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PRACTITIONERS, LEARNING DIFFERENCE AND REGIONAL[i] AND REMOTE[ii] INCLUSIVE EDUCATION SETTINGS: A FOCUSED ANALYSIS OF THE RESEARCH AND POLICY LITERATURE.

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Abstract

This literature review interrogates current international writing about inclusive education (IE) in regional and remote settings, with explicit reference to Australian considerations, including the emergent National Curriculum. The task of this review has been to establish the types of knowledge reported about IE in minority, marginalized and "other" inclusive educational settings, and to locate the absences of knowledge that the current literature indicates. Finally, future directions for research into IE in minority educational settings are proposed.

Prelude

After gaining my Diploma of Teaching, I began my career in the mid-1980's as a middle school teacher in the Northern Territory of Australia. I understood that students with learning difficulties were the subject of special education and that there were a handful of these kids in my classroom that the Special Education Teacher would come and withdraw from time to time. I had one girl with cerebral palsy who struggled up or down the external flight of stairs to the classroom several times a day, one boy with what I now know was some kind of acquired brain injury who was "once very clever" but who struggled to write, and one girl who seemed very vague to the point where I wondered whether or not she had hearing impairment (which it turned out she didn't). I also had a girl who attended, or partially attended, from the Tiwi Islands for about a month…I remember being shocked that a 12 year old could barely read or write. I was very afraid because I didn't know how to help her. There were numerous other Indigenous Australians in my class…I just didn't know who they were because they were invisible compared to the girl from the Tiwi Islands. There were other students who struggled, and a couple of kids who were much brighter than me.

A lot has changed since then. For one, as time passed, I became increasingly interested in students who were unable to learn as expected from the offerings of the curriculum. I completed a Bachelor of Education. I thought students had emotional problems that affected their learning. I completed a couple of qualifications in counselling. I realized that some kids actually think differently, and compute problems using 'other' thinking approaches. I studied psychology, and became a Counselling Psychologist, and an Educational and Developmental Psychologist. I realized what a complicated process it was to learn to read! I taught undergraduate and postgraduate inclusive education and school counselling subjects at an Australian university. I lectured for brief stints in Papua New Guinea (PNG) to lecturers from some of the teacher training colleges who were studying for a Masters in Inclusive Education. I could see that my frameworks of thinking and cognitive processing were very different to these colleagues of mine who are indigenous to their nation. One of the PNG men I was working with explained to me that his parents were teenagers in the Highlands of PNG when they first saw print on a page upon their first encounter of humans with white skin.   I

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bought cigarettes in PNG: the tobacco was rolled in pages from books.   I have begun further postgraduate study.

Introduction

A little more than two decades have passed since the World Proclamation of Education for All (UNESCO 1990, 4-5) which made note of the following:

> What is needed is an "expanded vision" that surpasses present resource levels, institutional structures, curricula, and conventional delivery systems while building on the best in current practices…An active commitment must be made to removing educational disparities.

Educational disparities were noted in educationally under-served and rural and remote populations, in nomads, migrant workers, indigenous peoples, minorities due to ethnic, racial or linguistic difference, those displaced by war, and those with disability. Four years later, the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) was ratified by 92 participating countries at the World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and Quality. Soon after, the terminology of "inclusive education" began its global journey of popularization and multiple interpretation (Slee and Allan, 2001).

This literature review accounts for any literature, national and international, available in current journal articles (1992 -2012) that is specific to inclusive education (IE) in regional and remote educational settings. The account is characterized by a range of epistemologies within the disciplines of education, sociology, and Western medicine / health .

The questions that guided this literature review are: (a) What does literature, from any discipline have to offer in answer to inquiries about learning differences, IE, and regional and remote areas in general?; (b) What are the knowledges that are reported, and what absences of knowledge are 'skirted' by these reported knowledges?; and (c) What is reported that is "other" about IE in unique territories?

This focused analysis of the literature begins with the identification and definition of key concepts, followed by a specific Australian integration of the concepts. The second section focuses on current literature discussing what is known and what is not known about IE in regional and remote settings; it outlines the literature that refers to 'other' IE settings and territories, including regional and remote settings. Also considered are the few researchers who write of IE in marginalized and "other" non-standard settings, and the characteristics of their research that are likely to benefit research into regional and remote settings. Knowledges present and absent are synthesized in relation to regional and remote Australia. The third section analyses what is counted as knowledge in the majority of the literature.   The conclusion draws this review together, providing some indicators for future research.

Identification and Definition of Key Concepts

The electronic, keyword-focused search backgrounding this English language literature review was conducted using the EBSCOHOST search engine, Australian Government departmental sources, and New South Wales Government departmental sources.   The main databases included in the EBSCOHOST searches were those associated with education (Academic Search Complete, ERIC, Education Research Complete) sociology (SocINDEX with Full Text) and psychology (PsycARTICLES, PsycINFO, Psychology and Behavioural Sciences Collection) and recent dissertations and theses (ProQuest Dissertation and Theses).   The search terms have included permutations of the following: rural, regional, remote, inclusive education, disability, learning

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difficulty, disorder, disability, difference, access, knowledge, curriculum, and socio-cultural.

Literature reporting IE in Australia was time limited to between 1992 (when the Commonwealth *Disability Discrimination Act* was passed, with the Commonwealth *Disability Standards* ratified in 2005) and 2011. Literature reporting on IE internationally has been considered if published post-1994, when the *Salamanca Statement* was ratified by 92 participating countries at the *World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and Quality* convened in Salamanca, Spain by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). This conference was called as part of the response to the *World Declaration on Education for All* launched at the UNESCO World Conference on Education for All in 1990 (UNESCO website, 2011).

Inclusive education is an area of practice fraught with personal, professional and political enmeshments, and this literature review could easily be bogged down in distinctions of definition and practice across disciplines of thought and practice. The 'culture' of seeing learning difference and inclusivity through the eyes of a particular discipline (i.e. through the training of education, psychology, medicine, sociology) is likely to contribute to a reification of some knowledges over others, or a way of achieving discipline-specific goals and agendas (Kearney and Kane 2006). As Umberto Eco (1999, 75) writes:

> …the real problem does not so much concern rules as our eternal drive to think that our rules are the golden ones. The real problem of our own cultural models is to ask, when we see a unicorn, if by any chance it is not a rhinoceros.

Two filters have been utilized in this literature review so as to sidestep the fractured nature of taking a "golden rule" position exclusive of other positions: the use of functional definitions of the core concepts of IE in regional and remote settings (learning difference, learner, access, inclusive education practice, practitioner); and to use selected literature from varied theoretical perspectives.

Learning Difference, Learner and Access

For the purposes of this literature review, of interest is any kind of learning difference (identified by functional or psychometric means) in children and young people that would warrant teachers or parents/carers wanting to seek further advice to that offered at the prescribed annual parent-teacher interviews or at the time of school report preparation when a child's achievements are compared via norm or criterion-referenced approaches. Not all of the candidates identified by way of these regular school measurement mechanisms would actually attract a formal diagnosis of Learning Disorder (American Psychiatric Association (APA), 1994) or an identification of learning difficulty caused by the impairments of cognitive, communication, sensory or physical function.   However, from a pragmatic perspective, that more advice is desirable in relation to a learner's learning will be taken as the identifying criterion of learning difference in that learner.

Learning difference may be influenced by intellectual impairment, environmental deprivation, speech-motor deficit, sensory deficit, Learning Disorder or Communication Disorder (APA, 1994). Environmental deprivation may include lack of adequate instruction, dislocation from self-identifiers, social isolation, unsafe home life contributing to sleep deprivation and a hyperaroused or desensitized nervous system, exposure to trauma either incidental or chronic, parent/carer/sibling mental or physical illness, and inadequate age-appropriate nurturing. 'Within-child' influences such as poor physical health (incidental or chronic), poor sleep (caused by sleep apnoea or insomnia), poor diet due to food fussiness and sensory issues, delayed or splintered developmental milestones, or problems with hearing or vision, may also contribute to learning difference. Finally, 'within-family' factors that may positively correlate with learning difference are cultural and linguistic diversity, relative poverty, and parental literacy level. The above factors are known to disrupt learner abilities of attention,

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concentration and memory which constitute the initial access abilities required for classroom-based learning.

Hunt (1981) and Eiszler (1983) were active in researching what they termed 'accessibility characteristics' in students. Their interest extended to the matching of teaching and learning styles in educational settings, and the expression of accessibility characteristics in teacher-friendly terms. The concept of learner 'accessibility characteristics' allows us to re-conceptualize learning difference as an issue of incongruence between the abilities of the learner and the content and processes assumed in the curriculum.

Using the descriptor 'learning difference' enables this focused analysis to bypass the inter-disciplinary debates regarding distinctions between learning difficulties and learning disabilities. It also enables acknowledgement of the philosophical debates regarding the influence of social capital (Bourdieu 1973), cultural determinism (Slee 2006), and cognitive frameworks (Berry, Irvine and Hunt 1988; Davidson 1979; Dingwall, Lewis, Maruff and Cairney 2009) on learner success, or otherwise, in classroom-based learning.

The descriptor 'learning difference' remains subject to the principles of inclusivity (i.e. normalization, social role valorization, participation, least restrictive environment, adaptation and accommodation). 'Learning difference' diverts the focus from 'within-student' learning problems towards other problem factors such as the curriculum, pedagogies of teaching and learning, teaching practices, learning contexts, and the provision of basic human needs (water, food, sleep, shelter, clothing and access).

Practitioner

In educational settings and communities, there may be a range of people participating in the IE of any student with learning difference. For the purposes of this literature review, and so as to account for the teaching and non-teaching persons in the web of personnel involved in the IE pathway for any one student with learning difference, the personnel will be thought of as the practitioners. This 'umbrella' term allows not only for the voice of educators, specialists and health professionals, but also for the voice of students themselves, as well as the voices of their caregivers.

Inclusive practice and inclusive education practice

The inclusivity principles of normalization, social valorization, least restrictive environment, and participation are drawn from the research and theoretical frameworks of Bank-Mikkelson (1969), Nirje (1970) and Wolfensberger (1972). Slee (2001a, 2001b, 2006) has written extensively about the taming of the once radical and political notion of IE, and that part of that "taming" is the continuing practice of cultural determinism using standardized testing to identify students as eligible (or not) for IE programs. Slee argues that IE has been hijacked from its capacity for social influence, and reduced to "another name" for integration and special education for children with a diagnosable or medicalized disorder.

The position of this literature review on IE is influenced by the Education for All (UNESCO) initiative, and the positions of Australian authors, Forlin (2004) and Foreman (2001, 2008). Graham and Slee's (2008) uncomfortable questions about who or what determines or owns inclusion have also been influential.

Inclusive education is taken to be education for students with learning difference due to disability, or due to ethnic, cultural, linguistic, social, or psychological divergence from what is considered the population, curriculum, or standardized criteria that is established in governing documentation as the

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norm.

For the purposes of this literature review, the terms 'inclusive education' and 'inclusive education practice' refer to education of students with learning difference in the least restrictive environment (LRE). The least restrictive environment is not intended to be mistaken exclusively for regular mainstream education classes and school settings; LRE does not exclude specialised settings, smaller student-teacher ratios, self-directed learning or mainstream settings with various adapted permutations of students, teachers, learning environments and learning stimuli.

To be circumspect about learning difference as relative to governing documentation (while evaluating and establishing the LRE for students with learning difference) forces IE thinking to be, in the first instance, student-centred rather than system-centred, environment-centred or resource-centred.

An Australian aside: an integration of key concepts

In a report on an Australian inquiry into rural and remote education commissioned by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, HREOC (2000, 2) access to education in rural and remote regions of Australia

> *...is compromised by ill-health, disability, poverty, isolation, high mobility and transience, natural events such as floods and even heavy rain. It is denied by remoteness coupled with the language and cultural inappropriateness of the instruction on offer for hundreds of Indigenous children.*

It can be common for children and young people from minority groups (e.g. students resident in rural and remote regions of Australia) to appear to have medical-model, diagnosable learning disorders, expressive / receptive language impairment, cognitive impairment, or social-emotional disorders. Indeed, if measured using standardized psychometric assessment instruments[iii] the most accurate result that could be reported would be that the student from a minority has a '*disorder of access to the curriculum*'.

This notion of learning difference being a side effect of the learner being outside of the 'membership' in the 'population' that inhabits the curriculum is not new.   Bourdieu (1974, 80) writes:

> *An educational system which puts into practice an implicit pedagogical action requiring initial familiarity with the dominant culture, and which proceeds by imperceptible familiarisation, offers information and training which can be received and acquired only by subjects endowed with the system of predisposition that is the condition for the success of the transmission and the inculcation of the culture.*

As the *Access Education* (HREOC 2000, 4) report indicates:

> *The traditional emphasis on the compulsory nature of education has allowed (Australian) governments to provide a monocultural education system that every child is required to attend. Education has not accommodated difference well and has not reached out sufficiently to children as individuals.*

Arguably, in the case of Indigenous Australians and other indigenous[iv] students being educated in Australian schools (by which this study means indigenous to Sudan, Iran, Iraq, Papua New Guinea, numerous Pacific Islands etc), the curriculum in the States and Territories might appear populated by

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the dominant culture (perhaps an urban, white, colonizing, middle class, heterosexual, homogenous, aspirant, 'smart' culture).

For some time, cognitive science, linguistic science, and educational and developmental psychology, have argued indigenous cognitive / information processing as having significant variation from the cognitive processing and scaffolding characteristic of what is glibly summarized as Western thought and language (Berry, Irvine and Hunt 1988; Berry and Dasen 1974; Das, Kirby and Jarmen 1975; Davidson 1979; Kearins 1986; Kearney and McElwain 1976; Luria 1976; Vygotsky 1962). While not specific to indigenous populations, Hunt (1981) and Eiszler's (1983) "accessibility characteristics" seem theoretically congruent with differences in cognitive processing noted in indigenous groups which in turn affect the learners' ability to access certain learning stimuli, content, processes and environments.

From a more contemporary ethnographic perspective, Sharifian (2003) suggests that cultural "templates" of thought and behaviour vary across indigenous groups.   In the specific case of Indigenous Australians, psychologists Dingwall, Lewis et al (2009, 225) point to the importance of "typical cognitive processes" that differ from those of non-Indigenous Australians.

Learning difference can be easily constructed as disability. However, this construction may be represent a mis-match between a student's socio-cultural influences and specific cognitive patterning strengths, and the influences and cognitive patterning strengths prevalent in the curriculum (national or state). Thus, the learning difference may be due to an access difference influenced by the learner's accessibility characteristics and the accessibility characteristics assumed by the content and processes of the curriculum.

The National Curriculum Board of Australia, mandated under the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority Act (ACARA 2008) with the task of establishing a national curriculum within Australia, has documented the place of inclusivity in Australian schools, and has marked out the importance of the national curriculum providing education for all Australian students from Foundation (F) to Year 12.   As Berlach and Chambers (2011) comment, however, interpretation, implementation and evaluation of the inclusivity principles embedded in the initial documents of the National Curriculum Board is designated as the responsibility of the educational authorities, schools and teachers around Australia.   What this will mean in relation to interpretation and implementation, and the ease and latitude with which these educational authorities, schools and teachers are permitted (and skilled enough?) to adapt the curriculum to communities of students with learning difference is yet to be seen.

What is reported as knowledge - and which knowledge is absent – in this review of the literature?

Inclusive education internationally

Developed nations such as Canada (Loreman, Lupart and Barber 2008; Loreman, McGhie-Richmond et al 2009), Great Britain (Ring and Travers 2005; Rose, Shevlin et al 2010), New Zealand (Kearney and Kane 2006), and Australia (Andrew, Beswick et al 2005; Forlin 2006; Grace, Llewellyn et al 2008; Graham and Slee 2008; Graham and Spandaglou 2011; Wu and Komesaroff 2007) are represented in the current general IE literature.

The nations of Africa (Ajiwan 2008; Kiarie 2007; Kuyini and Mangope 2011; Urwick and Elliott

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2010), Europe (e.g. Arnesen and Lundahl 2006; Berhanu 2011; Dizdarević, Vantić-Tanjić and Nikolić 2010; Radoman, Nano and Closs 2006; Walker 2010; Wendelborg and Tøssebro 2010), Asia (Ahsan and Burnip 2007; Rydstrom 2010; Singal 2006a, 2006b) and South America (Valdiviezo 2006) are also represented in the literature.

The literature from the USA (e.g. Beloin and Peterson 2000; Calculator and Black 2009; Downing and Peckham-Hardin 2007; Jackson, Ryndak and Wehmeyer 2008; Silverman, Hong and Trepanier-Street 2010; Villa, Thousand et al 2005; Wells 2009; Wischnowski, Salmon and Eaton 2004) is more extensive than any other nation in the English-speaking world, however, it is also very homologous to that nation's highly specific legislature and educational policy regarding students with disability (SWD).

While most of the abovementioned literature hails from nations which have diverse linguistic, cultural and socioeconomic populations, their discussion of IE is almost invariably limited to the special education needs of SWD in mainstream school settings.

None of the abovementioned literature makes specific reference to IE in regional and remote settings in specific nations.

Regional and remote settings within nations

Ludlow (2003) comments on the limited amount of literature reporting IE processes and practices in regional and remote settings. Compared to any other nation, the USA has the largest literature presence (e.g. Cross, Salazar et al 2009; Gritzmacher and Gritzmacher 2010; Johnson, Humphrey and Allred 2009; Jung and Bradley 2006; Larwood 2005; Nagle, Hernandez et al 2006; Pickard 2009). The general difficulty with this literature is that it is highly specific to the claustrophobically legislated model of IE in the USA.   It notes a high degree of dependence on external experts outside of the regular teaching staff in schools, and a limited availability of these experts in regional and remote settings.

Literature that is specifically related to IE in regional and remote educational settings in Australia is quite rare.   This literature is also highly specific: to a particular type of sensory impairment (Byrnes, Sigafoos et al 2002); to the voices of parents/carers over a 30 year period in a solitary context (Ypinazar and Pagliano 2004); to questions of teacher readiness and teacher preparation (Forlin, 2006); to the lack of availability of adequate services, strategies or professionals with appropriate training more readily located in major cities and inner regional areas (Andrew, Beswick et al 2005; Shepley 2008); and to the problems of gaining medical-model identification of disability in isolated communities (Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2000).

In these regional and remote accounts of IE in developed nations, an account of the ethnic, social, linguistic, cultural or psychological diversity within regional and remote populations is absent. Neither is there mention of learners who have learning difference due to incongruence between accessibility characteristics of the individual learner, the learning context and the learning content and processes (curriculum).

'Other-ness' in inclusive education 'territories'

Literature related to IE in regional and remote areas of various nations is sparse. However, literature that accounts for settings 'other' than the artificial homogeneity of 'major city/dominant culture' settings is likely to be of some use in understanding the 'other-ness' of IE in regional and remote

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settings.

Some of these 'other' settings will include socio-geographical territories: large population mixed industrial – rural nations (e.g. China and India); developing nations (nations on the margins of socioeconomic and political stability); and inner urban or outer metropolitan areas where social isolation and socio-cultural influences restrict the majority of students' access to the curriculum.   An additional 'other' setting for consideration will be the psycho-social territory of the imagination of researchers.

Large population mixed industrial-rural nations and developing nations.

Eleweke and Rodda (2002) indicate that IE in the developing nations of the world can only be perceived as problematic. They report the meaningful implementation of IE is unsatisfactory due to the absence of adequate resources, training, funding and enabling legislation.

Some of the global literature emerging from developing nations (Ahsan and Burnip 2007; Kiarie 2007) "borrows" the structure, resourcing and practices of IE for students with disability from the USA. What is apparent in this literature is the unquestioned and direct translation of this resource-rich, urbanized and popularized model from the USA to the national context of developing nations regardless of the impossibilities this immediately creates. Naturally, these are accounts of deficit and disadvantage compared to the Western model.

Prior to the 2008 Global Financial Crisis (GFC), and prior to the emergence of nations like India and China from the margins of global influence to a more central position on the world socio-economic stage, Meyer (2003, 33) asked the question:

> *What if some of the (inclusive education) principles and practices that we have espoused are somehow monocultural and, furthermore, not achievable within societies that exist for century after century, on the margins socioeconomically?*

A monocultural IE model, when directly translated to specific contexts, creates an IE account of absence, deficit, disadvantage and futility. In more recent literature, rather than questions of direct transferability of a specific model being asked, other questions are being posed related to the transmutability of IE philosophy, and the generation of 'other' IE practices to 'other' settings (Singal 2006a, 2006b; Deng and Zhu, 2007; Deng 2008).

A selection of literature coming from developing and emergent industrialized – rural nations remarks on national incongruence between IE practice (the 'walk') and the adroit incorporation of legislation and policies (the 'talk') of IE for SWD by their respective governments and educational authorities (Ahsan and Burnip 2007; Rydstrom 2010; Singal 2006b; Urwick and Elliott 2010). The tyranny of this mismatch between policy and practice is the percentage of students with disability who do not yet attend school (in Bangladesh, Ahsan and Burnip (2007) report 85%of SWD do not attend, while in India, Kalyanpur (2008) reports 90% of SWD are not provided for educationally), the negative attitude and fear of teachers (some of the 'walk' of IE) towards having SWD in their classrooms (Chhabra, Srivastava and Srivastava 2010; Deng 2008; Rydstrom 2010), and the chasm between the 'talk' and the 'walk' of IE for SWD at the classroom level (Johnstone and Chapman 2009; Ntombela 2009; Rydstrom 2010).

In the IE literature coming from China there is an absence of account for the different Chinese languages, national ethnic groups, and diversity of socioeconomic status across the nation.   For Chinese nationals, it may not be fortuitous to make comment on politically sensitive matters of sociocultural diversity. With that noted, it is from China (Deng and Zhu 2007, 27) that the following

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distinguishing observation is added to the world stage of IE:

> *None of the methods (of inclusive education) used by any one country can serve as a standard blueprint or paradigm for other countries in their development of inclusive education, and each country must explore models of inclusive education suited to itself in light of its own national circumstances*.

Deng and Zhu (2007) write that, in China, "Learning in a Regular Classroom" (LRC) policy and practice (reportedly influenced by Confucian philosophy and socialist politics) preceded the Western model of IE for SWD. The writers compare and explore the similarities and differences between the 1980's introduction of LRC in China, and the more recent civil rights driven IE model from the USA. Their purpose is to interpret IE from a "wider perspective" than that written about in much of the literature from Western philosophy and practice.

Contrary to China, literature from India (Kalyanpur 2008; Singal 2006a, 2006b) does acknowledge its 'within-country' ethnic, linguistic, religious and socioeconomic diversity. Singal (2006a, 2006b) notes that the diversity of India's vast population is well documented within Indian legislation and policy related to IE. Refreshingly, Singal initiates an interrogation of the extreme challenges and problems faced by the educational authorities charged with the implementation of India's emerging model of IE practice in India's diverse population and schools.

Singal (2006a) explores the notion of an ecosystemic evaluation of IE, and pushes the sometimes arbitrary boundaries of "ability" and "disability" in doing so. Singal begins exploring the contextual understanding of IE in the light of India's linguistic, cultural and economic diversity. Using Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1992) ecosystemic framework, Singal re-thinks IE as being in relationship to its context.

Uniquely, Singal (2006a) describes contextual and ecosystemic considerations as being more appropriate model-forming tools in establishing inclusivity as an educational practice in "other" national settings such as India. This concept of re-thinking models of IE in "other" settings is mirrored by Jackson, Ryndak and Wehmeyer (2008). Jackson Ryndak and Wehmeyer review the constructs of ecology and group process as tools for developing 'context - curriculum - student' appropriate IE. Coincidentally, Jackson et al write from the USA, another form of the large population, mixed industrial-rural nation, and which is unlikely to be familiar with parallels being drawn between itself and India.

Inner urban and outer metropolitan areas where social isolation and socio-cultural factors restrict students' access to the curriculum.

Byrnes, Sigafoos et al (2002) report on the availability of specialised IE resources available in NSW Government schools for students who are deaf or hearing impaired in Sydney, Australia. These authors explored the choice and accessibility of specialized services for students with low incidence learning difference related to hearing. They note that access to specialized educational services in large metropolitan cities like Sydney, Australia, may appear to be a choice for parents compared to their rural counterparts. However, they add that the practicalities of access due to problems created by time-measured distance and available transport often mean there is little difference between students in remote or urban settings obtaining access to a least restrictive educational environment. Inner urban and outer metropolitan areas are not immune to an 'other-ness' IE implementation than that represented in the dominant literature.

However, where one might expect to find current literature related to IE of students with learning

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difference in inner city schools or distinct metropolitan areas with high incidence of socio-cultural diversity or social isolation, there appears to be an absence of any research-based comment.

The imagination of researchers.

The absence of adequate research into regional and remote and 'other' IE settings (Meyer 2003; Ludlow 2003) is well enough documented. What boundaries does this area called 'absence of adequate research' have? Where are the theoretical fence-lines between adequate research of IE in non-dominant settings and the desert of no research? One fence-line may be the imagination of researchers of IE.

While not specific to IE in regional and remote settings, Silla, Hobbs and Wang (2008) document their initial research towards developing culturally accessible, transnational e-learning materials on the philosophy and practice of IE that is contextually and culturally sensitive. Using standard, dominant model literature regarding IE, they invited transnational education professionals to respond to and adapt the materials to be more user-friendly across cultures while still maintaining the principles of IE. This research finds a transnational, cross-disciplinary, cross-cultural collaborative fence-line and documentation of context-specific IE. These researchers have delineated a space for thinking with a wider perspective on the practice of IE.

Two authors, Paterson (2007) and Mallett (2008) have made imaginative contributions to the literature specific to regional and remote settings. Paterson (2007) researched a 'within-teacher' process (i.e. 'in-flight' thinking), while Mallett (2008) researched the matching of IE philosophy and practice to indigenous philosophy and practice.

Paterson researched the 'in-flight' thinking of five high school teachers (three in rural Canadian settings and two in rural Australians settings), collaborating with them while they were engaged in IE practice in the classroom.   This author found that these teachers had knowledge of individual students that was "other" to the categorical knowledge descriptive of their medical-model learning difficulties and that, when establishing instructional techniques, this knowledge was likely more valuable to the respective teachers than the categorical knowledge.   Some of this knowledge incorporated contextualized thinking of individual students as part of an intact group, and thinking about the individuals' academic (such as capacity to focus, follow instructions etc) and non-academic (such as affective identities, personality and personal experiences) characteristics. Paterson's research begins to delineate an untapped area of investigation into the regional and remote practice knowledge of IE practitioners.

Mallett (2008) investigated the incorporation of indigenous philosophy into the development and coordination of student support services, and the de-colonization and indigenization of Canadian curriculum for First Nations students. This theoretical approach to creating IE practices specific to a context and culture is a unique example of research imagination that brings 'other', fresher interpretations and expressions to a global philosophy.

An Australian synthesis of knowledge present and knowledge absent

In general, literature specific to IE in regional and remote communities is absent or limited. In Australia, this almost complete absence of literature comes as somewhat of a surprise when one considers the following trends (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2009, unless otherwise stated) that characterize the Australian population in regional and remote areas of the nation:

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- Between 11 and 12% (approximately 2.5 million people) of the Australian population lives in outer regional, remote, and very remote Australia.

- Approximately one third of the Australian population lives outside of the major cities (i.e. they live in inner regional, outer regional, remote and very remote Australia).

- Children and young people under 19 years of age represent approximately one quarter of the Australian regional and remote population (i.e. about 630,000 people of educable age).

- In regional and remote areas, health professionals per head of population are low by comparison to the cities and metropolitan areas of Australia (Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing 2008) and, when available, their services are sporadic, with long waiting lists and long waits between visits (Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2000).

- In regional and remote areas, health professionals working with children and young people are generally early career practitioners without paediatric specialization or additional paediatric training. The *Education Access* document (Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2000, 30) reports:

  Particular disadvantages for many rural and remote families are the lack of specialist services and the discontinuity of assessment and treatment. Many submissions (to the national inquiry) describe visiting specialists who come once each year. One will assess the child and then there may be another year long wait for a specialist to treat the child.

- The Indigenous Australian population (as a proportion of the Australian population) increases with the degree of geographical remoteness from educational and health services; the further away from the major cities, the higher proportion of Indigenous Australians to non-Indigenous Australians (from 1% in major cities to 45% in very remote Australia) (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2011).

- Compared to non-Indigenous Australians, the proportion of Indigenous Australians with post-school qualifications is small; education participation is also low compared to non-Indigenous locational counterparts (Walter 2008).

- Indigenous Australians are 2.4 times more likely to have a medical-model, diagnosable disability than non-Indigenous Australians (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2008).

- The indigenous refugee population settled in regional areas of Australia (e.g. Sudanese, Irani, Iraqi and Afghani) report their children are struggling in age-appropriate mainstream classroom placement, and that the high school aged children of these same families are not receiving adequate schooling given that they have never been to school except in Australia (Shepley 2008). This is reported by the parents of families who dwell in regional towns where there are private and public schools, TAFE and university. These same families report under-utilization of trauma and counselling services, difficulty in maintaining payments for rental housing or finding adequate housing for large families, high rates of unemployment or of casualised employment, and an absence of regional intensive English language services (both for adults and their children).

While knowledge concerning the incidence of learning difference present in Australia's regional and remote educational settings is readily available, practitioner knowledge is absent or limited regarding IE practice in settings other than the major cities.

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From this literature review, it seems reasonable to claim that IE in 'other' settings, such as regional and remote areas of Australia, is likely to be quite a different 'creature' (viz, rhinoceros or unicorn, Eco 1999, 75) to its homogeneous, urbanized genus. The knowledge we have from current research provides us with evidence that the creature, IE in regional and remote settings is contained by different fence-lines and is unlikely to ever take the exact shape of its urbanized relative.

What has been privileged as knowledge in the literature?

From developed nations and developing nations alike, the current literature generally focuses on the themes of advantages, obstacles or impediments to the success (or otherwise) of IE for students with learning difference in regional and remote settings. More specifically, topics covered include: the advantage of collaborative teaming, peer support and core curriculum adaptation (Downing and Peckham-Hardin 2007); the advantageous socio-cultural, systemic and teaching characteristics of specific rural schools that demonstrate effective IE (Nagle, Hernandez et al 2006; Wischnowski, Salmon, and Eaton 2004); the obstacles and impediments (such as limited personnel and resources) that contribute to IE failing in rural and remote settings (Beloin and Peterson 2000; Jung and Bradley 2006); the impediment of under-prepared mainstream teachers for these settings and the implications for recruitment and retention of those preparing to teach in regional and remote settings (Johnson, Humphrey and Allred 2009; Larwood 2005; Lemke 2010); and teachers', students' and parents' perceptions of IE at work in their setting (Loreman, Lupart and Barber 2008; Loreman, McGhie-Richmond et al 2009).

'Advantages', 'obstacles' and 'impediments' are relative concepts and, while not explicitly noted in this literature, these concepts are relative to a specific model of IE which is, of course, the legislature-driven model of the USA which dominates much of the research literature . This model is highly reliant on targeted funding for: resources (personnel, systems, materials, planning, and adapted settings); standardized identification of who is "in" and who is "out" of the category of disability; and specialist and paraprofessional practitioners. The literature often assumes that the "scaffolding" of this dominant IE model is the only expression of IE. The majority of this literature values constructivist knowledge, and the research it reports uses objectivist methodologies to generate additional knowledge.

Because of its attachment to the urbanized model typical of the USA, this literature of IE in regional and remote settings represents a limited understanding of the breadth of the philosophy of IE for all students. It reduces IE knowledge to 'expert' knowledge (i.e. the knowledge held by specialist teachers, and allied health and medical professionals). It favours this knowledge which, in regional and remote areas, translates to rarely accessible, if not non-accessible, knowledge.

This epistemological and ontological approach shapes IE as being largely concerned with SWD in mainstream school settings; there are clear objectivist categories, prescriptive ascertainment methods to establish membership in those categories, and related models of funding. The majority of this type of IE research has little, if anything, to say about learning difference other than that diagnosed as disabled by positivist instrumentation.

Subsequently, the majority of the literature polarizes urban vs. rural IE practice, mobilizing concepts of comparative deficit in regional and remote areas. This conceptualization has the effect of limiting the imagination and documentation of an 'other' paradigm and practice of IE in these locations.

There are, however, rare exceptions in the literature which discuss IE in 'other' settings (including regional and remote settings) and reference 'other' learning differences to those associated with disability (from Australia, Berlach and Chambers (2011) Graham and Slee (2008) and Slee (2006);

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from Canada, Mallett (2008); from India, Singal (2006a, 2006b); from New Zealand, Kearney and Kane (2006); and from Serbia and Albania, Radoman, Nano and Closs (2006)). As small as this literature group is, it has several immediately apparent commonalities: its origins are very recent historically (all published post-2004); it represents more subjectivist and interpretivist epistemologies and ontologies; it emerges from post-colonized and post-invaded nations; and it appears to wrestle with the dominant expression of IE and SWD as though with a constraining opponent.

Apart from Mallett (2008), this 'inclusive' IE literature is of a generally theoretical nature with acknowledgment of national socioculturally influenced learning differences. For example, from the Indian context, Singal (2006a, 2006b) refers to members of learning disadvantaged groups related to castes, tribes, religions, language groups, as well as to the disadvantage of gender.

Writing from a critical ethnographic stance, Mallett (2008) describes more context-specific approaches to IE for historically underachieving First Nations students. The author focuses on three First Nations' schools with apparent high incidence learning support needs in Manitoba, Canada. Mallett describes the implementation of limited, localized (school-based) control over IE curriculum, services and supports, and interdependent collaboration with the national and provincial educational authorities in de-colonizing and indigenizing the curriculum and student supports (e.g. identifying indigenous inclusive ideology, and informing student support services with indigenous philosophy).

In general, when the authors of literature of IE in regional and remote settings acknowledge the existence of students with learning difference (i.e. students who learn differently to the population of students that inhabit the accepted curriculum) as distinct from SWD, their commentary and research tends to be founded on subjectivist epistemologies and qualitative ontologies.

Subjectivist and interpretivist research approaches are known to account for participatory and relational elements (actors, voices, dialogue, narratives and discourse) of their research focus. What appears to be generally absent from the available literature are: some of the key actors and their voices (i.e. student voice, parent/carer voice, teacher consultant voice, teacher assistant voice); the dialogues between actors and within actors when working collaboratively for a learner with learning difference; and the narratives that actors tell when involved in educational planning.

Conclusion

Research across knowledge disciplines and related to IE in regional and remote areas is underdeveloped. This is the case internationally, as well as in specific national contexts, including Australia.

The bulk of literature that is available is largely characterized by positivist, objectivist knowledge of IE. This knowledge recognizes legitimate IE practitioners as specialized, learning difference as occurring solely within learners with disabilities, and IE as the contemporary substitute name for special education and mainstreaming. Subsequently, the available literature implies that regional and remote IE is bound to failure or inadequacy due to lack of measurable resources for SWD. At best, this literature skirts around 'that which is missing' from IE in marginalized, minority and regional and remote settings.

'That which is missing' from IE in regional and remote settings may be re-interpreted as 'that which is not yet accounted for' due to the absences forged by a mis-match between context and a limiting theoretical perspective. The spaces defined by absence may be the spaces in need of other theoretical perspectives driving the research.

A small section of IE literature draws on subjectivist, interpretivist and ecosystemic knowledge and

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critiques (Allan and Slee 2008; Jackson, Ryndak and Wehmeyer 2008; Mallett 2008; Paterson 2007; Silla, Hobbs and Wang 2008; Singal 2006a). Learning difference, access to the curriculum and the ecological influences on the learner and learning are the foci of this literature. In general, these researchers re-direct thinking away from 'within-child' impairment; they incorporate theoretical perspectives which include ecological and ecosystemic relationships between learner abilities, access to the curriculum, and learner context. These are likely the researchers of most interest to inclusive practitioners in 'other' settings, including regional and remote settings. Their thinking has the capacity to influence IE in all settings globally.

An implication of this literature review is that future research shifts its focus to: 1.) knowledge which is tacitly present (but not necessarily documented) in IE practices and practitioners in regional and remote settings; 2.) the ways in which knowledge is processed and generated in "other" IE settings as typified by regional and remote IE settings; and 3.) the generation of knowledge by IE practitioners as they work with the children and young people with learning difference.

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[i] The terms 'regional' and ' remote' will be used following the conventions of the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011) which defines population areas in Australia under the names Major City, Inner Regional, Outer Regional, Remote and Very Remote. Non-Australian literature in this review generally uses the terms 'rural' and/or 'remote', although these terms are rarely defined. There is no attempt in this literature review to clarify the differences or similarities between Australian and non-Australian contextual terminology describing the degree of distance / isolation from major cities. It is assumed that, in these other nations, the descriptors are also outlining the "otherness" of rural and remote regions, even if the mileage is comparatively smaller, or larger.

[ii] As above in [i].

[iii] As stand-alone tools, standardized psychometric assessment instruments designed to measure intelligence, at best suggest the individual's potential at academic success within the educational and cultural norms of the population sample on which the assessment instrument has been developed. Sociocultural minorities are rarely represented in the norms of standardized psychometric assessment instruments.

[iv] Throughout this text, 'Indigenous' will represent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, while 'indigenous' will refer to indigenous people living in Australia from other nations (e.g. indigenous Sudanese living in Australia).