Issues paper

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Policy recommendations written with
Children with Disability Australia
Inclusion in education
towards equality for students with disability

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On 18 September 2013, Machinery of Government changes established the Department of Education and the Department of Employment out of the former Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR). All references to DEEWR in the document should now be read as the Australian Government Department of Education.
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Summary

All children in Australia have the right to an inclusive education. However, there are many barriers to the realisation of this right in the lived experience of children and families. Current efforts towards upholding the rights of all children are impeded by a lack of understanding of inclusive education and misappropriation of the term. Additional barriers include negative and discriminatory attitudes and practices, lack of support to facilitate inclusive education, and inadequate education and professional development for teachers and other professionals. Critical to addressing all of these barriers is recognising and disestablishing ableism in Australia.

This paper draws from recent research in addressing gaps in current understanding to provide a firm basis from which to inform research based policy development. Taking a rights-based approach, the paper focuses on developing a clear understanding of inclusive education and identifying strategies to enhance the education of all children in Australia.
**Definitions**

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<tr>
<th>Term</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Children</strong></td>
<td>People 0–18 years of age.</td>
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<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td>The provision of education to people from early childhood through to adulthood (although it is recognised that education is an ongoing lifelong process).</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>People who experience disability</strong></td>
<td>The reality in current Australian society is that the use of ‘disabled person’ generally involves a negation of personhood, rather than recognition of the social imposition of disability. Consequently, in this paper the term people who experience disability is used to recognise the social imposition of disability, whilst still identifying the person first.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ableism</strong></td>
<td>Ableism is to disability what racism or sexism is to ethnicity and gender. Ableism involves discriminatory attitudes and practices arising from the perception that a person who experiences disability is in some sense inferior to a person who does not experience disability.</td>
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<td><strong>Universal Design for Learning</strong></td>
<td>Universal Design for Learning (UDL) ensures that environments and experiences are inclusive of children and adults in all their diversity. This includes providing multiple ways of accessing information, approaching learning tasks and engaging and participating in learning. UDL ensures that all environments and experiences are ready for all children, rather than targeting learning experiences to a homogenised ‘middle ground’, which excludes most learners, including many children who experience disability.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Inclusive education</strong></td>
<td>Inclusive education involves embracing human diversity and welcoming all children and adults as equal members of an educational community. This involves valuing and supporting the full participation of all people together within mainstream educational settings. Inclusive education requires recognising and upholding the rights of all children and adults and understanding human diversity as a rich resource and an everyday part of all human environments and interactions. Inclusive education is an approach to education free from discriminatory beliefs, attitudes and practices, including free from ableism. Inclusive education requires putting inclusive values into action to ensure all children and adults belong, participate and flourish.</td>
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Introduction

The right to an inclusive education is articulated in both the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)\(^1\) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with a Disability (CRPD)\(^2\). Consistent with ratifying these conventions, the Australian Government expresses its commitment to inclusive education in an array of documents and policies, including the National Disability Strategy\(^3\), the Australian Curriculum, the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, the National Quality Framework and the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia\(^4\). Each of these documents recognises the importance of responding to student diversity and ensuring the participation of all students as learners. However, while children who experience disability continue to be denied equal access to inclusive education from early childhood through to adulthood, the requirements of these conventions are not being upheld.\(^5\)

Following Australia’s ratification of the CRPD in 2008, the Council of Australian Governments agreed on the National Disability Strategy (NDS) in 2011. The NDS provided the local context for action following the ratification of the CRPD. It contains six areas of policy action, including one covering education (Learning and Skills). This was preceded by Australia’s national Disability Discrimination Act 1992\(^6\) (DDA).

The Disability Standards for Education 2005\(^7\) outline legal obligations for education under Australia’s national Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA). These legal obligations include ensuring the right of every child who experiences disability to education on the same basis as any child not labelled disabled.

Following Australia’s ratification of the CRPD in 2008, and the development of the NDS in 2011, a review of the Disability Standards for Education was undertaken in 2012. In the opinion of the author the review identified many issues currently resulting in violations of the right to an inclusive education. Serious concerns were raised regarding inadequate education and professional development for teachers and specialist support staff, lack of funding and limited support from education authorities.\(^8\) Consistent with UNICEF’s recent report on the State of the World’s Children\(^9\), attitudes were identified as a major barrier to inclusion.\(^10\) The review found that for many people, stigmatisation was such that they did not feel they could disclose the difficulties they may be having or identify their support needs.\(^11\) In sum, in the opinion of the author the review clearly identified that Australia is far from meeting its obligations under the CRPD and revealed many legislative breaches of the DDA.

People who experience disability form the largest minority group in our world today.\(^12\) However, the rights of people who experience disability are repeatedly denied.\(^13\) Exclusion or discrimination

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3. COAG, 2011
4. ACARA, 2012; ACECQA, 2011; AITSL, 2011; DEEWR, 2009
8. DEEWR, 2012
10. DEEWR, 2012
11. Ibid
12. World Health Organisation (WHO), 2011
on the basis of disability remains a common occurrence and children who experience disability are amongst the most excluded in Australia\(^{14}\) and throughout the world\(^{15}\).

Article 24 of the CRPD states the right of every person who experiences disability to participate fully in an inclusive, quality education on an equal basis with people who are not labelled disabled. Specifically this involves the right to inclusive education at all levels of education intended to support “the full development of human potential and sense of dignity and self-worth, and the strengthening of respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and human diversity” (CRPD, Article 24). Additionally, the realisation of the right to education requires ensuring accommodations will be made and support will be provided to “facilitate effective education…consistent with the goal of full inclusion” (CRPD, Article 24). The right to education for all has been recognised for many decades. Given this, it should not be necessary to specifically recognise the right of people who experience disability to an inclusive education—after all, \textit{all people are people}. However, “for some people these rights are conceived as natural, while for others these same rights are conceived as ‘privileges’”\(^{16}\).

“\cite{D'Alessio, 2011} Inclusion naturally implies exclusion, thus in order to understand inclusive education it is important to consider who is included and into what, and likewise who is excluded and from what. While inclusion is about everyone, as noted above, children who experience disability are amongst the most excluded groups, thus particular attention to the rights of people who experience disability is required. The CRPD articulates the rights of people who experience disability and clearly states that these rights are not privileges.

As a signatory to the CRPD Australia is obliged, under international human rights law, to respect, protect and fulfil the rights articulated within, including the right to inclusive education. Thus “to adopt appropriate legislative, administrative, budgetary, judicial, promotional, and other measures toward the full realization of the right” including provision of assistance and services as required to bring about inclusive education.\(^{18}\) This requires acting upon the recognition that “[i]nclusion is a right, not a special privilege for a select few”\(^{19}\).

Ill-informed attitudes and low expectations form a vicious cycle limiting opportunities for children who experience disability.\(^{20}\) Additionally, research has found that by age six children demonstrate internalised cultural preferences and prejudices reflective of the communities in which they live, including making unsolicited prejudiced statements about community members.\(^{21}\) The development of these entrenched prejudices in the childhood years creates a cycle of prejudice that inhibits social cohesion. Fostering inclusion in the childhood years has the potential to break this cycle\(^{22}\), thus making childhood an important focus area for developing inclusion. However, changes in the views and behaviours of children are unlikely without changes in adult views and behaviours.\(^{23}\)

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\(^{14}\) Hobson, 2010  
\(^{15}\) UNICEF, 2013  
\(^{16}\) D’Alessio, 2011, p.141  
\(^{17}\) Barton, 1997, p.232  
\(^{18}\) Jonsson, 2007, p.118  
\(^{19}\) Kliewer, 1998, p.320  
\(^{20}\) Cologon, 2012  
\(^{21}\) Connolly, Smith & Kelly, 2002  
\(^{22}\) Cologon, 2012  
\(^{23}\) Ainscow, 2007; Beckett, 2009; UNICEF, 2013
One issue that contributes to the difficulties in upholding the right to inclusive education, in Australia and internationally, is confusion regarding what comprises inclusive education and the frequent misappropriation of the term. Despite the right to inclusive education specified in the CRPD, what constitutes inclusive education varies across contexts and interpretations.\(^{24}\) Inclusion is often viewed as an ‘added extra’ or a ‘special effort’ born out of kindness or charity. By contrast, inclusion is a right and is fundamental to a functioning society.\(^{25}\)

Since the 1970s the move towards inclusive education has been gradually building. Subsequently considerable research has focussed on the outcomes of inclusive education. However, our current understanding of the implications of this research for policy and practice in Australia is hampered by a number of factors including a current lack of shared or common meaning for ‘inclusive education’, and a lack of knowledge about developing inclusive practices and attitudes towards inclusion. These issues are addressed in this paper.

In addressing the current gaps in understanding, this paper seeks to draw together research findings to develop a clear picture of the implications for improving policy and practice—in order to facilitate greater inclusion for children who experience disability in Australia. The intention of this paper is to provide a firm basis from which to inform research based policy development.

**This paper seeks to address the following questions:**

- What understanding of the term ‘inclusive education’ can be drawn from current research literature?
- What does the literature tell us about attitudes towards inclusive education and the impact this has on practices?
- What can we learn from research on ‘inclusion’ and ‘inclusive education’ to inform capacity building in childhood education, work against low expectations and increase inclusion in education?
- What are the implications of the reviewed research for developing policy and practice to facilitate inclusion of children who experience disability in Australia?

\(^{24}\) D’Alessio & Watkins, 2009
\(^{25}\) UNICEF, 2013
Inclusion in education: Issues paper
Method

An extensive literature search was conducted to develop this issues paper. Drawing on more than 170 research papers, in light of the questions outlined above, the current paper addresses: the meaning of the term ‘inclusive education’; outcomes of inclusive education; and barriers to or facilitators of inclusive education. Where relevant, links are also made to recent national and international reports. There has been a consistent lack of evidence to suggest any benefit of segregated education over time. By contrast, there is a considerable body of research demonstrating the benefits of inclusive education. This literature is considered in this paper. Taken together this paper provides a clear evidence base to inform policy and practice in inclusive education in Australia. It should be noted that while there are many considerations relevant to inclusive education that fall outside of the scope of this paper, this is not to suggest that they are not important. A number of gaps in the literature are identified and further research is urgently needed to address these gaps.
Section 1: Understanding ‘inclusive education’

Inclusive education can be a difficult concept to define.\(^\text{27}\) Indeed it is arguably one of the most contested educational terms.\(^\text{28}\) A lack of understanding about what ‘inclusive education’ means, is a barrier to inclusion in and of itself.\(^\text{29}\)

Definitions of inclusive education are rapidly changing.\(^\text{30}\) However, a troubling ambiguity is that the term inclusive education is often used to describe only placement in a mainstream classroom, rather than a child’s full participation in all aspects of the educational setting.\(^\text{31}\) Being physically present in a mainstream setting does not automatically result in inclusion.\(^\text{32}\)

“Being there is not enough; it is no guarantee of respect for difference or access to the material, social, cultural and educational capital that people [who do not experience disability] expect.”\(^\text{33}\)

It is now widely recognised that placement within a mainstream setting, while a necessary starting point, is really only a starting point for bringing about inclusive education.\(^\text{34}\) “[C]o-existence without involvement and sharing” does not equate to inclusive education.\(^\text{35}\)

A common misperception is that inclusive education requires a child (who is being ‘included’) to change or adjust to fit within a setting—as in a notion of assimilation rather than inclusion.\(^\text{36}\) Often this misunderstanding results in a ‘question mark’ perpetually placed over whether a child has a right to be ‘included’\(^\text{37}\). This devaluing and dehumanising approach would be better understood as a demeaning understanding of inclusion compared to a facilitative understanding of inclusion\(^\text{38}\) whereby all people are recognised as valued human beings and rights holders. In contrast to demeaning understandings of inclusion as conditional assimilation, inclusive education requires recognising the right of every child (without exception) to be included and adapting the environment and teaching approaches in order to ensure the valued participation of all children.\(^\text{39}\)

It has been argued that definitions of inclusion are too broad, thus paving the way for the problematic ambiguity discussed above.\(^\text{40}\) However, others argue that definitions are frequently too narrow.\(^\text{41}\) Narrow definitions of inclusion typically focus on inclusion of one group, while

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\(^{27}\) Armstrong, Armstrong & Spandagou, 2011

\(^{28}\) Graham & Slee, 2008

\(^{29}\) Baglieri, Bejplan, Broderick, Connor & Valle, 2011; Kluth, Villa & Thousand, 2001

\(^{30}\) Petrovskyi, 2010a

\(^{31}\) Beckett, 2009; Berlach & Chambers, 2011; Curcic, 2009; Fisher, 2012; Lavani, 2013; Vakil, Welton, O’Connor, & Kline, 2009

\(^{32}\) de Boer, Pijl, & Minnaert, 2011; McLesky & Waldron, 2007

\(^{33}\) Komesaroff & McLean, 2006, p.97

\(^{34}\) Armstrong & Barton, 2008; Beckett, 2009; Berlach & Chambers, 2011; Cologon, 2010, in press; Curcic, 2009; D’Alessio, 2011; de Boer et al., 2011; Ferguson, 2008; Komesaroff & McLean, 2006; McLesky & Waldron, 2007; Rietveld, 2010

\(^{35}\) Curcic, 2009, p. 532

\(^{36}\) Armstrong et al., 2011; Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Curcic, 2009; Lavani, 2013; Rietveld, 2010

\(^{37}\) Cologon, 2013a; Bridle, 2005

\(^{38}\) Rietveld, 2010

\(^{39}\) Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Biklen, 2000; Cologon, 2010, 2013a

\(^{40}\) Berlach & Chambers, 2011

\(^{41}\) Armstrong et al., 2011; Curcic, 2009
broader definitions focus on diversity and inclusion of all children.42 Understandings of inclusion are often tied up with funding, which can have adverse effects on how inclusion is implemented.43

In recent Australian research, Graham and Spandagou found that “[t]he contextual characteristics of a school and its community inform discussions of diversity and define what inclusive education means in specific schools”.44 Furthermore, this research revealed that the greater the cultural diversity in a school, the broader the understanding of inclusive education.45 This is consistent with arguments that definitions of inclusion reflect society’s beliefs about diversity in any given context.46 From this perspective, inclusive education is “a way of looking at the world that enacts the fundamental meaning of education for all children: full participation, full membership, valued citizenship… Inclusion is what we make it, and what we make it is what we wish our culture to be”.47

Critical engagement is required in order to move from an understanding of bringing children who are excluded into current educational settings towards an understanding of inclusive education as “providing the best possible learning environment for all children”.48 This requires transforming educational systems rather than changing children to fit within current, exclusionary, systems.49

**Macro and micro exclusion**

Segregation or exclusion is experienced as a stigmatising mark of being a ‘lesser’ or inferior person.50 It is a process of dehumanisation. Macro-exclusion occurs when a child is excluded from mainstream education and segregated into a ‘special’ school or a ‘special’ class/unit for all or part of the day, week or year (or denied education at all). This form of segregation and exclusion is easy to recognise. However, the lack of clear understanding of inclusive education results in a situation where exclusion also often occurs in the name of inclusion. It has been argued that in many instances the term ‘special needs education’ has been replaced with ‘inclusive education’, but without any actual change in policy and practice.51 Confusion about, or misappropriation of the term, inclusive education is also a concern within research. Some research claims to investigate inclusive education whilst actually perpetuating exclusion (as discussed in the next section of this paper).

When exclusion occurs within mainstream settings that claim to be inclusive, this results in what D’Alessio terms ‘micro-exclusion’.52 McLesky and Waldron illustrate an example of micro-exclusion, whereby students co-exist within a mainstream setting, but are not included:

“The general education teacher had just completed taking roll and handling the daily chores that are necessary to start the day. As reading was beginning, the special education teacher entered the classroom. She went to a table in the back of the room, and four students with disabilities joined her. The
general education teacher gathered the remaining 20 students in the front of the room. The special education teacher began working on a phonics lesson with “her” students, while the general education teacher was discussing a book she had been reading to the rest of the class for the past week.  

In addition to macro-exclusion in the form of refusal to enrol children who experience disability, the 2012 review of the Disability Standards For Education revealed multiple forms of micro-exclusion. Examples included:

- Refusal to make accommodations within the environment, thus restricting participation;
- Refusal to make accommodations to the curriculum/activities, thus restricting participation;
- Exclusion from sports activities;
- Only permitting children to attend school for the part of the day where funding for an additional staff member was provided;
- Exclusion from excursions and school camps;
- Exclusion from work experience placements within the school years.

These are consistent with research in a range of contexts, including Australia and New Zealand where micro-exclusion has been identified in the form of:

- Not being welcome in the educational setting (either refusal to enrol or active attempts to make the child and family feel unwelcome);
- Refusal to make accommodations or adaptations that are required for participation (for example refusal to install handrails in toilets);
- Ignorant and ableist attitudes on the part of school staff and other families;
- Conditional attendance whereby:
  - A child can only attend if a parent/caregiver is present;
  - A child can only attend if an aide is present;
  - A child can only attend for part of the day;
  - A child is sent home as soon as any difficulties arise.

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53 McLesky & Waldron, 2007, p.162
54 DEEWR, 2012
55 Purdue, Ballard & MacArthur, 2001; QPPD, 2003
It is clear that exclusion can occur in classrooms claiming to be inclusive.56 Experiences of exclusion, whether micro or macro, have considerable negative impacts on peer interactions and understandings. In such situations children are “likely to internalise the messages that they are inferior, incompetent and undesirable peer group members, which in turn is likely to negatively impact on their motivation to seek inclusion, thus interfering with their learning of culturally-valued skills”.57

The misappropriation of the term ‘inclusion’ or ‘inclusive education’ by those actually committed to perpetuating systems of ‘special’ education poses a serious barrier to the realisation of inclusive education.58 The term ‘special education’ suggests exclusion rather than equal participation.59 From this (mis)understanding of ‘inclusion’ situations of micro-exclusion occur, whereby a child is present but separated in a variety of ways including participating in a different curriculum and with different staff members60, or when a child attends only part of the time in a mainstream setting or is removed for some of the time in order to receive “support”61. Consequently, “[t]he purpose of inclusion must not be simply to replicate special education services in the general education classroom.”62

More blatant segregation occurs in macro-exclusion whereby children are educated in segregated ‘special’ schools or ‘special’ classes or units, rather than alongside all peers in mainstream settings. If a setting is actually inclusive then “[c]hildren with disabilities are not segregated in the classroom, at lunchtime or on the playground”.63

“Inclusive education is part of a human rights approach to social relations and conditions. The intentions and values involved are an integral part of a vision of the whole society of which education is a part. Therefore the role education plays in the development of an inclusive society is a very serious issue. It is thus important to be clear in our understanding that inclusive education is not about ‘special’ teachers meeting the needs of ‘special’ children …it is not about ‘dumping’ pupils into an unchanged system of provision and practice. Rather, it is about how, where and why, and with what consequences, we educate all pupils.”64

Inclusion in education “requires the abandonment of special educational stances which focus on compensatory approaches to individual ‘needs’, to embrace a pedagogy of inclusion and a commitment to the rights of all to belong”.65 This involves abandoning the idea of ‘making normal’ children who experience disability.66 From this perspective, a contemporary understanding of inclusive education is possible. However, underpinning micro and macro exclusion is the idea that people who experience disability are in some sense ‘lacking’ or less human than those who are not labelled disabled.67 This fundamentally ableist view must be addressed in order to understand and bring about inclusive education.

56 D’Alessio, 2011; Curcic, 2009; Purdue et al., 2001; Rietveld, 2010
57 Rietveld, 2010, p.27
58 Allan, 2010; Baglieri et al., 2011; D’Alessio, 2011; Lalvani, 2013
59 Armstrong et al., 2011
60 D’Alessio, 2011; Giangreco, 2009; Rietveld, 2010
61 Finke, McNaughton & Drage, 2009; Macartney & Morton, 2011
63 UNICEF, 2013, p.29
64 Barton, 1997, p.234
65 D’Alessio, 2011, p.141
66 Baglieri et al., 2011; Connor & Goldmansour, 2012; Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2011
67 Ainscow, 2007; Baglieri et al., 2011; Biklen & Burke, 2006; Rietveld, 2010
Ableism: Enculturated exclusion

“...the dominant culture’s inhospitable ways create the problems society shuns.”

Inclusive education involves “all children, families and adults’ rights to participate in environments where diversity is assumed, welcomed and viewed as a rich resource rather than seen as a problem.” However, in a culture where disability is commonly viewed as a tragic within-person characteristic, this is challenging to achieve.

“Ableism describes discriminatory and exclusionary practices that result from the perception that being able-bodied is superior to being disabled, the latter being associated with ill health, incapacity, and dependence. Like racism, ableism directs structural power relations in society, generating inequalities located in institutional relations and social processes.”

At the core of ableist thinking is the belief “that impairment (irrespective of ‘type’) is inherently negative which should, if the opportunity presents itself, be ameliorated, cured or indeed eliminated”. Ableist thinking results in a view of disability as a tragic within-person difference and creates an understanding of some people as ‘normal’ compared to a less ideal ‘other’. This notion of a ‘normal’ child is central to exclusionary approaches to education, in which all children are compared to a mythical ‘normal’ child and frequently found (or pathologised as) ‘lacking’. Therefore the focus becomes about “fixing” or “curing” a person (or preventing existence), rather than recognising that as humans we are all unique and impairment is simply one aspect of human diversity. By contrast a social model understanding of disability, as promoted within the disabled-persons movement, recognises that a person who experiences disability is whole and unbroken, but is disabled by the unaccommodating and ableist views, practices, systems and structures of society.

68 Biklen, 2000, p.341
69 Purdue, Gordon-Burns, Gunn, Madden, & Surtees, 2009, p.807
70 McLean, 2008, p.607
71 Campbell, 2008, p.154
72 Leiter, 2007; Loja, Costa, Hughes & Menezes, 2013; McLean, 2008
73 Baglieri et al., 2011
74 Cologon, 2013a, 2013b
75 Oliver & Barnes, 2010; Tregaskis, 2002
Ableism is deeply and subliminally embedded within the culture. Like racism or sexism, ableism leads to devaluing of people who experience disability. In turn this belief in the superiority of people who are not labelled disabled results in discrimination, abusive behaviour and exclusion of people who experience disability. Ableism is easily absorbed uncritically as we demonstrate to children, through micro and macro exclusion that some people are ‘others’ and thus create a sub-class of ‘disabled’. This social oppression impacts negatively on the psycho-emotional well-being of people categorised as ‘impaired’ by those deemed ‘normal’.

It is not possible to bring about inclusive education in reality whilst engaging in ableist views and practices. However, due to the lack of awareness of ableism and its impacts, for most people ableist beliefs are a consequence of enculturation and operate at a subconscious level. From a more positive perspective, "if all parties learn to view disability as a positive identity category, medicalising, dehumanising, and deficit-oriented discourse and practices are unlikely to prevail". Recognising ableism, and identifying ableist views and practices, is a critical first step in a process that has been paralleled to emerging from racist to anti-racist views.

Acceptance of the notion that children can be excluded from mainstream education because they are labelled disabled "amounts to institutional discrimination" and is an example of ableist views playing out in practice. Research provides evidence that, even for those who view inclusive education as optimal for all children, "interpretations of ‘all’ rendered certain students inappropriate candidates". This preparedness to exclude children based on categories or labels of disability demonstrates ableist discrimination at the individual level. This, along with the examples of micro-exclusion explored in the previous section of this paper, would not be acceptable from a non-ableist viewpoint. "Central to the demands of an inclusive society are issues of social justice, equity and democratic participation. Barriers to their realization within an existing society need to be identified, challenged and removed." Lack of awareness of ableism, and of the role people and institutions play in constructing disability, creates the conditions to perpetuate discrimination and therefore ableism.

Inclusive education is only possible when ableist views and practices are critically examined.

"...students should learn with, and from, each other—coming to know true diversity in terms of physical, cognitive, sensory, and emotional differences. In this way, artificial notions of ‘normalcy’ that have served to diminish and devalue ‘disabled’ children for so long can begin to change. As microcosms of society, classrooms must come to reflect, exemplify, and engage with actual diversity."

Thus inclusive practice within classrooms not only requires the disestablishment of ableism, but also provides the ideal conditions from which to begin to address the disestablishment of ableism in society as a whole. This process holds the potential for the realisation of inclusion in education and the creation of the conditions in which all children can flourish.

76 Campbell, 2008, p.153
77 Ibid
78 Beckett, 2009
79 Site, 2004
80 Thomas, 2012, p. 211
81 Bacon & Causton-Theoharis, 2012, p.15
82 McLean, 2008
83 Booth & Ainscow, 2011, p.43
84 Lalvani, 2013, p.24
85 Barton, 1997, p.233
86 Booth & Ainscow, 2011
87 Broderick et al., 2012; Harpur, 2012
88 Connor & Goldmansour, 2012, p.31
A contemporary definition of inclusion

“Inclusion may be seen as a continuing process of increasing participation, and segregation as a recurring tendency to exclude difference.”

Children’s knowledge and skills are developed through their interactions with each other. Therefore, inclusive education requires ongoing engagement with removing barriers to active involvement and participation in shared learning.

“Inclusion values the active participation of every child as a full member of his or her family, community, and society.”

As discussed above, inclusive education is about every child’s right to be a valued member of society and to be provided with equal opportunities to actively participate in and contribute to all areas of learning. This requires all participants within an educational setting to be open to listening and learning together—and this includes listening and learning together with children.

Inclusive education requires recognising impairment as one of many forms of human diversity, and welcoming and viewing diversity as a resource rather than a problem. Inclusive education, therefore, creates a situation where all children can be valued and experience a sense of belonging and where all children are encouraged to reach their full potential in all areas of development.

“[I]nclusion is not about disability, nor is it only about schools. Inclusion is about social justice. What kind of world do we want to create and how should we educate children for that world? What kinds of skills and commitments do people need to thrive in a diverse society?”

The notion of “inclusion goes to the heart of how we as a community of human beings wish to live with one another”. Respect for difference, collaboration, valuing families and community, and viewing all children as active and valued participants who have the right to be heard and provided with equitable access to education, are all factors that have been identified by Australian educators as essential to inclusive and quality education for all children.

Inclusive education is also about engaging inclusively with families. An inclusive community is “one that provides leadership in valuing families and the roles they play; and one that recognizes that the responsibility for being included in the community does not rest with the family, the individual or disability and service organizations”. Inclusion has been defined by families as being accepted as “just one of the group”, as something that families have to work towards and as something that is increasing over time.

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89 Miller, 2009, p.31
90 Diamond & Hong, 2010
91 Curic, 2009; Theodorou & Nind, 2010; Vakil et al., 2009
92 Frankel, Gold & Ajodhia-Andrews, 2010, p.3
93 Armstrong & Barton, 2008; Armstrong et al., 2011; McCullough, 2009; Naraian, 2011; Purdue et al., 2009; Theodorou & Nind, 2010; Wong & Cumming, 2010
94 Macartney & Morton, 2011
95 Armstrong et al., 2011; Beckett, 2009; Booth & Ariscow, 2011; Cologon, 2013a; Gable, 2013; McCullough, 2009; Purdue et al., 2009
96 Chapman, 2006; Connor & Goldmansour, 2012; Miller, 2009; Petriwskoj, 2010b
97 Sapon-Shevin, 2003, p. 26
98 Cologon, 2010, p.47
99 Carlson et al., 2012; Cologon, 2010
100 Berlach & Chambers, 2011; Breitenbach, Armstrong & Bryson, 2013, Edmiaston & Fitzgerald, 2000; Frankel et al., 2010; Jordan Schwartz, & McGie-Richmond, 2009; Vakil et al., 2009
101 Mayer, 2009, p.161
102 Neely-Barnes, Graff, Roberts, Hal & Hankins, 2010, p.251
In recent research in Italy, where all children have been educated together in mainstream settings since segregated education was ended in 1977, with the closure of all special schools, one final year high school student shared his understanding of inclusion: “Inclusion is about the whole of life—the way we live together as people for the whole of life”.103 This is consistent with a contemporary understanding of inclusive education as one aspect of broader inclusion in society.104 It also draws our thinking towards an understanding that, rather than a setting or placement, inclusive education is an ongoing process. “Inclusive education is about responding to diversity; it is about listening to unfamiliar voices, being open, empowering all members and about celebrating ‘difference’ in dignified ways.”105 When a child enrols in a setting, this is the beginning (not the endpoint) of the process of inclusion.106

Inclusive education involves an ongoing process of “putting inclusive values into action”.107 Translating values into action requires engaging with inclusive education as a very practical, everyday process. As Mogharreban and Bruns write, “[i]nclusion is not simply an intellectual ideal; it is a physical and very real experience”.108 This requires considering “[h]ow teachers understand the nature of knowledge and the student’s role in learning, and how these ideas about knowledge and learning are manifested in teaching and classwork”.109 As such, inclusive education can be understood as ongoing critical engagement with flexible and child-centred pedagogy that caters for and values diversity, and holds high expectations for all children.110 Inclusive education requires recognising that we are all equally human and putting this recognition into action in everyday practical ways.

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103 Cologon, 2013a
104 Booth & Ainscow, 2011; Cologon, 2013a; Curcic, 2009
105 Barton, 1997, p.233
106 Booth & Ainscow, 2011; Booth et al., 2006; Cologon, 2013a; Humphrey, 2008
107 Booth, Ainscow & Kingston, 2006, p.4
109 Ferguson 2008 p.113
110 Armstrong et al., 2011; Grenier, 2010; Petriwskyj, 2010b
Inclusion in education:
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Section 2: Outcomes of inclusive education

When considering the outcomes of inclusive education, there are a number of challenges. As noted above, many research studies, purporting to examine inclusive education, in reality consider practices of micro (and sometimes even macro) exclusion. Discriminatory attitudes and practices pose serious barriers to inclusive education, and yet, despite these challenges, research evidence overwhelmingly supports inclusive education. In addition to the outcomes for social justice and sense of community and belonging (as discussed above) research provides evidence of positive outcomes of inclusive education for social, academic, cognitive and physical development in children who do and do not experience disability. The research studies discussed here involve a diverse range of children, including children labelled with ‘mild’ through to ‘severe’ intellectual, sensory and physical impairments or multiple impairments.

Many of the studies discussed in this section explore situations where a child has been ‘included into’ an existing setting, rather than inclusive education whereby the setting has been transformed to provide the best possible education for all of its children. Nonetheless, these examples demonstrate the positive outcomes that are possible when considerable steps towards inclusive education are taken. If the barriers currently inhibiting the realisation of genuine inclusion were to be addressed it seems likely that the outcomes would be even more positive. As educational transformation occurs, ongoing research is required to develop a clear understanding of the outcomes of genuinely inclusive education.

The social side of inclusion

Whether the result of micro or macro exclusion, “[w]ith segregation comes devaluation, a loss in cultural capital for individuals. This form of disempowerment actively disadvantages students who have been labelled as disabled”111. Exclusion impacts negatively on children who experience disability, their peers and the adults who engage with them, resulting in marginalisation, stigmatisation and often bullying and abuse.112 While a common assumption is that abuse and bullying occurs only in mainstream settings, this is actually incorrect.113 By contrast, research provides evidence that despite higher teacher-student ratios and greater supervision the full range of bullying occurs in ‘special’ settings.114 While there is some variation in individual studies,115 particularly based on teacher or parent ratings, contrary to common perception, growing research evidence suggests that children who attend ‘special’ schools are more likely to experience bullying than children who attend mainstream settings, and that inclusive education is a key factor in reducing or eliminating bullying.116

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111 Connor & Goldmansour, 2012, p.31
112 Bliken & Burke, 2006; Curic; 2009, DEEWR, 2012; UNICEF, 2013
113 Davis & Watson, 2000; QPPD, 2003; Rose, Mondé-Amaya & Espelage, 2011; Torrance, 2000
114 Rose et al., 2011; Torrance, 2000
115 For example, Hebron & Humphrey, 2013; Woods & Wolke, 2004
116 Rose et al., 2011
Inclusive education facilitates social development in children who do and do not experience disability.\textsuperscript{117} Research evidence suggests that genuinely inclusive education allows children to build and develop friendships that they might not have considered or encountered otherwise.\textsuperscript{118} Inclusive settings encourage higher levels of interaction than segregated settings\textsuperscript{119}, which results in more opportunities for children to establish and maintain friendships\textsuperscript{120}. The more time a child spends within an inclusive setting, the greater the social interaction.\textsuperscript{121} In turn, this leads to better outcomes for social and communication development.\textsuperscript{122}

The growing body of research into the outcomes of inclusive education for social development has also found that inclusion results in a more positive sense of self and self-worth for children who do and do not experience disability.\textsuperscript{123} Inclusive education leads to a sense of belonging\textsuperscript{124} and to a self-concept not only as a receiver of help, but also as a giver of help\textsuperscript{125}. For children who do and do not experience disability, inclusive education has been shown to result in more advanced social skills.\textsuperscript{126}

Teachers frequently cite ‘challenging behaviour’ as their biggest concern regarding fulfilling their role as educators.\textsuperscript{127} Research provides evidence that inclusive education leads to improved behaviour development in children who do and do not experience disability with less ‘challenging’ or ‘disruptive’ behaviour in inclusive settings.\textsuperscript{128} Children who participate in inclusive education have been found to be more independent.\textsuperscript{129} Additionally, children who participate in inclusive education have been found to develop qualities such as patience and trust, and to become more aware of and responsive to the needs of others than children in non-inclusive settings.\textsuperscript{130} Inclusive education supports children in developing increased awareness and acceptance of diversity and understanding of individuality.\textsuperscript{131}

### Inclusion and academic development

In regards to academic development, again, research findings contrast with the common assumption that the higher teacher-child ratios, as well as teachers trained in special education, would result in better academic outcomes in segregated ‘special’ schools or classes. By contrast, research shows that children who experience disability who are included into mainstream educational settings demonstrate better academic and vocational outcomes when compared to children who are educated in segregated settings.\textsuperscript{132} Children who experience disability who


\textsuperscript{118} Finke et al., 2009

\textsuperscript{119} Antia, Jones, Luckner, Kreineyer, & Reed, 2011; Baker-Ericzén et al., 2009; Flewitt, Nind & Payler, 2009; Fox, Farrell & Davis, 2004; Giangreco, Dennis, Boninger, Edelman & Schattman, 1993; Odom et al., 2011; Theodoru & Nind, 2010

\textsuperscript{120} Hollingsworth & Buyssse, 2009; Palmer, Fulter, Arora, & Nelson, 2001; Stahmer et al., 2003

\textsuperscript{121} Antia et al., 2011

\textsuperscript{122} Finke et al., 2009; Jordan et al., 2009; Stahmer et al., 2003

\textsuperscript{123} Diamond & Huang, 2005; Fitch, 2003

\textsuperscript{124} Chapman, 2006; Miller, 2009; Odom et al., 2011; Petrivskyj, 2010b

\textsuperscript{125} Jordan et al., 2009

\textsuperscript{126} Baker-Ericzén et al., 2009

\textsuperscript{127} Cologon, 2012

\textsuperscript{128} Finke et al., 2009; Klewer, 1998; Moghareban & Bruns, 2009; Stahmer et al., 2003; Stahmer et al., 2011

\textsuperscript{129} Baker-Ericzén et al., 2009; Stahmer et al., 2011

\textsuperscript{130} Diamond & Huang, 2005; Finke et al., 2009; Giangreco et al., 1993; Stahmer et al., 2003; Nikolaraizi et al., 2005

\textsuperscript{131} Baker-Ericzén et al., 2009; Diamond & Huang, 2005; Finke et al., 2009; Harline & Correa-Torres, 2012; Hollingsworth, Boone, & Crais, 2009; Klewer, 1998, 2008; Palmer et al., 2001; Stahmer et al., 2003; Wong & Cunningham, 2010

\textsuperscript{132} de Graaf, van Hove, & Haverman, 2013; Finke et al., 2009; Giangreco, 2009; Klewer, 1998, 2008; Myklebust, 2005; Peetsma, Vergeer, Karsten & Roeleveld, 2001; Stahmer & Ingersoll, 2004; Tanti Burlio, 2010; Vakil, et al., 2009; Vianello & Lanfranchi, 2009
are included into mainstream settings have been found to score higher on achievement tests and perform closer to grade average than children who are in non-inclusive settings.\textsuperscript{133} Research provides evidence for better outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics.\textsuperscript{134} Additionally, it has been argued that inclusive education stimulates learning in that more time is spent on academic learning in mainstream schools than in segregated settings.\textsuperscript{135} Children who are included in mainstream schools are given opportunities to engage at higher academic levels and to achieve outcomes that may not otherwise be possible.\textsuperscript{136}

Children who do not experience disability have also been found to benefit academically from inclusive education with equal or better academic outcomes compared to children participating in non-inclusive settings.\textsuperscript{137} Furthermore, inclusive teachers engage all children in more higher-order thinking, questioning and dialogical interactions than non-inclusive teachers.\textsuperscript{138} All children in inclusive settings receive higher quality instruction that is better suited to individual needs, particularly through small group work.\textsuperscript{139}

In regards to children who do not experience disability, research finds no decrease in academic performance. Instead inclusive education results in\textsuperscript{140}:

- Increased learning opportunities and experiences;
- Overall education is more sensitive to differing student needs;
- Growth in interpersonal skills;
- Greater acceptance and understanding of human diversity;
- Greater flexibility and adaptability.

Communication and language development

Communication and language development in children who do and do not experience disability is enhanced through inclusive education.\textsuperscript{141} This is particularly evident when children who experience disability are supported to communicate with their peers.\textsuperscript{142} Children who are being included have been shown to increase independent communication, mastery of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) strategies and increased speech and language development when provided with appropriate support for inclusive education.\textsuperscript{143} Furthermore, children assessed as

\textsuperscript{133} Peetsma et al., 2001; Vakil, et al., 2009
\textsuperscript{134} de Graaf et al., 2013; Kliewer, 1998, 2008; Peetsma et al., 2001
\textsuperscript{135} de Graaf et al., 2013; Kliewer, 1998, 2008
\textsuperscript{136} Finke et al., 2009; Fox et al., 2004; Giangreco et al., 1993; Jordan et al., 2009; Jordan et al., 2010
\textsuperscript{137} Dessemontet & Bless, 2013; Farrell, Dyson, Polat, Hutcheson, & Gallannaugh, 2007; Kalambokia, Farrell, Dyson, & Kaplan, 2007; Kliewer, 1998; 2006; McGregor & Vogelsberg, 1998; Odom & Diamond, 1998; Odom et al., 2011; Purdue et al., 2001
\textsuperscript{138} Jordan et al., 2010
\textsuperscript{139} Jordan et al., 2009
\textsuperscript{140} Farrell et al., 2007; McGregor & Vogelsberg, 1998; Odom & Diamond, 1998; Purdue et al., 2001
\textsuperscript{141} Baker-Ericzén et al., 2009; Finke et al., 2009; Fisher & Shogren, 2012; Giangreco et al., 1993; Iacono, Chan & Waring, 1998; Hart & Whalon, 2011; Johnston, McDonnell, Nelson & Magnavito, 2003; Kliewer, 1998; 2008; Peetsma et al., 2001; Stahmer et al., 2003; Stahmer et al., 2011
\textsuperscript{142} Hart & Whalon, 2011; Kliewer, 1998; Stahmer, et al., 2003
\textsuperscript{143} Fisher & Shogren, 2012; Iacono et al., 1998; Johnston et al., 2003; Kliewer, 1998, 2008; Stahmer & Ingersoll, 2004
having limited vocabulary and language skills have been found to be able to engage in extended conversation and use complex vocabulary after six months of participation in an inclusive preschool setting.144

Enhanced communication and language leads to greater independence and initiation of interactions and increased active participation.145 Consequently it appears that inclusive education supports communication and language development, which in turn supports greater inclusion. Appropriate support to develop and implement AAC strategies is essential to inclusive education for many children.146

Physical development

Limited research has considered outcomes of inclusive education for physical development. However, research to date provides evidence to suggest that inclusive education contributes positively towards the physical development of children who experience disability. Children who experience disability who are included into mainstream educational settings show gains in motor development and have a higher degree of independence.147 Inclusion in mainstream educational settings encourages participation and provides more opportunities to observe and learn through the ‘power of the peer’, as well as to learn through trial-and-error.148, this may enhance opportunities for physical development. Inclusive education provides access to a broader range of play and learning activities, which can stimulate physical development and enhance children’s experiences.149

In research considering children’s perspectives on inclusion in physical activities, children reported that when they were actually included in physical activities this provided an entry point for play and friendship and created a sense of legitimate participation.150 Research has explored the negative outcomes for children when they are excluded from physical education.151 However, three international reviews have found that when children who experience disability are included in physical education and provided with appropriate support the outcomes are positive for all children involved.152

Outcomes for teachers

Overall, research provides evidence that inclusive education results in higher quality education and care for children who do and do not experience disability.153 However, the benefits of inclusive education are not only for children. While it has been found that teachers are sometimes initially reluctant to participate in inclusive education and may feel that they are not equipped for the
challenges involved, research has also found that teachers develop confidence in their ability to be inclusive educators, and increase their positive attitudes towards inclusion, through experience and support.\textsuperscript{154}

Teachers often feel that inclusion will be a bigger challenge or struggle than it actually is in practice.

\textit{“Two concerns are commonly voiced among professionals who express resistance to inclusion. This first is that the needs of children will not be met amid the complex dynamics of a general education setting. The second is that the needs of children with disabilities will require an excessive amount of directed resources that take away from the educational experiences of children without disabilities…neither concern is valid in a thoughtfully structured, well-resourced classroom.”}\textsuperscript{155}

Research has found that through participation in inclusive education, teachers experience professional growth and increased personal satisfaction.\textsuperscript{156} Additionally, developing skills to enable the inclusion of children who experience disability results in higher quality teaching for all children and more confident teachers.\textsuperscript{157}

\section*{Outcomes for families}

There is considerable research exploring the negative impact of exclusion on families. While it is outside of the scope of this issues paper, research provides evidence demonstrating that families frequently experience stigmatisation and a host of barriers when they seek to have their children included.\textsuperscript{158} Similarly the experience of stigmatisation and exclusion is common for parents who experience disability.\textsuperscript{159} While genuine collaboration and partnership has been found to facilitate inclusion\textsuperscript{160}, families frequently face a lack of responsiveness to their needs and wishes.\textsuperscript{161} However, there is very little research investigating the outcomes of inclusive education for families when it does occur. Some research suggests that when children are included this may support parents in feeling more confident to return to work.\textsuperscript{162} Additionally, the experience of genuine inclusive education contributes to parents’ psychological and economic well-being.\textsuperscript{163} Inclusive education, when it does occur, is often the result of considerable parent advocacy and many families strongly desire inclusive education for their children. Sadly for families, the path to achieving this is often not an easy one.\textsuperscript{164} It is frustrating for parents to have to continually advocate for the inclusion of their child in the school and community\textsuperscript{165}, particularly in light of the weight of evidence demonstrating the positive outcomes of inclusive education.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[154] Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Cologon, 2012; Giangreco, 1993; Jordan & Stanovich, 2001; Jordan et al., 2010; McGregor & Vogelsberg, 1998; Purdue et al., 2001
\item[155] Kliewer, 2008, p.136
\item[156] Finke et al., 2009; Giangreco, 1993
\item[157] Cologon, 2012; Jordan and Stanovich, 2001; Jordan et al., 2010; Wong & Cumming, 2010
\item[158] Baker-Ericzén, Mueggenborg & Shea, 2009; Litley, 2012; Palmer et al., 2001; Runswick-Cole, 2008
\item[159] Kilkey & Clarke, 2010; Robinson, Hickson & Strike, 2001
\item[160] Mortier, Hunt, Leroy, van de Putte & van Hove, 2010
\item[161] Hollingsorth & Buysse, 2009; Komesaroff, 2007
\item[162] Jordan et al., 2010
\item[163] Mayer, 2009
\item[164] Runswick-Cole, 2008
\item[165] Mogharreban & Bruns, 2009
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Inclusion in education: Issues paper
Section 3: Capacity Building—Bringing about inclusion in practice

This paper has considered research evidence regarding the outcomes of inclusive education. But how does this come about in practice? The following section considers what can be learnt from research to inform capacity building, work against low expectations and increase inclusion in education.

To preface this section, it is important to recognise the many children, families, teachers, paraprofessionals, principals, education department staff and others who work tirelessly everyday to support inclusive education. There are many challenges and raising the issues identified within the research literature should not be read as a criticism of individuals, but rather as an attempt to draw to light important issues that require careful consideration if inclusive education is to become a reality for children in Australia.

“Learning and participation are impeded when children encounter ‘barriers’. These can occur in an interaction with any aspect of a school: its buildings and physical arrangement; school organisation, cultures and policies; the relationship between and amongst children and adults; and approaches to teaching and learning. Barriers may be found, too, outside the boundaries of the school within families and communities, and within national and international events and policies.”

There are many barriers to inclusive education identified in the research literature. Major barriers identified include negative attitudes and stigma around ‘difference’ and ‘disability’, inadequate education and professional development for teachers and specialist support staff, and systemic barriers including lack of funding and support from education authorities.

Attitudes

There continues to be considerable discussion of the potential of education, particularly education with young children, to bring about social change. "Children are not born with prejudices against people who experience disability, but acquire them from adults, the media, and the general way in which society is organized." However, as noted earlier in this paper, even at very young ages, children demonstrate internalised cultural preferences or prejudices. In fact, research demonstrates that as early as three years of age children can identify people or groups of people they ‘like’ or ‘dislike’ on the basis of symbols of conflict or stigma. By age six children will make unsolicited prejudiced statements consistent with internalised cultural preferences. Awareness

166 Booth & Ainscow, 2011, p.40
169 Connolly et al., 2002
170 ibid
171 ibid
of the processes of enculturation emphasises the importance of working with young children to foster a culture of inclusion and actively seeking to break the cycle of entrenched ableism. However, it is important to recognise that “[l]ittle will change in the lives of children with disabilities until attitudes among communities, professionals, media and governments begin to change”.  

If the adults seeking to foster a culture of inclusion have not examined their own attitudes and practices, they are likely to perpetuate the cycle of ableism, ultimately preventing the realisation of inclusive education. The importance of listening and learning together with children is therefore particularly pertinent. 

Children’s attitudes and choices are significantly shaped by the attitudes of their family and community. Research provides evidence to suggest the presence of negative (child and adult) community views about inclusion and a lack of awareness of disabling processes. Ableist attitudes are frequently uncritically presented in books, television and other media. A lack of support for children who are learning about inclusion has also been identified. 

In addition to wider community influences, “[t]he attitudes of teachers and pre-service teachers towards inclusivity are critical to the success of inclusive practices”. Level of parental education has been found to influence attitudes towards inclusion. Similarly, teacher education has been found to significantly influence attitudes towards inclusive education. 

In a recent Australian study involving six primary and high school classrooms, Carlson et al found that teacher attitudes were the key to inclusive practice. They suggest a reciprocal relationship between positive attitudes and inclusive practice, meaning that inclusive attitudes create the conditions for engaging in inclusive practice, which in turn results in more inclusive attitudes. Openness to learning through mistakes and ongoing development as a teacher was also found to be critical, along with working collaboratively with parents and other educators. These findings are consistent with a growing body of research demonstrating the importance of teacher attitudes for bringing about inclusive education. It is important to note that research provides evidence to suggest that differences in teachers’ attitudes result in differences in teaching practices overall, not just related to children who experience disability.

School environment and the culture of a school influences the way teachers interact with children who experience disability, as well as teachers’ attitudes towards inclusive education. While much of the research focuses on the attitudes of classroom teachers, school principals and other

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172 UNICEF, 2013
173 Macartney & Morton, 2011
174 Diamond & Huang, 2005; Hollingsworth & Buysse, 2009
175 Beckett, 2009; Diamond & Huang, 2005; Finke et al., 2009; Fox et al., 2004; Frankel et al., 2010; Mayer, 2009; Wong & Cumming, 2010
176 Beckett, 2009; Cologon, 2013; Diamond & Huang, 2005
177 Rietveld, 2010
178 Berlach & Chambers, 2011 p. 533
179 Stahmer et al., 2003
180 Cologon, 2012
181 Carlson et al., 2012
182 Ibid
183 Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Brownlee & Carrington, 2000; Curcic, 2009; Diamond & Huang, 2005; Forlin, Douglas & Hattie, 1996; Frankel et al., 2010; Graham & Spandagou, 2011; Hurley & Horn, 2010; Jordan et al., 2009; Jordan et al., 2010; Kasa-Hendrickson & Kluth, 2005; Komesaroff, 2007; Koutouva, Vamvakari & Stelliou, 2006; McMahon, 2012; Purdue, 2009; Qi & Ha, 2012; Rietveld, 2010; Scougas & Mastropieri, 1996; Sharma, Moore & Sonawane, 2009; S, 1998; Sharma, Moore & Sonawane, 2009; S, 1998; Sze, 2009
184 Curcic, 2009; Giangreco, 2003; Jordan et al., 2009; Jordan et al., 2010
185 Kasa-Hendrickson & Kluth, 2005
educational leaders play a key role in creating the culture of a setting. Graham and Spandagou\textsuperscript{186} found that principals’ perceptions of inclusion are formed by their own understandings of inclusion as well as the context of the school they are in. “The process is reciprocal: context influences perceptions, perceptions influence attitudes and, in return, attitudes influence the context.”\textsuperscript{187} In this research principals expressed clearly ableist views making a strong distinction between children viewed as ‘normal’ and those viewed as ‘sub-normal’. Unsurprisingly this impacted negatively on attitudes towards inclusive education and it was sometimes unclear whether principals’ enrolled students who experience disability because they wanted to or because they are obliged to.\textsuperscript{188} These findings are consistent with evidence of negative attitudes of staff in administrative positions within the education system.\textsuperscript{189} A lack of motivation from education departments/providers to do all that is necessary to facilitate inclusive education has been identified as a barrier.\textsuperscript{190}

It is unsurprising therefore, that attitudes were identified as a major barrier to non-discrimination in education for people who experience disability in the 2012 review of the \textit{Disability Standards for Education}.\textsuperscript{191}

“\textit{O}ngoing discrimination and a lack of awareness across all areas in education continues to be an extremely significant area of concern for students with disability and their families. Many families reported that, through their education experiences, their children are subjected to: limited opportunities; low expectations; exclusion; bullying; discrimination; assault and violation of human rights.”\textsuperscript{192}

The review process revealed underlying ableist attitudes and practices prevalent in education in Australia.

Amongst others, Hehir\textsuperscript{193} articulates the impact of ableist views on educational opportunities. Writing about an 8-year-old boy, he notes:

“At his most recent IEP meeting, his mother asked what he was learning in science. She wanted to make sure he was being prepared to take the statewide assessment in grade four. The special education teacher responded, ‘We’re not doing science. We’re concentrating on fine motor development.’ Again, like too many children with disabilities, his educational program concentrates inordinately on the characteristics of his disability at the expense of access to the curriculum.”\textsuperscript{194}

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{186} Graham & Spandagou, 2011
\bibitem{187} Graham & Spandagou, 2011, p. 226
\bibitem{188} Ibid
\bibitem{189} Frankel et al., 2010; Hurley & Horn, 2010; Purdue, 2009
\bibitem{190} Komesaroff, 2007
\bibitem{191} DEEWR, 2012
\bibitem{192} Ibid, p.30
\bibitem{193} Hehir, 2002
\bibitem{194} Ibid, n.p.
\end{thebibliography}
Hehir argues that disestablishing ableism in education requires:

- Acknowledging that ableism exists within our systems of education;
- Seeking to unravel the effects ableism is having (deconstructing dominant ableist practices);
- Embracing impairment as one aspect of human diversity (along with diverse cultural backgrounds and genders, for example);
- Avoiding and eliminating stereotyping and patronising approaches and representation;
- Actively seeking to incorporate and celebrate multiple modes of participation;
- Debunking the myth that special education (segregated education) is superior to education of all children together (mainstream/inclusive); and
- Developing an understanding of and willingness to engage with principles of universal design for learning.

Addressing the attitudinal change inherent within these recommendations requires action at many levels—one key aspect is teacher education.

**Teacher education for inclusion**

Susan Hart and her colleagues have demonstrated that what teachers do in the present can create change ‘for the better’. However, lack of teacher education and support has been identified as a barrier to inclusive education. Teacher attitudes influence the implementation of inclusive practices in the classroom. Carlson et al argue that “[t]eacher attitude is the means by which teachers are motivated to establish inclusive teaching practices when certain support systems are in place”. Teacher education is directly related to teacher attitudes. Teachers who receive education about inclusion have been found to be more likely to have positive attitudes towards the inclusion of children who experience disability. Given the importance of attitudes for inclusive education, educating all teachers as inclusive teachers is an important goal.

As noted earlier in this paper, the notion that there is a ‘special’ way to teach ‘special’ children is in itself an ableist view. This ableist thinking results in categorising some children as unacceptable for inclusion. By inference this view suggests that there is one way to teach all children except children who experience disability. The uncritical absorption of the myth of ‘normal’ creates the conditions where teachers are able to view children who experience disability as ‘other’ and this

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195 Ibid
196 Hart, Dixon, Drummond & McIntyre, 2004
197 Brown et al., 2013; Hehir, 2002
198 Carlson et al., 2012; Curcic, 2009; Kasa-Hendrickson & Kluth, 2005; Huang & Diamond, 2009
199 Carlson et al., 2012, p. 18
200 Cologon, 2012
201 Bacon & Causton-Theoharis, 2012
202 Barton, 1997; Laivani 2013; Purdue, 2009; Valle & Connor 2010
process results in a lack of confidence (and sometimes unwillingness) to teach all children.\textsuperscript{204} The notion that there is one way to teach any group of children is both problematic and untrue, as it denies the individuality of all children and the diversity within any group, thus inclusive teachers are better teachers of any child.\textsuperscript{205}

Moving beyond the myth of the ‘normal’ child creates the conditions to improve education of all children. However, many teachers express considerable anxiety about inclusive education.\textsuperscript{206} Confidence grows with experience of inclusion.\textsuperscript{207} However, teachers require support to prepare them for this experience.

Teacher education has been found to lead to more inclusive attitudes.\textsuperscript{208} However, some studies show only minimal change\textsuperscript{209} and the majority of pre-service teachers feel unprepared for inclusive education\textsuperscript{210}. The traditional approach to teacher education in which teachers are taught about disability categories, often in a week-by-week fashion serves to reinforce the myth of the ‘normal’ and ‘sub-normal’ child\textsuperscript{211}, thus perpetuating ableism and impeding the opportunity to develop inclusive attitudes. However, in more recent years research has explored effective approaches to improving attitudes towards and confidence in inclusive education, through teacher education.

\textsuperscript{204} Baglieri et al., 2011
\textsuperscript{205} Curcic, 2009; Jordan et al., 2009, 2010
\textsuperscript{206} Huang & Dindond, 2009; Mayer, 2009; Petriwskyj, 2010a; Vakil et al., 2009; Watson & McCathren, 2009; Wong & Cumming, 2010
\textsuperscript{207} Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Curcic, 2009; Giangreco et al., 1993
\textsuperscript{208} Appl & Spenciner, 2008; Baglieri, 2008; Bishop & Jones, 2003; Brown et al. 2008; Brownlee & Carrington, 2000; Cagran & Schmidt, 2011; Cologon, 2012; Dart, 2006; Florian & Linklater, 2010; Forlin, Cedillo, Romero-Contreras, Fletcher & Hernandez, 2010; McLean, 2008; Niemeyer & Proctor, 2002; Sharma, Forlin, & Loreman, 2008; Sharma, Moore, & Sonawane, 2009
\textsuperscript{209} Carroll, Forlin & Jobling, 2003; Forlin & Chambers, 2011; Kirk, 1998b; Shippen et al., 2005; Tal & Purdie, 2000
\textsuperscript{210} Hemmings & Woodcock, 2011
\textsuperscript{211} Baglieri et al., 2011
From the research it is clear that key elements of teacher education that result in more positive attitudes towards, and understanding of, inclusive education involve:

- Teacher education that enables teachers to develop an understanding of ableism, recognise ableist values and practices and seek to disestablish ableist attitudes, including consideration of representation of people who experience disability.\(^\text{212}\)

- Support to move beyond deficit thinking entrenched within the special education paradigm towards an approach to education that welcomes and celebrates diversity.\(^\text{213}\)

- Learning about and developing understanding of inclusive education.\(^\text{214}\)

- Engaging in critical reflection about beliefs and practices.\(^\text{215}\)

- Building confidence for inclusive education through reflective practice on developing knowledge of flexible pedagogy and universal design for learning.\(^\text{216}\)

- Engaging with (critical) disability studies in order to develop understanding of the social construction of disability and the role of the teacher in reducing ableism.\(^\text{217}\)

- Developing an understanding of diversity as a resource, rather than a ‘problem’ and learning to presume competence and hold positive expectations of all children.\(^\text{218}\)

- Learning about available supports for facilitating inclusive education.\(^\text{219}\)

- Developing an understanding of the importance of building relationships with children in order to meet individual needs.\(^\text{220}\)

- Developing an understanding of the importance of listening to people who experience disability, including children, and drawing on the disability rights movement in striving towards inclusive education.\(^\text{221}\) Within this, providing opportunities for respectful engagement with people who experience disability and their families.\(^\text{222}\)

- Establishing strategies for ongoing collaboration with other teachers, including the provision of a ‘theoretical toolbox’ to assist with engaging in ongoing critical thinking and critical reflection.\(^\text{223}\)

\(^\text{213}\) Bacon & Causton-Theoharis, 2012; Baglieri, 2008; Baglieri et al., 2011; Broderick et al., 2012; Cologon, 2012; Lalvani, 2013; Macarthy & Morton, 2011; Slee, 2001
\(^\text{215}\) Baglieri, 2008; Cologon, 2012; Sharma, Forlin & Loreman, 2008
\(^\text{216}\) Cologon, 2012; Connor & Goldmansour, 2012; Florian & Linklater, 2010; Kasa-Hendrickson & Kluth, 2005
\(^\text{217}\) Broderick et al., 2012; Cologon, 2012, 2013; Grenier, 2010; Lalvani, 2013
\(^\text{218}\) Biklen, 2000; Biklen & Burke, 2006; Cologon, 2012; Diamond and Huang, 2005; Grenier, 2010; Kasa-Hendrickson & Kluth, 2005
\(^\text{219}\) Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Cologon, 2012; Dart, 2006; Home & Timmons, 2009; Koutouba et al, 2006; Sharma et al., 2008
\(^\text{220}\) Cologon, 2012; Kalyva & Avramidis, 2006
\(^\text{221}\) Biklen, 2000; Connor & Goldmansour, 2012; Macarthy & Morton, 2011
\(^\text{222}\) Broomhead, 2013; Cologon, 2012; Sharma et al., 2008
\(^\text{223}\) Broderick et al., 2012
Bringing about inclusive education requires providing education in disability studies and inclusion as an essential component of teacher education and ongoing professional development for all teachers and all other professionals involved in supporting inclusive education.

**Structural barriers**

“Thirty-five years ago, special education was seen more as a ‘solution to’ rather than a ‘problem of’ social justice in education, but not for everyone and not for long. Sociological critiques of special education (such as Tomlinson, 1982) showed the injustices that can occur in systems with separate forms of provision for learners who deviate from what is considered to be the norm.”

Addressing injustices requires putting inclusive values into action in practical everyday ways. In addition to attitudinal change, Hehir argues that disestablishing ableism in education also requires:

- Providing specialist support within mainstream settings when needed to ensure equitable access to education (e.g. teaching braille, assistance with setting up AAC systems);
- Ensuring that the education of specialist support providers (e.g. teachers of the D/deaf; braille teachers, allied health therapists) adequately facilitates the development of specialist skills (e.g. fluent signing, knowledge of how to teach braille etc.), as well as education to support recognition of and resistance to ableism, and the ability to collaborate with teachers to support inclusive education;
- Applying principles of universal design for learning.

As noted earlier in this paper, perpetuation of the ‘special’ education paradigm—rather than resulting in inclusive education – further entrenches ableist thinking and practices. Transformation of educational systems, policies and practices is required. This involves critical engagement, including examining the:

“...structural arrangements of schools, such as the physical layout of classrooms, student grouping practices, teachers' responsibilities for groups of students, and relations among teachers in their work with students, as well as processes for assessing student learning and communicating it to students, teachers, parents, administrators, and other interested parties.”

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224 Florian, 2008, p.202
225 Hehir, 2002
226 Ferguson 2008 p.113
Labelling/categorisation

One problematic aspect of the current Australian education system is the categorical approach to funding support. In addition to the challenges for families of different funding rules in different states and territories\textsuperscript{227}, the categorical approach to funding support results in many children who need support being deemed ineligible. Additionally, this requirement for a label in order to access support results in many children being constructed as an “other”, bringing with it the threat of low expectations and exclusion.\textsuperscript{228} Both of these issues result in perpetuation of ableist practices and pose major barriers to inclusive education.

The recent commitment to nationally consistent collection of data on school students who experience disability (NCCD)\textsuperscript{229} places an emphasis on the adjustments required, rather than diagnostic category. This may have potential for developing a funding system focused on student need for support, rather than ‘disability’ or labeling. However, it remains to be seen whether this will translate into a reproduction of the current system and processes of labeling and what this funding system needs to include that will facilitate genuine positive change.

Within the present system, funding allocations for support are based on processes of labelling and categorisation. This means that children who require support, but are not labelled disabled, are excluded from the system.\textsuperscript{230} These children are frequently overlooked within such a system of education.\textsuperscript{231}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{227} DEEWR, 2012
  \item \textsuperscript{228} Purdue, 2009
  \item \textsuperscript{229} DEEWR, 2013
  \item \textsuperscript{230} Petriwskyj, 2010a
  \item \textsuperscript{231} Jordan et al., 2010
\end{itemize}
“Constructing a society that celebrates diversity, involves a real acceptance of the concept of diversity without any need for demarcation of different types of diversity, some of which are less disruptive—hence more ‘acceptable’—than others.”

The process of labelling, while carrying the attractive promise of funding for support, is fraught with dangers within an ableist society.

Due to frequently static understandings of disability as a within-person ‘problem’, labelling often leads to stereotyped thinking and expectations about the labelled child. Additionally, given the tendency to require a child who has been labelled disabled to prove themselves ‘worthy’ of inclusion, labelling results in an automatic risk of exclusion.

Within the current system, resisting static understandings of disability, presuming competence, and recognising each child as a whole and valuable individual is essential. However, systemic change is required to fully address these concerns.

A system based on labelling and categorisation creates the conditions for exclusion whereby the presence or absence of labels become used as excuses for not engaging children in learning. Bringing about inclusive education requires addressing and amending the problems created by a system that requires diagnosis for access to supports. As Ho states, “it is ironic that a system that strives to provide equal educational opportunity would require children to be labelled in order to qualify for equality.”

**Systems of support**

Even when a child is labelled and therefore funding for support may be available, limited funding and resources, lack of support from specialist staff and education authorities, and inadequate professional development opportunities were identified as barriers to implementing the Disability Standards For Education. These findings are consistent with research evidence suggesting that many teachers feel insufficiently supported and under-resourced for inclusive education.

Teachers’ lack of knowledge, support and resources impacts on the implementation of inclusive practices in their classrooms and can also impact negatively on attitudes.

In an Australian study with 20 children with visual impairments in mainstream preschool and primary school settings, Brown et al. found that many teachers were aware of strategies to adapt the curriculum to be more inclusive. However, they lacked knowledge and support regarding preparing the environment and using visual aids. Additionally they lacked adequate resources and specialist support required for genuine inclusion. “Limited training, combined with inadequate specialist input, personnel, planning time, and resources to support staff, poses a serious challenge for teachers to implement inclusion for students with visual impairment.”

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232 D’Alessio, 2011, p.113
233 Ho, 2004
234 Biklen, 2000
235 Ibid
236 Purdue, 2009
237 Biklen, 2000
238 McMahon, 2012
239 Leiter, 2007
240 Ho, 2004, p.91
241 DEEWR, 2012
242 Curic, 2009; Morris & Sharma, 2011
243 Ibid
244 Brown et al., 2013
245 Ibid, p.230
Concerns reported by teachers relating to inclusive education include: large classroom sizes, lack of specialist support, inadequate time for planning and reflective practice, limited professional development and a lack of resources. Lack of support and resources, including lack of planning time, inadequate education and professional development, insufficient personnel, and inadequate materials create considerable barriers to inclusive education. In addressing these barriers, care needs to be taken not to (re)produce ableist approaches. An emphasis on resources without consideration of the structure and culture within a setting may result in deficit-based thinking that undermines the very meaning of inclusive education. Additionally, lack of resources is often used as an excuse for not allowing children who experience disability to participate or enrol. Providing support for teachers is essential to facilitating inclusion. However, the provision of support needs to be approached from an understanding of inclusive education and an active desire to resist ableism.

Addressing attitudes towards inclusive education at all levels and within all processes is a major component of inclusion. In addition to openness and willingness to bring about inclusion and active resistance to ableist practices (and alongside concerted efforts towards universal design for learning), teachers and school leaders require support in order to make adaptations to the environment and materials as required for the participation of individual children. This requires a combination of resources and specialist support. While specialist support needs to be implemented carefully in order to avoid creating micro-exclusion, as discussed earlier, this support is no less important than in segregated education. Teachers need to be supported to develop strategies for communication and participation as required, thus specialist teachers (such as teachers of the Deaf and braille teachers), as well as allied health professionals play an important role in working together with children, teachers and families to support inclusion.

Teachers and other professionals often lack understanding about roles and responsibilities in the care and education of children who experience disability. Careful consideration of and communication about the roles of different professionals is essential in order to avoid creating situations of micro-exclusion.

Regular collaboration with all members of the educational team, including parents, and specialist support professionals is required. This involves allied health professionals and specialist teachers working with teachers and families, rather than with children directly. Where appropriate, this support may be provided in a ‘push-in’ model of learning, where a support staff member is directly involved within classroom practice, rather than a traditional (exclusionary) ‘pull-out’ model. Consulting children regarding the support they need and how this is best implemented is also essential within this process.

246 Cologon, 2012; Brown et al., 2013; Hemmings & Woodcock, 2011
247 Beckett, 2009; Biklen & Burke, 2006; Finke et al., 2009; Frankel et al., 2010; Horrocks, White & Roberts, 2008; Huang & Diamond, 2009; Jordan et al., 2010; Mogharreban & Bruns, 2009; Morris & Sharma, 2011; Petrîvskij, 2010a, 2010b; Purdue, 2009; Theodorou & Nind, 2010
248 Purdue, 2009
249 Ibid
250 Batu, 2010; Brown et al., 2013; Curcic, 2009; Carlson et al., 2012; Cologon, 2012; Kasa-Hendrickson & Kluth, 2005; Morris & Sharma, 2011
251 Finke et al., 2009; Mayer, 2009
252 Finke et al., 2009; Mogharreban & Bruns, 2009
253 Batu, 2010; Finke et al., 2009; Fox et al., 2004; Hurley & Horn, 2010; Petrîvskij, 2010a; Purdue, 2009; Recchìa & Puig, 2011; Theodorou & Nind, 2010; Trepanier-Street, 2010; Watson & McCathren, 2009
254 Finke et al., 2009; Jordan et al., 2010; Mogharreban & Bruns, 2009; Vâlî et al., 2009
255 Coates, & Vickerman, 2010; Macartney & Morton, 2011
Paraprofessional support

There are a wide array of terms used to describe paraprofessional support. Common terms include teacher aides, learning support assistants, paraeducators, special support officers, inclusion support aides, special needs assistants, paraprofessionals, or teacher assistants.

Paraprofessional support is the most common use of funding intended to support inclusion. This is in part due to the assumption that for many children one-to-one support is beneficial. However, this assumption is not supported by research evidence. “Unfortunately, the support of an untrained paraprofessional can have negative consequences that actually undermine the original social and academic goals of inclusion.” In particular, the presence of a paraprofessional has been found to impede peer interactions.

256 Causton-Theoharis & Malmgren, 2005; Rutherford, 2012
257 Giangreco, 2010
258 Ibid
259 Causton-Theoharis & Malmgren, 2005, p. 432
260 Angelides, Constantinou & Leigh 2009; Causton-Theoharis & Malmgren, 2005; Giangreco, 2003; Giangreco, Yuan, McKenzie, Cameron, & Fiakia, 2005; Rutherford, 2012
Providing professional development opportunities to assist paraprofessionals in learning to facilitate peer interactions may be effective. However, a focus on education for paraprofessionals as the solution to current exclusionary practices needs to be approached with considerable caution. Unfortunately teachers often perceive paraprofessionals as their replacement, rather than as a support to them as the teacher of every child. This results in children who experience disability being educated mainly or solely by the least qualified person present (the paraprofessional) and clearly undermines any efforts toward inclusion (resulting in micro-exclusion). “When teachers fail to interact with children, they will not be able to gain the knowledge they need to plan a meaningful and relevant curriculum to support their learning and development.” Additionally, overdependence on paraprofessionals is a common problem, which adversely affects social and academic growth. Consequently the provision of paraprofessional support can prevent rather than facilitate inclusive education.

Where paraprofessional support is deemed to be appropriate, Giangreco suggests a number of strategies to assist with facilitating inclusive education:

- Seat all students together (do not have the student who is labelled disabled at the side or the back with the paraprofessional);
- Ensure the teacher takes responsibility for interacting with and educating all students;
- Avoid close physical proximity with the paraprofessional;
- Use the paraprofessional for whole class support;
- Facilitate interaction between all peers;
- Consult the student with disability regarding what support they require and how they wish this to be implemented; and
- Use the paraprofessional to enable greater teacher engagement.

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261 Causton-Theoharis & Malmgren, 2005
262 Butt & Lowe, 2012; Giangreco, 2003; Giangreco et al., 2005; Rutherford, 2012
263 Giangreco, 2003; Giangreco et al., 2005; Rutherford, 2012
264 Rutherford, 2012
265 Purdue, 2009, p.138
266 Giangreco, 2003; Giangreco et al., 2005; Morris & Sharma, 2011
267 Angelides et al., 2009; Giangreco, 2003; Giangreco et al., 2005; Morris & Sharma, 2011
268 Giangreco, 2003
Developing a culture of inclusion

While it is common to advocate for ‘disability awareness’ as part of the efforts towards inclusion, this tends to be interpreted to mean awareness of characteristics associated with disability labels. A critical aspect of working towards inclusion does in fact involve ‘disability awareness’ – that is, resisting dominant normative narratives or understandings of disability.\textsuperscript{269} Supporting children and teachers to genuinely develop disability awareness opens possibilities for actively reducing the barriers that result in the experience of disability for many children.

In the 2012 review of \textit{Disability Standards For Education}, it was identified that the development of a culture of inclusion, in which diversity is valued, is crucial, not simply the implementation of an inclusive curriculum.\textsuperscript{270} This requires support for children, families and educators to develop a positive understanding of inclusive education. It has been demonstrated that prejudice can be reduced and positive attitudes can be fostered through engaging in inclusive education\textsuperscript{271} and participating in education about disability awareness focussed on disestablishing ableist views.

Drawing on the research explored in this paper, Table 1 outlines some of the barriers identified along with approaches to addressing these issues.

\textsuperscript{269} Biklen, 2000
\textsuperscript{270} DEEWR, 2012
\textsuperscript{271} UNICEF, 2013
Table 1. Addressing barriers to inclusive education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Response needed</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of understanding of inclusive education.</td>
<td>• Engagement with disability studies and efforts to raise awareness and remove ableist underpinnings to policy and practice at all levels of the education system. This requires a paradigm shift away from special education and deficit thinking towards genuine embracing of diversity and welcoming diversity as a strength to enhance education for all children;  &lt;br&gt;• Community advocacy, including regarding language use and representations of media and popular culture;  &lt;br&gt;• Research focus on listening to voices of people who experience disability.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of understanding of the social construction of disability.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of awareness of ableism.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of recognition of people who experience disability as key players in bringing about inclusive education.</td>
<td>• Attention to the national and international disability and disability-rights movements;  &lt;br&gt;• Consultation with, and ongoing commitment to listening to the voices of, people who experience disability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ableist attitudes, policies, practices and cultural beliefs.</td>
<td>• The development of a culture of inclusion;  &lt;br&gt;• Ensure inclusion of all children from a very young age in order to break the cycle of enculturated ableism;  &lt;br&gt;• Cultural shift is required for children and adults, thus it is important to engage in listening and learning together;  &lt;br&gt;• Universal design for learning.</td>
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<td>Entrenched cycle of multi-generational ableist thinking.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of teacher confidence and preparedness.</td>
<td>• Compulsory modules in pre-service teacher education in both inclusive education and (critical) disability studies, with an active and explicit move away from traditional deficit based ‘special’ education.  &lt;br&gt;• Ongoing professional development in inclusive education and disability studies.  &lt;br&gt;• Creation of spaces and processes for ongoing critical reflection and dialogue to continually improve practice and create the conditions for the perpetual process of becoming inclusive.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Continued micro and macro exclusion. | • Develop a plan towards ending segregated education.  
|                                           | • Learn from other contexts such as Italy, where all children have been educated together in mainstream settings since all special schools were all closed following legislation in 1977. In order to work towards a positive experience for all involved and to avoid recreating ‘special’ education (and therefore exclusion).  
|                                           | • Careful review of the role of paraprofessionals.  
|                                           | • Provision of adequate support and resources, along with opportunities for ongoing critical reflection (as noted above).  
|                                           | • Implement universal design for learning.  
|                                           | • Support for all teachers to teach all children, not ‘special’ teachers for ‘special’ children. |
| Vicious cycle of low expectations and lack of opportunities. | • Improve teacher education.  
|                                                              | • Improve ongoing professional development.  
|                                                              | • More research documenting student outcomes and experiences.  
|                                                              | • Improved parent/student participation.  
|                                                              | • Leadership development on inclusion. |
| Ableist system of funding and support. | • Alternative funding system based on need, rather than categorisation. Appropriate education of specialist teachers, allied health professionals and paraprofessionals to ensure understanding of inclusive education, in depth specialist knowledge, and successful approaches to collaborating with families and teachers and active resistance to ableism. |
| Inadequate resources and support to facilitate inclusive education. | • Sufficient support and adequate resources to enable modifications and accommodations to the environment, materials and curriculum;  
|                                                                 | • Adequate funding for ongoing (and appropriate) professional development.  
|                                                                 | • The provision of sufficient planning time to facilitate an ongoing cycle of reflection and actions to enable inclusive practice.  
|                                                                 | • Adequate funding for specialist support (from appropriately educated support professionals)  
|                                                                 | • Commitment to universal design for learning within policies, structures, curriculum, environment, materials and professional development. |
Conclusion: Implications for going forward

On the basis of mounting evidence in support of inclusive education, in 2008 Dempsey \(^{272}\) concludes that "(t)he argument over whether inclusion works is ended. Inclusion does work when key components of the classroom and the school environment are in place". However, the transformation to inclusion is not an easy one. Barton writes,

"it is because of the offensiveness of existing injustices and barriers that we must not on the one hand underestimate the degree of the struggle involved if our vision of an inclusive society it to be realized, or on the other hand fail to recognize the importance of establishing effective working relationships with all those involved in removing oppression and discrimination."\(^{273}\)

Thus leadership is required to bring about change towards inclusion.\(^{274}\) Educators need to be supported to think outside the square—"enlarging their capacity to imagine what might be achieved"\(^{275}\). At the heart of this, false assumptions and low expectations regarding the capabilities and behaviours of certain children (or groups of children) need to be challenged.\(^{276}\) Resistance to ableism and transformation at all levels of education is required in order to bring about inclusive education in Australia, and thus to uphold the rights of all children. This requires commitment to the ongoing process of becoming inclusive.

\(^{272}\) Dempsey, 2008, p.59
\(^{273}\) Barton, 1997, p.239
\(^{274}\) Ainscow, 2007
\(^{275}\) Ibid, p.6
\(^{276}\) Ibid
Policy recommendations

There is considerable change at present within relevant national policy agendas regarding people with disability. Within the education reform it is imperative that there is a clear commitment to genuine inclusive education at all levels of the education system in Australia.

Building on the research literature reviewed in this paper, there is scope for a coordinated framework for inclusive education in all Australian schools.

1. Undertake a comprehensive review of policy and practice at all levels of the education system to ensure the rights of students with disability are upheld, consistent with Australia’s obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and in keeping with a contemporary understanding of inclusive education, and how evidence on inclusive education is translated to policy, practice and funding systems.

2. As part of this review, the educational practices and culture of segregated schools should be specifically examined, with a view to defining policy and funding arrangements for these settings that are consistent with Australia’s obligations and contemporary theory.

3. From this review, define clear expectations for inclusive education in Australian schools. These should incorporate and complement the Disability Standards for Education (2005).

4. It is essential that the funding model must build in capacity for compulsory pre and in-service professional development for educators on inclusive education (including developing awareness regarding ableism, and the provisions of the CRPD).

5. Inclusive education practice should become an integral part of education and training for allied health, education leaders and other education support professionals.

6. Direct, accountable and regular consultation with students with disability and their families must be built into the next phase of the development of the funding model for students with disability, including the collection of nationally consistent data on students with disability.

7. Further development of the diversity approach within the Australian Curriculum and the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia to incorporate disability awareness, including awareness raising regarding ableism and educational practice.
Join with Children with Disability Australia and the Clifton Hill Community to celebrate...

International Day of People with Disability

Monday 3 December

Promote awareness and acknowledge the contribution children with disability make to our community

Sausage Sizzle and other activities at Queens Parade throughout the day
Inclusion in education: Issues paper
References


