CHAPTER 1

RECONCEPTUALISING INCLUSIVE POLICY AND PRACTICE IN HIGHER EDUCATION: A BOURDIEUIAN THEORISATION

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Abstract
The increasing number of international students with a disability accessing higher education demands new approaches to policies and practices that maximise all students’ participation. This chapter illustrates how Bourdieu’s critical theory provides a framework for articulating successful policy and practice in inclusive education at one university. In this chapter, we show how we have adapted Bourdieu’s symbolic and epistemic capital in order to analyse the intricacies of inclusive discourse and conceptualise inclusion in relation to this case study. Our study aimed at capturing the lived experiences of four international students with a disability enrolled in one university in Australia. We found that inclusive practices were successful when the epistemic, symbolic and cultural capitals were in alignment with those within the relational fields. The key participants who informed our research were four international students who came from Sri Lanka, Hong Kong, China and the United States of America and four faculty members. The implications of the findings for faculty and support staff who are implementing strategic and successful inclusion at one university are discussed. It is hoped these implications may be more widely applied in challenging researchers, lecturers, staff and policy makers interested in making higher education accessible to all. In doing so we aim to underscore how a Bourdieuian perspective can challenge perceptions of student deficit.

Keywords
Inclusion in higher education – Bourdieu – critical theory inclusion

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1. The importance of inclusion in higher education

International and Australian inclusive policy contexts are promoting access to university level education for local and international students with disabilities/additional needs in Australia, yet often in these arenas the voice of the student is not heard. This chapter, based on a recent study, hopes to make those voices 'audible' by attempting an in-depth exploration of the experience of international students with a disability in one Australian university. In doing so, we hope to give a new perspective to policy, attitudes, and good practice in inclusive education.

There are many controversies surrounding the definition of inclusion. Inclusive education is often mistakenly used as a synonym for 'special education' (Slee, 2010). However as Slee (2010) suggests, "If inclusive education is not special education, what is it? It is a general struggle against failure and exclusion" (Slee, 2010, p. 121). As we see it, inclusion is a complex ideology, layered with power plays of politics, people, and institutions, physical and symbolic barriers. However, at its most fundamental "inclusion involves the full participation of all students in all aspects of schooling" (Loreman, Deppeler, & Harvey, 2010, p. 2). Under this definition, all students have the chance to learn when teaching approaches reflect "individual strengths and learning needs" (Ainscow, 1999; Corbett, 2001; Gale, 2001; Lindsay, 2003, in Agbenyega, 2007, p. 41) and promotes full student participation for those from all demographics.

Articles and Dyson (2005), and Mittler (2005) state that policy-makers in both developed and developing countries show their understanding of the links between inclusive education and economic development and the realisation that education allows all people to become empowered in making contributions on both social and economic levels.

In today's economic climate there are many reasons why students move from their own country to a foreign country in order to study. Altbach (2004) discusses reasons related to a lack of educational opportunities in home countries caused by overcrowding or competition. Other reasons are a lack of specialist courses in the home country, the desire to become more competitive through gaining qualifications overseas, political, racial, religious or economic factors. Issues of prestige (symbolic capital) which can also influence the decision, particularly in recognition of the domination of 'the West' in "the curriculum and of scientific discourse" (Altbach, 2004, p. 2). Furthermore "industrialised
countries are recognizing the need to provide their students with a global consciousness and with experience in other countries in order for them to compete in the global economy" (Altbach, 2004, p. 1). At its most fundamental, purely economic reasons may also dictate the extent to which universities market themselves as places of inclusion in order to attract more students both with and without disabilities.

1.1 Current inclusive policy framework

The Australian Disability Standards for Education 2005, based on the Disability Discrimination act of 1992 states: “it is unlawful for an educational authority to discriminate against a person on the ground of the person’s disability or a disability of any associates of that person” (Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, 2005). As such, Australian universities are required to demonstrate alignment with and commitment to policies of equity and diversity across faculties, which also encompass guidelines, procedures, and avenues for grievances, for both existing and prospective students. And yet, in the context of Australia, while the government’s Disability Discrimination act of 1992 “makes it unlawful to exclude people with a disability to achieve positive support, it does nothing to support people with a disability to achieve positive support from the university community. It also fails to specify what might be “reasonable support”” (Maclean & Gannon, 1997, p. 217, as cited in Fuller, Healey, Bradley & Hall, 2004, p. 304, italics added).

Furthermore, “Australia is falling behind other countries in performance and investment in higher education” (Bradley, Noonan, Nugent, & Scales, 2008). In 2008 the Australian government reviewed higher education in Australia through a panel chaired by Professor Denise Bradley (Swinburne University of Technology Social Inclusion Discussion Paper, 2010). The resulting paper ‘The Bradley Review’ pointed to the need for focus on various social inclusion initiatives in order to meet future economic and social goals. These six priority areas included ensuring the following in regards to extending access to higher education: 1. Targeting jobless families with children to increase job opportunities, improve parenting and build capacity; 2. Improving the life chances of children at greatest risk to disadvantage; 3. Closing the gap for Indigenous Australians; 4. Breaking the cycle of entrenched and multiple disadvantage in particular neighbourhoods and communities; 5. Reducing homelessness; 6. Improving outcomes for people living with a disability or mental illness and their carers.
(Swinburne University of Technology Social Inclusion Discussion Paper, 2010, p. 11). As such, universities Australia-wide are now required to show how they are actively seeking to engage student cohorts from the various demographics as mentioned above.

The equity and diversity policies of most universities reflect the direct relationship between universal ideals of inclusion. For example, these are realised as being in alignment with “principles of equity and justice” at the university central to this study (University Global Equal Opportunity Policy) and make direct reference to a number of declarations, underpinned by the U.N. such as the 1948 Declaration of Human Rights, International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1969), and the Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons (1975). The university at the centre of this study also has the available services of the Disability Liaison Unit for both students and staff to utilise for support mechanisms.

However, it is obvious from reading the university policies that they have been written from a ‘top-down’ perspective. The written initiatives are littered with policy-speak regarding institutional aims, long-term targets and current performance benchmarks. While there is mention made of seeking feedback from students with a disability and staff, the explicit processes in terms of how this will be done are not mentioned. Gaining access to the most recent policy documents from the university where this study took place required a log-in which means that only current staff and students are able to access the documents. As inclusive practitioners we feel the policies could be alienating for students because they are written in language which is legally jargonistic; the policies set out institutional objectives and inclusion as a retention strategy rather than how the policy impacts on students in everyday life. Furthermore, the inaccessibility of the documents is somewhat ironic and is not reflective of a transparent consultative process.

2. Critical Theory – Pierre Bourdieu
Our research approach was informed by critical theory. Critical theory is inextricably linked to notions of social justice, equity, freedom, self-determination, emancipation and empowerment and orientated towards a critique of society which informs us as practitioners of how we can enact change (How, 2003; Reeves, Albert, Kuper, Hodges, 2008).
From an emancipatory and transformative perspective we are concerned with a critique of the status quo of current inclusive practices and policies underpinned by the work of French critical theorist Pierre Bourdieu (1930 – 2002). Bourdieu’s work is considered to be ‘eclectic’ by his commentators (Simons, 2004; Webb, Schirato, Danaher, 2002; Grenfell, 2008). Indeed, Mahar and Wilkes (2004) suggest that “Pierre Bourdieu has always worked against the grain” (p. 218). His theories are influenced by “the sociology of class reproduction, of colonialisation and post-colonialisation, gender relations, economic and political hierarchy, and of the process of artistic production” (p. 218). Mahar and Wilkes contend that by doing so Bourdieu “rewrote the way we understand Western societies” (p. 218). To understand inclusive policy and practice involves a close consideration of power differences and how societies construct people as ‘disabled’ or within the negative discourse of ‘international student’. Bourdieu’s conceptual metaphors of field, capital and habitus help explain how these constructs are created. These concepts are explained in section 2.2 of this chapter.

2.1 Education and Bourdieu’s ideas embodied in Whole Schooling

Education is integral to Bourdieu’s theories – he sees educational institutions as mechanisms for maintaining and reproducing values and relations within social spaces for each new generation that enters into it (Apple, 2004; Webb, Schirato, Danaher, 2004). Further, “these institutions and the manner in which they are organised and controlled are integrally related to the ways in which specific people get access to economic and cultural resources and power” (Apple, 2004, p. vii).

Critical theorists argue that understanding reality requires a wider look at the circumstances and contexts in which they are produced (How, 2003). In a similar vein “the point of research on inclusive education should be to build robust and comprehensive analyses of exclusion in order that we might challenge social and cultural relations as mediated through education in order to dismantle oppression and promote inclusion” (Slee, 2010, p. 83). For these reasons we see educational inclusion from a ‘Whole Schooling Approach’ (Figure 1 below) that considers policy, infrastructure, staff attitudes and practices and their relationship to how these impact on students with additional needs at one university in Melbourne. Whole Schooling is the result of collaborations by the Whole Schooling Consortium, established in 1998 under the direction of Dr
Michael Peterson, and based in the US. The Consortium works with school, university and community networks in research, professional development and training into inclusive practices. A Whole School Approach provides insight into how inclusion has the capacity to challenge: “political, epistemological, pedagogical and institutional” (Acedo, 2009, p. 8) boundaries and prompt “a critique of social values, priorities and the structures and institutions which they support” (Barton, 2003, in Carrington & Sargers, 2008, p. 796).

Figure 1 – Whole Schooling diagram (adapted from the International Journal of Whole Schooling website).

Figure 1 shows the reciprocal relationship between “The Eight Principles” (support, partnership, and so on) in building effective practices in inclusion. Indeed, the main principles of Whole Schooling can be found within recent university initiatives in establishing links with the community and engaging in partnerships ‘outside’ with the aim of creating graduates with a stronger and deeper knowledge economy - an example of which can be seen at Victoria University in Australia:

“We value: knowledge and skills, and critical and imaginative inquiry for their capacity to transform individuals and the community; equality of opportunity for students and staff; diversity for its contribution to creativity and the enrichment
of our lives; cooperation as the basis of engagement with local and international communities; integrity, respect and transparency in personal, collaborative and institutional action (Value statement, Victoria University, 2008).

2.2 Bourdieu’s ‘conceptual tools’

Bourdieu’s thinking tools have enabled us as researchers to gain a deeper understanding of the wider contexts of inclusion.

Figure 2 - Bourdieu’s ‘thinking tools’

In Bourdieuan theorisation “Field connotes relations between individuals or institutions...a game in which players understand the rules and the objectives” (Clark, Zukas & Lent, 2011, p. 136). Habitus on the other hand is “internalised embodied social structures...hierarchy, internal habits, reflexivity, agency...structured by past and present circumstances and ‘generates practices, beliefs, perceptions, feelings and so forth in accordance with its own structure’” (Manton 2008, p51, in Clark, Zukas & Lent, 2011). Capital implies any accumulated resource that is effective in a given social area - the economic (wealth measured in monetary terms), the social (social ties), the symbolic (one’s status) and the cultural (cultural habits and dispositions which comprise a resource capable of generating benefits) (Clark, Zukas & Lent, 2011).

As the diagram shows, these elements are interdependent. These interactive forces impact on and shape the policy and practice of inclusion. For example, an individual’s field will have an influence on the kind of capital recognised in that field and serve to shape the habitus of the person. For this particular study we have considered the field to be the relationships both within the university in Australia and in the home country of the student.
The habitus has revealed itself for each participant through our semi-structured interviews. Habitus and capital were the two main tools we used in conceptualising inclusion in this chapter. As we will discuss, we see habitus as something which is permeable and changeable and thus ‘inclusion’ is perceived as an ideology which is generated by capital and field.

2.3 Bourdieu’s capital and successful inclusion

Bourdieuian commentators point to myriad types of capital – economic, informational, legal, technical, political (Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008) as well as cultural, social and symbolic forms of capital (Meinert, 2004). “Capital is broadly defined as a socially valued good, but has many specific meanings” (Mahar & Wilkes, 2004, p. 223).

Symbolic and epistemic capitals have been the most relevant types of capital for us to leverage in this research. Symbolic capital can be defined as “a sense of honour, reputation, dignity, prestige or power” (Mahar & Wilkes, 2004, p. 223). In this study symbolic capital relates to how students are viewed in their field (the current university) and to what kind of voice they are afforded by those from the dominant Australian university culture. For example, in their identity as ‘international students’, we were prompted to ask how this impacts on the way in which staff interact with them, and whether this is compounded by being a student with a disability. For staff, capital relates to agency and voice in the field, for example, what kinds of voice are staff afforded in their fields? Are they able to access training and support? Are they valued for what they do? Where do they ‘sit’ in the external hierarchy?

Epistemic capital is where agents in the "intellectual field engage in strategies aimed at maximising not merely resources and status but also epistemic profits, that is, better knowledge of the world" (Maton, 2003, p. 62). With better knowledge of the world, staff can be ‘agents for change’ in exploiting their knowledge of inclusive practices for the greater good.

2.3.1 The role of staff and cultural constructs

Staff have a vital role in encouraging, promoting and fostering a positive and wholly inclusive environment. They are also important because they are the ones that embody inclusive policies by putting these into practice with students. Clearly, an environment where all students feel comfortable in disclosing, sharing and communicating their needs is important if staff are to respond effectively and efficiently to student diversity. As we will show, this is only possible
when students’ symbolic capital is in alignment with that of the university or recognised and respected by lecturers. Indeed, a positive and equitable learning environment is integral to facilitating learning for all students (Donato, 2008). Therefore it can be argued that effective inclusion is akin to effective teaching practices overall. Indeed enhancing inclusive practices will benefit all students (Jordan, Schwartz, & McGhie-Richmond, 2009). Furthermore, the habitus of the teacher, that is the establishment of a good rapport with students, in addition to personal characteristics such as patience, good communication skills, a flexible and empathetic approach, an understanding of nature of different disabilities and student needs and accessibility of time are paramount (Donato, 2008).

In terms of epistemic capital, it is also important that teachers are positive and flexible in their approaches, rather than ‘blaming the victim’ and holding the view that students are creating more work for them. Staff awareness training has been found to significantly contribute to “the success of the students with disabilities” (Donato, 2008, p. 24). Therefore the lack of knowledge of key university inclusive policies can contribute to creating barriers for students with a disability.

"Underlying our attitudes is our system of values" (Loreman, et al., 2010, p. 40). As discussed, these are what Bourdieu understands as the habitus. Our attitudes can be largely guided by the existing socio-cultural norms of a particular country. For example, within the Asian context, Forlin (2007) discusses how any inclusive models necessitate different approaches shaped in part by cultural differences (which is consistent with the guiding principles of the conceptual framework for this study). In addition, she argues that the concept of inclusive education is one that is relatively new in most of Asia, and that values embedded in Confucian philosophy are also a likely contributor to the willingness to thoroughly embrace inclusion (Forlin, 2007). This means that students with a disability will be seen as having low symbolic capital within this field. However the fact that "our values can change" (Loreman, et al., 2010) is highly significant within the context of this study, as will be shown.

3. Research methodology
Our study aims to inform inclusive policy, practice and professional development initiatives at one university, which may also be applicable at other institutions. Our research was framed by seeking answers to the following questions.
How can Bourdieu’s conceptual tools of capital, habitus and field help us and other inclusive practitioners to understand:
- faculty perceptions and reflections of working with an international student with a disability?
- what contributes to an international student with a disability feeling supported or unsupported at university?
- some of the socio-cultural norms of disability and how these impact on the student experience?

In view of these questions the study was designed as a qualitative, interpretive case study of one higher education institution. The case study approach was taken because we are interested in presenting our findings as forms of quotes from the participants in order to reflect and illuminate their real, lived experiences. In order to ensure validity and reliability we engaged in rigorous reflexivity as insiders which allowed us insight into “how our own beliefs, interests, experiences political commitments and social identities might have impacted on our research” (Swart & Aghenyegea, 2010, p. 3). We engaged a third party in transcribing the audio recordings which we then cross-referenced and established an audit trail by sending transcripts to the participants for validation, editing and final approval.

3.1 The study

There were eight research participants involved in this study: four students and four teachers (all names have been changed to protect anonymity). Students: Jane (Sri Lanka) with an arm injury sustained from a recent car accident in Australia; Anna (Hong Kong) who has depression and anxiety; Mary (China) a student with a vision impairment; and James (US) who has attention deficit disorder. Teaching staff were all from the University Language Centre: Jenny, Veronica, Lauren and Monica. Author one worked in the same capacity as the teaching staff from the University Language Centre, but has since left. Author two is currently the academic advisor for this project.

We used semi-structured interviews and asked a series of questions formulated under various headings such as ‘general background information’, ‘pedagogical and practical knowledge’, ‘policy and legislation’ and ‘culture, values and beliefs’ across the three different interviewee cohorts, and changed the wording to suit the context of the participants. We did not correct any linguistic errors in the transcripts in view of seeking to maintain the authentic voice of the participants.
We used Ritchie and Spencer’s (1994) analysis framework to analyse the data in view of its facilitation of transparency and rigor; this included various stages related to data familiarisation and developing a thematic framework, developing a colour coding system for themes and working with both hard and soft copies of the transcripts. We were careful to maintain the original utterance of the participant and avoid moving too quickly towards strict classification and therefore loss of true meaning.

4. Results and discussion
Our results have been organised by themes informed by the guiding research questions, the lenses of Bourdieu’s capital and the Whole Schooling Approach.

4.1 Partnership and support space for all, democracy: Symbolic capital
In relation to our questions pertaining to staff perceptions and students feeling supported, in this data set we see how when the symbolic capital of the student is recognised and respected, the student feels supported. This is part of an ongoing partnership and democratic process. These ideas are articulated in Monica’s comments below:

“I think there are 2 things [that contribute to the success of a student with a disability]...one of them is the personality of the student and their own sense of motivation and desire to obtain a particular goal, and their own sense of agency within that, so having their needs met by making sure they make those needs clear. But to a large extent I’d also say that having a unit or a facility or an environment where those needs that they are articulating can be met, is very important, in terms of being able to access materials, in terms of having classes in which they’re not excluded from (Monica).

Here Monica is suggesting that the students’ own habitus is an important driving force in helping them to feel a sense of achievement and success regarding their learning. The symbolic capital of the student is suggested here through Monica’s use of the word “agency”. As she suggests, a student having their needs met will depend largely on their agency within that context, or in other words, their level of symbolic capital in making their requests. The result as Monica suggests is not being excluded from learning, thus relating back to the Whole Schooling concepts of ‘space for all’ and ‘democracy’.

The habitus of the teacher in having a positive approach and seeking to optimise their epistemic capital in understanding the students’
needs is pivotal in creating a wholly inclusive classroom (Donato, 2008; Jordan, et al., 2009). This is evidenced in the experience of the student:

“The lecturers and all are very nice. They gave me extensions for my assignments and I deferred some exams... I never knew there were people like that who go out of their way... Even in the tute, if I can’t copy the stuff or whatever, my tutor would give me the notes so that I can take my own time (Mary).

In relation to our question about socio-cultural norms, the results indicated that different values and beliefs affect the ways that students with disabilities are perceived and supported in higher education.

“My country, they don’t recognise people as mentally disabled. They just think that we’re crazy and you should be locked up in a mental hospital (Anna).

This was similar to Jane - having agency and symbolic capital in her situation meant that she was able to speak up and get what she felt she needed:

“I got extra time and rest time for the exams which was really good. Then I was able to defer the final exams last semester because the accident happened one week before the finals (Jane).

Jane’s experiences here in Australia were largely positive which in some ways is not surprising as in her home country of Sri Lanka, students with a disability are not recognised in terms of their symbolic capital. The socio-cultural context of Sri Lanka can perhaps enable us to understand why - it is multiethnic (Sinhala, Tamil, Muslim, and Bur ethnic groups), multilingual (Sinhala, Tamil, and English are the official languages), and multi-faith (Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and Burgher being the main religions) (Marecek, 1998). However, unfortunately, the ethnic conflict between the Sinhalese and the Tamils has been continuing in various degrees of severity since July 1983 (Hayes, 2010). When set against this backdrop it is perhaps not surprising that inclusion has not been high on the country’s agenda. Indeed “the influence of politics on education in reality creates dominant experiences of discrimination and marginalization” (Sorenson, 2008, p. 1).

Because the students come from different cultural groups where the beliefs are negative, they felt disempowered. Evidently in their home countries students like Mary and Anna do not have symbolic capital. James from the USA picks up on this point – illustrating how even between America and Australia there is a
difference in the way universities recognise and respect a students’ symbolic capital:

"I wasn’t raised in Australia but I think Australians are more easy-going which I love. And I think the universities are more accommodating and more helpful to their students (James). However in Australia these students seem to identify with a different set of values and beliefs thus reflecting a change in values (Loreman, et al., 2010).

"I think it was significant that this student was from a country where women are not empowered. I think that this, in addition to her disability, made her quite defiant at times (Veronica).

In Veronica’s case, the shift in identification of values for the student she taught resulted in the student becoming ‘defiant’. Veronica’s reflection on this student’s change in character is through her own reflection of the differences in symbolic capital she identified this student was afforded in her home country as compared to Australia. Perhaps this projection is also part of Veronica’s assumptions about this student’s behaviour in her classroom, and seeking to justify the reasons for her perceived ‘defiance’.

This shift in behaviour as a result of students aligning themselves with different sets of norms and behaviours in their ‘new’ fields as international students also proved to be positive in that students spoke a great deal about learning to become independent in Australia.

"I feel it’s very different from China than here. [In Australia] we should learn a subject by ourselves, reading or do some assignment only by yourself...I think this is good (Mary).

"I never knew I could achieve something that I really wanted so I’m really happy. It’s like having real power (Jane).

These comments are significant in challenging the preconceived notions we as practitioners have noted often occur amongst others in the field in their beliefs of international students as being reluctant independent learners. These comments would suggest the exact opposite. When we consider that these two young women also have a physical disability to contend with in their lives here in Australia, these quotes become an even more meaningful account of resilience and determination.

4.2 Barriers to partnership and support: the lack of epistemic and symbolic capital

Regarding what contributed to a student feeling supported or unsupported, our results were consistent with the literature in that we found a correlation between awareness, knowledge and attitudes of
staff and the degree to which successful and holistic inclusion can be realised. It was also apparent that a lack of these prevents partnership and support from evolving. This was evident in the findings from the interviews by both staff and students.

"When I first trying [sic] to see a doctor and having new medication which is very difficult, because psychological pills are not a cold or something and I may have difficulties in class which the teacher himself thought it was a way that I tried to get higher marks (Anna).

In Anna’s case as a student, the lack of epistemic capital on the part of the lecturer resulted in his apparent ignorance of her condition and hence lack of recognition of her symbolic capital in accusing her of trying to get higher marks. This is a real shame as it points to a lack of understanding on the part of the lecturer which caused great distress for the student.

Not knowing or having met the lecturer meant that we could only make assumptions based on Anna’s experience of him. Regarding our research question about staff perceptions, from Anna’s comments we assumed that perhaps the habitus of this lecturer meant that he was uninterested in increasing his epistemic capital. This is one issue. The other issue comes about when teachers are keen to increase their epistemic capital, but are not given these opportunities because of their perceived lack of symbolic capital in the field.

"I didn’t even know anyone with this disability…..we had to work [the teaching] out ourselves… and that was hard (Lauren).

Lauren’s comments suggest that she had a lack of epistemic capital in having to work out how to teach a student in the class who had a vision impairment and an intermediate level of English.

"I wasn’t ever offered the chance to go on any kind of training course… I discovered a lot of useful information later on the uni website…but by the time I discovered it, I was too snowed under with the demands of the course (Veronica).

Veronica’s comments imply that her symbolic capital was not recognised within her teaching unit because she was not offered the opportunity to increase her epistemic capital. Bourdieu refers to this denial of opportunity as ‘symbolic violence’ (Bourdieu, 1999). Veronica suffered through a lack of opportunity and recognition by the ‘powers that be’ (her management) to up-skill and improve her teaching conditions by increasing her teaching knowledge. The symbolic violence is also evident in her feeling overwhelmed by the
demands of the course she was teaching, as she makes no reference to any support offered to her during this time.

Jenny’s experience is a further example of staff experiencing symbolic violence in the field. The reticence of management to share important personal details about the student with Jenny made her feel like she was not part of a cohesive team working together.

“This student had so many personal issues where they were confidential issues and this meant that people like [managers] were in the know, but you and I were not. I can understand you must keep the confidentiality of the student, because that’s essential, but this funny thing about the confidentiality is that it often makes it difficult for the whole group to feel like a team... we knew there were things affecting her teaching progress but we were not a part of the ‘in’ group that knew what they were. And some of those were very serious. So it’s a bit like, you get on and do your job. It’s difficult because we weren’t a complete group (Jenny).

In Jenny’s experience it appears that management did not value the symbolic capital of her ‘level’ as a teacher and therefore she was not privy to certain information, an awareness of which, would have provided a context for the difficulties that her student was experiencing in class.

4.3 Capital and contextual factors
What is apparent throughout the data is how cultural norms (both institutional cultural norms as well as those pertaining to a country) perpetuate perceptions of disability, while at the same time acting as a catalyst in driving the extent to which both staff and students feel supported. For example managers did not create opportunities for professional development of teachers or establish clear mechanisms for communication and the sharing of ideas between their staff. Therefore an unsupportive culture was created.

For students the existing socio-cultural norms resulted in feeling unsupported in their own countries. The juxtaposition of the students’ comments regarding their perceived level of support in Australia against their own notions of disability driven by culture (for example Anna’s words about how they ‘lock you up’) clearly results in what we see as a positive reflection of their experiences as a student in Australia. In other words, the students who were interviewed all came to Australia with minimal expectations of how their particular needs would be met due to their respective home-country experiences and lack of symbolic capital in their own countries. Of course these students did also give some examples of
where they felt unsatisfied with how their needs had been met at their university in Australia but in general the insights gleaned from the interviews were different to what we as researchers had anticipated.

For staff, the symbolic violence was highly apparent in feeling that they faced a mammoth task in supporting their student and their support from management was lacking. We might conclude from the comments made by staff that they continue to ‘do the best that they can’ without recognition or encouragement to increase their epistemic capital through training, thereby increasing their symbolic capital. Perhaps also if students tend to be talking about their experiences as positive then this is considered as satisfactory on the part of managers and supervisors, particularly in a cultural context where students are being viewed more and more as the ‘consumer’.

However there was a sense that managers and colleagues did not understand the extent of burnout the teachers felt because of their added responsibilities and excessive workloads. As a result they felt unsupported by management and colleagues and alluded to feelings of resentment over the fact that they were the ones ‘targeted’ to have a student with a disability in their class. This indicated that they felt they had no symbolic capital in their network of relations (field) with staff.

The major implications gleaned from this study highlight the importance of professional development of staff in increasing and leveraging their epistemic capital. A positive work ethic for all staff could be fostered through participation in professional learning communities; creating a work culture where all staff become capable in utilising comprehensive resources provided by the institution to support students. A comprehensive and multi-faceted approach to training which includes information on theoretical perspectives on disability, legal issues, appropriate accommodations for students, communicating with students who have a disability and teaching resources is key (Burgstahler & Doe, 2006; Darcy & Cohen, 2004). Strategies and procedures also need to harness the symbolic capital of the students in becoming active participants in the learning community and using their knowledge and experience in educating staff (Izzo, Hertzfeld, Simmons-Reed, Aaron, 2001).

There also seems to be a real and apparent lack of opportunity for teachers to learn from each others’ symbolic and epistemic capital. Learning communities allow a space for professionals to engage with others, and encourage a collaborative work culture (Vescio, Ross & Adams, 2008). Learning communities are underpinned by a focus on student learning rather than teaching.
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(Deppeler, 2010; Vescio, Ross & Adams, 2008) The focus on the best outcomes for students is the common goal for the learning community. Arguably this could have served to help the staff who were interviewed in this study as a sense of isolation underscored many of their comments.

As we see it, the results from the interviews indicate that students and staff feel supported and have positive experiences when symbolic and epistemic culture are in alignment within the cultural contexts of the institution and the country. When this does not occur staff and students feel unsupported and have negative experiences.

4.4 Calibrating capital and context for all stakeholders: Re-framing the field, Re-righting language, Re-searching for inclusion, Re-visioning education

The question we would like to pose for ourselves as a matter of further investigation and reflexive practice is: how can we work towards calibrating these forms of capital within the field for the good of all students, staff and ourselves as both practitioners and researchers in the field of inclusion? “Re-framing the field, Re-righting language, Re-searching for inclusion, Re-visioning education” are the ways in which Sleet (2010, p. 154) conceptualises this happening. We argue that these four approaches assist stakeholders in generating symbolic and epistemic capital in looking at areas such as “engaging the constituents; new research partnerships”, “recognising transformations and conservations”, “framing a values framework for researching inclusion and exclusion”, “inclusion as an educational aspiration and strategy; educating teachers for community; engaging teachers and community in policy development” (Sleet, 2010, p. 154). We see the re-calibrating of these perspectives as creating powerful learning communities and individual agents for change. The final section will consider how this can be achieved in policy making approaches.

Conclusion

Critical theory affords us the means to articulate new directions in policy making as informed by the lived experiences of all stakeholders. Inclusive educational policy which is underscored by critical theory as we have shown “goes beyond political analysis to pursue a politics of transformation. In this regard it asks not only the traditional question of what is to be done, but also, who is to do it?” (Pothier & Devlin, 2006, p. 9).

In the UK, The Disability Equality Duty (2007) enables stakeholders to move beyond the traditional scope of “what is to be
done” towards not only “who is to do it?” but also “how is it to be done?” The Disability Equality Duty “demands the inclusion of disabled voices in decisions with regard to the policies and procedures of public bodies including higher education institutions” (Vickerman & Blundell, 2010, p.7). As such, the onus for public bodies has moved beyond mere inclusive policy writing into a clear, transparent and consultative process for all stakeholders to be involved in. The Disability Equality Duty therefore seeks to create an alignment between the symbolic capital of the institution and that of its stakeholders.

The Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) is an independent organisation, a registered charity which receives its funding from UK higher education grants. The unit works in consultation and collaboration with universities and colleges in the UK in order to “further and support equality and diversity for staff and students in higher education across all four nations of the UK, and in further education in Scotland” (www.ecu.ac.uk). Their publication “Strategic approaches to disabled student engagement” (May & Felsinger, 2010) is a practical guide written for higher education institutions:

"...to strategically develop more effective mechanisms to further the involvement of disabled students, not only in the development of disability equality schemes (DES), as required by the disability equality duty (DED), but also in the implementation of those schemes and in the wider development of an ongoing institutional culture towards disability equality (May & Felsinger, 2010, p. 3).

These ideals echo “democracy, community, support, partnership and a space for all” - the main tenets of the Whole Schooling framework. Students and staff are recognised in terms of the symbolic capital they can offer the institution, rather than the other way around, as expressed below.

"In order to further disabled student involvement, institutions should pay attention to the value of the student voice, ensuring that it is respected, encouraged and recognised. By listening to disabled people, institutions can benefit from a unique insight into how institutional processes and practices are experienced, which will help them to eliminate discrimination and enhance the quality of the student experience. Furthering student involvement likewise calls for collaboration to be valued, recognising the benefit of working
with disabled students in terms of the quality and quantity of what can be achieved.

The document "Strategic approaches to disabled student engagement" (May & Felsinger, 2010) is easy to read and access. It includes practical guidance and suggestions for how these transparent and wholly inclusive processes can be implemented. Engaging in these practices enables the various 're-doings' as argued by Slee (2010). In doing so, policy making moves towards a Bourdieuan vision; "a shift in institutional culture, in the values and traditions that characterise how an institution, its constituent parts and individuals operate" (May & Felsinger, 2010, p. 41).

Inclusion is a powerful tool not only for social justice but for the greater good of all:

"Engaging with disabled students is of particular importance to institutions in shaping their facilities, services, and curriculum and assessment design, not only in meeting the entitlements of disabled students, but those of all students. Through meaningful and sustainable involvement, higher education institutions can achieve a truly inclusive learning environment to the benefit of all students and the institution itself (May & Felsinger, 2010, p. 41).

References


Equality Challenge Unit accessed 20 November 2011 from www.ecu.ac.uk.


