



Policy implications of collective agency for inclusion: evidence from the Welsh context

Carmel Conn & Susan Davis

To cite this article: Carmel Conn & Susan Davis (2023): Policy implications of collective agency for inclusion: evidence from the Welsh context, Journal of Education Policy, DOI: [10.1080/02680939.2023.2222372](https://doi.org/10.1080/02680939.2023.2222372)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02680939.2023.2222372>



© 2023 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.



Published online: 12 Jun 2023.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 157





View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

Policy implications of collective agency for inclusion: evidence from the Welsh context

Carmel Conn ^a and Susan Davis ^b

^aFaculty of Life Sciences and Education, University of South Wales, Newport, UK; ^bSchool of Education and Social Policy, Cardiff Metropolitan University, Cardiff, UK

ABSTRACT

Despite widespread commitment to inclusive education as government policy, global progress in the last two decades has been slow and uneven. This article explores the relationship between policy and its enactment to examine what conditions make inclusion available as a course of action within education systems. Focusing on learners with additional learning needs, evidence from the Welsh context is presented in relation to two policy turns in the last decade, the most recent of which is a turn towards a Fourth Way ‘professional capital approach’ that appears to signal movement towards more inclusive education. It is noted that, at the level of practice and practitioner beliefs about learners with additional learning needs, these policy movements appear to have had remarkably little impact. Drawing on a hybrid model of analysis, we argue that the collective agency needed for inclusion requires an account of the belief systems of a range of policy actors, particularly in education systems where hierarchies of learners are fundamentally upheld. Using evidence from educational reform in Wales, we describe how conditions for collective agency for inclusion may be experienced as unavailable within education systems.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 18 November 2022
Accepted 2 June 2023

Keywords

Inclusion; Wales; policy window; agency; affect

Introduction: inclusion and the politics of education

Educational policy tends to present ideas about practice as if they are part of a natural order of things, but it is in fact inherently political and will always draw on certain discourses whilst ignoring others (Francis et al. 2017). This is as a way of articulating a particular worldview, but also of producing people as certain kinds of subjects. Post-structural analysis is useful in focusing attention onto the ways in which educational policy enacts relations of power within a society and helps to manage populations (Ball 2013). Foucault (1979) saw policies that focus on the individual in relation to a set of standards as problematic since they serve to objectify people by reducing them to a ‘norm’. Such policies will always construct certain groups of people as inferior as a way of maintaining existing hierarchies (Hardy and Woodcock 2015). In education, some learners are given labels that describe them in terms of a deficit with the assumption that this should be the focus of learning and development. Foucault (1982) described such policies as supporting ‘dividing practices’ that distinguish between those who are

CONTACT Carmel Conn  carmel.conn@southwales.ac.uk

© 2023 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way.

advanced and have high status and those who are low status and in danger of being left behind. Education for the latter group is seen to require ‘remedial’ practices of identification, classification, intervention and measurement that single out individual learners as the source of any ‘problem’. What is not at issue is how schools reflect inequalities in society and the operation of important structural influences (Brantlinger 2006). Critical to progress in learning is the quality of teaching and professional beliefs about learners, but these external structures are often overlooked within a system that is based on the manufacture of inability (Tomlinson 2017).

It is perhaps unsurprising that progress towards inclusion has been slow with evidence of uneven development across countries globally in the last two decades (OECD 2020a). The high cost of school failure and relative success of inclusive education systems has meant widespread commitment at the policy level to inclusive education, but nevertheless there is a marked difference in the amounts of inclusive education coverage achieved by individual countries (Entrich 2021). The relationship between policy and practice is not a straightforward one and inclusion requires consideration not only of policy mandates but also of the ways in which enactments of policy are subject to local conditions (Ball 2013; Bowe, Ball, and Gold 1992). Inclusive education is highly complex in this respect and provides many examples of tensions and ambiguities in policy enactment. What is of significance is whether inclusive practice is available as a viable course of action given the constraints of the wider education system in which education professionals work (Naraian and Schlessinger 2021).

The ways in which policy and practice intersect to produce different outcomes in relation to inclusion are something we want to explore in this paper. Drawing on poststructuralism, affect theory and the concept of policy windows, we apply a hybrid model of analysis to developments in the Welsh education system. Wales is one of the four devolved nations of the UK and, even before the establishment of the National Assembly of Wales in 1999, Welsh educational policy had been developing along a trajectory distinctive to that of the other UK nations (Lemke and Zhu 2018). The Welsh context has been defined by persistent poverty and inequality and this has reinforced within policy distinctively Welsh principles of equity, social justice, human rights and community engagement (Chaney 2012; Egan 2017). Traditional forms of educational governance, a commitment to comprehensive education and trust in the professionalism of teachers are enduring features of the Welsh education system (Power 2016), though the degree to which market principles and competitive individualism that characterise the English education system have been rejected in Wales is contended (Lemke and Zhu 2018). Wales is currently undergoing extensive reform of its education system, which has the aim of raising standards and reducing the impact of disadvantage on the attainment of learners through increased emphasis on universal access to the curriculum, higher aspirations for all learners, and flexibility in educational decision-making by schools and teachers (Welsh Government 2020). The reform programme involves the design of a radically new curriculum and changes to teacher education and professional standards, as well as an overhaul of the system for learners who require additional support for learning.

We want to use developments within Wales to focus on the issue of the relationship between policy and its enactment, with reference to the inclusion of learners designated as having ‘additional learning needs’. This is a term that has been introduced by reform of

the education system in Wales to describe learners who require support that is different in some way to that provided to other learners and replaces the category of ‘special educational needs’ (SEN) (Welsh Government 2021a). We want to explore first developments at the policy level in relation to this group, specifically two policy turns in the last decade that appear to signal a movement away from and then towards inclusive education. We discuss the market principles approach to education that emerged in Wales post-2014, in the wake of poor performance in global student assessment measures. We then outline a second policy shift in the post-Covid-19 recovery period. We argue that this more recent shift in policy toward a Fourth Way ‘professional capital approach’ (Hargreaves and Shirley 2009) appears to offer policy opportunity for educational change and the development of socially just practices.

Having outlined developments in Wales at the level of policy, we turn to the issue of policy enactment and evidence in relation to practice in schools and colleges in Wales for those with additional learning needs. We note that, despite apparently real change at the level of policy, evidence suggests remarkably little change is taking place in practice. We use evidence from the Welsh context to consider policy enactment in relation to the role of different policy actors. We explore the role of the learning support coordinator as ‘policy activist’ in the enactment of inclusion (Ball, Maguire, and Braun 2012) and note that this role, which involves coordinating provision for learners who require extra support, is essentially a collaborative one. Drawing on affect theory and the work of Naraian (2019, 2021), we argue that collective agency for inclusion requires an account of the belief systems of a range of policy actors, particularly in education systems where hierarchies of learners are fundamentally upheld. Using evidence from educational reform in Wales once more, we query whether the conditions of collective agency for inclusion are always available within education systems. Finally, we briefly consider policy developments in Wales in relation to discrimination and anti-racism practices as a point of comparison for our discussion and as a way of bringing out the importance of policy entrepreneurialism and the significance of a ‘focusing event’ (Michaels, Goucher, and McCarthy 2006) to policy enactment.

Inclusion and policy developments in Wales

Following what was deemed at the time an unsatisfactory performance in the 2009 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) (OECD 2014), the Welsh Government made a notable policy turn in relation to its priorities. The then Education Minister, Leighton Andrews, focused these on the raising of standards by putting greater emphasis on performativity, for example, through the introduction of national testing, data gathering and the launch of a new system of school categorisation (Andrews 2011). The move signalled a commitment to an emerging architecture of regulation within education systems around the world that has come to be known as the Global Education Reform Movement, or GERM (Egan 2017). Rather than more traditional forms of service delivery, GERM promotes the remote organisation of education through a range of control mechanisms focused on standardisation, target setting and performance monitoring (Spina 2019). GERM typically utilises market principles to assert value in the form of measurement of educational actions, responsibilities and practices that lay claim to a science of continually improving learner outcomes (Ball 2017).

In relation to inclusive education in Wales, this policy turn is perhaps most clearly exemplified in the change of emphasis in the Welsh Government's approach to support for learners, with additional learning needs (ALN). Most particularly, there is a notable shift in the framing of what is at issue in 2010 guidance on support for learners with additional learning needs, *A Curriculum for All Learners*, and documents related to the reform of the ALN system released post-2014, including the 2014 White Paper on proposed legislative changes for additional learning needs and the subsequent ALN Code for Wales 2021. The earlier document uses the language of rights that has become familiar in Welsh policy movements in the last two decades, but also draws on ideas about inclusive education that prioritise the development of practices to support the inclusion of all learners. In setting out the principles that underlie such practices, the document gives emphasis to practices for 'transforming learning capacity' for all learners, including valuing diversity and developing a positive ethos in schools (Welsh Assembly Government 2010). The influential work of Susan Hart and colleagues (Florian 2012; Hart 2012) is used to frame how inclusive education is understood, noting that it requires the operation of an 'ethic of everybody' and a widening of what is ordinarily available in classrooms, for example, through the use of flexible grouping and universal learning provision. Importantly, differentiation is seen as having a place within practice, but only if important pedagogical conditions for learning are present. These are described and include understanding the different ways children and young people learn, professional willingness to problem-solve around these, appropriate adjustments of expectations of learners, and the development of supportive learning relationships based on a belief in the capacity of all learners to learn. Finally, guidance is provided on specific aspects of practice including assessment for learning, curriculum planning and teaching strategies for enhanced provision.

By contrast, later policy documents, ones that relate to reform of the system for learners with additional learning needs, move away from consideration of practices that support a universal provision and the development of schools to focus on learners and what they bring to learning spaces. Analysis of the 2014 White Paper reveals that an understanding of what is effective in practice is derived from an economic discourse of education in its emphasis on efficiency, timeliness and cost-effectiveness (Welsh Government 2014). In this document, the issue of additional learning needs is conceptualised in terms of the efficiency of the system for 'identification, provision and review', with the language of intervention, measurement and expected outcomes employed heavily throughout. Additional learning needs are presented in terms of a straightforwardly causal model (Hammersley 2014) that presents any difficulty in learning as the result of learner 'needs' (Runswick-Cole and Hodge 2009), with change taking place mainly at the level of the learner. The idea that learning is transactional and involves a range of influences, many of which are external to the learner, including structures within schools and the beliefs and actions of teachers and leaders, has little place in this document compared to the 2010 guidance.

The fact that the subsequent ALN Code for Wales (Welsh Government 2021a) is avowedly a 'technical' guide rather than a code of practice takes this perspective further. In setting out technical guidelines for a system of identification, provision and review, any link to the idea of learning being the result of relationships and structures is broken. Although there is a stated commitment to inclusion and a consultative rights-based

approach to education, how this is to be achieved in practice is not outlined. There is the sense of an ‘empty architecture’ that ghosts its own content even as it sets it out, as Allan and Youdell (2017) have described it in relation to other education systems in the UK. Mention is made at several points of ‘differentiated teaching’ (OECD 2014), but what this entails is not explicitly stated. The regulatory system introduced by the Code makes it a requirement at the local level to fill in the gaps where practice is concerned – and to fully shoulder accountability for this – and so constitutes a mandate that allows a remote but powerful form of free-floating control (Allan and Youdell 2017; Ball 2013). Where guidance on practice is given as part of reform documents, this can be startling in its distance from notions of educational inclusion. In 2018, rapid evidence assessments were undertaken for specified groups of learners, including Autistic learners and those with a diagnosis of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and guidance arising from these is fully aligned with a medical model of disability (Oliver and Barnes 2012). In the reviews, evidence for ‘what works’ is synthesised without evaluation of the evidence base itself, for example, in terms of the use of neuro-normative measures and problematic research practices that do not value diversity or even acknowledge it (Welsh Government 2018b, 2018b 2018a). In the guidance documents, controversial behavioural approaches to education feature strongly, with practices recommended that could never be described in terms of a universal provision that is offered in mainstream classes (Welsh Government 2019b, 2019c).

Using the analytical device of a ‘policy window’ (Kingdon 1984) to examine policy opportunity in this period in Wales, we would have to conclude that the conditions for inclusive education were not present. Kingdon’s policy streams model identifies policy windows as important to change and describes these as transitory periods of opportunity when specific policy processes converge. He identified three processes or ‘streams’ in particular: the problem stream, which is what is viewed as requiring the active attention of policy in the present moment, the policy stream, which is a set of possible solutions to this identified problem, and the politics stream, which comprises political willingness or imperative based on recent events, for example, an event that prompts a change in public opinion (Guldbrandsson and Fossum 2009). Although each of these three streams develops independently according to Kingdon, it is their momentary convergence that opens up the possibility of policy movement in a specific direction. For inclusion in the Welsh context post-2014, the problem of standards together with educational policy based on market principles resulted in the policy solution of performativity that could not be said to support educational inclusion. In effect, policy developments as set out above constitute adherence to a ‘complexity-reduction movement’ (Lenz Taguchi 2010; Osberg and Biesta 2010) that is fundamentally incompatible with progress towards educational inclusion. Complexity-reduction promotes a simplistic but powerful narrative that any ‘problem’ of learning is reduced to the level of the learner and is a straightforward matter of applying normative standards and managing expectations of only limited ability. What is required for inclusive education is a socially complex understanding of causality within education systems (Biesta 2016), and the ways in which this is contingent on the interactions of multiple components, some of which are remote from the learner but nevertheless have significant impact on their experience. Inclusion is about thinking relationally and understanding a range of influences, both internal, but most importantly, external to the learner. It is essentially a complexity-*increase*

movement that demands the asking of difficult questions about the status quo, about how learners are positioned and the fairness of this, and about one's own assumptions, values and experiences (Florian and Graham 2014). A key issue is not what someone is or needs, but *how they are viewed*, and whether this reflects structural issues within the system that disadvantages some groups (Tomlinson 2017).

We now turn to a policy shift in the post-Covid 19 recovery period that has taken place in Wales and that may signal a movement towards inclusion. There appears to be a shift away from recent priorities as outlined above, namely the problem of standards, in favour of prioritisation of issues relating to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly its unequal effect on different populations (Welsh Government 2021e). In Welsh education, as elsewhere, it is apparent that the pandemic has affected some groups of learners more than others, intensifying the experience of disadvantage for some who are already in disadvantaged groups (Welsh Government 2021e). The rapid move to remote learning at the start of the pandemic meant more virtual lessons and self-paced learning for learners in schools, and subsequent emergence of social inequalities in relation to learning support (OECD 2020b). Early evidence suggests that learners who require extra support experienced virtual support as less effective but also experienced disadvantage in terms of access and participation (European Commission 2020). At policy level in Wales, identified needs in relation to this group of learners appear to have prompted a shift in the politics of education, away from market principles and towards a re-emphasis of 'distinctively Welsh values' (Welsh Government 2021d, 2). Inequality and disadvantage have been persistent issues for Wales (Egan 2017) and in the post-pandemic Programme for Government, there is a re-statement of values in relation to community, equity and social justice along with the importance of collaboration and support for the most vulnerable in society to ensure no one is left behind (Welsh Government 2021d). The curriculum reform that is currently taking place appears to offer a policy solution, moreover, which signals more favourable conditions for inclusive education as set out below.

A characteristic feature of the new Curriculum for Wales is support for the autonomy of practitioners to make curricular decisions and provision of flexibility within a common framework that allows them to do this (Sinnema, Nieveen, and Priestley 2020). Based on evidence that learner achievement is most directly affected by the quality of instruction, an emphasis in Welsh educational reform has been the empowering of teachers to develop their professionalism (Hughes and Lewis 2020). This programme of reform draws on what has been termed a Fourth Way 'professional capital approach' (Hargreaves and Shirley 2009) which identifies professional learning as the entry point to school improvement. To this end, the Welsh Government has introduced a range of initiatives to support the development of the profession, including a National Masters degree and several projects focused on educational research and professional inquiry (Welsh Government 2021c). Considerable investment has been made in this respect suggesting that these are material rather than symbolic policies that are supported in their implementation by resource and strategic planning (Hardy and Woodcock 2015). What is important in relation to our arguments here is that professional learning, particularly in the form of collective examination of practice and self-reflection on beliefs, attitudes and knowledge, is what supports the development of inclusive practices (European Agency 2016; Minott 2019). Inclusion is ultimately about how people view each other

and show respect for difference and requires teachers and leaders to understand how their cultural frames of reference shape perceptions of learner behaviour (Nieto and McDonough 2011). Inclusive education constitutes a focus on structures within schools and society, with a commitment to change needed here rather than at the level of the learner (Ainscow 2020). Critical reflection features prominently within approaches to professional learning in Wales and this raises the possibility of teachers and leaders questioning dominant discourses about practice and developing a better understanding of the ways in which certain groups of learners are marginalised within schools and the wider society.

Added to this, a clear commitment to learner participation and community engagement (Welsh Government 2021e) has potential in terms of supporting the realisation of inclusion. Gaining the views of learners, their families and others will inevitably help to challenge the status quo and ‘interrupt’ taken for granted practices. Research indicates that learner voice tends to express ideas not fully recognised within mainstream practice and challenges practitioners’ basic assumptions (Ainscow and Messiou 2018). This then adds to a policy solution based on a pedagogy of listening and reflection – essentially a movement towards complexity-increase within the current Welsh education system – that holds out promise for real change. Applying once again the analytical tool that a policy window provides, it would appear that a window of opportunity has opened up. The identified problem of inequality together with a politics of education focused on professional capital and the solution offered of quality teaching would appear to be consistent with a movement towards inclusive education as it is currently understood.

Having explored developments in the policy context in Wales in relation to inclusion, we want to turn now to consider developments in practice. This is as a way of thinking about the nature of the relationship between policy opportunity and the enactment of policy. Again we draw on evidence from the Welsh context as illustrative, we will argue, of a situation where policy opportunity appears to exist, but the willingness to act upon it does not. We hope that in presenting issues within the Welsh context, we can shed light on the problem of progress towards inclusion that is a global one.

Translation of policy into practice: inclusive practice in the Welsh context

Education policy exists as text but also as local discourse in how it is perceived, understood, communicated and enacted by practitioners (Ball 2015). As Ball and colleagues have pointed out, policy may be directed centrally, but it is the ways in which it is taken up in schools and colleges and transformed through rich interactions of material and discursive practices that shape policy enactments on the ground (Ball, Maguire, and Braun 2012). Such practices provide ways of thinking and talking about policy and of producing professional subjectivities that allow what is ‘effective’ in teaching to be seen and understood, including what constitutes a successful practitioner and what is ‘good learning’ (Ball 2015). Attention to the recontextualisation of policy highlights the way in which policy as text is open to interpretation and mediated by local conditions, including cultural values and systemic priorities and commitments (Ball, Maguire, and Braun 2012).

Consideration of the translation of policy into practice requires attention to the many levels at which policy operates and the complexity of arrangements at regional and

institutional levels, but also at the level of the classroom practitioner and interactions between teachers and learners (Mowat 2018). The all-important context of policy is manifest in the dynamics of local discourses and material practices, in structural possibilities and differing subject positions and in the emergent nature of everyday practices and ongoing interactions, all of which provide policy with an inherent fragility and uncertainty of outcome (Ball, Maguire, and Braun 2012). Inclusive education provides many examples of this phenomenon since education systems globally differ markedly in terms of the amount of inclusion coverage achieved despite government commitments to the agenda of inclusion. Indeed, statements of governmental commitment to inclusive principles are not good indicators of the inclusivity within an education system, with structural issues within the system itself of much greater significance, for example, the degree of competition within a system and the heterogeneity of schools (Enrich 2021).

What is illustrative about policy enactment in Wales is the remarkable lack of change in practices relating to those with additional learning needs despite apparently materially real shifts in policy mandates, as outlined above. Strong evidence exists to suggest that this is the case, with successive studies indicating widespread and persistent belief in segregated practices as in the best interests of some learners. From research into the views of practitioners and parents about additional learning needs, what appears to be enduring is the degree of investment in the system for learning support that predates any reform. Following a consultation in 2008 titled 'Statements or something better?', dissatisfaction was expressed with the existing system, but there was also a clear desire to hold on to what was seen as useful (Welsh Assembly Government 2008). A level of nervousness was expressed by both parents and educational practitioners about the prospect of change, something that was also apparent in research carried out over a decade later (Welsh Government 2019a). In this later study, a consistent response from teachers and leaders was that the pre-reform system of support, which was generally conceptualised as something 'additional to' learning contexts that remained unchanged, needed to continue. Support practices were described in terms of grouping based on learner attainment, catch up sessions, withdrawal, segregated classes and 'intervention groups', with a separate system of specialised provision seen as needing to exist alongside mainstream education (Welsh Government 2019a). Research in the Welsh context has gathered a considerable amount of information of these kinds of practices, which appear to be pervasive and definitive in terms of curricular organisation (Conn and Hutt 2020; Welsh Government 2019a). Evidence suggests that practitioners engage in implicit othering of learners with ALN whose needs are seen as beyond what can be expected in terms of ordinary practice, so placing them outside of mainstream provision (Knight et al. 2022). The degree of complexity of learning difference is cited as a barrier to inclusion, though there is some indication that significant numbers of learners with ALN are viewed as coming within this category (Conn and Hutt 2020).

Importantly, there is also evidence of the operation of 'fixed ability thinking' (Hart and Drummond 2013) across schools in Wales. This is the belief that learning is fundamentally the result of the internal resources of learners, which are 'fixed' at birth, for example, as 'high ability', 'moderate ability' and 'low ability'. It is a pervasive belief in education systems beyond Wales and has been ascribed a 'regime of truth' that appears to refer to a natural order of things but actually supports existing power relations (Francis et al. 2017). Fixed ability

thinking is particularly problematic for inclusive education since learners deemed 'low ability', who typically include those with additional learning needs, tend to fare less well in systems that are structured by attainment (Cullen et al. 2020). It is also the case that open-minded attitudes towards learners and what they can do have been found to be essential to the development of inclusive practices in classrooms (Brennan, King, and Travers 2021; Florian and Beaton 2018; Hart and Drummond 2013). It is for this reason that transformative professional learning for inclusion supports social learning that has an impact on teacher attitudes, beliefs and efficacy alongside teacher empowerment as the mechanisms for change (Brennan and King 2022). What is notable in the Welsh context is strong evidence of education professionals using the language of 'ability', including in relation to learners with ALN (Conn and Hutt 2020; Estyn 2020), and of the presence of associated practices, such as lack of movement between learning groups, reduced curricula, experiences of stigma and the development of negative learning identities (Welsh Government 2023).

The possible impact of current ALN reforms, which are likely to produce a change in the way learners are identified under new arrangements, is of significance here. The ALN Code 2021 provides new criteria for this, namely, whether a child or young person has 'greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age', but also crucially whether the learning difficulty or disability requires a provision that is 'additional to or different from' that made generally available to other learners within a setting (Welsh Government 2021a, 29–30). These criteria mean that some learners identified as having special educational needs under the previous SEN Code of Practice for Wales (Welsh Assembly Government 2004), perhaps most notably those at earlier School Action and School Action Plus stages, will not go on to be identified as having additional learning needs. Furthermore, it is to be expected that, given evidence of fixed ability thinking in the Welsh education system, these learners will become simply 'low ability' and continue to be taught in lower attaining groups. The policy imperative, therefore, of helping the most vulnerable and ensuring no one is left behind, brings the inequities of grouping by attainment into sharp focus within the Welsh context. The evidence base is strong in this respect and points to the absence of benefit of grouping by attainment on learner outcomes, particularly for those taught in lower sets (Cullen et al. 2020). Research indicates that grouping by attainment results in less effective pedagogy and poorer outcomes for this group of learners (Higgins et al. 2015) and gives rise to feelings of unfairness in learners (Tereshchenko et al. 2019).

The new Curriculum for Wales is instructive on this point. The vision of the curriculum is to support children and young people to become ambitious and capable learners, enterprising and creative contributors, ethical and informed citizens, and healthy, confident individuals (Welsh Government 2020). For the purposes of educational inclusion, however, what is at issue is not simply whether someone feels themselves to be capable, healthy and so on, but whether they are *seen and validated as this by others*, particularly those who have authority over them. Worrying evidence of deficit views about the capabilities of learners has been set out above. Research in the Welsh context indicates, moreover, that teachers can continue to hold deficit views about learners even after they have shown that they are capable of learning (Waters-Davies and MacDonald 2022). What is of concern here is that learners who are deemed 'low ability' appear to absorb the negative views of others over time (Hallam and Ireson 2007; McGillicuddy and Devine

2018) and can come to develop identities that are a far cry from the vision as set out in the Curriculum for Wales.

Policy actors and collective agency for inclusion

In thinking about how policy is recontextualised at the level of practice, it is important to consider the positional identities of diverse professionals and the different ways in which their roles intersect with policy (Ball, Maguire, and Braun 2012). Policy actors are defined by the positions they adopt in relation to any policy and can take on a number of different roles. The role of narrator, for example, is often adopted by senior leaders who straightforwardly narrate policy within an organisation, whilst that of translator may be taken on by a middle leader who interprets the principles of policy in developing practice and acts in an advisory capacity. The role of policy receiver is usually taken on by junior classroom practitioners who do not actively participate in the translation of policy (Ball et al. 2011). Other policy actor roles are identified too, such as enthusiast, critic and outsider, but it is policy translators that have been described as the ‘policy activists’ in an educational setting since it is they who work out what policy actually means for practice and take steps towards its enactment based on these interpretations (Ball, Maguire, and Braun 2012). Research indicates that middle leaders acting as policy translators are active in leading, planning, producing, inspiring, persuading and appeasing colleagues in pursuit of policy and so play a key role in the collective enactment of it (Skerritt et al. 2021). They may also be assigned a specific post that relates to the policy so maximising their identification with it.

For inclusive education, a growing number of countries are positioning the role of learning support coordinator as an increasingly strategic one for policy implementation (Struyve et al. 2018). This is often a middle leader role that requires the translation of principles of school improvement for inclusion for the purposes of classroom practice, and encompasses identifying learners who require extra support, applying resources and services, offering advice to teachers, liaising with external agencies and keeping records (Lin, Hill, and Grudoff 2022). This is the case in Wales, where central to the reform of the system for ALN is the role of the Additional Learning Needs Coordinator (ALNCo) who has become a ‘teacher leader’ under statutory guidance. Under the new legislation, the ALNCo has a strategic role in the development of ALN policy and practice in settings, advising on staffing and resource issues but also with day-to-day responsibility for the identification and monitoring of learners with ALN (Welsh Government 2021a). The role of the ALNCo is given prominence in guidance documents, which describe it as one of overarching responsibility for the coordination of support for learners, with additional learning needs. However, guidance states it is the wider workforce, that is all staff working with children and young people with ALN, who also have responsibility for ‘ensuring that learners’ needs are identified and provided for’ (Welsh Government 2021a, 71).

Research into the work of learning support coordinators points to possible challenges in relation to how they are positioned, for example, whether their role is publicly authorised by leaders and endorsed by colleagues (Struyve et al. 2018). A particular challenge is identified in relation to the blurred boundaries of the role, specifically that coordinators seek to facilitate the pedagogical practices and relationships of others, whilst

also having to intervene directly in teacher instruction and classroom activity (Struyve et al. 2018). The coordinator role has itself been broken down into a range of competing priorities and roles, including that of auditor, arbiter, rescuer and expert (Kearns 2005). Most essentially, though, current conceptualisations of inclusion mean that the role is a collaborative one (Ainscow and Sandhill 2010; Ní Bhroin and King 2020). The coordinator is a 'change agent' but one who always acts as part of a collective made up of multiple agencies capable of thinking together and developing shared practices (Van de Putte et al. 2018).

Recent theorising of teacher agency focuses on the way in which teachers achieve agency through an interaction of their capacity and the environmental conditions in which they work. An ecological perspective on agency helps us to see agency as emergent from the individual resources of the teacher but also from affordances and constraints within the environment (Priestley, Biesta, and Robinson 2015). Thus, agency is highly relational and embedded in the interplay of community members within a school environment. The collective agency needed for inclusion, however, takes the relational nature of teacher agency further still. Inclusion is conceptualised as the creation of a culture of collaboration that supports problem solving around barriers to education experienced by some learners (Florian and Graham 2014). Shared values, including shared responsibility for all learners, are thought to be important as a basis for teachers feeling supported to experiment with practice and to reflect on this with others (Ainscow 2020). Thus, actions taken by classroom practitioners in pursuit of inclusion go beyond what would generally be ascribed to the role of 'policy receiver' (Ball et al. 2011), which is largely envisaged as a passive, non-activist one. This seems to be reflected in research into inclusion in Wales, where the beliefs and actions of ordinary classroom practitioners as policy receivers constitute more in the way of activism than one would expect (Welsh Government 2019a). Indeed, evidence suggests activism across other policy actor roles too, including senior leaders who are most often policy narrators. Evidence suggests they too hold deep-rooted beliefs about learners and have different levels of commitment to inclusion as an agenda.

Deep-rooted beliefs about learners and differing degrees of commitment to an inclusion agenda is an issue beyond Wales and a major barrier to the accomplishment of an inclusive education system (Ainscow and Sandhill 2010). Inclusion frameworks that are developed for the purpose of supporting educational change often focus on attitudes, beliefs and values for this reason (European Agency 2022). Such frameworks are designed to support professional learning and the way in which teachers and leaders think about the differences that learners bring to learning spaces. Nevertheless, progress towards inclusion remains slow and fragmented and we want to consider next the role of affect in the production of teaching for inclusion, again using evidence from the Welsh context, as a way of exploring the issue of agency further.

The affective production of teaching for inclusion and the impact of structural issues within education systems

Inclusion is complex and scholars often combine a range of theoretical frames to provide sufficient account of the material, relational and discursive practices that are involved. Inclusion is essentially a social process in each school setting that is configured by unique

arrangements of cultural experiences, beliefs, ideas, commitments and tolerances (Brennan and King 2022). Theoretical frames need to be powerful enough to reflect multiple perspectives, individual but also collective activity, situated practices and reciprocal influences within systems and subsystems. In the work of Naraian (2019, 2021), for example, critical disability studies are brought together with critical race theory, affect theory and new materialist ontologies as a way of theorising micro, macro, temporal, spatial and affective constituents of inclusive practices. Critical disability studies provide a lens to view the way in which difference is constructed and used to maintain hierarchies that reproduce power relations within a society, whilst critical race theory and multiculturalism raise issues of social justice and the importance of reflective practice and anti-oppressive education. New materialist ontologies move the focus away from discourse towards the operation of the material within settings and the ways in which this has agency and exerts force in terms of practice. By focusing on the material, it is possible to describe learning spaces as networks of associations where the human and nonhuman come together in moments of significance for both teachers and learners that mean someone feels included and has a sense of belonging, or alternatively, feels excluded and overlooked. Naraian (2019) notes that tensions exist between these different theoretical frames. Critical disability studies centres marginalised others whilst social justice focuses on teachers and leaders and their beliefs. New materialism, moreover, dissolves the boundaries between dualisms such as subject and object and emphasises the ways in which entities of all kinds come together to form assemblages. However, Naraian and Schlessinger (2021) make the case for employing different theoretical lens in order to achieve a deeper, richer and more comprehensive understanding of inclusion as a material-discursive phenomenon that also recognises agency as collective and deeply situated.

Increasingly, theories of affect are used as further framing for inclusion to support consideration of the ways in which teachers are able to develop socially just practices. Affect theory has been conceptualised as a way of moving on from discourse, culture and structures to encompass psycho-emotional dimensions and the embodied nature of experience (Goodley, Liddiard, and Runswick-Cole 2018). It is important to recognise the social and cultural conditionings of affect and to see how feelings and desires contribute to social contexts. Affect theory draws attention to experience of the material, relational and discursive, as they are experienced *from the inside*, allowing exploration of the ways in which the social, cultural and political flows through people (Davies and Gannon 2012). Affect theory promotes interest in the attachments people feel to particular ideas and practices and so is concerned with connections between things and the intensity with which these exist, that is, with collectivities and ‘assemblages’ as opposed to single subjectivities (Fox and Alldred 2015; Goodley, Liddiard, and Runswick-Cole 2018).

In applying affect theory to education, the work of Naraian and colleagues invites us to consider how embodiment and emotion play a part in the production of teaching for inclusion within school contexts. Their research illustrates the ways in which working with learners who require extra support gives rise to ‘big feelings’ in teachers, including difficult feelings of apprehension, anxiety, resentment and incompetence (Naraian and Schlessinger 2021). These feelings are public feelings and are negotiated with others as part of practice in schools, often under challenging circumstances. Connecting the self to

those who are seen as in need of support – who are constructed as incapable, disabled or at risk – brings the danger of being constructed in similar ways (Goodley, Runswick-Cole, and Liddiard 2016). As Naraian and Schlessinger point out, teacher failure is inextricably linked to student failure since teachers are judged on the degree of success with which they are able to support the learning and development of their students. Thus, supporting learners who experience difficulty with learning carries the risk of failure for the teacher as well. Following the work of Ahmed (2014), Naraian and Schlessinger argue that, in school systems where success and failure has a high premium for both learners and teachers, such a risk may serve to move teachers towards some students, settings and practices and away from others, already anticipating difficulty, discomfort and the danger of failure. As Naraian and Schlessinger write (Naraian and Schlessinger 2021, 153):

Pedagogical acts are more than pedagogical acts. They are objects of fear or desire, and teachers are moved towards or away from their enactment depending on their own histories, ideological positioning, cultural and structural contexts, and thus, affective draws.

The emergent possibilities of teaching for inclusion are inherently risky therefore and it is the affective production of teaching that signals whether conditions are supportive or not. The role of affect and its centrality to the whole programme of teaching, with its attendant virtues of cleverness, goodness, ability and success, needs to be grasped in order to understand the power of forces to include or exclude. For practitioners working under the constraints of an education system that fundamentally promotes learner hierarchies, for example, ‘high ability’ over ‘low ability’ and mainstream over ‘special provision’, inclusion may simply not make sense at a deep level of being.

Affect attachment perhaps helps to explain the dominance of one educational system over another and the persistence of the belief that inclusion is an unworkable idea. We pose the question: is this what evidence from the Welsh context tells us? Indeed, there are indications that the system being created by reform continues to perpetuate existing ‘dividing practices’ (Foucault 1982) despite developments in relation to teacher professionalism, quality teaching and reflective practice. It is possible to see, for example, that the competency-based nature of the new curriculum threatens to perpetuate certain values and continue to marginalise some learners (Knight and Crick 2021; Osberg and Biesta 2010). The danger here is that statements of competency – statements about what learners should be and can do – tend to gloss over different ways of being in the world as well as important barriers that individuals face within society. The new ALN Code, moreover, is preoccupied with identifying and addressing learner ‘needs’ and so perpetuates the idea of learning as emergent from internal resources rather than external influences. A further threat is the continuation of a system of accountability that is based in some way on pupil attainment. This is something that has been raised as an issue for Welsh educational reform and indeed the national school categorisation is currently being replaced with a new system that promises to decouple pupil assessment and school improvement (Welsh Government 2022b). We note that where education systems report impressive achievements in equity and standards, inclusivity is an essential part of school cultures and pride, but also constitutes one of the criteria upon which they are judged (OECD 2022). We would like to point out therefore the imperative of school leaders placing equal value on the goal of achievement of all learners with that of school improvement, though evidence from Wales suggests that pressures within the system,

such as access to resources and the imperative of data-driven results, give rise to a pragmatic response to supporting learners' needs and hidden exclusionary practices (Power and Taylor 2020).

Significant shifts in policy coupled with the fast pace of reform mean that practices based on fundamentally different principles sit alongside each other in Wales, for example, universal provision and attainment grouping. More favourable conditions for inclusion would require much clearer messaging to ensure the discourse of inclusion is not misunderstood or appropriated by conservative movements seeking to maintain the status quo (Slee 2019). A strong and consistent message about inclusion would start to dismantle learner hierarchies, but it is perhaps notable that there is little mention of inclusion in recent policy documents and, given tensions in the ALN Code as outlined above, it is not clear what the Government's position on inclusion is.

Policy entrepreneurialism and the significance of a focusing event

It is the case that the move from special educational needs to inclusion and the improvement of schools calls attention to a wider group of learners and raises the profile of diversity as an issue for Welsh education (Welsh Government 2016). We finally turn to a brief consideration of the issue of discrimination and anti-racism practices in Wales in order to highlight the importance of a policy entrepreneur for educational change as well as the significance of what has been described as a 'focusing event' (Michaels, Goucher, and McCarthy 2006). The Welsh Government has set out a raft of measures to begin the process of becoming an anti-racist nation by 2030 (Welsh Government 2022a), and it is interesting to note that ideas on anti-racism have been more prominent in Welsh Government policy since the racist murder of George Floyd in the US in 2020. There has long been a tradition in Wales of 'Cynefin' – belonging for all people – and this has been mirrored in recent policy, such as the new Curriculum for Wales, which sets out a vision of children as citizens of Wales and of the wider world to put a global perspective in place. If we go back to the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015, this envisaged a more equal Wales and provided an undertaking that Welsh people would be empowered to fulfil their potential no matter their circumstances (Welsh Government 2015).

In 2021, a significant movement in terms of policy entrepreneurialism took place when the Welsh Government commissioned Professor Charlotte Williams to review the teaching of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic learners and the representation of identities in the Welsh curriculum. Her report produced extensive findings and set out 51 recommendations to schools and educational settings, which focused on the importance of embedding BAME¹ histories into the curriculum and on the duty on schools to be more robust in generating anti-racist environments and thinking (Welsh Government 2021b). This is a high-profile report that has been followed up with the establishment of the Diversity Anti-Racist Practice and Professional Learning programme, which has come to be known by its acronym, DARPL. This is tasked to address the shortfall in practitioner knowledge and practice in relation to a 'racial dynamic' since it is often the case that schools and educators are unaware of how racism is inherent in society and the micro-systems within schools that serve to perpetuate this (Bent et al. 2012; Tickly 2022).

There appears to be an understanding within the Welsh policy context that discrimination can occur due to more than one protected characteristic and that we always need

to apply an intersectional lens when reflecting on diversity and inclusion. Intersectionality is a useful framework on which to base our understanding and response to inequality since it highlights the interconnection of power and privilege that produces it (Bešić 2020; Bhopal 2020). The Welsh Government's vision, as expressed in the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan (Welsh Government 2022a), is one of an anti-racist approach that requires looking at the ways racism is built into policies, formal and informal rules and regulations and generally the ways in which people work. There is some evidence that this is seen to require a focus on structural issues and real engagement with policy, rather than a tokenistic airbrushing. In education, schools must guard against 'colour blindness' and against treating learners as the same since, by employing colour blind logic, there is negation of the lived experiences of people of colour (Davis 2022).

Consideration of discrimination and anti-racism practices also highlights the role of a 'focusing event' (Michaels, Goucher, and McCarthy 2006) in bringing about change. This is an event that may be perceived as a crisis or catastrophe and so sets a new benchmark for future events. The recent global focus on black lives as important may constitute such a moment, with organisations in the UK widely reappraising their Equity Diversity Inclusion (EDI) procedures and provision. In Wales, the publication of the Williams report (Welsh Government 2021b) and subsequent setting up of the DARPL programme together with a focus on structural issues means that there is the important prospect of consistent messaging in relation to the valuing of diversity within this moment of significance.

We understand, however, that challenges exist in this area too. Talking about race is always complex and therefore it is often side-lined or sanitised in EDI offerings. Trying to unpick hundreds of years of racism is impossible, and the dynamics of racism probably do not sit well within a fleeting moment of policy opportunity. Matters pertaining to 'race' and racism are emergent moreover. For example, it has been suggested that the current emphasis on 'wokeness' with reference to anti-racist initiatives is being 'weaponised' (Sobande 2019; Zavattaro and Bearfield 2022). Specifically, the word 'woke' – meaning to address racism or inequalities – has moved into common parlance 2 years after the death of George Floyd but is increasingly being viewed negatively by some.

Conclusion

Consideration of policy movements in Wales in relation to race serves to remind us of the problems associated with viewing marginalised learners in homogenised ways. In this paper we have focused on the relationship between policy and its enactment with reference to the inclusion of one marginalised group, that is, learners designated as having 'additional learning needs'. From our analysis, we are aware that different sets of issues, ideas, discourses and events produce unique policy and practice trajectories. For learners with ALN in Wales, it appears to be the case that there is greater possibility of the withholding of capacity, value and rights with the prospect of some learners, or even many, moving into the category of 'low ability' following educational reform. Again, it is important to take a complex view since research indicates that issues of race, for example, might further intensify this experience (Connolly et al. 2019). There is a lack of policy entrepreneurialism in the area of ALN, however, compared we argue to race policy, and the changes taking place in

arrangements for this group of learners would probably not be described as a crisis and therefore constitute a focusing event. The continued existence of hierarchies within schools in Wales, we have argued, maintains a premium for success and failure that creates risk-taking conditions. This constrains the collective agency needed for inclusion and contributes to the relative lack of progress in practice for this group of learners.

For this not to be the case, there would need to be much more in the way of inclusion as a valued principle that runs through all parts of the education system in Wales. Outside of the UK there is evidence of the importance of inclusion acting as a fundamental principle in educational reform and of the need for clearly defined steps to accomplish inclusive aims (OECD 2022), but these are certainly challenges within the Welsh educational context, where policy in relation to learners who are defined by their capacity for learning is contradictory and unclear. As Allan (2021) has recently pointed out, however, the experience of the Covid-19 pandemic creates an imperative for change and provides an opportunity to rethink orientations towards human rights and democratic values. External scrutiny of educational standards is probably a persistent pressure within the Welsh education system, as it is elsewhere. It is worthwhile to note, therefore, that PISA scores for one of the most successful education systems according to this measure, Finland, are explained by the relatively higher performance of the lowest performing learners (Ainscow 2020; Sahlberg 2007). The critical point here is that educational policy, which materially results in raising attainment would go a long way towards addressing current Welsh Government aims to close the achievement gap between learners and create greater equity in the education system overall.

Note

1. The acronym BAME is used here as this was the convention on the report.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Notes on contributors

Carmel Conn is Associate Professor in Inclusive Pedagogy in the Faculty of Life Sciences and Education, University of South Wales.

Susan Davis is Reader in Diversity and Equity in Education in the School of Education and Social Policy, Cardiff Metropolitan University.

ORCID

Carmel Conn  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-4395-8302>

Susan Davis  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-9341-9964>

References

- Ahmed, S. 2014. *Wilful Subjects*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Ainscow, M. 2020. "Promoting Inclusion and Equity in Education: Lessons from International Experiences." *Nordic Journal of Studies in Educational Policy* 6 (1): 7–16. <http://doi.org/10.1080/20020317.2020.1729587>.
- Ainscow, M., and K. Messiou. 2018. "Engaging with the Views of Students to Promote Inclusion in Education." *Journal of Educational Change* 19 (1): 1–17. <http://doi.org/10.1007/s10833-017-9312-1>.
- Ainscow, M., and A. Sandhill. 2010. "Developing Inclusive Education Systems: The Role of Organisational Cultures and Leadership." *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 14 (4): 401–416. <http://doi.org/10.1080/13603110802504903>.
- Allan, J. 2021. "Inclusive Education, Democracy and COVID-19." *Utbildning och Demokrati* 30 (1): 9–21. <http://doi.org/10.48059/uod.v30i1.1549>.
- Allan, J., and D. Youdell. 2017. "Ghostings, Materialisations and Flows in Britain's Special Educational Needs and Disability Assemblage." *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 38 (1): 70–82. <http://doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2015.1104853>.
- Andrews, L. 2011. "Teaching Makes a Difference." 2 February. Available: [Accessed June 20, 2022]. <https://www.iwa.wales/agenda/2011/02/teaching-makes-a-difference/>.
- Ball, S. J. 2013. *Foucault, Power and Education*. New York: Routledge. <http://doi.org/10.4324/9780203078662>.
- Ball, S. J. 2015. "What is Policy? 21 Years Later: Reflections on the Possibilities of Policy Research." *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 36 (3): 306–313. <http://doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2015.1015279>.
- Ball, S. J. 2017. *The Education Debate*. Third. Bristol: Policy Press. <http://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1t893tk>.
- Ball, S. J., M. Maguire, and A. Braun. 2012. *How Schools Do Policy: Policy Enactments in Secondary Schools*. New York: Routledge. <http://doi.org/10.4324/9780203153185>.
- Ball, S. J., M. Maguire, A. Braun, and K. Hoskins. 2011. "Policy Actors: Doing Policy Work in Schools." *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 32 (4): 625–639. <http://doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2011.601565>.
- Bent, E., J. Hill, J. Rose, and L. Tickly. 2012. *Making the Difference: Ethnicity and Achievement in Bristol Schools*. Bristol LA.
- Bešić, E. 2020. "Intersectionality: A Pathway Towards Inclusive Education?" *Prospects* 49 (3–4): 111–122. <http://doi.org/10.1007/s11125-020-09461-6>.
- Bhopal, K. 2020. "Confronting White Privilege: The Importance of Intersectionality in the Sociology of Education." *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 41 (6): 807–816. <http://doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2020.1755224>.
- Biesta, G. J. J. 2016. *The Beautiful Risk of Education*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge. <http://doi.org/10.4324/9781315635866>.
- Bowe, R., S. Ball, and A. Gold. 1992. *Reforming Education and Changing Schools: Case Studies in Policy Sociology*. London: Routledge.
- Brantlinger, E. 2006. "The Big Glossies: How Textbooks Structure (Special) Education." In *Who Benefits from Special Education? Remediating (Fixing) Other People's Children*, edited by E. Brantlinger, 45–76. Mahwah, NJ and London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. <http://doi.org/10.4324/9781410617309>.
- Brennan, A., and F. King. 2022. "Teachers' Experience of Transformative Professional Learning to Narrow the Values Practice Gap Related to Inclusive Practice." *Cambridge Journal of Education* 52 (2): 175–193. <http://doi.org/10.1080/0305764X.2021.1965092>.
- Brennan, A., F. King, and J. Travers. 2021. "Supporting the Enactment of Inclusive Pedagogy in a Primary School." *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 25 (13): 1540–1557. <http://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2019.1625452>.

- Chaney, P. 2012. "Additional Learning Needs Policy in the Devolved Polities of the UK: A Systems Perspective." *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs* 12 (1): 28–36. <http://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-3802.2011.01207.x>.
- Conn, C., and M. Hutt. 2020. "Successful Futures for All? Additional Learning Needs in Wales in the Light of Curriculum Reform." *British Journal of Special Education* 47 (2): 152–169. <http://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8578.12307>.
- Connolly, P., B. Taylor, B. Francis, L. Archer, J. Hodgen, A. Mazenod, and A. Tereshchenko. 2019. "The Misallocation of Students to Academic Sets in Maths: A Study of Secondary Schools in England." *British Educational Research Journal* 45 (4): 873–897. <http://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3530>.
- Cullen, M. A., G. Lindsay, R. Hastings, L. Denne, C. Stanford, L. Beqirag, F. Elahi, et al. 2020. *Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools: Evidence Review*. London: EEF.
- Davies, B., and S. Gannon. 2012. "Collective Biography and the Entangled Enlivening of Being." *International Review of Qualitative Research* 5 (4): 357–376. <http://doi.org/10.1525/irqr.2012.5.4.357>.
- Davis, S. 2022. "Re-Imagining Initial Teacher Education (ITE) Using an Intersectional Lens." In *Diverse Educators: A Manifesto*, edited by H. Wilson and B. Kara, 473–477. London: University of Buckingham Press.
- Egan, D. 2017. *After PISA: A Way Forward for Education in Wales?*. Merthyr Tydfil: Bevan Foundation.
- Entrich, S. R. 2021. "Understanding Cross-National Differences in Inclusive Education Coverage: An Empirical Analysis." *IAFOR Journal of Education: Inclusive Education* 9 (4): 21–40. <http://doi.org/10.22492/ije.9.1.02>.
- Estyn. 2020. "Effective School Support for Disadvantages and Vulnerable Pupils – Case Studies of Good Practice." Available: https://www.estyn.gov.wales/system/files/2022-01/Effective%2520school%2520support%2520for%2520disadvantaged%2520and%2520vulnerable%2520pupils%2520en_0.pdf.
- European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education. 2016. *Raising the Achievement of All Learners in Inclusive Education: Literature Review*. edited by Kefallinou, A. Odense, Denmark: European Agency.
- European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education. 2022. *Profile for Inclusive Teacher Professional Learning: Including All Education Professionals in Teacher Professional Learning for Inclusion*. edited by De Vroey, A., A. Lecheval and A. Watkins. Odense, Denmark: European Agency.
- European Commission. 2020. "The Likely Impact of COVID-19 on Education: Reflections Based on the Existing Literature and Recent International Datasets." Available: [Accessed September 26, 2021]. <https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC121071>.
- Florian, L. 2012. "Preparing Teachers to Work in Inclusive Classrooms: Key Lessons for the Professional Development of Teacher Educators from Scotland's Inclusive Practice Project." *Journal of Teacher Education* 63 (4): 275–285. <http://doi.org/10.1177/0022487112447112>.
- Florian, L., and M. Beaton. 2018. "Inclusive Pedagogy in Action: Getting It Right for Every Child." *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 22 (8): 870–884. <http://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2017.1412513>.
- Florian, L., and A. Graham. 2014. "Can an Expanded Interpretation of Phronesis Support Teacher Professional Development for Inclusion?" *Cambridge Journal of Education* 44 (4): 465–478. <http://doi.org/10.1080/0305764X.2014.960910>.
- Foucault, M. 1979. *Discipline and Punish*, translated by A. Sheridan. New York: Vintage.
- Foucault, M. 1982. "The Subject and Power." *Critical Inquiry* 8 (4): 777–795. <http://doi.org/10.1086/448181>.
- Fox, N. J., and P. Alldred. 2015. "New Materialist Social Inquiry: Designs, Methods and the Research-Assemblage." *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 18 (4): 399–414. <http://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2014.921458>.
- Francis, B., L. Archer, J. Hodgen, D. Pepper, B. Taylor, and M.-C. Travers. 2017. "Exploring the Relative Lack of Impact of Research on 'Ability grouping' in England: A Discourse Analytic

- Account.” *Cambridge Journal of Education* 47 (1): 1–17. <http://doi.org/10.1080/0305764X.2015.1093095> .
- Goodley, D., K. Liddiard, and K. Runswick-Cole. 2018. “Feeling Disability: Theories of Affect and Critical Disability Studies.” *Disability and Society* 33 (2): 197–217. <http://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2017.1402752>.
- Goodley, D., K. Runswick-Cole, and K. Liddiard. 2016. “The Dishuman Child.” *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 37 (5): 770–784. <http://doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2015.1075731> .
- Guldbrandsson, K., and B. Fossum. 2009. “An Exploration of the Theoretical Concepts Policy Windows and Policy Entrepreneurs at the Swedish Public Health Arena.” *Health Promotion International* 24 (4): 434–444. <http://doi.org/10.1093/heapro/dap033>.
- Hallam, S., and J. Ireson. 2007. “Secondary School pupils’ Satisfaction with Their Ability Group Placements.” *British Educational Research Journal* 33 (1): 27–45. <http://doi.org/10.1080/01411920601104342>.
- Hammersley, M. 2014. *The Limits of Social Science: Causal Explanation and Value Relevance*. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications Ltd. <http://doi.org/10.4135/9781473906921> .
- Hardy, I., and S. Woodcock. 2015. “Inclusive Education Policies: Discourses of Difference, Diversity and Deficit.” *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 19 (2): 141–164. <http://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2014.908965> .
- Hargreaves, A., and D. Shirley. 2009. *The Fourth Way: The Inspiring Future for Educational Change*. Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press. <http://doi.org/10.4135/9781452219523> .
- Hart, S. 2012. *Thinking Through Teaching*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge. <http://doi.org/10.4324/9780203065051>.
- Hart, S., and M. J. Drummond. 2013. “Learning without Limits: Constructing a Pedagogy Free from Determinist Beliefs About Ability.” In *The SAGE Handbook of Special Education*, edited by L. Florian, 439–458. Los Angeles: Sage. <http://doi.org/10.4135/9781446282236.n28>.
- Higgins, S., S. Katsipataki, R. Coleman, P. Henderson, R. Major, and D. Coe. 2015. *The Sutton Trust – Education Endowment Foundation Teaching and Learning Toolkit*. London: EEF.
- Hughes, S., and H. Lewis. 2020. “Tensions in Current Curriculum Reform and the Development of teachers’ Professional Autonomy.” *The Curriculum Journal* 31 (2): 290–302. <http://doi.org/10.1002/curj.25> .
- Kearns, H. 2005. “Exploring the Experiential Learning of Special Educational Needs Coordinators.” *Journal of In-Service Education* 31 (1): 131–150. <http://doi.org/10.1080/13674580500200260>.
- Kingdon, J. W. 1984. *Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Knight, C., Z. Clegg, C. Conn, M. Hutt, and T. Crick. 2022. “Aspiring to Include versus Implicit ‘Othering’: Teachers’ Perceptions of Inclusive Education in Wales.” *British Journal of Special Education* 49 (1): 6–23. <http://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8578.12394>.
- Knight, C., and T. Crick. 2021. “Inclusive Education in Wales: Interpreting Discourses of Values and Practice Using Critical Policy Analysis.” *ECNU Review of Education* 5 (2): 258–283. <http://doi.org/10.1177/20965311211039858> .
- Lemke, M., and L. Zhu. 2018. “Successful Futures? New Economy Business Logics, Child Rights, and Welsh Educational Reform.” *Policy Futures in Education* 16 (3): 251–276. <http://doi.org/10.1177/1478210317751269> .
- Lenz Taguchi, H. 2010. “Rethinking Pedagogical Practices in Early Childhood Education: A Multidimensional Approach to Learning and Inclusion.” In *Contemporary Perspectives on Early Childhood Education*, edited by N. Yelland, 14–32. Berkshire: Open University Press.
- Lin, H., M. Hill, and L. Grudoff. 2022. “Constructing Special Educational Needs Coordinators’ Identities Through Emotions.” *Journal of Education for Teaching* 48 (1): 89–101. <http://doi.org/10.1080/02607476.2021.1928481>.
- McGillicuddy, D., and D. Devine. 2018. “‘Turned off’ or ‘Ready to fly’: Ability Grouping as an Act of Symbolic Violence in Primary School.” *Teaching and Teacher Education* 70:88–99. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2017.11.008>.

- Michaels, S., N. P. Goucher, and D. McCarthy. 2006. "Policy Windows, Policy Change and Organisational Learning: Watersheds in the Evolution of Watershed Management." *Environmental Management* 38 (6): 983–992. <http://doi.org/10.1007/s00267-005-0269-0>.
- Minott, M. 2019. "Reflective Teaching, Inclusive Teaching and the Teacher's Tasks in the Inclusive Classroom: A Literary Investigation." *British Journal of Special Education* 46 (2): 226–238. <http://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8578.12260>.
- Mowat, J. G. 2018. "Closing the Attainment Gap – a Realistic Proposition or an Elusive Pipe-Dream?" *Journal of Education Policy* 33 (2): 299–321. <http://doi.org/10.1080/02680939.2017.1352033>.
- Naraian, S. 2019. "Precarious, Debilitated and Ordinary: Rethinking (In)capacity for Inclusion." *Curriculum Inquiry* 49 (4): 464–484. <http://doi.org/10.1080/03626784.2019.1659100>.
- Naraian, S. 2021. "Making Inclusion Matter: Critical Disability Studies and Teacher Education." *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 53 (3): 298–313. <http://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2021.1882579>.
- Naraian, S., and S. L. Schlessinger. 2021. *Narratives of Inclusive Teaching: Stories Of Becoming In the Field*. New York: Peter Lang US. <http://doi.org/10.3726/b18136>.
- Ní Bhroin, O., and F. King. 2020. "Teacher Education for Inclusive Education: A Framework for Developing for the Inclusion of Students with Support Plans." *European Journal of Teacher Education* 43 (1): 38–63. <http://doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2019.1691993>.
- Nieto, S., and K. McDonough. 2011. "Placing Equity Front and center' Revisited." In *Studying Diversity in Teacher Education*, edited by A. F. Ball and C. A. Tyson, 363–384. New York: Rowman and Littlefield.
- OECD. 2014. *Improving Schools in Wales: An OECD Perspective*. Paris: OECD Publishing. Available at: [accessed 24 Jan 2022]. <http://www.oecd.org/education/Improving-schools-in-Wales.pdf>.
- OECD. 2020a. "Ensuring Inclusive Education in All Regions (SDG 4)." In *OECD Regions and Cities at a Glance 2020*. Paris: OECD Publishing. <http://doi.org/10.1787/5a5089a2-en>.
- OECD. 2020b. "The Impact of COVID-19 on Education: Insights from Education at a Glance 2020." Available: [Accessed September 26, 2021]. <https://www.oecd.org/education/the-impact-of-covid-19-on-education-insights-education-at-a-glance-2020.pdf>.
- OECD. 2022. "Review of Inclusive Education in Portugal." Available: [Accessed July 1, 2022]. <https://www.oecd.org/publications/review-of-inclusive-education-in-portugal-a9c95902-en.htm>.
- Oliver, M., and C. Barnes. 2012. *The New Politics of Disablement*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. <http://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-230-39244-1>.
- Osberg, D., and G. Biesta. 2010. "The End/S of Education. Complexity and the Conundrum of the Inclusive Educational Curriculum." *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 14 (6): 593–607. <http://doi.org/10.1080/13603110802530684>.
- Power, S. 2016. "The Politics of Education and the Misrecognition of Wales." *Oxford Review of Education* 42 (3): 285–298. <http://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2016.1184871>.
- Power, S., and C. Taylor. 2020. "Not in the Classroom, but Still on the Register: Hidden Forms of School Exclusion." *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 24 (8): 867–881. <http://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2018.1492644>.
- Priestley, M., G. J. J. Biesta, and S. Robinson. 2015. *Teacher Agency: An Ecological Approach*. New York: Bloomsbury. <http://doi.org/10.4324/9781315678573-15>.
- Runswick-Cole, K., and N. Hodge. 2009. "Needs or Rights? A Challenge to the Discourse of Special Education." *British Journal of Special Education* 36 (4): 198–203. <http://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8578.2009.00438.x>.
- Sahlberg, P. 2007. "Education Policies for Raising Student Learning: The Finnish Approach." *Journal of Education Policy* 22 (2): 147–171. <http://doi.org/10.1080/02680930601158919>.
- Sinnema, C., N. Nieveen, and M. Priestley. 2020. "Successful Futures, Successful Curriculum: What Can Wales Learn from International Curriculum Reforms?" *The Curriculum Journal* 31 (2): 181–201. <http://doi.org/10.1002/curj.17>.

- Skerritt, C., G. McNamara, I. Quinn, J. O'Hara, and M. Brown. 2021. "Middle Leaders as Policy Translators: Prime Actors in the Enactment of Policy." *Journal of Education Policy* 38 (4): 567–585. <http://doi.org/10.1080/02680939.2021.2006315> .
- Slee, R. 2019. "Belonging in an Age of Exclusion." *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 23 (9): 909–922. <http://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2019.1602366>.
- Sobande, F. 2019. "Woke-Washing: "Intersectional" Femvertising and Branding "Woke" Bravery." *European Journal of Marketing* 54 (11): 2723–2745. <http://doi.org/10.1108/EJM-02-2019-0134>.
- Spina, N. 2019. "'Once Upon a time': Examining Ability Grouping and Differentiation Practices in Cultures of Evidence-Based Decision-Making." *Cambridge Journal of Education* 49 (3): 329–348. <http://doi.org/10.1080/0305764X.2018.1533525> .
- Struyve, C., K. Hannes, C. Meredith, M. Vandecandelaere, S. Gielen, and B. De Fraine. 2018. "Teacher Leadership in Practice: Mapping the Negotiation of the Position of the Special Educational Needs Coordinator in Schools." *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research* 62 (5): 701–718. <http://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2017.1306798>.
- Tereshchenko, A., B. Francis, L. Archer, J. Hodgen, A. Mazenod, A. Taylor, D. Pepper, and M.-C. Travers. 2019. "Learners' Attitudes to Mixed-Attainment Grouping: Examining the Views of Students in High, Middle and Low Attainment." *Research in Papers Education* 34 (4): 425–444. <http://doi.org/10.1080/02671522.2018.1452962> .
- Tickly, L. 2022. "Racism and the Future of Anti-Racism in Education: A Critical Analysis of the Sewell Report." *British Educational Research Journal* 48 (3): 469–487. <http://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3776>.
- Tomlinson, S. 2017. *A Sociology of Special and Inclusive Education: Exploring the Manufacture of Inability*. New York: Routledge.
- Van de Putte, I., E. De Schauwer, G. Van Hove, and B. Davies. 2018. "Rethinking Agency as an Assemblage from Change Management to Collaborative Work." *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 22 (8): 885–901. <http://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2017.1412514> .
- Waters-Davies, J., and N. MacDonald. 2022. "The Capable Child as a Threshold Concept for Inclusive Early Childhood Education and Care." In *Inclusive Pedagogies for Early Childhood Education*, edited by C. Conn and A. Murphy, 164–181. New York: Routledge.
- Welsh Assembly Government. 2004. "Special Educational Needs Code of Practice for Wales." Available: [Accessed June 28, 2022]. <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-03/special-educational-needs-code-of-practice-for-wales.pdf>.
- Welsh Assembly Government. 2008. "Statements or Something Better? Summary of Progress to Date and the Next Steps." Available: [Accessed June 24, 2022]. <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/8830/2/summaryprogressenglish%3Fflang%3Den>.
- Welsh Assembly Government. 2010. "A Curriculum for All Learners: Guidance to Support Teachers of Learners with Additional Learning Needs." Available: [Accessed June 20, 2022]. <https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/11124/1/100426curriculumforlearnersen.pdf>.
- Welsh Government. 2014. "Legislative Proposals for Additional Learning Needs – White Paper." 22, May. Available: [Accessed June 20, 2022]. https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2018-01/140604-consultation-document-en_0.pdf .
- Welsh Government. 2015. "Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act." Available: [Accessed August 17, 2022]. <https://gov.wales/well-being-future-generations-wales-act-2015-guidance>.
- Welsh Government. 2018a. "A Rapid Evidence Assessment of the Effectiveness of Educational Interventions to Support Children and Young People with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder." Available: [Accessed June 24, 2022]. <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/statistics-and-research/2019-06/180515-assessment-effectiveness-educational-interventions-support-children-attention-deficit-hyperactivity-disorder-en.pdf> .
- Welsh Government. 2018b. "A Rapid Evidence Assessment of the Effectiveness of Educational Interventions to Support Children and Young People with Autistic Spectrum Disorder." Available: [Accessed June 24, 2022] <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/statistics-and-research/2019-06/180515-assessment-effectiveness-educational-interventions-support-children-autistic-spectrum-disorder-en.pdf> .

- Welsh Government. 2019a. "Research to Establish a Baseline of the SEN System in Wales, GSR Report Number 8/2019." Cardiff: Welsh Government. Available: [Accessed September 23, 2021]. <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/statistics-and-research/2019-04/research-to-establish-a-baseline-of-the-special-educational-needs-system-in-wales-final-report.pdf>.
- Welsh Government. 2019b. "Support for Children and Young People with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in Educational Settings." Available: [Accessed June 24, 2022]. <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-01/ways-of-supporting-learners-with-attention-deficit-hyperactivity-disorder-adhd.pdf>.
- Welsh Government. 2019c. "Support for Children and Young People with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in Educational Settings." Available: [Accessed June 24, 2022]. <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-01/ways-of-supporting-learners-with-autistic-spectrum-disorder-asd.pdf>.
- Welsh Government. 2020. "The Curriculum for Wales." Available: [Accessed March 23, 2022]. <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales>.
- Welsh Government. 2021a. "The Additional Learning Needs Code for Wales 2021." Available: [Accessed July 21, 2021]. <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-03/210326-the-additional-learning-needs-code-for-wales-2021.pdf>.
- Welsh Government. 2021b. "Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Communities, Contributions and Cynefin in the New Curriculum Working Group: Final Report." Cardiff: Welsh Government. Available: [Accessed August 17, 2022]. <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-03/black-asian-minority-ethnic-communities-contributions-cynefin-new-curriculum-working-group-final-report.pdf>.
- Welsh Government. 2021c. "The National Strategy for Educational Research and Enquiry: Vision Document." Available: [Accessed August 18, 2022]. <https://gov.wales/national-strategy-educational-research-and-enquiry-nsere-vision-document-html>.
- Welsh Government. 2021d. "Programme for Government." Available: [Accessed July 26, 2021]. <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-06/programme-for-government-2021-to-2026.pdf>.
- Welsh Government. 2021e. "Renew and Reform: Supporting learners' Wellbeing and Progression." Available: [Accessed September 23, 2021]. <https://gov.wales/renew-and-reform-supporting-learners-wellbeing-and-progression-html>.
- Welsh Government. 2022a. "Anti-Racist Wales, Action Plan." Cardiff: Welsh Government. Available: [Accessed August 8,]. <https://gov.wales/anti-racist-wales-action-plan>.
- Welsh Government. 2022b. "New Framework for School Improvement to Focus on Learner Progression." Available: [Accessed July 1, 2022]. <https://gov.wales/new-framework-school-improvement-focus-learner-progression>.
- Welsh Government. 2023. "Grouping Practices for Learning Support." Final report. Available: [accessed March 27, 2023]. <https://hwb.gov.wales/professional-development/the-national-strategy-for-educational-research-and-enquiry-nsere/collaborative-evidence-network>.
- Zavattaro, S. M., and D. Bearfield. 2022. "Weaponization of Wokeness: The Theater of Management and Implications for Public Administration." *Public Administration Review* 82 (3): 585–593. <http://doi.org/10.1111/puar.13484>.