Kerri Tearle
Ktea4497@usyd.edu.au
Dr Ilektra Spandagou
ilektra.spandagou@sydney.edu.au

LEARNING SUPPORT POLICY IN AUSTRALIA (NEW SOUTH WALES) AND NEW ZEALAND; DISCOURSES OF INFLUENCE

Kerri Tearle, University of Sydney, Sydney
Dr Ilektra Spandagou, University of Sydney, Sydney

Abstract

This paper presents a comparative discourse analysis of the learning support policy in New South Wales, Australia and New Zealand. The dominant discourses in both policies are identified and analysed in terms of how they determine the manner in which students experiencing difficulties with learning are included in schools. It is argued that the possibilities of inclusion are constrained by constructions of learning difficulties which in turn justify the models of support provided. Three types of discourses were identified in the two policy documents; *inclusion discourses* related to placement, rights and needs; *historical discourses,* that refer to a deficit model of disability, professionalism and human capital in education, and *other discourses in education* referring to external but implicit discourses of managerialism, marketisation and academic excellence. The analysis revealed that the policies not only construct students experiencing difficulties as *deficit* in comparison to other *normal* students but in constraining support to remediation they ultimately put forward powerful constructions of classroom teachers, *normal* students, support teachers and school executive. The study concludes that possibilities for inclusion under the current policy regimes in both countries are limited without reform at both a broad systemic level concurrently with localised solutions.

Introduction

Inclusive education emerged as a critique of traditional special education where it was argued that the emphasis on segregation and remediation compromised the human rights of students with disabilities (Armstrong, Armstrong & Spandagou, 2010). Therefore inclusion was initially defined by what advocates argued special education was not and could not be. The result being that inclusion has had different meanings for different stakeholders in different contexts. A lack of clarity continues to characterise inclusive education particularly in regard to what it means for policy and practice (Ainscow & Sandhill, 2010).

The ethos of inclusive education was endorsed at the Salamanca Conference in 1994 where members of UNESCO, including Australia and New Zealand, became signatories to the *Statement and framework for action on special needs education* (UNESCO, 1994). This Statement led to policy reform and new legislation in Australia and New Zealand. The most significant change has been the increase in numbers of students identified as having a disability attending their local school (Dempsey, 2007). To facilitate this, education policy makers in Australia and New Zealand have developed a series of *add-ons* to mainstream education. Essentially the mainstream structures, institutional arrangements, curriculum and pedagogy remain with support added aimed at fixing or remediating students towards achievement considered *normal*. Thus the traditional model of schooling has continued with support structures tacked onto the edges. The policy makers have attempted to deliver a redistribution of educational access without taking anything away from the mainstream (Slee, 2011). These efforts have been deemed an incremental journey towards inclusion (Graham & Sweller, 2011).

The effect of this *add-on* or *safety-net* approach to learning support has been mixed for inclusion. While there are more children with disabilities in schools, this paper is specifically interested in students now labelled as *experiencing difficulties* (NSW Department of

Kerri Tearle
Ktea4497@usyd.edu.au
Dr Ilektra Spandagou
ilektra.spandagou@sydney.edu.au

Education and Training (DET)[1], 2007) or having *moderate needs* (New Zealand Ministry of Education (MoE), 2012b, sect 6) where their physical presence in a mainstream classroom is not overtly under threat. In this sense exclusion is conceived of as marginalisation resulting from less participation in the cultures and curricula of mainstream schools (Booth, Ainscow & Dyson, 1997). These students, once labelled as *slow, backward, or failures,* have come to be *pathologised* as *disabled* learners (Barton, 2003). Tomlinson (1985) argues that *learning difficulties* is an umbrella term applied to a range of poor performers not for the purpose of support but to facilitate management of a troublesome group. She reports that there is an overrepresentation of students from specific ethnic, linguistic and low socio-economic backgrounds in this group. Australia and New Zealand conceptualise these learners as those that deviate negatively from the expected norm of achievement to an unacceptable degree based on normalising judgements. According to the normal distribution curve of achievement students with learning difficulties is the category applied generically to those at the bottom end of the normative distribution whether an impairment is observed or not.

This individual psycho-medical perception of the *problem*, which began in earnest after the introduction of anti-discrimination legislation (Dempsey, Foreman & Jenkinson, 2002) in both Australia (Disability Discrimination Act 1992) and New Zealand (Human Rights Act 1993), has been important in setting the discourses of the policy. The conception of problems with learning as medical or biological sees the student as intrinsically flawed and therefore deficit to other students (Allan, 1996; Fulcher, 1989). This conception of disability is referred hitherto as *individual deficit*.

This study attempted to identify and elucidate barriers to inclusion in two systems that explicitly state their commitment to inclusion, New South Wales (NSW) (Australia) and New Zealand. This study looked specifically at two policies which provide for learning support in mainstream classrooms, Assisting Students with Learning Difficulties (NSW DET, 2007) and Special Education Policy 2000 (New Zealand MoE, 1996). These policies refer to public schools. These policies have informed practice for a number of years however recently, in March 2012, there have been substantial changes in both systems. Both systems are in a period of transition as they respond to the recommendations of public inquiries into the provision of special education. In NSW the policy remains in place supported by the new program, *Every Student, Every School* (NSW Department of Education and Communities (DEC), 2012b). In New Zealand the Special Education Policy is now being implemented through a series of work programs entitled *Success for all: Every School, Every Child* (New Zealand MoE, 2012d).

New South Wales is Australia's largest state in terms of population (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2011). The public education sector in NSW is comprised of more than 2,200 schools enrolling approximately 760,000 students (NSW DEC, 2011, p. 1). In 2009, 65% of school students were educated in public schools, including 76% of the total number of students with a disability (NSW Parliament, 2010, pp. 14-15). Learning support is provided through the Learning Assistance Program (LAP) (NSW DET, undated a) based on the aforementioned policy. The LAP has recently been expanded under the *Every Student Every School* program (NSW DEC, 2012b) due to an increase in Federal Government funding.

New Zealand is an island nation in the Pacific and is one of Australia's nearest neighbours and allies. The public school population of 764,000 is similar to NSW (New Zealand MoE, 2011). Since 1990 New Zealand has had one of the most highly devolved systems of education management in the world (OECD, 2012). While schools are primarily government funded and subject to government policy, the day-to-day running of schools is devolved to a board of trustees. The main provisions of the policy dealing with learning support are the Special Education Grant (SEG) and the Resource Teacher Learning and Behaviour program (RTLB). The government currently spends $35 million on the SEG which represents 7.6% of total spending on students with disabilities (New Zealand Government, 2010). The grant is

[1] In NSW the Department of Education and Training (DET) was the author of the NSW policy, the LAP and the supporting documents. In 2011 the department was renamed The Department of Education and Communities (DEC).

Kerri Tearle
Ktea4497@usyd.edu.au
Dr Ilektra Spandagou
ilektra.spandagou@sydney.edu.au

provided to all schools but is weighted by a measure of the socioeconomic status of the school population called the *decile rating* (New Zealand MoE, 2001). Current spending on the RTLB program is $68 million, roughly 15% of special education (New Zealand Government, 2010) but the resource is used across the entire special education portfolio.

Eligibility for both the SEG and the LAP is not dependent upon a diagnosis of disability but on the recommendation of a teacher, usually the classroom teacher, via a referral system. Teachers are encouraged to refer students who are not performing in line with their peers to a committee which allocates support. In both systems the majority of support is provided in the form of a specialist teacher (Support Teacher Learning (STL) in NSW and Resource Teacher Learning and Behaviour (RTLB) in New Zealand). In both systems this specialist teacher is able to work with the teacher in a whole class context, observe individual students in the class and playground and provide recommendations to the teacher or they can take individuals or groups for withdrawn specialised support.

This research is influenced by Foucault's method of policy genealogy and problematisation to identify and interpret the power-knowledge relationships that entrench the discourse of individual deficit. Foucault was interested in how certain ways of seeing phenomena come to be reified as truths. Thus, this paper argues that while inclusion is the overt intention of the policy documents, the underlining policy discourses anchor the policy responses in a deficit model of disability. Rather than embedded responses to students experiencing difficulty both systems have created and expanded a series of add-on approaches which perpetuate a special education model within the mainstream classroom.

Methodology

The study aimed to identify barriers to inclusion in two systems where the explicit aim of learning support policy is inclusion. Beginning with a social constructivist framework the methodology evolved from the argument that disability is socially constructed therefore, these policies construct learning difficulties and thereby create possible responses to the policy problem. Inspired by the policy genealogy work of Foucault and the theoretical framework for policy analysis developed by Stephen Ball (1994) the study set out to identify and analyse the discourses present in the policies.

Ball (1994) postulates that through discourse policy constructs its subjects, the policy stakeholders, and casts them into specified roles. This process takes place over multiple sites of struggle as set out in Ball's five contexts of policy (1994): the context of influence, the context of policy text production, the context of practice, the context of outcomes and the context of political strategy. This poststructuralist view of policy fitted neatly with the social constructivist theoretical framework of disability (Oliver, 1996). Foucault sought to understand constructions of normality, and its converse abnormality, using policy archaeology and problematisation in order to render the familiar strange and therefore interrogateable. In Discipline and Punish (Foucault, 1977), he traces the history of key social institutions including schools and attempts to understand the disciplinary function of schooling by considering whose purpose schools serve.

In identifying the discourses present in the policy the study utilised Bacchi's (2009) *what's the problem represented to be* methodology which consists of six key questions:

1. What is the problem represented to be?
2. What presumptions or assumptions underlie this representation of the problem?
3. How has this representation of the problem come about?
4. What is left unproblematic in this problem representation?
5. What effects are produced by this representation of the problem?
6. How/Where is this representation of the 'problem' produced, disseminated and defended? How could it be questioned disrupted and replaced?

This analysis produced a detailed deconstruction of the problem the policies were designed to address. Understanding how a phenomenon in society has come to be perceived as a problem allows the analyst insight into the unproblematised *truths* that are built into the policies and

Kerri Tearle
Ktea4497@usyd.edu.au
Dr Ilektra Spandagou
ilektra.spandagou@sydney.edu.au

their resultant programmes. In unpacking the layers of conceptualisation that have built up around disability as contained within and around the policies the policy discourses were revealed. Having identified the discourses and ascertained that they pushed and pulled the policy outcomes in a multidirectional and even contradictory way, the insights of Ball that policy discourses construct its subjects into preordained roles became critical. From this point on the study critically and hermeneutically analysed how each of the policy discourses in both countries worked to construct roles for the different policy stakeholders. In looking at the discourses and the role they play in effecting outcomes in schools Ball's (1994) five contexts of policy making framework was important in understanding the various sites of struggle across which the discourses prevail. In articulating the various contexts in which individual deficit perceptions are produced, reproduced and sustained provided insight into how the discourses may be disrupted.

Results

Using the Bacchi (2009) framework three types of discourses were identified in the two policy documents as set out in Figure 1.

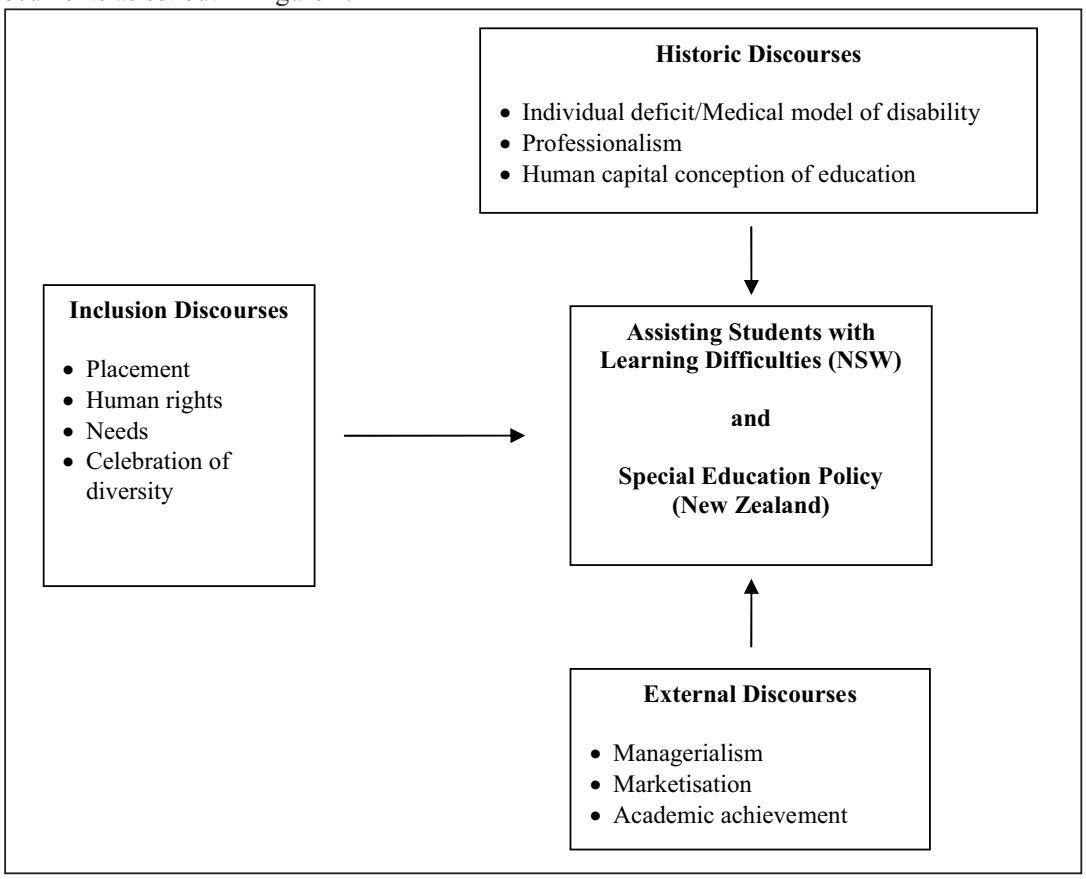

Figure 1. Policy Discourses

Historical Discourses

Both policies are a remoulding of previous policy with the intention of moving to a more inclusive and less complex model of allocating support. Many of the previous discourses remain in the policy including individual deficit, professionalism and human capital.

Individual deficit, sees the *problem* solely located in the student as defined above. Both policies were found to be clearly and resolutely grounded in a discourse of individual deficit because a) policy makers locate the policy problem as being with the students, b) the structure

Kerri Tearle
Ktea4497@usyd.edu.au
Dr Ilektra Spandagou
ilektra.spandagou@sydney.edu.au

and practices of the educational institutions have not been considered in any depth, c) labels and categories based on an individual deficit or medical discourse are present and b) approaches to practice aim for remediation. Firstly, both policies explicitly locate the source of the policy problem with the individual as demonstrated by the following excerpts:

> Learning difficulties may arise at any time throughout a student's school life. Students may experience difficulties in learning because of the ways in which they learn or the rates at which they learn (NSW DET, 2007, Sect 1.2 emphasis added).

> Children and young people with special education needs include learners with disabilities, learning difficulties, communication or behaviour difficulties, sensory or physical impairments (New Zealand MoE, 2012a, para 4).

In *Success for All: Every School, Every Child* (NZ MoE, 2012d) policy makers appear to have taken a deliberate decision to remove all traces of deficit language moving to a framework that talks about the policy problem more wholistically. However the SEG and RTLB program remain the funding mechanisms for learning support and they explicitly reference the Special Education Policy and like the policy straddle the discourses of individual deficit and ecological models of disability (New Zealand MoE, 1998 and New Zealand MoE, 2001).

Secondly, the structure and practices of the educational institutions have not been considered in any depth. In New Zealand the policy straddles the historic discourse of individual deficit alongside consideration of broader factors which disable students. However the barriers are not articulated nor are strategies for removing them. It remains to be seen if the new broader description of the policy problem leads to explicit identification and dismantling of barriers to learning. In NSW the discourse of individual deficit reigns supreme with no consideration of school based causal or exacerbative factors.

Thirdly, labels and categories based on individual deficit or medical discourses are present. Both systems have abandoned medically informed labels as the basis for allocating learning support in order to redirect resources from diagnosis to support. However, both policies are directed at students with learning difficulties (NSW DET, 2007, sect 1 and New Zealand MoE, 1998) and these students are identified according to how far they deviate from the *centre* or *norm*. Therefore both policies do categorise students based on what some can and others can't do and it is this deviation from acceptable performance that is constructed as the *problem*. The students who are the primary subjects of these policies are those who *have* difficulties with learning. Therefore the students are still labelled by what they cannot do even though the label is no longer explicitly medically informed.

Finally, approaches to practice aim for remediation**.** Inextricably linked to individual deficit is *normalisation and remediation*. Social constructivism argues that diversity in all species is *natural* and the division of students into normal and abnormal is *artificial* (Graham, 2006). Normalisation in the context of this research refers to the remediation of diversity to bring it into line with this artificial and unproblematised notion of normal (Graham & Slee, 2005). Further it is argued that this norm is reified in policy, curriculum and assessment as a positivist concept which defines the *correct* way of learning or being (Silvers, 2002). Normalisation is the response to otherness that seeks to correct difference as though it were a fault. Fulcher (1989) argues that the assumption of individual deficit presupposes that the solution to the problem must be remedial, i.e., there is something wrong with the child that must be fixed. Bratlinger (2006) rails against the idea of *fixing* children to bring them *up to normal standards* arguing that gifted and talented students are not remediated down to perform in line with the norm but extended and nurtured. In both countries policy makers clearly believe that problems students experience with learning *are treatable* (again linking to a medical conception of the problem) and that they *should* be treated to bring students into line with expectations and achievements of the *normal* student body. In NSW and New Zealand the key indicator that the policies are remediative is that the policy responses to the problem are all aimed at the individual student. Supporting documents in NSW (NSW DET, undated b, para. 3) and the New Zealand policy guidelines, (New Zealand MoE, 2012a, para. 4) do refer to "accommodation and learning adjustments" and "property modifications" not to

Kerri Tearle
Ktea4497@usyd.edu.au
Dr Ilektra Spandagou
ilektra.spandagou@sydney.edu.au

facilitate inclusion but to provide education on the same basis as other students. Students are considered to be successful when they learn and progress in the same way and rate as *normal* students.

In summary both policies are framed and formed by a discourse of individual deficit. New Zealand is clearly striving to move to a more inclusive education system but without a detailed plan to tackle environmental factors in schools which disable students and with no policy to reimagine schools it is unclear how powerful the new work programs will be.

Professionalism in the context of this study refers to the reification of special education or medical experts in the power-knowledge relationships between students, teachers and schools. This discourse, formed by an individual/medical conception of learning difficulties, places the professional in a position of power over students and classroom teachers and prevents teachers from examining the role of pedagogy in the proliferation of learning difficulties (Prosser, 2008). Further professionalism relies upon, and at the same time gives currency to, the populist notion that the classroom teacher cannot be expected to support the full range of diversity found in the classroom and therefore is justified in outsourcing responsibility for certain students to the experts (Slee, 2011). The discourse of professionalism is deeply embedded in traditional models of special education and appears historically in all learning support policies past and present for both countries.

In NSW (NSW Government, 1990) the classroom teacher is listed as being primarily responsible for education of all students in the class including students with learning difficulties. New Zealand allocates responsibility to the whole school from the Board of Trustees down to the classroom teacher (New Zealand MoE, 2012b). However in both countries identification begins with the classroom teacher who can refer the student to the domain of an expert, usually a specialist teacher, thus the solution to the problem is located away from the classroom teacher.

The **human capital discourse** of education is perennially present in explanations of the purposes of education. Knowledge has long been associated with economic growth as described by the economic theory of human capital (Becker, 1964), which argues that education prepares students for the workplace and that investment in education produces both individual and national economic returns. Critique of this theory centres around its weak empirical validation (Carnoy, 1995; Welch, 2007). Further to this critical feminist contributors have argued that the theory is based on men who are assumed to be guided by self-interest and able to operate autonomously in a free market with full access to all available choices (Blackmore, 2005). Disability advocates argue that the theory does not account for diversity of ontology or the effects of dependency (Abberley, 1999). However these concerns have not prevented broad acceptance of the theory from international organisations such as OECD down to national governments where its political appeal has ensured its adherence in education policy discourse. This discourse has grown in prominence in education policy alongside the marketisation of education observable from the mid-1980s onwards (Kenway, 2006; Wills & McLean, 2008).

In the NSW the education system prioritises particular ways of learning and expects students to learn at a predetermined speed (NSW DET, 2007, sect 1.2). What is unclear is whether these expectations are based on what the average student is capable of or on how much students need to achieve in order to complete their school education for future work or to be university ready. The newly renamed Department of Education and Communities (DEC) leads its website with the following banner, "To provide world class education and support strong, vibrant communities to ensure the economic and social wellbeing of New South Wales" (DEC, 2012a, banner).

In New Zealand the policy does not explicitly contain a human capital discourse. However it specifically references the National Education Guidelines and the New Zealand Curriculum (New Zealand MoE, 2012a, para 1). These documents are rooted in a human capital economic discourse. In outlining policy initiatives the New Zealand MoE has repeatedly declared,

> Ongoing initiatives in schools are designed to produce a high-income, knowledge-based economy which includes all New Zealanders (2008, para. 1; 2010, para 1).

Kerri Tearle
Ktea4497@usyd.edu.au
Dr Ilektra Spandagou
ilektra.spandagou@sydney.edu.au

In summary the human capital discourse of education has a long history in the education policies of both systems. While it is not explicitly observable in either policy, the endorsement of related policies, which do contain this discourse, indicate that this discourse remains embedded and uncontested in the policy as a *truth discourse*.

Inclusion Discourses

The Salamanca Statement developed by UNESCO (1994) was a watershed document in outlining a commitment by participating nations to creating education systems which were inclusive of students with special needs. The Statement describes inclusive education systems as those

> …institutions which include everybody, celebrate differences, support learning, and respond to individual needs" (UNESCO, 1994, p. iii).

Within this quote are contained the discourses on inclusion that have been subsumed into the policy documents. The two most observable discourses in both policies are the discourses of human rights and individual needs. A positive discourse on diversity is not present in either document.

Alongside individual deficit the **human rights discourse** dominates New Zealand Special Education Policy:

> Learners with special education needs have the same rights, freedoms and responsibilities as people of the same age who do not have special education needs (New Zealand MOE, 2012c, para 1).

The rights discourse is also present in the NSW policy although to a lesser extent. In New Zealand the strong tones of the rights agenda are intended to counter the association between weakness and disability prevalent in previous policy expressed through medical, charity and lay discourses (Brown, 1994). The impression is given in both policies that students have a legal right to inclusion which is supported by the policy. The fragility of this protection is demonstrated in both countries by the exclusion of students on behaviour grounds whereby the rights of the individual to an education have been overridden by the burden they place on the school system (Dickson, 2008; Owers, 2011). We would add to this that policy premised on a discourse of rights but rooted in a discourse of individual deficit does not and can not bring about systemic **celebration of diversity**. At the policy level it is agreed that students with disabilities have a *right* to be included in the education system, not because they are valued and welcome. If students are present solely because of their right to be there, not because they form a valued part of the school, they will continue to be marginalised.

In NSW the **needs discourse** dominates the justification for the policy. The policy problem lies with the inability of the student to meet the State's expectations and the policy response is focussed on the individual needs of the student:

> Students experiencing difficulties in learning will have differing levels of educational need, which may require the provision of one or more educational support services over varying periods of time (NSW DET, 2007, para 1.3).

In New Zealand students are described as "students with moderate needs" (New Zealand, MOE, 2012b, sect 6). The emphasis on needs was intended to facilitate differentiated curriculum based on the strengths and needs of all students and to move away from medically informed professional assessments (Brown, 1994). However, the focus on allocating resources according to need clearly assumes a *normal* level of need, with those who deviate significantly from the norm deemed to *have* special needs. Thus the focus remains on the individual and the norm remains unproblematised (Armstrong et al., 2010). This is essentially an extension of the welfare state or *safety-net* approach to the distribution of government resources where the state attempts to ensure that all students achieve a minimum standard (Kenway, 2006). A focus on minimum standards does little for equity and the focus on the additional or special needs that some students have perpetuates their otherness and contributes to their marginalisation.

External Discourses

Kerri Tearle
Ktea4497@usyd.edu.au
Dr Ilektra Spandagou
ilektra.spandagou@sydney.edu.au

The analysis revealed that other dominant discourses in education were significantly influential in the implementation of these policies. One of the widely documented and critiqued movements in the public policy of Western nations is the introduction of private sector business management practices into the provision of public education referred hitherto as managerialism. Related to this are the discourses of political economy (bang for buck), public sector transparency, parental choice and competitive market (marketisation) and academic excellence. It is argued that the relative strength of these other discourses create pressures that distort or negate the stated intentions of the policies.

During the period 1980-1999 **managerialism** and marketisation were hugely influential for public sector management in Australia and New Zealand including education administration. Public schools were expected to compete with each other and the private sector as a mechanism for the efficient distribution of funding and services. In Australia this has had a significant impact on the way in which schools were required to plan, operate and report on performance (Cranston, Kimber, Mulford, Reid & Keating, 2010). Additionally in 1990s investment in education was increasingly linked to economic performance based on a human capital discourse of education as discussed previously.

A managerialist discourse is present in these policies. Kearney and Kane (2006) describe the New Zealand policy as primarily documents for resource allocation and we would argue that the same can be said for NSW. In NSW the adoption of a non-categorical approach to learning difficulties was adopted based on the recommendation of the Parkins' Report (2002) to facilitate inclusion but was presented and justified on the grounds of efficient use of resources (NSW DET, 2004; NSW DET; undated b). In both policies the justification for the allocation of resources is a based on inclusion discourses of rights and needs but nowhere in either document is there a pedagogical discourse. Fulcher (1989) argues that inclusion demands that policy relinquish deficit conceptions of students and adopt a pedagogical discourse in relation to students and the outcomes targeted by the resource allocation.

In NSW the relationship between standardised test results and the allocation of learning support funding creates contradictions and dilemmas. On one hand the test results are intended to direct funding to schools with greatest need. So there is an implicit incentive for principals to ensure that all students sit the tests (Martin, Jackson & Burke, 2006). However the Federal Government replaced State based tests with National testing (NAPLAN) and publishes these results on the *My School* website (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), 2012). The marketisation discourse supports the rights of parents to have access to accurate information in order to make informed choices about the best school for their children. This creates a disincentive for principals to have all students sit the test with allegations arising that principals were deliberately avoiding including all students in the assessments (Lamperd & Harris, 2010). So on one hand funding support is higher the poorer the test results. On the other hand the perceived performance of schools (and by implication of principals and teachers) is dependent on good test results.

A **marketisation** discourse is not explicitly present in the policies but it does drive other education policy discourses which in turn impact on how schools perceive students with disabilities and learning difficulties. For example the *My School* website (ACARA, 2012) which provides comparative information about schools and the publishing of National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NZEA) data in New Zealand (New Zealand Qualification Authority, 2012) create competitive pressures on schools to prioritise skills and ways of demonstrating learning that reflect those rewarded by standardised testing. Students who do not or can not conform to this are identified as having learning difficulties. This demonstrates the interdependence of the discourses of marketisation and **academic achievement**. The focus is on interrogating what constitutes academic success and who this definition of success privileges.

Having identified and partially analysed the discourses the study went on to consider how the policies contribute to the construction of students assessed as having learning difficulties, other students, teachers and schools? The following section focuses in particular on how the discourses interactively work to construct students with disabilities in schools.

Kerri Tearle
Ktea4497@usyd.edu.au
Dr Ilektra Spandagou
ilektra.spandagou@sydney.edu.au

Construction of Students Assessed as having Learning Difficulties.

Students are present but flawed. The policies of both countries clearly indicate that students experiencing difficulties with learning are present and will continue to be present in public schools. However the discourse of individual deficit in both policies constructs these students as implicitly flawed. The problem is situated wholly with the student in NSW and primarily with the student in New Zealand. The individual student possesses the problem, not schools or teachers.

Students are present but flawed (although capable of improvement). The NSW policy indicates that difficulties with learning can be ameliorated and do not necessarily define the student (paras. 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3). The goal of the SEG in New Zealand is explicitly aiming to improve student outcomes, i.e., fix the problem (New Zealand MoE, 1998). This emphasis on treating the problem is an extension of the medical model of disability. It could also be argued that this reflects the managerial discourse. Managerialism needs the medical model to provide evidence of prudent expenditure through specific indicators and targets against which success is measured. If you don't believe the problem can be fixed then how can you justify the allocation of scarce resources? Interestingly alongside this in the New Zealand program there is an acceptance that students may need additional assistance in one setting but not in another depending on the learning or behavioural expectations set (New Zealand MoE, 1998). This indicates that policy makers understand the socially constructed nature of learning difficulties but again the emphasis of the response is on supporting the reform of the individual not in reconsidering the setting.

Students are present but flawed (although capable of improvement) and therefore weak requiring additional support and monitoring. The rights and needs discourses of both policies construct the student with special needs as weak and in need of support and charity. These discourses of inclusion have not seriously disrupted a charity discourse of disabilities in schools. The charity discourse negates the rights of recipients for self determination or to express dissatisfaction with the support provided. Learning support based on needs, as defined by professionals, carries stigma that is necessarily exclusionary. Allan (1996) adapts Foucault's (1977) use of panopticism and hierarchical gaze to describe the manner in which students with disabilities are scrutinised, monitored and supervised. She argues that the pressure of accountability for funds spent, duty of care and target setting approaches results in these students receiving far greater scrutiny and surveillance than mainstream students. She goes on to theorise how this surveillance impacts on the socialisation and general experience of school for such children. The individualisation of their education sets these students apart from others and creates an experience of the schooling that is not mainstream.

Students are present but flawed (although capable of improvement) and therefore weak requiring additional support and monitoring creating additional costs and pressures on mainstream schools. One of the issues that has dominated reviews of special education and learning support past and present is adequacy of funding. An increase in funding was the recommendation of both the NSW parliamentary enquiry and the New Zealand Review and both governments have responded with increased commitments (NSW Government, 2011; New Zealand Government, 2010). However, the response of schools to these students is often reduced to the cost burden they impose on their individual schools as demonstrated by research into the attitudes of school principals towards inclusion (Graham & Spandagou, 2011; Kearney, 2009). When this is considered alongside concerns principals express about the perceived negative impact these students have on the reputation of the school in the marketplace it can be argued that managerialism and marketisation discourses combine to construct the student with disabilities as an expensive burden and a marketplace liability.

Conclusion

The main conclusion of the study is that despite the stated intentions of policy makers to develop inclusive responses to students who experience difficulties with learning, the adherence of deficit and normative discourses locates these students outside the cultures and

Kerri Tearle
Ktea4497@usyd.edu.au
Dr Ilektra Spandagou
ilektra.spandagou@sydney.edu.au

curricula of mainstream schools (Booth et al., 1997, p. 337). Further, the other dominant discourses of the policies were found to sustain these deficit and normative discourses. In analysing the combined effects of these discourses an analogy of a theatre script or play proved elucidating. A play instructs a group of actors to take on specific roles in order to tell a story. The actors are not able to step out of their roles as this undermines the telling of the tale. In a similar way policy and its resultant programs and institutional arrangements construct the various participants in a way that cement their role in the system and make it difficult for them to perceive themselves and each other in ways other than those established by the policy. The dominance of the individual deficit discourse and the ensuing remediative policy measures not only construct the students as weak and burdensome but they lock teachers and school executive into normalising roles that are antithetical to a celebration of diversity.

By considering each of the discourses and the roles they construct for the stakeholders it became clear that the discourse of individual deficit has prevailed because the discourses of inclusion have proved weak in a legal, structural and systemic sense. The relative strength of the inclusion discourses has been undermined by powerful external discourses which both rely on the premise of individual deficit for their legitimacy and in turn reaffirm individual deficit as a *truth* discourse. The significant institutional features of the education systems of both countries, which are the result of managerialism, marketisation and academic achievement discourses, include standardised benchmarks and testing and competitive markets in education supported by publishing of academic results. Many have become cynical about inclusive education policy reforms, which say much but do little, and therefore argue that localised solutions must drive reform (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010). We argue that the focus on localised solutions places enormous responsibility on teachers and school executive whose capacity for reform is limited by the systemic pressures we have described here. Progress in inclusion necessitates classroom based reform with a pedagogical direction supported by institutional, environmental and discursive structures that emanate from policy.

As stated earlier the discourses identified and critiqued sustain each other and the central tenet is the *truth* discourse of normality. The norm or the average is constructed for many reasons including practicality. Millar and Morton (2007), like many others, have critiqued curriculum developers for being unable to move away from constructed averages, but how does mass education do this? Catering to the average and supporting the outliers has defined the entire welfare state. If we are arguing that the state needs to move away from reifying the norm, then inclusionists need to be active in providing alternative paradigms. Here is the challenge: to develop a new political economy of education based on socially just pedagogy and learning for all. This paper does not provide the solution but it signals that it must be developed in a practical and credible fashion or all that the inclusion movement has worked for will remain a sideline issue.

Kerri Tearle
Ktea4497@usyd.edu.au
Dr Ilektra Spandagou
ilektra.spandagou@sydney.edu.au

References

Abberley, P. (1999). The significance of work for the citizenship of disabled people. Paper presented at University College Dublin. Retrieved March 9, 2012 from http://www.leeds.ac.uk/disability-studies/archiveuk/Abberley/sigofwork.pdf

ACARA. (2012). My school website. Retrieved March 13, 2012 from http://www.myschool.edu.au/

Ainscow, M., & Sandill, A. (2010). Developing inclusive education systems: The role of organisational cultures and leadership. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 14*(4), 401-416.

Allan, J. (1996). Foucault and Special Educational Needs: a 'box of tools' for analysing children's experiences of mainstreaming. *Disability and Society*, *11*(2), 219-234.

Armstrong, A. C., Armstrong, D., & Spandagou, I. (2010). *Inclusive education: International policy and practice.* London: Sage Publications.

Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2011). *Australian Demographic Statistics: June 2011*. Retrieved March 5, 2012 from http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/3101.0

Australian Commonwealth. (1992). *Disability Discrimination Act*. Canberra: Australian Commonwealth.

Bacchi, C. (2009). *Analysing policy: What's the problem represented to be?* Frenchs Forrest, NSW: Pearson Australia.

Ball, S. (1994). *Education reform: A critical and post-structural approach*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Barton, L. (2003). *Inclusive education and teacher education: A basis for hope or a discourse of delusion*. Professorial lecture. London: Institute of Education, University of London.

Becker, G. (1964). *Human capital, A theoretical and empirical analysis, with special reference to education*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Blackmore, J. (2005). Researching policy: Key concepts. In B. Somekh & C. Lewin (Eds.) *Research methods in the social sciences* (pp. 97-101). London: Sage Publications.

Booth, T., Ainscow, M., & Dyson, A. (1997). Understanding inclusion and exclusion in the English competitive education system, *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, *1*(4), 337-355.

Brantlinger, J. (2006). Conclusion: Whose labels? Whose Norms, Whose Needs? Whose benefits? In E. Brantlinger (Ed.), *Who benefits from special education?* (pp. 233-247). New Jersey: Erlbaum.

Brown, C. (1994). *Special education policies of the fourth labour government, 1984-1990: An interpretive analysis*. Unpublished Masters thesis, Massey University.

Carnoy, M. (1995). Education and the new international division of labor. In *International encyclopaedia of economics of education, 2nd edition* (pp. 211-217). Oxford: Pergamon.

Cranston, N., Kimber, M., Mulford, B., Reid, A., & Keating, J. (2010). Politics and school education in Australia: A case of shifting purposes. *Journal of Education Administration*, *48*(2), 182-195.

Dempsey, I. (2007). Trends in the placement of students in segregated setting in NSW government schools. *Australasian Journal of Special Education, 31*(1)*,* 73-78*.*

Dempsey, I., Foreman, P., & Jenkinson, J. (2002). Educational enrolment of students with a disability in NSW and Victoria. *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education, 49*(1), 31-46.

Dickson, E. (2008). The inclusion and exclusion of students with disability related problem behaviour: The contrasting approaches of Australia and the United States of America. *Australia and New Zealand Journal of Law and Education*, *13*(2), 49-63.

Foucault, M. (1977). Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison. London: Penguin Books.

Kerri Tearle
Ktea4497@usyd.edu.au
Dr Ilektra Spandagou
ilektra.spandagou@sydney.edu.au

Fulcher, G. (1989). *Disabling policies? A comparative approach to education policy and disability.* London: Falmer Press.

Graham, L. (2006). Caught in the net: A Foucaultian interrogation of the incidental effects of limited notions of inclusion. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, *10*(1), 3-25.

Graham, L., & Slee, R. (2005). *Inclusion?* Paper presented at Australian Association for Research in Education Annual Conference, Sydney. Retrieved September 18, 2010 from http://www.aare.edu.au/05pap/gra05189.pdf

Graham, L., & Spandagou, I. (2011). From vision to reality: Views of primary school principals on inclusive education in New South Wales, Australia. *Disability & Society*, *26*(2), 223-237.

Graham, L., & Sweller, N. (2011). The inclusion lottery: Who's in and who's out? Tracking inclusion and exclusion in New South Wales government schools. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, *15*(9), 941-953.

Kearney, A., & Kane, R. (2006). Inclusive education policy in New Zealand: Reality or ruse? *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, *10*(3), 201-219.

Kearney, A. (2009). *Barriers to school inclusion: An investigation into the exclusion of disabled students from and within New Zealand schools*. Ph. D, Massey University.

Kenway, J. (2006). Education policy: Markets and society. In A. McClelland & P. Smyth (Eds.), *Social policy in Australia: Understanding for action* (pp. 209-233). South Melbourne, Victoria: Oxford University Press.

Lamperd, R., & Harris, A. (2010, May 12). Schools ask struggling kids to avoid NAPLAN tests, parents claim. *Herald Sun.* Retrieved March 12, 2010 from www.heraldsun.com.au/news/schools-can-cheat-naplan-exams/story-e6frf7jo-1225864756741

Martin, M., Jackson, V., & Burke, M. (2006). *The Learning Assistance Program: A reflective study.* Sydney: NSW DET.

Millar, R. & Morton, M. (2007). Bridging two worlds: Special education and curriculum policy. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, *11*(2), 163-176.

New Zealand Government. (1993). *The Human Rights Act.* Retrieved February 25, 2012 from http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1993/0082/latest/DLM304212.html

New Zealand Government. (2010). *Success for all: Review of special education – recommendations for change: Cabinet paper.* Retrieved July, 21, 2011 from http://www.minedu.govt.nz/NZEducation/EducationPolicies/SpecialEducation/SuccessForAll.aspx

New Zealand MoE. (1996). *Special education policy 2000*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.

New Zealand MoE. (1998). *Managing the special education grant: A handbook for schools*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.

New Zealand MoE. (2001). *Resource teacher: learning and behaviour (RTLB) clusters. Effective governance, management and practice*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.

New Zealand MoE. (2008). *Initiatives*. Retrieved March 13, 2012, from http://www.minedu.govt.nz/NZEducation/EducationPolicies/InternationalEducation/Initiatives.aspx

New Zealand MoE. (2010). *Initiatives*. Retrieved March 13, 2012, from http://www.minedu.govt.nz/NZEducation/EducationPolicies/Schools/Initiatives.aspx

New Zealand MoE. (2011). *Education counts: Statistics*. Retrieved November 15, 2011 from http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/schooling/july_school_roll_returns/6028

New Zealand MoE (2012a) *Special Education Policy Guidelines: Introduction*. Retrieved June 11, 2012 from http://www.minedu.govt.nz/NZEducation/EducationPolicies/SpecialEducation/AboutUs/ContextOfOurWork/SpecialEducationPolicyGuidelines/Introduction.aspx

Kerri Tearle
Ktea4497@usyd.edu.au
Dr Ilektra Spandagou
ilektra.spandagou@sydney.edu.au

New Zealand MoE (2012b). *Resources for Boards*. Retrieved June 11, 2012, from http://www.minedu.govt.nz/NZEducation/EducationPolicies/SpecialEducation/PublicationsAndResources/ResourcesForBoards.aspx

New Zealand MoE (2012c). *Special Education Principles*. Retrieved June 11, 2012, from http://www.minedu.govt.nz/NZEducation/EducationPolicies/SpecialEducation/AboutUs/ContextOfOurWork/SpecialEducationPolicyGuidelines/SpecialEducationPrinciples.aspx

New Zealand MoE. (2012d). Success for all – Every school, every child. Retrieved March 23, 2012 from http://www.minedu.govt.nz/NZEducation/EducationPolicies/SpecialEducation/OurWorkProgramme/SuccessForAll.aspx

New Zealand Qualification Authority (NZQA). (2012). Secondary school results. Retrieved March 13, 2012 from http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/studying-in-new-zealand/secondary-school-and-ncea/secondary-school-statistics/

NSW DEC. (2011). *NSW public school enrolment data*. Retrieved February 20, 2012 from https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/media/downloads/about-us/statistics-and-research/key-statistics-and-reports/public-school-enrolments.pdf

NSW DEC. (2012a). Education and Communities: Homepage. Retrieved March, 13 from http://www.educationandcommunities.nsw.gov.au/

NSW DEC. (2012b). *Every Student, Every School: Learning and support.* Retrieved March 30, 2012 from https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/media/downloads/about-us/how-we-operate/national-partnerships-program/every-student-every-school/learning-and-support.pdf

NSW DET. (undated a). *The Learning Assistance Program.* Retrieved December 12, 2011 from http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/studentsupport/programs/lrngdifficulty.php

NSW DET. (undated b). *Principles: Assisting students with learning difficulties*. Retrieved February 20, 2012 from https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/policies/general_man/general/learndiff/PD20060342.shtml

NSW DET. (2004). *The Learning Assistance Program: school presenters notes*. Retrieved October 27, 2008 from http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/studentsupport/programs/The Learning assistance program.doc

NSW DET. (2007). *Assisting students with learning difficulties*. Sydney: NSW DET. Retrieved March 1, 2012 from https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/policies/general_man/general/learndiff/PD20060342.

NSW Government. (1990). *Education Act*. Retrieved February 28, 2012 from http://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/inforcepdf/1990-8.pdf?id=fc4bcf6a-d005-68af-fa91-fd9a7d10cd09

NSW Government. (2011). *NSW government response to the report of the legislative council general purpose standing committee no. 2: Inquiry into the provision of education to students with a disability or special needs*. Retrieved February 19, 2011 from https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/media/downloads/about-us/news-at-det/inquiry_into_the_provision_of_education_to_students_with_a_disability_or_special_needs.pdf

NSW Parliament. Legislative Council. General Purpose Standing Committee No. 2. (2010). *The provision of education to students with a disability or special needs.* Report no. 34. Retrieved July 12, 2010 from http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/Prod/parlment/committee.nsf/0/bd30607cceed0133ca25776200264698/$FILE/100716%20The%20provision%20of%20education%20to%20students%20with%20a%20disability.pdf

OECD. (2012). OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education: New Zealand 2011. Retrieved March 6, 2012 from http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org.ezproxy1.library.usyd.edu.au/education/oecd-reviews-of-evaluation-and-assessment-in-education-new-zealand-2012_9789264116917-en

Oliver, M. (1996). *Understanding disability: From theory to practice.* London: Macmillan Press.

Kerri Tearle
Ktea4497@usyd.edu.au
Dr Ilektra Spandagou
ilektra.spandagou@sydney.edu.au

Owers, M. (2011, September 15). *The Court Report.* Episode 4, Series 3. Television Broadcast. New Zealand: The Gibson Group.

Parkins, W. (2002). *Review of support for students with low support needs enrolled in regular classes*. Sydney: NSW DET.

Prosser, B. (2008). Beyond ADHD: A consideration of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and pedagogy in Australian schools. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, *12*(1), 81-97.

Silvers, A. (2002). The crooked timber of humanity: Disability, ideology and the aesthetic. In M. Corker & T. Shakespeare (Eds.) *Disability/postmodernity: Embodying disability theory* (pp. 228-244). London: Continuum.

Slee, R. (2011). *The irregular school.* Oxon: Routledge.

Tomlinson, S. (1985). The expansion of special education. *Oxford Review of Education*, *11*(2), 157-165.

UNESCO. (1994). *The Salamanca statement and framework for action on special needs education*. Retrieved June 12, 2010 from www.unesco.org/education/pdf/SALAMA_E.PDF

Welch, A. (2007). Making education policy. In R. Connell, C. Campbell, M. Vickers, A. Welch, D. Foley, N. Bagnall & D. Hayes. *Education, Change and Society* (pp. 1-30). South Melbourne, Victoria: Oxford University Press.

Wills, R., & McLean, M. (2008). Who's in, who's out of New Zealand public schools? How decisions are shaped. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, *12*(5), 511-523.