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Developing standards for inclusive teaching in South Africa: A dilemma analysis

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Abstract

As inclusive education has gained traction internationally, there has been a demand for teachers who are equipped to teach diverse learners. This has led to attempts to capture the competences of inclusive teachers in scholarly literature and to the development of standards for professional teaching, generally, and for inclusive teaching in particular. Sets of national standards are expected to enhance the professional status of teaching, and to improve student outcomes by describing the knowledge of teachers, developing a shared language of practice, promoting accountability, and directing professional development initiatives. This paper is concerned with the development of a set of standards for inclusive teaching to inform initial teacher education in South Africa. The conversations of people involved in the standards generation work were, with permission, recorded and analysed. Analysis of the data showed that, during deliberations, a number of dilemmas emerged. The first dilemma is whether standards for inclusive teaching should be described apart from the more general professional teaching standards applicable to all teachers. The second dilemma was a contest about whether the standards should adopt broad or narrow definitions of inclusive education. The third relates to the primacy of context, and the fourth dilemma concerns the significance of learner differences for teaching and learning. The resolution of these dilemmas is explained with Wiredu's (1996) concept of the *will to consensus* and professional judgement of the participants.

Keywords: teaching standards, inclusive teaching, initial teacher education, dilemma analysis, professional judgement, consensus

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Introduction

Inclusive education is concerned with identifying and addressing exclusion in education, and developing teaching and learning environments that support access, belonging, participation and success for all learners (UNESCO 2018). Signatory countries (which include South Africa) to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) are expected to 'ensure an inclusive education system at all levels' (United Nations 2006, Art. 24.1). In the years after the end of legalised apartheid, South Africa developed a framework for the establishment of an inclusive education system. This framework, outlined in White Paper 6 (Department of Education, DoE 2001), builds on constitutional values of the right to equality, human dignity and freedom from discrimination. Teachers are seen as a key resource in the quest for a more inclusive education, and teacher education is seen as an important part of the country's overall progress towards an inclusive education and training system (DoE 2001).

As inclusive education has gained traction internationally, there has been a demand for teachers who are adequately prepared to teach diverse learners. Meeting this demand has required different strategies. These have included the recurriculation of initial teacher education (ITE) programmes to ensure that prospective teachers are well prepared for the demands of inclusive teaching, finding ways to assess their work-based teaching practice for evidence of inclusive teaching practice, and the rolling out professional development activities for in-service teachers. These initiatives require that 'inclusive teaching' is defined and delineated, with clarity on what counts as inclusive practice (Florian 2014). To this end, there have been various attempts to capture the competences of inclusive teachers in scholarly literature (for example, Florian & Rouse 2010; Loreman 2010; European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education 2012) and in the development of national policy standards for professional and inclusive teaching.

The focus in this article is the tensions and dilemmas that arose during the development of a national set of standards for inclusive teaching for South Africa. The standards development process was undertaken in 2017 as part of a wider initiative with the South African Council of Educators (SACE) to address variations in the quality of teaching nationally through a set of general professional teaching standards. Simultaneously, stakeholders in teaching (unions, government departments and teacher educators) met to develop a set of nationally relevant standards for the design of inclusive education coursework in initial teacher education programmes. Drawing on the conversations of the participants in these meetings, we identify four dilemmas that emerged in the process and design of the standards. We will show that some of these echo dilemmas in the field of inclusive education internationally, and suggest that a 'will to consensus' (Wiredu 1996: 183) enabled an acceptable resolution of the dilemmas. The will to consensus required participants to draw on their specialist knowledge and exercise their professional reasoning and judgement in response to tensions between their personal ideological commitments, their stakeholder imperatives and their shared mandate of developing a broadly acceptable set of standards. In so doing, we contribute to the literature on standards for

professional teaching by addressing the concern that research on these documents often 'leave[s] those who create the representations largely out of the picture' (Mulcahy 2011: 98). We also bring the discussions on dilemmas in the field of inclusive education into conversation with the literature on teaching standards – intending to further an understanding of both.

Standards for professional teaching

Standards for professional teaching promise much, and can be found in education systems across the globe (Adie & Wyatt-Smith 2018). Standards are intended to enhance the professional status of teaching and improve learning gains in various ways. First, the articulation of quality teaching demands that the professional knowledge of teachers is described and organised. A set of standards provides a common language of practice (Danielson 2015; Loughland & Ellis 2016) and has been shown to be especially valuable for newly qualified teachers who are starting their careers. Second, members of the profession can hold one another to account against agreed criteria of good practice. Third, standards shape and provide direction for professional development (McDaid 2010; Mulcahy 2011), and the way standards are framed has a significant backwash effect on the nature and content of teacher education programmes (Furlong 2013). Teaching standards may also support national strategies and reform efforts because they are embedded into standards documents and thereby influence teacher thinking (Carrington et al. 2015).

Standards for professional teaching do not necessarily live up to their promise. They potentially overburden teachers who may see the application of standards to their practice as a bureaucratic imposition. When associated with measurement and performativity, they can reduce teachers' professional discretion and become a way in which governments regulate and control teachers. Furthermore, standards may present a fragmented account of teaching, and reduce it to a series of discrete behaviours (Forde et al. 2016) that perversely undermines the integrated nature of expert practice. Standards are also devised outside the contexts in which they are enacted, and precision in description belies the messiness of practice (Kostogriz 2018).

The development of standards for inclusive teaching in South Africa

National reviews of ITE programmes in South Africa have found substantial variations between the ways different universities offering ITE programmes conceptualise coursework to prepare students for teaching (Council for Higher Education 2010; Deacon 2016). The national Initial Teacher Education Research Project lamented the 'lack of a self-regulating teacher education (and teaching) profession [that is] able to clearly delineate a common, agreed set of ITE knowledge and practice standards and curricula to which all universities should conform' (Deacon 2016: 25). The development of standards for coursework for inclusive teaching in South African ITE programmes is one attempt to address the variable quality across different higher education institutions offering ITE programmes. The initiative has been spearheaded by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) as part of the wider European Union-funded Teaching and Learning

Development Capacity Improvement Project (T&LDCIP). The British Council was also involved in this process.

A three-phase process was put in place to develop the standards. Phase One of the process was a large colloquium held at the Department of Basic Education's (DBE) offices. This colloquium comprised plenary sessions with speakers from South Africa and internationally, and a series of discussion groups. Stakeholders at this meeting included academics from many of the South African universities, officials from both the DHET and DBE, non-government organisations and activist organisations, and members of civil society organisations. The purpose for creating standards, according to the programme of this colloquium, is to

> lead to greater standardisation and convergence in teacher education programmes. Initial teacher education programmes vary greatly, and the intention is to ensure that all programmes address inclusive education in sufficient depth and breadth, and include substantive content and academic rigour in order to produce better teachers ultimately. (DBE 2017: n.p.)

Recommendations from the discussion groups at the colloquium were tabled for consideration by a working group that would subsequently devise the standards. All attendees were invited to express their interest in being part of a working group to develop the standards. A working group of 14 stakeholders was constituted by the DHET and mandated with the responsibility of delivering a set of standards for inclusive teaching over the following six months. Phase Two involved a day-long meeting of the standards development working group, where five dimensions of inclusive teaching were identified as first-order categories for framing the standards. Phase Three was a two-day meeting during which the dimensions were described, with subdimensions and standards for beginner teachers developed for each. The work was then presented to the wider SACE team working on the broader project of developing standards for professional teaching in the South African context. The purpose of this article is not to evaluate the product of these processes, that is, the standards themselves, but to inquire into the discussions that generated the standards. Doing so led us to identify a number of dilemmas that the participants had to contend with as they sought and reached consensus through dialogue.

Dilemmas in (inclusive) education

Dilemmas capture something of the complexity of education (Berlak & Berlak 1981; Scager et al. 2017). A dilemma is understood as a necessary choice between two equally valid but mutually incompatible positions. There is always risk or negative consequence (Norwich 2010) associated with resolution on one or other side of the dilemma. The very nature of teaching is said to be dilemmatic, contradictory and paradoxical as teachers balance competing demands in their classrooms (Scager et al. 2017). Dilemmas, according to Berlak and Berlak (1981: 111), are 'linguistic constructions that, like lenses, may be used to focus upon the continuous process of persons acting in the social world.' These authors explain that the language of dilemmas 'captures contradictions that are simultaneously in consciousness and society' (ibid.: 124). Various scholars

have identified and categorised dilemmas in education (see, for example, Berlak & Berlak 1981; Judge 1981), and dilemmas have become a focal point for scholars in special and inclusive education.

Our interest in dilemma analysis is provoked by the idea that standards for teaching are not neutral – they are produced in a particular social context, and reflect a set of power relations (Mulcahy 2011). A set of published standards appears as a completed artefact and the contests and tensions in its assemblage are usually invisible. Our interest is in the process of encountering and resolving the inevitable dilemmas that arise both from the inherent tensions in the field of inclusive education and from the different stakeholder imperatives, priorities, experiences and perspectives. These differences necessitate that participants in the working groups exercise a 'professionally appropriate perception of what is salient' (Morrow 2007: 80), an understanding of others' positions through dialogue, and a willingness to reach consensus.

Dilemmas offer a useful lens for analysis. Berlak and Berlak (1981: 233) say that they developed their framework for 'practical inquiry' in education. Norwich (2008, 2010) has used the ideas of the recognition and resolution of dilemmas in cross-national explorations of special and inclusive education. Norwich (2008: 32) identifies several dilemmas in relation to special needs and inclusive education. These dilemmas relate to issues of curriculum (whether children with disabilities should learn the same or different content), identification (whether children should be identified as requiring special provisions), parent and professional influence (the extent to which parents and professionals can exercise power in decisions), and place (whether children with disabilities should learn in regular classrooms). Ethical dilemmas around resources, assessment and interventions are foregrounded in special education (see, for example, Berkeley & Ludlow 2008; Stockall & Dennis 2015; Scager et al. 2017). Michailakis and Reich (2009) find dilemmas to be a useful way to describe tensions in inclusive education between different levels of the education system – from the macro system, to the organisation, and to the classroom. Costley (1997) used dilemmas to analyse teachers' responses to curriculum frameworks when teaching pupils with moderate learning difficulties. Given the generative nature of dilemma analysis, we deemed it an appropriate framework for analysing the tensions that arose during the standards generation process. We contribute to the scholarship of dilemma analysis with the use of the 'will to consensus' (Wiredu 1996: 183) as a means to understand the resolution of dilemmas within conversations among professionals.

Wiredu (1995: 53) observes how 'decision making in traditional African life and governance was, as a rule, by consensus.' In using dialogue to reach a consensus position, Wiredu argues that all parties are able to feel that 'adequate account has been taken of their points of view' without necessarily reaching a point of total agreement (1995: 54). The will to consensus 'presupposes an original position of diversity' and through the will to reach consensus, dialogue can lead to a 'willing suspension of disagreement, making possible agreed actions without necessarily agreed notions' (ibid.). Reaching a consensus position requires the willingness to lay aside personal interest to advance a common project (Wiredu 1996). We believe that Wiredu's concept is an

appropriate lens for understanding the generation of standards for inclusive teaching in the South African context given that a group of diverse stakeholders were brought together and tasked with a common goal. Extensive dialogue and the will to consensus were needed from all parties in order to reach a negotiated, and broadly accepted, product through the processes.

Research design and methodology

The inclusive teaching standards generation process included a qualitative research project that aimed to secure a record, and deeper understanding, of the processes involved in devising the standards. To this end, and with ethics approval from the university and permission from the DHET, the stakeholders involved in the deliberations were invited to participate in the research by allowing their contributions to be audio recorded. Assurances of anonymity and the right to withdraw were given. We collected no biographical data on participants because this may have raised concerns about anonymity, and we were interested in the group deliberations rather than tracking individual contributions. Discussion groups that included any member who did not want to participate were not recorded. Each discussion group was constituted of 10–15 people. In Phase One, there were two sessions and five group discussions. In Phase Two, there were three sessions with one group and, in Phase Three, there were six sessions and one group. Fourteen conversations, lasting between 90 and 150 minutes were audio recorded and transcribed for analysis. We conducted an initial thematic analysis of the data in which codes were assigned to segments of conversation, and these codes were then clustered into categories (Robson 2011). These categories attested to participants' engagement with a wide range of topics related to the elements of inclusive education (UNESCO 2018) that preservice teachers could be expected to know about. These elements included the following: theory, legislation and policy; schools; curriculum and pedagogy; personnel (teachers, school leaders and other specialist and support personnel); and communities (contexts, parents/caregivers and learners). We then approached these data to answer two questions:

- What dilemmas are embedded in the deliberations?
- How were the dilemmas resolved?

A key decision in analysis was to determine what constituted a dilemma. In other words, not all disagreements reflect dilemmas. We took dilemmas to be those contradictions in which resolution on one or other side would have a significant impact on the process or the product of the deliberations. We also decided that the dilemmas needed to be evident across at least two phases of the process, such that they could be seen to represent an ongoing tension. Finally, we took dilemmas as those issues that could be described at a level of abstraction.

The authors of this article disclose their involvement in the processes described above. Walton was a member of the inclusive teaching standards working group, and was present at all three phases as a participant observer. This meant being immersed in the process while also having a research interest. The advantage of this is an appreciation of the context of the discussions (Bryman 2012)

and insider knowledge of the issues raised. The disadvantage is the possibility of bringing preconceived ideas to data analysis and not having sufficient distance from the process to be objective. This was mitigated by the involvement of Rusznyak, who took part in the broader SACE Professional Teaching Standards generation process but not the inclusive teaching part. Rusznyak brought a sensitivity to the topic through knowledge of the overall aims of the processes and was able to offer inter-rater reliability in coding and analysing the data. Other measures that ensured the quality of the findings were the use of an external transcriber, who provided the researchers with anonymised transcripts, and creating distance by only beginning analysis a full year after the final meetings. We have, where appropriate, provided extended extracts from the data in support of our findings, noting that we have made grammatical changes to some extracts to enhance readability.

Findings and discussion

This section describes four dilemmas that emerged in the group deliberations and relates each to the wider literature. The resolution of each dilemma is mentioned. We present the dilemmas roughly in a time sequence in that the first dilemma had to be resolved before the second, and the second before the third. Then, we suggest the notion of consensus within an African philosophy, and the exercise of professional judgement to explain how the participants were able to move on from seemingly entrenched positions on one or other side of a dilemma to produce the final document.

Dilemma 1: Inclusive teaching – 'everyone's business' versus 'our specialised knowledge'

In Phase One of the process, participants grappled with whether standards for inclusive teaching should be described apart from the more general professional teaching standards that would be applicable for all teachers. On one hand, strong arguments were made for not having a set of separate standards for inclusive teaching. The reasons given by one participant were that 'social justice and inclusivity' would appear to be 'added on' when, in fact, 'values should permeate all these other domains, subject competences [and] interpreting curricula.' Another participant suggested that having a separate description of inclusive teaching implied that 'you can choose not to be [an inclusive teacher].' The South African Constitution was invoked as this participant continued: 'And how do we then uphold our Constitution that this is a right for marginalised children if we are creating a space in which you have a choice?' Inclusive teaching, in this view, is 'responding to diversity in a classroom and all teachers should be doing it.' In other words, inclusion is 'everybody's business' and thus shouldn't be described separately from professional teaching standards more generally.

On the other hand, participants were concerned that, without standards dedicated to inclusive teaching, inclusivity could be marginalised. As one participant explained: 'The conventional way of looking at teaching is not necessarily an inclusive way of teaching. And so to just create standards around the conventional way we view teaching, almost marginalises inclusion in that

debate.' Another participant argued that 'we need to put disability in more consciously … to ensure that that inclusivity is manifested and delivered.' This participant elaborated the point using an example of a school that is 'technically inclusive, those children are there. They're fulfilling the mandate of our Constitution. They are not unlawful. But they are not prepared. And those children, as a result, are not safe.' This suggests that while a school might be structurally inclusive, the teaching might not be. Another participant saw the need for discrete standards for inclusive teaching, not as the ideal, but as a requirement for 'teachers who are new and who are novice.' This point was developed by another participant who saw value in describing 'what are we looking at in an inclusive teacher' as a means to 'inform initial teacher education [and] to be able to inform continuous professional development.' For these reasons, the visibility of a separate set of standards for inclusive teaching was deemed valuable.

This dilemma arising from the relationship between professional and inclusive teaching is not unique to the development of standards in the South African context. Internationally, we see this dilemma manifest in how inclusive teaching is positioned within, or separated from, general standards set for teaching. Different approaches are apparent, and two positions will be briefly mentioned. The first approach describes general standards for teaching and has an additional document that gives an in-depth account of the knowledge and skills demanded by inclusive education. Scotland, for example, has a set of general professional standards developed by the General Teaching Council for Scotland for teachers at different stages of their career. In addition, there is a National Framework for Inclusion (Scotland Teacher Education Committee 2014: 4) that 'identifies the values and beliefs, the professional knowledge and understanding, and the professional skills and abilities, in terms of inclusive education, to be expected of student teachers and of qualified teachers at whatever stage of their career.' A second approach is where standards that address inclusive education are a part of the broader professional teaching standards. England, for example, devotes one of its English Teachers' Standards (Department for Education 2011) to teachers' pedagogical responsiveness to diverse learners. There is no additional framework that provides detailed expectations for inclusive teaching in this system, but the one embedded standard signals the expectation that all teachers know about, and respond to, learner diversity.

The dilemma of whether to infuse inclusive education into the broader professional teaching standards (developed by the SACE) or to establish a stand-alone set was largely resolved by the external mandate to generate standards that inform the development of courses in inclusive education within ITE. So, a discrete set of standards had to be produced. However, the inclusive education standards working group was given opportunities to engage with a draft set of professional teaching standards. These opportunities ensured that principles of inclusive teaching were intentionally embedded in the broader set of national professional teaching standards developed by SACE. The form of the standards and the relationship between the broad ones and the focused ones was therefore resolved. However, in Phase Two of the process, this dilemma expressed itself somewhat differently during the deliberations.

Once the process of standards development began, participants found it quite difficult to

demarcate aspects of teaching that could be regarded as the purview of inclusive education. After a brainstorming session in which participants contributed characteristics of inclusive teaching, one said: 'These standards could end up being standards which are going to be a bit too much to handle. So I think at some point we're going to have to be a bit disciplined about not putting everything into this, you know.' Another participant agreed, saying:

> So because otherwise we're going to end up replicating what they [the SACE group working on general professional teaching standards] are doing and we're going to be exhausted in the process. But if we were to say … you know what, that's our stuff, which if we don't flesh out … the big group is likely to lose.

This participant presented the idea of 'our specialist knowledge' to signal the specific contribution that the inclusive education working group brought to the standards generation process. This challenge of finding the specialist knowledge of inclusive education continued through to Phase Three. Discussion took place about the inclusion of the ideas of reflective practice and continual professional development. One participant reminded the others that 'we are doing the inclusive things' saying, 'I guess I'm also thinking what we must do that the others wouldn't think of.' In resolving this dilemma, we see participants pushed to interrogate and articulate their specialist knowledge and perspective. They needed to identify a distinct boundary between their own mandate and the terrain of others working on professional teaching standards.

Dilemma 2: Defining inclusive education – diversity versus disability?

The dilemma identified from the deliberations is a contest about the definition of inclusive education – whether it should focus on all learners vulnerable to marginalisation and exclusion, or whether it is specifically an issue of disability. But before exploring this, we found an interesting sub-dilemma embedded within the dilemma. Framed explicitly as a dilemma by one of the participants in Session Two of Phase Two, it is expressed as follows: Standards for inclusive teaching cannot be described without a shared understanding of what is meant by inclusive education; the converse is that in developing the standards, the necessary definitional work would be done. This extended extract is illustrative:

> **Participant (P)9**: So what I suspect is going to happen … is it will end up being iterative, that as we start talking about what we'd like to see – whether we call them standards, indicators, something … we're actually going to almost work backwards and clarify understandings. So I think it's … almost a dilemma … if we're not working with the shared understanding, will we get anywhere?
>
> **P2**: Yes.
>
> **P9**: You know, and I think there is some concern that maybe we won't. But on the other hand then it's through the working together that I think those understandings emerge and … I suspect just listening to us, probably we've got enough to kind of stumble along with.

The participants did not pause the deliberations to settle on a definition of inclusive education and proceeded to 'stumble along.' This is significant in the resolution of a dilemma where there is tacit acknowledgement of the need for a consensus position, and where not all stakeholders will be fully

satisfied with an outcome, but all can regard a consensus position as tolerable in the light of competing and incompatible positions. But the wider dilemma of how explicitly disability should feature was given extensive consideration.

One participant described this dilemma with reference to a higher education institution, saying: 'So that, that brings a dilemma now. Like the institution that we are talking about, they are looking at disability specifically, but then at the same time we are clamouring for inclusive education – so where are we going?' On one hand, there were participants who rejected the link between inclusive education and special needs. Taking issue with South Africa's policy, one participant said: 'White Paper 6 which is our primary policy on inclusive education, still talks about building a special needs education system.' Continuing the thought, this participant said: 'I don't think it is a problem to have discussion and debate about what inclusive education is, but when it is so radically seen as about disability, that is a problem.' The concern with the many ways in which South African learners have been (and continue to be) excluded from schooling was a refrain throughout the discussions. A participant in Phase Two identified excluded identities that s/he wanted acknowledged by saying:

> It's not only about learners with special needs and so on, but it's also about those learners in mainstream classrooms that are excluded. I exclude you because of language, I exclude you because of religion, I exclude you because I look at you as a person without any culture, you are a-cultural. So I'm not including you. You don't feel welcome there because nothing is said about your culture, nothing is said about your religion, nothing is said about maybe what – the context, your context.

This extract reveals a concern that exclusion operates as the non-recognition of diverse language, religion and culture, and an argument that the standards had to incorporate this recognition. The views of these participants reflect what is known as a broad view of inclusive education. This broad view brings all children vulnerable to exclusion into the scope of inclusive education (UNESCO 2018). However, in broadening the definition of inclusive education by focusing on a range of excluded identities, there is a risk that disability is marginalised.

The narrower view of inclusive education argues for the focus to remain on the inclusion of disabled children, particularly since these are the most marginalised children in the world (Croft 2013). This narrower view was held by some participants in the standards generation discussion. They wanted issues of disability to be foregrounded in the standards document. One participant raised concern with the broad approach to inclusion that is said to exclude those concerned with disability:

> And then I think the disability community will push back and say you are getting excluded from inclusion now. Like, it's just like, this is a disability? No, it's not. And … I spend a lot of time with the DSD [Department of Social Development] and those groups, and they feel excluded by inclusive education.

Others pressed for reference to disability to be made specific within a broader consideration of 'learner diversity' in the standards. They wanted explicit mention of 'the broad knowledge of

disability and some specifics,' and for the word 'disability' to be included with notions of child development and human rights.

The dilemma is that by foregrounding disability, the standards could miss many other ways in which learners are excluded. But, a more generic approach to diversity risks marginalising disability issues all over again. This dilemma reflects concerns in Miles and Singal's (2010) debate between Education for All and Inclusive Education. These authors discuss the impact of the invisibility of disability in 'education for all rhetoric,' but also show how focus on access for individuals or groups can detract attention from focusing on overall systemic change. They conclude that 'while many in the field argue that there needs to be a focus on "all," there is arguably still a need for a particular focus on disability issues – sometimes called a "twin-track" approach' (Miles & Singal 2010: 11). Somewhat pessimistically, these authors suggest that it is impossible to find common ground on this issue. The participants in the working group did reach consensus through the resolution of Dilemma 4 (see below: General responsiveness vs individual support) and the term 'disability' does not appear in the standards.

Dilemma 3: De/colonial inclusive education

The primacy of context is the issue at the heart of this dilemma. It emerged in Phase Two as participants in the process looked for precedent in international standards for inclusive teaching, while trying to ensure relevance to the contextual realities of South Africa. A key point of contention was whether to start with context and work towards describing applicable standards, or whether to start with exemplars from elsewhere (such as Scotland and England, mentioned above), and then seek contextual relevance. One participant argued for looking 'from an Afro-centric perspective in the context of South Africa in such development of the standards if we are to respond, if we are to develop standards that are in alignment with our pragmatic realities.' This was seen by another participant as a 'bottom-up' approach, in contrast to a 'top-down approach' that would look at existing standards in other countries. One participant gave support to the bottom-up approach, arguing that the team 'should start with the practical realities of South Africa and that's the first thing that we should be interrogating.' Others favoured seeing 'what is out there.'

To enable progress, this dilemma was resolved through the chair's mandate to the group to get a sense of 'what's happening out there. We take that, we look at it and we then begin the process using that Afro-centric approach – what we can use, what we can't, how we're going to change it.' As the discussion about various international models progressed, with group members suggesting aspects of inclusive teaching that should be reflected in the standards, the following interchange took place:

P2: What about ICT?

P19: Decolonised.

P9: You've got?

P19: Decolonised inclusive education.

P2: Decolonise inclusive education? [Some participants chuckle]

P23: I'm writing it!

P19: Teaching for social justice.

The idea of decolonised inclusive education shifted the conversation to a focus on the need to describe inclusive teaching that was anchored in the South African experience. One participant was concerned to foreground 'the structural and environmental barriers that's part of the South African context. Like it's like a whole other thing that South African teachers have to contend with more than a lot of other countries.' There was a sense that there are issues in South Africa that are not covered in global descriptions of the competences of inclusive teachers. These issues are defined by one participant as 'around … social justice and intercultural competence,' which are seen as being 'a whole other layer that teachers need to address' in South Africa. Another participant was concerned to find a domain of teacher competence where the standards would 'unpack all of your very South African relevant barriers to learning.' Here, the dilemma resolution was through the intertwining of both global and local as participants moved iteratively between ideas raised in the international models and those specifically relating to the South African context.

The challenge of balancing contextual specificity and generality continued into Phase Three of the process. The dilemma is evident in that a choice towards too much specificity loses relevance for those outside the immediate context, but too much generality 'could mean anything.' The following extract is from a discussion on what it might mean for a standard to say: 'Understanding barriers of learning and development in the South African context.'

P9: That then opens, for example, is that possibly in your universities you might need to be spending more time on the foetal alcohol syndrome issues because that's a, quite a big thing there ...

P26: Yes.

P9: ... but not necessarily in our areas where teachers may need to be aware of it but … So that also even opens up the possibility for quite contextually specific responses, I don't know. Is that what you're thinking?

P30: Yes, and we are not only training teachers for South Africa.

P29: That's what I wanted to mention.

P30: We usually miss out on our colleagues from Lesotho, from Swaziland.

P29: Yes.

P30: We teach them the South African context as if they were going to go back and work there.

P26: Yes, but that's why I want it to be Southern African context.

P30: Okay.

P29: That's what I wanted, also to say that.

> **P26**: Because if we just say 'in context' it could mean anything and especially people like me who are still so tied to northern hemisphere things.

This conversation captures the advantage that a general statement offers the flexibility for an individual university to explore location-specific barriers to learning, in this case, foetal alcohol syndrome, which is more prevalent in some parts of South Africa than others. The limitation to South Africa is challenged, with the acknowledgement of students from different parts of Southern Africa. At the same time, some regional grounding is emphasised so that 'northern hemisphere things' do not prevail.

Standards for teaching generally are problematic in that they represent an 'abstract discourse' that is inevitably at variance with 'the particular experiences of teachers' (Kostogriz 2018: 245). This tension is also prevalent in inclusive education, which has a supranational discourse (through the UNCRPD, UNESCO, Sustainable Development Goals, etc.) and local instantiations. The potential conflict between the global abstraction and the local instantiation is well documented in the literature in the field (Kalyanpur 2016; Muthukrishna & Engelbrecht 2018), and it is widely conceded that local histories and geographies of exclusion will shape inclusive education in different contexts (Kozleski, Artiles & Waitoller 2011).

Dilemma 4: General responsiveness to difference versus individualised support

A well-known dilemma in special and inclusive education manifested itself in the deliberations of the standards working group. Derived from the work of Minnow (1990, cited in Norwich 2008), the 'dilemma of difference' concerns the implications of treating everyone the same (and so, not providing the support that individuals may require) versus treating everyone as different (and risking marginalisation and stigmatisation). Dyson and Howes (2009: 156) express this as the 'dilemma of how to respond simultaneously to differences and commonalities between learners.' One of the participants in Phase Three of the process expressed this as the 'distinction between the kind of what we do for everyone versus the specific interventions for some.' On one hand, there were participants who recommended that the standards should emphasise knowledge of the effective use of general teaching strategies. One participant expressed this as

> teachers having a toolkit where they can just pull on different things based on what they are finding as they are going along. So you would want to give them a kind of bag of goodies that they are taking to the classroom.

This view was emphasised as being congruent with the focus on beginner teachers, and the recognition that ITE could not provide information about all the learning needs that prospective teachers might encounter. A participant said: 'We can't load initial teacher education with everything that we know that inclusive teachers need because that ends up being pretty impossible.' The work of Lani Florian (2014, 2015), who had been a plenary speaker in Phase One, was influential in this discussion. The concern was raised by participants that the standards did not reinforce 'bell curve thinking' but that inclusive teachers should 'hold high expectations for all learners.'

On the other hand, the concern was raised that a general pedagogical responsiveness to diversity in the standards was insufficient. One participant disagreed with the toolkit idea, saying

> I disagree because sometimes children do need very specific intervention depending on where they're at and what their need is. So I think we can be generalist to a point but in order to really, honestly, authentically move that child forward, you have to be with where that particular child is at.

Another participant argued for a focus on 'individual support' for 'identified groups of learners like … additional language learners or learners who struggled with concentration.' Suggesting wording that would be used in the final document, someone else wanted to shift the language of support to a more asset-based approach. This participant said: 'I was thinking shouldn't we change the wording of "individual support, planning and intervention" to "addressing individual strengths and needs"?' The focus here remains on an approach that secures the visibility of the individual learner or identified group in the standards.

This dilemma is expressed in the fields of inclusive and special education with debates about whether disabled children require pedagogies specific to their disability classification (see for example, Cook & Schirmer 2003; Lewis & Norwich 2005; Croft 2013). Florian and Black-Hawkins promote the idea of an inclusive pedagogy that focuses on everyone in the classroom, arguing for an extension of 'what is ordinarily available for all learners (creating a rich learning community) rather than using teaching and learning strategies that are suitable for most alongside something "additional" or "different" for some who experience difficulties' (2011: 818).

The dilemma was resolved in the standards document not on one or other side, but by having a focus on both. The third dimension of inclusive teaching was described in the standards as 'Classroom practices that promote and support collaborative and individual learning,' with two subdimensions. The first subdimension reflects the influence of Florian's (2015) inclusive pedagogical approach with the words: 'Classroom strategies that are pedagogically designed to be responsive to learner diversity.' The second subdimension, 'Individual asset-based support,' satisfied those who wanted to secure a focus on individually tailored pedagogy. This resolution, in effect, also resolved the second dilemma given that the specific needs of individuals (possibly with disabilities) were seen to be addressed.

Discussion: Dilemma resolution

We return to the concern that scholarly discussions of teaching standards neglect the human processes that produce them (Mulcahy 2011). We understand the resolution of the identified dilemmas through the African philosopher, Kwasi Wiredu's, idea of consensus. The members of the discussion groups in Phases Two and Three embodied the 'will to consensus' (Wiredu 1996: 183) in both the process and the product of the deliberations. Some dilemmas, like whether to have separate standards for inclusive teaching, were resolved by settling on one side in favour of the other. In these instances, because of the impetus of the task at hand and the desire to 'avoid immobilisation,' group members who had different ideas were able to 'prune down their

reservations' in pursuit of 'the common necessity for something to be done' (Wiredu 2010: 1057). Other dilemmas, like defining inclusive education in terms of general diversity or disability, were resolved by what Wiredu calls 'smoothing of edges' in which dialogue brought about 'compromises that are agreeable to all or, at least, not obnoxious to any' (1996: 183). In some cases, participants did not stick in an unyielding way to their preferred position but, rather, made certain concessions and moved towards a common consensus position that they did not find untenable.

The ability and willingness to seek consensus required that participants draw on their professional knowledge to make reasoned judgements in the complexities of the standards generating process. The resolution of dilemmas encountered during the deliberations required that consensus be reached if the artefact of the standards was to be, if not widely accepted then, widely acceptable to different stakeholder interests. Reaching such a consensus position required the participants to exercise professional judgement in the deliberation processes. This judgement draws on both theoretical knowledge and complex practical experience (Shalem 2014). Participants needed to be able to hold onto the overall mandate of the standards development working group while representing their own theoretical and ideological positions, and ensuring that the views of their stakeholder constituencies were considered. The exercising of professional judgement required them to consider the perspectives of different positions through dialogue, that is, engage in a 'situational appreciation' (Morrow 2007: 80) of what is salient in particular situations, and concede aspects that enabled the imperatives of other stakeholders to be reflected in the resulting standards. For this process to generate a coherent and owned set of standards, the consensus could not be one of dominant personalities and interest groups but, rather, one of careful and considered engagement with a complex set of issues from different perspectives.

Conclusion

This dilemma analysis has highlighted three issues that we believe are significant for inclusive education and teacher education in South Africa. First, the South African context is complex, and the standards reflect a codified but abstracted vision of inclusive teaching. Teacher education has an important role to play in mediating the standards and enabling their performance in practice. Second, while the standards might be abstract, they represent a very real process of human actors, all with their own interests and positions, working together to produce an acceptable document in a relatively short period of time. The dilemmas encountered were resolved in different ways within an overall will to consensus through engaged dialogue by diverse stakeholders. Finally, while South Africa faces unique challenges to inclusive education as a result of its colonial and apartheid past, it is also grappling with common concerns. Therefore, the knowledges produced in this Global South context can and should contribute to the international discourse community in the field.

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