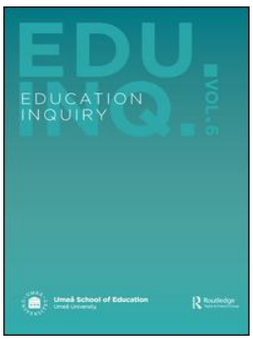

Education Inquiry

ISSN: (Print) 2000-4508 (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/zedu20

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To cite this article: Nataša Pantić & Lani Florian (2015) Developing teachers as agents of inclusion and social justice, Education Inquiry, 6:3, 27311, DOI: 10.3402/edui.v6.27311

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.3402/edui.v6.27311

Published online: 01 Sep 2015.

Education Inquiry
Vol. 6, No. 3, September 2015, pp. 333–351

Developing teachers as agents of inclusion and social justice

Nataša Pantić[*†] & *Lani Florian*[**]

Abstract

Policies around the world increasingly call for teachers to become 'agents of change', often linked to social justice agendas. However, there is little clarity about the kind of competencies such agency involves or how it can be developed in teacher education. This paper draws on theories of teacher agency and inclusive pedagogy to clarify the meaning of teachers as agents of change in the context of inclusion and social justice. Inclusive practice requires the collaboration of teachers and others such as families and other professionals. Agents of change work purposefully with others to challenge the status quo and develop social justice and inclusion. We discuss the possibilities of combining theories of inclusive pedagogy and teacher agency for developing teachers as agents of inclusion and social justice in teacher education. These possibilities include: 1) nurturing commitment to social justice as part of teachers' sense of purpose; 2) developing competencies in inclusive pedagogical approaches, including working with others; 3) developing relational agency for transforming the conditions of teachers' workplaces; and 4) a capacity to reflect on their own practices and environments when seeking to support the learning of all students.

Keywords: teacher agency, inclusive pedagogy, teacher competence, teacher education, educational change

Introduction

Calls for teacher educators to prepare teachers as 'agents of change' have become common in policies and literature around the world, endorsed by a social justice agenda that is concerned with educational inequalities and a desire to raise educational attainment and improve outcomes for all learners (Ballard 2012; Florian 2009; Villegas and Lucas 2002; Zeichner 2009). The strategic idea of teachers as change agents in reducing educational inequalities is linked to research showing teachers are the most significant in-school factor influencing student achievement (Hattie 2009; OECD 2005). This can be interpreted to imply that teachers have a role to play as agents of social justice. A recent review of teacher education in Scotland, for example, stresses the need to prepare teachers as "prime agents of educational change" (Scottish Government 2011, 4) and suggests that

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 ISSN 2000-4508, pp. 333–351

Citation: *Education Inquiry* (EDUI) 2015, **6**, 27311, http://dx.doi.org/10.3402/edui.v6.27311

among other knowledge and skills, "all new teachers should be confident in their ability to address underachievement, including the potential effects of social disadvantage" (36). Clearly, teachers are seen as contributing to a social justice agenda by working in ways that help to mitigate the external causes of educational inequality. However, multiple interpretations of terms such as 'educational inequality', 'social justice' and 'change agency' means that there are different ways of thinking about such ways of working and how they might be developed through initial teacher education.

Following international developments in inclusive education, we characterise ways of working intended to mitigate the external causes of educational inequality as inclusive pedagogy, or an inclusive pedagogical approach (Florian and Black-Hawkins 2011). As we will discuss, the approach represents a distinctive way of working that is more specific than the principled but more general term, inclusive education, in part because it is concerned with educational attainment as well as other outcomes. Inclusive pedagogy is an approach that attends to individual differences between learners while actively avoiding the marginalisation of some learners and/or the continued exclusion of particular groups, for example, ethnic minority students, those from culturally diverse backgrounds, non-native language speakers, students with additional needs, and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds who may be disadvantaged by poverty. This list of identity markers is neither exhaustive nor unitary but is intended to denote some of the aspects of individuality that account for individual differences and may interact with other variables to create barriers to learning that can result in underachievement.

Over the years, a specific view of inclusive education as learning how to respect and respond to human differences in ways that include, rather than exclude, learners from what is *ordinarily available* in the daily routines of schooling has emerged from a programme of research in the United Kingdom (Black-Hawkins, Florian and Rouse 2007; Florian and Rouse 2009; Rouse and Florian 1996; 1997; 2006). As this work has shown, the act of extending what is ordinarily available, as opposed to doing something 'additional' or 'different' for some is a complex pedagogical endeavour that requires a shift in thinking away from commonly accepted ways of providing for everyone by differentiating for some. It is distinctive in that it accepts the notion of individual differences between learners without relying predominately on individualised approaches for responding to such differences. It also implies a knowledge base for teacher education that views classroom teachers as competent agents whose beliefs about students' capacity to learn, pedagogical choices and ways of working with others influence student outcomes (Black-Hawkins and Florian 2012).

While 'pedagogy' is often understood as a practice related exclusively to classrooms, the present conceptualisation of teachers as agents of inclusion and social justice emphasises the need to develop teachers' capacity for working with other

agents in order to remove the structural and cultural barriers for some students' learning and participation. We situate the inclusive pedagogical approach within the broader theory of teacher agency for social justice (Pantić 2015) in order to challenge the established views of teaching as an isolated teacher-classroom activity and explore the possibilities of expanding the remit of teacher competence and preparation to include teachers' relational agency – a capacity to work purposefully with other professionals and become aware of the resources they could bring to bear to support a child (Edwards 2007; 2010).

Further, the inclusive pedagogical approach is distinguished from conceptualisations of inclusive education that focus specifically on students with special educational needs. While debates about the definitions and meaning of inclusive education are beyond the scope of this paper, decades of research on the influence of school factors on learning and on student outcomes have persuaded us that a broad conceptualisation of educational inclusion as a matter of social justice is warranted and needed. This is not only because research since the 1980s has clearly shown how school structures can create special educational needs (e.g. Tomlinson 1982) that have disproportionate effects on vulnerable groups (e.g. Dyson and Kozleski 2008). It is because this knowledge alone is insufficient and new approaches are needed if teacher competence for addressing the structural and cultural barriers to inclusion embedded in their schools and education systems is to be developed. This leads to important questions about how new teachers can and should be prepared if they are to contribute to a justice agenda by working in ways that avoid the repetition of exclusion (Allan 2006) and the perpetuation of inequitable educational outcomes for some groups of learners.

Today, demographic changes in Europe (and elsewhere) exist alongside policy shifts that promote more inclusive education systems in many countries (EADSNE 2012; Waitoller and Artiles 2013). At the same time, issues of race, ethnicity, social class, language learning (bilingual and plurilingual), religious diversity, gender and disability may or may not be covered by national policies of social and educational inclusion. A broad conceptualisation of inclusion requires teacher education programmes to focus on improving the quality of schooling for everybody. In the sections below, we link current thinking about the competencies required of teachers who are being prepared for inclusive education to theories of human agency in order to consider how teachers might be prepared as 'agents of change for social justice'.

Teacher competencies for inclusion and social justice

Teacher competencies are understood to include skills, knowledge and understanding, as well as values and moral sensibilities, and professional identity (van Huizen et al. 2005; Tigelaar et al. 2005; Korthagen 2004; Koster et al. 2005). Teaching competencies associated with change agency are broadly conceptualised to include relevant knowledge and understanding as well a capacity to engage with

educational change and reflect on one's own beliefs and values (Korthagen 2004; Pantić and Wubbels 2010). Preparing teachers as agents of change to promote social justice and inclusion requires clarity not only about what teachers need to know, do and believe but how they will exercise their agency as teachers when adopting this approach. While there is some agreement in the literature about the knowledge, skills and values teachers need to be effective with diverse groups of students, little is known about how these are developed, enacted, sustained and evidenced in the many varied educational environments in which teachers work. Nevertheless, they are often reflected in the national standards that specify which competencies teachers need to achieve qualified teacher status and include:

- the integration of theoretical and practical knowledge and skills (Donnelly and Watkins 2011; Korthagen 2001);
- being able to develop a pedagogy that is inclusive of all (Blanton, Pugach and Florian 2011; EADSNE 2011; Florian and Linklater 2010);
- collaborative skills and attitudes (Frost 2012; Nevin, Thousand and Villa 2009);
- recognising the importance of the home environment and working with diverse families (Hornby 2010; Scorgie 2010, Villegas and Lucas 2002);
- a broader understanding of educational change and how it affects the conditions for learning in contexts of exclusion and disadvantage (Slee 2010; Zeichner 2009);
- building relationships for improved learning outcomes (Cornelius-White 2007; Donnelly and Watkins 2011; Hattie 2009; Wubbels and Brekelmans 2005);
- capacity for reflection and inquiry (Liston and Zeichner 1990; Zeichner 2009); and
- accounting for moral values and commitment to the education for all (Carr 2003; Kim and Rouse 2011; Pantić and Wubbels 2012).

Slee (2010) has argued that one of the most relevant areas of competence for promoting inclusive practice to be developed in teacher education is student teachers' understanding of how broader social forces influence exclusion and disadvantage. Further, teachers committed to social justice and inclusion must be capable of building appropriate professional relations with students and other actors in order to respond adequately to students' diverse needs. Supportive relationships and knowing students is particularly important when teaching students from diverse backgrounds (den Brok et al. 2010). Teachers who are able to act as agents of social justice are believed to need experience of working with families from a variety of cultures and social contexts in order to understand how home (and other) environments influence educational outcomes (Flecha and Soler 2013; Villegas and Lucas 2002). Yet studies of teachers' perceptions of their role show that understanding of education systems (including teachers' cooperation with relevant

professionals, local communities and involvement in school development planning activities) is viewed by teachers as one of the least important areas of their competence (Pantić and Wubbels 2010; Pantić, Wubbels and Mainhard 2011). This suggests that the importance and place of the relational aspect of teaching in teacher education may not be sufficiently foregrounded.

Teaching involves taking mutual responsibility for joint actions that requires teachers and other actors to negotiate professional boundaries and work flexibly (Edwards 2010). It might involve setting aside institutional objectives to respond quickly to a given situation, for example, a crisis in a student's life may necessitate the collaborative efforts of many professionals that exceed issues of academic achievement. This situation is not an exceptional event but one that is recognised in national policies intended to facilitate the coordinated efforts of many professionals. In Scotland, for example, it is reflected in the agenda to improve multi-agency working and develop integrated children's services, an agenda that has been set by "Getting it Right for Every Child" (Scottish Executive, 2006). Central to this policy is that adults working in the areas of health, education and social services should work collaboratively. As Florian and Rouse (2009) have noted, *Getting it Right for Every Child* is supportive of an inclusion agenda but, "there are significant implications for teachers and other adults who work with children, not only relating to their knowledge, skills and attitudes, but also for their roles, responsibilities and professional identities" (597).

In addition, this collaborative work takes place in a context of competing policy objectives. While many education practices promote inclusive practices as a strategy to reduce educational inequality (Kerr and West 2010), the need to challenge and transform existing institutional structures is also recognised. Thus, teachers need to be prepared not only for dealing with issues of educational exclusion and underachievement, as Slee (op. cit.) has argued, but to understand and know how to respond to the relational aspects of the job (as described by Edwards (op. cit.)). In other words, teachers must know how to exercise agency in using an inclusive pedagogical approach that supports the achievements of all learners.

Such efforts must begin with an acknowledgment that teachers are complex agents whose practices are highly contextualised and they cannot simply be regulated to do things differently (Vongalis-Macrow 2007). It is necessary to make theoretical sense out of *how* teachers make a difference, and how they engage with school practices that are effective for addressing exclusion and underachievement (Florian 2012; Florian and Black-Hawkins 2011; Hayes et al. 2006; Include-ED 2009). This is important because it is how teachers address the issue of inclusion in their daily practice – reflected in their knowledge, attitudes and beliefs about learners and learning, as well as in the things that they do, and the responses that they make when the students they teach encounter barriers to learning – that determines their inclusive pedagogical approach (Florian and Linklater 2010).

Teacher agency

Human agency has been defined as an ability to "intervene in the world", to "act otherwise", to "make a difference", to exercise "some sort of power" (Giddens 1984, 14). Agents engage purposefully in acts which they know, or believe, will have a particular quality or outcome, and use the knowledge of the act to achieve this quality or outcome. Agents' intentions, motivation and perseverance in the face of obstacles are guided by a *sense of purpose* and commitment to the desired outcome (Bandura 2001). Further, agency is determined by agents' *competence* or, in Giddens' terms, the knowledge of the act needed to achieve that desired outcome – in our case competence in inclusive pedagogical approach. Giddens (1984) describes agents' competence as "knowledgeability" of rules and tactics of practical conduct in the milieu in which they move, which may or may not include knowledge about those which apply in contexts remote from their own experiences (90–92). For example, agents from different cultures or social groups might not know the rules of others in less privileged sectors of life, and vice versa.

Agency is further determined by the levels of *autonomy* and power within given structures and cultures, which can either foster or suspend agency (Archer 2000). In a socio-cultural perspective, agents are seen as embedded in their professional contexts, yet capable of transforming these contexts (Eteläpelto, Vähäsantanen, Hökkä and Paloniemi 2013; Lasky 2005). For Archer (2000), agency is always collective, while actors are individuals who shape the structures and cultures, not in a way any particular actor wants but as a result of interactions. Their efficacy is entirely dependent on what sense actors make of their contexts and the opportunities they recognise for transformative practice. *Reflexivity* is another essential aspect of agency involving a distinctively human capacity to monitor and reflect both their own practices and social contexts, to creatively envisage alternatives and collaborate with others to bring about their transformation (Archer 2000; Bandura 2001; Giddens 1984). In theory, collective agency can contribute to the transformation of structures and cultures over time as groups and individuals interact exercising their particular abilities, skills, personalities, seeking to advance their purposes and perceived interests. However, agency can also be used to reproduce the existing structures and cultures, for example, if an individual or group action fails to bring about desired changes, or seeks to maintain the status quo (Archer 2000).

In this context, there is an important distinction to be made between 'agency' and 'agency for change'. The later requires a clear articulation of the nature of change which could help teacher education designers specify appropriate purposes and relevant preparation. However, such specification of the desired change brings a tension between preparing teachers for making a difference in accordance with their own *sense of purpose* and attempting to influence a change in teachers' beliefs and practices for carrying out external agendas around inclusion (even when such

agendas are by and large endorsed by teacher educators and teachers themselves). In this paper, we address this tension by positioning the inclusive pedagogical approach as the core of teachers' *competence* as agents of change for social justice. This allowed us to articulate a general direction of the desired change and its underlying principles without prescribing the different ways in which teachers might enact those principles in the contexts of their future workplaces. In different contexts teachers acting as agents of social justice might involve both taking forward and resisting the official policies (Luttenberg et al. 2013; Sachs 2003). The aim of related teacher preparation is to enable teachers to construct their professional agency by adapting policy requirements to fit their professional commitments (Lipponen and Kumpulainen 2011; Robinson 2012).

Biesta and Tedder's (2007) ecological view of agency positions it within the contingencies of ecological contexts in which agents' act upon their beliefs, values and attributes they mobilise in relation to a particular situation. In this view, agency is conceived as something that is achieved, rather than possessed, through the active engagement of individuals with aspects of their contexts-for-action. The achievement of agency results from the interplay of individual efforts, available resources, and other contextual factors as they come together in particular and, in a sense, always unique situations (Priestley, Edwards, Priestley and Miller 2012). Such ecological agency also encompasses the interplay of time dimensions, i.e. influences from the past (e.g. adopted routines), orientations towards the future purposes (e.g. hopes, fears, desires) and engagement with the present (e.g. judgments about the limits and opportunities provided by the present structural contexts). An important implication of this view is that agency is seen as temporal and historically situated within the complex interplay of cultural and institutional contexts (Lipponen and Kumpulainen 2011). Individual actors might exercise agency in one situation but not in another considering the potential gains and losses, their past experiences, emotions and concerns for own well-being (Biesta and Tedder 2007).

Applying these aspects of human agency to the work of teachers, Pantić (2015) developed a model of teacher agency for social justice, including:

1. Sense of purpose – teachers' beliefs about their role as agents and understanding of social justice
2. Competence – teachers' practices addressing the exclusion and underachievement of some students
3. Autonomy – teachers' perceptions of environments and context-embedded interactions with others
4. Reflexivity – teachers' capacity to analyse and evaluate their practices and institutional settings

Teachers' exercise their collective agency for social justice within the scope of their professional autonomy by interacting with each other and with other agents.

The present conceptualisation positions the inclusive pedagogical approach as 'a core expertise' that represents teacher competence as part of their agency. At the same time, it takes into account the contexts that shape professionals' responses to situations of vulnerable children (Daniels, Leadbetter, Warmington, Edwards, Martin, Popova and Brown 2007). This enables us to explore how teachers can be prepared to sustain such core expertise alongside the relational agency in order to develop the common knowledge that will mediate inter-professional interactions in a purposeful action (Edwards 2007; 2010).

The 'core expertise' of inclusive pedagogy

Teachers can and do make a difference to what and how children learn (Hattie 2009). They engage in inclusive practices working at different levels including classrooms, for example by using a variety of grouping strategies as alternatives to ability grouping (Black-Hawkins and Florian 2012; Florian 2012), as well as in collaborative actions for addressing issues that require responses beyond the classroom (Florian and Spratt 2013; Include-ED Report 2009), or by engaging in professional and social networks seeking to contribute to greater social justice (Sachs 2003). Research has identified practices that can significantly contribute to improving learning and achievement of vulnerable students, such as substantive engagement of families in decisions about education (Flecha and Soler 2013), sharing responsibility within school for the outcomes of all learners, planning strategies to address exclusion and underachievement, and working with other professionals (Ainscow 2005; Edwards 2007; Include-ED Report 2009). This body of knowledge comprises the core expertise (the knowing, doing and believing) embedded in the inclusive pedagogical approach.

The inclusive pedagogical approach emerged from a programme of research (cited above) that studied the practice of classroom teachers whose classes consisted of a diverse range of learners. The teachers in these studies were committed to raising the achievements of all learners whilst safeguarding the inclusion of those who were vulnerable to exclusion and other forms of marginalisation (see, for example, Black-Hawkins, Florian and Rouse 2007; Florian and Black-Hawkins 2011). As the studies began to reveal a picture of inclusive practice as one where the teacher's gaze had shifted from 'most' and 'some' learners to 'everybody', the teachers' approach was located within a socio-cultural framework on pedagogy (Alexander 2004) where the complexities inherent in providing for differences between students were subsumed within a set of interrelated ideas about children, learning, teaching and the curriculum. Inclusive pedagogy encourages open-ended views of all children's potential for learning and encourages teachers to extend the range of opportunities that are available to everyone in the learning community of the classroom and school.

In a recent teacher education reform project, this conceptualisation of inclusive pedagogy was portrayed as a set of assumptions linked to actions for reforming the content of an initial teacher education course (Florian 2012). As can be seen in Table 1, consideration of what teachers need to know, believe and be able to do as they are preparing to enter a profession that accepts responsibility for the learning of diverse groups of students was developed by articulating theoretical assumptions and linking those to actions that might constitute a reform agenda for teacher education along with an acknowledgement of the challenges such reforms might face. For example, if responses to individual differences should be thought of as an ordinary part of a teacher's response when students experience difficulties, which assumptions should drive programme reform, which actions should be undertaken and which challenges might be encountered? While the idea of teacher agency was not explicit, there was an acknowledgement that the key assumptions guiding the teacher education reform process were located within the broader structures of schooling (represented as key challenges in the third column of Table 1).

Using these ideas, Florian and Spratt (2013) developed a framework for interrogating the inclusive practices of teachers who had completed the course and were in the induction (first) year of teaching. Being aware of the highly variable context in which teachers work, as well as the structural features of schooling that can obscure inclusive practice, necessitated a theoretically derived framework to capture evidence of practices associated with the assumptions of the inclusive pedagogical approach: that brings together teachers' believing (in their capacity to support all children, as well as the capacity of all children to learn), 'knowing' (about socio-cultural perspectives on learning as well as theoretical, policy and legislative issues)

Table 1. Inclusive Pedagogical Approach

Underlying assumptions about what teachers should know, believe and do	Actions for reforming initial teacher education	Key challenges within the broader structures of schooling
Difference must be accounted for as an essential aspect of human development in any conceptualisation of learning (knowing)	Replacing deterministic views of ability with a concept of 'transformability'	'Bell-curve' thinking and notions of fixed ability still underpin the structure of schooling
Teachers must believe (can be convinced) that they are qualified and capable of teaching all children (believing)	Demonstrating how the difficulties students experience in learning can be considered dilemmas for teaching rather than problems within students	The identification of difficulties in learning and the associated focus on what the learner cannot do often puts a ceiling on learning and achievement
The profession must develop creative new ways of working with others (doing)	Modelling new creative ways of working with and through others	Changing the way we think about inclusion (from 'most' and 'some' to everybody)

(adapted from Florian 2012, JTE)

and professional 'acting' or ways of working that can create adequate conditions for all learners (Liston and Zeichner 1990; Rouse 2008; Slee 2010). In this way, Archer's conceptualisation of agency clearly operates as an activity that is influenced by school structure while also influencing how that structure can change.

In sum, the assumptions underpinning the notion of an inclusive pedagogy are that teachers are competent agents in possession of the necessary knowledge to teach all children – what distinguishes inclusive pedagogy from other approaches is the way this knowledge is put to use in support of everyone. To this end, teachers respond to the complexity and diversity of learners as a natural consequence of humanity rather than portraying 'some children' as 'different' thereby creating an unhelpful hierarchy within diversity (Florian and Linklater 2010). An inclusive pedagogical approach relies on socio-cultural knowledge about how people learn such as how novices differ from experts (Bransford, Brown and Cocking 2000), rather than differentiating groups of learners on the basis of perceived limitations or judgments about what they cannot do. What differentiates inclusive pedagogy from other complex pedagogical endeavours is a rejection of the false hierarchy of 'most' and 'some' learners. Modelling this view of pedagogy in initial teacher education programmes is essential work if teachers are to become agents of change "confident in their ability to address underachievement, including the potential effects of social disadvantage" as required by those who seek to reform teacher education as a strategy for addressing educational inequality (Scottish Government 2011, 36). This requires new ways of working collaboratively with others.

New ways of working with others – inclusive pedagogy and teacher agency

Addressing the risks of exclusion and marginalisation in education often requires the collaboration of many actors (Ainscow 2005; Florian and Spratt 2013; Include-ED Report 2009) and a capacity of various professionals to align their purposes and actions to those of others in working relationships in which different kinds of expertise are brought to bear on a given situation (Edwards 2007; 2010). For example, a teacher might recognise that a child's difficulty in learning or behaviour arises from a set of interconnected issues related to language and the home environment, alert other practitioners to the child's vulnerability and seek the support of other professionals. While we would argue that the ways in which teachers undertake this task might enhance or inhibit an inclusive pedagogical response, there has been little research that systematically explores the ways and conditions in which teachers collaborate with others as part of a concerted effort to reduce disparities in educational outcomes.

Some studies suggest that teachers' capacity for working with others is essential for dismantling overlapping and complex barriers to learning and participation in schools, yet such capacities are insufficiently developed as part of teacher

preparation and professional development (Waitoller and Artiles 2013). Studies that examined teachers' struggle to promote inclusive practices and cultures in their schools show the value of collaboration, inquiry and compromise as part of teachers' routine work (Deppeler 2006; Kugelmass 2001). Kugelmass' (2001) ethnographic data gathered over 4 years illustrates how, contrary to teachers' fear of diminishing their professional independence, collaborative ways of working between teachers and specialists enhanced teachers' autonomy and ability to negotiate with school district administration. Other case studies indicate that teachers find a supportive school community essential for raising achievement of all learners (Carrington and Robinson 2004; Louis, Marks and Kruse 1996). In the model of teacher agency for social justice, collegial relationships and collaboration are part of teachers' collective agency through which they can transform their schools' structures and cultures (see Table 2).

In many educational contexts, promoting inclusive practices and social justice implies the need to challenge and transform existing institutional structures and a willingness to take risk to improve students' learning. For example, the difficulty of sustaining collaborative cultures within highly centralised and bureaucratic school systems has long been recognised (Hargreaves 1994, Kugelmass 2001). Nevertheless, there is evidence that collegial relationships help teachers exercise their collective agency to adapt policy requirements to fit some practices and reshape others (Robinson 2012). Exploring the tension between a 'standards agenda' and an 'inclusion agenda' in the English policy context, Dyson and Gallannaugh (2007) showed that the development of inclusive practice is possible even where the strategies of performance, accountability and control mechanisms in national policy are perceived by teachers to be entirely hostile. Thus, building teachers' motivation and capacity for entering and sustaining collaborative relationships with each other and with other professionals is essential both for addressing present risks of exclusion and underachievement, and for creating conditions for future collective commitment and efficacy (Rose and Norwich 2015).

However, teachers are rarely systematically prepared for dealing with various external reasons for exclusion and underachievement, or for the relational aspects of their job within given education systems. Initial teacher education programmes continue to struggle to prepare teachers to work in education systems where many forms of exclusion remain ubiquitous (Slee 2011), and the preparation of teachers and other professionals remains fragmented in many countries (Waitoller and Artiles 2013). In these contexts, it is not surprising that tensions arise in attempts at the collaborative working needed for transforming school practices. For example, Davies, Howes and Farrell's (2008) analysis of the tensions between teachers and school psychologists revealed teachers perceived themselves as solely responsible for the classroom. They were reluctant to engage in reflection and dialogue about their practice and wanted psychologists' expertise to align with their role perceptions

(Davies, Howes and Farrell 2008). Learning to accept and work with these tensions is part of building capacity for inter-professional work since different agencies have different specific agendas, priorities and ways of working (Rose and Norwich 2015).

The challenge for teacher preparation is to help teachers understand how their interactions with each other and with other agents contribute to the transformation and reproduction of the structures in which they work. By combining elements of the framework for evidencing inclusive pedagogy in action (Florian and Spratt 2013) with the proposed model of teacher agency (Pantić 2015), new possibilities to generate further knowledge that help systematically prepare teachers for the relational requirements of inclusive practice can be developed. While working collaboratively with others is an integral part of the inclusive pedagogical approach, the model of teacher agency situates teacher competence for inclusive practice within the broader domains of teacher agency (see Table 2). As a result, a clearer

Table 2. Aspects of teacher agency and inclusive pedagogical practices

Aspects of teacher agency	Inclusive practice
Purpose (commitment, motivation)	• teachers' perceptions of their moral roles, sense of identity and motivation as agents of social justice • teachers' own understanding of social justice
Competence (Inclusive Pedagogy as 'core' expertise)	• teachers' understanding of broader social forces that influence schooling and (micro-)political competence • teachers' practice of inclusive pedagogy, including: 1. Replacing deterministic views of ability with a concept of 'transformability' 2. Demonstrating how the difficulties students experience in learning can be considered dilemmas for teaching rather than problems within students 3. Modelling new creative ways of working with and through others
Autonomy (individual and collective efficacy and agency, relationships and contextual factors)	• teachers' beliefs about individual and collective efficacy • levels of confidence, control and resilience • collaboration and collective agency for social justice • levels of power and trust in teachers' relationships • perceptions of school cultures and the principal's leadership • perceptions of teachers' roles as school and system developers and participation in decision-making • broader education policy and socio-cultural contexts
Reflexivity (reflexive monitoring of own action and social contexts)	• teachers' capacity to articulate practical professional knowledge and justify actions • teachers' meaning-making of the structures and cultures in their schools as sites for social transformation • critical and open reflection on their assumptions, practices and exploration of alternatives

(adapted from Pantić 2015, T&T)

understanding of the ways in which teachers may also contribute to the transformation of institutional structures and cultures, rather than feel disempowered by those that they perceive as obstacles to supporting all students learning can be developed.

In the model of teacher agency for social justice, teachers' *sense of purpose* as agents, commitment to and understanding of the principles of social justice is a necessary precondition for their acting as agents of change promoting social justice. Teachers' *competence* for acting as such agents further requires a deeper understanding of the ways in which inclusive practice can be enacted in different contexts. While helping student teachers understand how their 'acting' might reflect their commitment (or not) is seen as crucial, it is not sufficient in itself for the enactment of the principles of social justice promoted by many teacher education programmes in the beginning teachers' actual practices. This is because practices will vary greatly depending on the particular understandings and manifestations of justice, equality, inclusion and exclusion in the different contexts in which they work. This is why understanding relational aspects of teaching within a given scope of professional autonomy is another essential element of the knowledge base for teacher education.

Fullan (2006) suggests that systems are transformed through the proliferation of "system thinkers" and creation of mechanisms and processes that allow people to collaborate within and across departments, schools and communities or systems. By this account, teacher preparation for system thinking in relation to social justice requires an understanding of complex forms of exclusion and developing a capacity to work with colleagues, families and other professionals to remove the intersecting barriers that keep some students from participating in meaningful learning experiences. Thus, student teachers can be prepared for exercising their collective agency to address exclusion and underachievement and to contribute to the transformation of school environments by embedding additional expertise and support, in this case, knowledge of the relational aspects of agency, into the structures and cultures upon which future agency will depend.

While both the inclusive pedagogy and teacher agency frameworks have been developed as research tools, they can function as tools for helping student teachers systematically reflect on their sense of professional purpose and identity, practices and environments. The combined frameworks can help teachers recognise that inclusive practices are not isolated from the structural and cultural contexts of their workplace that might encourage or impede such practices. This is essential for nurturing teacher agency for inclusion and social justice, which in many places is likely to involve efforts to transform the structures and cultures, as well as acting within them.

Professional values are woven through such collaboration and seen as crucial to how professionals interpret problems in practice (Edwards, 2010). Exploring simultaneously notions of professional purpose, practices and working conditions can help student teachers reflect on their own and others' professional identities and

practices to make visible the difficulties that arise when professionals from different fields work together (Davies, Howes and Farrell 2008). The concept of relational agency advanced by Edwards (2007; 2010) provides a tool for examining how agents can resolve ambiguities and tensions by recognising motives and resources that others bring to the collaborative activity with the aim of learning how to negotiate the goals and align responses.

Preparing teachers to act as agents of inclusion and social justice might usefully provide opportunities for student teachers to engage in inter-professional activities that cross the boundaries between the different professional practices (Akkerman and Bakker 2011) with the aim of transforming professional identities and practices to meet the requirements of an inclusive pedagogical approach.

Conclusion

Preparing teachers to act as agents of change for inclusion and social justice challenges some of the well-established ways of thinking about teaching as an individualistic teacher-classroom activity. Teacher competence as agents of inclusion and social justice involves working collaboratively with other agents, and thinking systematically about the ways of transforming practices, schools and systems. Supportive relationships and knowing students is considered particularly important when teaching students from diverse backgrounds (den Brok et al. 2010). Teachers committed to social justice and inclusion must be capable of building appropriate professional relations with pupils and other actors in order to respond adequately to students' diverse needs.

There is enormous value for trainee and beginning teachers to have opportunities to engage in collaborative teaching with the support of specialists as part of their professional development, building confidence and broadening their repertoire of responses to the difficulties students experience in learning. Understanding how teachers as professionals can individually and collectively affect the conditions for schooling and learning of all (Liston and Zeichner 1990) might involve teachers' broader political awareness as well as a micro-political competence of finding allies to change their schools better to meet their commitments (Blase 1991; Bondy and Ross 1992). In addition, theorising about teacher agency and inclusive practice can inform a systematic reflection in teacher education courses for helping teachers make sense of inclusion within school settings and develop capacities for working with others to transform the structures and cultures. To this end, expanding the remit of teaching as a professional practice is central to systemic change.

In summary, the preparation of teachers to act as agents of change for inclusion and social justice requires an expanded competence to include shared responsibility for the development of schools and systems. We have argued that teachers' agency in relation to this involves: 1) a sense of purpose, that is, a commitment to social justice; 2) competence in an inclusive pedagogical approach, including working

collaboratively with others; 3) autonomy – understanding and making use of one's power, and positioning in relation to other relevant actors, e.g. understanding how actors can collectively transform situations of exclusion or under-achievement of some learners; and 4) reflexivity, a capacity to systematically evaluate their own practices and institutional settings. This implies a shift from thinking about teaching as 'implementing' policies designed by others to a focus on systematic conditions which shape practices, and understand what other actors can bring to bear on developing more inclusive educational systems and practices.

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