequently be addressed by changes in the curriculum, pedagogy, and practical aspects of training courses for preparing teachers for inclusion. It would seem that some form of national or state responsibility and general monitoring of the quality of courses is essential, nonetheless, too much direction regarding the curriculum calls for caution as it may inhibit opportunities for contextualising courses to meet local regional needs.

Conclusion

According to UNESCO (2009):

The success of creating inclusive education as a key to establishing inclusive societies depends on agreement among all relevant partners on a common vision supported by a number of specific steps to be taken to put this vision into practice. The move towards inclusion is a gradual one that should be based on clearly articulated principles that address system-wide development and multi-sectoral approaches involving all levels of society (p. 14).

Educational reform internationally has sparked an inclusive movement based on rights, diversity, and equity. The focus has clearly moved to establishing education systems that deliver education for all by providing appropriate accommodations to include all learners, regardless of ability or SEND within regular schools. As schools and systems shift towards providing more inclusive environments, teacher educators are also challenged to transform their views and practices with respect to teacher preparation (Smith, & Tyler, 2011).

The diversity of global situations is so broad that it is impossible to provide a single response as to how teachers can be better prepared for inclusion. In many countries where educational systems are well established and operating successfully, a systemic approach has been taken to prepare teachers.

Nonetheless, this still has the potential for enormous disparity between the providers employed to manage the training. While educating teachers about inclusive education and improving their beliefs, knowledge, and skills is central to enabling change, this can only go so far. In many instances an increased desire to implement inclusive practices becomes inhibited by the overall system and cultural context within which teachers work. Previously training has been found to have a positive impact in the areas of attitude, self-efficacy, and concerns about inclusive education in teachers taking professional learning courses about inclusion (Forlin et al. in press). In particular, improvement has been found to be strongest in areas teachers feel are under their direct control. If educational systems and schools are themselves not inclusive then engaging with inclusive teaching is very difficult for teachers and any positive impact from training will be reduced.

Based on the initial results of this preliminary investigation of pre-service teachers perceptions regarding inclusion in Japan it would appear that the preparation of teachers for inclusion will require a significant change to the current training model if it is to meet this new shift in schooling. Currently understandings of inclusion are minimal, with pre-service teachers reporting limited knowledge and skills about how to cater for the special educational needs of students with SEND. Further, acceptance of including learners with more complex needs in regular classes is far from positive. A system-wide educational reform towards inclusion must be supported by a similar system-wide approach to preparing teachers to become effective inclusive practitioners if this reform is to be successful. The need for reform of training of teachers for inclusion in Japan would seem urgent.

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