Several authors in this volume (see the Adapted Physical Activity part in this volume) have discussed some of the possibilities and challenges in adapted physical education. In this chapter, the focus shifts towards the notion of inclusion which in recent years has become an important aspect of educational policies internationally (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2013; see also Chapter 17 by Lieberman & Block, this volume). Inclusive education differs from previously held notions of ‘integration’ and ‘mainstreaming’, which tended to be concerned principally with ‘special educational needs’ and implied learners changing or becoming ‘ready for’ accommodation by the mainstream. By contrast, the term ‘inclusive education’ now acknowledges the importance of equal access and equal opportunities for all (not just those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities – SEND). It is about rejecting segregation or exclusion of learners for whatever reason – ability, gender, language, care status, family income, disability, sexuality, colour, religion, or ethnic origin. It also encourages the modification of the environment (i.e. the structure, organisation, learning, curriculum, and assessment practices of schools) so that diverse learning needs can be met, whatever the origin or nature of those needs.

Inclusion is about the child’s right to participate and the school’s duty to accept by making learning more meaningful and relevant for all, particularly those learners most vulnerable to exclusionary pressures. Inclusion is based on “a paradigm shift from a deficit model of disability to one of social/human rights” (Rieser, 2013, p. 1). It is considered a pathway to mitigate the negative effects of poverty, social, racial, ethnic inequalities, and cultural disintegration (UNESCO, 2008). It is thus underpinned by a strong social agenda. Educating young people about the value of learning (and living) with others and understanding that diversity is a resource and asset to their educational and life experiences is paramount (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education [EADSNE], 2012). The notion of inclusion has therefore clear implications for how teachers teach (and how and what teachers learn), with inclusive pedagogies being the foundation of effective teaching and learning.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine how teachers can be educated to adopt effective inclusive pedagogies that meet the diverse needs of the student population. Some of the challenges and barriers encountered will be discussed and possibilities for future teacher education programmes will be considered. The chapter begins with an historical overview of how our understanding of inclusion has changed over time. We then present the principles of effective
inclusive teaching followed by an analysis of the literature on the nature and quality of existing initial teacher education (ITE) and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programmes. We will then consider the implications for evidence-based practice by drawing upon a national CPD programme on inclusive Physical Education (PE) in England and conclude with points for future research and practice on inclusive education.

**Historical overview**

Inclusive education emerged out of ‘special’ education. The establishment of special schools in the nineteenth century and before was based on an instinct to expect and to identify difference and disability and occurred simultaneously with the growth of the eugenic and psychometric movements which focused on the systematic medicalisation of the body and mind (Hodkinson, 2012; see also chapters 14 & 16 by Eliane Mauerberg-deCosta et al., this volume). These ‘sciences’ gave the logical foundations and practical tools for educators to establish the quality of every student and to make decisions about who would be part of, and who would be separated from, the mainstream education provision. However, after the Second World War, such mechanisms began to lose credibility as educators began to think more deeply about the effects of separation, including the devaluing of the separated minority.

The 1960s saw the rise of the Civil Rights movement, initially concerned mainly with ‘race’ and subsequently expanded to other groups that experienced discrimination, segregation, and oppression. In the 1970s and 1980s, as a result of the heightened importance of social justice internationally, action was being demanded to eliminate exclusion and segregation (Thomas, 2013). Within this anti-discriminatory climate, parents/carers of students educated in special schools began to challenge the decisions of authorities and professionals; and there was subsequently a clear move towards their placement into mainstream schools (Nepi, Fioravanti, Nannini, & Peru, 2015). In England, this was legitimatised by the 1978 Warnock Report and the subsequent 1981 Education Act. In the US, major changes in inclusive education took place during the 1960s during which period the foundations for developing a positive learning environment and access to effective education for disabled students were laid (United States Department of Education [USDE], 2008).

Significant developments in educational theory, such as the resurgence of interest in progressive education, also contributed to the realisation that the notion of (dis)ability and its relationship to achievement should be challenged. More specifically, arguments that success or failure at school were constructed rather than within-child led educators to question beliefs about the crystal-hard relationship that had been assumed to exist between ability and achievement. Academics over several decades (e.g. Coles, 1997, Rouse, 2007) have argued that children fall behind at school for a host of reasons, most of them having little or nothing to do with ‘dysfunctions’ in the workings of their brains. Based on socio-cultural understanding of learning, the notion of inclusion therefore “promotes a view of human difference as an aspect of every person, rather than something that characterises or differentiates some learners from others” (Rouse & Florian, 2012, p. i). Consequently, it is not ‘diagnosis’ and separate treatment that are important for success in schools, but rather the existence of the right conditions for learning.

There have been several reports that emphasise this point. Articulations of these new developments in ways of thinking, in policy and in law include: The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child which in 1989 set out children’s rights in respect of freedom from discrimination and in respect of the representation of their wishes and views; and the UNESCO Salamanca Statement (1994) which called on all governments to give the highest priority to inclusive education. The Human Rights Act passed in 1998 contained an anti-discrimination article.
and brought the European Convention on Human Rights into UK legislation. British courts must now adhere to the convention. The Disability Discrimination Act (1995) also contained provisions to ensure that disabled pupils are not treated less favourably than other pupils. In the US, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement (IDEA) Federal Law stated that children with disabilities have the right to be educated in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) (i.e. a child's school placement must be as close as possible to the child's home and the child is educated in the school he or she would attend if not disabled). Under IDEA and other related laws, the need for quality teachers was recognised to ensure the appropriate education of children with disabilities.

However, in spite of a number of progressive changes in legislation, achieving inclusion and reducing underachievement continues to be one of the biggest problems faced by schools across Europe (EADSNE, 2010). Whilst there is very little robust evidence on the effects of inclusion on the achievement of pupils with diverse needs (Nepi et al., 2015), concerns have been raised that SEND children (in England) are still vulnerable to exclusion from the culture, curriculum, and community of mainstream schools (Runswick-Cole, 2011). In this context, there are strong voices questioning the extent to which inclusion is a 'sound educational practice' for everyone (Hodkinson, 2012). Their arguments have rested principally on the "impracticability of inclusion, its ideological or values-based provenance, and the pedagogic and social benefits of special education" (Hick & Thomas, 2008, p. xxii).

The maintenance of exclusionary practices, if and when applicable can be partly explained by examining the impact of other political, educational, and socio-economic influences on school systems (Bourke, 2009). Naraian, Ferguson, and Thomas (2012) argued that the policy of inclusion is fundamentally incompatible with the marketisation of education and the standards-driven, outcomes-based philosophy that underpins much of educational endeavours in recent years. In the context of competitive, selective, and socially divisive policies (Hick & Thomas, 2008), the future of schools is determined to a large extent by how well their students perform in standardised tests. In the US, for example, the 2001 federal No Child Left Behind Act demanded that all students demonstrate proficiency in reading and mathematics by 2014 (Naraian et al., 2012). This example provides a clear illustration of the ‘framework of exceptionality’ (Hick & Thomas, 2008) in which teachers and schools find themselves. Similar targets dominate the UK educational system and it has been argued that in this environment, it is often the case that SEND children are viewed as “inefficient consumers of scarce resources” (Goodley & McLaughlin, 2011, p. 5). But there also are concerns about the prevailing stereotypes about the presence, participation, and achievement of other groups of learners that appear to reflect and perpetuate deficit-orientated explanations of failure.

Research suggests that the relationship between school performance and deprivation is so close that the two variables appear to be simply alternative measures of the same thing (Blane, White, & Morris, 1996). It also seems that learners from minority ethnic communities have long been disproportionately targeted by special education (Hick & Thomas, 2008). In this context, institutional racism has become a widely recognised concept in the UK, and in a government commissioned report, it was acknowledged that persisting inequalities take new forms:

Whilst overt racism (at least on the part of staff) is now unusual in schools, discrimination against the grandchildren and great grandchildren of the early Black migrants persists in the form of culturally unrepresentative curricula and low expectations of attainment and behaviour on the part of staff. (Department for Education and Skills [DfES], 2006, p. 3)
Riehl (2000) presented compelling evidence demonstrating that “the challenges and opportunities posed by diversity are growing” (p. 57). So, this issue is complex and questions remain about the means by which effective inclusive education can be achieved in practice (Runswick-Cole, 2011). There are many and varied ways of helping to develop more inclusive practices in education and physical education and the following section looks at some of these in an attempt to answer questions about what schools and teachers can do to offer a truly inclusive education experience to all young people.

**Theoretical framework**

As pupils arrive in schools from different backgrounds, and with different prior experiences, needs, (dis)abilities, and aspirations, the key challenge for schools and teachers is to provide a coordinated, informed, and tailored support to students who differ in important ways (Dyson, Howes, & Roberts, 2002). The issue of inclusion necessitates school-level action. Research suggests that schools which have an inclusive, participatory culture display a number of consistent characteristics (Winter & O’Raw, 2010). However, no matter how inclusive schools might think they are, they all need to engage in ongoing critical reflection about their ethos, forms of organisation, curriculum, and teaching/learning/assessment practices to ensure that, within an ever-evolving student population, barriers are removed. To this end, the Index of Inclusion (Booth & Ainscow, 2002) was developed with the aim to support the inclusive development of schools. Although there is a large body of literature on school organisation around inclusion (e.g. EADSNE, 2004), because of limited space, this section focuses on the central principles of teaching and learning with the intention of offering practitioners a framework for thinking about effective inclusive pedagogy.

Research designed to explore questions about teaching and learning for inclusion is relatively scarce. However, the available evidence seems to point towards some key principles that reflect a powerful and reflective pedagogy that has been developing over the last 100 years (Hartley, 2009). John Dewey, an influential American educational philosopher in the first half of the twentieth century, argued that pupils should participate actively in decisions that affect their learning. For Dewey, “the child is the starting point, the centre, and the end” (cited in Flanagan, 1994, p. 4). Likewise, the fundamental argument underpinning the ‘child-centred’ educational philosophy of the 1960s was that education should “start with the needs of the child” (Hartley, 2009, p. 427). Since these early elaborations, the development of pedagogical approaches grounded in constructivist and socio-cultural perspectives of learning (e.g. cooperative, reciprocal learning, learning communities) enable young people to ‘learn together rather than separately’ (Dyson et al., 2002) and to be involved in their own education in a meaningful way.

A persistent theme in making inclusive learning a reality in schools is pupil choice (and pupil voice). Offering pupils opportunities to choose what, how, and where they learn represents a fundamental step towards a truly inclusive pedagogical approach. In this case, reflecting existing rhetoric about the importance of personalising learning, students are not consumers but co-creators of their educational experiences (Makopoulou, 2011). This requires that teachers engage in dialogue with learners and their families in order to understand and respect their diversities and to “jointly create suitable and attainable conditions for achieving relevant and pertinent learning opportunities” (UNESCO, 2008, p. 11).

Separate programmes should also be viewed with scepticism. Offering separate instruction and promoting individual work (with a learning support assistant) locates those students who are perceived to be lagging behind at the margins of the classroom (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). In sharp contrast, a key element of an inclusive learning environment is
“not the individualisation but the diversification of the educational provision” (Blanco, 2009, p. 11). Learner diversity needs to be thoroughly understood and considered in the planning phase, instead of taking a ‘one size fits all’ approach ‘on the basis of an average student’ only to then subsequently “carry out individualised actions to respond to the needs of specific students” (Blanco, 2009, p. 14). Inclusive pedagogy therefore means that teachers “extend what is ordinarily available” and “reduce the need to mark some learners as different” (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011, p. 826).

In the US, IDEA (federal law) supported the provision of ‘culturally relevant instruction’ for diverse learners in regular classroom environments, which revolved around the following principles (USDE, 2008, p. 41):

- linking assessments of student progress directly to the instructional curricula rather than abstract norms to standardised tests;
- creating classroom environments that reflect different cultural heritages and accommodate different styles of communication and learning;
- developing and implementing family-friendly practices to establish collaborative partnerships with parents/carers.

Similar questions about the effective inclusion of all learners seem to have troubled PE academics and teachers over a number of years. The debate began in the 1960s when it was recognised that students vary in physical ability for a host of reasons and that teaching the ‘correct’ technique based on a ‘model in teacher’s mind’ is neither achievable nor appropriate: “A technique suitable for one may be limiting for another with different physical or mental attributes” (Knapp, 1964, p. 14). Knapp (1964) suggested that effective instruction should rather build upon the interests and abilities of each individual. Given the time of its publication, this radical and progressive proposition problematised taken-for-granted normative practices that continue to enforce a ‘constitutional divide’ between ‘perfected naturalised humanity’ and the ‘imperfect bodies’ (Campbell, 2009) who fail to perform according to pre-determined standards.

Since then, the ‘struggle’ to meet and support learners’ diverse needs in PE settings has been embedded – albeit not always explicitly – in a range of topical publications. The most striking example of an expanded view of PE pedagogy is the US-based ‘Spectrum of teaching styles’. Introduced by Mosston over 40 years ago and further developed by Mosston and Ashworth (2010) over the decades, the spectrum is testimony to the substantial consensus of PE experts that teachers must draw upon a range of teaching styles (demonstrating ‘mobility ability’) to respond in a personalised way to learners’ diversities. Within the spectrum, the inclusion teaching style (where teachers present learners with different entry points) highlights the importance of giving students choice over what and how they learn. In this way, learners are self-regulated and learning is viewed as “something they do for themselves rather than as something that is done to or for them” (Mosston & Ashworth, 2010).

The ‘inclusion spectrum’, developed by Ken Black and Pam Stevenson in the UK, offers another theoretical and practical framework for enhancing learning experiences and outcomes for all. More specifically, it is predicated that all pupils will be included and challenged to progress in their learning if and when their teachers differentiate activities by Space, Task, Equipment, or People (STEP) and by adopting different approaches to teaching and learning. These include ‘open’ (i.e. all play together), ‘modified’ (i.e. adapt activities using the STEP tool), ‘parallel’ (i.e. ability groups), or ‘separate’ (i.e. temporary interventions aligned with the lesson learning objectives) activities – or through a process called ‘reverse integration’ as all pupils participate in disability sport (Stevenson, 2009). Underpinned by the social model of disability, the inclusion spectrum
has not been without its critiques. Fitzgerald (2012, p. 445) argued that encouraging teachers to “modify or tinker with sport based skills and the composition of the groups receiving instruction” does little to question and unsettle prevailing ‘normative practices’. The inclusion model has not been subjected to intense empirical investigation about its effects and effectiveness; it is thus difficult to consider it to be a universally agreed and ‘proven’ model for effective inclusive practice.

Understanding students’ diverse learning needs lies at the heart of effective inclusive practices. In recent years, it is widely accepted that assessment must be used in ways that enhance student learning by engaging learners in understanding where they are in their learning, where they need to go next (but the destination could be different for different learners), and how best to get there (Frapwell, 2010). There also is consensus that high quality assessment must be ‘valid’ and ‘reliable’. However, inside the assessing systems of schools there are in fact few objective standards (that are not normative). In their absence, there remains little more than the comparison of one student with another. It is on such comparisons that beliefs about ability rest and are perpetuated (Evans & Penney, 2008). Therefore, assessment can be seen and practised as a process for enabling and legitimising the hierarchisation and judgement of students (Thomas, 2013).

Thomas (2013) has recently claimed that “a strong case needs to be made for a new kind of thinking and policy about inclusion” (p. 474), if the ambitious rights-based and outcomes-based arguments that underpin inclusion are to be realised. This needs policy makers, researchers and practitioners to draw upon present-day ideas about thinking, learning and teaching and to reject twentieth century thinking on exceptionality. In this context, Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programmes can play an important role.

**Current trends and issues**

Research evidence suggests that the quality of teachers is an important factor determining student learning and achievement. In the US, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2002) required the presence of well-qualified teachers in every classroom and the use of evidence-based practice to optimise student learning (USDE, 2008). Internationally, it is acknowledged that in order to offer a truly inclusive experience, teachers need to engage in high quality ITE and CPD programmes. When effective, it is in these settings that teachers’ understandings about the importance of inclusive teaching and learning are developed and expanded, attitudes and perceptions about student diversity are examined, and the ways they understand, approach, and respond to learners’ differences are scrutinised (Florian & Rouse, 2009; Forlin, 2010; UNESCO, 2008, 2013). However, although the vision and goals of inclusive education are clearly outlined in European and international policies, over the last decade there are claims that preparing and supporting teachers for inclusive classrooms is “one of the most important challenges facing teacher education today” (Voltz, 2003, p. 5).

Findings from the Teaching and Learning International Survey showed that ITE is not having enough impact on teacher preparedness for inclusive education (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2009). Other studies also suggest that teachers do not feel adequately prepared to respond to the challenges of diverse learners, raising fundamental questions about the quality and effectiveness of available provision (Rieser, 2013). Teachers often express fear, anxiety, and reluctance to include learners with special needs in mainstream schools (Forlin, 2010). These findings can be partly explained by evidence indicating that despite major policy reforms, ITE programmes have yet to undergo the anticipated and necessary large-scale curriculum changes to align with these requirements (Hodkinson, 2010; Rieser, 2013). An urgent reconsideration of the curriculum in the whole continuum of teacher education from ITE to CPD is thus needed (EADSNE, 2010).
In a recent publication by UNESCO (2013), a range of curriculum-related challenges in ITE were identified; one of the most pertinent being the apparent lack of a broad understanding of inclusion (Rieser, 2013). The ITE curriculum often is based on concepts of segregation and special education with little if any consideration given to other groups of learners who face exclusionary pressures. Linked to this, it is often the case that inclusion is treated as a ‘stand-alone topic’ (with specifically designed one-off modules on SEND students) or a ‘specialist issue’ (additional placements in special schools) rather than embedded as a key principle of effective teaching (UNESCO, 2013). However, such professional learning experiences reinforce narrow interpretations of the notion of inclusion and perpetuate prevailing beliefs that children who experience learning or other difficulties or disabilities are the responsibility of specialist trained teachers (EADSNE, 2010).

Large discrepancies between the content of ITE curriculum and the practical knowledge and skills teachers need to implement inclusive education in schools have also been identified (European Training Foundation, 2010). Researchers question programmes that are heavily lecture-based and which are delivered by teacher educators who lack expertise and ‘practical wisdom’ (UNESCO, 2013). The issue here is not the enhancement of trainee teachers’ theoretical knowledge per se – as teacher knowledge is a significant factor affecting student achievement (Timperley & Alton-Lee, 2008). The problem exists and escalates when (trainee) teachers have limited opportunities to understand the key principles of effective inclusive pedagogies and to reflect upon their own beliefs, attitudes, and values; factors which appear to shape the ways teachers organise the learning environment (Forlin, Loreman, Sharma, & Earle, 2009). Critical theorists also suggest that trainee teachers need more and better opportunities to engage critically with the causes (e.g. historical, socio-cultural, ideological) of discriminatory and oppressive practices in education (Ballard, 2003). Instead of focusing on the development of instructional competences in a narrow and technicist way, it is therefore considered paramount that ITE (and CPD) programmes focus on the formation and modification of attitudes and cultures that influence the way teacher knowledge is put into practice.

In ITE settings, this necessitates extensive and high quality school placements. Research suggests that it is only through opportunities to engage with diverse learners in authentic contexts that trainee teachers can develop an in-depth understanding of child development and diversity in context (UNESCO, 2013). To ensure quality in provision, strong collaborative partnerships between ITE programmes and schools need to be developed and sustained, offering school staff and teacher educators opportunities to draw and build upon their different forms of expertise (McIntyre, 2009). The purpose of school placements should not only revolve around the application of taught competencies but also pursue a mutual transformative agenda so that all partners involved: develop, review and evolve ways of teaching with the primary aim of responding to individual differences.

Although the research evidence on the challenges and opportunities within current ITE programmes is accumulating, very little research on the nature and quality of existing CPD programmes on inclusion is available. Contrary to other national strategies (e.g. numeracy, literacy), CPD for inclusion is considered a neglected area with only limited and largely fragmented CPD opportunities offered to teachers (Hodkinson, 2012). Existing research (e.g. Stubbs, 2008) has examined the nature and quality of different CPD forms (e.g. school-based provision with access to a mentor, short courses) and findings largely reflect the wider CPD literature on how best to support teachers to learn (see Chapter 16 by Mauerberg-deCastro et al., this volume). However, there is very little understanding on what teachers learn about inclusion in CPD settings, the extent to which this knowledge reflects current and broad conceptualisations of inclusive pedagogy, whether the opportunities teachers have to ‘ponder the rhetoric and reality’ of
effective inclusion of diverse learners in their schools (Riehl, 2000, p. 56), and how (or whether) this learning impacts upon their practices. It is therefore clear that the evidence base of CPD on inclusion needs to be expanded. The project reported in the following section sought to address this gap.

**Implications for evidence-based practice**

In 2013, a national CPD programme on ‘Inclusive Physical Education’ (IPE-CPD) was launched in England. Funded by a UK business and managed by the Youth Sport Trust (an independent charity supporting school PE in England) this programme was offered (and is still being offered) to all primary and secondary teachers and other adults (e.g. teaching assistants, sport coaches) involved in the education of children. Its aim was to increase the confidence and competence of school staff to deliver high quality IPE experiences to all students, including pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND; see also Chapter 16, Mauerberg-de Castro et al., this volume, for discussion of teacher confidence to teach students with disability). The ‘inclusion spectrum’ provided the theoretical framework (or ‘theory of instruction’; Wayne, Yoon, Cronen, & Garet, 2008) for the programme.

Delivered in a ‘traditional’ format, through a one-off, day-long (6 hours) workshop, the content and structure of the programme were designed (and reviewed) by ‘experts’ on inclusion but the delivery was the responsibility of approximately 40 trained tutors. The authors were commissioned by the YST to carry out an independent evaluation with the goal to provide evidence of programme impact on participants’ confidence to deliver high quality IPE (objective 1) and to capture the quality of CPD implementation (objective 2). A range of both qualitative and quantitative methods were employed, including interviews with tutors (n=15), systematic observations of workshops (n=20), participant questionnaires (n=750), and follow-up interviews with school staff and students with the aim to capture CPD impact in a more detailed way (Makopoulou, 2015). Drawing upon evidence from workshop observations, this section provides evidence on some aspects of its content and ways participants were supported to learn.

Evidence suggests that, at a theoretical level, this programme reflected the non-categorical definition of inclusion (offering tailored opportunities to every child) supported in the literature. However, despite this seemingly clear and shared conceptual understanding underpinning workshop design, some confusion and disparity was apparent in most of the workshops observed. Evidence showed that although most tutors made clear references to the need to understand inclusion broadly, the practical aspect of the workshop — dominated by examples about the inclusion of SEND students — was perhaps the space when/where tutors’ conflicting and somewhat confused interpretations were most vividly evident. Although a few tutors offered advice on how to support the ‘whole spectrum’ (including the more able students), there was little (if any) elaboration on how to effectively educate a student population that is diverse in terms of race and ethnicity, social class, gender, or cultural/linguistic factors.

Given the purpose of this programme, the most striking finding was the limited (if any) meaningful connections made between the CPD experience and participants’ existing practices. Observations showed that, in most cases, tutors allowed insufficient opportunity for participants to articulate how they addressed effective inclusion of all learners; to provide examples of good practice or to discuss potential challenges/barriers encountered. This lack of understanding of participants’ existing practices and attitudes led to some tutors making a series of assumptions about the knowledge/skills participants needed (thus failing to ground the experience in participants’ questions). Evidence also showed that only three
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Tutors facilitated ‘conceptual dissonance’ (Timperley & Alton-Lee, 2008), by supporting participants to evaluate the adequacy of current practices, to analyse how these deviate from what is proposed in CPD, and to discuss or evaluate the effect of different approaches on their students.

Although most tutors did not tailor provision effectively, a key strength of this programme was the importance placed on fostering participants in rethinking student ability and achievement (Naraian et al., 2012). This was illustrated by discussions about the importance of planning based on teachers' understanding of what students ‘can do’ rather than delivering PE lessons grounded in misdirected and ill-informed assumptions about the difficulties students experience. In this sense, inclusion was promoted as a pedagogical approach that should be “firmly located within the sphere of individual students and their needs” (Hodkinson, 2010, p. 63). While discussing issues around monitoring progress, most tutors also questioned the idea that all students’ achievement can and should be ‘measured’ in a single, narrow way and against ‘normative’ standards. Participants were rather advised that the emphasis should be on individual learning targets so that all students have opportunities to succeed.

This perspective resonates with existing progressive rhetoric on inclusion that fosters teachers to discover, acknowledge, and stimulate ‘the open learning potential of each student’ (UNESCO, 2008). There is evidence to suggest that such an approach diminishes inequalities in educational outcomes, especially for Black and Minority Ethnic students (Hick & Thomas, 2008). But, unquestionably, this approach somehow goes against the standards- and performance-based educational system in England. Questions yet to be explored through school case studies are the extent to which participants have opportunities (or are permitted) to explore the potential utility of this way of assessing and how evidence of progress can be captured in a way that the experiences and outcomes for diverse groups of students are not compromised.

Future directions

Research on curricular aspects of inclusive education is still at an emergent stage. Fundamental questions remain about the ways in which teachers support diverse learners to participate and achieve (descriptive research) as well as the effectiveness of their practices (evaluation research). Innovative approaches to inclusive teaching need to be tested (experimental research) so that rhetoric is grounded in robust evidence of processes and impact. Similar lines of inquiry need to be pursued in answering important questions about effective/ineffective ITE and CPD programmes. Research on the nature and impact of CPD opportunities on inclusion is particularly weak, lacking sufficient depth and specificity to guide policy and practice.

ITE and CPD provision programmes also need to be grounded in the best available research evidence in order to strengthen the ways in which teachers understand and respond to students’ differences. Evidence from the evaluation of the IPE programme in England suggests that ensuring conceptual clarity, in both theoretical and practical situations, is an important step. However, more attention needs to be placed on the ways ITE and CPD providers interpret and apply existing theory and research. There also is a need to ensure that CPD programmes are grounded in teachers’ experiences and questions, offering opportunities for meaningful critical engagement with instructional strategies and curriculum approaches (as well as teachers’ practical wisdom) to ensure that attitudes and practices are challenged.
Summary of key findings

- Inclusion is about providing effective and tailored learning opportunities for every child (UNESCO, 2008).
- Teachers have a professional responsibility to shift away from ‘one size fits all’ approaches and to recognise instead that learners are diverse in numerous ways: life experiences, family history, social, economic, cultural, and ethnic background, prior experiences, personal interests, and (dis)abilities.
- The pedagogical foundation of inclusive teaching is grounded in progressive, constructivism, and social learning theories.
- Today, inclusive education, as a political, social, and educational concept, has been embraced while segregation and discrimination have been rejected and outlawed.
- Despite significant changes in legislation, evidence suggests that ITE programmes remain largely unchanged, grounded in principles of segregation and special education (‘special’, one-off modules or additional placements in special schools).
- There is evidence to suggest that preparing and supporting teachers for inclusive classrooms is a key challenge facing teacher education today.
- Very little research on the nature and quality of existing CPD programmes on inclusion is available.
- Evidence from the CPD programme in England suggests that tutors need further support to ensure that teachers develop new insights on how to identify and cater for student diversity, beyond the needs of SEND students.
- Teachers involved in the process must be permitted to inform the CPD provision based on their understandings, perspectives, questions, and practices (tailoring CPD provision).
- It is important that researchers work together to build a strong knowledge base that is not only grounded in robust research but that also has sufficient depth and specificity to guide CPD policy and practice.

Reflective questions for discussion

1. What is inclusive education?
2. Which students are we thinking about when we talk of ‘inclusive education’?
3. What are the key elements of effective inclusive teaching?
4. What are the key challenges that need to be addressed to ensure that teachers are prepared to address student diversity effectively?

References


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