

THE INCLUSIVE SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHER IN AUSTRALIA

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As a result of the 1992 Disability Discrimination Act in Australia and parental support for inclusion, regular teachers now include students with disabilities in their classes. Inclusion has been more successful in primary than in secondary schools. Secondary schools remain a challenge due to their traditional focus on curriculum, examinations, subjects and the large numbers of students allocated to each teacher. A qualitative methodology was used to identify the attributes, attitudes, knowledge and skills of inclusive teachers and the optimal means of their acquisition. Inclusive secondary teachers are dedicated, accomplished teachers. They feel empathy for their students and are student-rather than subject-centered. They work and learn collaboratively. Inclusive teachers need special education expertise or to be able to access special education knowledge at the point of need. Just as students with disabilities depend on their teachers, so too are secondary teachers dependent on their schools and systems to provide support during the learning process.

Introduction

Special schools have existed in Australia since the 1880s and special education classes were established in regular schools during the 1930s (Ashman & Elkins, 1998). State governments, however, only assumed responsibility for teaching all students, including those with severe intellectual disabilities, in the 1970s (Ashman & Elkins, 1998). Education systems offered a continuum of services ranging from special classes and units in regular schools to special education centers and schools which were built on separate grounds. Since then, there have been major changes to the provision of special education services. Based on the principle of normalization (Wolfensberger, 2000), integration of students with disabilities into regular classes became popular in Australia in the 1980s (Forlin, 1997; Gow, Ward, Balla, & Snow, 1988; Loreman, 1999)}. When integrated, students from special education classes in secondary schools would spend part of their school week in regular classes with their

peers. Students tended to be integrated in more practical subjects such as art, music, industrial arts or home science.

The impact of the 1992 Disability Discrimination Act (Commonwealth Government of Australia, 1992) on the numbers of students with disabilities enrolled in regular classes in regular schools has been dramatic (Productivity Commission, 2003). An increasing number of parents exercise their rights to send their children with disabilities to regular schools and expect them to be included in all aspects of school life (Senate Employment Education and Training Reference Committee, 2002). The Disability Standards for Education (2005) (Commonwealth of Australia, 2005) clearly state that students with disabilities must not only have physical access to regular schools, but must be able to access the curriculum as well. Although the majority of teachers were not prepared for inclusion during their preservice training, they have taught or are teaching students with disabilities (Forlin, 2001; Productivity Commission, 2003).

Defining “inclusion”

“Inclusion” refers to all people being valued, accepted and respected regardless of ethnic and cultural backgrounds, socio-economic circumstances, abilities, gender, age, religion, beliefs and behaviours (Forlin, 2004; United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1994). Inclusion is a human rights or social justice principle which embodies values such as equity and fairness (Ainscow, 2005). In an inclusive school, children are not treated equally but are given equitable support to enable every child to be able to participate physically, socially and academically with their peers. This means that the environment, curriculum, teaching methods, assessment and reporting could all need to be adjusted or differentiated. A child in a wheelchair may need ramps to adapt the physical environment. Teaching may need to cater for a student’s learning needs in the same way. A child with a learning disability may need more assistance with reading or to be able to present knowledge verbally rather than in written form. A child who has difficulty concentrating may need the amount of work to be reduced, to have tasks presented one at a time and to be shown how to self-monitor. Teaching children with disabilities is just one aspect of inclusive schools and communities but is the focus of this paper, specifically in secondary schools.

Aim of the research

Some of the literature on inclusion argues that teachers need training in special education to include students with disabilities (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1995; Heward, 2003; Kauffman & Hallahan, 2005; Mock & Kauffman, 2002; Zigmond, 2003). Other researchers and academics propose that inclusion is simply a matter of good teaching practice (Ainscow, 1999; Giangreco, 1996; Skrtic, 1995; Stainback & Stainback, 1996; Thousand, Rosenberg, Bishop, & Villa, 1997). The dispute in the literature inspired the first research question:

1. What are the attributes, attitudes, knowledge and skills of inclusive teachers in secondary schools?

Collaboration in learning communities has resounding support in the literature (Dettmer, Dyck, & Thurston, 1999; Friend & Cook, 2000; Idol, 1997; Palincsar, Magnusson, Morano, Ford, & Brown, 1998; Thousand, Villa, & Nevin, 1995; Walter-Thomas, Korinek, McLaughlin, & Williams, 2000) as the optimal means of teacher skill acquisition, but was this realistic in the secondary school context? Thus the second research question:

2. How can teachers acquire the attributes, attitudes, knowledge and skills of inclusive teachers?

Method

A qualitative methodology was selected to gain a deeper understanding of the inclusive teacher in the secondary school context. Initially, twenty leaders in integration and inclusion, to be referred to as “leaders”, who were known to the interviewer were selected. Using a snowball technique, each leader nominated other leaders. In total, 50 leaders, 43 female and 7 male, agreed to participate in the research. Once written consent had been received, each leader was interviewed in person or by phone for an average of one hour. The interviews were taped, then transcribed. Participants were given the opportunity to edit their scripts and further consent was obtained to use the edited script. Summaries of the interviews were sent to the leaders for comments as part of the validation process.

Demographic data

The sample group consisted of 7 academics, 16 consultants, 1 psychologist, 2 administrators, 10 executive staff, 9 Learning Support coordinators (LSC), 1 secondary teacher and 4 special education teachers in units. The role of the LSC varies considerably from school to school but typically involves coordinating services to students with disabilities and supporting teachers. The coordinator does not necessarily have special education expertise. Twenty-one leaders worked in the government sector, 10 in the Catholic schools, 12 in independent schools and 7 in universities teaching pre-service education courses. Thirty-six participants came from Western Australia; 14 from 6 other states and one territory. Seventy-two percent had special education qualifications and the remainder had expertise in including students with disabilities in secondary schools. Twenty-eight participants had primary training, 17 secondary and 5 both primary and secondary training. The sample group had a wide range of experiences teaching students with disabilities in regular and segregated settings. Seven leaders had PhDs, nine had Masters degrees and the remainder degrees or diplomas.

Interviews

Ten interview questions were generated from the research questions. A small pilot study with four participants enabled the interview questions to be refined. Three questions elicited demographic information. Other questions related to inclusion: the issues leaders had observed in secondary schools; the current and future roles of teachers, special educators and education assistants. Another question directly asked leaders to describe the attributes, attitudes, knowledge and skills of inclusive teachers they had observed in secondary schools. Five hypothetical case studies of students

with disabilities including autism, acquired brain injury, dyslexia, mild and moderate intellectual disabilities were given to the participants. Leaders were asked how a secondary teacher in a nominated subject could include each student academically and socially. Interviewees were questioned about their experiences in effective methods of teacher learning and were asked to prioritize the learning needs of teachers. All the questions were embedded in the secondary school context, drawing on observations and experiences rather than special theory or literature.

Leader perspectives

Two leaders strongly supported full inclusion. Ninety-six percent of the leaders, however, were strongly in favour of the continuum of services model. This group believed that students should access whichever setting met student needs at a particular time rather than be guided by parental commitment to any one philosophy. Some children may commence in special education settings, then move into regular classes in primary school and return to special education settings in secondary school. A student may access a special education class for one program and be in regular classes for others. Regardless of their philosophies, many of the participants were concerned about the effects of segregated special education schools on children. They valued opportunities for all children to interact. There was a high level of agreement amongst the responses.

Results

Leaders acknowledged the great challenges of including students in secondary school and felt that only a minority of secondary teachers could be described as inclusive. Inclusive teachers were accomplished or expert teachers because a high level of knowledge and skills was required. The inclusive teacher could require special education expertise or immediate access to special education expertise. The importance of a supportive system and school was stressed repeatedly. Teachers could not become inclusive on their own. The profile of the inclusive secondary teacher centered on four characteristics:

- inclusive attitude
- student rather than curriculum focused
- learns through collaboration
- inclusive teaching practices

Each quote from the research illustrates the beliefs of the participants.

Inclusive attitude

"If you've got the will, you're about 95% of the way there."

During the last decade, research (Forlin, 1995, 1997, 1998, 2001, 2003, 2004; Forlin & Bamford, 2005; Forlin, Douglas, & Hattie, 1996) has shown that a positive attitude is the most crucial factor in becoming an inclusive teacher. Leaders believed that attitude was even more important than knowledge and skills. Some teachers seem to be inclusive by nature or through nurture and welcome the opportunity to teach every child. These teachers think it is important that children with and without disabilities interact and learn values from each other. Differences are accepted as a normal part of

life. Children with disabilities are not special, just members of the class. There are teachers who become inclusive after they have successful experiences in teaching children with disabilities. Improving pedagogy therefore increases the chances of teachers having successful experiences. Some teachers respond positively once they understand the philosophy of inclusion which is emotionally appealing. They feel that they would want their children to be included too. Some teachers, however, reluctantly change their attitudes only when they understand the legal requirements of the 1992 Disability Discrimination Act and the accompanying Disability Standards for Education (2005) and realize that they have no choice. Teachers may not always agree with the choice of setting by the parents, but they did need to respect and accept the parents' legal right to make the choice.

Inclusive teachers accept responsibility to teach all the children in their classes rather than try to give it to an assistant or recommend that the student with disabilities selects another course. They believe that all students learn so have high expectations. Accordingly, opportunities are created for everyone to succeed. Successful learning builds the self-esteem and status of the students amongst their peers. Students can improve their status when they are given responsibilities in the classroom, leadership roles or age-appropriate praise. The inclusive teacher celebrates even small achievements. They do not blame the child for failing but change their teaching methods or strategies until they find one which works. Their understanding of inclusion motivates the inclusive teacher to devote the extra time and effort required to differentiate the curriculum or support the student.

Having a student with a disability in the class does not mean that the child's needs are the most important or that they have to dominate the learning activities of the class. The needs of all the students and how the teacher can support everyone in the class are considered. There is awareness that adjustments made to include one student have the potential to help many others. The child with a disability blends into the class and is not singled out by being isolated with a teacher assistant at the back of the class. The students are given a variety of activities to choose from so everyone is doing something different. The students understand that everyone learns differently and that there are different ways of achieving goals.

The relationships in the classroom are respectful, positive and supportive. Disparaging comments are not tolerated. The teacher models appropriate attitudes for the students. The inclusive teacher does not pretend the student does not have a disability but helps the other students understand and support their peer. This could require the student with a disability, parents, a teacher or a disability support group providing peers with information about the student's disability and ways they can assist the student. Permission from the student with the disability and the parents is necessary and the awareness-raising must be handled sensitively. Acceptance and understanding can be enhanced through the curriculum. The class may study a novel featuring a person with a disability. Students can study a disability in science or famous people in history, some of whom just happen to have disabilities. A guest speaker may talk about their own experience having a disability.

Pre-service training is more likely to contribute to inclusive teaching if it concentrates on developing inclusive attitudes amongst the pre-service teachers. There is a marked difference in attitude when trainee teachers are aware that they will be teaching

children with disabilities compared to those who never expected to do so. Listening to parents of children with disabilities talk about their children and their aspirations, or to adults with disabilities about their school experiences builds empathy amongst teachers and can become a valuable part of training. Children who attend classes with other children with disabilities are less likely to have negative attitudes to inclusion in the future.

Strategies for teaching students with disabilities are best infused through all education courses rather than designated as special education and taught separately. Teachers need to learn how to teach literacy and numeracy from the early years to the final years of schooling. With the legal situation today, there could be classes where some students are still learning early literacy skills and others are studying university levels of literature. Knowledge of childhood development from birth to adulthood is an advantage.

It is important that a teacher emerges from pre-service training with an inclusive attitude because negative attitudes are difficult to reverse. Teachers can be reluctant to attend professional development if they do not support inclusion. Even if every teacher in the school attends in-service courses, they may not be attentive. Teachers can resist learning if they are not interested or cannot see any relevance, much like their students. For teachers with negative attitudes, professional development on teaching strategies may be more effective.

Student centred

“It’s actually knowing who that person is, acknowledging who that person is and making the adjustments that you can.”

Knowledge of their subject, curriculum and content, is important but so too is student knowledge. Despite the increased difficulty acquiring student knowledge, with over one hundred students per week, inclusive teachers do their best to get to know their students personally in the same way as primary teachers. The whole child is considered by an inclusive teacher: academically, socially, emotionally. Teachers gain personal knowledge by observing students in various contexts like the classroom, school excursions and the playground. Inclusive teachers listen to their students and parents to learn about student interests. Teachers need time to get to know their students before they can understand how to apply effective strategies. This explains why even the best preparation for the transition of a student with a disability from one year to the next does not have immediate results.

Teachers find out how their students learn best, assess their learning styles and use Gardner’s (1999) multiple intelligences approach. They assess or develop learning profiles of their students by gathering information from past teachers, parents, and the school psychologist. Standardized tests, curriculum-based assessment and observation increase their knowledge. Inclusive teachers want to understand why the students are experiencing learning difficulties. Even more importantly, they want to identify the students’ strengths because these can be used to improve learning. If a student is a visual learner, for example, the teacher knows to provide diagrams, pictures, photos, posters and visual material on the computer or in books.

Social and emotional inclusion is just as important to the inclusive teacher as academic inclusion. Social inclusion is promoted by providing opportunities for

students to interact with each other. Co-operative learning, working in pairs or groups, using peer tutors, team activities, structured games, and changing seating arrangements all promote social inclusion. If a student appears to be isolated from peers, social groups can be established to support the student. Buddy or peer support systems and vertical roll groups offer opportunities for interaction. By encouraging students to email each other or play computer games at the end of a lesson or lunch times, students can form friendships and improve their social skills. If a teaching assistant is allocated to the class to support the student, the assistant must be careful to work with all the students to avoid isolating or labelling the student with the disability. Not too many adolescents enjoy having an adult by their side throughout the day.

The student should be asked about their post-school goals. Having a long-term vision guides the inclusive teacher in curriculum delivery. Parents and teachers can contribute suggestions for long term goals at IEP meetings. Students may need to learn functional skills such as eating or living skills such as money management and literacy through the curriculum. They could learn the skills by attending alternate courses within the school or community. If available, a job coach can support the student initially during work experience.

Independence is a goal for all children. The inclusive teacher makes sure that the student with a disability does not become dependent on the teacher, a teaching assistant or peers. The student who needs to improve organizational skills is taught to use checklists, color-coded timetables or memory books. Prompts and assistance are gradually withdrawn. The inclusive teacher talks to the student about their strengths. Students are given strategies to help them learn so that they can take responsibility for their own learning. In doing so, students develop self-awareness which can prepare them for life. Discussion between the teacher and the student occurs privately or with parents rather than in front of peers. Learning goals and strategies are negotiated between the teacher and the student. A student who has difficulty writing may negotiate to present his or her work alternatively through a PowerPoint presentation, an oral report or a video clip. All students are given choices. The student with a disability helps to develop the IEP or behavior plan. Feeling ownership of the plan is more likely to produce a positive outcome.

Knowledge of the educational implications of the disability is essential to inclusive secondary teachers because it provides an understanding of how the curriculum, content and pedagogy will need to be changed if the student is to learn. The teacher needs specific information about how autism affects the student in their class rather than general information on autism. The “label” or category of disability is of little benefit without specific information about the child. A child with cerebral palsy, for instance, may have minor problems with fine and gross motor skills or may be unable to walk. In this respect, parents have expert knowledge to share with teachers.

Schools need to have an efficient means of accumulating and storing information so that teachers can have quick-gain student knowledge. Student databases are very effective if they are kept up-to-date. The school psychologist may be the person who can explain medical reports or assessments related to the student’s disability. On occasions, teachers will find a student’s disability has such an impact on behavior or learning that they need further assistance. Although it would be beneficial, the teacher

does not need to complete a special education course at university but does need access to professionals with the expertise at the point of need. This, of course, will only work if the system or community provides the time for collaboration and expertise through consultants or colleagues with special education expertise within the school.

Collaboration

“If you can get people collaboratively to work together with the right will, you can solve anything.”

To be able to include students with disabilities in their classes, inclusive secondary school teachers may require new knowledge and skills. Professional development in the form of one-day workshops or conferences has limited value, and few teachers have time for academic study. The knowledge and skills teachers need can be learnt at the point of need by collaborating with any of the stakeholders in the child's life. The relevant stakeholders will vary depending on the child, the disability and the situation but could be medical professionals, therapists, disability support groups, teaching assistants, colleagues with experience in teaching the student, special education teachers or consultants. Inclusive teachers develop partnerships with parents who have so much knowledge of their own child to share. There is an honest exchange of opinions. Teachers are responsible for giving students and parent the information they need to choose appropriate curriculum pathways.

Effective communication skills are essential for a teacher to work collaboratively. Teachers continually solve problems throughout the school day. The same problem-solving approach is applied by an inclusive teacher when it comes to a student with a disability. The teacher remains confident that a simple solution can be found and thinks creatively of solutions. When a solution is elusive, the teacher openly expresses concern and seeks knowledge and assistance from others. This was described as a “special attribute”, perhaps implying that it is not commonly evident amongst secondary teachers! Inclusive teachers regard teaching as a lifelong learning journey. They are on a quest to learn new skills and strategies. Therefore, learning how to teach a student with a slightly different learning profile is inspiring rather than daunting.

This study suggests that secondary school teachers are moving from being autonomous and teaching behind closed doors to being or wanting to be far more collaborative and collegial. Collaborative learning can be as simple as asking colleagues for advice in the staffroom or via email. The whole staff or faculty can attend sessions within their schools where teachers speak about a course they have completed, professional development, resources or strategies they found useful. Teachers within a department can work on a project together. The advantage of colleagues working within departments is that they can learn content knowledge and pedagogy from their peers. They may focus on differentiating the Year 9 curriculum to cater for a group of students with learning difficulties and several who are gifted. Teachers can share units of work they have created or store them in a central file or on their computers for colleagues to use. Teachers from different departments may work together to develop integrated units of work based on a student's strengths or interests. The computer and history teachers may develop a project for their students. Learning to use PowerPoint can be combined with a study of World War II. Teachers can observe their colleagues teaching to discover how to support a particular student

or apply a new strategy. Colleagues can combine their experience and knowledge to brainstorm possible solutions to any problem. A teacher with more experience in a particular area may act as a mentor to a colleague, help plan lessons, give demonstration lessons, provide feedback on their colleagues' lessons or team teach. Professional networking with teachers from other schools and visits to other schools inspire teachers to try new ideas and explore other possibilities.

Teachers with special education expertise or consultants can lead their colleagues through the IEP process, the development of behavior management or social skills plans, differentiation of the curriculum. They can withdraw a student for specific skills training. Many schools have Learning Support Teams, comprising the deputy principal, psychologist, special education or learning difficulties teacher and one or two other experienced teachers. The team meets regularly to listen to the concerns of teachers of students with learning or behavioral difficulties. Members of the team suggest strategies the teacher can try. The teacher trials their recommendations and reports the results to the team. If the teacher needs further advice, the team may arrange for a person with specialist knowledge to visit the school. Most Australian schools have access to consultants, although the access is limited by the large caseloads and the limited time that can be allocated to any one school. The ideal support is a full-time LSC with specialist knowledge.

Inclusive teachers not only draw on the strengths of their colleagues, but on the strengths of their students. They highly value peer support and make maximum use of the resource. Students may be called upon to support their peers socially and academically. To help students learn, teachers carefully allocate students to groups based on their strengths. Consultants in the study reported impressive ideas from students. For instance, a young man with severe cerebral palsy which restricted speech and movement was included in drama classes as a result of the suggestions and support of his peers. The students were far more innovative than their teachers! As part of their own learning programs, some students can use and improve their skills by producing computer programs or art work for peers with disabilities. The targeted student could be in the same class or in a completely different year. Students with disabilities may tutor much younger children, or be tutored by older students or peers.

Teaching assistants and teachers work in partnership in an inclusive classroom. The teacher is responsible for developing the curriculum and directing the assistant. There is effective communication between the two. The teacher is always consulted before changes are made to the program or problems occur and is given feedback on the student's progress. The assistant often works with groups of students and the student with disabilities, or with other students in the class so that the student is not stigmatized. Assistants are encouraged to attend IEP meetings. Their contribution and experience are valued and respected. An executive staff member or LSC is responsible for all the assistants so that there is co-ordination, representation and a sharing of student knowledge.

Inclusive teaching practices

"Straight away when I walk into a classroom I can see whether teachers are inclusive or not."

Inclusive teachers love teaching. They are described as "compassionate", "approachable", "friendly", "warm" and "kind hearted". The word "soft" is not

mentioned because inclusive teachers demand high standards of behavior and work. Well-organized, inclusive teachers manage their classrooms efficiently and work comfortably with other adults in the room. Managing challenging behavior is another skill they are forever striving to improve. Well aware of the link between learning and behavior, they think of ways to engage their students. A disability may affect a child's behavior so the inclusive teacher makes sure they understand the connection. The teacher also knows which strategies have and have not worked in the past. They are hard working and prepared to devote the extra time and work they need to prepare work for students who need differentiation. Calm personalities and a good sense of humor help teachers maintain a positive outlook.

Inclusive teachers have a wide repertoire of teaching strategies which gives them the flexibility to match student knowledge to pedagogy and to apply another strategy quickly if the first does not work. They do not rigidly use the same lessons and same methods each year but change them to suit the needs and interests of their students in different classes. They use good teaching practices such as giving clear instructions, breaking tasks into smaller components, demonstrating the task, providing opportunities for guided practice and independent practice, monitoring progress, giving feedback, reviewing learning at the end of one lesson and again at the beginning of the next. Adept with technology and computers, they use technology to boost learning and student motivation.

To be able to include a student with a learning disability academically, the inclusive teacher must differentiate the curriculum, teaching strategies, assessment methods and reporting. The teacher understands that children learn at different times, and there are many different pathways to learning the same outcomes. A student is not included by merely sitting in the classroom but must actively participate in the program and learn. The student needs to move along the learning continuum. To guide differentiation, teachers may break the curriculum into "must know, should know and could know". All the students "must learn" core knowledge. Once this knowledge has been learned, students may move on to the knowledge that they "should know". It is possible that only the most gifted students learn the "could know" knowledge.

Some students will have quite different learning goals built into the curriculum. The whole class may be conducting a science experiment. The majority may be learning about the properties of gas and liquid. The student with an intellectual disability is learning to concentrate, help his peers and practice his communication skills. No matter how difficult the content or tasks may be, simple goals can be woven throughout. Leaders could explain how to do this even when the class was studying algebra and Hamlet. All but two leaders, however, did caution that there are times when alternate work or courses are far more relevant to the student's goals. They did not adhere to the belief that children must remain together at all times to learn.

Inclusive schools and systems

"It is hard to actually talk about an inclusive teacher without also talking about an inclusive school as I wouldn't like to give the impression that it all depends on a teacher."

According to the participants in the study, some secondary schools are impressive in their inclusivity. Their principals are committed to inclusion and provide strong and courageous leadership. Policies and practices have been reviewed to make sure they

are inclusive. The school culture is inclusive and the school community actively promotes inclusivity. Through the employment of additional staff, teachers are given time, that most precious of resources, to collaborate, plan and learn the skills they need. Effective teaching and inclusion are professional development priorities. The school builds close relationships with the community so it can access vocational courses and workplaces to prepare students for life after school. Partnerships with parents and universities are fostered. Timetables are flexible so that students can access any classes or external courses that suit their needs. There is a genuine desire to support students to achieve their post-school goals, whether they be to attend university or to enjoy their leisure time.

Interviewees were adamant that inclusion is not the sole responsibility of teachers. It is very difficult for teachers to be inclusive if their schools and the education system are not also inclusive. Inclusion must be a systemic priority or policies will be tokenistic and funding will not be forthcoming. Education systems must offer inclusive policies, funding, resources, expertise, professional development and a curriculum which promote and facilitate inclusion. Western Australia Department of Education and Training was cited as an example of a system which has endeavored to provide an inclusive educational environment for all students. The *Review of Educational Services for Students with Disabilities in Government Schools* (Department of Education of Western Australia, 2001) resulted in inclusion becoming a much greater priority. A new strategy was launched called *Building Inclusive Schools: Managing Diversity* (Department of Education and Training of Western Australia, 2003). Administrators and principals were all given three days of professional development on inclusion. *Building Inclusive Classrooms* was developed as a professional development package to prepare teachers for inclusion (Department of Education and Training of Western Australia, 2003). A new model of resourcing called Schools Plus gives schools greater flexibility in the selection of resources they use to support students with disabilities and features additional teacher time (Forlin & Bamford, 2005). By the end of 2007 all schools should have nominated a staff member to be the LSC for half to one and a half days per week. Although special education skills and full-time positions are preferable, this is a step in the right direction. Coordinators are funded to complete the Building Inclusive Classrooms course and receive further training days over two years. Consultants and specialist services are available to provide invaluable support to LSCs and regular teachers. These include a Speech and Language team, Autism Intervention team, Assistive Technology team, Disabilities High Support team, Hospital Schools Services, Vision Impairment and West Australian Institute for Deaf Education. Inclusivity is a core value of the outcomes-based approach to learning and teaching currently being implemented. Within the last five years, the government system has taken strong measures towards becoming inclusive.

Conclusion

The portrait of an inclusive secondary school teacher is an idealistic representation. It is important to understand the attributes, attitudes, knowledge and skills of the inclusive secondary teacher and to understand how they can be acquired before teachers in general can be assisted to gain them. Attributes such as creativity, flexibility, enjoying teaching and regarding the student as the centre of learning rather than the curriculum are common to inclusive teachers. They have positive attitudes to

inclusion. Although good teaching practice is essential, teachers also need access to special education expertise for the foreseeable future. Secondary teachers, with a wealth of knowledge to share, will learn through collaboration if they are given the time and opportunities to do so.

Although slow to have an impact, the 1992 Disability Discrimination Act has given the inclusion movement impetus and a legal framework. It is difficult to imagine education systems responding to the extent they have today in Australia without its existence. The relative simplicity of the primary school structure has meant that success has been more evident in this setting more quickly. The research did establish, however, that it is possible for secondary schools to be inclusive, even in systems dominated by external examinations, shortages of funding, teachers who are mostly untrained in special education and stressed due to constant curriculum changes. It is to be hoped that the needs of children with disabilities will lead reforms to providing a more relevant, responsive secondary school system for all students.

Further Information

The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs

http://www.unesco.org/education/pdf/SALAMA_E.PDF

1992 Disability Discrimination Act (Australia)

http://www.hreoc.gov.au/disability_rights/dda_guide/dda_guide.htm

Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education, UK

<http://inclusion.uwe.ac.uk/csie/csiehome.htm>

Council for Exceptional Children USA

<http://www.cec.sped.org>

Professional Development Activities for Teacher Training for Inclusion

1. Invite parents of children with disabilities to talk about their experiences as parents.
2. Arrange for pre-service teachers to teach students with disabilities during their prac teaching in schools. Discuss their experiences.
3. Discuss inclusion as a philosophy. Trace its origins. Is an inclusive society a desirable goal?
4. Examine the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education. What are the implications for your country?
5. Study how people with disabilities have been treated throughout history in different cultures.
6. A teacher has just learned that a student with a disability is enrolling in the class. Develop a resource that the teacher could use which explains how to teach the student. The resource could be a pamphlet, a booklet, a CD, a video clip.
7. The group watches a film featuring a character with a disability. How is the character portrayed? What impact does this have on viewers' attitudes to people with disabilities?
8. Use case studies to consider how a teacher could include the student academically. For example, Alison is a student with a mild intellectual disability in her first year of high school. She has just learned to write and read simple sentences and can count to ten. The rest of the class is studying a novel. How can Alison be included in the activities?
9. John is aged eight and is having trouble making friends. He sits alone in the playground. Brainstorm ways of helping John make friends.
10. Prepare a lesson using co-operative learning. Pretend your pre-service class is a group of primary students and demonstrate how you would group the students and teach the topic.

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