

**Inclusive education in Aotearoa: What are we doing in  
initial teacher education, professional learning and  
development?**

**Final Report to NZCCS**

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## Acknowledgements

The impetus for the project came from ongoing conversations with parents, educators, and members of the NZCCS National Services Leadership Team: How could we work to make schools and classrooms better for disabled students, their families and whanau, and their teachers? Families and teachers had reported that they continued to experience resistance to disabled students participating in regular classrooms. In this project, we wanted to understand what teachers could mean when they said “But we weren’t trained to do this.” This led us to considering teachers’ experiences throughout their learning; during initial teacher education, and ongoing professional learning and development. We were also alerted to the importance of the understandings and experiences of the teacher educators and professional development leaders and advisors.

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The participants for this project gave generously of their time and their expertise. Together we have identified many ongoing areas of interest. We look forward to further research and dialogue about the implications for our practices as teacher educators.

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## **Aim of the Project**

The aim of this project is to provide a survey of the contemporary New Zealand landscape in initial teacher education and ongoing professional learning: what are we doing to equip teachers with the knowledge and skills to provide good school experiences for disabled students?

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Anecdotally, parents and educators alike express concerns about the provision of education and ongoing staff development for teachers working with increasingly diverse classrooms; and, in particular, disabled students. Two recent reviews have called for systematic research into the area. The recent report on the quality of initial teacher education based on an analysis of the documentation held by the Teachers Council stated that many of the programme monitors' reports were positive. Nevertheless, "there appears to be considerable variation in the composition of programmes, and a common core of courses such as the study of educational foundations, teaching methods, learning theory and classroom management was not evident" (Cameron, 2004, p.8).

This project has four research questions:

1. What are we doing in New Zealand to prepare new and beginning teachers to educate disabled students in primary and secondary classrooms?
2. What are we doing to provide our current primary and secondary teachers with staff development to enhance the education and school experiences of disabled students in primary and secondary classrooms?
3. What are the indicators of effective practice for initial teacher education and professional development to enhance the education and school experiences of disabled students in primary and secondary classrooms?
4. How does current provision of initial teacher education and professional development compare with indicators of effective practice?

The research programme has three main components. The first has been an analysis of the literature around inclusion and initial teacher education. Internationally,

we found a wealth of literature addressing most of the themes which were of concern to the researchers. This literature is discussed in the next section. The bibliography at the end of this report lists a large proportion of the references we have collected and examined. The full list is available in an Endnote format, and hard copies of most articles have also been collected as part of the project.

The second element has been to discover the extent to which programmes of initial teacher education address the goals of inclusion of children with disabilities in the regular classroom. This has involved the collection of course information about various programmes, and interviews with a range of staff. During the life of this project, a report on an analysis of the documentation held by the New Zealand Teachers Council (Kane, 2005) was also released. The report looked at programmes and courses for all initial teacher education providers, collecting all the official supporting documents. The database that was developed was made available in February 2006 to the researchers in the current project for further analysis. A further aspect has been the development of a survey for beginning teachers. The first surveys are being disseminated now (Terms 1 and 2, 2006, as courses are being offered) to all year one and year two beginning teachers who attend courses run by school support services (this will result in approximately 1000 surveys being sent out). The beginning teachers are asked to comment on how well they think they were prepared, and those aspects of their initial teacher education programme that were more or less helpful to them.

The final element was a survey of schools to discover the extent to which teacher professional development in 2005 addressed the aims of developing and enhancing teachers' abilities and willingness to include disabled students in the regular classroom.

## **Background to the study**

There is a strong view in the international literature that an effective initial teacher education (ITE) is a necessary condition for high quality inclusive education. Some believe that far too little attention has been paid to preparing teachers for the inclusive school. Booth et al (2003) argue that there are some basic questions that need to be asked in developing teacher education courses that support inclusion:

- To what extent does the curriculum of teacher education encourage the development of inclusive schools?

- What preparation and support do teachers need to implement inclusion?
- What are the policy and cultural contexts for the development of inclusion?
- How are barriers to learning and participation overcome in teacher education? (Booth, Nes, & Stromstad, 2003).

O'Shea (2000 p. 72) puts it another way:

The world class schools that our society needs and expects require a well-prepared and qualified diverse, professional teaching cohort as never before. Whether in special or general education, there is a growing consensus that the single most important influence in the education of a child is a well-prepared, caring and qualified teacher.

While discussing special educators rather than inclusive educators, O'Shea argues the need for professional standards in the preparation of teachers, a quality workforce and a set of high ethical principles. She does document a shift towards inclusive approaches, and the need to ensure that new teachers have a high quality general teacher education, plus some areas of speciality:

Just as general educators need new skills for working with exceptional students in general classrooms, special educators need new skills in helping exceptional students access the richness of the general curriculum (O'Shea, 2000 p. 74).

Other authors argue that, despite the quality of the teaching workforce, inclusion may take place in an atmosphere that is hostile to its principles, or at least where there are inadequate resources to carry it out effectively. Garner (2000) argues that inclusion has reached policy prominence despite the "evidence that points to the conceptual and practical unpreparedness of many newly qualifying teachers", even though these will form "the vanguard of inclusion initiatives in education" (p. 111). Garner reviews the evidence over the past 20 years in the UK and concludes that the notion that teachers are inadequately prepared for special needs education, and particularly for inclusive, is well-known, frequently acknowledged and yet almost ignored. He notes "...a survey of the contemporary landscape in ITE will bring little comfort to those seeking to build an inclusive education system" (p. 111).

There is quite a large and diverse literature on the programmes of teacher education that support inclusion. Some of these, particularly from the United States, are concerned with the merging of ‘general’ and ‘special’ education workforces, others discuss the impact of innovative new approaches in particular programmes, and others focus on the characteristics needed for an inclusive educator. The literature is presented thematically below, beginning from broad issues of context and proceeding to discuss specific programmes and approaches.

## **Contextual issues: power, politics and ethics**

Questions of social justice are central to inclusive education. According to Ewing (2001), questions of ethics, power and privilege are at the heart of all educational transactions. She argues:

It is important for teacher educators, including special education professionals, to reflect on the extent to which teacher training curricula, pedagogy, and individual perspectives transmit, often tacitly, benign visions of political and social realities that encourage uncritical acceptance of hierarchies, social class structure, and “power and privilege” arrangements in schools. It is spurious to deny that every aspect of schooling is layered by race, social relationships, ability grouping, tracking, special education labelling and classification, discipline referrals, suspensions and expulsions, dropout rates, composition of the teaching force (2001 p. 13).

From Ewing’s perspective, teacher education needs to move beyond the ‘technical’ approach, which focuses on the individual competencies of teachers to deliver the curriculum, towards a much broader view. Teachers must have a critical understanding of the structures of society and schooling, must value a range of cultures and the contributions they make to the overall social mix, must be caring of their students and able to motivate them. Ewing argues that, while it is reasonably simple to engage students on questions of gender and class, it is much harder to examine structures of power and privilege in relation to colour and race.

The approach favoured by Ewing centres on reflective teaching practice, and her paper describes the way that teacher educators can engage students in debates around critical questions. She argues that while many programmes do this, many more simply reproduce the hierarchies of the wider society. Teacher education is a critical point to engage teachers in models of change. The paper argues that there is a need to be vigilant

about the existence of a hidden curriculum in teacher education, which continually asserts the dominance of existing power relations through the composition of the student body, pedagogy, curriculum and 'silences'.

Sapon-Shevin (2001) makes similar arguments to Ewing, noting that by 2020, children of colour will make up around 46 percent of the school-age population. This paper argues that the debate over ethnic inclusion has been kept largely separate from the debate over the inclusion of people with disabilities. Moreover, she says, linking disability and race can be very problematic; inclusion is not the same thing as valuing diversity:

But if we conceptualize disability as a social construct, closely linked to political, cultural, social and economic demands and limitations, then we can link the disability agenda to a broader diversity mandate (2001 p. 35).

The paper discusses Zeichner's (1993) proposals for teacher education, including "teaching students about the dynamics of prejudice and racism; emphasising sociocultural research knowledge about the relationships among language, culture, and learning; exposing students to successful examples of teaching ethnic and language minority students; and embedding instruction in a group setting that provides both intellectual challenge and social support" (p. 37). Sapon-Shevin finally calls for a focus on diversity, critical thinking and an end to the artificial boundaries that structure people according to ability.

Townsend and Patton (2000) raise similar issues, arguing that teachers need to become far more self-reflective around issues of race and colour in the context of ethical teaching practices:

To evenly distribute power and privileges in school and university settings, we must engage in self-reflection and critique processes, and understand more about African American culture, and incorporate that understanding in interactions with those learners and families (2000, p. 32).

Deborah Voltz is interested in the links between special education and cultural diversity. She notes that schools tend to be rich in cultural diversity but that special educators need to take a lead in providing diverse cultural environments. She argues that many students from other cultures end up as 'special education' students because of



the “cultural dissonance and biased expectations” of the schools. Voltz’s article does not discuss cultural diversity in inclusive settings.

Roger Slee (2001), in a wide ranging paper that discusses political, ethical and practical issues around inclusion, argues that educators:

...need to become more critically literate about the politics of disability and disablement as a prelude to their attempts to practice inclusion. The continuing failure of many inclusive schooling researchers to engage with the field of disability studies is problematic. Debates about the politics of disability and impairment and the forms of knowledge produced by the rich interaction of structuralist, post-structuralist and feminist researchers provide greater potential for a more robust theory of educational disablement which captures both the individual and the broader social relations of their context (Slee, 2001 p. 117).

This view has particular implications for the tools that are used to prepare teachers for inclusion. He asks: “should not the preparation of ‘inclusive’ teachers be woven right across the fabric of the teacher-training curriculum?”.

Slee argues against the notion that making units of special education compulsory within the general teacher education curriculum will encourage inclusion, noting that such a proposal is based on an “appalling ignorance of the scope of inclusive education” (p. 120). Finally, Slee addresses the political context within which inclusion is expected to be implemented, noting that key schooling policies do not support a philosophy or practice of inclusion:

When we see narrowing forms of academic curriculum reified through national testing, league tables and pernicious inspection regimes reinforced through media campaigns of public vilification of ‘failing schools’ ... it is hard to imagine the place for an inclusive culture (Slee, 2001 p. 118).

These arguments are also put forward in Avalos (2002, p. 266) who is concerned at “the emerging model of narrow standards to assess teacher performance and the imposition of high-stakes, norm-referenced, standardised testing to measure such performance”. These comments echo those of Diez (2002), who describes an existing innovative programme of teacher education (see below).

Snyder et al (2001) report a study undertaken by pre and in-service teachers in an inclusion course, who interviewed teachers that were currently teaching in an

inclusion classroom, defined as “a general education classroom in which students with special needs received instruction along with general education students” (2001 p. 200).

The findings of this study raise significant questions for those interested in developing an effective initial teacher education for inclusion. There are wide differences between teachers over what inclusion means, ranging from the least restrictive (that children with special needs are educated in general classrooms), through the view that inclusion is general and special education teachers working together, to the position that inclusion means “educating students with learning disabilities or students who are functioning at close to grade level in general education classrooms” (Snyder et al, 2001 p.201).

Other key findings were around the lack of resources to meet the demands of students with special needs, the lack of training and expertise in special fields, and that only just under half of teachers “indicated positive benefits for students in inclusive settings” (p. 205). The authors took heart from the fact that nearly half of inclusion teachers reported that their attitudes had become more positive towards students with special needs, as a result of teaching in an inclusive setting.

## **The current study**

The current study provides a multi-faceted approach to answering these (and other) questions in the New Zealand context. The starting point of our work is the phenomenon of the production of exclusionary practices within inclusive programmes. In the US and some other countries, the separation of ‘general’ from ‘special’ teacher education formalises a two system approach (Blanton, Griffin, Winn, & Pugach, 1997b). In New Zealand, an inclusionary legislative framework, a generalist system of teacher education, and a school framework that specifically demands ‘diversity’ should generate the conditions for inclusion. That it does not uniformly do so is due to a range of factors, including the historical legacy of the homogenous and exclusionary classroom and the normative teacher education programmes that this model implies. There are also policy issues, especially the framework of school ‘choice’ that privileges the ‘academic’ classroom, not the ‘democratic’ one, which makes inclusion difficult to achieve. In essence, then, New Zealand’s schooling system demands inclusionary practices, but there are numerous barriers to achieving them.

This study emerged from the expressed needs of parents and people with disabilities for a good quality, inclusive schooling. Specifically, parents reported to a

community advocacy agency, CCS, that teachers stated they were not trained in inclusive practices. CCS, in turn, commissioned this research project to find out why a formally inclusive system did not produce inclusive educators.

This report provides a preliminary analysis of the study's findings. It is a large and complex study, that engages in depth with a number of ITE courses taught in universities and colleges of education in New Zealand. It became clear early on that it was not possible to apply a simple input/output model to this study. Teacher education is a multi-layered process incorporating multiple engagements, institutional exigencies, competing theoretical and practical models and imbued with significant and contested cultural meanings. While ITE is concerned with the 'production' of the teacher, the process is much more complex than such language implies.

The remainder of the report is structured into four parts. Because our search of the literature has not found any similar studies, we first outline the various elements of the research process, explaining the reason for the specific approaches taken and the relationship between the parts. The report then picks up on three central themes that have emerged from the study. The first is the slippage that occurs between the various levels of the system when talking about inclusion. This is due, in part, to the contested nature of the term, and in part to the way it has been subsumed, in New Zealand, to a discourse of diversity. The second section is devoted to the issue of where inclusion can be found (and not found) in initial teacher education, and how the discursive practices of ITE constrain and shape students' understandings of inclusion. One such discourse relates to notions of professionalism and teachers as professionals. While at a formal level in New Zealand, being a 'professional' teacher requires one to be an inclusive educator, in practice this relationship is by no means clear. The final section considers, in broad terms, what this study has found to be the barriers to an inclusive teacher education, as articulated by participants. We also pay attention to the silences and gaps in their discussions.

## **The scope of the study**

The study had six inter-related research elements. The first two were contextual, examining the literature and policy documents that considered ITE and inclusion. The literature search around the terms *inclusion* and *initial teacher education* generated some 280 items, which have been organised into the themes of policy, programmes, research studies, quality, strategies and professional development. This literature

database has been updated twice since the project began, to ensure latest publications are included.

An analysis of policy documents was undertaken. New Zealand's Education Act (1989) declares that "people who have special needs have the same rights to enrol and receive education at state schools as people who do not" (s.8(1)). The team was interested in what this meant in practice, especially in terms of teacher education. In particular, if children with special needs have the right to an education, how does that translate into the competencies, expectations and work of teachers who have these children in their classrooms? We examined documents from the Ministry of Education and the New Zealand Teachers Council.

The main research focus was on ITE courses, professional development and the skills and approach of beginning teachers. The first part examines the content of primary and secondary ITE courses. We were interested in how much students were taught about inclusion, how it was contextualised, the extent to which the philosophy of inclusion permeated teacher education courses and how successful the institutions were in producing inclusive teachers. The focus of this part of the study was on primary and secondary teacher education, and six teacher education sites participated in the study.

Not all relevant questions could be answered merely through a content analysis. The context, the intentions of the course designers and teachers and issues around the practicum placements also needed to be examined. Teacher education courses are hardly a theoretical and pedagogical unity, being made up of a range of academic disciplines that often conflict both within and between themselves. The second part of the study involved a series of structured interviews with a range of lecturers, programme leaders and others (including some teachers of inclusive education courses) at the six sites. We often heard during our interviews that some subject areas and lecturers had a greater commitment to inclusion than others. In such an eclectic setting, then, understanding the forces that produce (or not) inclusive teachers is quite complex.

The literature also points out that post-ITE learning is important in shaping teachers' practice in inclusive education (Buell, Hallam, Gamel-McCormick, & Scheer, 1999; McLeskey, 2004; Robinson & Carrington, 2002). In New Zealand, professional development (PD) is purchased at the level of the school, and the team was interested in finding out how much teacher PD focused on inclusive education, who provided the training, who defined the need and who received the programmes. The third part of the

study involved a survey of five percent (130) of New Zealand primary and secondary schools. The surveys were targeted to the PD co-ordinators in those schools. Both quantitative and qualitative responses were sought, and the findings, especially the qualitative aspects, reveal key themes around the meanings of inclusion, and who has responsibility for students. (Appendix 1 is a brief report on this element of the project).

The final aspect of the research involved asking beginning teachers how well prepared they considered themselves to be to run an inclusive classroom. At the beginning of each school year, School Support Services run PD courses for beginning teachers. This year, we have used those sessions as an opportunity to undertake a short survey on the extent to which new teachers consider their ITE prepared them to be inclusive educators. The survey form mainly required quantifiable responses, with some small opportunities for written comment.

### ***Divergent meanings***

The research process has underlined problems with how the concept of inclusion is defined and used in the education sector. In this study, we found that it was a contested term at the levels of policy, within particular programmes, in school practicum placements and among both teacher educators and new teachers. This has been noted by others:

Familiarity with the terminology of inclusive education has grown considerably, however, there are various, competing discourses through which meanings and understandings differ (Graham & Slee, 2005).

It is our view that these competing discourses permeate every 'level' of inclusion, from government policy making to individual schools and classrooms. The findings of our study indicate a sector rife with differing definitions and meanings, disparate policies and practices, highly uneven descriptions of what inclusion means in teacher education, courses that uphold the theory of inclusion but not its practice, and resistant discourses at the level of the school. It is therefore not surprising that the emerging teacher may not always have a clear view of what inclusion means in New Zealand schools.

The policy level is problematic, despite the clear articulations of rights to education contained in the Education Act. The main question here is how the 'right' to education gets translated into an inclusive education. From 2000 on, New Zealand has had a mandatory *Disability Strategy*. Objective three of that strategy is to 'provide the

best education for disabled people'. The strategy is intended to be a whole of government approach, integrated into each portfolio. However, the most recent update on the strategy from the Office of Disability Issues provides no clear direction or approach in relation to inclusion:

The debate over what are the best settings for education continues, with views divided on whether special schools, units or regular class settings best meet children's needs. However, we can be sure that all disabled children need at least some time in mainstream settings that are inclusive and accessible. This ensures that all children have opportunities to interact with their peers. This idea is supported by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, which recommended, in October 2003, that New Zealand better integrate disabled children into mainstream education and other aspects of society (Office of Disability Issues, 2005).

In our research, not a single interviewee mentioned the *Disability Strategy* as a key tool for promoting the rights of people with disabilities to education (although the *Disability Strategy* does appear in the course content of a number of the very few courses that examine inclusion). In particular, people with disabilities – and the parents who initiated this project, for example – are unable to rely on the *Disability Strategy* to deliver inclusive education. Further, the *Disability Strategy* has had little or no impact on ITE for inclusion. This possibly indicates the lack of leadership and clear direction evident in the strategy.

The New Zealand Teachers' Council (NZTC) is the government agency responsible both for defining the qualities of a competent teacher and for reviewing the curriculum and pedagogy of teacher education courses. The NZTC does not use the term inclusion or inclusive teacher/classroom. The term used is 'diversity', and the definition of that comes from a 2003 Ministry of Education *Best Evidence Synthesis*:

Diversity encompasses many characteristics including ethnicity, socio-economic background, home language, gender, special needs, disability, and giftedness. Teaching needs to be responsive to diversity within ethnic groups, for example, diversity within Pakeha, Māori, Pasifika and Asian students. We also need to recognise the diversity within individual students influenced by intersections of gender, cultural heritage(s), socio-economic background, and talent (Alton-Lee, 2003).

The main effect of the use of diversity is to subsume the inclusion of people with disabilities to a need for ‘responsiveness’ to a whole range of groups defined in several ways. While the teacher who is responsive to all the diversities cited above could be called inclusive, in practice diversity is taught and learned by students in ITE in fragmented ways. Some of the interviewees for this study specifically picked up on this point:

*I think perhaps if I refer to the word diversity, one of the concerns that we have at times is that diversity is taken to mean those people who are different from the majority rather than a term that is about the growing complexity and diversity of our society and the need to find ways of ensuring that everyone is seen to be equal and included in all of the things that we do.*

There are courses on Maori language and culture, on sociology and inequality, on teaching other languages and on ‘inclusion’. Thus the competing diversities form a jumble of pieces, out of which the student (and their teacher) is supposed to assemble the complete picture.

Many elements of our study demonstrate a slippage in terms. We were frequently asked what we ‘meant’ by inclusion. There is significant contestation within courses over what it, in fact, means. This was best demonstrated by our analysis of the data generated by Ruth Kane and her colleagues (Kane, 2005), which included self descriptions of teacher education programmes in relation to inclusion. A number of these demonstrated the discourse of ‘diversity’ that permeated downwards from the Ministry’s work. For example, our further analysis of the documentation collected for the Kane (2005) report showed that in many of the programmes there was no specific policy on inclusive education, though it is acknowledged within care outcomes for all courses within the programmes. Issues related to diversity were integrated into Professional Studies papers. Students most often could undertake an optional paper on students with special learning needs.

This can be contrasted with the approach taken by one ITE provider to the question about preparation for inclusive teaching practices:

*Every graduating student: has a clear understanding of their responsibilities to teach all children well, and has developed a positive, respectful attitude and effective teaching strategies; has a sound understanding of current thinking about disability, as informed by people with disabilities; is familiar with current*

*legislation and policy regarding disability and education; is prepared to work respectively with parents and support personnel for the benefit of each students; is aware of school/community resources that can be utilised to support students education. Is taught in [a specific course] (ibid).*

While these appear to offer two extremes in terms of the focus on inclusion, we also found that provision in practice did not necessarily match up to the rhetoric. One programme in particular, which was considered to offer cutting-edge inclusive education in ITE courses, no longer did so due to retirements and other cutbacks. The inclusive education course, which was the fulcrum of the programme, was now being taught by a part-time, temporary lecturer, and was scheduled against compulsory courses for ITE.

While many programmes had a course called ‘inclusion’, and usually a compulsory one, very few of the programmes had an approach that one interviewee called ‘infusion’:

*Yeah, infusion, that is what we do here, it is infused in everything. If you read the literature it is certainly not an added on approach here. I think the added on approach does more disturbance to things than good because it gets portrayed as being other, other than normal, tacked on. Everything is infused here...*

From this perspective, a course-based approach to inclusion denies the notion of inclusion as inclusive. Despite the legislative requirement for inclusion, it is not a philosophical platform upon which initial teacher education rests. It is a course, one among others. However, some argue for the effectiveness of such a structure:

*Put it this way, I am reasonably convinced that what we do has some effect. I am less convinced that by including inclusion in other papers we would be more effective. I think the notion of highlighting the inclusion is necessary, important and it becomes effective. When you put ...an inclusion paper alongside working with cultural and linguistic diversity, I think you highlight two particular areas that may not receive appropriate attention any other way. I am not saying we are perfect... but I do think that it is necessary to structure it in this way and I don't see any great disadvantage to our students.*



The prevailing attitude towards inclusion as a subject led to us refining the language we used in interviews and the document search, from ‘inclusion’ to ‘including children with disabilities in the regular classroom’. There are significant differences between the two, but this approach allowed us to bring in a clear focus on children with disabilities, which was in line with the overall research brief. In summary, difficulties of language, definition and practice all act as barriers to the teaching and learning of (and research into) inclusive practices.

### ***Where is inclusion found, and where is it not found, in ITE?***

We have already noted that some programmes have specific courses on inclusive education, and others (although not many) ‘infuse’ inclusion across the curriculum. For the latter, courses on professional studies provide the heart of inclusion courses:

*So we want our graduates to be able to educate all of their students within their classrooms, within their schools, within their services in an inclusive manner, paying attention to the particular needs of each but not treating some of them as if they are other people, and needing to be brought in because they are different. I think that might be a generalisation that is helpful to start, it’s a bit loose but maybe we can start with that.*

A number of providers pointed out to us that teachers are legally required to teach all the students that turn up in their classrooms, hence the focus on professional responsibility. However, while few of those interviewed would disagree with this, there are a number of caveats caused by perceptions of competing views of professionalism:

*Always the secondary teacher will feel ‘I am going to be judged by how well my students perform academically and by what academic work they put up’.*  
*Accountability and ... the NCEA and all the measurement assessment nightmare just reinforces it. I am going to be judged according to measurable academic growth in my students.*

There are fewer courses, and especially compulsory courses, on inclusion or special needs education in secondary than in primary programmes. Most primary programmes are multi-year and most secondary ones a single year graduate diploma, which probably accounts for the absence of these courses (among others). But the *effect* of this is that secondary students may be reinforced in the view that ‘teaching the subject’ is the most important role of the secondary teacher. It is therefore unlikely that most secondary teachers hold ‘inclusion’ of people with disabilities as part of their

professional self-concept, or that they have been taught the skills to mediate the inclusive classroom in an academic setting.

One point that came through very clearly in the interviews with ITE providers was that ITE staff, and students, who had strong relationships with people with disabilities tended to be strong advocates for inclusion. The influence of teachers, or families and of students with disabilities is clearly demonstrated in the following extract:

*We have three [lecturers] with obvious disabilities, who give lectures not necessarily about their disability, about disability in general and various other topics... Our first assignment gets them (students) to look at disability issues within their own family/whanau/extended group. It makes them take a fresh look at some things they took for granted. Also we have had parents of children with special needs come and talk; sometimes they bring their children. Sometimes the course members they also talk about their sister or brother or themselves, their special needs because of the environment that we create of trust, this is the human condition it is not something to be fearful about, it is something if you want to talk about, is the space to do it. It seems a very powerful yet natural way where everyone starts to realise about the variety that constitutes humanity.*

We are confident that the survey responses from new teachers will provide very rich data on where inclusion is and is not found in teacher education. But even before new teachers come up against the presumed ‘barriers’ to inclusion outlined below, their knowledge and understanding of it is partial and contested, often based on individual relationships or encounters that may or may not occur during the teacher education, and on teacher education courses of variable quality in terms of the provision of teaching relating to inclusion.

### ***What are the barriers to inclusive teacher education?***

In the questions posed by Booth et al (2003) there is an implicit suggestion that ITE institutions should be encouraging the development of inclusive schools, which entails (in many cases) a significant pedagogical and philosophical shift in schools. Many of the academic staff members who work in ITE are certainly committed to changing schools through their research studies. But one question is how they mediate the relationships that develop with schools through the ITE process, and especially the practicum.

We had a particular interest in the practicum, as a source of potential modelling of high quality inclusive settings, but also of other models. We were aware that some teacher education programmes in the United States were working with school partners who “were selected for the quality... of inclusive programs for people with disabilities” (Meyer, Mager, Yarger-Kane, Sarno, & Hext-Contreras, 1997)(p. 31).

There is no such selection here. There would be difficulties in selecting in that way, due to lack of schools willing to take student teachers, and perceived major relationship difficulties in rejecting a school on the grounds that they are not adequately inclusive. As one inclusion course co-ordinator noted, after a comment that schools in New Zealand are required by law to include all students:

*... sometimes a whole school may be exclusionary. So I mean I don't say that our students always go to an inclusionary setting. What I'm saying is that the government says that any child can come to their local school but ... some schools says “oh well unfortunately there's stairs and we can't have the wheelchair here we don't think we can serve your child as well as that school over there” so they try and direct children with disabilities away. If we put our student teachers in that school, then they are probably going to meet more exclusionary attitudes ... And I would hope that, by the end, they would also have been in schools where there are children with disabilities and they can see it working perfectly.*

In effect, this means that ITE providers are not using their influence to encourage inclusion in schools. If there were, for example, an expectation placed on schools that students would learn about inclusive practices while on placement, would this influence practice, over time, in those schools? The situation is, of course, not nearly as clear-cut as that. Teachers make a range of judgements about students, and, in practice, often the philosophy of inclusion contains a cut-off mark: these can be included, those cannot. In the following extract, two participants in a group interview held with one ITE provider reflect on the effects of selectivity:

*Person A: It's a threshold. People say, “I am quite happy with this disability but don't give me this disability”*

*Interviewer: So severity is an issue.*

*Person A: Severity and type. Give me physical but don't give me intellectual, give me sensory but don't give me behavioural. It's quite complex in that regard.*

*Person B: So that throws philosophical views right out that window sometimes doesn't it?*

*Person A: Yes.*

*Person B: In one instance they say we have to recognise and respond to diversity and in the next instance they want to be selective about who they want to be working with.*

This kind of 'partial' inclusion approach is found more often among teachers and schools. We found echoes of that in responses to the professional development survey. Some responses were quite judgmental, such as the person who noted: "obviously disabled children who have a will to learn will be managed differently to children who disrupt the learning of the general class". One PD response strongly delimited inclusion according to a child's age, the (imagined) effects on the other children and the amount of time that was appropriate to be included:

Disabled learners included in mainstream classrooms is not a fair choice to any stakeholders except parents hoping to normalise the disability. The children do not integrate well after the age of 8 or 9. Mainstream children are becoming carers in classroom and playground - hardly fair on their learning and development. There are parts of a school day that inclusion is appropriate but not all day long.

### ***Does an integrated teacher education course deliver inclusion?***

In the United States, one significant aspect of inclusion has been the developing trend towards teacher education courses that eliminate the special education teacher (Blanton, Griffin, Winn, & Pugach, 1997a; Heston, Raschke, Kliever, Fitzgerald, & Edmiaston, 1998; Kleinhammer-Tramill, 2003; Rainforth, 2000; Shade, 2001). This literature has established that integrated teacher education, such as that provided in New Zealand, is a necessary condition for inclusive education. But it is not, obviously, a sufficient condition. In this study, we have worked at identifying those factors that provide a good education (and a poor one) in inclusion. In comparing courses, we were struck by the unevenness of content between them, which carried through from their philosophy and self-description. That is, while during our interviews staff from all

programs professed their commitment to inclusion, there was significant difference between institutions and courses in both form and content. This is consistent with the findings in the Kane (2005) report on initial teacher education based on analysis of documents.

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