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# How teachers manage their work in inclusive classrooms

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## Abstract

The aim of the study reported in this paper was to develop substantive theory regarding how teachers manage their classroom work when they are placed in the position of having a student with a severe or profound intellectual disability included in their class. The result was the theory of selective adaptation. The theory proposes that teachers can be classified as 'technicians', 'strategists', or 'improvisers' according to the extent to which they selectively adapt their classroom practices. Furthermore, there is a correspondence between the extent to which teachers selectively adapt their classroom work and the impact of inclusion on their lives. © 2000 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

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## 1. Introduction

The study reported in this paper focuses on the 'inclusion' of children with severe or profound intellectual disabilities into the 'regular' classroom setting. Throughout much of the world there is a growing emphasis on the need for education to be every bit as inclusive of such children as it is of children without disabilities. Thus, a new challenge is being posed for teachers. This, in turn, has generated a new agenda for educational researchers. The study reported here is one response to this agenda. It is a qualitative study located within the symbolic interaction tradition, with the use of data collection and data analysis methods proposed by grounded theorists (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). While the study was confined to the State of Western Australia

(WA), the theory of 'selective adaptation' which emerged provides a new perspective on the central research question of how regular classroom teachers manage their classroom work when one member of their class has a severe or profound intellectual disability.

## 2. The background

By 1993, there were, world-wide, over 200 million children with intellectual disabilities (Mittler, Brouillette, & Harris, 1993). The experiences of such children can range from one of being totally excluded from schooling through to full-time placement in a regular classroom. Furthermore, where they are able to gain access to formal education services, placement types include special education programs in public or private residential services, separate schools, special centers within regular schools, special classes in regular schools, and

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'inclusion'. For the purpose of this paper, the term 'inclusion' is used to describe situations where the regular classroom teacher is responsible for the educational program of disabled children alongside their non-disabled peers and where all of this education takes place in the regular classroom (Lipsky & Gartner, 1994, p. 36). Such a situation needs to be differentiated from 'integration', which refers to situations where some of the schooling of disabled students takes place in settings where they are segregated from their non-disabled peers while the rest is received alongside them in regular classrooms.

Throughout the Western World there is a significant move towards 'inclusion' (Kisanji, 1998; Sebba & Ainscow, 1996). Various propositions have been advanced to explain this phenomenon. The decline in influence of the medical and psychological professions in the field of childhood disability (Lewis & Cook, 1993) has moved the focus away from the clinical tasks of measurement, assessment and labeling and, instead, has concentrated attention on the educational and social needs of children with disabilities. Slee (1997, p. 416) has argued that a first step in meeting these needs is to acknowledge the diversity of identities which "have hitherto been collapsed into special educational categories to fit professional and bureaucratic imperatives and also into materialistic narratives of disablement".

Arguments used to enhance the participation rates of racial minorities and females in education have also been used to promote 'integration'. There has been a growing acceptance that individuals with disabilities "have the same rights as others in the community to achieve maximum independence as adults, and should be educated to the best of their potential towards that end" (Jenkinson, 1993, p. 320). The challenge now in this regard, as Slee (1997, p. 416) sees it, is "to consider how we support and legitimate difference through a range of resourcing arrangements, pedagogies and curriculum initiatives to expand options for all students".

Some have taken as their starting point criticisms of the theoretical foundations of the concept of disability:

Since the politicisation of disability by the international disabled people's movement ... a growing number of academics, many of whom are

disabled people themselves, have reconceptualised disability as a complex and sophisticated form of social oppression (Oliver, 1996) or institutional discrimination on a par with sexism, heterosexism and racism. (Barnes, 1996, p. 43)

Adopting such a perspective, various groups have used powerful moral, social and political arguments in support of their case for inclusive education (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994; Rouse & Florian, 1997). **They contend that segregated education leads to segregation in adult life and that 'inclusion' in education would have the opposite effect.** The assertion here is that positive attitudes towards people with disabilities are developed when disabled and non-disabled children interact at school, and that these attitudes are sustained in adult life.

Within Western Australia, while the state education system offers a continuum of placement options, not all of these options are available to all children. The Education Department has a policy that directs schools to ensure that parents receive "appropriate advice in order to make informed decisions about how their children's needs are best met" (Ministry of Education, 1993, p. 3). Nevertheless, the majority of children with a severe or profound intellectual disability attend educational support schools, centers or units. Where such facilities exist, the Education Department will not allocate the resources needed to support a child's placement in a regular classroom. Conversely, in those rural and remote areas of the state where education support facilities are not available, **children with this level of intellectual disability are included in regular classrooms.** Accordingly, teachers in rural settings cannot refuse to accept students who have intellectual disabilities. This makes the field a rich one for research, especially on the teaching processes involved.

It is also a field seriously in need of research. While there is an abundance of empirical research literature in special education (Skidmore, 1996), the corresponding body of empirical research literature on inclusion is not at all as extensive. Accordingly, associated school practices are not always informed by studies undertaken in the field. This is not to argue that no research has been undertaken; rather, it is to recognize that, overall, for the past fifteen



years the literature on inclusion has been dominated by a focus on its axiological foundations (Sebba & Ainscow, 1996). Neither is it to argue that informing practice in inclusive education with empirical research is unproblematic. Brantlinger (1997), drawing from the insights of theorists who study ideology, argues that we need to think seriously about the impact of our educational preferences on the least powerful members of society if equity in schooling is to be achieved. Also, as Slee (1999) argues, empirical research needs to be undertaken from a variety of perspectives, including, but not exclusively, that of the researcher. Allan (1999, p. viii) takes this position a stage further in her recent work by inviting us to listen to non-disabled and disabled students' discourses and "observe the complex regimes of inclusion and exclusion colluding and colliding with each other in the school". Similarly, insights into the understanding of 'inclusion' from the perspectives of classroom teachers are needed. The study which is reported here is one contribution to the area. It is a qualitative study located within the symbolic interaction tradition, with the use of data gathering and data analysis methods proposed by grounded theorists. It responds to calls in recent years for studies on the process of inclusion (Janzen, Wilgosh, & McDonald, 1995; Udvari-Solner & Thousand, 1995), and specifically on the ways teachers experience, respond to, seek to manage and exert control over inclusion (Ferguson, 1993; Vulliamy & Webb, 1993).

### 3. The design of the study

The study was based on a central research question which asked how teachers in rural and remote schools in Western Australia, who have had no specific training for the education of children with disabilities, manage their classroom work when they are placed in the position of including a student with a severe or profound intellectual disability in their class. **A child with a severe intellectual disability is defined as having an IQ in the range 20–40, while children with a profound intellectual disability are defined as having an IQ below 25** (American Psychological Association, 1994).

From the outset, it was recognized that restricting the study to WA regular rural teachers in regular classroom settings who had been assigned one student with a severe or profound intellectual disability, would mean that there would be major limitations to any theory which would be developed. In particular, it was accepted that it would not be possible to claim generalizability for the study in the sense in which that concept is understood by quantitative researchers. Nevertheless, it was also recognized that if a theory could be developed then it might be generalizable in the sense that people could relate to it and perhaps gain an understanding of their own and others' situations.

In framing the central research question in terms of how teachers manage their classroom work the researchers were adopting a concept which has been clearly articulated within the symbolic interaction tradition in social theory (Blumer, 1969). This is to argue that it is important for the researcher to explore teachers' understandings about the phenomenon of inclusion, how they act towards it, how they act towards others in relation to it, and how their understandings and actions change over time. It is from an understanding of these dimensions of the phenomenon of inclusion that we can arrive at an understanding of the basic social process, or processes, involved.

The notion of teachers' classroom work is also central to this study. A variety of frameworks exist to describe and explain the tasks, processes and technologies which constitute the classroom work of teachers (Barry & King, 1993; Dreeben, 1970, pp. 87–88). The present researchers, however, chose not to use an existing framework. Rather, the term 'managing classroom work' was used as an 'in-vivo' code (Glaser, 1978, p. 70; Strauss, 1987, p. 33) to capture how teachers view the way they deal with their day-to-day work in the classroom. In other words, managing classroom work was deemed an appropriate focus for the present study as it was discovered in pilot work that it was a term regularly used by the teachers themselves.

#### 3.1. Participants

The participants were all regular classroom teachers in Western Australian rural state schools

School Size in Pupil Nos. (pseudonym)	Teacher	Grade Level taught	Male/ Female	Years of Teaching Experience	Years in Current School
110	Mary	2	F	18	9
230	John	4	M	10	0
105	Joan	2	F	3	3
312	Lesley	4	F	1	0
90	Anne	2	F	4	2
180	Dianne	3	F	0	0
60	Anthea	5	F	25	21
260	Penny	4	F	2	1
145	Juliana	6	F	13	0
270	Susan	3	F	25	6
320	Sandra	4	F	16	2

Fig. 1. A profile of the teachers in the study.

who had a student with a severe or profound disability included in their class. Throughout the state there were 25 government primary school teachers in that situation. Of these, 22 had no previous experience of teaching a student with a severe or profound intellectual disability, thus fitting the criteria for selection. Eleven of the 22 were selected for data gathering and they all agreed to participate. They were all located in the south-western portion of the state. This is also the most densely populated rural district in WA and covers an area of about 360,000 square kilometers. The other 11 teachers were located in the remainder of the state and it was not possible to include them in the study as they were scattered over a sparsely populated area which constitutes one-third of the area of all of Australia.

The level of teaching experience of the 11 teachers selected varied significantly. The year the study commenced was the first year of teaching for one of the teachers. This contrasted with another teacher who had been teaching for 25 yr and was in the twenty-first year of teaching at the same school. A more detailed profile of the teachers is displayed in Fig. 1. Here it will be noted also that ten of the teachers were female, thus reflecting the ratio of female to male teachers in the WA education system in rural areas.

### 3.2. Research methods

The study used qualitative methods of data gathering and analysis proposed by grounded theorists. These research methods are consistent with the symbolic interaction view of human behavior (Chenitz & Swanson, 1986), offering a comprehensive and systematic framework for inductively building theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In this study, their use led to the discovery, development and verification of the substantive theory (Glaser, 1978; Woods, 1992) of 'selective adaptation'.

Data gathering took place through interviewing, observation and document study. The interviewing was conducted over one school year. Semi-structured interviews were held with each of the participating classroom teachers on at least three occasions throughout the year. The interview questions were framed around the central research question. The following illustrates the types of questions asked in the first round of interviews:

What will you do in the days ahead to plan and prepare for having XXX as a member of your class? Why?

What changes, if any, do you intend to make to your regular teaching routine in response to having XXX as a member of your class? Why?

Have you set any goals or targets for the year ahead? Why?

Have you given any thought to the task of developing an appropriate educational program for XXX? Why?

These interview questions were not specific questions to be answered. Rather, they were guiding questions. In other words, they were those questions which suggested themselves at the commencement of the study as being the most productive guides to generate data pertinent to the central area of interest. As the study progressed they were modified and refined in response to the data which emerged. For example, one of the initial questions was: What do you consider are XXX's parents' expectations in relation to inclusion and how do you plan to respond to these expectations? This was modified to: Have you formed a view about the expectations of XXX's parents in relation to inclusion? Later in the year it was modified again to: Have the expectations of XXX's parents had an influence on your classroom work this year?

Over one hundred hours of classroom observations were also conducted at various times during the year. The observations were complemented by data yielded through documents obtained from the teachers, school administrators, and various other personnel within the Education Department. Teachers' diaries, designed specifically for the study, provided another source of data. These diaries had the initial set of interview questions printed on the first two pages and the teachers were encouraged to use them as a guide in making regular entries about their experience of inclusion. They were also encouraged to document any critical incidents which took place. Data were coded and analyzed using the three coding methods of the grounded theory model: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Glaser, 1992). The teachers were involved directly in verifying the data and the emerging theory.

#### 4. The theory of 'selective adaptation'

The theory of selective adaptation which emerged from the study represents the basic

social-psychological process by which regular classroom teachers manage their classroom work when one member of their class has a severe or profound intellectual disability. The theory is now presented in two parts. The first part is an outline of what is meant by selective adaptation. This provides a background to the second part, namely, a grounded typology of teachers with regard to how they manage their classroom work in an inclusive classroom.

##### 4.1. *The meaning of selective adaptation*

Teachers tend not to make radical changes or transformations to their classroom organization, teaching methods or curriculum content when responding to the challenges of managing their classroom work in an inclusive classroom. Rather, where changes are made, they tend to be carefully considered modifications of existing teaching practices. In other words, teachers manage their classroom work in an inclusive classroom by selectively adapting aspects of their normal practices. Each of these categories will now be considered in turn.

##### 4.1.1. *First category — receiving*

Once teachers become aware that they will have a student with a severe or profound intellectual disability as a member of their class they begin to gather information about inclusion. The processes that teachers use in this regard are categorized within the theory of selective adaptation as 'receiving'. Lesley gave general expression to this notion of receiving as follows:

I spent a lot of time with the deputy discussing the whole thing. I wanted to find out everything I could about the whole deal, about what I was entitled to and what was expected of me. This was a whole new ball game for me and I just wanted to know the rules.

Teachers engage in the processes associated with receiving with greatest intensity at the start of the school year. However, they also utilize the processes at subsequent times to deal with situations which arise in relation to specific aspects of managing their classroom work.

Within 'receiving' there are three distinct but inter-related processes: 'clarifying', 'analyzing' and 'checking'. *Clarifying* is the term that has been given to the process by which regular classroom teachers find out about 'inclusion' and its myriad elements. A comment made by Sandra captures what is involved:

I wanted to know my rights in this area. I wanted to know if I had to take a child with such problems. I even thought about contacting the union to get some advice about inclusion. I knew that more and more of these children were moving into regular classes, but I didn't know very much about it at all.

Teachers in the present study used a wide range of strategies when clarifying. The more formal of these strategies were discussions with representatives of the Education Department and union officials. Other formal strategies included participation in training programs and professional development programs designed to increase teachers' skills in the education of students with disabilities. Informal strategies included discussions with colleagues and school administrators and casual conversations with friends and family members.

*Scrutinizing* is the process through which teachers examine closely the information they receive about all aspects of inclusion. In particular, it is the process through which they analyze individual pieces of information and then reconcile them with their current overall understanding of inclusion. As Joan put it:

I was given conflicting advice about where Lucy should be seated in the class. On the one hand, I was told that she must be in with the other kids and then I was told that for practical and safety reasons she should be at the desk on her own. It was up to me to balance the principles of inclusion with the practical task of running the class.

This process can be likened to the construction of a jig-saw puzzle whereby each piece of information has significance for the whole picture of inclusion and the emerging picture has significance for each of the pieces. On the one hand, teachers

attempt to make sense of particular aspects of operating an inclusive classroom by reference to the broad conceptual and axiological underpinnings of inclusion, while on the other hand they equally seek to gain a general overview of the phenomenon by scrutinizing the information they receive about particular aspects of operating an inclusive classroom.

As a direct result of engaging in scrutinizing, teachers' overall understanding about inclusion can change significantly over a school year. The process of examining closely information about a wide range of specific issues associated with inclusion tends to have a cumulative effect on their overall understanding of the phenomenon. In the words of one teacher in the present study: "the big picture about inclusion kept changing as the year wore on because I was forced to think about all aspects of it very thoroughly".

*Checking* is the process used by teachers to compare and contrast the information they receive about inclusion. Anthea explained as follows how she engaged in this process:

Already I've got a few ideas about how to 'take advantage' of having Sophie in the room. It will be a good opportunity to teach the others about acceptance and tolerance, and being thankful for what you've got. But I am not sure how far you can take it. I am not sure if I should be drawing attention to Sophie or not. I'll have to check this out with the visiting teacher.

Checking stems from a reluctance on the part of teachers to accept any information, advice or suggestions about the broad range of issues associated with inclusion without corroboration. It can relate to a single issue or situation, or it can be a lengthy process involving complex issues and multiple sources of information. In this regard, the teachers in the present study frequently sought the views of the principal, other teachers and teacher-aides about very specific matters related to the student with the disability. Also, each of the responses was considered and compared with the teachers' prevailing views about inclusion. As with clarifying and scrutinizing, the intensity with which teachers in the present study engaged in the process of checking was greatest at the commencement of the

school year. However, they also continued to engage in checking well into the second half of the school year.

#### 4.1.2. *Second category — accepting*

Once teachers have satisfied themselves that they have developed an understanding of the broad conceptual underpinnings of inclusion and that they have received accurate information about specific aspects to this approach to the education of students with disabilities, they begin to consider the implications of this new educational phenomenon for themselves and for others. They do this through ‘assessing impact’, ‘values clarifying’ and ‘reconciling’.

*Assessing impact* is the process through which teachers make initial judgments about the overall impact that inclusion will have on their classes. Dianne voiced her thought patterns in this regard in the following manner:

There's no doubt that I'm going to be spending a lot of extra time developing individual educational plans and thinking up new ways of teaching.

Teachers assess impact by creating a mental image of what the year ahead will look like and by visualizing the changes they believe they will have to make to their existing classroom work-practices.

*Values clarifying* is the process through which teachers examine inclusion within the values framework they hold in relation to the education of students with intellectual disabilities. Mary was engaging in this process when she stated:

I have no doubt that inclusion is the right thing to do. The days of segregating children with disabilities are behind us. But teachers are going to need a lot of support and advice to make sure that all kids in the class get a fair deal.

In values clarifying teachers ask themselves two types of questions. The first type is along the following lines: Does inclusion fit with my own values in relation to human rights, equity, ethics and social justice? The second type of question they ask is along the following lines: Does the practice of

inclusion fit with my own values about education? *Reconciling* is the process through which teachers examine inclusion, or specific aspects of it, in relation to their existing personal and professional frameworks. Penny used the term when reflecting on her experiences at the commencement of the school year:

I found it difficult to reconcile ‘inclusion’ with my life at this time. Up until the start of this year I had my teaching career on track and I knew where I was heading. This was a big change for me in many respects. I had to think carefully about it [inclusion] to see how it would influence my life.

She went on to give a detailed account of the aspects of her life she considered may have been influenced by having a student with a severe intellectual disability as a member of her class. In analyzing this account a series of recurring questions which she asked herself became clear: How will this inclusion affect my career? Will the experience increase or decrease my opportunity for transferring to another school? Will it enhance my opportunity for promotion within the education system? How will inclusion affect my relationship with colleagues? What impact will it have on my personal life? Consideration of these and other questions led the teacher to make an overall assessment of the likely impact of inclusion on her professional and personal life.

#### 4.1.3. *Third category — committing*

‘Committing’ is a category comprised of three processes: ‘deciding’, ‘rationalizing’ and ‘explaining’. Through these processes teachers develop a consistent point-of-view about inclusion. This then leads them to engage in a range of actions and interactions aimed at justifying the particular point-of-view they have taken about inclusion, both to themselves and to others. In this regard, John made the following comment:

I gave a lot of thought to my teaching during first term. Towards the end of term I realized that I would have to make some decisions. Was I going to make ‘inclusion’ work or was I going to

fight against it. I felt I had to become more definite in my approach. So I decided to give it my best shot. But I could easily have gone the other way. I can see how some teachers become negative and say it can't work. I didn't. I decided to make it work.

Through the process of *deciding* which is exemplified in this extract, teachers adopt a particular stance in relation to inclusion which, in turn, influences the nature and extent of the adaptations they make to their classroom work practices.

The stance taken by teachers in relation to inclusion after engaging in the process of deciding can vary significantly from one teacher to the next. While some teachers develop a strong commitment to inclusion based either on axiological or educational grounds, others reject this approach to the education of children with disabilities and, as a result, spend the remainder of the school year implementing a policy to which they have little or no commitment. Perspectives which range between these two points-of-view can also develop as the outcome of the process of deciding.

*Rationalizing* is a process in which teachers justify to themselves the particular stance they have adopted about inclusion. Anne was engaging in this process when she stated:

I was quite open with the deputy principal. I told him that I was setting up the classroom and establishing routines that would take care of Lucy's needs, but that I would be relying heavily on the teacher-aide to work with her. I am happy to put time into preparing her program, but I can't take time away from all the other kids during class time.

Through engaging in such rationalizing, teachers use information, advice from others and personal experiences which support their stance. Also, they tend to downgrade, trivialize or reject information or advice which conflicts with the stance they have taken.

While teachers talk with their friends and colleagues, particularly in the early part of the school year, to clarify and check information about inclusion, they also use these discussions to *explain* the

stance they have taken. A typical explanation was along the lines of that offered by Joan:

I think there will be more gains than losses for me in this. I've already learnt a lot of new things about my teaching so far this year. By making changes to the way I teach I am going to get more satisfaction and the class is going to work more effectively.

As with rationalizing, teachers also tend to use the process of explaining to criticize or reject viewpoints about inclusion which conflict with their own. Also, as they gain experience with inclusion they tend to speak with increased conviction about their own views, interlacing their contributions to conversations with examples drawn from their own experiences in managing an inclusive classroom.

#### 4.1.4. Fourth category — *adjusting*

'Adjusting' is the 'core category' of selective adaptation. Thus, it represents the central phenomenon around which all the other categories are integrated. It consists of three major processes: 'selecting', 'reacting' and 'initiating'.

*Selecting* involves teachers identifying aspects of their classroom work practices they are going to change in response to inclusion. As Sandra put it:

I knew that I would have to give my teacher assistant a lot more responsibility, far more than I would normally allow. I made a conscious decision to give her a more direct and responsible role.

For all teachers the selecting process tends initially to be focused on classroom organizational practices. Some teachers then move beyond this somewhat narrow focus and select elements of their teaching strategies for change. Yet another group of teachers take the additional step of selecting particular aspects of the content of the curriculum for change.

*Reacting* is the process whereby teachers make changes to their classroom practices in response to a particular experience or set of experiences they have had when teaching in an inclusive classroom.

In this regard, John explained how he was preparing himself for what was to come:

There is no doubt that this will be a big learning year for me. It will be a real opportunity to learn more about teaching kids with disabilities. I am already booked in for two training programs in Perth.

Through 'reacting' teachers attempt to change particular classroom practices with which they are dissatisfied and make adjustments which they believe will improve the way the classroom is operating. The overall aim of the process is to make a positive change in current practices which, in turn, will enhance the capacity of the teachers to manage their classroom work.

*Initiating* involves teachers making pre-emptive changes which are based on the information they have received about inclusion through the processes of clarifying, scrutinizing and checking, or on the point-of-view they have adopted in relation to the education of students with intellectual disabilities in regular classrooms. The following comment from Susan indicates what is involved in this process:

It took a lot to implement the friendship roster for Lucy. My lunch breaks and recess times were taken up with this. I gave it my best shot because I had been told that it would have positive results.

Through engaging in this process teachers make changes on the basis of the conditions they anticipate they will experience in the inclusive classroom.

Motivation for teachers to engage in initiating can stem from a range of sources. There were many examples in the present study where teachers made changes to their regular practices, especially in relation to classroom organization, as precautionary measures to increase safety for the student with the disability, for other students, or for adults in the classroom. Other changes were motivated by the concern of the teachers to ensure that they were implementing classroom practices consistent with current practices in relation to inclusion. In most cases, however, initiating was motivated by the

desire to establish an effective classroom environment which would result in productive outcomes for all students in the class.

#### 4.1.5. *Fifth category — appraising*

The fifth and final category of the theory of selective adaptation is 'appraising'. It consists of two major processes, namely, 'assessing' and 'judging'.

*Assessing* is the process used by teachers to estimate the magnitude or quality of the outcomes of the adjustments they have made to their regular classroom practices in response to inclusion. Juliana gave the following example of such an adjustment:

The change we made to the arrangement of desks and equipment has been very successful. I've been able to set up a reading corner and the kids can move about without falling over things. It also feels as though we have more space. The room seems bigger.

Assessing can be a simple process in which teachers examine the direct effects of specific changes they have made to the classroom. However, this is rarely the case. The complex and dynamic environment of classrooms is such that most changes made by teachers have a number of interrelated consequences. Therefore, it is often the case that the process of assessing involves an examination of the impact of changes on and between the disabled student, the other students, the teacher-aide and the teacher. Teachers use a variety of strategies to assess the outcomes of the adjustments they make to their normal classroom practices. These range from objective, statistically-based techniques such as counting the number of times the student with the disability will engage in a particular type of behavior, through to subjective, intuitive methods of assessment.

*Judging* is the process through which teachers draw conclusions about the value of the outcomes of the adjustments they have made to their current classroom practices. The following was Penny's judgment:

When I look back to the start of the year and think about how the classroom was operating,

I know that the new approach was worth the pain in making the changes. I was very uncertain about my capacity to teach all the students in the class and to keep things under control if I chose to spend a lot of time with Lucy each day. I know that the experts might be saying that I am relying too heavily on the teacher aide, but I really don't think there is any better way of going about it.

When they engage in this process they are asking: Have the adjustments I have made in my normal classroom practices increased my capacity to manage my classroom work? The judgements they make in this regard lead them to consider whether to persist with the changes, revert to their previous classroom practices, or implement alternative adjustments.

### **5. A 'grounded typology' of teachers regarding how they manage their classroom work in an inclusive classroom**

A major outcome of the study being reported here was the development of a 'grounded typology' (Glaser, 1978) of teachers with respect to how they manage their classroom work in an inclusive classroom. The typology is based on three propositions which build upon the meaning of selective adaptation outlined in the previous section. The first proposition is that teachers can be classified into three types in relation to the extent to which they selectively adapt aspects of their classroom work in an inclusive classroom. The second proposition is that the inclusion of a child with a severe or profound intellectual disability into regular classrooms can have a significant impact on the professional and personal lives of teachers. The third proposition is that there is a correspondence between the degree to which teachers selectively adapt aspects of their classroom work and the extent to which their lives are affected by inclusion. Each of these propositions will now be considered in turn.

#### *5.1. Proposition one*

The extent of selective adaptation varies amongst teachers. For some teachers, labeled 'the

technicians', the adaptation is limited to the area of classroom organizational matters. This includes, for example, making changes to the regular layout of the classroom or implementing new routines or procedures. Other teachers, labeled 'the strategists', move beyond this somewhat narrow focus and selectively adapt their teaching strategies and methods. For a third category of teacher, the 'improvisers', selective adaptation also extends to the content of the curriculum.

All teachers tend to focus initially on and selectively adapt aspects of their classroom organizational practices in response to inclusion. There are many examples in the data which indicate that teachers are eager to attend to the technical aspects of managing the inclusive classroom before turning their attention to other areas to adapt. As Anthea remarked, "It's like anything in teaching, you've got to attend to the basics before you can move on to the fancy stuff".

The time taken for strategists and improvisers to shift their focus to selectively adapting beyond classroom organizational matters varies from one teacher to the next. Some of them move beyond this narrow focus within a few days of the school year commencing, while others make the transition many weeks or even months into the year. Similarly, the time taken by the improvisers to commence adapting the content of the curriculum also varies amongst the teachers in this category. The situation with regard to the present study is illustrated in Fig. 2.

#### *5.2. Proposition two*

For some teachers, the inclusion of a student with a severe or profound intellectual disability in their class has a significant impact on their in-school life. For other teachers, inclusion has an impact both on their in-school life and their professional work at home. For a third category of teachers, inclusion has an impact on their in-school life, their professional work at home and their general life.

(a) *The impact of inclusion on teachers' in-school life.* For each of the teachers in the present study the inclusion of a student with a severe or profound

Teacher (pseudonym)	Teacher Type	Selective Adaptation of Classroom Organisation	Selective Adaptation of Teaching Methods	Selective Adaptation of Curriculum Content
Joan	technician	Week 3		
John	technician	Week 2		
Dianne	technician	Week 2		
Susan	technician	Week 3		
Mary	strategist	Week 1	Week 2	
Penny	strategist	Week 5	Week 5	
Sandra	strategist	Week 2	Week 3	
Juliana	strategist	Week 5	Week 7	
Anne	improviser	Week 1	Week 2	Week 8
Anthea	improviser	Week 1	Week 2	Week 18
Lesley	improviser	Week 2	Week 2	Week 12

Fig. 2. Teachers classified by type and the approximate timing of their transition through the stages of 'selective adaptation' in the 41-week school year.

intellectual disability in their class had an impact on their in-school life. At various times during the working year issues associated with inclusion dominated their working lives. Conversations with colleagues were frequently interlaced with discussions about disability issues, principals frequently sought information about the students with disabilities, parents frequently asked questions about the implementation of inclusion, and non-teaching staff often offered opinions about the new approach to educating students with disabilities. While for some, the impact was minor, for others their exposure to inclusion resulted in a significant change in the regular pattern of their lives at school. They spoke often about the increased demands on their time which resulted from managing an inclusive classroom and the restrictions this placed on their ability to participate in the regular activities of the school.

Throughout the course of the year most of the teachers in the study reported that the task of managing an inclusive classroom had affected in some way their relationships with their colleagues.

For example, mid-way through the school Susan made the following comment:

I've really noticed a change in my relationship with the others. There seems to be a bit more distance between me and them and I'm still trying to work out why. It may just be my imagination, but I think they may be giving me more consideration because of the extra work involved in looking after Angela (pseud.). Even the boss seems to be treating me with kid-gloves. It's very subtle but it's also a bit spooky.

Other teachers attributed their changed relationships with colleagues to the increased workloads associated with managing an inclusive classroom. As Joan put it:

I don't have the same amount of time to mix with the staff during breaks. I used to spend a lot of time in the staffroom during recess and lunch but I can't do that any more. I am not moaning about it. It's just a fact of life. But it's got to

have an effect on my role with the staff. That's OK.

The teachers also spoke about how the increased demands on their time which resulted from managing an inclusive classroom placed restrictions on their ability to participate in regular activities at school.

There were also, however, a number of positive features in the relationships between the teachers and their colleagues as a consequence of inclusion. Diane was particularly pleased that her status in the school had been enhanced because of the increased responsibility which was associated with teaching a student with very high support needs. This highlights another general area in which inclusion has an impact on the in-school lives of regular teachers. Indeed, most of those in the study provided examples to illustrate the increase in the overall level of responsibility and accountability which is associated with inclusion.

A final area in which inclusion has an impact on teachers' in-school life is related to the attention focused on the inclusive classroom. John spoke of "operating in a goldfish bowl" when referring to the many visits he received from therapists, psychologists and visiting teachers. Similarly, Mary was concerned about the ongoing attention her class received during discussions at staff meetings as a result of inclusion. Yet again, Joan spoke of the inordinate amount of time spent during Parent and Citizens' meetings discussing the operation of her classroom and, in particular, matters pertaining to inclusion.

*(b) The impact of inclusion on teachers' in-school life and their professional work at home.* While the impact of inclusion is felt in a myriad of ways by all teachers in relation to their in-school life, others also feel the impact on their professional work which is done at home. The following examples from the data illustrate the impact that inclusion has on teachers in this regard:

I'm thinking a lot more about why I am planning to do things. It takes a lot more time but I think it's making things easier at school (Mary).

I learnt early on that you cannot skip a week of planning and preparation and run on automatic.

You can't wing it and you can't just rely on last year's programs. You have to think about things carefully, especially at home in the evenings (Penny).

I'm a lot more disciplined in my preparation at weekends. This inclusion has got me into a good routine (Juliana).

My husband and the kids said a few things at the start of the year. They noticed how much more time I was spending on preparation at home at night and at the weekends (Sandra).

One of the most common changes to a teacher's professional work at home is an increase in the overall amount of time spent planning and preparing. A general view held by the teachers in the present study is that this additional planning and preparing is required to ensure they can manage their classroom work effectively. At the same time, however, while some of them were concerned initially about this increased time commitment, as the year progressed they were generally pleased with their own abilities to reduce the amount of additional planning and preparation time required. Also, despite the additional time spent, it was possible for some teachers to stop inclusion impacting beyond this realm of their lives.

*(c) The impact of inclusion on teachers' in-school life, their professional work at home and their general life.* For a third group of teachers within the present study, the impact of inclusion was felt in their general lives, including interactions with their families and friends, leisure pursuits, hobbies, holidays and entertainment activities. The following examples from the data illustrate this:

Inclusion dominated my home life for a while. It is one of those things that we as a family tended to talk about over meals, on week-ends, any time (Anne).

It is a routine topic of conversation with my friends. They are really interested because of Sophie's (pseud.) degree of disability. Sometimes I raise the topic and sometimes someone else will. I guess it is because I have started to think a lot

about social justice issues. My mind goes to it all of the time (Lesley).

During the first few weeks I was worried about the safety issues. I kept on thinking about my responsibilities and what would happen if anything went wrong. I used to wake up at night worrying (Anthea).

While these and other extracts from the data illustrate the impact that inclusion can have on the general lives of teachers, the study also found that the extent of this impact declined during the latter half of the school year. The following comment made towards the end of the school year by Anne was typical of the explanations given to account for this decline in the impact of inclusion: “It’s like anything in teaching, after a while you just get used to it”.

### 5.3. *Proposition three*

Considerations so far have focused on the classification of teachers according to the extent to which they selectively adapt their classroom work and on the classification of teachers according to the extent to which their lives are affected by inclusion. What now follows is an exposition on the correspondence which was found to exist between these two series of classifications.

For ‘technicians’ — teachers who tend to restrict the adjustments they make to their regular classroom practices to the area of classroom management — the impact of inclusion tends to be confined to their in-school lives and does not impinge to any significant extent upon either their professional work at home or their general life. There are very few examples in the data which indicate that teachers classified as technicians are particularly concerned about, or give special consideration to, issues associated with inclusion either during their planning and preparation time at home or during the general course of their lives. An exception in this regard was voiced by Susan as follows:

This inclusion stuff nearly destroyed a dinner party we gave last term. I was really surprised by

the passion it stirred up amongst a couple of my friends. They took opposing views on the practice of having really disabled kids in our schools and I had to become the umpire. Everyone joined in, everyone had an opinion. I was really surprised.

Susan was surprised by the incident because, as she commented, “It was the first time that inclusion ever became an issue for me outside school”.

For ‘strategists’ — the teachers who selectively adapt both their regular classroom organizational practices and their teaching strategies — the impact of inclusion extends beyond their lives at school to also affect their professional work at home. Teachers in this category regularly spend periods of time at home on matters related directly to inclusion. However, like the technicians, the general lives of the strategists tend not to be affected by inclusion. For ‘improvisers’ — the teachers who selectively adapt their regular classroom practices, their teaching strategies and the content of the curriculum — the impact of inclusion is felt across three areas of their lives, namely, in-school life, professional work at home and general life. As the following comment made towards the end of the school year by Anthea, an experienced teacher, illustrates, the lives of teachers in this category can be affected significantly by inclusion:

Even my mother noticed a change in me during the first few months. She said she was concerned about me. Maybe it was because I was talking a lot more about my work than I did in previous years. But she knew that I had been very keen to make this (inclusion) a success and she also knew that it was taking a lot of my time and energy.

Anthea’s deputy principal also noticed the impact that inclusion was having on her:

It’s become a big part of her life this year. She’s certainly given 100 per cent to make sure that Marnie (pseud.) gets the best chance in school.

These and other examples from the data support the finding that teachers who tend to make the widest range of adjustments to their classroom

EXTENT OF 'SELECTIVE ADAPTATION'

		Selective Adaptation of Classroom Organisation	Selective Adaptation of Teaching Methods	Selective Adaptation of Curriculum Content
I M P A C T  O F  I N C L U S I O N	In-school	Joan John Dianne Susan		
	Professional Work at Home	Mary Penny Sandra Juliana	Mary Penny Sandra Juliana	
	General Life	Anne Anthea Lesley	Anne Anthea Lesley	Anne Anthea Lesley

Fig. 3. Teachers classified by the extent of 'selective adaptation and the impact of 'inclusion'.

work practices are also the teachers most widely affected by inclusion. The situation within the present study is illustrated in Fig. 3.

### 6. Conclusion

It is not possible to claim generalizability for this study in the sense in which it is understood by quantitative researchers. However, it may be generalizable in the sense that people can relate to it and perhaps gain an understanding of their own and others' situations. Furthermore, it can serve to increase the understanding of policy-makers about how teachers manage their work in inclusive classrooms.

The theory may also stimulate others to explore areas related to the phenomenon of inclusion with the aim of developing further theory. Research could include, for example, an examination of how

teachers manage their classroom work in the inclusive classrooms of different categories of schools, including secondary schools, non-government schools, metropolitan schools and large schools. Research could also focus on how school administrators, parents, or students manage particular aspects of their lives when they have direct experience with the phenomenon of inclusion.

The theory also has a number of implications for practice. The contention that teachers tend not to make radical changes to their existing teaching practices in response to having a student with a severe or profound intellectual disability as a member of their class should be instructive to those who will be faced with such a situation in the future. In particular, it should provide reassurance to those who might otherwise consider that the successful management of an inclusive classroom requires the implementation of wholesale changes to their classroom practices. It is also reassuring to know that

teachers become progressively more relaxed about inclusion and more supportive of it when they have had experience of it.

Another area for which the theory has practical implications is in relation to management and administration. In particular, it should assist principals and deputy principals in gaining an appreciation of the different ways in which regular classroom teachers respond to inclusion. Also, an understanding of the processes and stages of selective adaptation could assist school administrators to support teachers who are called upon to include students with severe or profound intellectual disabilities into their classes.

The theory of selective adaptation also has implications for practice in the area of teacher education. According to Pearman, Huang, and Mellblom (1997), there is a need to rethink the arena of pre-service teacher education so that when new teachers enter schools they will already have the skills required to teach all students regardless of their particular abilities or disabilities. In particular, they call for an increased emphasis on pre-service education which aims to increase the ability of graduate teachers to modify their teaching strategies, adapt the curriculum, carry out assessments, manage their classrooms and meet the individual needs of students. The theory of selective adaptation could play some role in addressing this call by informing student teachers who might find themselves teaching in inclusive classrooms in the future.

Finally, the theory may also make a contribution in the arena of in-service education. If recent calls for school-based in-service education to address the problems and issues associated with the inclusion of students with severe and profound disabilities into mainstream classes are heeded by education authorities, the findings from relevant research will be required to inform the development of appropriate training programs for teachers. Theories like that of 'selective adaptation', which are grounded in the actions and interactions of teachers, should be useful in this regard.

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